

ROSS, ELIZABETH

FIRE MAKERS.

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#### FIRE MAKERS.

In acts of the Cherokee national council making appropriations for payment of council members and other employees, fire makers were listed. The position was created by an act of the council dated at Tahlequah, October 11, 1850. Provision was made that there should be appointed at the opening of each annual session of the general council, that is both the national committee or senate, and the house of council, a fire maker for each branch of the legislative body, and for the executive department. The supreme court was also authorized to appoint a fire maker at the beginning of each annual session of the high court.

In the early period, the log houses in which the members of senate and council met were comparatively small and one fire maker for each chamber was sufficient, as also for the executive department, or office of the principal chief, and for the supreme court chamber. At the time the provision was made for fire makers their compensation was placed at one dollar each per day in cash. At a later period the compensation

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was raised to two dollars per day, as evidenced by a list of officials ~~at the council~~ and employees printed in a volume of acts of the national council a number of years later.

Applicants for the position of fire makers were numerous at the beginning of council each year, some of those seeking the position coming from distant sections of the nation.

After completion of the brick capitol, and its occupancy, the numbers of fire makers was somewhat increased. The legislative chambers, the executive offices, office of the board of education, supreme court room, and the office of the national treasurer were all provided with iron stoves and in the winter season a large quantity of fire wood was required.

In rear of the capitol a number of cords of wood were placed in readiness for use before the opening of the council, which for many years was on the first Monday in November, but in the early period of the Cherokee government the council convened on the first Monday in October. Immediately the two legislative bodies assembled for the transaction of official

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business the various employees were selected. At that time several of the persons desiring to serve as fire makers realized their ambition, but others experienced disappointment, some of them showing and expressing indignation, believing themselves more entitled to favorable consideration than those selected and employed.

The senate and council chambers in the brick capitol were long and large and a huge iron stove furnished heat, sometimes of too great intensity. The fire makers crammed oak and hickory wood into the capacious stoves until at times they glowed red with heat. Numbers of people made their way into the chambers, many for the purpose of listening to the speeches of members of senate or council, while others entered for the purpose of keeping warm when the weather was too cold for comfort on the outside.

The fire makers received employment until the Cherokee government passed from existence. Some of those who filled the position are yet living (1937).

Authority: S. W. Ross, Park Hill, Oklahoma.