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## **Ritzville – How the town got its name**

*(From the Adams County Centennial Edition of 1883-1983, published by the Ritzville Adams County Journal.)*

County seat of Adams County and a key city in the Big Bend wheat-producing area, Ritzville today might be located one mile east of where it is - and might even be know by a different name - had some of its early settlers been able to agree on two pressing issues.

Both arose about 1887...only seven years after the first handful of permanent residents had arrived in the area.

These colonists had settled just south of the land staked off by Philip Ritz along the Northern Pacific railway, which built through Adams County in 1881. With its depot, the NP had erected a water tank. It was located across the present Railroad Avenue from the Journal building. This tank was the only source of water in town, and all the settlers made use of it.

By about 1887, however, the railroad found its water supply running short. Drastic orders were issued that no more water be taken from the tank except for railroad use. The astonished citizens rushed to dig wells in various parts of town. But none of the wells reached water. The closest successful well to Ritzville was one mile east.

“All right,” civic leaders decided, “if we can’t get water here, we’ll move to where we can.” Immediately plans were made for laying out a new town site surrounding the successful well. Businessmen were polled, and all except one voted in favor of the transfer.

The lone dissenter happened to own the most pretentious building in town - a two story hotel. He declared flatly that attempting to move the hotel would involve too much difficulty, risk and expense. In the face of this objection, the entire plan fell through. Ritzville remained where it is located today - and shortly afterwards several successful wells were planted.

The second crisis arose about the same year. Apparently the Northern Pacific, which had contracted with Philip Ritz to grade 10 miles of its new line, also had given him the privilege of naming the station it was dropping off 65 miles southwest of Spokane.

Ritz, calmly selected ‘Ritzville’. But several pioneer businessmen, after living here a few years, decided they didn’t care for the name, It lacked both euphony and promise. They met to select a new name which would then be forcibly handed to both the railroad and post office department.

Each businessman announced his preference. The names were all different. As it later developed, each had named his own hometown back east. The meeting broke up for lack of agreement, and ‘Ritzville’ it remained.