

ROSS, ELIZABETH. OLD DUNCAN HOME.

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Elizabeth Ross,  
Investigator,  
Jan. 29, 1933.

## AN OLD DUNCAN HOME.

Among the homes in the Park Hill locality which have stood for more than a half century is that one which was occupied for twenty-four years by the Reverend Mr. Walter A. Duncan, his wife and several members of his family. The Reverend Mr. Duncan was born in Georgia in 1823, and died in October 1907, at his home in Park Hill. The house is situated on a level spot near the center of the neighborhood, and was once surrounded by a number of trees, most of which have been cut down.

Upon coming to live at this place, Mrs. Duncan planted walnut trees, which at the beginning of the World War had grown to immense size. Wishing to do her "bit" Mrs. Duncan had the trees felled and the logs sold and the proceeds were given to the war fund. But there is yet standing in the yard, near the house, one of the largest and oldest elm trees in the section. This tree, perhaps more than a century old, casts dense shade over a part of the yard in the summer season.

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The Duncan house originally belonged to the Reverend Mr. Leonidas Dobson, first a Methodist and later a Presbyterian minister. Construction and completion of the house was made in 1878. Darius E. Ward of Tahlequah was the builder. The Reverend Leonidas Dobson and his wife occupied the house until 1883, when it was bought by the Reverend Walter A. Duncan.

As a member of the Cherokee National Board of Education, of which he served as President for some time, this minister was long interested in the educational affairs of the Cherokees. Before taking up his residence in the Park Hill locality, the Reverend Mr. Duncan had spent ten years as Superintendent of the National Orphanage, the permanent location of which was at Salina, in the Saline district.

While residing at Park Hill the Reverend Mr. Duncan filled several important official positions. He served as a member of the Board of Education, and as a member of a Cherokee delegation to the city of Washington. Each year the Cherokees were represented at the seat of the National Government by a delegation empowered to attend the

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business affairs of their nation. In the earlier years men of undoubted ability and high standing were selected, nominated by the Principal Chief, and confirmed by joint vote of the two branches of the National Council. One of the most able of the Cherokee delegates was the Reverend Mr. Walter A. Duncan. His knowledge of Cherokee affairs was wide and he was familiar with Cherokee history to a remarkable degree. He had arrived from the old nation as a youth, and as a young man had filled the position of Private Secretary to Principal Chief John Ross in 1844.

While living at Park Hill the Reverend Mr. Duncan managed his farm which was in the vicinity of his home and preached occasionally long after his retirement from active ministerial duties. Until his latest years he evinced much interest in the affairs of the Cherokees, and in the government of the United States.

In his spare time the Reverend Mr. Duncan studied the Greek language and derived much pleasure in reading and translating it, even to the last days of his life.

Mrs. Kate Larzelere who became the Reverend Mr. Walter A. Duncan's wife, a native of Maryland, lived for some

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years after his death in the home, but later lived in Granite City, Illinois, in the home of her daughter, Mrs. H. B. Smith. Mrs. Duncan's death occurred at the age of eighty-seven years, at that place in February, 1930. Interment was made beside her husband in the Ross cemetery at Park Hill.

The Reverend Mr. Walter A. Duncan sometimes recalled that he had visited the site of Tahlequah in 1834, five years before the selection of the spot upon which the capitol was built. At the time, he related, there was only one residence to be seen, which stood on a height east of the future capital. This house was occupied by Young Wolfe, who was of half white and half Cherokee blood.