

ROSS, S. W.

PRAIRIE FLOWER.

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INTERVIEW

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Elizabeth Ross,
Investigator,
January 24, 1938.

An Interview with S. W. Ross,
Park Hill, Oklahoma.

The Prairie Flower.

During the administration of President James Buchanan, the city of Washington was visited by Principal Chief John Ross on official business of the Cherokee Nation. Each year while he was chief executive of the Cherokees, John Ross spent some weeks in Washington. He headed a delegation of Cherokees who were authorized by the National Council of the Cherokees to represent their Nation at the seat of government. It was probably in 1857 that the Principal Chief, on the occasion of his annual visit, was accompanied by his family.

Some days before the beginning of his return journey to his home at Park Hill, near the center of the Cherokee Nation, the Principal Chief was a caller at the White House. Accompanying him was his little daughter, Anna Brian Ross, then about thirteen years of age. The President received the Principal Chief and his daughter with his usual fine

courtesy and an agreeable period was spent in the historical old mansion.

The interior of the White House with its many objects of interest was quite wonderful to the young daughter of the Principal Chief and she ever afterward recalled the visit with pleasure. It was when the guests of the President were about to take their leave that President Buchanan said to Anna Ross, "I have thought of a name which is appropriate for you. I am going to call you the Prairie Flower". This was very pleasing to the young girl from the Cherokee Nation, who was soon to be on her way back to the Indian Territory in the northeastern section of which lay the Cherokee Nation.

The story of the name which the President of the United States had bestowed upon the daughter of the Principal Chief became widely circulated upon their arrival in their own country and home locality. Until comparatively recent years there were living old men and women who recalled the story. It was one of a number of anecdotes once related in connection with Chief John Ross and members of his family. But at the present time, 1938, those familiar with the story are very few.

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A marble headstone in the Ross Cemetery, in the Park Hill locality, marks the grave of the lovely woman who as a girl received the name of "Prairie Flower" from the President of the United States. The inscription on the headstone says that she died October 20, 1876, at the age of thirty-one years, four months and twelve days. She was then the wife of Leonidos Dobson, a minister of the Gospel, who was originally a Methodist but later became a Presbyterian. To Reverend and Mrs. Dobson a son was born who died in infancy in September, 1868.

Originally the Ross family burial ground, for a number of years, this cemetery was extensively used by various families in later times and is now called the Ross Cemetery. The grave of the "Prairie Flower", as she once was called, is beside that of her father, Principal Chief John Ross who died in the year 1866.