

ROSS, ELIZABETH

OLD BURYING GROUND

441
7-1891

ROSS, ELIZABETH OLD BURYING GROUND 7489.

Elizabeth Ross,
Interviewer,
September, 11, 1937.

Old Burying Ground.

The old Park Hill burying ground, sometimes called the old Mission graveyard, has lain abandoned and neglected many years. It is possible that interments were made in the spot a number of years before the term Park Hill was first used more than one hundred years ago. The greater number of graves are now totally obliterated. Some had been properly marked with headstones but most of these have been shattered into fragments, as cattle and horses wandered through the unfenced tract of woodland in which the burial place was situated.

In somewhat recent years, however, the woodland has been cleared away and the land placed in cultivation. The plowshares have in some instances obliterated some of the forgotten graves. Were it not for the fact that the graves of the Reverend Samuel A. Worcester, D. D. and some of the members of his family, and of early day teachers in the old mission school are protected by an iron fence, all these graves would now be obliterated.

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The old burying ground lies a short distance north of the site upon which once stood the wooden building utilized as a church by the Reverend Stephen Foreman, Presbyterian Minister, assistant from 1839 until 1859 of the Reverend Dr. Worcester in his translation of the Sacred Scriptures into the Cherokee language. In this wooden building was established the Park Hill Presbyterian Mission School in September, 1884.

Some members of the Reverend Mr. Foreman's family lie in the old burying ground. His son, Austin Worcester Foreman, accidentally shot and killed in January 1855, is buried there, and so is Ermina Nash Foreman, sixteen year old daughter, who died in June, 1855. A few years after the close of the Civil War the Reverend Stephen Foreman laid out a family burial plot a quarter mile west of the old burying ground and was there buried in December, 1881. The family plot in course of years developed into the Park Hill cemetery of today.

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Buried within the Worcester plot besides himself and members of his family, are Caleb Covel, once a teacher at Dwight Mission; Miss Nancy Thompson, once a teacher in the early day Park Hill Mission, which was maintained by the American Board of Boston, Massachusetts; Mrs. Nancy Brown Hitchcock ("Grandma Hitchcock"), long connected with old Dwight Mission, who died at Park Hill. It was the request of "Grandma Hitchcock", it has been related, that she be buried in a grave lying north and south at the foot of the graves of Dr. Worcester and his first and second wives, Mrs. Ann Orr Worcester, who died in 1840, aged forty years is buried here, and Mrs. Ermina Nash Worcester, who died in 1872, aged seventy-two years. Dr. Worcester died April 20, 1859, aged sixty-one years.

It was in the Worcester plot that the late Miss Alice Robertson often said that she desired to be buried near the graves of her father and mother and other members of the family.

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Somewhat recently two tombstones which once marked graves on the outside of the Worcester plot have been placed on the inside of the iron fence, presumably by some person having no knowledge of the history of the old burying ground. Immediately west of the iron fence there are three graves covered with heavy sandstone slabs. One of the graves is that of Elias Boudinot, first Indian editor, buried June 23, 1839. The occupants of the two other graves are unknown.

Authorities:

Reverend Stephen Foreman, Miss Alice Robertson, W. H. Balentine, senior, all deceased, but their recollections are known; also J.S. Whittmore, Tahlequah, to whom Miss Robertson said she would be buried with her relatives.