

The Legend of the Grindstone

By J. W. Henson

The Grindstone juts up from the surrounding meadows and forests as if someone in the distant past had dumped a monstrous truck load of cosmic dirt on a remote corner of the earth. I have copied down the following legend of this mountain so its memory shall not be forgotten..

“I am Night Hawk, muse of the Cherowassie, a proud people of the Cherokee. We had lived forever season upon the slow and friendly Wolftever, and down to where it meets the great water of the Tenisee.

“We planted corn in the fireflash of the sun, hunted animals for their flesh and skins. Gathered fruits and chestnuts, dried our catch of fish and deer for the winter, and herbs to season our food.

“We worshipped the gods of nature and were taught of them. Learned which herbs to use for what diseases. We were not often sick. Health was one of the strong gifts that the gods gave to us. We lived at peace with the other families and hunted freely in each others forests and fished the streams together. Life was good.

“Yet, it was the nighttime that we Cherowassie enjoyed the most. After a day of work and hunt it was good to sit around the flicker of the campfire. Old Sages told stories that reached back into the mists of time. Told how our people had struggled to live in harmony with all nature; of the young Braves who had protected us from want.

“Young women sat nursing their babies as the warm milk, overflowing little mouths, ran glistening down the mother’ brown bodies’. Strong warriors danced the dust into clouds, giving the air an earthy scent.

“Far into the night the play went on. Children fell asleep upon the duff. Warrior and Sage grew silent. The embers of the campfire glowed as wolf’s eyes among the timber.

“It was at this time of night that a breeze came walking through the tree tops. Came whispering tales of by-gone days.

*Telling tales of Oowesanga
Dancing maiden Cherowassie.
How she tantalized the warriors,
Tripping lightly ‘round the campfire,
In a deep and gathering twilight.
Danced upon the fringe of meadow,
Stopped to pick a flower in passing,
Lay upon the tufts of grasses,
Court of the wind and weather.*

*Bore an heir and died in giving.
Found upon the flowering heather,
Lying on her back they found her.
Carried earth in woven baskets,
Buried Oowesanga's beauty,
Where she lay upon the meadow.
Teardrops fell as rain from heaven,
Fell upon the sleeping beauty,
Covered her and left her lying!*

“Dear reader, if you stand today southwest of the mound they called the Grindstone you can see the breast of Oowesanga still rising, lifted high into the sky, speaking of her shapely beauty.

“Now is the time to be silent. The wind and the fire are dead. The Cherowassie have gone to their rest. The night grows silent and peaceful under the shadow of Oowesanga.”

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