

# **The Mystery Glyphs are not Indian so they have to be modern and or a Hoax???**

By: Terry L. Carter

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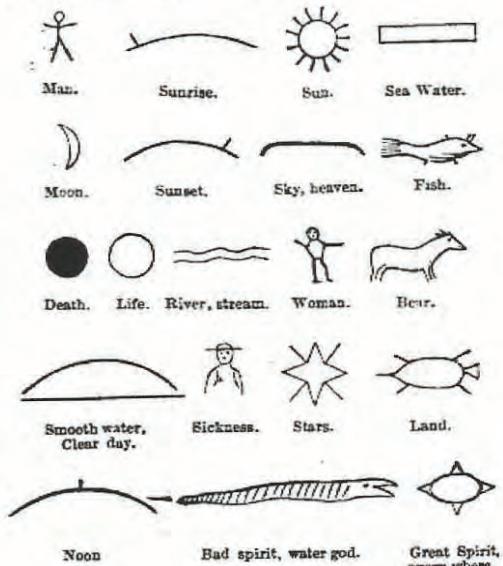
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-134 TRADITIONAL HISTORY OF

communication to another Indian, and by them make himself as well understood as a pale face can by letter.

There are over two hundred figures in general use for all the purposes of correspondence. Material things are represented by pictures of them.

## THE CHARACTERS USED IN PICTURE WRITING.



Ancient picture writing from Copway's book

As I traveled all across the western United States, searching out the locations and clues to the mystery glyphs. I kept hearing the same thing over and over again from the scholarly and rock art communities; the mystery glyphs are not Indian so they have to be modern and or a hoax. Growing up in Utah and seeing thousands of Indian petroglyphs through out my lifetime, I had to agree with them at least on one of their points. The Mystery Glyphs were not anything like the Indian petroglyphs I had been used to seeing.

Then one day while I was thumbing through one of my boys Cub Scout manuals I was shocked to find some drawings of the Mystery Glyph symbols in one of the manuals. This was in a section teaching the boys all about Indian sign language. As I researched this source I learned that it came from William Tomkins little book called Indian Sign Language. This book was originally published in the 1930's and has been reprinted several times, and is still available from Dover publishing today.

Tomkins Had a fascination with the Native Americans, he studied George Copway's book published in 1850 entitled "The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibwa Nation". One of the subjects Copway wrote about was the ancient sacred records and pictorial language that was passed down for over a hundred generations to only a select few. Copway was the chief of the Ojibwa nation and he never new anything about this until his uncles best friend shared this information with him, as he had been one of the chosen few to learn the sacred mysteries.

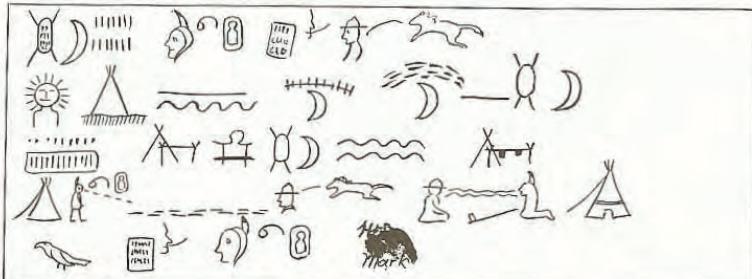
Tomkins also studied Henry Schoolcraft's huge seven-volume book set titled Archives of Aboriginal Knowledge, which contains more material. However, most of the relevant sections, (those with Mystery Glyph-like symbols) are covered by Garrick Mallery and William Tomkins.

Later on in the late 1800's Tomkins went and lived with the Indians to learn more about their traditions but what fascinated him the most was the way the different tribes with different languages could still communicate with sign language and the pictorial language of the ancients. Tomkins eventually ended up finding a few of the older Indians that he communicated with, using the ancient language.

Like I said at the beginning of this report, I kept hearing the same thing over and over again, they're not Indian so they have to be modern. Yet here we have documented proof from the mid 1800's stating that these types of symbols are part of an ancient language that were known and used. Probably by the Medicine men or shamans of the Indian tribe.

Armed with this new information I went back to the different individuals telling me they were modern, to show them what I had found.

Keesakawasis was delighted to find that he had a white brother to whom he could write his ancient pictorial language. He is over 70 years old but still in the full possession of his faculties, and actively heads the tribe of which he is a member. To his Sioux brothers William Tomkins has been known for many years as Sunka Wakan Wahtogla, or Wild Horse. The text of the Chief's letter of reply and its interpretation follows:



"In the 14th day of the Frog Moon, Day Child writes to his friend Wild Horse, who is a wise man. The winter was cold and stormy from the Frost Moon. The Fog Moon there was much snow and cold, and in our teepees we were hungry. Now it is the Frog Moon and the river runs and we again have a little meat. I look for the coming of my friend Wild Horse when we can sit in my teepee, talk and smoke much kinni kinnick. Sitting Eagle helps me write. Your friend DAY CHILD."

*From Tomkins book; letter using ancient pictorial language*

Then I started hearing that the publications by these authors, of the several Indian pictograph symbols, identical or similar to some of the Mystery glyphs, was justification for their position that the Mystery Glyph panels are modern in nature, and that their symbols were (allegedly) copied from the books. Some extended this idea, and claimed the published material "proves" the Mystery Glyphs were copied or plagiarized from modern publications. However, that is unjustifiable for two very good reasons; (1) it could only be true if the symbols did not exist prior to the publications, which of course, was certainly not the case. The symbols in published literature clearly show they were in existence and in use by certain Indians long before they ever found their way into 19th century books. According to tradition, they were passed down from pre-

historic times, eventually to the Indian sources Schoolcraft & Copway used. (2) Copway suggests that there are over two hundred of these symbols yet he only shows us a handful in his publication. To date there is way more than 200 different symbols used in the Mystery Glyph panels. Far more than is shown in all the published publications combined. Also the Mystery Glyphs only contain about twenty percent of the published symbols. I would think that if some one were going to perpetrate a hoax using these published symbols as their base, they would have at least used the majority of the known symbols instead of making up their own.

But despite the fact that several of the Mystery Glyphs are found among the symbols in these literatures, none of the Mystery Glyph panels have been successfully interpreted, let alone consistently from panel to panel, using the published meanings which were assigned to the symbols.

Because of the prior existence that includes some of them in lists of authentic signs demonstrates, the published literature does serve to establish that at least some of the Mystery Glyph symbols (those included in the lists) were used by native Americans prior to and up to the 1800's, and probably much earlier.

It seems unquestioned today that the meanings of the symbols given in the 1800's literature are all correct. But that assumption is not well founded, since so few sources exist (only a couple which are generally cited) for the meanings. Nearly all the Indian-sourced meanings we have for the symbols, (especially referring to the Mystery Glyph symbols in the lists) were set down by either Copway (limited examples) or Schoolcraft. Mallery and Tomkins, with some exceptions, are largely just repetitions of Copway and Schoolcraft, without very much original investigation of the meanings, in the case of the included Mystery Glyph symbols. To what extent the different Indian tribes of the mid 1800's would have actually endorsed or disagreed with the published meanings we have, seems unknowable today, using academic sources.

Since there seems to be significant variances in the meanings of some symbols from tribe to tribe, (as is evident by the stick figure of a man with a line through the head. Copway says it means sick. Tomkins says it means white



*One of the hundreds of symbols not listed in any of the publications*



man) even when they stem from some common or related root-idea, it should be considered that the originally-intended Mystery Glyph meanings may not even have been known to native tribes in the 1800s, or even much earlier, but originating far enough back so that the meanings of the Mystery Glyphs had changed with time, or other circumstances, sufficient to make them unreadable by later Indians. Other circumstances include being made by members of a tribe who assigned particular unique meanings to them (which is certainly suggested by the linear style, as opposed to the cluster-relationship found in most petroglyph panels, the latter demonstrated by Lavan Martineau), but whose presence in the region was temporary or exclusionary, or a tribe that existed for a period, but disappeared at some point for other reasons.

It is my hope that in writing this little article, the statement that "they are not Indian therefore they have to be modern" has been disproved. I have

tracked down and verified that they are at least 100 to 150 years old. I have newspaper articles from the 40's 50's and 60's stating that they looked old back when some of the different sites were being found or reported. How much older than the 150 years old, if any, is anybodies guess, but I personally think they are older. But at the very least they were made in the late 1800's and are historic and need to be valued and protected as such.

I have come across several reports that state people have come across a petroglyph panel that looks modern in nature because of the straight lines and the hieroglyphic symbols that they have been written with. They don't look anything like the Indian petroglyphs they are used to seeing so they just dismiss them as cowboy scratchings or as a modern day hoax, and never properly record or report them.

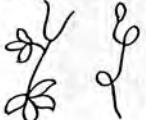
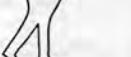
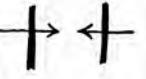
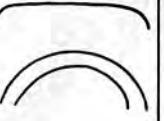
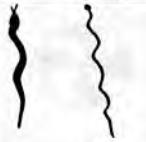
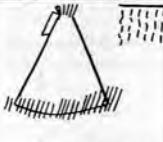
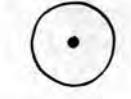
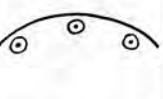
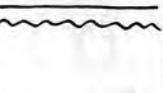
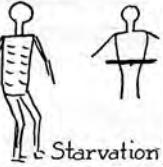
If we could get the idea out to the different individuals and rock art groups through out the country. That there is a basis for the Mystery Glyphs to be seriously researched, studied and documented, then there is no doubt in my mind that we can come up with more than the 25 site locations that are presently known to exist today. When more of these sites are found, we will have a better chance at discovering who carved these mystery glyphs and why, and what the messages say, that they thought was important enough that they had to neatly and painstakingly carve them into stone in remote locations.

Terry L. Carter

## PICTOGRAPHS AND IDEOGRAPHICS

|                 |                                  |                  |                    |                     |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
|                 |                                  |                  |                    |                     |
| American        | Antelope                         | Arrows           | Bad                | Bear alive          |
|                 |                                  |                  |                    |                     |
| Bear dead       | Bear sad heart                   | Bear glad heart  | Beaver             | Beaver in his house |
|                 |                                  |                  |                    |                     |
| Beaver Tail     | Big Voice                        | Bird Tracks      | Black Deer         | Blanket             |
|                 |                                  |                  |                    |                     |
| Headless Bodies | Bow and Arrow                    | Boy              | Brothers           | Buffalo             |
|                 |                                  |                  |                    |                     |
| White Buffalo   | Indian Camp                      | Canoe            | Canoe and warriors | Cheyenne            |
|                 |                                  |                  |                    |                     |
| Cloud           | Cold and Snow                    | Come or Call for | Plenty Corn        | Whooping Cough      |
|                 |                                  |                  |                    |                     |
| Big Crow        | White Crow                       | Calumet Dance    | Council            | Crane               |
|                 |                                  |                  |                    |                     |
| Dakota or Sioux | Dakotas and Cheyennes Make Peace | Day              | Death              | Deer Tracks         |

From William Tomkins book: Indian Sign Language

|   |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|---|--|---|
|    |    |    |    |    |
| Making Peace  | Peace Pipe  | Pipe  | Pipe   | Thunder Pipe  |
|    |    |    |    |    |
| Medicinal Plants  | Porcupine   | Power   | Prisoners  | Jack Rabbit   |
|    |    |    |   |    |
| Rain and Cloudy   | Ran   | Rattlesnake   | Rest   | River   |
|    |    |    |    |    |
| River Fight   | River Flood   | Road  | See  | Sea   |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Shell   | Mountain Goat   | Sick  | Sky  | Smallpox  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Snake   | Deep Snow   | Deep Snow   | Sociability  | Soldier   |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Spotted Face  | Spirit  | Spirits Above   | Bad Spirit Medicine  | Great Spirit Everywhere   |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Speaks  | Storm and Windy   | It Struck   | Starvation   | Stars   |

From William Tomkins book: Indian Sign Language

|                        |                  |                         |                |                |
|------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|
|                        |                  |                         |                |                |
| Sunrise                | Sunset           | Sun                     | Sun            | Swallow        |
|                        |                  |                         |                |                |
| Talk                   | Talk together    | Teepee<br>(Man Reached) | Teepee         | Thirty         |
|                        |                  |                         |                |                |
| Thunder bird           | Tree             | Same Tribe              | Tracks         | Trade          |
|                        |                  |                         |                |                |
| Treaty                 | Tomahawk         | Top Man                 | Three Years    | Wading Birds   |
|                        |                  |                         |                |                |
| Walked - passed        | War Bonnet       | Raising War Party       | War            | War            |
|                        |                  |                         |                |                |
| Water Carrier          | Calling for Rain | Weather Clear           | Weather Stormy | Whirlwind      |
|                        |                  |                         |                |                |
| Horse<br>(White Man's) | White Beaver     | White Hawk              | White Man      | Whooping Cough |
|                        |                  |                         |                |                |
| Wind                   | Wolf             | Woman                   | Woman          | Winter         |

From William Tomkins book: Indian Sign Language