

Trees

SEQUOIA REDWOODS NAMED FOR INDIAN WORD PAINTER

History and Science Link Gigantic Sentinels of Forest With Pretty Story of Indian Life and Accomplishments.

With club women of the state attending the California Federation of Women's clubs, devoting their attention today to a program for conservation of the redwoods, attention has been called to the fact that there are two distinct classes of redwoods, one the Sequoia Sempervirens, or the coast redwoods, and the other the Sequoia Gigantea.

In the former class are the great redwood trees of Santa Cruz county, famed the world over, which thrive along the coast range, not so large as those of Santa Cruz, but of the same class.

The trees of the second class are found higher up in an altitude 5000 feet or above, and abound profusely in the Sierra Nevada mountains. They are entirely a different kind of tree, the wood being very brittle and does not make good lumber, as does the coast redwood.

The question as to just where the name Sequoia came from has been raised, and according to Margaret A. Logan, in an article entitled "The American Cadmus," published in Out West, she says:

"There could hardly be more appropriate title than this, which has been given the truly great aborigine who is commemorated by science in the name of the hugest trees in the world—for the Sequoia Sempervirens, the incomparable redwood of California, was christened in honor of the only American Indian that ever invented a written language, the only Indian 'educator' (as we use the word nowadays), Se-quo-yah, the Cherokee.

"Se-quo-yah's mother was a Cherokee maiden whom a Dutch peddler, named Gist, wooed and married while trading among her people. Gist was a lazy vagabond, and deserted his bride before the end of two years, and was never seen again. Three months after he disappeared a little son came to cheer the widow's solitude, and she called him 'Se-quo-yah,' which means 'he guessed it,' a probable reference to the family name Gist, or Guest; but poetically apt in the light of later events. Among the English he was afterward known as George Guess."

Her story goes on and tells of the youth's growth and his marriage, and of how his mind became

busy over the mystery of what was termed "the talking leaf," a paper found upon a white man taken prisoner by the Cherokees. The prisoner explained that it was a letter from a friend and read it to them, but the Indians declared it must be a message from the Great Spirit.

"No," said Se-quo-yah, "the white man knows how to make his words fast upon paper, just as we catch a wild animal and tame it." He then vowed he would write an alphabet for his people that they, too, might have talking leaves. After long labors, during which he carved and painted upon bark the things which stood for certain sounds, he perfected 82 signs which represented every sound of his native tongue.

He then summoned neighboring chiefs and explained what he had accomplished, and to prove its practical use called in his little daughter, Ah-yokeh, the only one of his family who had shown much faith in his self-appointed task. The child was sent from the room, the story related, while some of the chiefs repeated sentences which Sequo-yah wrote upon the bark, and when she returned, Ah-yokeh read them off as readily as if she had heard them spoken. The chiefs were at last convinced, and the news of the great discovery spread. When it reached Washington, Congress voted a silver medal and \$500 bestowed upon the inventor. He afterward received a literary pension.

This great Indian never got farther west than Colorado, and he never saw the great forests of redwoods of the Pacific coast state which bear his name.

These giants of the forest were given their name by Stephen Endlicher, and, according to the new International Encyclopedia, this distinguished Austrian botanist, born at Pressburg, Hungary, also became interested in literature.

It is stated that he was so impressed by the story of this ignorant Indian and the great work he did in creating a written language for his people that he gave the name Sequoia to the greatest of all world trees—those of Santa Cruz county—in commemoration of the Indian whose story he had learned.