

ROSS, ELIZABETH

ERRONEOUS TALES

7404

386

ROSS, ELIZABETH. ERRONEOUS TALES.

7 404

Elizabeth Ross, Interviewer  
Indian-Pioneer History  
August 27, 1937

#### Erroneous Tales

In connection with Tahlequah some strange and fanciful tales have been related within recent years. As a matter of historical fact, the original meaning of the name has been lost for unknown years. Those who agreed upon the name as that of the Cherokee capital in 1839, had no knowledge of the meaning of the term.

Several places in the ancient Cherokee country, east of the Mississippi River, once bore the name which has been variously spelled as Tellique, Tellico, Talikwa, and Tahlequah. One of these places, sometimes referred to as a "town," was of such great age and importance that the name was selected as that of the new body politic which was organized in the present Oklahoma, ninety-eight years ago.

Those who have undertaken to supply the definition of the historical name relate an impossible tale to the effect that several men were sent out to seek a site for the new capital, spent many hours in the timber lands and undergrowth and

found no suitable place. The men became separated and finally two of them arrived in a beautiful spot in which were some fine springs, whereupon the two are represented as exclaiming: "Tahle Quah," which means so the narrators allege, "Two will do." That is that two members of the party were sufficient to select the site. As a result, the tale continues, the term Tahlequah was adopted as the name of the Cherokee capital.

The truth of the matter is that the Principal Chief, members of the council, and leading men, had in all probability decided that the site of the capital should be where it was located soon after the arrival in the Indian Territory of the Eastern Cherokees in 1839, for the place of meeting of councils and consultations was designated, as the "Tahlequah Council Ground" sometime before the site of the capital was definitely announced. The site was on a portion of the council ground, and in an act of the National Council a few years after establishment of the capital the laying out and sale of town lots upon the council ground was provided for, a town

ROSS, ELIZABETH. ERRONEOUS TALES.

7404

3

site having been located on the former council ground.

Because the future site of the capital was well situated and convenient it was selected as the proper place for holding meetings and councils before the naming of the new capital, consequently there was no necessity for a party to seek a site.

"Two will do" is mentioned in another fanciful story. This story relates that some men were sent out to seek springs, although the outlying regions for miles in all directions is well watered by springs and water courses. After sometime spent in futile search, the men reached the future site of Tahlequah and there found two springs, though there are numerous springs. Upon discovering the two springs the finders ~~are said to have given utterance to "Tahle Quah,"~~

alleged to mean "Two will do." - That is, that two springs would be sufficient for the Cherokees. As in the case of the alleged seekers for a site for the capital there are persons unfamiliar with the meaning of Cherokee terms who believe the story concerning the springs.

Ancient Tellico, Talikwa, Tellioue, or

ROSS, ELIZABETH. ERRONEOUS TALES.

7404

4

Tahlequah, was one of the peace towns, or towns of refuge, and some have regarded the term, Tahlequah, as synonymous of safety or refuge.

Among other persons of distinction who found no definition of the name was James Mooney of the Bureau of American Ethnology, who visited Tahlequah in 1891.

Authorities: Various and intelligent Cherokee officials and citizens; the late Reverends W. A. Duncen and A. N. Chamberlin, both familiar with the native language; James Mooney, in ethnological report.