

The Council Oaks- A Mighty Monarch

Written by Gladys Barker

These historic facts are authentic

Have you ever visited Winameg, the village in Fulton County, so named to honor Chief Winameg, a Potawatomie chief? Winameg, a French-Indian word meaning "Two Boys" or "Twin Boys."

Well, I have visited it often, and each school day of the year I pass this one hundred feet high oak, at the foot of the hill on the McClarren or D. W. H. Howard homestead.

One evening as I was passing I suddenly had an urge to walk to the Council Oak which was around four hundred years old and touch her side. I stood there in amazement as I thought I heard someone speak. I was startled but thrilled. I listened again and it seemed that the giant Council Oak was talking to me. I looked closer and saw places cut on the tree where a prisoner had been tied by the Indians. I could see thousands of bullets it seemed embedded about the spot where this white man had been put to his death.

Momentarily, the Council Oak asked, "Did you know that beneath my bough a very important council between white men and red men took place?"

I replied, "I believe I have read or heard about it. You, no doubt, have seen many interesting things take place here, about which you could inform me. Will you please relate some of them?"

"Now regarding that council held here which gave me my nick name 'Council Oak', replied the tree; "it had as its purpose the rightful buying from the Indians the territory that we now call Fulton County. Colonel D. W. H. Howard, who lived in that big house on the hill, could speak the dialects of the Indians very well, even when he was a mere boy. So he interpreted the treaty or agreement made between the Chief Winameg and the Government. I think that was about 1827 or 1828, which was nearly one hundred-thirty years ago."

"I am glad to know how you received that nickname," I said. "Now go on!" I insisted.

"I noticed you were looking at those bullets in my trunk, perhaps you would be interested in knowing that the Indians stood on the hill above me and shot, not to kill the prisoner, but just to see how near they could strike

his body without inflicting death on him," he replied.

"Please continue," I said.

"Another thing that might interest you and other history lovers is the fact that the first Fourth of July celebration held in Fulton County was celebrated by your grandfathers and grandmothers here under the shade of my spreading branches back in 1848 or 1849. I think there were about forty or fifty people here that day. They did not have great speeches nor did they bring giant firecrackers to explode but the big part of the celebration was the dinner consisting of deer, bear, wild turkey, corn bread and wild fruit. Oh yes, and no lemonade nor iced tea but clear cool water from that sparkling Indian spring which still can be seen on the other side of the road. I was so happy for them that I waved my branches and rustled my leaves in happiness.

"Another reminiscence which amuses me, was the burial of the last relative of Chief Winameg in Fulton County. After the Indians were moved westward, a

a few had hidden in the forests way."

near Winameg in hopes that they could die in peace in their beloved land. Among these Indians was Wyoxie, a Potawatomie chief the last descendant of Chief Winameg. He died in 1840. Mr. John Sindel and Moses Tappan made a rough hewn box, in which the chief with his blanket, gun, ammunition and hunting equipment with a little gourd to aid him in his journey to the 'happy hunting grounds' were laid. As Mr. Sindel and Mr. Tappan began to nail the lid on there were many scoldings from the Indians. They said no nails should be used in the lid, because when he came forth from the grave to continue his journey, he would have great difficulty getting out if the cover were nailed fast. He was carried to his grave by oxcart to the Aetna Cemetery where he was buried."

"Thanks so much," I said, "it is getting late and I must be on my

"Just one last remark," continued the Council Oak, "I want you to notice as you leave that each day I cast my shade over the last resting place of two worthy men, Chief Winameg and Colonel Howard, noble chiefs both of them, one of red skin and the other white, that lie almost side by side near my feet."