

The Legend of Bloody Butcher Corn

The Meadows family from West Virginia tells the tale of their family's heirloom Bloody Butcher Corn.

THE LEGEND OF THE BLOODY BUTCHER CORN

Bloody Butcher corn is described as a blood red corn originating in the 1800's by the mixing of Native American corn with the white settlers' seed. It is found on front doors when the air turns crisp and used in culinary dishes by world renowned chefs. But for us, the Meadows family, it is a reminder of our ancestors and this why we strive to preserve the heirloom. According to legend, the bloody butcher seed first came into our family around the 1800's through Betsey Gibson who was half white and half Pottawatomie Indian. At the age of ten, Betsey Gibson and her Wolf dog were captured by Native Americans. Betsey befriended the Native Americans and learned their culture waiting until she could make an escape. Betsey and her Wolf's escape happened a year after her capture when she swam across the Ohio River. When she returned back to the white civilization, Betsey brought with her the bloody butcher seed and the beginning of our history.

Betsey Gibson, about eight years later married and had a daughter named Delilah Deal. Delilah Deal would later marry another key character in the legend named "Bandy Bill" Mullins. Bandy Bill was known as being a wild man who owned a large amount of property in Tennessee and in Clay County, West Virginia. He was a large man of Australian and Cherokee descent. Bandy Bill and Delilah Deal were married and moved to Nicholas County, West Virginia, where he purchased several thousand acres for his large family. Bandy Bill Mullins and Delilah Deal were told to have had twelve children that inherited his empire. However, his daughter Ebby Mullins Meadows never owned a share of the wealthy Mullin's farm after she chose to marry a traveling preacher named Bill Meadows. Ebby was disowned by her family and forced to forge her life on her own with only the bloody butcher seed and her Cherokee roots to help her survive. Ebby never again attained the wealth she was born into. But she bought a small farm on Cranberry Ridge in Webster County, West Virginia, where she had several children one of whom was Bob Meadows.

Bob Meadows was a known horse trader in the Nicholas county area. He married a wealthy woman from California named Laura Walker and they bought a small farm in Cottle, West Virginia where they raised their children one of whom is Edgar Meadows.

It was now 1921 and the Great Depression had begun and Edgar Meadows began his childhood in poverty. The Depression had robbed the country of its wealth and the Meadows family of their security. Edgar was forced to help on the farm more and go to school less. The family became poor with only the bloody butcher to keep them going. Edgar would walk in the snow barefoot in order to get the corn meal grist and keep the family going. It was during this time that the bloody butcher played its most important part in our history because without it, the Meadows family would have starved.

Even after the Depression, it became increasingly harder for the Meadows family to regain the standard of life they were once used to. Edgar Meadows met and married Edna Martin and they began to plan for a future. A future that would not consist of hardship. They bought a small farm in Cottle where they raised seven children and they started working the farm more and more. Edgar realized that the only way they would ever rise above their predicament was with the help of the land.

Now, in 2006, Edgar is in his older years and he still continues to raise the bloody butcher. He plants, hoes, waters, and harvests the corn all himself the same as he did as a child and as a young man. It is his therapy and there is not a year that goes by that bloody butcher is not planted. It is the top priority in the garden because it has proven its worth to him and his family. That is why the recognition of the Meadows family bloody butcher corn meal is such a blessing to the family and especially Edgar. It is almost like a piece of our history is in every kernel of that corn. It is the telling of our ancestry and a tribute to all that had been, all that is, and all that will be.

Legend written by Julie Green, granddaughter of Edgar Meadows
