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Elizabeth Ross

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"THE ROSS MILL"

For a period of some five years extending from the middle fifties of the last century, the Ross mill on the Illinois river, several miles northeast of Vanlequah, was in constant operation. Connected with the mill were Daniel M., John A., and Lewis A. Ross, brothers, sons of John Golden Ross and Mrs. Eliza Ross of the Park Hill locality.

The mill was operated by water power, a large overshot wheel furnishing the motive power. The machinery was the most modern of the period, purchased from leading mill machinery dealers in distant states. There were several milling industries in connection. There was a complete flouring mill, a grist mill, a saw mill, and a wool carding machine.

Many sheep were raised in the Cherokee Nation and along the borders of the outlying states, and home spun clothing was largely worn and besides the wool used for purposes of making cloth on the

looms, there were considerable quantities for sale each year.

Wheat was raised in large quantities, and as there were very few mills in all the extensive Indian Territory, and few in the western sections of Arkansas, a great deal of grinding was done at the Ross mill. Wagons drawn by horses, mules and oxen came from various sections of the Cherokee Nation, from points in other nations of the Territory, from places in Arkansas, and borders of Missouri and Kansas in instances. There were times when the mill was operated both day and night for some time until the wheat was made into flour.

There was a level tract in the vicinity of the mill, under the forest trees, where the wagon men encamped while awaiting completion of their grinding.

Besides flour a great deal of corn was ground into meal for customers near and far. Those in nearer localities brought their bags of corn on horseback, sometimes afoot, or in wagons.

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There was frequent demand for lumber and many large yellow pine logs were sawed into various lengths.

Daniel H. Ross, the senior proprietor, had a brick residence built near the mill, where he lived with his family during the period the mill was in operation.

Outlying there was a fertile and productive farm and there was also an orchard. Upon approach of the Civil War the mill was abandoned and during the progress of the conflict, the machinery was destroyed by marauding and pillaging parties, who caused great damage in various localities. At this period there are few reminders of the mill to be seen, though the outline of the dam is yet discernable.

In 1907, forty-seven years after he left the Ross mill where he had cultivated the farm, Henry J. Abby, seventy-two-year-old veteran of the Civil War, at the home of his son in Colorado City, Colorado, spoke interestingly of the old mill, of its proprietors and of the scene as he remembered it in his old age. The finest corn crop he had ever seen in his life, Abby said, was that which was raised on the farm at the mill in the eventful

year of 1860.

Indications were then apparent that there would soon be war, and Abby returned to his native state of Wisconsin, enlisted in the Union army and served to the end of the conflict. He never returned to the Indian country, but eventually went to Colorado. With several other veterans, he was employed by General William J. Palmer, capitalist and railroad builder, to keep the lawns and scrubbery in order at the estate, "Glen Eyrie", of General Palmer out in a picturesque and level vale between rugged peaks, some miles from Colorado City.

The Cherokee country, the hills and forests along the Illinois river as Henry J. Abby saw it and remembered it, was a paradise for wild game, and the river teemed with fish.