

ROSS, ELIZABETH

EARLY DAY ARTIST

#7423

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ELIZABETH ROSS--
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Elizabeth Ross,
Interviewer,
Sept. 6, 1937.

Early Day Artist.

Some reminders of a painter of scenes and portraits. still exist in Cherokee County, where, in what was then the Tahlequah District of the Cherokee Nation, J. M. Stanley completed several family portraits.

Stanley, a native of Detroit, Michigan, arrived at Fort Gibson in 1843 and during his stay at that place completed, it has been said, some of the scenes which he later carried away to the east and finally placed in the Smithsonian Institution at Washington.

In the summer of 1843, Stanley attended the great council held in the public square at Tahlequah, at which were present ten thousand Indians from a score at least of different tribes, principally from western plains. At the Council Major George Lowrey, Assistant Principal Chief of the Chere-

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kee Nation, exemplified the language of wampum. The address made by Lowrey, then 73 years of age, was written out in full by Stanley and has there-
by been preserved.

In 1844 Stanley arrived at Park Hill from Fort Gibson, and during his stay at the home of

Principal Chief John Ross painted portraits of John G. Ross, his wife, Mrs. Eliza Ross, and two of their children, Eleanora C., and Lewis A. Ross.

The visit of J. M. Stanley to Fort Gibson has been the cause of an often repeated and erroneous statement, to the effect that Henry M. Stanley, explorer of portions of Africa, and discoverer of the long missing and distinguished David Livingstone, once lived at Fort Gibson in the early days and taught school in the old church which was demolished a number of years ago.

John Rowlands, who changed his name to Henry M.

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Stanley, was born in Denbigh, Wales, in 1841, arrived in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1855, and was adopted by Henry M. Stanley, a prominent business man. Rowlands adopted the name of his benefactor and was living in New Orleans at the beginning of the Civil War. None of the residents of the town of Fort Gibson of the decade of the sixties ever knew of Henry M. Stanley visiting or staying in that town. But in course of time the story was placed in circulation and persons unfamiliar with the career of John Rowlands, afterwards Henry M. Stanley, gave credence to the story and aided in its circulation.

Tablequah, when visited by J. M. Stanley, was a small and picturesque town, the majority of its houses being built of logs. Four stores were in operation, and there were several hostelries in the vicinity of the square in which stood the log houses in which

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the National Council met at intervals, and in which the Principal Chief and other officials had their offices.

Authorities:

Recollections of Miss E. Jane
Ross, deceased.
J. M. Stanley's story of Lowrey's
address.
Biography of Henry M. Stanley.