

From a clipping
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furnished by Mr. W. B. Powell
Indian Springs, Georgia

OWEETA, MAID OF INDIAN SPRING

More than a century ago, the Creek Indians occupied the lands surrounding the historic little village of Indian Spring, located in Butts County, Georgia. William McIntosh, the chief of the lower Creeks, who had reached the zenith of his career, signed a treaty at Indian Spring, ceding to the white men all remaining lands and agreeing to the Indians' removal to the west. The Indians were enraged and were violently opposed to any cession of their lands. They met at a general council and McIntosh was doomed to death. Their final removal was inevitable and they were sent west by the Federal Government. The ceded territory was divided into land lots and sold to individual purchasers. The spring, with ten acres, was reserved by the state.

Indian Spring became a popular summer resort, known far and near for its healthgiving water. The Indians had long before discovered its curative pro-

perties. When an illness came upon them both old and young came to drink of the "Medicine Water," and were made well again.

Despite the advancing tide of progress the State Forestry Service has preserved many beauty spots. There remain many quiet and alluring stretches along the vine-clad forests hills and silent sloping valleys. The spring, itself, has been protected by a picturesque rock inclosure which keeps the waters pure for the hundreds of visitors who come each year. A museum for Indian relics, built also of rocks, ornaments the site where once stood the Wigwam Hotel. This hotel was destroyed by fire several years ago. Rocky walls have been built here and there. The narrow rambling paths made by the Indians have been widened, making woodland walks for those who love and enjoy the beauties in nature's garden.

One of these forest trails leads to a time-worn rock. On its weather-beaten side there is a shadowed outline of an arrow-pierced heart. Those whose lives have been long and closely identified with this village rich in Georgia history and Indian lore will tell you that as far back as memory takes

them this outlined heart and arrow have been plainly visible on the side of this rock. It was here that the Creek Indian maiden, Oweeta, spent many happy hours. From the low crest of the nearby hill, down the slopes of fairest green in the glimmering veil of tree shadows, one may view this rock. Following the murmuring, tinkling waters of Labothaccosa Creek, under the bending sky with the whispering leaves overhead, you find it nestled amid the same long shadows that stretch down the drooping hillside. Here is the legend that has grown out of those times:

Generations come and go -- each playing its part in the drama of life, and each in turn passing on -- but this old, gray rock remains in its resting place. It is little wonder that the beautiful Creek Indian girl willed to remain always in the mystical realms of her paradise.

Oweeta roamed over these valleys and hills. She loved her woodland home. She loved the bees, the butterflies, the robin's musical call, the flute-like trills of the thrush. She loved the song at sunrise and again at sunset, of the mocking bird -- "sweet mimic of the woods." The flowers, the vines,

the piney odors and the moonlit shadows became a part of her. She loved the waving trees above her head and the soothing lullaby of the water at her feet. Oweeta wore a single feather in her band, taken from the wing of an eagle, the sacred bird of all Indians. Her eyes were so dark and gentle that old Masokee, her father, and the wise man of the tribe, was once heard to murmur with a startling intensity of feelings, "Her eyes are like limpid pools and beneath their depth lurks all the love of the ages." Hers was truly a "face that smiled quickly, then a face with its soul in its eyes."

Oweeta was as lovable as she was beautiful. Because of her sweet gentleness she was the pride of her father and loved by the hardened old squaws and by the toughest of the men. From childhood Kitoomi was her playmate. His lithe, young figure was erect and sinewy. Browned by many suns he was strong and sturdy as the arrows he fashioned. Like Whitman's American he had grown into a man taciturn, yet loving. A face calm and unafraid. Used to the open air of God's out-of-doors,

His kingdom was spread before him. Beyond

the hills were the deer where he hunted them in the fall. In the spring, down beside the river, the speckled trout and bass would be waiting in the pools and rapids, In this wooded kingdom he could find his way as clearly as you or I go to and fro in this every-day world of ours. No task was too dangerous for Kitoomi if Oweeta smiled approval.

On the brightest of the nights when the moonlight covered the heavens with glory and made the earth soft and sweet with silvery radiance, when the stars that were brightest hung low in the sky and the moon shadows were dancing -- Oweeta and Kitoomi would glide along the paths of the hillsides, and, hand in hand, arrive at the deep crystal pool where flowed in a constant stream, the cold life-giving water. On such nights when the two would come, there were times when Oweeta would playfully dash the cool waters into Kitoomi's face when he would stoop to drink from her cupped hands. He would overtake her on the brow of the nearby hillside, whence she had fled and taken refuge behind a great live oak tree that stood straight as a sentinel who watched for her coming. Those were days of freedom, of happiness and love. No alien hand had come to mar the naturalness. But time sped

on! The white man, never content but always wanting more, envied the Creeks their lands.

The news of the "Treaty of Indian Spring" spread among the Indians. The old squaws shook their heads and made a muffled sound between a moan and a grunt. Their darkest and most helpless hour was upon them. There lurked discontent among these silent, stoical people of a to-be-vanished race. The wisdom of old Masokee gave them no peace. Oweeta was sad with a sob in her throat. No moonlight nights at the crystal spring. The rock, which had been the trysting place for so many happy meetings, when love songs would be softly crooned together, missed their coming. Kitoomi had gone away to meet the men at the council house where tribal justice was being planned. This was a crisis affecting scores of Indians. Days passed, but nothing happened. Weeks spun out their course and still there was no news. The strain was nerve-wearing

The long blue shadows of early evening were creeping farther and farther out into the quiet spaces. A thrush was singing somewhere out of sight. Oweeta, with direful forebodings of evil in her heart, looked down into the eyes of a tiny gray lizard, drowsily

enjoying the restful charm of the rock.

"Oh, you, too, will be fleeing from the white man," she said. "Everything runs at his approach. Only the sobbing waters will stay on forever." Her head went down into her hands and the strong, brown shoulders shook with sobs. Such silent, deep emotion from a bleeding heart -- that the heart of any white man would have been moved to retreating pity should he have witnessed such a scene.

Once, when Oweeta was standing on a hillside, a pale face man came into view. Like a flash, she retreated to a safer distance. He called to her to stop -- to wait. He came on and on -- but each time Oweeta retreated -- then stood like a deer in arrested advance. "Your name, O beautiful Indian maiden, tell me your name!" he called. "Oweeta," she sang back to him in soft, musical tones.

The blue eyes flashed -- arms were out-stretched -- and, with a roguish laugh and a quick Irish wit, he sang. "Come down to me, O beautiful princess, and it will be only 'Wee-too' forever!"

Frightened by the gesture and the laugh, Oweeta disappeared into the forest. The youth laughed and went his way. With the babbling, sighing waters of

Labothaccosa in her ears -- and the memory of the pale face who did not look so wicked but was all cruel and wicked in the heart -- made her heart bleed the more at giving up her woodland home to the white man.

After weeks of absence, Kitoomi and the men came back. False hope! There were no good tidings. No encouragement. No arbitration. There had been no Calumet. They would be compelled to journey westward. The Indians made audible moans and went about their work with an occasional shake of the head, as though they were granting no luck to the white man. Their weary countenances had faded to a sullen gray.

Kitoomi had told Oweeta that resistance was useless. Their lands had been taken by the pale faces. They would be transported across the great Mississippi. They would never come again to the scenes of their happiness.

It was a sad sight to see the smoke from many camp fires curling heavenward at evening. The men and women looking at the land they so loved and must so soon leave forever. Oweeta's heart was bleeding, the pain sharp like an arrow embedded there. Kitoomi had told her that the wild forest lands would continue

on the other side of the big river -- they would have freedom in the west. Oweeta's head drooped.

And so the story ends; but people do say that throughout the years that have been -- in the small hours of the night when they are safe from the pale faces' prying eyes -- the moon smiles down upon two Indian lovers seated on the beloved trysting rock.

O lands! all so dear to them, what you are -- they have become a part of that -- whatever it may be.