

INDEX CARDS

Orchards--Cherokee Nation

Agencies--Cherokee

Jones, John B.

Churches--Cherokee Nation

Elizabeth Ross,  
No. 4251-4590  
Indian-Pioneer History  
S-149  
June 3, 1937

"FRUIT RAISING IN THE CHEROKEE NATION".

The first nursery of any consequence in the Cherokee Nation was established by the Reverend John B. Jones, a Baptist minister and missionary, who, in 1872, was appointed United States agent to the Cherokees by President Ulysses S. Grant. Besides his activities as a preacher and teacher, John B. Jones sought to interest the people, the full-blood element in particular, in agricultural pursuits, fruit culture and raising of livestock. Also he advised the cultivation of cotton to a reasonable extent, it being a product for which money was always forthcoming.

Born among the Cherokees in North Carolina, John B. Jones spoke their language with the facility of a native. Upon completion of his education at an institution in New York state, John B. Jones lived the greater portion of his after lifetime, from 1855 until during the seventies of the last century, in the Cherokee Nation.

1863

2

In order to supply the Cherokees with fruit trees John B. Jones planted the nursery at the old Agency, several miles north of Tahlequah. In this nursery many apple and peach trees were given attention. In his talks with the natives Mr. Jones stressed the desirability of raising fruit, but his success was not greatly encouraging. While most of the natives usually had some peach trees about their premises, not much attention was given to the growing of apple trees. One alleged reason was that apple trees were too long in reaching the stage where they bore fruit. Nevertheless, had Mr. Jones lived some years longer he might have experienced a greater measure of success. But his health broke down and he went to Colorado, hoping to experience benefit. His sojourn in Colorado failed to restore his condition and he died a few years before the close of the decade of the seventies of the last century.

The old Agency buildings, the farm and nursery, once in charge of John B. Jones, was taken in hand by John M. Smith, a white man, whose wife was a Cherokee. Smith thus became an inter-married Cherokee citizen and during the remainder

of his lifetime, which continued to advanced age, he retained the agency property. It was during a period in which he was engaged in selling trees from the nursery that Smith acquired the sobriquet "Apple Tree" Smith. He once maintained a good-sized orchard of apple trees.

In these days few persons know that the pioneer nursery proprietor/northeastern Oklahoma was the Baptist missionary and United States agent, John B. Jones, once a resident at the old Baptist mission station where the town of Watts is now located, in Adair county,

John B. Jones eventually removed to Tahlequah, which then became Baptist missionary headquarters in the Cherokee Nation.