

ROSS, ELIZABETH.

THE WORCESTER PRESS

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Elizabeth Ross
Investigator
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Narrative by Elizabeth
Ross on the Worcester Press.

"The Worcester Press" was one used in the Park Hill Mission Printing Office. Printing was begun in that office in 1837 and continued until the death of Reverend Samuel A. Worcester in 1859. Within recent years, each of two well known small hand-operated printing presses have been thought by various persons to have been "The Worcester Press". As a matter of fact, neither of the two small presses ever were used in the Mission Printing Office.

The smaller of the presses has been referred to as the Schawb press. It was shipped to the Reverend F. L. Schawb, once superintendent of Dwight Mission, from New York City. Superintendent Schawb was told by those who sent him the press that it was the original Worcester press. Because of this erroneous statement the Reverend Mr. Schawb adhered to the belief that the famous press was that in his possession. This press is now at Dwight Industrial Training school, near Sallisaw Creek, Sequoyah County.

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The larger press was sent from New York City to the Reverend A. N. Chamberlin, a Presbyterian minister, who lived for a number of years at Pheasant Hill, several miles distant from Vinita. The Reverend Mr. Chamberlin printed a Cherokee primer and other small items, such as tracts and leaflets. He, too, had been informed that the Worcester press had been sent him. In course of time this press came into possession of the late Reverend Ralph J. Lamb, D.D. of Tulsa. Dr. Lamb sometimes stated that he was the owner of the Worcester press. A short time before his death, Dr. Lamb presented the press to the First Presbyterian church of Tulsa.

During many years there has been speculation as to what became of the press so long used at Park Hill. Many believed that it had been shipped to the headquarters of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, at Boston, Massachusetts. Such was never done. The American Board in 1860 withdrew from missionary labors in the Cherokee Nation. The mission property and buildings were then acquired through purchase by Abigail Hicks, a

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Cherokee citizen, whose wife was the former Miss Hannah Worcester, youngest daughter of the Reverend Samuel A. and Ann Orr Worcester. Abijah Hicks was murdered soon after the beginning of the Civil War and his widow lived on the old Worcester homestead until near the close of the conflict, when she moved to Fort Gibson. Her second husband was Dr. Daniel D. Hitchcock. An assistant surgeon in the United States Army, Dr. Hitchcock, after treating many cholera victims in 1867, fell a victim to the malady and he was buried in the United States National cemetery, near the town of Fort Gibson. His wife is also buried beside him, she dying many years later at an advanced age.

It was not until recently that definite and convincing particulars relating to the disposition of the Worcester press, as it has often been referred to, was forthcoming.

During the Civil War period Mrs. Hannah Worcester Hicks, as she then was, kept a diary. In looking through this diary her only living son, H. W. Hicks, found this reference to the printing press and materials:

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"Today I went to the printing office. I did not know before how completely it had been cleaned out. The press, types, papers, etc., all carried away or destroyed by Stand Watie's men, with help of the Texans". (The Texans were members of a Texas Confederate regiment).

Stand Watie, at first a Colonel, and later Brigadier General in the Confederacy, made several raids in the Park Hill locality, principally in 1863, in the course of which "Hunters-Home", the residence of Major George M. Murrell, was looted, although Major Murrell was himself a strong adherent of the Confederacy, absent from home at the time in Virginia. "Rose Cottage", home of Principal Chief John Ross was burned by order of Stand Watie, and in the town of Tahlequah, his orders resulted in the burning of the Cherokee capitol buildings. The old mission was then visited and the famous printing office, first in the present State of Oklahoma, wrecked, as indicated in the reference in the War-time diary of Mrs. Hannah Worcester Hicks.

The press was considerably larger than those already mentioned and has been referred to as a "Tufts Standing

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Press". During the period of some twenty-two years it was in very frequent use, a vast volume of printed matter being completed and sent out. The printing office stood at a distance of several hundred yards from the mission residence, or Worcester home. Soon after the war closed the office was sold, and its owner demolished the building and hauled the material to the town of Fort Gibson.