

ROSS, ELIZABETH

A FATAL BURN

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Elizabeth Ross, Field Worker
Indian-Pioneer History
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A Fatal Burn

A brief account is herein given of the fatal burning of Miss Mary Stapler, which occurred at Rose Cottage, in 1860 at Park Hill, Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory, at the home of Chief John Ross. His wife, Mary Bryan Stapler, was a cousin to Miss Stapler. Miss Stapler visited the Cherokee Nation expecting to become a school teacher. As the Seminaries closed in 1856 for want of funds it would seem that she desired to be appointed to teach in the Female Seminary building, in which a public school was placed in operation in 1860. But at the time of the fatal accident the school had not been made operative. After arriving at the home of Chief John Ross, Miss Stapler is said to have given instruction to the Chief's two young children, Anna and John.

No one now living is able to give definite particulars as to the date of the accident, but it probably occurred early in the year, as the weather was cold. Miss Stapler's dress caught fire as she stood in front of an open fireplace. She ran out into the yard, covered with flames. She was overtaken and the flames extinguished, but she had received injuries

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which had fatal results. Realizing that her recovery was impossible, Miss Stapler requested that a mirror be brought to the bedside, calmly gazed upon her wounds and remarked, "I came all the way to the Cherokee Nation to be burned to death." This remark is recalled by Miss E. Jane Ross, niece of Chief Ross.

The same authority also recalled, many years later, that the appearance of the face of Miss Stapler as she lay attired for the grave, was as though made of white wax. The flames, it appears, did not mar

her countenance. Burial was made in the Ross family burying ground, now called the Ross cemetery. The grave has never been marked. Nearby is the monument of Chief John Ross.

Joshua Ross and Miss E. Jane Ross taught school in the Seminary building during several months of the year 1860.

Authority: Miss E. Jane Ross, my aunt, and my father, Lewis A. Ross, told me of this sad occurrence.