The background of the cover is a vibrant, painterly illustration of a rural landscape. A massive, ancient-looking tree with thick, gnarled branches and dense green foliage dominates the center. In the background, a red brick house with a white chimney and a white house are visible, partially obscured by the tree's branches. A wooden fence runs across the foreground, and a small sign is visible on the right. The overall scene is bright and lush, suggesting a peaceful, historical setting.

While a Tree Grew

THE STORY OF MARYLAND'S WYE OAK

Elaine Rice Bachmann & Friends of the Maryland State Archives
Illustrated by Kim Harrell



dedication

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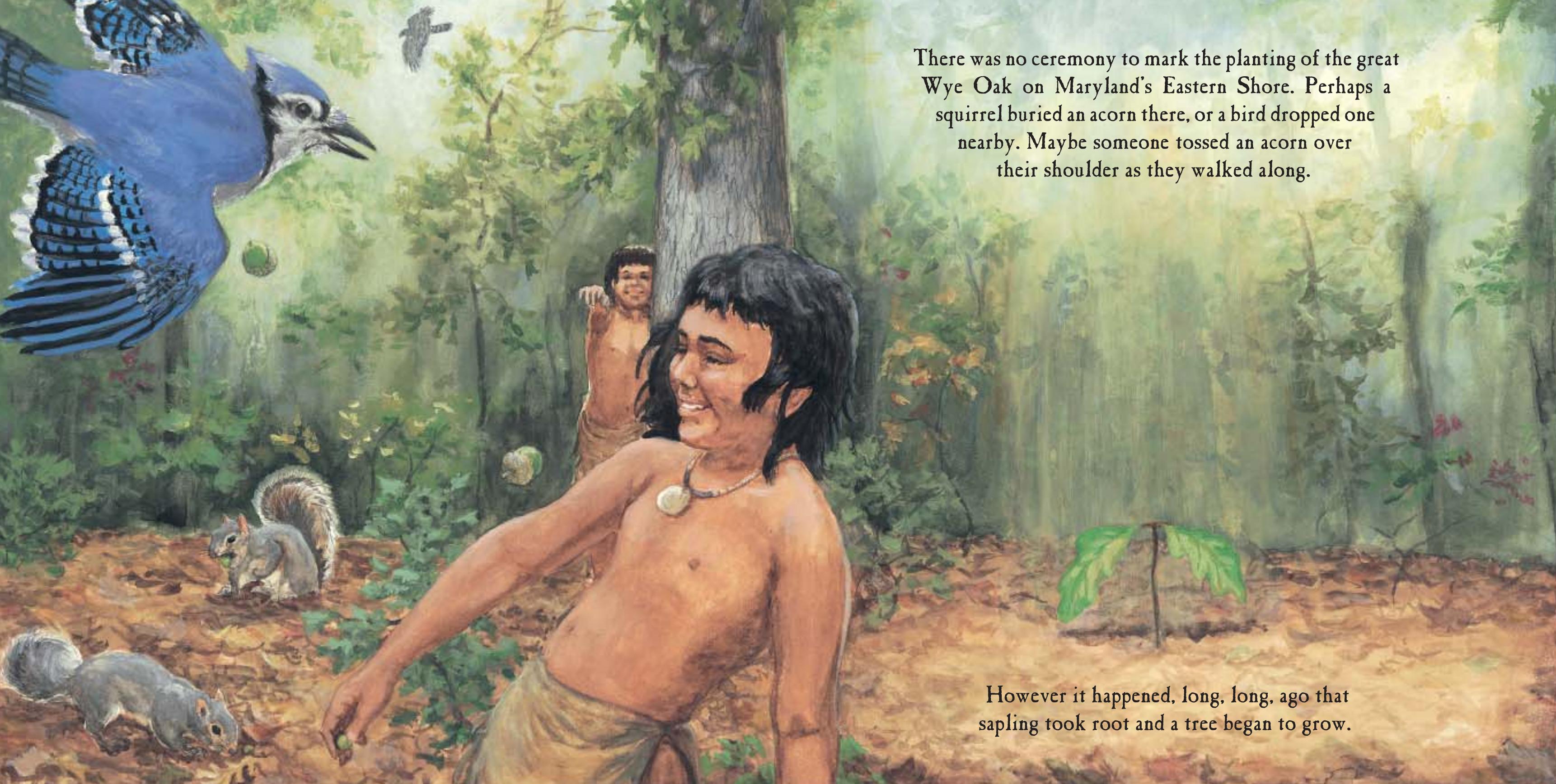
While a Tree Grew

THE STORY OF MARYLAND'S WYE OAK

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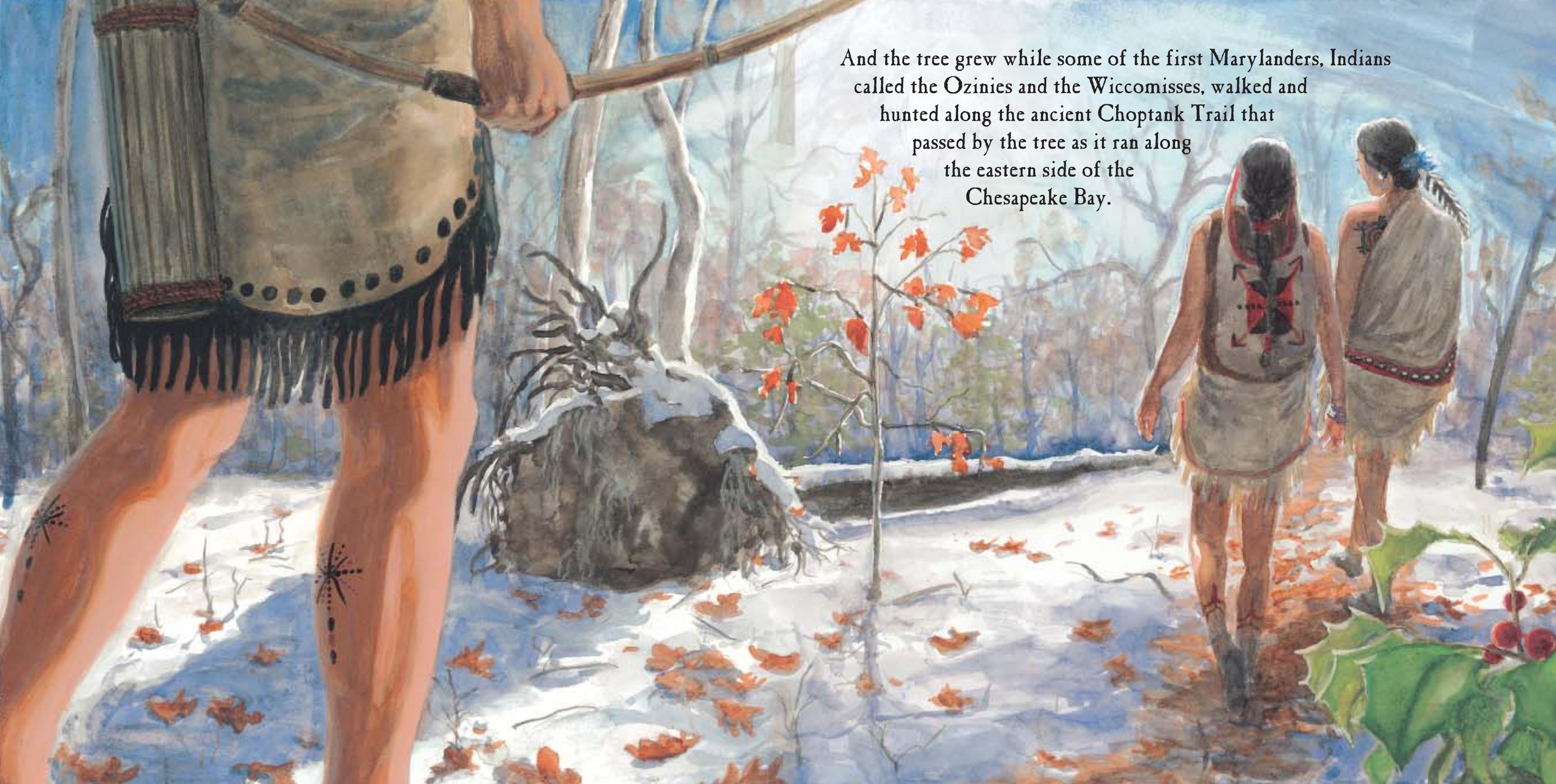
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Centreville, Maryland

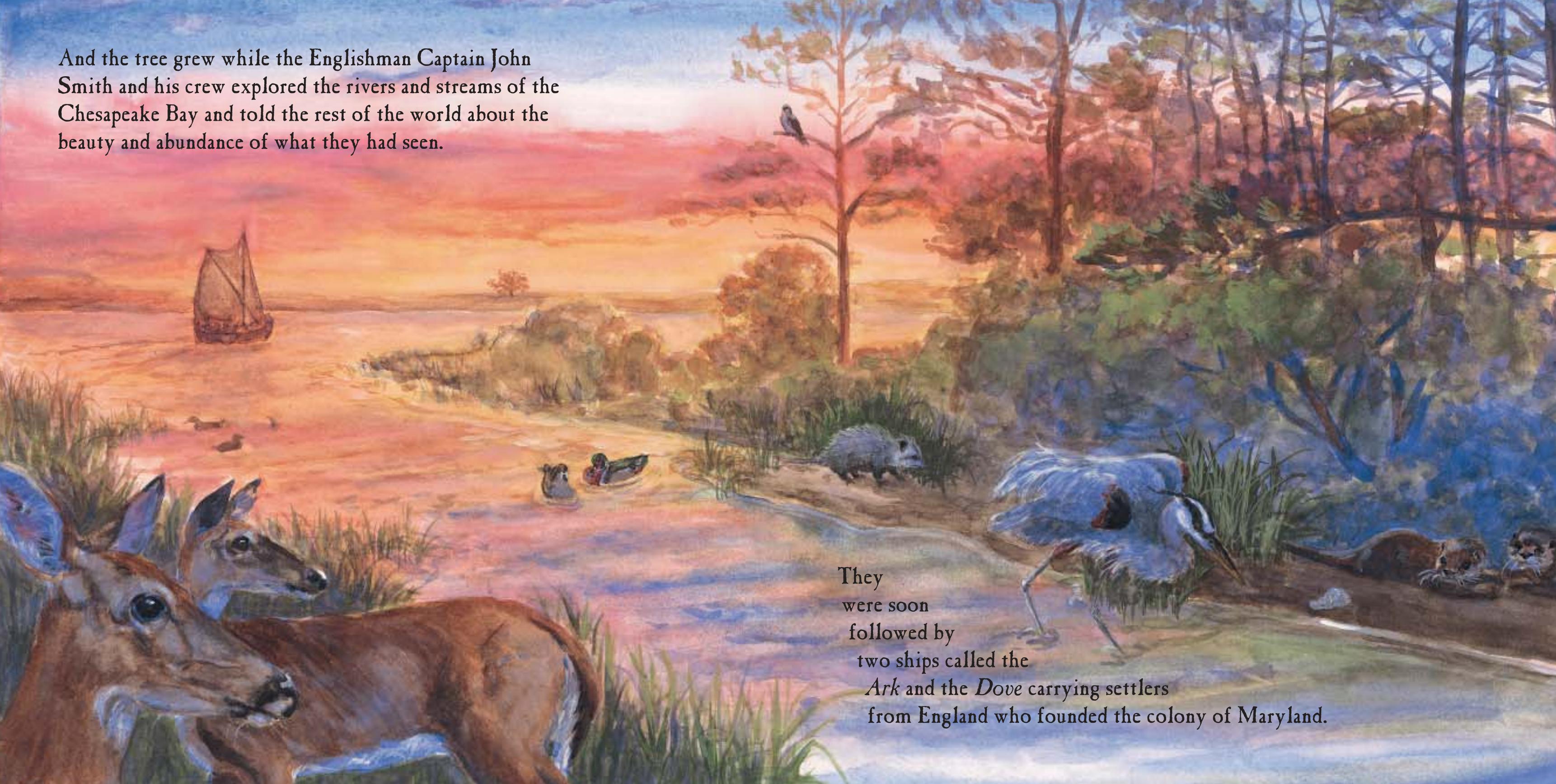


There was no ceremony to mark the planting of the great Wye Oak on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Perhaps a squirrel buried an acorn there, or a bird dropped one nearby. Maybe someone tossed an acorn over their shoulder as they walked along.

However it happened, long, long, ago that sapling took root and a tree began to grow.

A painting depicting a scene in a forest. In the foreground on the left, a Native American man is shown from the waist down, wearing a fringed garment around his waist and having star-shaped tattoos on his legs. He holds a long wooden staff. In the center, a young tree with bright orange leaves stands in a clearing. In the background, two women are walking away from the viewer. One woman has a large feathered headdress and a garment with a red and black geometric pattern on her back. The other woman has a blue feather in her hair. The ground is covered with fallen orange leaves, and the background shows a dense forest of trees with some autumn foliage. The overall style is that of a historical or ethnographic illustration.

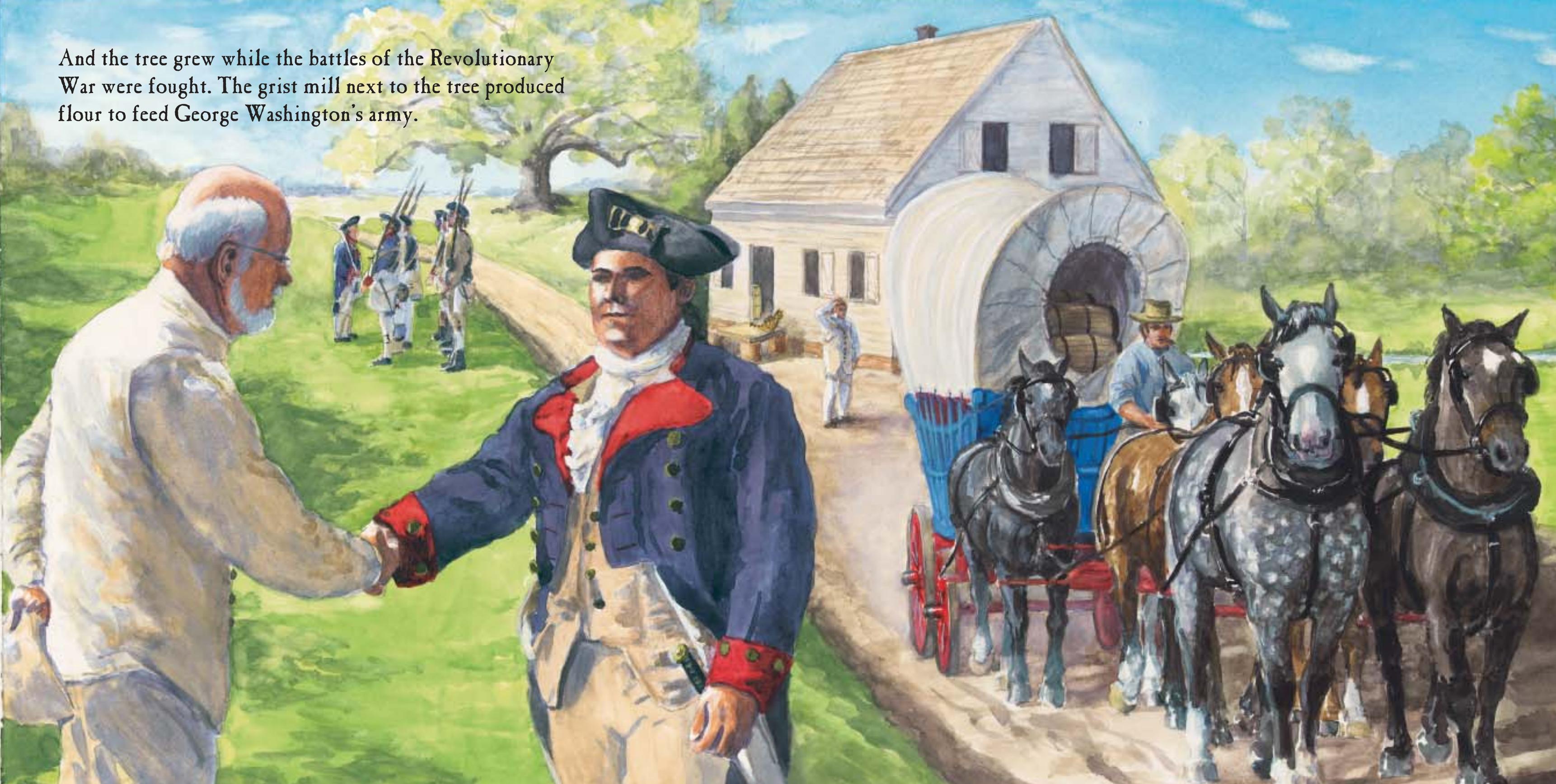
And the tree grew while some of the first Marylanders, Indians called the Ozinies and the Wiccomisses, walked and hunted along the ancient Choptank Trail that passed by the tree as it ran along the eastern side of the Chesapeake Bay.



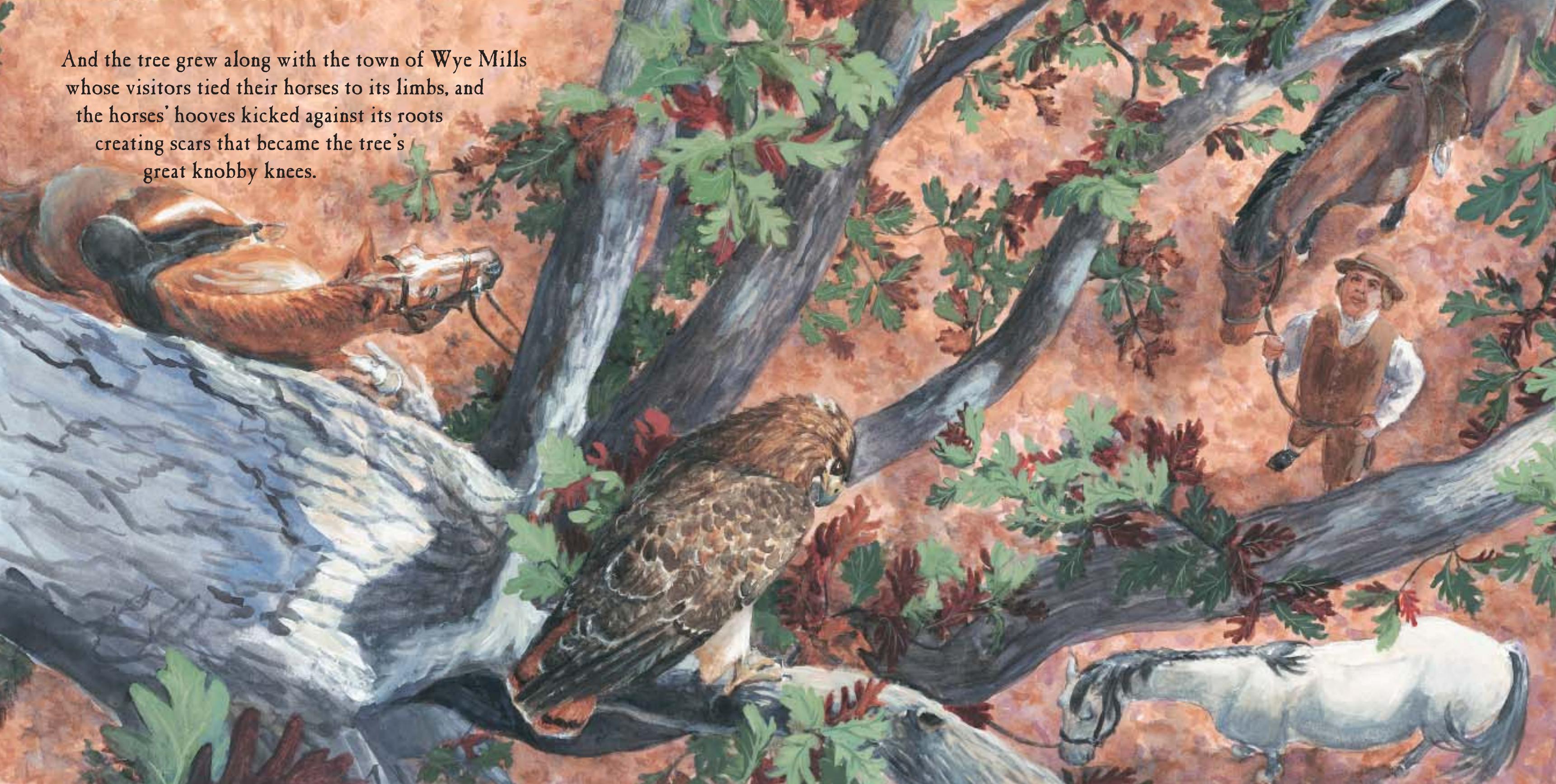
And the tree grew while the Englishman Captain John Smith and his crew explored the rivers and streams of the Chesapeake Bay and told the rest of the world about the beauty and abundance of what they had seen.

They
were soon
followed by
two ships called the
Ark and the *Dove* carrying settlers
from England who founded the colony of Maryland.

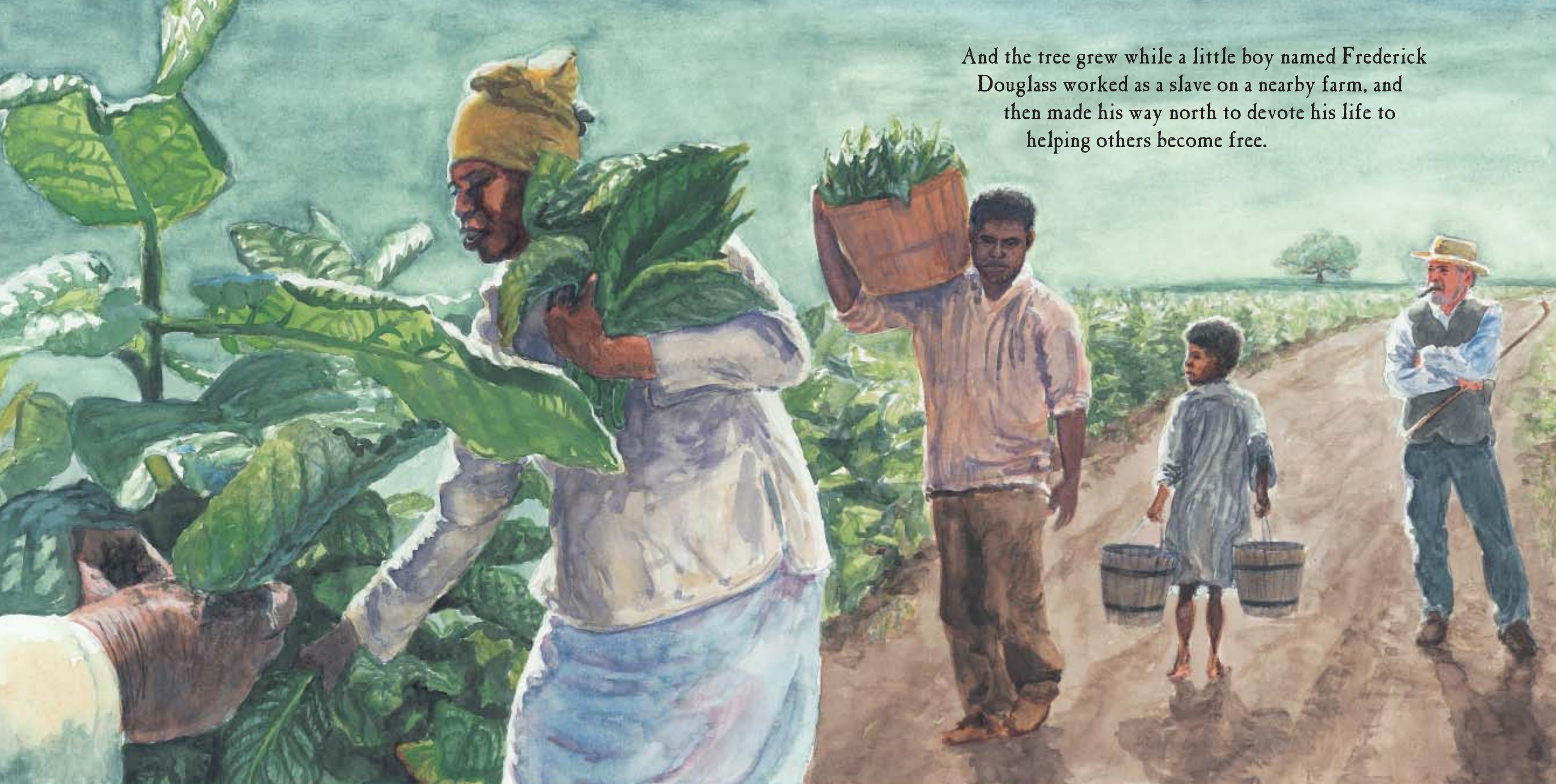
And the tree grew while the battles of the Revolutionary War were fought. The grist mill next to the tree produced flour to feed George Washington's army.



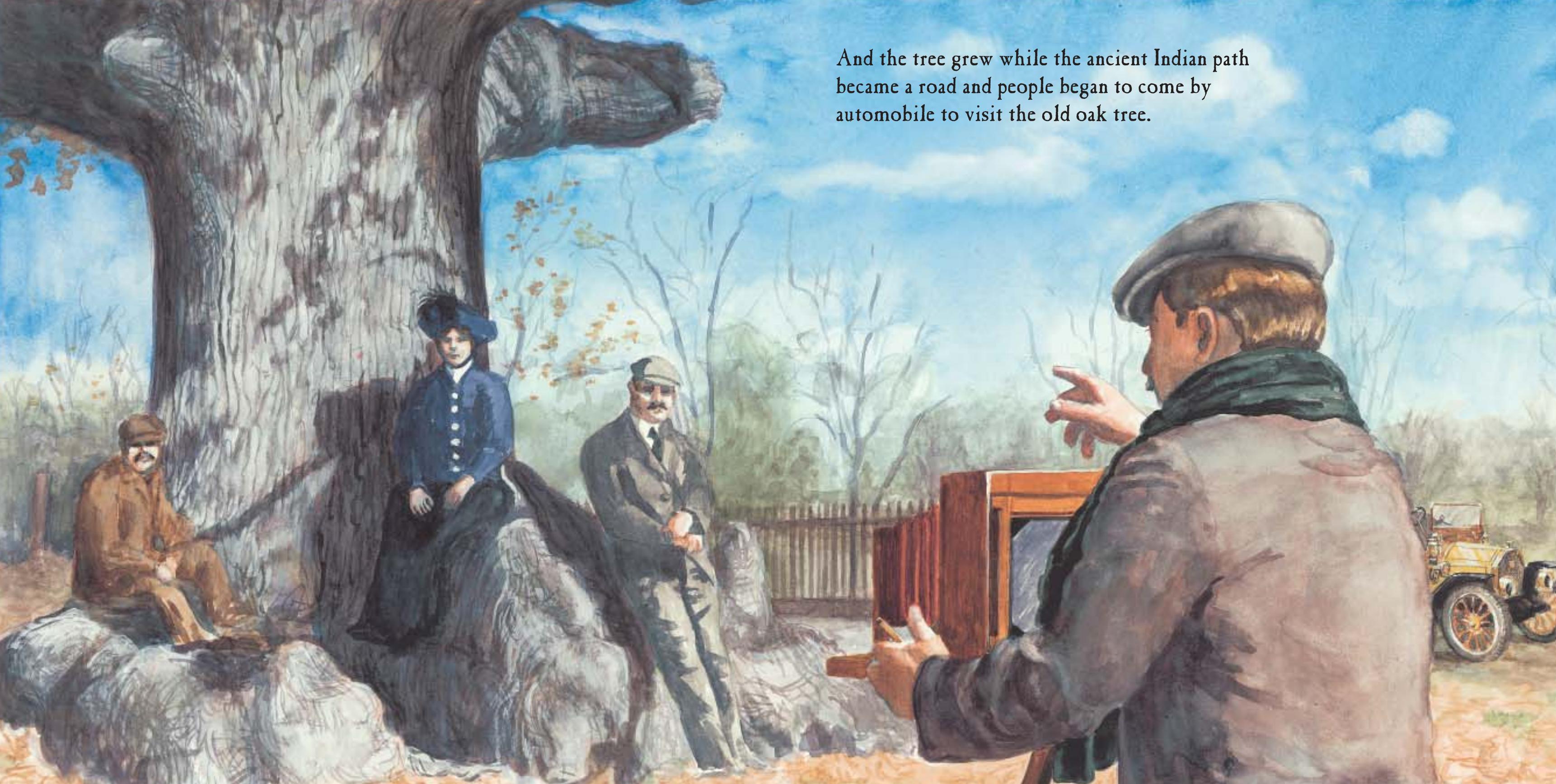
And the tree grew along with the town of Wye Mills
whose visitors tied their horses to its limbs, and
the horses' hooves kicked against its roots
creating scars that became the tree's
great knobby knees.



And the tree grew while a little boy named Frederick Douglass worked as a slave on a nearby farm, and then made his way north to devote his life to helping others become free.



And the tree grew while the ancient Indian path became a road and people began to come by automobile to visit the old oak tree.





And the tree grew so big and mighty that it became famous as the largest white oak in North America. People from all over the country came to gaze up into its branches in awe of all the history it had seen.



And the tree grew while the first airplanes flew overhead and while workers, armed with concrete and steel, inched their way across the Chesapeake to build the Bay Bridge.

A detailed illustration of a massive, ancient tree. The trunk is thick and gnarled, with a large, jagged hole in the center, revealing a hollow interior. The bark is dark and textured, with some lighter patches where it has been damaged or peeling. The roots are thick and spread out across the ground, some reaching towards the viewer. The background shows a dense forest of smaller trees with green foliage. The overall scene is set in a natural, outdoor environment.

And the tree grew old.

One night, when the wind blew especially hard, it fell.



And a part of the tree still grows in the many seedlings from its acorns that have taken root throughout the land. Maybe one of these, too, will grow for over 400 years and become famous. And maybe someday our ancestors will come to visit it, and gaze up into its branches in awe at all of the history it has seen.

