

Legend of Oak Tree Point

By L. Glenn Earl.

Have you ever thought as your
course you take,
Across the waters of Charleston
Lake,
To some grassy point or fairy bay,
To spend a carefree, happy day
That other canoes the same course
took,
Exploring every cove and nook
Of a shore that wanders miles and
miles
To bound a lake of pretty isles;
That other hearts as free from care
Laughed in the joy of living there;
That a wilder blood of a different
race
Revelled in the glories of the place;
That tented homes sprang up at
night,
Wierd shapes in the white evening
light,
And with the coming of the day,
Sped in their roamings far away.

But here at Charleston, we can trace
The tragic story of a race,
That vanished when the whiteman
came;
And going, left us but a name;
And yet some tracings, incomplete,
The curious wanderer will greet;
Some pictured word that's half-
effaced
From the marble slab that one time
graced
The altar to some favored god,
And digging in the nearby sod,
A roll of painted bark we'll find—
The only writings left behind.

On Oak Tree Point, you know the
place,
A tall tree stands in stately grace,
And 'neath the tree in early spring,
Two flowers to the world their fra-
grance brin:
One, blood-red, defiant, stands
Against the winds and shifting sands,
The other, delicately white,
Withers in the sun's bright light

The legendary story goes,
That when the winter's ice and
snows
Have vanished from the vales and
hills,
And springtime laughs from the
flooded hills,
A firefly wings its way at night,
To the tree, and by its tiny light,
It plants the seeds from which the
flowers
Spring in the early morning hours.

The religion of the Redmen here,
Was not of love, but rather, fear;
If o'er the land a wild storm went,
Some tribute to a god was sent;
If sickness prevailed among the tribe,
'Twas only cured by some great
bribe;
And sometimes in their great de-
spair,
A chieftain's daughter, sweet and
fair,
Was hopefully given that they might
win
The approval of some god again.

The death of Kee-wa-san is told
On Painted rocks in letters old,
How a spirit demanded from the
tribe,
Some tribute, sacrifice or bribe,
To appease his wrath at a fancied
slight
The tribal hunters had given one
night;
How Kee-wa-san in robes of white,
When the glorious morning broke
alight,
Gave for her tribe all she had to give,
Gave her life that they might live.

Among these hunters who had done
The offensive act to the Evil One,
Was Kee-wa-san's lover, young and
strong,
Trained in war, learned in song,
And many travels had broadened his
mind,
Among the older men you'd find
No one with reasoning as clear,
None so devoid of any fear.
He did not believe in the spirit's
might,
Would not admit that it was right,
The sacrifice that they had made;
And on his mind the horror played,
'Till all day long he saw the face
Of the one who had given her life
for the race;
She seemed to stand beyond his
reach,
Far out on the lake from the sandy
beach,
And all the night he heard her call,
Come from the marsh below the fall
Where Charleston's waters leave the
lake
And their winding streamway slowly
take,
Ever onward toward the sea,
Murmuring the song of the joyous
free.

And the Night Wind seemed to bring
her cry
Eager and pleading as he hastened
by;
But always from the marsh it came,
'Twas always her voice that called

his name,
'Till a haunted mind in a stalwart
frame,
Gave to him a madman's name.
And every day the hunters heard
The sullenness of his muttered word,
And oft, he declared, his loved one
true
Paddled the marsh in her birch
canoe,
Lost, perhaps, but never dead,
Searching in vain for the way that
led
Back to her camp, back to his heart,
And never again would they be apart.

And in the quietness of night,
When the lake was flooded with
silvery light,
Past cat tails, tall, and reeking
weeds;
And the wolf far away in his rocky
lair,
Heard him call in his despair;
And the black snake, hiding in the
swale,
Hissed at the earnestness of his
wail,
'Till far across the lone marsh, damp,
He saw the gleam of a firefly's lamp,
'My love," he cried, "It is your
light,
Guiding me through the dismal
night."
And faster he drove his light canoe
Over the waste where the firefly flew.

And the moon called the gloom to
hide the scene,
And a storm came down o'er the tall
reeds, green;
Hail and rain laid a cold hand, harsh,
O'er the wild expanse of the lone-
some marsh;
Fierce gusts of wind beat the sway-
ing reeds,
Broken and crushed among the
weeds,
'Till not a living thing was left
In the path the furious tempest cleft.
And a spirit fair, in the morning
light,
Who'd watched the youth through
the stormy night,
Gathered him close and quickly flew
Out beyond the rainbow's hue;
And in a beautiful garden land,
He walks with his loved one hand in
hand,
Where war and strife is never seen,
And the hills and vales are always
green;
No fear of Death, no thought of
Care,
And only Love is known there.

And that the tribe might not forget
That Love is better than Regret,
The Goddess of Love placed a tall
oak tree,
Stately and green, where we all may
see,
And it stands for the wonderful love
he bore
For the tender maid that the spirit
tore

From his loving arms. And its dark
leaves, green,
Whisper the joy that they have
seen.
And the white flower grows for Kee-
wa-san,
The red, for her noble lover-man.

And oft, from the wild marsh,
damp,
A firefly comes, with his tiny lamp,
And in the dusky glow of night,
The red flower opens at its light,
Perhaps from beyond where Death's
no more,
He brings from the flower that's
gone before
A message of love from the white to
the red,
But only the Oak Tree hears what's
said

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