

ROSS, ELIZABETH

FORGOTTEN GRAVEYARD

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Elizabeth Ross
Interviewer
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Forgotten Graveyard.

One of the oldest burying grounds in Cherokee County, now altogether obliterated, once lay near the north bank of the Park Hill branch, several hundred yards northeast of the Campbell spring. No one knows when the first interment was made, but in years long past there were several of the older residents of the Park Hill locality who asserted that quite a number of burials had been made during decades of the past. Included in the number were whites, Indians, and negroes. The latter eventually used the ground exclusively, and several of the old time colored people, once slaves of residents of the section, were buried in what is now the forgotten graveyard.

During the Civil War period a number of men belonging to the band of which William C. Quantrell was the leader, suddenly arrived in the Park Hill locality coming from the hills in the south. Taken by surprise a group of men, who were in the locality, were attacked by the Quantrell men and several were killed. It is said to be quite probable that the victims were buried in the old graveyard. And on another occasion a band

of armed men arrived and engaged in shooting such negro men as were found and who sought safety in flight. Five or six of the colored men were killed, according to those who recalled the circumstances and they, too, were, no doubt, buried in the now obliterated burying ground.

Although for many years utilized from time to time the old graveyard was never enclosed with a fence, nor was a tombstone or monument ever erected. On the north side was a road which led through a section of the locality and round about were forest trees. Superstitious persons avoided passing the burying ground after nightfall, if possible, for there were some who asserted they had seen weird and strange "things" in the vicinity of the spot.

After the passage of many years the land upon which the old graveyard was situated passed into possession of a new owner, who soon cleared away the trees which stood in and about the burying ground and with plows soon obliterated all traces of the graves. Since then the spot has been cultivated and corn and oats have grown where an

unknown number of persons of various ages were buried in years of the past.

As there were settlers in the locality a number of years before the name Park Hill was used, it is possible that first interments were made more than a century ago, perhaps during the decade of the twenties of the nineteenth century.

Near the vicinity of the old graveyard there stood for many years a clump of Chickasaw plum trees, so the trees were designated by some of the old-time residents. No one knew when the original trees were planted, but it is possible that they once stood near the premises of some early and now unknown settler.

Authorities:

R. R. Meigs, Park Hill, Oklahoma.
Wiley Britten, writer of Civil War events.
Personal recollections of the old graveyard and a negro burial.