
By

JOHN G. CARTER.

Filed April, 1938, with Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution.

This report was made to Dr. David I. Bushnell, contributor to the Bureau of American Ethnology, and at his request was placed in the permanent files of that Bureau. As some doubt existed, due to conflicting reports on the subject, as to the year of the death of Big Snake, a famous Chief of the Piegan tribe of the Blackfoot Indians, Dr. Bushnell requested the writer to make an investigation.

In ascertaining the year of Big Snake's death it became necessary to determine the years referred to in the events chronicled in the Blackfoot winter counts.

The Blackfoot winter counts are historical records, written in photographs upon hides, and in these records each year, or "winter" is identified by some outstanding event or remarkable occurrence which took place during the year. The resulting chronicle gives a list of outstanding events in Blackfoot history. Naturally, in their original form the Blackfoot winter counts are undated.

It is believed that no history of the Blackfoot Indians has, as yet, been written. The data required to date the winter counts could not be obtained by reference to any library Index or Catalogue. A general search had to be made of Government records and reports, and the writings of such men as had, in times past, close contact with the Blackfoot Indians, and the Piegan tribe of those Indians.

It is believed the following paper contains the first attempt to date a portion of the Blackfoot winter counts.
References to Big Snake are to be found in McClintock's books, the Old North Trail and Old Indian Trails, in his account of Iron Shirt's winter count, as given by Brings Down the Sun; in the depositions of Piegan Indians taken on the Blackfoot Indian Reservation in Montana, June 26 and June 29, 1926, in the case of Blackfeet et al. Indians v. United States, United States Court of Claims No. E 427; also in a footnote on page 238, volume III, Contributions, Historical Society of Montana; and in the winter counts of Elk-horn and Big-brave in Clark Wissler's Blackfoot Social Life, volume VII, part I, Anthropological Papers American Museum of Natural History. His name and mark appear under the heading of Piegons as a signer of the treaty of October 17, 1855, (11 Stat. 657, et seq.) concluded between the United States and the Piegan, Blood, Blackfeet and other Indians. His name does not appear on the unratified treaty concluded at Fort Benton, Montana, November 16, 1865, between the United States and the Piegan, Blood, Blackfeet, and Gros Ventre Indians, (4 Kappler, 1133); nor upon the unratified treaty concluded at Fort Benton; Montana, September 1, 1868, between the United States and the Blackfoot Nation, (4 Kappler, 1138); nor upon the agreements made with the Blackfeet and ratified by Act of Congress of May 1, 1868, (25 Stat. 113), and June 10, 1896, (29 Stat. 350); nor upon the treaty concluded at the Blackfoot Crossing of the Bow River, September 22, 1877, between the Canadian Blackfeet and Great Britain. Big Snake is not referred to in the Life of Isaac I. Stevens by Hazard Stevens, nor is he mentioned by Larbenteur, De Smet, Palladino or Grinnell.

Big Snake first comes to notice in 1842 when he drove off forty head of horses and mules from Fort Union. (See Contributions, Historical Society of Montana, cited supra).

We next hear of Big Snake at the treaty of the Judith, or Yellow
River, in October, 1855, where he acted as announcer, and was also known as Loud Voice. He is mentioned as a Chief who was present at this treaty in the winter count of Iron Shirt, as given by Brings Down the Sun. (Old North Trail, 432; Old Indian Trails, 313). His daughter, Catches-Two-Horses, calls him Black-Snake-Man, and told McClintock that she was married to White Calf at the age of seven, and that she heard her father tell the people they were going to get food from the Government at the Judith, (Yellowstone or Yellow) River. She says buffalo were scarce there, while many Indians were starving. (Old Indian Trails, 87). Hazard Stevens bears this last assertion out, and says that buffalo and game were scarce around the Judith River when the treaty of 1855 was concluded. (Life of Isaac I. Stevens, vol. II, 107). In the record of Blackfeet et al. Indians v. United States, Piegan witnesses testified as to Big Snake's part in the treaty of the Judith of 1855. Eagle Head, a Piegan, 93 years old, testified that the treaty of 1855 was entered into at the junction of the Missouri and the Judith Rivers, that the Judith River was called Yellow Creek by the Indians, and that Mountain Chief was the Chief of the band, while Little Dog and Little Plume were recognized to be equal in rank by the bands of the Blackfeet, and that Big Snake, or Loud Voice was recognized as wise man, and announced the words spoken by the short man (Stevens) and also announced the words spoken by the three Chiefs to the interpreter. (R.p. 75). In the same record Scarce Woman, wife of Eagle Head, a Piegan woman, 70 years of age, testified that she was present at the Judith River treaty, and was 8 years old at the time; she identifies the Judith as Yellow Creek, and saw the short man (Stevens) at the treaty, and says they received annuities from the short man. (R.pp. 81-82). Catches Two, a Piegan woman, testified that she was present at the treaty of the Judith, and was old enough at the time to be the wife of White Calf; that her father was Big Snake; that Big Snake was a minor speaker when the treaty was made, and that her father was the Chief of the band she lived with. (R.p. 100).
Cuts at Night Black Face Man, a Piegan Indian, was present at the treaty of 1855 at the Judith River, and testified that he was big enough to know what was going on there, and heard what was said, and that the announcer was Big Snake. (R.p. 108). From the foregoing we know that Big Snake was also known as Loud Voice, and also known as Black Snake Man; that he was Chief of a band of the Piegans; that he was the father in law of White Calf, having a daughter, Catches Two, married to White Calf, who had become his wife at the age of seven. Also that Big Snake took a prominent part in the treaty of the Judith, being announcer, or crier.

The next reference to Big Snake is to be found in Wissler's Blackfoot Social Life, and refers to his death. In Elk-horn's winter count (p. 46), number 10, appears the following: "Big snakes (chief) killed;". While the numbers of the winter count, including number 10, are not dated, yet the year in which Big Snake's death occurred, as described in number 10, can be ascertained by determining the year in which the events referred to in numbers 5, 11, 17 and 30 of the winter count took place, and this can be done. Number 5 states that "John Monroe came up to tell Piegan that soldiers were near to issue ammunition and some Piegan did not go because they were skeptical; six Flathead came there for ammunition, some Nez Perce, two North Blackfeet, a few Blood, four north Piegan and some Gros Ventre, but no Sarcee." (Wissler, 46). In September, 1853, Governor Stevens was at Fort Benton, with his party who were engaged in the exploration and survey of a northern route for a railway from the head of the Mississippi into the Oregon country. During a part of the time of his stay at and around Fort Benton he contacted the Gros Ventres, Piegans, Bloods and Blackfeet, with a view to gaining their good will and obtaining their consent to make a treaty with the Government, and with other Indians, to cease their inter-tribal wars and keep the peace. He failed to contact all of these Indians, but succeeded in holding councils with some of them. (Hazard Stevens, vol. I, pp. 364-374). Number 5 of Elk-horn's winter count may therefore be dated, provisionally, as 1853.
In number 11 of this winter count is the following: "first time steamboats came to Fort Teton." But in number 4 we find the statement: "traded at Fort Benton." (Wissler, 46). Fort Benton was not founded until 1846. "In 1846 Ft. Lewis was abandoned, and Ft. Benton was built by Culbertson, about seven miles below Ft. Lewis, on the north bank of the river." (I, Contributions, Historical Society of Montana, pp. 84, et seq.). On the other hand Fort Teton, or Teton Post, which stood just at the mouth of the Teton River, was probably built around 1838 or 1839, and was sold out to the American Fur Company, and the property removed to Fort Tecumseh, October 14, 1830, or 16 years before Fort Benton was founded. (Chittenden, History of the Fur Trade of the Far West, p. 956). Therefore, Fort Teton cannot be referred to in number 11, if these Indians actually traded at Fort Benton, as stated in number 4. But a great event on the Upper Missouri, in the Blackfoot country was the arrival of the first steamboat at Fort Benton. Chittenden says: "These events bring our sketch of the history of Fort Benton down to the point already reached in our regular narrative. The arrival of the first steamboat in 1859 was an epoch in her history." (Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River, vol. I, p. 237). We therefore set the date of number 11 in Elk-horn's winter count as 1859.

Number 14 of Elk-horn's winter count, (Wissler, 46), states: "a Piegan was killed by a number of Gros Ventre." Larpenteur, (Forty Years a Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri, vol. II, p. 335), says about the winter of 1861-1862, "I knew the Gros Ventres of the Prairie were at war with the Blackfeet - that is, with the Piegans." Number 13 of Elk-horn's winter count recites: "first fight with Gros Ventre." Therefore, number 13 of this winter count can be placed for the year 1861, and number 14 for the year 1862.

Number 17 of Elk-horn's winter count, (Wissler, 46), says in part: "ammunition issued; --- a fight with the Flathead; also with the Gros Ventre;". Judge Lyman E. Munson was at Fort Benton in October, 1865, and
there attended the council between representatives of the United States and the Piegan, Gros Ventres, and other Indians, where a treaty was negotiated and signed. Annuities were distributed, whereupon a fight broke out among the bands of Indians present, and Governor Meagher, one of the treaty Commissioners, suppressed the fight by training cannon on the Indians. (Munson, V. Contributions, Historical Society of Montana, pp. 216-219). This treaty was never ratified, but is printed in 4 Kappler, pp. 1133-1137. As to this treaty Cooley, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, wrote to Harlan, Secretary of the Interior, under date of April 13, 1866, in part, as follows: "Through Hon. C Upson, M.C., we have copies of letters from H.D. Upham, Clerk of the Agent, dated Fort Benton, Jan'y. 8th and Feby. 2nd, from which it appears that at the first mentioned date the Gros Ventres were about Milk River, inclined to keep the peace, but that the Piegan were hostile, and committing murders and depredations upon whites, also upon the Crows and Gros Ventres, and paying no attention to the treaty stipulations. The Bloods are also spoken of as hostile, and the Gros Ventres complain that they were compelled to keep quiet, and allow themselves to be plundered. By Mr. Upham's letter of Feby. 2nd, it appears that the Gros Ventres had retaken some of the horses from the Piegan and the latter were 'preparing for war on a big scale.'" (Indian Bureau Files, Report Book 18, p. 199). From the foregoing it would seem proper to place the date of number 17, Elk-horn's winter count, as 1865.

Number 30, Elk-horn winter count, states: "Sitting-bull killed many Piegan." (Wissler, p. 47). John Young, United States Indian Agent, Blackfeet Agency, Montana, under date of August 8, 1880, reported to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in part, as follows: "During the winter" (i.e. 1879-1880) "several raids were made upon the Piegan by parties of Sioux and many horses stolen. In the pursuit of the thieves, for the purpose of recovering the ponies, there was some fighting. Six Piegan were killed and one Sioux, the main party of the latter escaping with
their booty. This caused me much trouble in preventing restless parties of young men from 'going to war,' as they call it, to get back an equivalent for the lost horses. In two instances some horses were brought back by parties who had gone to hunt at Cypress Mountain. I made it known that all horses thus obtained must be returned when claimed, and this has been done. Six were sent back at one time and eleven at another to their owners in Canada." (Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1880, p. 108). That the Sioux mentioned in this report belonged to Sitting-bull's band is shown by the report of Agent Young to the Commissioner, dated July 28, 1879, which states: "The hostile Sioux under Sitting Bull are among the natural and implacable enemies of the Piegons, and reliance can be placed upon their co-operation with the whites in case of any offensive movements in this direction by the Sioux. During the past two or three years there has been a sort of armistice between the Sioux and these Indians, in order that they might hunt the buffalo over the same general range, but even this truce has now ended. According to their custom, these Indians, late in the fall of last year, went on the winter hunt, dividing into two bands. White Calf, head chief, went toward the Bear Paw Mountains, where they found a moderate quantity of buffalo, and many Indians of other tribes engaged in hunting; among these were Sioux from across the Canada line. An understanding was made that they should not war upon nor steal from each other, but should camp together peaceably; this was adhered to until near the time for breaking up camp, when some of the Sioux stole from the Piegons 35 ponies, and made for across the Canada line, but were pursued and overtaken. When called upon to stop and talk, their reply was by firing upon their pursuers; a fight ensued, in which the Sioux lost six warriors, and the Piegons one. The stolen ponies were run across the line and reported as having been received in Sitting Bull's camp. Since that time there have been other smaller encounters
reported, and the old feeling of hostility against the Sioux has been revived." (Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1879, p. 89). Number 30 of Elk-horn's winter count seems to refer to the year 1878.

If, as above set forth, Number 5 of the Elk-horn winter count refers to the year 1853; 11 to 1859; 13 to 1861; 14 to 1862; Number 17 to 1865; and 30 to 1878, then Number 11 of Elk-horn's winter count, which contains the statement that Big Snake was killed, stands for the year 1858. While the records cited for supporting the date on each individual number in the Elk-horn winter count may in some instances be weak in that support, yet they cannot all be erroneous.

We now turn to the Big-brave winter count. (Wissler, pp. 48-50). In this winter count Number 9 states: "Chief Big-snake was killed in the summer." (Wissler, p. 48).

Number 9 in the Big-brave winter count states: In the fall, the first treaty was made by the Government at the mouth of Yellow River; there were seven different tribes there."

For identification of the Judith River with Yellow River, and for an account of the treaty by persons who were present, see depositions of Piegan witnesses in Blackfeet et al. Indians v. United States, cited above.

The preamble of the treaty of the Judith reads as follows:
"Franklin Pierce, President of the United States of America, To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting: Whereas, a treaty was made and concluded at the council ground on the Upper Missouri, near the mouth of the Judith River, in the Territory of Nebraska, on the seventeenth day of October, in the year one thousand eight hundred and fifty five, between A. Cumming and Isaac I. Stevens, commissioners on the part of the United States, and the Blackfoot and other tribes of Indians, which treaty is in the words and figures following, to wit:— Articles of agreement and convention made and concluded at the council ground on the Upper Missouri, near the mouth of the Judith River, in the Territory of
Nebraska, this seventeenth day of October, in the year one thousand eight hundred and fifty five, by and between A. Cumming and Isaac I. Stevens, commissioners duly appointed and authorized, on the part of the United States, and the undersigned chiefs, headmen, and delegates of the following nations and tribes of Indians, who occupy, for the purposes of hunting, the territory on the Upper Missouri and Yellow Stone Rivers, and who have permanent homes as follows: East of the Rocky Mountains, the Blackfoot Nation; consisting of the Piegan, Blood, Blackfoot, and Gros Ventre tribes of Indians. West of the Rocky Mountains, the Flathead Nation; consisting of the Flathead, Upper Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenay tribes of Indians, and the Nez Perce tribe of Indians, the said chiefs, headmen, and delegates in behalf of and acting for said nations and tribes, and being duly authorized thereto by them. (11 Stat. L. 657, et seq.).

There were eight tribes named in the treaty. Number 6 in the Big-brave winter count obviously refers to the year 1855.

Number 9 of the Big-brave winter count, in addition to referring to the death of Big-snake, states that Mountain-chief spent the winter on Milk River and found a very large piece of buffalo dung, which was about three feet across when measured.

The Trading Expedition of William T. Hamilton, by William T. Hamilton, (Contributions, Historical Society of Montana, vol. III, pp. 33-123), states that on October 21, 1858 he was in the camp of Little Dog, "located on what is called Marias River, but called Bear River by all the Indians." (Hamilton, p. 58). After a feast, "I asked them where the Crow Indians and Gros Ventres were and whether they were at war with the Crows yet or not, they being the ancient enemies of the Piegans. They replied that they had made peace with the River Crows the previous spring and were looking for them to pay them a visit at any time...The Gros Ventres were a branch of the Arapahoe tribe, which was on friendly terms with the Piegans, but not with the Blackfeet." (Hamilton, p. 61). On the same day, Hamilton writes: "In a short time Mountain Chief, that being the name of the
chief second in rank, brought in eight fine head and tail robes," (Hamilton, p. 63). On October 24, 1858, Hamilton determined to go and see the Blackfeet. He continues: "As Little Dog had informed me the Blackfeet were not to be trusted at any time. He said he would send Fringe and five other young bucks with us to the camp, which was on the north fork of the Milk River - called Bear River also." (Hamilton, p. 68).

The statement in Number 9, Big-brave winter count, that Mountain Chief was on Milk River does not necessarily contradict the statement that he found him on the Marias in 1858, as both rivers were called Bear River by the Indians. In fact Number 9 may have been given as Bear River in Blackfeet, referring to the Marias, and have been translated as Milk River by the interpreter. Number 9 of this winter count evidently refers to the year 1858.

Number 16, Big-brave winter count, (Wissler, p. 49), states: "At Fort Benton, the Government gave the Piegans clothes, etc; the white man who issued the things to them went by the name of Black-horse-owner. At this place they also made peace with the Gros Ventre. In the summer Little Dog was killed and the Piegan fought with a great number of enemies, with the Crow, the Assiniboin, and Gros Ventre who helped one another in fighting the Piegan; but the Piegan overpowered or whipped them all."

For identification of the above with the unratiﬁed treaty at Fort Benton of 1865, see the evidence given under Number 17, Elk-horn winter count, above cited. There it appears that a ﬁght broke out between the Indians present after the treaty was signed, and that Governor Meagher restored peace by training cannon on the Indians. This may be the peace with the Gros Ventres referred to in Number 16, Big-brave winter count. According to citations made under Number 17, Elk-horn winter count, above given, the Piegans were ﬁghting with the Gros Ventres, and other Indians in 1865. Number 16, Big-brave winter count can be referred, we believe, to the year 1865.
Number 20, Big-brave winter count, (Wissler, p. 49), states: "The Piegan had smallpox and the soldiers attacked seventy camps, killing many old men, women and children."

E.S. Parker, Commissioner of Indian Affairs reported to J.D. Cox, Secretary of the Interior, under date of October 31, 1870, the following: "Those with whom we have had, perhaps, the greatest trouble are the Piegan Indians, a band of the Blackfeet nation, who range in Montana and across into the British possessions. It is, without doubt, true, that members of the Blackfeet, in the summer and autumn of the past year, had been guilty of frequent depredations upon the property of citizens of Montana, and had committed several murders. Excited and indignant, the citizens of the Territory demanded that they should be allowed the privilege of organizing an armed party to punish the offenders. This demand, for various reasons, could not with propriety be acceded to; but in order to afford them protection against the marauders, the small military force then in Montana, upon representations made to the War Department of the exigency of the case, was largely increased, and in the winter following a campaign was undertaken against them, but principally against the Piegan band of the nation, who were, it seems, the greatest offending parties. The command, which was under Brevet Lieutenant Colonel E.M. Baker, of the United States Cavalry, attacked a camp of this band - Red Horn being their chief - on the 23rd of January last, on the Marias River, the result of which was the killing of 173 of their number, among whom were, it is reported, many women and children. As the conduct of the military on this occasion has been severely animadverted upon by a part of the public press, and by persons in an official capacity, as well as by private individuals, it is but just to the officer in command that his version or statement of the matter should be received and impartially considered. He remarks, in a report to General Sherman, that of the number killed, 120 were able bodied men, and 53 women and children; that of the captives, afterward released, there were 140
women and children; and he declares his belief that every effort was made by his officers and men to save the non combatants, and that the killing of the women and children was accidental and unavoidable. Although the consequences were deplorable, yet they were effectual in completely subduing the Indians, and the entire nation has since not only been quiet, but even solicitous to enter into arrangements for permanent peace and good behavior in the future. Added to this trouble, brought upon themselves by their evil doings, there was, at the same time, raging among them the small-pox, by which great numbers were swept away, and much suffering superinduced. This dreaded scourge not only affected the Blackfeet, but prevailed alarmingly among the Assiniboine, Gros Ventre, and River Crow tribes, on the Missouri River, below Benton. In this connection I would remark that the Department has been active in causing the prompt vaccination of all the Indian tribes, to the extent of the means provided for the purpose by Congress, and it is hoped by this action that a calamity so disastrous as that which has befallen some of the tribes will not occur again." (Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1870, pp. 3 and 4). It may here be noted in passing that E.S. Parker is the only person of Indian blood who ever held the position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

Palladino states: "From this date on, that is, from the Fall of 1865 to the Summer of 1869, matters seemed to grow worse, the Blackfeet becoming more hostile and aggressive. The highway to Fort Benton, particularly, became infested with marauding bands of Indians bent on plunder and murder. It is asserted that during the Summer of 1869, fifty-six white people were killed by different war parties in ambush. The murder of Malcom Clark at the mouth of Prickly Pear canyon, 25 miles from Helena, on the 23d of August of that year, brought things to a climax, and culminated in what is styled in the history of Montana, the 'Piegan war of 1869-1870,' and in the slaughter on the Marias, January 23, 1870, by Colonel Baker and his command, of 233 Indians, 50 among them being women and children." (Indian and White in the
Judge Lyman E. Munson, in his account of the period around the year 1865, states: "Whites would murder whites for plunder, scalp and mutilate their victims, and then report it as an Indian massacre, to be followed by similar outrages upon the Indians. Indians were more sinned against than sinning." (V Contributions, Historical Society of Montana, p. 218).

Number 20 of the Big-brave winter count therefore, we believe, refers to the year 1869.

If, as above set forth, Number 6, Big-brave winter count, can be identified with the treaty of 1855; Number 9 with Mountain Chief being encamped on the Marias River in 1858; Number 16 with the unratified treaty of 1865, and the hostilities of that year, and that Number 20 refers to the year 1869, then it follows that Number 9, which states that Big Snake was killed during the summer, can refer only to the year 1858.

It appears from the above that both the Elk-horn and Big-brave winter counts place the death of Big Snake in the year 1858.

From all of the foregoing we conclude: That Big Snake was a chief of a band of the Piegan tribe of the Blackfoot Nation; that in 1843 he ran off with forty head of horses and mules at Fort Union; that he was the father in law of White Calf; that he was the announcer, or crier, and as such took a leading part at the treaty of October 17, 1855 at the Judith River; and that he was killed in 1858.

The pictures of Indians, and sketches of various Chiefs which were made during the travels of the Stevens Treaty Commission in 1855 were the work of "The artist, Gustave Schoen, a soldier of the 4th Infantry, detailed for the trip --- an intelligent German, a clever sketcher, and competent to take instrumental observations." (Life of Isaac I. Stevens by Hazard Stevens, vol. II, p. 68). Schoen's sketches were used to illustrate Hazard Stevens book, but there is no sketch of Big Snake among them.
The late Robert J. Hamilton, a Piegan Indian, former councilman, and delegate to Washington gave the following information about Big Snake: That he took his name because a big snake appeared to him in a dream; and that once upon a time, when charging an enemy camp, he struck the tipis of the enemy with his coup stick, calling out, as he did so, "A Big Snake has struck you!"

James White Calf, whose actual name is Last Gun Chief, when he was in Washington in the month of February, 1936, stated: That he was the son of White Calf, and that his mother was one of the daughters of Big Snake, and that Big Snake was killed in a battle with the Crow Indians.

Joseph W. Brown, a Piegan Indian, and President of the Blackfoot tribal council, gives the information that Big-brave, whose winter count is above quoted, was the father of Mountain Chief, who is one of the persons named in the Big-brave winter count, and who is now living at Browning, Montana, on the Blackfoot Indian Reservation.
JOHN TWO GUNS, NATCHEKAPOAY NAMAUCHKA.

The following report was made in response to a request for information from the office of the Chief of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, in regard to the name in the Blackfoot language of Two Guns White Calf.

Two Guns White Calf was a member of the Piegan tribe of the Blackfoot Nation, who resides upon the Blackfoot Indian Reservation in Montana. He was widely publicised through the efforts of the Publicity Department of the Great Northern Railroad, in connection with their advertising campaign in behalf of Glacier National Park, and was well known among the Piegans, Blackfoot and Blood tribes, who formed the Blackfoot Nation.

This request for information came to the Bureau of American Ethnology from the Librarian of the Office of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, and was, in turn, referred to me by the Bureau of Ethnology.

The original of the report was sent to the Chief of the Bureau of American Ethnology, and a copy was sent to the Library, Office of Indian Affairs.

John G. Carter.
Following numerous inquiries concerning the design of the Buffalo nickel, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C., wishes to make public the following facts:

In 1927 the Director of the Mint in a communication to the Office of Indian Affairs said that the designer of the Buffalo nickel was Mr. James Fraser of New York. He also stated that no particular Indian posed for this plate. Today the Commissioner of Indian Affairs received the following letter from Mr. Fraser:

328 East Forty-Second Street,
June 10th, 1931.

Commissioner of Indian Affairs,
United States Department of the Interior,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

The Indian head on the Buffalo nickel is not a direct portrait of any particular Indian, but was made from several portrait busts which I did of Indians. As a matter of fact, I used three different heads; I remember two of the men, one was Iron-Tail, the best Indian head I can remember; the other one was Two Moons, and the third I can not recall.

I have never seen Two Guns Whitecalf, nor used him in any way, although he has a magnificent head. I can easily understand how he was mistaken in thinking that he posed for me. A great many artists have modeled and drawn from him, and it was only natural for him to believe that one of them was the designer of the nickel. I think he is undoubtedly honest in the opinion that his portrait is on the nickel.

I am particularly interested in Indian affairs, having as a boy lived in South Dakota before the Indians were so carefully guarded in their agencies. Later the Crow Creek agency was formed at Chamberlain, but I always feel that I have seen the Indian in his natural habitat, with his finest costumes being worn. I hope their affairs are progressing favorably.

Sincerely yours,

(Sgd) J. E. FRASER,"

It also may be added that the Indian Two Moons, of whom Mr. Fraser speaks in his letter, was an old hereditary chief of the Cheyennes, who died at midnight of April 28, 1917.

(54763)
Washington, D.C.

November 3, 1938.

The Director,
Bureau of American Ethnology,
Smithsonian Institution,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:  
Attention: Mr. Wilding.
Re: Two Guns White Calf.

This is to confirm my telephone conversation with Mr. Wilding of November 2, in regard to the name of Two Guns White Calf in the Blackfoot language.

The information following has been procured from Mr. Perry Kennerly, a mixed blood, and a member of the Blackfoot tribe. Mr. Kennerly is familiar with both the Blackfoot and the English languages. He resides at 913 Jefferson Street, N.W., this city, and his telephone number is Georgia 3527.

According to Mr. Kennerly, Two Guns White Calf is not so called by the Blackfeet, and he is not a Blackfoot, but a Piegan. The name Two Guns White Calf is the invention of the Publicity Department of the Great Northern Railroad. The Piegans call him Two Guns Taking, or Nachekapoay, Two, Namau, guns, chka, Taking.

The word two in Blackfoot is natoka, but in conjunction with the word guns, becomes nachekapoay. But two bears would be natoquech kyio, kyio meaning bear. But if the name two bears were applied to a woman, as two bear woman, kyio then becomes kyaki.

Two Guns father was White Calf, but it is not the custom of the Blackfeet to use names and surnames, and to give the son his fathers name. Two Guns father was called ksick, White, onistah, Calf. Kennerly says he was never known as Running Crow, but that in his old age some of the Blackfeet called him kiyis, Bear, chemoki, Hat.

In Kappler's Laws and Treaties, volume I, page 607, the name White Calf is given as Onistay pokah, or O nis tai po kah, as it is there spelled. But Kennerly says that Pokah means child, or baby, so that a correct translation would be Onistay, Calf, Pokah, Child. There was a Piegan by that name, but White Calf was never known as Calf Child.

An author named Salomon gives Natiki as the Blackfoot word for Two Guns. But the word in Blackfoot is Natoka, according to Kennerly, and natoka, as above mentioned means two.

Two Guns has also given his name as John Two Guns.

From Mrs. Allen, Librarian, Indian Office, the following information has been obtained, which may prove of interest.

Much publicity has been given to the statement that Two Guns, or Two Guns Taking, was the model for the Buffalo nickel. This statement, it
appears, is not correct.

In the Illustrated World for May, 1917, at page 344, a statement appears by James Earle Frazier, of 3 McDougall Alley, New York City, to the effect that the head on the Buffalo nickel was taken from five different models. Mr. Frazier was the sculptor who designed the Buffalo nickel. The Indian Office was also informed by the Director of the Mint, in a letter replying to an inquiry made by them, that no particular Indian served as a model for the Buffalo nickel.

Mr. Kennerly does not know how Two Guns Taking got his name. To the suggestion that it might refer to the capture of two guns in combat, Kennerly said that Two Guns did not have the reputation of being a great fighting man, and he doubted if he captured two guns in a battle. Of course it is possible that Two Guns father might have captured two guns in a battle, and given the name to his son, but this is only a suggestion, and there is no evidence to back it up.

Trusting that the above information will prove satisfactory, I am,

Sincerely yours,

John G. Carter.

JGC:c

------------------

Washington, D.C.

November 3, 1933.

The Honorable,
The Commissioner of Indian Affairs,
Interior Department,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir: Attention: Mrs. Allen, Librarian.
Re: Two Guns White Calf.

This is to confirm my telephone conversation of November 2, with Mrs. Allen, Librarian of the Indian Bureau, in which I promised to furnish the office a copy of a letter written by me to the Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, in regard to the name of Two Guns White Calf in the Blackfoot language.

The copy of the letter sent to the Smithsonian, Bureau of Ethnology is enclosed herewith.

Sincerely yours,

John G. Carter.

JGC:c
Encl. 1.

------------------

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
BUREAU OF AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY
WASHINGTON, D. C.

November 5, 1933.
Dear Sir:

Your letter of November 3 has been received, and I wish to thank you sincerely for your interest in the matter of Two Guns White Calf. This information has been placed on file for future reference.

A memorandum has also been made of the name and address of Mr. Kennerly. This will doubtless be of value in connection with the language of the Blackfoot.

Very truly yours,

(Sgd) M.W. STIRLING

Chief.

Mr. J.C. Carter,
Kellogg Building,
1433 F Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

AWW

Refer in reply to the following: 5-1100

Library

Address only the

Commissioner of Indian Affairs

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

NOV 13 1928

Mr. John G. Carter
1433 F Street, N.W.,
Washington, D.C.

My dear Mr. Carter:

By your courtesy of November 3, the Library of the Office is in receipt of information relative to Two Guns White Calf for which please accept thanks.

This letter is being made a matter of permanent file in the library.

Sincerely yours,

(Sgd) CHARLES H. BURKE
Commissioner.