

ROSS, ELIZABETH

FORGOTTEN BURYING GROUND.

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Forgotten Burying Ground.

In the extreme southern section of the Park Hill locality, Oklahoma, not far distant from the Illinois River, there is on the bench of a high wooded hill an early day and forgotten place of burial. No one now living knows how many persons were buried there, for the last interment was probably made in 1852. Whether the spot was once enclosed is not known. Only one inscribed stone was ever erected. Years ago a heavy monumental stone, some four feet high and probably eight inches in thickness, stood at the head of one of the graves. This memorial was of gray limestone, quaintly lettered and ornamented with symbolic designs, one of them a weeping willow, and another a dove flying upward with a streamer in its beak. Upon the stone was inscribed the name of Mrs. Elizabeth Delano, who died in the year of 1852. The monument was prepared by John Watt, a native of Scotland, who built many chimneys in the early days, and was known as the most proficient stone mason and monument maker of the fifties, and sixties of the last century.

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Concerning Mrs. Elizabeth Delano, who was rather well advanced in life at the time of her demise, early residents of the Park Hill locality related an interesting story. As the wife of "Uncle Billy" Stinnett, a white man, who once operated a small store near one of the old roads leading west from the Illinois river, through the Park Hill neighborhood, she lived with her husband in an old-fashioned house in the vicinity of the store. Mrs. Stinnett was a member of the western Cherokee nation. She was very large, afflicted with rheumatism, and unable to walk. She usually sat in a large chair and directed her household workers. In the course of time her husband died. The money and property possessed by the old couple was considerable. The "widow Stinnett" was often mentioned as being wealthy. Presumably she would continue a widow to the end of her days, but those who so predicted were badly mistaken.

There came a day when Mrs. Elizabeth Stinnett was married in her home, sitting in her chair, to Lorenzo Delano, a good-looking young man of the old neighborhood--himself quite a youth in comparison

with the age of his wife. A few years passed and the pioneer woman died. Her estate passed to her young husband, who soon removed to another part of the Cherokee nation. But the big gray limestone monument was provided but would be standing today but not some person or persons became possessed with the idea that treasure lay hidden in the grave. Evidently dynamite was used in shattering the heavy stone into fragments. Anyway, it was destroyed several years ago, and no one now recalls the entire inscription.

The early day burial place is even yet isolated, a lonely spot where once the forest trees grew thickly in near vicinity. The nearest trail was some distance away and comparatively few people of relatively recent years ever knew the location of the place.