



## *The Weekly Historical Note*

By: Nicolas Reynolds  
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### *The Hermit Thrush Story*

Long ago, the Birds had no songs. Only Man could sing, and every morning, Man would greet the rising Sun with a song. The Birds as they were flying by, would often stop and listen to the beautiful songs of Man. In their hearts, they wished that they too could sing. One day, the Good Spirit visited the Earth.

The Good Spirit walked over the earth inspecting the various things he had created. As he walked through the forest, he noticed that there was a great silence. Something seemed to be missing.

As the Good Spirit pondered, the sun sank behind the western hills. From the direction of the river, there sounded the deep rich tones of an Indian drum, followed by the sacred chanting of the sunset song. The Good Spirit listened. The song was pleasing to the ears of the Good Spirit.

The Good Spirit looked around. He noticed that the Birds were also listening to the singing. "That is what is missing!" said the Good Spirit. "Birds should also have songs."


The next day, the Good Spirit called all of the Birds to a great council. From near and far they came. The sky was filled with flying birds.


The trees and bushes bent to the earth under the weight of so many.

On the great Council Rock sat the Good Spirit. He waited until all of the Birds had perched and had become quiet.

The Good Spirit spoke. He asked the Birds if they would like to have songs, songs such as the People sang. With one accord, the birds all chirped, "Yes! Yes!"

"Very well," said the Good Spirit. "Tomorrow when the Sun rises in the East, you are all to fly up in the sky. You are to fly as high as you can. When you can fly no higher, you will find your song. The bird who flies the highest will have the most beautiful song of all the birds." Saying these words, the Good Spirit vanished.





Next morning, long before sunrise, the Birds were ready. There were Birds everywhere. The earth was covered with them. There was great excitement. However, one little Bird was very unhappy. He was the little broth Thrush. Perched beside him was the great Eagle. As the little Bird gazed at the Eagle, he though, "What chance have I to compete with this great Bird? I am so little and Eagle is so large. I will never be able to fly as high as he."

As he was thus thinking, an idea entered his mind. "Eagle is so excited that he will not notice me." With this thought in mind, the brown bird flew like a flash to the Eagle's head, and quickly hid under his feathers. The great Eagle was so excited that he did not notice the little Thrush. "With my great wings, I will surely win," he said.

The sun finally looked over the eastern hill. With a great roar of wings, the many birds took off.

The air was so full of flying Birds that for a time, the sky was dark. Their bodies covered the face of the sun.


For a long time, the birds flew upward. Finally, the smaller, weaker birds began to tire. The little Hummingbird was the first to give up. His little wings beat the air so hard that to this day one can, if one listens, hear his humming wings. His little squeaking call says, "Wait, wait for me," a very plain song.


The fat cowbird was the next to give up. As he floated down, he listened and heard his song, a very common song. Other birds weakened and while flying eastward, listened and learned their songs.

At last, the Sun was at the end of the Earth. The night Sky began to darken the Earth. By this time, there were only a few Birds [left]. They were the larger, strong-winged Birds: the Eagle, Hawk, Owl, Buzzard, and Loon. All night, the Birds flew up, ever up.

When the sun rose next morning, only the Eagle, chief of all Birds, was left, He was still going strong.

When the Sun was halfway in the Sky, Eagle began to tire. Finally, with a look of triumph, for there were no other birds in sight, the tired Eagle began to soar earthward. The Little Thrush, riding under the feathers of the great Eagle, had been asleep all of this time. When the Eagle started back to Earth, little Thrush awoke. He hopped off the Eagle's head and began to fly upward. Eagle saw him go and glared with anger at him, but was powerless to stop him as he was completely exhausted.





The little Thrush flew up and up. He soon came to a hole in the sky. He found himself in a beautiful country. The Land of Happy Spirits. As he entered the Spirit world, he heard a beautiful song.

He stayed in heaven for a while learning this song.

When he had learned it completely, he left the Land of Happy Spirits and flew back toward Earth.

Thrush could hardly wait to reach the Earth. He was anxious to show off his beautiful song.

As Thrush neared the Earth, he glanced down at the Council Rock. There sat all of the Birds, and on the Council Rock, glaring up at him was Akweks, the Eagle. All of the Birds were very silent as they waited for Thrush to [land] on the council ground.

Suddenly, the feeling of glory left the little Thrush, and he felt ashamed. He knew that he had cheated to get his beautiful song. He also feared akweks, who might get even with him for stealing a free ride. He flew in silence to the deep woods, and in shame, with dragging heart, hid under the branches of the largest tree. He was so ashamed that he wanted no one to see him.

There you will find him today. Never does the Hermit Thrush come out into the open. He is still ashamed because he cheated. Sometimes, however, he cannot restrain himself and he must sing his beautiful song. When he does this, the other Birds cease their singing. Well they know that the song of the Hermit Thrush, the song from the Spirit World, will make their songs very weak. That is why this Spirit Song causes the Sun to shine in the hearts of the People who hear it as they go into the dark forest.

*(The Old Six Nations People told this to their children to teach them to be honest, and that it does not pay to cheat.)*

