

WASHINGTON STATE  
Geographic Name Application



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF  
**Natural Resources**

Proposed Name: Chaenn Hill  
County: Thurston  
Township: 16N Range: 1W Section(s): 7  
Lat. 46.8803770 N, Long. -122.8456877 W (Begin)  
Lat. \_\_\_\_\_ N, Long. \_\_\_\_\_ W (End)

New Name  
 Controversial Name  
 Name Change  
 Location Clarification  
 Spelling Clarification

### Description

Type of feature (lake, stream, etc.): Hill  
Description of feature (location, length, depth, height, size and/or area covered): Hill rising to 420 feet approximately a mile north of the city of Tenino.

If a stream, number of months it flows on a yearly basis: \_\_\_\_\_  
Is this feature identified by other names or spellings? Please list variant names: Chain Hill, Chane Hill, Chein Hill, Chaine Hill, Chainne Hill, Chaen Hill.

Has it ever been signed, posted, or publicized? If so, when? The hill has been mentioned in local newspapers for more than a hundred years. The various spellings have been used. There is a nearby street, "Chein Hill Lane SE." The USGS uses "Chain Hill."

### History

*Please provide a brief history of the feature and its immediate surroundings, this might include information on the following: 1 Native American; 2 First settlers; 3 Historical background pertinent to feature; 4 History on how the land is/was used; 5 Natural disasters (floods, fires, etc.) 6 Any significant cultural events. If appropriate, geology, flora and fauna. Cite sources. Use additional pages if needed.*

Origin of name: In 1884 Charles Chaenn purchased 80 acres on the hill north of Tenino (NE1/4 of SW1/4 and NW1/4 of SE1/4, Section 7, Township 16, North of Range 1 West, Willamette Meridian) from Avery Gilmore for \$600. Charles Chaenn died in 1910. The first known use of his name for this hill dates from 1912.

Sources: Thurston County Place Names (1992, Thurston County Historic Commission), "Chain Hill" (2012, Tenino City Historian), The History of Pioneer Travel Converges on Chaenn Hill (2019, Thurston Talk). Attachments.

If a commemorative name, provide a brief summary of the ENTIRE life of the person including how and the length of time he/she was associated with the proposed feature: Jean Thiabaud Tschaine born in Brechaumont, Haut Rhin, France, in 1839. He entered the United States through Texas in 1871. He was married there in 1876 under the name "Jean Charles Thiabaud Tschaenn to Zoe Bertrand. They arrived in Thurston County, Washington Territory in 1878. In 1884, they purchased 80 acres near the hill north of Tenino. In 1888-9 they had a contentious divorce in court. In 1897 Charles moved to King County as a gardener for Mrs Whittler in Seattle. He married Lisette Schmidt there in 1900 and moved back to his farm north of Tenino, where he died in 1910.

# Justification of Proposed Name

What is the usage of feature? As a main area geographic feature, the hill has long been an obstacle for the original pioneer trail, the Pacific Coast Highway, and Old Highway 99.

Please state why the proposed name will best serve the public interest: It has always been known that the hill was named for Charles Chaenn, but the spelling has constantly varied. In the interest of historical accuracy and to solidify spelling using correct form for the future, the main form of Charles Chaenn's name, as he used it during his lifetime in Thurston County, should be used. Adopting the correct spelling will reduce any future confusion and misinformation.

How long has the proposed name been in use? By whom? Chaenn has been one of the variants used, but a concerted effort to standardize it has only been a focus since 2018 when research by the Tenino City Historian brought the correct spelling to light.

Please list all sources of information used for your research: (maps, books, articles, periodicals, etc. for background history relating to proposed name) Please see the attachments

What type of support is there for the proposed name?

*List all groups and persons who are familiar with the proposed feature and its usage. Please provide names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses and his/her association with knowledge of the geographic feature:*

Richard A. Edwards, Tenino City Historian, 849 Westminster Dr NE, Lacey, WA 98516 (360)970-1838

City of Tenino, (nearest municipality) 149 Hodgden St S, Tenino, WA 98589 (360) 264-2368 (see attached proclamation of support from the Mayor and City Council)

## Application submitted by:

Name: Richard A Edwards

Address: 849 Westminster Dr NE City: Lacey State: WA Zip: 98516

Phone #: (360)970-1838 Email: historian@ci.tenino.wa.us Date of Application: 1/16/2020

***I am aware that all information submitted is considered to be public information.***

Printed Name: Richard A Edwards

Signature:  Date: 1/16/2020

Please mail completed form along with copies of any additional materials to:

**WA State Board on Geographic Names**

**PO Box 47030**

**Olympia, WA 98504-7030**

*(Phone: 360-902-1280 - Fax: 360-902-1778 - Email: bogn@dnr.wa.gov)*

**BY THE CITY OF TENINO  
- A PROCLAMATION -  
CHAENN HILL**

**WHEREAS**, the hill at Latitude 46.8803770 N, Longitude -122.8456877 W in Township 16N, Range 1W, Section 7 of the Willamette Meridian has long been a part of Tenino's history; and

**WHEREAS**, Charles Chaenn, who purchased 80 acres including much of this hill in 1884 and lived on the farm there, on and off, until his death in 1910; and

**WHEREAS**, this hill has been known to Tenino history for over a hundred years to be named for Charles Chaenn, under various spellings of Chaenn, including Chain Hill, Chainne Hill, Chein Hill, Chane Hill, etc., and

**WHEREAS**, Charles Chaenn is recorded as "Charles Chaenn" in the 1879 Washington Territorial Census, and is recorded as "Charles Chaenn" on the 1884 purchase of the land, and personally signed his name "Chaenn" as evidenced from a receipt dated 1887; and

**WHEREAS**, Richard A. Edwards, Tenino City Historian, has recommended that in order to insure the correct spelling of Chaenn Hill, now and for the future, he submit an application to the Washington State Board on Geographic Names for a spelling correction which would, if approved, be forwarded to the United States Board on Geographic Names for Federal consideration;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, we, the Mayor and the City Council of the City of Tenino Washington do hereby Proclaim the support of the City for this application.

Signed in the City of Tenino, Washington, this 14<sup>th</sup> Day of January, 2020.

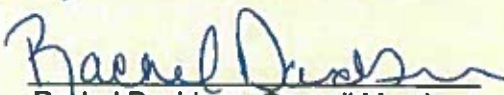
  
Wayne Fournier, Mayor

  
Linda K. Gotovac, Council Member

  
David A. Watterson, Council Member

  
John O'Callahan, Council Member

  
Jason Lawton, Council Member

  
Rachel Davidson, Council Member

## CHAIN HILL\*

Chain Hill (Section 7, Township 16N, Range 1W) was named after Charles Chaenn (1839-1910), a pioneer farmer who owned 80 acres near the summit of the hill north of Tenino.

Charles Chaenn was born January 24, 1839 as Jean Thiabaud Tschaine in Brechaumont, Haut Rhin, France. He was married in Texas on March 15, 1876 to Marie Zoe Bertrand, who was born May 13, 1846 in Le Noyer, Haute Alpes, France.


Charles and Zoe came to Thurston County by 1878 where on January 25, 1878, Charles Tschaenn declares his intent to become a US citizen in Thurston County Court. He is listed as a Farmer in the territorial census of 1879. In 1884 they purchased 80 acres on the hill north of town (NE1/4 of SW1/4 and NW1/4 of SE1/4, Section 7, Township 16, North of Range 1 West, Willamette Meridian) from Avery Gilmore for \$600.

In 1885 they purchased lots in Olympia located on what is now the corner of Capitol Way and 18th Ave SE. In 1887 Charles is listed in the city directory as running a saloon (called The First and Last Chance Saloon) on Main (Capitol Way) near the city limits.

A very public legal divorce battle beginning in 1888 between Zoe and her husband ended up in Territorial District Court where, amid criminal charges involving Adultery and Selling Liquor without a License (against Zoe though she was not found guilty) and an Assault (the beating of Charles Chaenn by Robert Holmes, Zoe's alleged lover), they were granted a divorce in 1889.

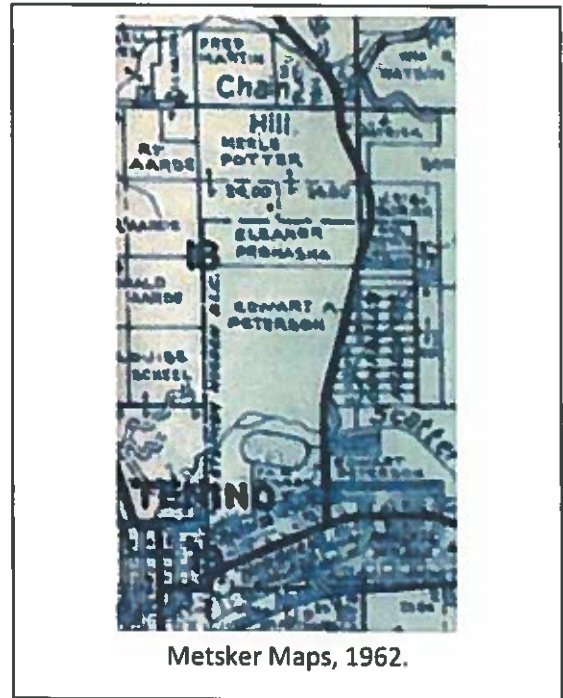
### \*Naming Variants

Due to the odd spelling of Chaenn, the hill's name has been written many ways over the years, including: Chain, Chane, Chein, Chaen. Charles usually spelled his name Chaenn and so it should be Chaenn Hill.

  
signature from a receipt dated  
Sept 12, 1887.

"general breakdown and old age." He was buried at county expense in Forest Cemetery, Olympia. His grave is unmarked.

The earliest mention of Chaenn Hill that I have found to date is from 1912 in the Tenino News when it was spelled "Chainne hill."



Metsker Maps, 1962.

In 1890 Zoe was running a saloon on Main (Capitol Way) between 16th and 17th according to the Olympia city directory but after that nothing is known about her.

About 1897, Charles moved to King County where he spent a few years serving as a gardener for Edward Wittler's household in Seattle. While there he married a second time (to Lizette Schmidt) in November 1900, shortly after which the couple moved back to his farm in Thurston County. Lizette left him nine months later and moved back to Seattle.

With his health declining, in 1909 he sold his land for \$1 to Wilbur F Blue in return for having his debts paid and for being cared for by the Blue family until his death.

Charles Chaenn died on March 4, 1910 from

Several years ago Chein sold timber and secured about \$600. Of this \$100 went to pay a grocery bill and it is not known what he did with the remainder. Some think it is secreted about his place. He was borrowing money from friends up to the time of his death. He has no relatives here.

*The Morning Olympian*

5 March 1910

## The History of Pioneer Travel Converges on Chaenn Hill

[thurstontalk.com/2019/02/10/the-history-of-pioneer-travel-converges-on-chaenn-hill/](https://thurstontalk.com/2019/02/10/the-history-of-pioneer-travel-converges-on-chaenn-hill/)

February 10, 2019



Early travel into the Washington Territory took place via the Cowlitz Trail. To avoid mountain passes, hopeful pioneers moved west along the Columbia River, and loaded into canoes and barges up the Cowlitz River to Cowlitz Landing in Toledo. From there, they went overland north on the Cowlitz Prairie to Chehalis and Centralia, through Grand Mound Prairie to Tenino, and on north to Tumwater.

Before any wagon tracks were worn into the soil, this route was traveled by Native Americans. A modern person may call the same route the Oregon Trail.

On the last stretch of the Cowlitz Trail from Tenino to Olympia is a particularly notorious hill on Old Highway 99 called Chaenn Hill.

**What's it Called Again?**

Chain Hill, as it's often referred to today, is spelled numerous ways. I grew up on the hill and was told as a child that it was called Chain Hill because of the extra chains needed to pull the ox carts. Alternative spellings of Chein or Chaen gave doubt to this claim.

Tenino historian Rich Edwards had family connections to Charles Chaenn, whose farm sat near Chaenn Hill. According to Edwards' research, Charles Chaenn was born as Jean Charles Thiabaud Tschaenn in France in 1839. On July 9, 1884, Charles and his wife Zoe Chaenn purchased 80 acres from Avery Samuel Gilmore for \$600. Charles went on to own a saloon in Olympia called the First and Last Chance Saloon, which was somewhere near 17th Street.

Charles and Zoe went their separate ways and eventually had a messy divorce. Charles finished out his days penniless at his farm near Tenino where he died in 1910. He sold his land to Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur Blue in exchange for their care in his declining years. A receipt that was signed by Charles clearly shows the spelling Chaenn, which is possibly an Americanized version of his birth name.

### **Wagons, Trains, and Automobiles**

Chaenn Hill's grade has been altered over the years. The new road, constructed about 1920, was called the Pacific Highway and is now Old Highway 99. It rerouted the ascent so the hill is less treacherous today. But at one time, the hill was both narrow and steep and well known for accidents.

Art Dwelley in his book *Prairies and Quarries* has this to say about the hill:

"It was a hard, lonely, and secluded life in the first years of settlement. Roads were poor and going to 'town,' the nearest being Tumwater, was a major project. One of the most dangerous and difficult stretches of the road was Chaen Hill. Described as a 'terror,' by one pioneer woman, the old road was steep and often required an extra team of oxen to negotiate. (The old wagon road was located to the east of the present highway....)"

Tenino was put on the map by Stephen Hodgden who established a stage coach or horse station at his farm referred to on the route from Olympia to the Cowlitz as Hodgden Station. The quickest route from Hodgden Farm to Olympia is over Chaenn Hill.

When the Olympia-Tenino Railroad was built, it bypassed Chaenn Hill altogether possibly because of the grade. Heading south, the train deviated away from Old 99 by Offut Lake Road toward McDuff Road, where it takes up the route of our modern BNSF railroad to Tenino. Even with this route change, the old Olympia-Tenino train ride was a notoriously bumpy ride.



But that isn't to say that there was never a train on Chaenn Hill. More than one small spur was constructed on the top of Chaenn Hill to aid the logging companies, specifically the Olympia Logging Company and Hartson-Otis Lumber Company.

Long before the Pacific Highway or Old 99 were completed, cars took to the road in rural Thurston County. In 1914, Tenino's streets were paved, but the paved highway didn't arrive until around 1920, which made travel over Chaenn Hill just as treacherous for the automobile commuter. Prominent Tenino citizen William McArthur got his first car in 1913 - it was a 30 horsepower 1912 EMF touring car. His grandson, Scott McArthur humorously recounts the journey over Chaenn Hill in his book *Tenino, Washington The Decades of Boom and Bust*:

"The worst part of the road between Olympia and Tenino was Chaen Hill. This section of road has been realigned since then. It was a steep hill. Before the railroad came, teams hauling timber and farm goods to Olympia would double-team going up the grade. It was the scene of a number of accidents. Chaen Hill was quite a pull for the automobiles of the day. Some cars didn't have fuel pumps. Gas flowed by gravity from the gas tank, which generally was under the front seat, to the carburetor. If the car was heading up a really steep hill, gas wouldn't flow to the engine and the engine could stall. In that case, those people backed up the hill in reverse gear. Other cars had trouble making it with a full load. William McArthur would make the kids get out and walk up the hill while he drove. But going the other way he was afraid the mechanical brakes might fail so he would make the kids get (out) of the car and walk to the bottom of the hill where he would pick them up again."

Between ghost trails and old railroad beds, it is easy to confuse Chaenn Hill property owners who wonder if they have a piece of the Oregon Trail running through their property. In many cases, they may have both.



The Chaenn Hill road before it was rerouted was steep and a challenge for those who traveled from Olympia to Tenino. Photo courtesy: South Thurston County Historical Society



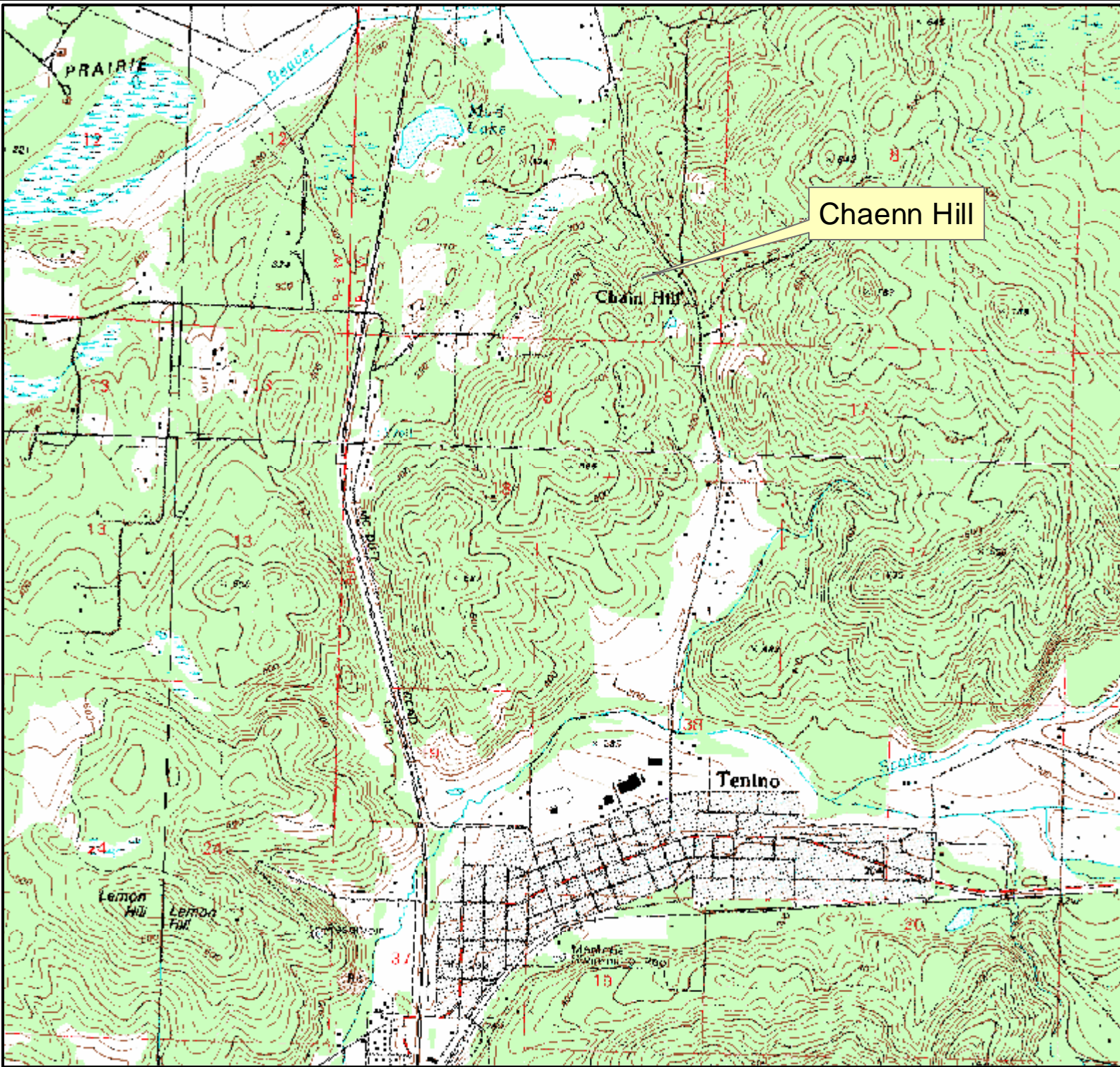
The Pacific Highway, now known as Old Highway 99, was not paved until around 1920. Here the new highway is shown heading into Tenino at the Campbell Farm. Tenino Elementary School sits on the right today. Photo courtesy: South Thurston County Historical Society



**CHEIN HILL Section 7, T16N, R1W,  
W.M.**

"A hill on Old Highway 99 just north of Tenino. It is named after Charles Chein who had a farm there in the 1890s. Chein had been a saloon keeper in Olympia before moving to Tenino. The hill was one of the roughest sections of the old wagon road from Tenino to Olympia and was universally disliked by stagecoach and wagon drivers. It is also the alleged site of an ambush set by Leschi in an attempt to kill Governor Isaac Stevens during the Indian Wars. Local legend has it that Stevens took the Black River trail to Olympia and thwarted the Indian plan." (Art Dwelley, Ms.)

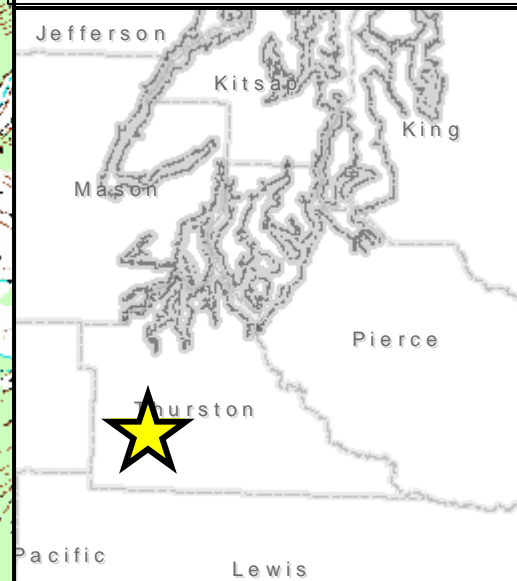
# Chaenn Hill - THURSTON COUNTY



Summit; 524 ft. elevation; located 1 mile N of the City of Tenino.

The proposed name was submitted by a local historian who provided evidence that the feature was originally named "Chaenn Hill", but was later changed to the current name of Chain Hill.

In 1884, Charles Chaenn purchased 80 acres in the area. Mr. Chaenn passed away in 1910, and the first known use of the name "Chaenn Hill" began in 1912.



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