

ROSS, ELIZABETH JOHN WATT, LONEER STONE MASON.

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HOSS, ELIZABETH.

JOHN WATT, PIONEER STONE MASON
OF THE CHEROKEE NATION.

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September 15, 1937.

John Watt, Pioneer Stone Mason of the
Cherokee Nation.

While the Cherokee National Male and Female Seminaries were being built, from 1847 until 1850, one of the skilled stone masons employed was John Watt. This man had served his apprenticeship in his native Scotland and later crossed the Atlantic to the United States.

After completion of the seminaries, Watt was employed at various intervals in the Cherokee and Choctaw Nations, building chimneys, foundations, and making tombstones.

Watt liked the Cherokee Nation very well, and would have liked to own land and occupy a permanent home, but under the laws of the Indian Nation, none but its own citizens could do so, as all Cherokee lands were held in common. Consequently, there was no way in which Watt might acquire land. He went over into Arkansas and established his home in Crawford County several miles distant from Van Buren, where he lived many years, but

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from time to time he visited friends in the Cherokee Nation.

On one occasion upon returning from a visit to Scotland, Mr. Watt presented several ladies, whose husbands or relatives he had had business transactions with, with fine and beautiful shawls, which may have been manufactured at Paisley, Renfrewshire.

When John Watt died at an advanced age, he left a tract of land comprising one hundred and ninety-seven acres, a substantial and comfortable home, together with an unknown sum of money, but which was known to be large. Also, he left a peculiar will. Instead of leaving the land and home to his wife, he signified his desire that a favorite nephew living in Scotland become his heir. The wife of John Watt was to have the home and land and full use of his personal property during her lifetime, but upon her demise the nephew became the owner. The nephew, however, never

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came to the United States, and none of the property ever passed into his possession.

The wife of John Watt had no knowledge of the amount of money her husband had amassed. She only knew that it was a large sum. She was provided with everything necessary for her comfort and not being inquisitive asked no questions as to the money; although she knew it was kept somewhere about the premises.

A few years after the death of John Watt, his widow was awakened several nights in succession by a dull and muffled thudding sound which she could not locate. But

one night the big stone chimney crashed to the ground, and when daylight came a secret vault was revealed beneath the hearthstone, where the money had been hidden.

Thieves had found a clue to this vault, had dug beneath the foundation causing the chimney to fall and had secured the money.

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The inscription: "J. Watt" may be seen upon the rear of the slabs or near the bottom upon many of the tombstones completed by him.

Many of the older people of the Cherokee Nation knew him well.

Authorities: R. R. Meigs, Park Hill, Oklahoma, Mrs. Ruth E. Cooper, daughter of John Watt.
