



Chief Joseph

March 3, 1840 - September 21, 1904

Nespelem, Washington

Hinmat?owyalahq?it, known as Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce, died at Nespelem, Washington, on September 21, 1904. He was sixty-four. A physician said it was a broken heart, which is not a diagnosis and is not entirely wrong. Born in the Wallowa Valley of present-day Oregon on March 3, 1840, he led his people's 1877 flight toward Canada after the government opened the valley to settlers and then sent the Army to finish the map.

The fighting and the surrender in the Bear Paw Mountains, thirty miles short of the border, made him a national figure. The speech attributed to him - "I will fight no more forever" - was shaped by translators and newspapers; the petitioning that followed was his. He spent the rest of his life asking, in speeches and letters, to return to Wallowa. He was sent instead to the Colville reservation. He died there, still waiting.

Nespelem is the grave. Wallowa is the home he named. This memorial lists Nespelem as the register city because that is where the waiting ended, and it will not let the valley drop out of the sentence.

Photographers posed him in a blanket and called it the end of a war. He used the portraits as tickets into rooms where a petition might be heard. Nespelem buried him among the people who had been sent there. Wallowa, which he could describe by creek and ridge, remained closed. He learned how a translated speech could travel farther than a living man. The Colville years were petitions, photographs, and a wait. Nespelem is where the wait stopped. The Wallowa creeks are still the place he meant by home.

Services

Died at Nespelem, Washington, on September 21, 1904. Interment in the Nez Perce cemetery at Nespelem. Wallowa, Oregon, is the home he named.

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