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INDIANS OF MONTAUK GIVEN LEGAL STANDING

May Sue to Recover Their Alleged Rights on Big Peninsula.

REJOICING IN "FREETOWN."

"Dunk" Pharaoh Has Rosy Dreams of Being the Real King of the Tribe.

(Special to the Eagle.)

Easthampton, L.I., March 31—It is possible that descendants of the Montauk Indians once so powerful in aboriginal councils, particularly among the Long Island tribes, may again, in the not distant future, come into possession of Montauk, a picturesque and extensive peninsula, the easternmost portion of Long Island, for this week the Montauks have been given legal status as Indians, as a tribe, power to sue for what they allege are their rights.

For many years remnants of the Montauks have vainly tried to regain possession of this valuable land. Once a suit was carried to the Court of Appeals. That tribunal decided that the tribe, as a tribe, did not exist, hence it had no power to sue.

Then began an effort to effect legislation giving the Indians judicial standing as a tribe. The almost annual bills in the Legislature to bring about this desired end have been defeated, but this year the much accomplished feat, and yesterday there was great joy in "Freetown," the local name for the eagle and Indian settlement, just north of this village.

The present so called Indians already are themselves as the proud possessors of Montauk's vast acreage, and they see their copses and wigwams, vastly more imposing than their sires owned, erected on the peninsula.

A Full-Blooded Montauk May Not Exist To-day.

It is very likely that there is not a full-blooded Montauk living, yet in Freetown are "Dunk" Pharaoh, Ebenezer Pharaoh and two or three other braves, who claim to be of the original Montauks. They surely are part Indian.

"Dunk" is a contraction of Wyandanch. The latter was the name of the red man who was once the real head of the Montauks. Wyandanch, or Chief-King Pharaoh of the Montauks, or chief-King Pharaoh they call him. He claims to be a son of Pharaoh, who was generally regarded as a real Indian, and who was hailed as king in his day. He claims, too, that Wyandanch, the latter, was related to be a direct descendant of the great Wyandanch. The present "Dunk" Pharaoh is about 45 years old.

Long Island Tribes Numbered Thirteen.

Prince's history of Long Island, 1845, which is generally recognized as an authority, says that when the white men first landed on Long Island, their hunting grounds extended up on the south side from Canarsie to Montauk and to Greenport on the north side. Each had its distinctive head (sagamore, or chief) and each tribe had its own dialect, with each other and all were entirely at peace with the whites.

Of the thirteen tribes the Montaukes were the most powerful. Wyandanch was the supreme head, or great Sachem, of all the tribes. To him all looked for counsel. His elder brother was Poggatacut, head of the Shinnecock tribe, and his sister and mother was Newsiteah, head of the Shinnecocks. Wyandanch was a great friend of Lion Gardiner, who settled on Gardiner's Island, which is still in that family. Gardiner ever often spent the night in Wyandanch's wigwam. Finally, in 1651, Gardiner bought the island from Wyandanch, giving one large gun, one keg of powder, twenty bullets, seven fathoms of wampum and a suit of blankets—and this was considered a big price for the place, considering that no real estate boom was then at work.

Montauk, the Indians' Capital.

Many Indianians pointed to the fact that Montauk was the capital of the government and the citadel of power. To the Montauks and they came to Wyandanch for their counsel. At Montauk, too, are the largest and most fortifications of purely Indian construction. The ruins of the fortifications are to be seen on the west side of Fort Pond Bay. Four feet square. Some of its remnants are still there. The Montauks were the largest burying places for their dead and the finding of buried chiefs, many being brought from long distances to be interred in this venerated spot. For the greater part of the way the body of Lion Gardiner, who died in 1663, was carried from Gardiner's Island to Montauk. He was also were brought all the way from Shelter Island, on the north shore, the tribe to Fort Pond Bay further to the west shore to be interred. A little spot was fashioned for the dead, and up to as late as 1845-1850 spot was always considered as a sacred one, and Indians would allow it. Every Indian who passed that way carefully tended the little piece of holy ground, and it looked as clean as though freshly mowed.

Indians Sold Peninsula to the White Men.

Following the wane of the red man Montauk was used as a common pasture ground for cattle owned by farmers all the way over to Amagansett, including Southampton. The Indians bought cattle, and in time developed a sort of stock company, and pastured cattle in number according to the number of cattle owned by each Indian, by the pasturing of a certain number of head of cattle. This custom was kept up until comparatively few years ago.

The consideration for the land of cattle from the Indians to the white men was a big herd of cattle, which were left to run wild and multiply during the summer, and in the fall of the half wild cattle, which are to be seen in Eastern Montauk to-day, were rounded up and driven to the Hayground, where they remember the [illegible] annual [illegible].

Indians Retained Their Right to Fish and Hunt on Montauk.

Although the Indians sold their lands for the purpose they held their fishing, hunting and log rights. Following the cattle pasturing era Arthur Benson, of Brooklyn, now owner of Montauk, purchased a large tract of the peninsula of acres. Associated with him as the late Austin Corbin and other prominent men. The claims to have bought the rights from the Indians they retained as long as lives were in them. Then Montauk he bought "Freetown" and placed the Indians there.

"Dunk" Pharaoh Claims Indians' Rights Were Never Abandoned.

"Dunk" Pharaoh and his followers claim to have consented to such arrangements as will assert their ownership, at least, as rights.

In fact, a year ago last fall "Dunk" and his others tried to move on Montauk. They went there, built a shack, and proceeded to fish. Legal proceedings were instituted, the result being a fine of $5 and $1 or five days in jail. Stupid Indian as he was, he refused to pay the fine, preferring to go to jail. Then he was released, as has court assertion of ownership.

At present Montauk is owned by the Montauk Association of the Long Island Railroad. No charges were made. It is said that Mr. Dunk Aldred was to prosecute the pleas and make of the claim a test subject matter case. A somewhat ridiculous was played by the Indians in the matter of the fishing. It is said that all this will halt because of the passage of the bill that permits the Indians to sue. The Indians have a right of fishing, if their current reports legal claims.

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Thu, Feb 26, 2015

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