

ROSS, S. W.

BOYLES MEMORIAL CHURCH. 13170

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INTERVIEW.

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Elizabeth Ross,
Investigator.
March 9, 1938.

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

BOYLES MEMORIAL CHURCH.

During the '80's of the last century, there stood in the north part of Tahlequah a church which was called the Boyles Memorial Methodist Episcopal church. This building had been erected through the efforts of Savelon S. Boyles in memory of a young son, William Boyles, who died at Tahlequah a comparatively short time before the church was built.

Savelon S. Boyles, a tall, long-bearded man, operated a blacksmith and wood-working and wagon-making shop for some years in Tahlequah. In Civil War days he had served in a Union regiment from Kansas. He married a Cherokee several years after the close of the Civil War and spent the rest of his life in Tahlequah, being a member of the G. A. R. post of Tahlequah and for a number of years a notary public. The church was built at a place not far from his home and place of business. It was a substantial wooden building with seating capacity for large congregations and was equipped with a good-sized bell, which hung in the belfry.

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The membership of this church which was usually referred to as the "North Methodist Church", was fairly large for several years and there were several pastors who filled its pulpit before its final closing. Among the pastors whose names are now recalled by older residents of the city maybe mentioned the Reverend G. T. Morrison, who, sometime after leaving Tahlequah, was charged with fatally poisoning his wife, in Texas, in which state he was tried and executed. It is remembered that Mrs. Morrison was a large handsome woman of attractive personality. The Reverend C. P. Brewer, the Reverend Peter O. Matthews, and the Reverend Henry Cloud also served as pastors of this church. Of these men the Reverend Peter O. Matthews was of part Indian blood, member of a small nation living in a distant section of the United States. This minister had served as a soldier in a Union regiment in the time of the Civil War. The Reverend Henry Cloud was a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, who had attended the Cherokee National Orphan Asylum, at Salina. It is possible that there were some other pastors preceding those mentioned, but no one now recalls the name of any earlier pastors.

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After some years, the membership of the Boyles Memorial church became greatly reduced. Sunday school and church work were discontinued. No more pastors were called and the building stood vacant. Eventually the building was sold and it was remodeled for use as a store house. The belfry was torn down, the building reduced in height and a new entrance built. Since then several persons have occupied the building, usually it has been grocers, though general merchandise has been sold there.

Few of the people of today know that the building, probably built of yellow pine lumber from sawmills in the Cherokee hills, was once a church. Few of those who once attended services within its walls now live in the vicinity of Tahlequah, and the majority are probably dead. Savelon S. Boyles, who named the church and aided in its completion, has been dead for a number of years.

When the Boyles Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church was built and completed the north section of Tahlequah was sparsely populated and for a considerable period of time only a few business houses were operated in the

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vicinity. The church doors opened directly on the principal street, at the intersection of another street leading from east to west. There are now a number of business houses in the vicinity of the former church.