

SPECIAL ECLIPSE LETTER FROM GRANDPA

Dearest grandchild,

As the eclipse darkened the sky today I was reminded of a story I came across many years ago. Gov. Wm. Henry Harrison was the governor of Indiana and was concerned about the influence of an Indian prophet named Tenskwatawa. This name means “open door” or “prophet”. He was an inept alcoholic previously known as “Lalawethika” which means “noise maker” or “loud mouth”.

In April 1806 Gov. Harrison wrote a letter to the Shawnee people warning them about the prophet. As a part of his letter he wrote: “If God had really empowered him, He has doubtless authorized him to perform miracles that he may be known and received as a prophet. If he is really a prophet, ask him to cause the sun to stand still or the moon to alter its course, the rivers to cease to flow, or the dead to rise from their graves. If he does these things, you may believe he has been sent by God.”

Since the prophet’s older brother, Tecumseh, could read, it is assumed they had an almanac and knew when the eclipse of the sun would be. Consequently, they sent back a letter to Harrison saying that in 50 days the Prophet would have the sun go dark at high noon. Harrison had inadvertently walked into a trap.

On June 16, 1806 at high noon the Prophet, dressed in his raven’s feathers, went through his incantations, pointed at the sun, and when it darkened his followers went berserk.

Some time later the Prophet promised his deluded followers that if they would dip their arrows in the magic bowl they would be divinely directed to kill the white man. If they dipped their vests in the magic bowl, they would be divinely protected from the white man’s bullets. This set the stage for their disastrous defeat in the Battle of Tippecanoe on Nov. 7, 1811.

There are many lessons we can learn from history. One lesson is that you don’t have to be inspired by God to know when the next eclipse will be as long as you have an almanac.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce