

ROSS, ELIZABETH A DOCTOR ARTIST

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366

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367

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Dr. Joseph M. Thompson of Tahlequah, Cherokee County, Oklahoma, whose death occurred in 1935, practised his profession in and about Tahlequah, and as a surgeon in the army in the period of the World War for some forty-six years. During that long period he hoped for the coming of the time when he might find leisure to give attention to drawing and painting. In his youthful days it was Dr. Thompson's desire to become an artist, but after completing his high school studies he was sent to the Missouri Medical College at St. Louis, Missouri, and immediately after his graduation from that institution entered upon his career as a practitioner.

The years passed away and eventually, when he was more than sixty years of age, he found time in which to take up the long delayed making of pictures. But instead of using paints he colored his drawings with colored inks. The most widely known perhaps of the several pictures he completed before his demise, was that of Sequoyah or George Guess. Several amateur artists have completed pictures of this famous Cherokee during the past four years, having to use, of necess-

ity, photographs made from pictures which were taken from the original Sequoyah portrait in the gallery of the war department at Washington, D.C. Some of the resultant pictures have not been noticeably excellent, but among those which are of artistic worth may be mentioned a portrait painted by Mrs. Sue Thompson Hamilton, Okmulgee, and that completed by Dr. Thompson, a cousin.

Another picture completed by Dr. Thompson depicts the features of Tom Starr, first leader of an outlaw band in what is now Oklahoma, having come into notoriety in 1842. Starr, who lived to the age of seventy-four years, died in the Canadian District, near Briartown, Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory, in 1894. Erroneously, it has been said that the Cherokee Nation was compelled to make a treaty with Starr in 1846. As a matter of historical fact a general amnesty was declared in that year, and Tom Starr, who had fled to a distant region, was included in the act. In the picture painted by Dr. Thompson, Tom Starr is shown as a lean-visaged wrinkled individual, wearing a wide-brimmed white hat, from beneath which white strands of hair fall almost to his shoulders. The picture was copied from a small photograph made

of Starr in his closing years.

Two other Indian subjects were Red Cloud, famous leader of the Sioux Indians, and Stan Watie, Chief of the Confederate contingent of the Cherokees during the Civil War period.

Dr. Thompson's only instruction in drawing was derived at the Cherokee National Male Seminary along in 1882, when a Professor Hadley gave him some lessons, but gave no instructions whatever in painting. Some have referred to Dr. Thompson as a "natural born artist". Among several other pictures drawn and colored was one entitled "The Ruin".

Authorities: G. W. McGregor, Walter A. Thompson,  
Tahlequah.  
As told to S. W. Ross.

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