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WEEKEND BREAK



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Referred to by the pioneers as 'the last princess of Oysterville,' Judy Little's grandmother Myrtle Johnson Woodcock (1889 – 1973) was the great-granddaughter of both Quinault and Chinook chiefs.



THE LAST PRINCESS OF OYSTERVILLE

Remembering great-granddaughter of Quinault, Chinook chiefs

By SYDNEY STEVENS

Early this summer, Judy Little came to Pacific County from her home in California as she does most years. She came to take part in the Chinook First Salmon Ceremony and to pay homage to her ancestors — especially to her grandmother, Myrtle Jane Johnson Woodcock.

“My grandmother was born in Oysterville on April 13, 1889. It was the year Washington became a state but, more importantly to our family, she was born just three months after her father (my great-grandfather Capt. James Johnson) had drowned on Willapa Bay. Grandma Myrtle Jane was the ninth child to be born to Cecile ‘Jane’ Haguet and James Johnson, Jr.”

Old-timers in Oysterville still remember hearing the stories of Baby Myrtle’s birth. She was the great-granddaughter of both Chief Hoqueem of the Quinaults (after whom the Grays Harbor County town of Hoquiam was named) and Chief Uhlahnee of the Celilo Falls Chinooks. When she was born, the chiefs of many tribes arrived in their high-prow canoes bringing gifts in celebration and to honor this descendant of chiefs — this child whose father had so recently drowned.

Myrtle’s granddaughter Judy has visited the place of Myrtle’s birth many times over the years. The Johnson house was just south of the Oysterville Church and, though it no longer exists, family descendants consider the site an important part of their heritage. They have held several Johnson family reunions in Oysterville, paying homage to their forebears as well as to the village that succored and helped them during those long-ago days.

Recently, the Oysterville Restoration



Sydney Stevens

Judy Little visited Oysterville this summer to pay homage to her Native American ancestors and to thank the people of Oysterville for the new sign commemorating her ancestors’ homesite.

Foundation replaced a sign commemorating the location of the Johnson house and telling about the birth of “the last princess of Oysterville.” This year, Judy came specially to thank the foundation and the residents who have kept the story alive.

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THE PIONEERS

By Myrtle Johnson Woodcock, 1889-1973

Passing along life’s busy day,
Onward, undaunted, the caravans go;
Nor choosing, nor asking the best of the way
Nor seeking to gain when the leaders are slow.
If we have a friend among them,
The honor is certainly ours,
For they have been to this workaday world
As the sunshine is to the flowers.
They did not wait ‘til we called to them
Out of the darkness of night —
They blazed the trail that we may not fail
And placed every signpost right.
They did not grope in blindness,
Nor veil their eyes with tears,
But sought out each deed of kindness
Thank God for the pioneers!
What shall we do for the pioneers?
Shall a monument pierce the sky?
It may, but the tribute we owe them
Is something money can’t buy.
We may build a shaft of the rarest gems
The heart ever gave in rebound,
By simply doing as they have done,
Our duty to those around.
Westward, undaunted, the caravans go,
To the glorious setting sun:
The shadows have lengthened and gone for them,
Our journey has just begun.
They struggled to carve the way for us,
Far across the sun-packed plain.
If we but follow each signpost right,
We shall not have lived in vain.

— Written in 1920