

RELATE ORIGIN MAPLE SUGAR

Beautiful is Legend of Moqua,
Wise Squaw, Which Accounts
for Indian Discovery of
Delicious Sweet.

Maple sugar is a special product of our new world, and when the Pilgrim Fathers landed they found it ready for them. The Indians had long known the virtues of the beautiful, abounding tree, and believed it to be the special gift of the Great Father to His hungry children. Among the Iroquois there were many legends, or rather, sacred myths and traditions of the maple tree.

According to one pretty myth, a spirit came from heaven to teach the Indians to make the sugar from the clear, sweet water. But another version is given in the legend of Moqua, the wise squaw.

One morning the mighty hunter, Wokis, bade his wife cook for his dinner a choice bit of moose meat and have it ready when the tall stick which he stuck in the snowdrift should throw its shadow to a certain point. Moqua was a meek wife, so she promised to obey, and well did she know her fate in case of failure. After her lord departed, she hewed off the meat with her sharpest stone knife, and filling an earthen pot, or kek, with snow for melting, she hung it over the fire. Then she sat down to her embroidery work. It was her pride that Wokis, her lordly husband, should sport the gayest moccasins in the tribe, and many hours did she spend every day in working with bright-colored porcupine quills. For no brave in all that country was so warlike as Wokis, no squaw so skilled in embroidery as Moqua.

CURIOUS LEGEND

As she worked on the moccasins, hours passed as minutes. She took no note of time, so busy was she in her labor of love. Suddenly she heard a startling noise—the bark string that held the kek suspended was burned off, and a quenching, scattering explosion followed the overthrow of the pot.

What could she do? There was no water, the melted snow was gone and she must boil the moose meat before her lord's return. It was growing late, there was no time to melt more snow, so seizing a birch bucket, of maple water that was always tapped in the spring for its sweet flavor, she filled the kek anew and hung it over the minded fire. Into it she popped the moose meat and set a cake of pounded corn to bake on the slab before the fire. Then she resumed her embroidery, in which the quills were both needle and thread.

She was working the totem of her race, the bear, so different from the wolves, eales and turtles, of other tribes. Dreaming of her husband's future success in hunt and battle, the hours passed by; the shadow crept past the mark; the fibre burned low; the once juicy meat was a shriveled morsel in a mixture of gummy liquid.



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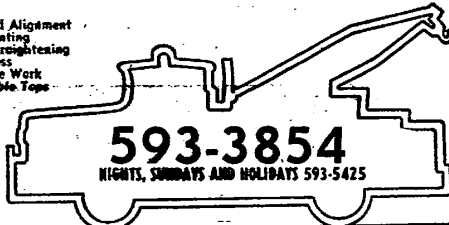
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