

ROSS, S. W.

SEVENTH INTERVIEW

(Colored) HIGH SCHOOL  
#12022

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Interviewer, Elizabeth Ross,  
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Interview with S. W. Ross,  
Park Hill, Okla.

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### Colored High School.

Nearly ten miles north of Tablequah is the site of the colored high school, which was established toward the close of the eighties of the last century. The school was in operation for several years before the close of the Indian Government.

Former slaves of Cherokee citizens, and the descendants of such slaves were given by the terms of the Treaty of 1866, by and between the Cherokees and the Government of the United States "all the rights of native born Cherokees." Upon the resumption of the Cherokee Government after the close of the Civil War a number of public schools were reopened or established. Included in the number of such schools were several for the benefit of negro children. The teachers were sometimes Cherokees, but eventually such schools were taught by negro teachers.

With the passage of years the colored citizens of the Indian nation desired that a high school be established for the

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benefit of the negro pupils, who completed public school studies. As a consequence, the National Council finally passed an Act which provided for the building of a colored high school and an appropriation of money was made with which to defray all expenses which might be incurred.

The site selected upon which to build the negro high school was at the Double spring, in the midst of a rural section. A number of workmen were employed and a substantial and large brick building was completed. A superintendant or steward who was a negro citizen of the Cherokee Nation, was selected and assumed charge of the building. The instructors were likewise negroes and a number of young negroes were enrolled as students, the institution being co-educational. While the school work was maintained, a fair degree of interest was manifested by the negro citizens and before the institution was closed several students were graduated. School work came to a close when the Cherokee government ceased to exist.

During some years the colored high school building stood tenantless with the exception of a caretaker, finally to be occupied by white persons of the section. It was in the building that along in 1912 or thereabouts ~~that~~ a Mrs. Morgan was shot to death by one Abe Owens; both the woman and her slayer being

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white persons. Thereafter, some person or persons whose identity was never discovered or disclosed set fire to the large building and it was totally destroyed. Nothing now remains to mark the site except broken and scattered brick.

This was the first and only high school for negroes in the Cherokee Nation. Numbers of Cherokees were opposed to the use of Cherokee funds in building and maintaining the institution, for the reason that all Cherokee lands and accrual of money therefrom were the property of Cherokees by blood only, according to their construction of the Cherokee patent and treaties. The United States Government, it was said, forced the negroes upon the Cherokees as full citizens. In a limited manner the Cherokees intended to provide for former slaves, giving them land to cultivate but not recognizing them as entitled to the right to vote or to receive Cherokee moneys. But the colored high school was built and maintained, nevertheless.