

ROSS, J. E.

SEMINARY SUPERINTENDENT.

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Elizabeth Ross
Investigator.
March 23, 1938.

Seminary Superintendent.
(Interview with S. W. Ross)
Park Hill, Oklahoma

In the neglected old burying ground in which lie a number of early-day missionary workers, in the Park Hill locality, may be seen the broken tombstone of Charles M. Delano. He was born in 1812 and the date of his death was April 25, 1861. He was said to have been a native of the state of Ohio.

A short time before the outbreak of the Civil War the Cherokee National Female Seminary was reopened, after having been closed for several years and Charles M. Delano received his appointment as Superintendent. Two teachers were appointed. (They were Joshua Ross and Miss E. Jane Ross). A number of students were enrolled. But when the Cherokee Nation became involved in the War, school work was again discontinued, not to be resumed until after the beginning of the '70's.

Some time after taking up his duties at the Park Hill locality, Charles M. Delano became seriously ill and died. A few days before his death, word was received of the bombardment of Fort Sumter, South Carolina, on the 12th day of April. That fact convinced the majority of the people that war would

soon prevail throughout the United States and in the Indian Territory.

Mr. Delano had lived among the Cherokees some years before he was selected as Superintendent of the Female Seminary. He was the last superintendent to serve before the beginning of the War. When his life closed his family and relatives decided that he should be buried in the original Park Hill burying ground.

The surrounding country in 1861 was largely unbroken, there being extensive woodlands and valleys in which no houses had been built. Besides the wild game animals found in the timbered sections there were numbers of predatory animals, principally wolves and wild cats, though there were some panthers. As once recalled by those who were present at the seminary the night before the burial of Charles M. Delano, the wailing scream of a panther near the building startled its occupants and caused a hurried return to the interior by those on the outside. (Prevalent custom of sitting with the deceased was being followed).

The final resting place of Charles M. Delano, who was forty-nine years of age at the time of his death, was a few

yards north of the small enclosure within which are the graves of the missionaries. A small tombstone of white marble, bearing the emblem of the A. F. and A. M. was placed at the grave, but was eventually broken by wandering livestock. But within recent years, some person, for some unknown reason, has placed the broken tombstone on the inside of the iron fence about the grave of the Reverend Samuel A. Worcester and others once connected with the old Park Hill Mission.

Old residents of the locality were acquainted with the Delano family in the early period. Besides Charles M. Delano, whose wife was a Cherokee citizen, there was Lorenzo Delano; who also married a Cherokee. In 1839 Lorenzo Delano served as postmaster of Park Hill. Some years later, upon the death of his wife, he returned to his native state.

Yet living in Oklahoma are some descendants of Charles M. Delano, who was one of two Superintendents of the Female Seminary who died at that institution.