

ROSS, S. W. ·

CHEROKEE TEXT BOOKS: 12928

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INTERVIEW.

12928.

Elizabeth Ross,
Investigator,
Jan. 31, 1938.

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

CHEROKEE TEXT BOOKS.

More than seventy years ago the printing of the text books in the English and Cherokee languages was suggested. The Reverend John B. Jones, for some years engaged in preaching and teaching among the Cherokees as a Baptist missionary, made the suggestion.

It was the belief and contention of the Reverend Mr. Jones that full blood Cherokee pupils would more readily learn their lessons if the text books were printed in the language with which they had been familiar from their earliest years of understanding. With the lessons so printed, with the English opposite, progress would quickly be made.

Eventually the Reverend Mr. Jones laid his plans before the Principal Chief and leading members of the Cherokee Senate and Council. The result was that an act was passed authorizing the printing of text books after the manner suggested by the missionary.

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The National Council decided to and did appropriate the sum of \$200.00 out of the Cherokee National Treasury for the benefit of the Reverend John B. Jones. This sum it was said by the National Council, was for the purpose of enabling the minister to prepare and have published a text book on the plan of Allendorf's. This book was to contain the text matter in both languages, and it was designed for use in the Cherokee National Public Schools. The Principal Chief was authorized by the National Council to issue a warrant to the amount of \$200.00 payable to the Reverend John B. Jones.

The book printed was an arithmetic. It was prepared by the Reverend John B. Jones who was a scholar of fine attainments and was thoroughly familiar with the difficult Cherokee language. The printers in the office of the Cherokee Advocate set up the type and the Cherokee Arithmetic was printed and bound in that office.

The act authorizing the printing of the arithmetic and appropriating the sum of \$200.00 was passed at the regular annual session of the National Council act at Tahlequah, in November, 1866. The act was approved and

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signed by William P. Ross, Principal Chief, on the 27th day of November, 1866. John Ross, for many years Principal Chief, had died August 1, 1866, and William P. Ross, his successor by action of the National Council, served until November, 1867.

The Cherokee Arithmetic, a few copies of which are probably still in existence, was intended by the Reverend John B. Jones to be the fore-runner of other text books similarly arranged. But later officials seem to have exhibited small interest in the text books as suggested by the author of the Cherokee Arithmetic, and no other books were authorized by the Council to be printed. The Cherokee Arithmetic received small attention, and the English text continued to be used, so far as all books used in Cherokee schools were concerned.

Cherokees of scholarly attainment in later years have agreed that the plan of the Reverend John B. Jones was excellent and that full blood Cherokee pupils would have, through the use of English-Cherokee text books, made more rapid progress.

In a volume of Cherokee Laws printed in 1867 there is a reference to the text books suggested by the Reverend John B. Jones.