

ROSS, S. W.

NINETEENTH INTERVIEW.

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Interview with S. W. Ross  
Park Hill, Oklahoma

Field Worker - Elizabeth Ross  
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In a neglected spot in an old field approximately one mile south of Tangleman is the grave of Judge David Carter, a man of prominence in the early period of the Cherokee Nation in Indian Territory.

Concerning David Carter there has been related an account which says that his father, Nathan Carter, a white man, was captured when a boy by Indian warriors at the time of the Wyoming Valley Massacre in Pennsylvania, in 1778. Eventually the boy was carried to the Cherokee country and grew up among these people. As it was Nathan Carter married a woman of the Cherokees and spent his lifetime in their midst.

David Carter, born in the original Cherokee country east of the Mississippi River in the year 1802, attended school for awhile in the institution established in 1817 at Cornwall, Connecticut, by the American Board of Boston, Massachusetts. The Institution was

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maintained for the exclusive benefit of Indian youths. Besides David Carter, there were several other Cherokees who were enrolled at the school.

Upon removing to the Indian Territory in 1838, David Carter established his home in the Tanlequah district, near the road leading south from Tahlequah to Park Hill. There he lived until during a portion of the Civil War period, when he removed to another and distant section as a matter of safety, returning to his home upon the return of peace. Here he continued to live until the 1st day of February, 1867, when he died and was buried in near vicinity of his late home. One month later, March 1st, he was followed in death by his wife.

In 1840, David Carter served as clerk of the court at the time the first murder case in the present state of Oklahoma was tried under the laws of the Cherokee Nation. In following years he held several important official positions. He was superintendent of Cherokee National schools, associate justice of the Cherokee supreme court, chief justice of that court,

editor of the National newspaper, the "Cherokee Advocate," and delegate to Washington (appointed by the Cherokee council). He was a member of the Cherokee Lodge of Masons at Tahlequah, and a leading member of the Methodist Church, a near neighbor being the Reverend Thomas Bertholf, who built historic Riley's Chapel (two miles south of Tahlequah).

Ben W. Carter, oldest son of Judge and Mrs. David Carter, was a member of the first class graduated from the Cherokee National Male Seminary in the fifties of the last century, and father of Representative Charles D. Carter, who served for twenty years as a member of Congress from Oklahoma.

All members of the family of Judge David Carter lived in places remote from the old home and after the death of Judge Carter and his wife the house and adjacent land fell into other hands. The original home was demolished a number of years ago.

The burial spot is east of where the large old-fashioned family residence once stood, but few of the people who pass along the roadway know that the small

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marble headstone marks the final resting place of one of the notable men of the old Cherokee Nation. Unless the graves of Judge Carter and his wife are protected by a substantial fence of iron, or wall of stone, they must in the course of not distant years become entirely obliterated.

The labors and influence of Judge Carter in the pioneer days was of great value in the progress of the Cherokees in their new home in Indian Territory.