

ROSS, S. H.

SEVENTEENTH INTERVIEW. #7999  
GRAVE of BUILDING.

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Elizabeth Ross, Field Worker  
Indian-Pioneer History  
October 18, 1937

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

Grave of Boudinot.

In the original Park Hill burying grounds long abandoned and neglected, there is a recumbent slab of brown sandstone upon which there is no inscription. Beneath this stone lies the dust of Elias Boudinot, a notable Cherokee of long past years. Born in the old Cherokee Nation east of the Mississippi River in the year 1803, and given the Cherokee name of Galagina or Kille-keenah, he eventually realized the opportunity of studying at a school established by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions at Cornwall, Connecticut, on the banks of the Housatonic River.

Upon enrolling in the Institution the youth was informed that he would have to discard his Indian name and thereupon adopted for himself the name Elias Boudinot. This was the name of a distinguished citizen of New Jersey, who was a friend of George Washington and had once served as president of the Continental Congress. The Honorable Elias Boudinot was greatly interested in the Indian race and is said to have assisted Galagina in securing entrance to the school.

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Elias Boudinot, the Cherokee, remained in the institution several years and made excellent progress in his studies. During his stay in Cornwall he met Harriet Gold, youngest daughter of a leading citizen of the village and eventually they were married, encountering in the meanwhile great opposition during which time Boudinot retired from the school and returned to his home. Later, he returned to Cornwall, married Harriet Gold, and they then went to the Cherokee Nation in Georgia, where Boudinot assisted in missionary labors and as clerk of the council. In 1828, he was selected to serve as editor of the "Cherokee Phoenix", the first Indian newspaper ever established. As first Indian editor, he attracted much attention and was regarded as one of the leading men of the Indian Nation.

In course of time there arose a great agitation for the removal of the Cherokees to Indian Territory, but the majority of the Cherokees stood firmly opposed to the desires of the white people of Georgia. They refused to agree to a treaty which would extinguish their title to their lands. During this time Elias Boudinot retired from the editorship of the "Cherokee Phoenix" and was succeeded by Elijah Hicks,

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and later Hicks was succeeded by Richard Taylor. The Georgia state guard finally confiscated the printing press and materials and the first Indian newspaper ceased to exist in 1834.

When the majority of the Cherokees remained unmoved in their opposition to a treaty, the Reverend John S. Schermerhorn, commissioner on part of the President of the United States, negotiated a treaty with a small number of men who had not been authorized to act by the general council of the Cherokee Nation. A treaty was signed in 1835, accepted by President Andrew Jackson and eventually ratified by a one vote majority in the United States senate. This treaty extinguished the title of the Cherokees to their lands lying east of the Mississippi River and the removal of the Cherokees became a reality in 1838.

There was great anger among the Cherokees when the fact became known that Major and John Ridge, both highly prominent, had signed the treaty. A group of Cherokees plotted to slay John Ridge and probably other members of the number signing the treaty but Principal Chief John Ross, according to historical records, learned of the decision and prevented accomplishment of the design.

The members of the treaty signing group removed to

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Indian Territory in 1836 and 1837 and joined the western Cherokees. In 1839, when the expelled Cherokees had arrived, steps were taken to establish anew the Cherokee Nation in the Indian Territory. But before that act was accomplished Major Ridge, his son, John Ridge, and nephew, Elias Boudinot, were all slain. At a secret meeting or council of a number of Cherokees, held some miles north of Tahlequah, decision was reached to remove by death the principal signers of the treaty made in 1835. Those who decided upon the removal of the three kinsmen declared that they were carrying out the provisions of a stern law of the Cherokees which declared that any person or persons who negotiated sale of Cherokee lands without sanction or authority of the general council should suffer death.

On June 22, 1839, at places miles apart, the Ridges, father and son, and Elias Boudinot were surprised and slain. Elias Boudinot was suddenly attacked by several fullblood Indians near the Park Hill Presbyterian mission and mortally wounded, surviving unconscious only a few hours.

The funeral services for Elias Boudinot were conducted by the Reverend Samuel Worcester, D.D., on the 23rd day of June, 1839.