

May 27, 1956

Mr. C. B. Gwin,
Benton City, Wash.

Dear Mr. Gwin:

Thank you for your letter concerning Smowhala.

As I recall, you are now retired, having served formerly as postmaster at Benton City.

You seem to have a wide background of historical experience, that should be preserved in note form at least--your experiences on the railroad project, your recollections about early days along the river, the postal service and the various post offices etc.

I am hopeful that people like you can encourage younger people to work with you in establishing a Benton County Historical Society. That is one aim of the State Historical Society of which I am a curator. If such a move can be started, I would be glad to come down and keynote the meeting with an explanatory address. I did that in Ritzville a couple of months ago and the Adams County Historical Society has now been formed. Most societies make the mistake in organizing of forming or trying to form a museum which requires finances. It is better to start with committees preserving recollections of old-timers like yourself; pictures, journals, dairies, and notes that have been written but never published. Of the thousands written, but few can find their way into print because of the expense involved. Why don't you make that such a project. You will find Mr. Voorhees of the Columbia Basin News and one of his reporters, Ted Van Arsdol willing to cooperate with you and others.

I know you are well acquainted with my brothers, the Priest Rapids band of Wanapum Indians, because of their fishing excursions at Wanawish or the Horn. I have worked with these people many years, and we have now succeeded in getting a home for them at Priest Rapids where the dam is to be built, their graveyard preserved etc. Johnny Tomanawash, whom you must know, was in a bad accident at Hesperlem several months ago and had to have his hair cut. Johnny Buck, or Puck Hyah Toot is my very close friend. During the years we have worked out material for a book, Drummers and Dreamers that will be published Oct. 6. I am sending you some material on that and if you wish, will be glad to have one set aside so when we visit Kennewick or Pasco about Oct. 18, the Shields Book Store there will have a copy set aside for you. Johnny and some of the others have promised to go with me on the book tour. I would send you an invitation stating the time and date we will be there and you can come and see them.

Little Smowhala was Yoyouni, although most of the names like that were

not commonly told to the white men. These people have given me an old family name, Now Tow Look. The book contains an account of Little Smowhala's death. He was, as you said, frozen to death while hunting elk and deer in the Colockum and was brought back and buried in the graveyard on the hill upstream from the site of the lower Priest Rapids dam. That is the graveyard we have had preserved after a long fight with the government.

Johnny Tomanawash and Johnny Buck were along on that hunting trip. I checked them several times, separately and individually, and their account varied considerably from that taken in notes by the late L.V. McWhorter and now at Washington State College. It was evidently taken hurriedly. You can't get a fast, accurate interpretation, even if you know some of the language.

I also have tape recordings of the pronouncation of Smowhala. It has a slight inclination to sound like a q "Shmoquilla", but you get too harsh a pronouncation in that manner.

You are right, according to my research and notes, and newspaper accounts from that period, as to the person who claimed to originate the slogan: "Keep Your Eye on Pasco." You've a good memory.

Are there many more ssourdoughs of your vintage around your area? Suppose you are tied into the Sourough Association, which holds meetings about once a year around here. If not, I'll give them your address when I come across some of the old timers.

You no doubt know many things that are not included in Drummers and Dreamers but you can't put everything into a book, even of close to 400 pages. I've more notes left than things put into the book, and those accumulated during over five years of research, interviews etc.

Hope you will be seeing us when we go on the book tour. And let me know if some sort of a Historical Society can get going in your area. The State Society will give its blessings to such an undertaking.

Sincerely Yours

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