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INTERVIEW: Mrs. Florence Caleb Smith

by-Frank J. Still

Mrs. Florence Caleb Smith, widow of Rev. Henry Smith who was a son of Captain J. L. Smith. Mother's maiden name was Kate Larzeylere. I was born in Delaware, I came to Indian Territory in 1870 when I was three years old. We came to Coffeyville, Kansas by train and by covered wagon to Chief John Ross' home at Park Hill. I remember seeing a rail fence and did not know what it was so I asked.

We lived at Chief John Ross' home until my mother went to teach at the orphan asylum. My mother later married W. A. (Watt) Duncan, who founded the orphan asylum. He was principal 12 years. My aunt Carrie Larzeylere, married Chief John Ross' son John Ross Jr. in the east and that is how we came to come west.

The first school I attended was the orphan asylum. My mother then went to the female seminary, later as matron at the male seminary. I attended the male seminary and was the only white girl to ever graduate from the seminary. I graduated in the class of 1885. Mattie Fields, Conie Bell, J. W. Duncan, Jess Lamar, Will Elliott, Sam Mills, Henry Clark were seminary students at that time. I taught the early Caney school near Wauhulliau, Okla. I also taught in the first public school in Tahlequah. I taught at the Elm Springs Mission near Welling in 1887. The children were all fullblood Indians. I taught music at the male seminary in 1894. My husband, Henry Smith, graduated from the male seminary in 1886. He was ordained as minister at Ardmore in 1900. He was priest at the episcopal church at that time he was the only Indian priest.

Robt. L. Owen was my first teacher at the orphan asylum. After the orphan asylum burned at Salina it was moved to the Insane asylum, where the Quoyah training school.

When I lived at the John Ross place the cabins for the slaves were

still standing. John Ross tore them down for wood and the last one he used for a hog pen.

Arch Campbell was my husband's mother's grandfather.

My mother painted the picture of Sequoyah that hangs in the Liberty State Bank. It was once sent to the World's Fair. I can remember May George Murrell. I used to visit there and stay all night with the children. They had the finest furniture I ever saw. Large four poster beds. Five of us children would sleep in one of them.

George Murrell was very wealthy. He had a sugar plantation in Louisiana. His son, Ross Murrell, lived in Louisiana. His aunt, Jennie Murrell, shipped their fine furniture to Ross Murrell and he did not like it.

One of my first pupils was an Indian by name of Charlie Squirrell. He could climb trees and go from limb to limb. He would study out loud in English and repeat in Cherokee out loud. The house was a log house the benches were split logs. This boy Squirrell was a great hand to chew tobacco. He made a hole in the wall to spit through. He hunted squirrels and brought me the tails I had one whole side of the room lined with squirrell tails.