

The life and times of William ‘Billy Chinook’ Parker

Richard Macy is organizing a family gathering of descendants of Billy Chinook. As background for the event, Mr. Macy offers the following brief history of the life and times of William ‘Billy Chinook’ Parker.

William ‘Billy Chinook’ Parker ~ ca. 1823-1890.

In the early Nineteenth Century the world was taking a great interest in the Pacific Northwest and the Columbia River Basin. The British had established themselves at Ft. Vancouver on the Columbia; the American John Jacob Astor built a trading post at what is now Astoria.

The Spanish had earlier sailed north from Mexico and California, and left their mark with place names along the coasts of Oregon and Washington: Spanish Head, and the Straits of Juan de Fuca. Even the Russians made inroads into the territory, coming south from Alaska as far as Ft. Ross just north of present day San Francisco.

It was at the village of Wascopum on the Columbia River that a male child was born, about the year 1823. His name was Young Guygo. He was orphaned at an early age. His parents probably died from one of the many diseases brought here by the White man.

When Guygo was a young teenager he embarked on the beginning of the many adventures that colored his life. He left his home at Wascopum and journeyed to Ft. Dalles to live among the White people and learn their ways.

There at Ft. Dalles Young Guygo lived at the Mission with the Reverend Daniel Lee and his family. He quickly learned to speak English, and began an understanding of the ways of the White man: how they lived and socialized and related to each other.

In 1835, Reverend Lee baptized Young Guygo and gave him the Christian name William Mackendrie (or Makandrie). People then began calling the young Indian “Billy” or “Indian Billy.”

Sometime after 1835, Billy moved in with a family of Chinook

Indians named Perkins. It was during that time that Billy learned basic carpentry and blacksmithing, and continued with his English schooling.

The spring of 1842 marked the arrival at Ft. Dalles of Cpt. William Fremont of the U.S. Army. Fremont had been sent West by the government to explore and map all the major trails and waterways of the West.

Fremont needed to enlarge his expedition, and began to recruit Indians as guides and scouts. Wanting to explore the world beyond the Columbia River, young Billy applied and was hired on as a scout.

Because Billy was living with a Chinook Indian family at the time he became a scout, Cpt. Fremont assumed Billy was a Chinook Indian and referred to Billy as “My Chinook” or “Billy Chinook.” The name stuck and Billy from then on was called Billy Chinook.

Late spring of 1842 was the beginning of Fremont’s journey south through Central Oregon, into the Klamath Basin and on to Northern California.

Most of August and fall time of 1842 was spent exploring Northern California; and then the decision was made to make a winter crossing of the Sierra Mountains, eastward to Nevada. It was a perilous trek, and Billy voiced his regret at joining the expedition, wanting to return to Oregon.

Fremont convinced Billy to stay with the troupe, and they made their way East. They arrived in Washington, D.C., in the summer of 1843. There in Washington, Fremont enrolled Billy in Columbia College to continue Billy’s education.

The lack of money cut short Billy’s formal education, and Fremont sent him to live with a Quaker family in Pennsylvania for the winter of 1843-44. In the spring of 1844 Fremont was ordered by the government to make another expedition to the West.

Word was sent to Billy to return to Washington, D.C., and join the expedition. On his arrival in D.C., Billy stated to Fremont:

“Billy been a good Quaker all

winter. Have new good book (the Bible). Will put names all horses and wives in good book.”

Early spring of 1844 was the beginning of the journey West. When the group neared Utah it got word that the Bear Paw Rebellion had started in California. Billy made the decision to detour to California instead of going on to Oregon.

For the next seven years Billy bounced around Northern California. He probably took part in the Gold Rush of 1849. He must have struck it mildly rich, because in 1851 Billy returned to The Dalles with a herd of cattle, a 31-year-old Indian woman named Margaret, and the name William Parker.

On Mill Creek near The Dalles is where Billy and Margaret settled, and Billy began the life of farmer and stock man. Problems soon arose in the form of the Oregon Land Donation Act—An act passed by the territorial government giving the right to any adult U.S. citizen to claim any unused land in the territory, or to any land settled by an Indian without compensation to the Indian.

Billy did his best to petition the government to have the act rescinded. He wrote a very eloquent letter to Joel Palmer, superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Territory of Oregon, arguing the injustice of the act, but to little avail.

The act was not rescinded but it was allowed to expire, and within a few months it was no longer in effect. By the early 1850s the United States began negotiations with the Tribes of Middle Oregon. This laid the groundwork for the Treaty of 1855.

Billy was not in favor of the treaty. He believed it would take too much from the Indians, and regulate them to a poor place where they would be dependent on the government for their very existence. Nevertheless, the treaty was signed in June of 1855.

After the treaty was signed the Wasco and Warm Springs Indians were ordered onto the lands in Central Oregon that today is called the Warm Springs Indian Reser-

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vation of Oregon.

Billy settled into his new surroundings and renewed his vocation as farmer and stock man. He preferred the name William Parker, but many still called him Billy or Billy Chinook.

As a devout Christian, Billy was a pillar of the community, but he hadn’t given up all his Indian ways; he still practiced polygamy, bringing into his family a young Indian woman named Helen to join Margaret as a sister wife.

This didn’t go well with the local preacher and the superintendent, but Billy refused to change his ways.

Life on the reservation was not always peaceful. There were times when hostile Indians raided the reservation, stole horses and kidnapped women and children.

War came between the United States and the Snake Indians and the Bannock Indians. Billy was recruited along with many other reservation men as Army scouts. They campaigned against both the Snake and the Bannocks, and Billy rose to rank of Sergeant.

Back from the wars, Billy settled back into a peacetime life. In 1868 he met a 15-year-old Warm Springs girl named Annie Holliquilla. Billy was 45. They were married, bringing more admonishments from the preacher and the superintendent.

And it was about this time that Helen disappeared from the scene: It seemed the words from the preacher and superintendent had some effect.

In 1869 a baby girl was born to Billy and Annie. Her name was

Emma Parker.

All his adult life Billy was an outspoken supporter of Education. Because the Indian school at Warm Springs only went as far as the eighth grade, had Emma enrolled in the Indian school at Forest Grove. It was 1882.

In the years following Emma’s birth the words from the preacher and the superintendent about Billy’s lifestyle faded; though seemingly Billy changed his ways. Nevertheless, the 1884 Warm Springs Census shows this entry:

William Parker—Head of Household, age 61.

Annie Parker—Wife, age 31.

Emma Parker—Daughter, age 15.

Margaret—Dependent, age 54.

Billy lived out the rest of his life at Warm Springs. A respected elder, he built a home on the Sidwalter Flat about a mile south of what is now County Line Road. That house was later passed down to his step-daughter Matilda and became known as the Stacona place.

Billy died in 1890 and is buried in the oldest section of the Agency Cemetery. Margaret is buried nearby.

Annie lived on 41 more years after Billy’s death. She remarried Arthur Symentire.

A note: On the Treaty of 1855 all the Indians who signed the treaty signed with an X, and their signs were witnessed by an Army officer.

The first name on the list of signers is William Parker—Billy Chinook—followed by an X as his mark, witnessed by an Army officer.

That seems strange, that a man who was very literate, both orally and in writing, in the English language would sign the treaty with an X instead of signing his signature.

Also, Billy Chinook had been an outspoken opponent of the treaty. In all probability Billy did not sign the treaty, but the Army used a ringer and passed him off as William Parker.

— Richard Macy

Resolutions of Tribal Council

Lawsuit

Whereas on October 18, 2017, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon commenced legal action against Vanport International Inc. in United States District Court, District of Oregon, Case No. 3:17-cv-1649; and,

Whereas in its complaint (attached to resolution as an exhibit), the tribe states the following facts:

- In 1967, the tribe formed Warm Springs Forest Products Industries for the purpose of operating a sawmill located on the Warm Springs Reservation; and,
- The United States of America holds legal title to timber located on the Warm Springs Reservation in trust for the benefit of the tribe; and,

- WSFPI purchased the tribal timber pursuant to standard contracts prepared by the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, which required payment from the purchaser before title would pass from the United States to the purchaser; and,

- The tribe delivered tribal timber with a value of \$2,416,731 to WSFPI for which it did not receive payment; and,

- WSFPI processed the unpaid-for tribal timber and delivered the finished lumber to Vanport; and,

- The tribe has an on-going beneficial interest in the unpaid-for

tribal timber, and that Vanport exercised dominion or control in the unpaid-for tribal timber; and,

Whereas the tribe seeks judgment against Vanport in the amount of \$2,416,731 plus interest from the date the unpaid-for tribal timber was delivered to WSFPI until paid in full; and,

Whereas on January 12, 2018, Vanport filed an answer and affirmative defenses to the tribe’s complaint (also attached as an exhibit); and,

Whereas in its affirmative defenses, Vanport alleges, among other things, that the tribe “retains no interest in the subject lumber or proceeds from its sale” because the tribe “and the BIA knowingly waived or extinguished any such rights [the tribe] may have possessed when they allowed WSFPI to sell the lumber to Vanport knowing that WSFPI had not already paid all of the stumpage fees that it allegedly owed...”; and,

Whereas, based on the trust duties that United States owes the tribe and the BIA’s involvement in the ultimate facts giving rise to the action and Vanport’s affirmative defenses, the United States should take affirmative steps to assist the tribe in prosecuting the action, which include, without limitation, the assignment of litigation counsel from the United States Department of Justice and consideration of an amicus curiae appearance in the Action on the side of the tribe;

now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Twenty-Seventh Tribal Council of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, pursuant to Article V, Sections (a), (l), and (u), of the Tribal Constitution and By-Laws, that the Tribal Council requests that the Pacific Northwest Regional Director of the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Superintendent of the Warm Springs Agency take affirmative steps to assist the tribe in prosecuting the action, which include, without limitation, requesting immediate assignment of litigation counsel from the United States Department of Justice and consideration of an amicus curiae appearance in the Action on the side of the tribe. *Resolution no. 12,483.*

Timber LLC

Whereas the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon is a federally recognized tribe, organized pursuant to the Constitution of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, approved by the Secretary of the Interior on February 14, 1938 (the “Constitution”); and,

Whereas, pursuant to Title IV of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, Pub. L. 93-638, the Tribe and the United

States Department of the Interior have entered into a compact of Self-Governance; and,

Whereas, pursuant to the Compact, the Tribe has assumed responsibility for the implementation of, among other things, Interior’s forestry program, which was previously administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs; and,

Whereas in the Compact, the United States expressly reaffirms its trust responsibility to protect and conserve the trust resources of the Tribe and its members; and,

Whereas the tribe has delegated the implementation of the Forestry Program to the Branch of Natural Resources, Forestry Department and Timber Committee; and,

Whereas BNR Forestry undertakes forest land management activities pursuant to the Compact and the National Indian Forest Resources Management Act, 25 U.S.C. §§ 3101 et seq. and its implementing regulations, 25 C.F.R. Part 163, and Tribal Ordinance 74; and,

Whereas the tribe has formed (and is the sole member of) the Warm Springs Timber Company, LLC, a Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs limited liability company for the purpose of obtaining the highest overall value for the Tribe’s timber resources through prudent harvesting, merchandising, and re-selling of the tribe’s timber; and,

Whereas the tribe has also designated the Timber Company as the tribe’s Indian enterprise for purposes of 25 C.F.R. Part 163; and,

Whereas, pursuant to Tribal Resolutions 12,278 and 12,354, Tribal Council authorized the Timber Company to be the primary purchaser of the tribe’s timber in 2017 and also directed BNR Forestry and the Timber Company to enter into a written memorandum of understanding, setting forth the parties’ roles and responsibilities with respect to the tribe’s 2017 Timber Sale Program; and,

Whereas Tribal Council believes that it is in the best interests of the tribe that the Timber Company continue to operate as a going concern and as the primary purchaser of the Tribe’s timber; and,

Whereas Tribal Council believes that it is in the best interests of the tribe that BNR Forestry and the Timber Company enter into an amended and restated memorandum of understanding in substantially the form (attached to the resolution as an exhibit); now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Twenty-Seventh Tribal Council of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, pursuant to Article V, Sections 1(a), (c), (f), (l), and (u) of the Tribal Constitution and By-Laws, that the Tribal Council hereby:

(a) Affirms that each “Whereas” in this Resolution is true and correct in all material respects; and

(b) Approves the MOU and directs BNR Forestry and the Timber Company to execute the MOU and implement it in good faith. *Resolution no. 12,495.*