

MEIGS, R. R.

FOURTH INTERVIEW 12178
ORIGIN OF OLD CEM TERY.

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Elizabeth Ross, Investigator,
November 16, 1937.

Interview with R. R. Meigs,
Park Hill, Oklahoma.

Origin of old Cemetery.

A somewhat extensive burying ground often referred to in the present period as the Ross Cemetery lies in the Park Hill locality on an eminence south of the stream which flows through the neighborhood. Originally the spot was a family burial place having its beginning in 1841.

The oldest son of Lewis and Frances Ross was John McDonald Ross who had been absent from the original Cherokee Nation east of the Mississippi in 1838 when the removal west of the Eastern Cherokees occurred. As a student the young man was at that time in the state of New Jersey attending the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University. From college he was graduated in the summer of 1841 and soon left for the new country of the Cherokees in northeastern Indian Territory, reaching the new

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home of his parents after some days of travel.

While calling at the home of his uncle, Principal Chief John Ross, early in September, 1841, John McDonald Ross was suddenly stricken with^a severe illness diagnosed as typhoid-pneumonia. The best medical attention available in the new country was obtained but the malady proved fatal within a short period.

Old people of the locality once related that the young man while making his way about the locality previous to being stricken had greatly admired the spot upon which he was eventually buried, and had contemplated the building of a residence there. It was also related that he signified before his demise that he wished to be interred upon the tree-covered spot. So it was there that his grave was made and protected by an iron fence set upon a foundation of gray limestone.

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As years passed away other members of the family were buried upon this eminence, including Lewis and Frances Ross, some of their grandchildren, Principal Chief John Ross and his second wife, and others, principally relatives. But long before the close of Indian Territory days other persons were buried there. Finally, however, the original burying ground became designated as the Ross Cemetery.

John McDonald Ross, who was about twenty-one years of age at the time of his death, was the first citizen of the Cherokee Nation to be graduated from the College of New Jersey, now Princeton College.

The monument over his grave, a circular one of white marble elegantly ornamented, several feet in height, cut as if broken at the top, is meant to represent the broken life of John McDonald Ross and was designed by one of his classmates.

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With the exception of the original Park Hill burying ground, the Ross Cemetery is the oldest in an extensive section, lying nearly a mile north of the range of hills which form the southern boundary of the old locality.