

ROSS, ELIZABETH

CHEROKEE FARMS

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## Some Old Farms.

A number of Cherokee County farms contain tracts which were placed in cultivation more than one hundred years ago. Members of the Western Cherokee Nation, who arrived in what is now Oklahoma at the beginning of the thirties of the nineteenth century, were the first settlers in the oldest neighborhood of today. Farm and garden products were planted, tended and grew to maturity in the long bygone times. When the Eastern and larger body of Cherokees arrived in 1839 some of them acquired the homes and other improvements which had been held by the earlier settlers.

Here and there along the Barren Fork and Illinois River are localities in which some of the Western Cherokees once lived. And other sections once numbered members of this group as residents.

Several of the farms in the Park Hill locality, or portions of them, were first fenced and cultivated by "old settlers".

The "Chief Ross farm", as it was known to residents of the locality in bygone years, included land which had been placed in cultivation by the first owner of the log-walled home which the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation purchased soon after his arrival in the Spring of 1839. During following years, the same portion of

land was cultivated and most of it is yet utilized.

No one now recalls the name of the original settler, whose home was a double log house with a half-story.

For many years John Ross, youngest son of Chief Ross, and family lived at the old home place, which later became the property of his son, Leonidas C. Ross.

The farm is now owned by a Mr. Knott of Springdale, Arkansas.

The old home of George M. Murrell, which bears the name "Hunters Home", a landmark of the locality, stands near, or upon, the spot where originally stood an "old settler" home. The surname of this man was McCoy. The fine spring and flowing stream near the McCoy log house attracted the attention of Murrell and the owner agreed to sell the house and other improvements for a satisfactory sum. It has been said of McCoy that he built several other homes and enclosed portions of land, which he sold to other members of the recently arrived Eastern Cherokee group, thereby acquiring a considerable sum of money. Some of the land in the near vicinity of the Murrell home is that which McCoy had in cultivation before the removal west of the Cherokees from the old nation beyond the Mississippi River. Upon acquisition of the home and land

by George M. Murrell, a greatly increased acreage was fenced and placed in cultivation, and a large orchard planted. George M. Murrell's wife was Minerva Ross, elder daughter of Lewis Ross, a brother of Chief Ross. After the death of his first wife he married her youngest sister, Amanda Ross. The original Murrell property is now owned by a family whose surname is Russel.

Return J. Meigs secured as a home one of the largest houses in the settlement. This house, which is yet standing, was built in 1834, and was originally occupied by a family of the name of Fields. One of the land which had been cultivated by the first owners is farmed today. Mrs. Return J. Meigs, after her husband's death, married Andrew Nave. Their grandchildren, sons and daughters of William H. and Henrietta Jane Hinton are still in possession of the original home and farm of Return J. Meigs.

Outlying from the Park Hill locality, between that place and the later site of Tahlequah, there were the homes and cultivated acreage of other members of the western Cherokee group. Among them were several members of the Keyes family, some, if not all, having arrived in 1828, the same year in which the treaty of that year stipulated that removal from the region between the White and Arkansas Rivers should be made by the Cherokee settlers

to a new country in a region which became designated as Indian Territory in 1834. One of the Keys' homes was not far distant from the later site of the Cherokee National Female Seminary, and the land lying near the old home site is yet cultivated.

The old farms were fenced with oak or walnut rails, usually nine feet in length, and as their resistance to the weather was great, they lasted many years.

My brother S. L. Ross is authority for a portion of this article.