

Indians (Sacajawea)

C O P Y

January 4, 1957
Chicago, Illinois

Witness No 4

Dear good friend:

It is my understanding that the Piegans of the Blackfeet Nation did know, probably by "moccasin telegraph", that there was a Shoshone woman with Lewis and Clark but since they speak an entirely different language from the Shoshones, I don't think they could help in the correct pronunciation of her name even if they knew it.

First of all to attempt to get the proper pronunciation, it would be necessary to establish which band of the many Shoshone tribes she belonged to. Since her brother seems to have belonged to a tribe west of the Rocky Mountains and not to the tribe of Shoshones that were living near the Wind River Valley, at that time, I think the more correct pronunciation would be found among the Idaho Shoshones. Of course, no Indians pronounce their language today as it was spoken over a hundred years ago.

I can see no reason to think she was a Mandan, although she was living with Mandans who had obtained her, as I understand it, by purchase as a slave. She was married to a white man when Lewis and Clark knew her.

It is not of great importance how her name is spelled phonetically. I believe the closest rendition would be, "Sah caw zhaw wee ugh, soft vowels, sibilant and harsh consonants, with the accent on the middle syllable.

I believe that visually the most pleasant spelling in English is Sacajawea.

I hope that this helps you a bit.

And I hope that you and Mrs. Painter are well and happy.

Sincerely
/s/ Eagle Plume

Notation of Roy Painter:

Charles Eagle Plume, Blackfoot Indian, address: Allenspark, Colorado, where he operates a store; lectures on Indian problems during the winter. His theme is that Indians are still prisoners of war. A college graduate, with a few years spent in postgraduate study, War II drew him into the Army. He speaks well, and was well received at Twin Falls, Idaho, when he addressed Town Hall.