

MARTIN, SUSIE.

SECOND INTERVIEW.

7822.

Carl Sherwood,
Investigator,
Nov. 14, 1937.

An Interview With Susie Martin,
Great Granddaughter of William
P. Ross, prominent Cherokee Indian.

My great grandfather, William P. Ross, was a native of the old Cherokee Nation, and was born August 28, 1820, on the Ross farm at the foot of Lookout Mountain, near Chattanooga, on the Tennessee River.

His father came from Scotland. His mother was a Cherokee Indian and a niece of Chief John Ross.

In childhood he was educated at home, and in youth was a bright and promising boy of good deportment, which attracted the attention of his uncle, Chief John Ross, who offered to bear the expenses of the boy's education, for the fortune of William P. Ross's father, \$10,000.00, had been lost in the payment of a security debt for a defaulter.

William P. Ross was sent to the Mission School in Wills Valley, Alabama, and later was graduated from Princeton College, with the honors of his class in 1842. While he was pursuing his studies in the north, the reluctant Cherokee Indians had left forever their mountain homes in Alabama, Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee and, forced by the treaty

MARTIN, SUSIE.

SECOND INTERVIEW.

7822.

-2-

of 1835, had emigrated to the hills of the Indian Territory; here they united into one nation with the Western Cherokees at Tahlouteskee, near the mouth of the Illinois River.

The Indians ran the lines and named judicial districts, and elected officers under a constitution formed by the Cherokees located at Tahlequah as the capital, accepted missions, opened eleven public schools, and organized Bible and temperance societies.

The foundation of the Cherokee Government was laid and officers were elected for terms of two and four years.

Will P. Ross then returned South, to Lookout Mountain, followed the path of the Cherokees who had come West, and found his father's house at Park Hill, in the summer of 1842.

After teaching the Indian children of Fourteen Mile Creek, in their log cabin school house which was also a Methodist church whose pastor was the Reverend Mr. John Fletcher Boot and after hearing the wampum explained by Assistant Chief Major George Lowry to the chiefs and warriors of twenty-one nations and tribes, in a grand June Council of Peace assembled, in the month of October, 1843, William P. Ross appeared for business at the capital, under the Council

MARTIN, SUSIE.

SECOND INTERVIEW.

7822.

-3-

shed at Tahlequah. He was welcomed by the Chief and introduced to the Senate and Council. He was chosen clerk of the Senate, and during that session of the National Council was elected editor of the Cherokee Advocate.

Its first number appeared in September, 1844, with the motto, "Our Country, Our Rights, Our Race".

William P. Ross drafted many acts found in the Cherokee Code of Laws, assisted council and chiefs to build on the foundations laid in treaties and constitutions, the schools, seminaries and asylums of the Cherokee Nation.

Often from 1846 to 1886, William P. Ross was Indian delegate to Washington City. His arguments before the Department of the Interior Indians Committees disclosed his knowledge of Indian treaties and showed him to be a master of English.

In 1871 William P. Ross represented the Cherokee Nation at Okmulgee, in the grand Indian Council provided by treaty for the Indian Territory, and then his voice was heard with admiration and confidence. In 1874 the National Council seated him to fill the vacant chair of Chief Lewis Downing.

His last important speech in the Senate of the Cherokee Nation was on a bill to cooperate, sustain, continue and endeavor the Cherokee Male and Female Seminaries.

MARTIN, SUSIE.

SECOND INTERVIEW.

7822.

-4-

His life is a part of Cherokee history. Full of years and honors, William P. Ross died a Senator of the Cherokee Nation, July 28, 1891, aged seventy-one years and was buried in the National Cemetery at Fort Gibson. Susie Martin lives at Muskogee, Oklahoma.