



Legend of Seneca Rocks

The Betrothal of Snow Bird, Princess of the Seneca Indians

The only daughter of chief Bald Eagle and his wife, White Rock, was Snow Bird. As a young girl she played at the base of these towering rocks, often gazing at their topmost peaks and longing to be able to climb to the tallest of them. As a young woman, she became the most beautiful of all the maidens of the Senecas. Her rank and beauty brought many men from her tribe and neighboring tribes courting her. The rivalry caused her to face the serious problem of choosing a mate. When the day arrived to choose a mate, seven young warriors, all suitors for the hand of the Seneca princess, assembled in an open space and arranged themselves in a semi-circle facing the mighty rocks. The faint-hearted had dropped from the contest, not daring to face the ordeal to which they were sure they would be subjected. Silence reigned on all sides. This rush of expectancy was on all until the beautiful Princess Snow Bird clad in the royal garb of her tribe, moved swiftly and gracefully into the circle and faced her lovers. She lifted her hand and silence fell upon the assembled. Ever since I was a little girl, I have watched yonder rocks push their rugged summits into the heavens and many times I have longed to be able to climb to their topmost crags. There have I spent the happiest, the most enjoyable days of my life. Of all the Seneca Indians, I am the only one who has accomplished the feat. One day, about a moon past, I decided upon a contest, a trial of bravery and endurance. You will soon engage in this contest, and to the successful one of you, I will give my hand, my heart and my life."

Princess Snow Bird set out on the journey, followed by the seven braves. Upward they climbed, the sure-footed maiden always leading. As the climb became more and more difficult, three of the seven turned back, dispirited and disappointed. Another followed to the fifth pinnacle and then wearied of the

struggle and gave up. A fifth man crumpled in a heap near the same pinnacle and was rescued from death by the fourth, who led him back to safety. The two that remained followed closely in the footsteps of the maiden. Finally, with renewed determination, they set out on the last and most dangerous stretch of the journey, the maiden as always, in the lead. At last she reached the summit and turned to look for her most persistent suitor. He was only a few feet below her. In this moment of waiting, his foot slipped on the ledge of rock. The maiden hesitated for a fraction of a second. Was he not the bravest and strongest of the Senecas? Where would she ever find his equal? So with the alertness and strength of her young arms, she caught the falling brave and drew him to safety and to herself. Long they sat together talking of their future, and then as darkness approached, the two lovers descended by the trail at the rear of the gigantic rocks. They stood before Chief Bald Eagle and White Rock. The great chief conferred upon his newfound son-in-law the authority to become his successor as chief of the tribe.

