

SMITH, FLORENCE.

INTERVIEW.

13807

488

SMITH, FLORENCE - INTERVIEW.

13807

Ross, Elizabeth
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Interview with Florence Smith
Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

Owen School.

The public school in district number 7, a short distance north of the Park Hill post office, bears the name of the Owen School, given in honor of former United States Senator Robert L. Owen, who was a native of Lynchburg, Virginia. Robert L. Owen, although a citizen by blood of the Cherokee Nation, was never in that nation until the beginning of the '80s of the last century. Then, having completed his education in Virginia, he visited the Cherokee Nation in company with his mother, Mrs. Narcissa Chisholm Owen, who was the daughter of Thomas Chisholm, one of the three chiefs of the western Cherokee Nation. Mrs. Owen had been absent from the Cherokee Nation for many years.

At the time of the arrival of Robert L. Owen in Tahlequah, the principal chief was Dennis W. Bushyhead, and a number of prominent leaders of the period occupied official positions. When a position on the Cher-

SMITH, FLORENCE - INTERVIEW.

13807

-2-

okee National Board of Education became vacant Robert L. Owen, then quite a young man, received the assistance of leading members of the senate and council, and was selected as one of the three members of the Board. Having assumed the official position, he, with the other members, selected the teachers for the various public schools and those also for the Male and Female Seminaries. The services of Robert L. Owen as a member of the Board of Education were begun in the year 1881. Former students of the National Female Seminary, which then stood in the Park Hill locality, recall that Mrs. Narcissa Owen was for several years a member of the faculty as an instructor in music, and that Miss Janie Owen, a niece of Mrs. Narcissa Owen, was for sometime a teacher in the Female Seminary.

Beside serving as a member of the Board of Education Robert L. Owen filled no other official positions under the Cherokee Government, for he was, in the course of a few years, appointed United States Indian Agent by President Cleveland and assumed his duties at Muskogee, which place became his residence, principally.

SMITH, FLORENCE - INTERVIEW.

13807

-3-

Following the admission of Oklahoma to Statehood and the establishment of public schools throughout Cherokee County, the site for a school was selected several hundred yards west of the site of the old Female Seminary, and a substantial brick building was erected in the district known as Number 7, and when the name was suggested, "Owen" was selected and has ever since been in use.

The Owen School stands opposite a woodland near the eastern border of which were spread the tables when the annual commencement programs were given at the Female Seminary. Free dinners were provided for all in attendance. Usually a large number, or nearly all, of the parents of the pupils arrived to accompany their children to their homes, and there were many guests. As the seminary invariably closed near the end of June in each year these dinners were served beneath the shade of the trees.

On several occasions the Cherokee schools were under the supervision of a Superintendent of Education, but more often a Board of Education served. This board

SMITH, FLORENCE - INTERVIEW.

13807

-4-

was composed of three members. The members were appointed by the Principal Chief and confirmed by the Senate and Council. The office of the board of education was maintained in Tahlequah, in the capitol building.