

SEMINOLE SUN DANCE

(BY WILMA J. MARCH)

The Florida Seminole Sun Dance had its birth some years ago, but the original Indian festival, the Ashee Tallilwee, is centuries old. Each spring it is held in West Palm Beach and attended by thousands of travelers who are attracted by the colorful ceremonies and tribal rituals.

The theme of the festival is one of rejoicing and making merry over the wooing and betrothal of a chieftain and princess of different tribes. The festivities are preceded by the customary negotiations between the women of both tribes. They decide who these personages shall be and the desirability of the match. But some individuality is left to the lovers, for they are granted permission to show their wishes in the matter. The chieftain pursues his fair lady in true Indian fashion and she may accept or refuse his attentions. The real ceremonies begin with the appearance of Chief Fighting Cat as he is seen approaching the village of his Princess, White Wing Feather. He is attended by three braves who give to the picture a background of prestige. Unlike our modern lovers, he speaks in symbols, a custom which is very old with the Indian. At the entrance of his sweetheart's tent he places the skin of a deer which he has killed. The meat of the animal is rolled within it. This symbolizes his prowess as a hunter and his capability of caring for a wife.

With the delicate gesture of not accepting or refusing his hand too rapidly, she waits for a short period of time and then shows her desires. If she refuses his offer of marriage, the skin remains as he placed it, but if she takes the gift into her tent he knows that she has returned his love with the symbolism of acceptance. She cooks the meat and offers it to him as the act of a dutiful wife. For three days there is rejoicing and feasting. A huge kettle of stew is made and many hours are spent around it.

The Seminole Indian has perhaps the most historic and colorful past of any existing tribe in North America. But the name is misleading to say the least. Seminole, in its true sense, according to the language of the Creeks from which the Florida red skins sprung, means runaway. In no way does that meaning apply to the tribe for surrender was unknown to them. They strongly represented the name, designating themselves as Kanyukse Estachattie, meaning Red People of the Peninsula. After resisting the United States forces for seven years with a mere handful of braves, they sought safety in the depths of the Everglades without any sign of surrendering. Those few years cost the government a heavy toll of lives and many millions of dollars. Coming originally from farther northward, they gradually drifted into Florida. During the middle of the eighteenth century, when they came, the other tribes in the state had become depopulated. Thus the Seminoles mixed readily with all groups, the result being a race which has the characteristics of many tribes. They proved to be a very industrious tribe, and before many years had large tracts of land under cultivation. Hundreds of cattle roamed their fields and with numerous slaves escaping from their white masters, the Indians welcomed them, giving work on a more equal basis. This consequently became the primary cause of the wars that followed.

The activities of the first war were mostly in the northern and western portions of the state and continuing up into the lower parts of Georgia and Alabama. At the close of this they settled in the eastern section of the peninsula with the exception of the district around Fort Marion, which is now St. Augustine. They numbered approximately four thousand with an additional thousand colored fugitive slaves. On September 18, 1823, they agreed to a treaty made at Camp Moultrie, in which they were to keep within a reservation, the northern limit of which was at a point where Ocala now stands. In April, 1834, another treaty was ratified, the terms of which stated that the Seminoles were to be sent beyond the Mississippi, giving them three years to emigrate. This plan was not popular with the greater majority of the tribe and it caused much unrest. President Andrew Jackson was firm in his de-

cision of removal. Then to add insult to injury, General Thompson, head of Indian affairs in Florida, upon several occasions sent raiding parties against the Seminoles, seizing slaves, cattle and produce. The Indians became enraged, and as a final blow a party led by Thompson captured one of Chief Osceola's squaws, claiming she was a fugitive slave. Osceola needed nothing more to place him on the war path. Swearing vengeance he lay in ambush near Fort King and on December 28, 1835, killed General Thompson and Lieutenant Smith. Major Dade, with a small company of men numbering around a hundred, left Fort Brooks (Tampa) to lend assistance, fearing drastic trouble. But the gallant band got no further than the point where the Dade park now stands when, on the exact day of the death of General Thompson, Micanopy, with a handful of Indians lying in ambush, killed the major with the first shot. That fray has been called the Dade Massacre, only two wounded whites escaping to tell the story of that bitter event. During the skirmish those who did not fall in those first hours, built a breastwork of crude logs which formed a protection for only a short time. The bodies lay as they fell for nearly a month, then being buried in a single trench. Later they were removed to the federal cemetery at St. Augustine. In 1921 the Florida legislature appropriated a fund to purchase 80 acres of land, including the scene of the Dade Massacre.

The disturbances continued for a period of two years more with the bands of redskins being gradually lessened. Osceola was farseeing and foresaw a day when they would be completely annihilated if a treaty was not made. He raised a flag of truce over his camp and, carrying another, marched, with two braves, toward the government headquarters. General Hernandez gave orders that they be thrown into prison at Fort Marion. The two braves made a determined effort to escape, starving themselves until they were able to squeeze through the bars. But the proud chieftain would not stoop to escape. He was removed to Fort Moultrie where he died in 1835. With the pride of tradition still on his lips, he feebly asked for his costume of war. Painting himself and his instruments of war with the battle red dye, he died victorious, in his own mind at least. Thus the treaty which he had hoped to make was never signed. Nearly a century passed and no evidence of a treaty ever came to light. The fray lasted about five years longer with no outstanding victories or losses. Finally, remembering Osceola's prediction, the remaining Seminoles found safety in the depths of the Everglades where the white man was loathe to go. Surrender? No! They merely disappeared. Literally war ended but technically there has been a state of war ever since, owing to the fact that a peace treaty had never been signed. That fact makes the Seminole wars have a particular significance in American history.

To-day these Indians are at peace with the world and they desire to become true American citizens in every sense of the word. Annually scores of them arrive in West Palm Beach during the latter part of March to participate in their colorful sun dance, a gesture of friendliness. Thousands of tourists and citizens of the east coast district assemble for this festival which is gaining greater importance each season.

This year marks the centennial of the first Seminole disturbance and a festival of unusual activities was arranged. Parades, fireworks, carnival attractions, tribal dances, alligator wrestling, a grand ball and a historical pageant "Florida Under Five Flags" followed the ceremonial betrothal of Chief Fighting Cat and Princess White Wing Feather, on the opening day.

Wednesday afternoon the high light of the festival took place. Harold L. Ickes, secretary of the interior, ranking official of Indian affairs, and John Collier, commissioner of United States Indians, were presented with a proposal directed to President Roosevelt, in which the Seminoles enumerated their desires in regard to citizenship. The century old negotiations for peace were

again opened up for consideration. The Indians asked reparation for the loss of cattle and land which they had suffered years ago. Only four hundred and fifty Seminoles remain in the State of Florida to-day. They desire fifteen dollars per head per month and 200,000 acres of land with the privilege of hunting game thereon. They wish to be recognized as citizens of the United States of America with all rights and privileges of such. In return they will swear allegiance to America.

A press conference was held immediately upon arrival of the two government officials in West Palm Beach. The press asked many questions regarding the attitude of the government towards these red skins. At present most of the state Indians are living on lands they do not own. The entire amount of lands allotted to the Indians in the United States is about 105,000 acres and they should have twice that. They should possess lands which they feel are their own, as that procedure would make them more responsible and take a keener interest in citizenship affairs. They have until the eighteenth of June of this year, to decide whether or not they desire to come under the new reservation made by the federal government. Secretary Ickes was inclined to think that a large tract of land within the limits of the Everglades National Park would make an entirely satisfactory reservation for them. Several difficult problems would be handled in an efficient manner and their presence would be a valuable asset to the park from the viewpoint of an added attraction. If these people vote for the new deal for Indians, they will undoubtedly attain more support from the government. The new policy is to encourage their Indian life, through which they find the most happiness. Their health, too, is considered and cared for under this plan. They do acquire some of the modern methods of civilization but are inclined to cling rather closely to many traditional forms. In their camp at the Sun Dance one saw them sewing with portable machines and few women can handle a sewing machine with greater efficiency. The colorful dresses which they make in the course of two to three days are truly a work of art. Their sense of color harmony and detail of pattern is remarkable, portable victrolas are grinding forth the modern melodies. Babies lay asleep in their crude hammocks; a pen of alligators gave promise of intense thrills for the wrestling matches. The odd maiden smoked an occasional cigarette and children sat intently threading strings of beads. They were contented and that was

MODERN, EFFICIENT Banking Service



Head Office
MONTREAL

THE OUTCOME of
117 YEARS of SUCCESSFUL
BANKING OPERATION

The Bank of Montreal places at the disposal of its clients a modern, efficient service in every department of domestic and foreign banking.

BANK OF MONTREAL

Established 1817

TOTAL ASSETS IN EXCESS OF \$750,000,000

Markdale Branch: A. G. ROBERTSON, Manager

Chatsworth Branch: R. T. DUNLOP, Manager

a great deal. The city officials sent ample supplies of potatoes, rice, meat and vegetables. In all, these people of the Everglades were enjoying their annual pilgrimage to civilization.

Sam Tommie, spokesman for the medicine men of the tribe, presented the views of the Seminoles to the government officials stressing three things, namely, the necessity of allotted lands, where they can live and raise stock; the desire to be allowed freedom of the hunt and the remuneration of a small monthly payment.

Just what the outcome along these lines will be, we will have to wait and see. Secretary Ickes and John Collier both believe that cash handouts to Indians prove, on the whole, demoralizing. Some American Indians do receive payments, but it is

not the usual thing. If the arrangement of the park reservation did not prove satisfactory, it could then be changed, but these gentlemen thought the plan a feasible one. Park game wardens would have tact and the game situation would be under supervised control. Besides, the land upon which the Indians now live, is not productive. It was stated that the co-operation, interest and help given to the American Indian by the United States government has never been anything to boast of. Their place in the world was part of the Creator's great plan. Likewise it is fitting that we of greater privileges, should remember that they have a heart and a soul and that their "Happy Hunting Ground" may be in one with the hereafter for which we strive to gain a place.

When Lovely Flowers Are Desired Order
Northern Nurseries Flowers
Beautifully Arranged
Carefully Delivered
Retail Store: 231 - 9th Street East, Owen Sound
Orders placed with R. L. STEPHEN, MARKDALE,
will receive prompt attention

CREAM

Sell your Cream and Eggs to Markdale Creamery where you are sure of getting a square deal at all times, for, after all, the year round service with Highest Market Prices is what counts. Our steady increase in business from year to year will prove that we are giving satisfaction. For instance, during the month of April this year we have an increase of almost six thousand pounds of butter over April a year ago, at both our creameries.

Notice to Our Cream Patrons

The Cream Producer is entitled to all that is in the cream as far as weight, grade and test and that we absolutely guarantee.

Our Motto:

"Highest Market Prices - Best Possible Service and Square Dealing"

— Open Tuesday and Saturday Nights —

Markdale Creamery & Produce Co.
Phone 66, Markdale