



Legends have always been a part of Native American culture, handed down from one generation to the next, creating a colorful history.

So it is with the *Na-So-Mah* * and the *Legend of Face Rock*



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graphic by J. Russell



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Potlatch

The gift-giving ceremony

“The potlatch is commonly known as one of the unique Northwest Coast cultural markers, where elaborate gift giving and ceremony were combined for community building and a variety of other social purposes (Barnett 1968).”

“The Coquille Giveaway is a potlatch tradition that survived the impetuosity of European settlement. While setting, scale and frequency of giveaways have changed significantly to meet the contemporary needs of the Tribe, the original purpose has remained constant: to improve the host’s social standing and community network through a ceremony of giving.”

Quoted from: *Survival of a Potlatch Tradition*
Jason Younker, University of Oregon 2002.



* **Na-So-Mah** was a village located near where Old Town Bandon is today.

The legend is Reprinted with permission from *Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest* by Ella E. Clark. Copyright 1953 & 2003. University of California Press

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The Legend of Face Rock



Photo: Bill Russell

*The girl was lying on the wet sand,
her beautiful face looking up at the sky.
Near by, her dog stood as if barking.
A little west of them were the scattered racoons
and the empty basket.
All had been turned to stone.*



Prolog

This legend has been a part of the Coquille tribal history for many generations. To stay true to the original story the following is quoted from *Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest* by Ella C. Clark (1953).

This legend was told many year ago by Old Indian Mary, a *Coquille* (Ko-kwel). It explains some curious off-shore rock formation found along the coastline, Bandon Oregon.

The word “potlatch”, coming from a Nootka word meaning “giving” passed thru the Chinook jargon into the speech of all tribes of the Pacific Northwest.

The Legend of Face Rock begins

“Seatco, evil spirit of the ocean, caused the storms that blew up and down the coast. He killed fish and threw them on the beach. Sometimes he swallowed canoes and fishermen. The coast people feared him and tried not to anger him.

The mountain tribes did not know Seatco, and so did not fear him. Whenever they came down to the coast to trade or to attend potlatches, they brought with them their families, horses, and dogs; the children brought their pets.

One summer, four chiefs of the coast Indians held a big potlatch in honor of Siskiyou, powerful chief of a mountain tribe. The four tribes planned a big feast, for they wanted to show their guests how prosperous the coast tribes were. The potlatch would be held on the beach, near the mouth of the Coquille River.

feast. The women and girls dug great numbers of clams and mussels and prepared them for steaming beneath sea moss and myrtle leaves. Hunters brought in a dozen elk and several deer. Many salmon were made ready for roasting on spits over driftwood fires. Huckleberries were heaped on cedar-bark trays. When runners announced that Chief Siskiyou and his people were a day’s journey away, the roasting and the steaming were begun.

The chief brought with him his beautiful young daughter and they camped on the potlatch grounds. The daughter, Ewauna, had her pets with her – her dog and a basket of baby raccoons. The girl had never before seen the ocean. All day long, she and her dog, Komax, raced along the beach, excited by the breaking of the waves.

People of the village warned her, “Don’t go alone on the bluff. Seatco might see you and take you.” But Ewauna laughed at their warning.

By the morning of the second day all the guests had arrived, and the great feast began. The four chiefs dressed in their ceremonial robes, welcomed their guests and spoke in praise of the great Chief Siskiyou. All day the hosts and guests feasted. That night they slept where they had eaten.

When all was quiet in the camp, the great chief’s daughter, taking her dog and her basket of raccoons with her, slipped away to the beach. She ran and danced along the shore, singing a song to the moon, which hung low over the ocean. She danced nearer and nearer the water, into the silver path. Then she dropped her basket on the beach, told her dog to guard her little pets, and ran into the surf.

She would swim toward the moon, following the silver trail. Her dog barked a warning, but she swam on and on, far from shore. Suddenly a black hand passed across the moon, and she was seized by a creature that came out of the water. Seatco claimed her as his own and started toward his cliff with her.

The dog rushed to rescue her, carrying the basket of raccoons with him. He dropped the basket and sank his teeth into the demon’s hand. Roaring with pain and anger, Seatco grabbed the dog and the basket and hurled them down the beach. He held the girl close to him, trying to make her look into his eyes. But she turned her face away and looked at the moon. She remembered that Seatco’s power lay in his eyes.

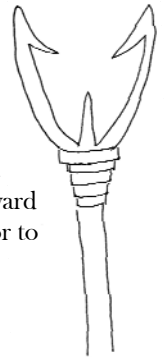
Next morning the chief missed his daughter. He and his hosts rushed to the beach. The tide was out. The girl was lying on the wet sand, her beautiful face looking up at the sky. Near by, her dog stood as if barking. A little west of them were the scattered raccoons and the empty basket. All had been turned to stone.

On a large rock near the shore sits Seatco, still trying to catch the eye of the maiden. He too has been changed to stone.”



The leister spear is a Northwest coast composite fishing spear, usually made of barbed bone side and center pieces attached to a wooden rod and conifer root lashing. A very effective tool used in a downward motion to stab fish in shallow water or to remove from a trap.

Length: approximately 10 ft (3 m)



For days, the people were busy preparing the