

ROSS, ELIZABETH

PARK HILL PRESBYTERIAN MISSION

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Elizabeth Ross
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Park Hill Presbyterian Mission.

Approximately a quarter century after the abandonment of the original Park Hill Mission by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, a new school was established by the Presbyterian church. The site selected was in near vicinity of that which had once been occupied by the first Mission school building.

The Park Hill Pres^bbyterian Mission school began its work at the beginning of the first week in September, 1884. The building in which the school was established was known to most of the people of the day as the "Foreman church"; otherwise, the Park Hill church.

The Reverend Stephen Foreman, a Cherokee citizen, who had received a classical and theological education, established himself at Park Hill in 1839, and until 1859 assisted the Reverend Samuel A. Worcester in translating the Bible into the Cherokee language.

In 1865 the Reverend Mr. Foreman was appointed Presbyterian Missionary at Park Hill. He is usually regarded as occupying that position until his death in 1881, though inactive from the infirmities of age for a considerable period.

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The old mission church had been ruined in the Civil War period and a building was necessary. There was a vacant house several hundred yards from the Foreman home and this house he had repaired and fitted up for church purposes. High-backed plank benches were procured, a pulpit erected, and a belfry built on top of the transformed house. The old bell of the original mission church was swung in the belfry, and thereafter the preaching services were held in the "Foreman church" from time to time.

It is said that this building was that which was being completed under the supervision of Elias Boudinot, notable character in Cherokee history, on the 22nd day of June, 1839.

It was on this day, several fullblood Indians induced Boudinot to leave the vicinity of the new house and accompany them in the direction of the Worcester residence. Boudinot was then killed in the woodland.

For some time before the death of the Reverend

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Stephen Foreman on December 9, 1831, there was preaching at intervals by the Reverends Alexander Reid and Leonidas Dobson. Then the Reverend Willis Weaver of the Tahlequah church filled an appointment at the Park Hill church for some time, being succeeded by the Reverend G. T. Thompson, and he by the Reverend W. L. Miller, each of the Tahlequah church.

Miss Ada O. Bodine of Plymouth, Ohio, was the first teacher in the Park Hill Presbyterian Mission school, continuing until the close of the spring term in 1886, when she retired.

Sarah S. Mathes of Tennessee, had arrived in the autumn of 1885, and remained for some years.

Soon after the beginning of 1886 the "Foreman church" was totally destroyed by fire. Early on a cold morning a youth started a fire in the stoves, using a large quantity of combustible material. The stove pipe leading from a new room, recently constructed, had not been protected with a brick flue. Soon the pipe was red hot, the dry shingles atop the house became ignited and within

a brief period the old church was reduced to ashes.

Although the Reverend Stephen Foreman before his death had said that any part of his land should be available to the Presbyterians should they ever desire to establish a mission school, the site was abandoned and a new school and church erected more than a half mile north of the place where the mission had burned. The new building, containing two large rooms, was completed during the early autumn of 1886. It was fitted up as a church and as a school building. Dedicationary services were held on Sunday, October 31, 1886. The pastor was Arthur Grant Evans, who later became widely known as A. Grant Evans, president at one time of Henry Kendall College, (now the University of Tulsa) and president of Oklahoma State University. In 1884 Evans had been a member of the faculty of the Cherokee National Male Seminary, entering the ministry in 1885.

A home for the pastor and teachers was built near the church and school building. Miss Sarah S. Mathes, the principal teacher, was now assisted by Miss Carrie L. Evans, sister of the pastor. Both the pastor and

his sister came to the United States from England.

When the old mission burned early in 1886, the historic bell of the old mission or "Worcester church", had crashed into the midst of the flames and been reduced to a mass of shapeless metal. In ^{the} course of time this metal was shipped back to the Andrew Meneely Bell Foundry, West Troy, New York, where the bell was recast. Containing its original inscriptions, the bell was returned to Park Hill mission church, where it was first swung upon a wooden frame but later placed in a belfry. At this time the bell, originally cast in 1847, hangs in the belfry of the Park Hill Presbyterian church.

The Park Hill Presbyterian Mission school continued in operation until within a short period preceding the admission of Oklahoma to statehood, when permanent discontinuance was made. The school and church building was finally torn down and a new church built in the small town of Park Hill.

Among other teachers at the mission school were Misses Florence Caleb, (daughter of Mrs. Walter A. Duncan, Park Hill, Indian Territory); Stella Mathas, Johnson City,

Tennessee; Margaret McCarrell, Blauvelt, New York; Nellie and Cunningham; Kate and Elizabeth Patterson; Mary Margaret Russel, Jacksonville, Illinois; Mrs. Lillian Reek, Mrs. Ella Duncan, (wife of Reverend Thomas D. Duncan) Perry, Oklahoma; Messrs. Jero Moore, Tennessee, and Williams, Illinois.

Succeeding the Reverend Arthur G. Evans as pastor was the Reverend Joseph McCarrell Leiper of Blauvelt, New York. The successor of Reverend Leiper was the Reverend Ralph J. Lamb, an Englishman, later to live for many years at Bartlesville and at Tulsa. Some others who were pastors at Park Hill were the Reverends Thomas D. Duncan; J. V. N. Hartness; M. A. Pearson; John S. Calhoun, D. D.; William H. Sellheim, D. D.; ~~William H. Scheep~~; Roy T. Nunn; and at this period, William F. Reipschlager, who arrived comparatively recently.