

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

170

1. Name of Property

historic name Ross Cemetery

other names/site number 34CK379

2. Location

street & number 3/8 mi south of jct. of Murrell Road & N4530 Road not for publication N/A

city or town Park Hill vicinity X

state Oklahoma code OK county Cherokee code 021 zip code 74451

Ross Cemetery
Cherokee County, Oklahoma

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally X statewide ___ locally. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official

1-24-02
Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register Beth Boland 3/7/02
___ See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the
National Register

___ See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the
National Register

___ removed from the National Register _____

___ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> objects
<u>3</u>	<u>3</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: FUNERARY Sub: Cemetery

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: FUNERARY Sub: Cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation _____
roof _____
walls STONE: Limestone - enclosure fence
METAL: Iron - enclosure fence
other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Native American

Period of Significance 1842 - 1930

8. Statement of Significance (Continued)

Significant Dates 1842
 1867

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
 Ross, John

Cultural Affiliation _____

Architect/Builder N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

- Previous documentation on file (NPS)
__ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
__ previously listed in the National Register
__ previously determined eligible by the National Register
__ designated a National Historic Landmark
__ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
__ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

- Primary Location of Additional Data
 State Historic Preservation Office
__ Other State agency
__ Federal agency
__ Local government
 University
__ Other

Name of repository: University of Oklahoma; Oklahoma Archeological Survey

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Ross Cemetery
Cherokee County, Oklahoma

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approx. 3 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>15</u>	<u>324090</u>	<u>3968950</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

N/A See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lois E. Albert/Archeologist II

organization Oklahoma Archeological Survey date September 26, 2001

street & number 111 E. Chesapeake telephone 405-325-7211

city or town Norman state OK zip code 73019-5111

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Ross Cemetery
Cherokee County, Oklahoma

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Cherokee County Commissioners

street & number 213 W Delaware telephone 918-456-4121

city or town Tahlequah state OK zip code 74464

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 9

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

Narrative description:

The Ross cemetery is located about 3/8 mile south of the junction of Murrell Road and N4530 Road, about 1/2 mile southeast of Park Hill, in Cherokee County, Oklahoma. Park Hill is about four miles south of Tahlequah, the capitol of the Cherokee Nation beginning in 1839. The cemetery lies on the edge of a prominent upland south of Park Hill Branch, a tributary of the Illinois River. It is enclosed by a chain link fence with a metal gate at the entrance; entry is from the west, through a narrow, graveled lane between a small farm house and an abandoned brick schoolhouse. A weathered wooden sign which reads "Ross Cemetery" is attached to the gate. The lane is about 250 feet (75 meters) long, and then opens out northward to form the cemetery. In the northwestern corner of the cemetery, there is a steep, northwestward facing slope. The graves have been placed on the higher, more level section of the fenced area. Around the perimeter of the cemetery grow large trees, mostly elm and oak. A few trees, including a very large elm near John Ross' grave, also grow among the graves (Photo 1).

The cemetery overlooks the beautiful valley through which flows Park Hill Branch. This area was one of the earliest places settled by the Cherokees in what is now Oklahoma, beginning at least by 1826. The area of the cemetery can be seen from locations where once stood homes of several members of the Ross family. About 1/4 mile to the northeast is the site of Rose Cottage (34CK366), the home of John Ross. The site of Prairie Lea (34CK375), the home of John's brother, Lewis Ross, is about 1/2 mile to the southeast. About 1/2 mile to the northwest was the home of John's daughter, Jane Ross Meigs Nave (34CK378). Hunter's Home, which belonged to Minerva Ross Murrell and her husband George Murrell, is about 3/4 mile to the west-northwest. Minerva was the daughter of Lewis Ross. The latter, Hunter's Home, is the only one of these homes still standing. It is owned by the Oklahoma Historical Society, and is a National Historic Landmark. Westward, the valley also contains traces of the original Presbyterian Mission founded by Rev. Samuel Newton, Rev. Stephen Foreman, and Rev. Samuel A. Worcester, who all came to the area before removal.

Ross Cemetery began in 1842 with the burial of John McDonald Ross, a nephew of Chief John Ross and the eldest son of Lewis Ross. He admired the spot where the cemetery is now located, and was given the land on which to build his home. On his deathbed, he asked to be buried here. His grave is within a walled enclosure about 13.5 x 13.5 meters (Photo 2). This wall was constructed of limestone and a cast iron railing. Each of the corners is a large, square pillar of limestone blocks 42 x 42 cm with a pointed cap at the top which measures 48 x 48 cm; they are 202 cm high. Between the pillars are limestone walls 73 cm high and 41 cm thick with a beveled top, and a base 47 cm thick. Above the stone wall is a cast iron railing 83 cm high. A gateway is in the east wall; it is 106 cm wide with a cast iron gate which matches the iron railings of the walls. This wall shows some signs of neglect; small trees which were allowed to grow along the walls have pushed it out of line in places. Originally, the corners were topped with large lead balls, but during the Civil War they were scavenged for use as bullets. Extant letters and interviews from the Ross family mention damage to the tombstones; some of the earliest may have been recut or replaced after the war, although no documentation has been found to support this conclusion. There are 14 marked graves within the walled enclosure.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 10

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

Just northeast of the northeastern corner of the entrance lane is a non-contributing building, a latrine, built of concrete blocks painted white. The roof is asphalt shingles. The building is about 2.5 x 2.5 meters with a wooden door on the eastern side.

Most of the graves in this cemetery are those of descendants of John Ross and his siblings. Others are those of members of the surrounding community or of tenants of the Ross family. There were 531 known graves in the cemetery as of September 1, 2001. Although many of these graves are marked with inscribed headstones, others are marked only by a slab of plain sandstone, and a few can only be noted as a depression. There are probably additional graves which have not been located. The graves are arranged in irregular rows running north-south, with the graves oriented east-west (Photo 3).

Descriptions of the gravestones of John Ross and other significant persons are as follows:

John Ross – The stone is a multi-sectioned obelisk of polished grey granite on a grey sandstone base for a total height of 283 cm (Photo 4). The sandstone base of the monument is 71 x 71 cm by 20 cm high; the next section (3) is of polished grey granite with dimensions of 56 x 56 cm x 28 cm high; Section 2 is also of polished grey granite and contains the inscription on the east face and circular, unpolished, decorative elements on the north, west, and south faces; the uppermost, Section 1, is 181 cm high and 30 x 30 cm square at the bottom, tapering toward the top to form the obelisk. To the west of the monument is a cast bronze marker commemorating Ross's service in the War of 1812 (Photo 5). The incised inscription reads:

CHIEF JOHN ROSS
BORN
OCT. 3, 1790
DIED
AUG. 1, 1866

Lewis Ross – This upright stone is of white marble with a sandstone base. The upper part of the stone (114 cm high and 15.5 cm thick) has separated from the base and is currently sitting in front (east) of and leaning on the base (Photo 6). Three faces of the marble stone are inscribed or ornamented. The eastern face (108.5 cm high) contains the inscription and the northern and southern faces have scrolled ornamentation (56 cm high) carved in relief. The stone is becoming weathered and the inscription is somewhat difficult to read. Above the inscription, a Trail of Tears marker has been added (Photo 7). At the top of the eastern face is a slanting area with a carved oval area which reads: OUR FATHER. The inscription on the upright section of the eastern face reads:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 11

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

LEWIS ROSS

BORN
FEB'Y 26, 1796
DIED
FEBRUARY 15,
1870

He's passed that undiscovered bourne
whence none return though thousands go
and here his friends are left to mourn
a loss which strangers cannot know.

The area surrounding Ross's name is incised so that the letter stand out and are the same height as the surface of the stone. The remaining inscription is incised.

Riley Keys – An ornate, upright, multi-sectioned, white marble and limestone gravestone marks the spot where Keys is buried (Photo 8). At the bottom is a plain, rectangular, limestone base 66 x 40 cm x 22 cm high. The next section (2) is plain and measures 56 x 30 cm x 13.5 cm high. It is made of marble. The third section, also marble, holds the inscription and the ornamentation. At the bottom, it measures 45 cm north-south x 21 cm east-west; the inscribed section measures 39 north-south x 18 cm east-west; the height at the left corner is 86 cm and the maximum height (at the highest point of the carved drape) is 90.5 cm. The inscription reads:

RILEY KEYS SR.
DIED June 5, 1884
AGED 71 Yrs. 26 Ds.

The area surrounding the name is incised so that the letters are flush with the surface of the stone; the dates are incised. Above the inscription is a Masonic emblem carved in the same manner as the letters, and above this is a protruding band. Above the band is a wreath carved in relief. The right portion of the stone is a drape carved in relief which falls below the protruding band.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 12

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

John McDonald Ross – The ornate, multi-sectioned monument that marks the original burial in the Ross Cemetery is of white marble on a concrete base. Inscriptions and relief carving ornaments all four faces of the monument cm (Photo 9). The total height of the monument is 301 cm. The measurements are (in ascending order): concrete base, 122 x 122 cm x 13 cm high; Section 8, 90.5 x 90.5 cm x 24 cm high; Section 7, 83 x 83 cm x 2.5 cm high; Section 6, 81 x 81 cm x 69 cm high; Section 5, 91.5 x 91.5 cm (widest point), 83 x 83 cm (top), x 9 cm high; Section 4, 81 x 81 cm x 20.5 cm high; Section 3, 39 x 39 cm x 5 cm high; Section 2, circumference 126 cm x 15 cm high; Section 1, circumference 97 cm x 167 cm high. The upper section is a fluted column, which is “broken” to indicate his short life. Sugaring can be seen on the marble of the column. Section 4 is ornamented on all four faces with different carved relief floral designs in the center and a leaf design on each corner. Each corner of Section 6 is ornaments with an upside-down, stylized torch and flame design. A floral garland encircles the top of the fluted column. The incised inscriptions are on Section 6; they read (in order of east, north, and south faces):

JOHN McDONALD ROSS
son of
Lewis and Frances Ross,
nephew of
John Ross,
Head Chief of the Cherokee Nation.
A Graduate of the College
at Princeton N. J. in 1841.

In the circle of Home
dutiful, self-denying and affectionate;
To his Nation
a Friend faithful and enlightened.
His character benevolent and true, a mind active
and cultivated, an integrity firm
and inflexible;
In the morning of life,
before the bright promises of his youth
had ripened into action,
he passed from earth, leaving to his friends
a rich legacy of love, respect
and virtuous incitement.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 13

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

BORN
NEAR CALHOUN, TENN.
Nov. 15th, 1820
DIED
Sept. 19th, 1841;
Aged 21 years 9 months.

Although the date on the tombstone says 1841, a letter from Princeton University (Dunkley 2001) and a contemporary newspaper article have confirmed a date of 1842 (Anonymous 1842). Using the birthdate of 1820 and death date of 1842, his age at death is correct. This might be evidence that the monuments were recut or replaced later, or it could just be an error in the original cutting of the stone.

Robert Bruce Ross – A compound upright marker of white marble marks the graves of Ross and his wife, Frances Daniel Thornton Ross. Ross's gravestone is a military style marker (Photo 10). Each stone measures 59.5 cm high at the side and 62.5 cm in the center of the curved top. Ross's stone is 30.5 cm wide and his wife's stone is 33.5 cm wide. They are 10 cm thick and sit on a base which measures 142.5 cm north-south by 28 cm east-west by 5 cm high. Between the two headstones is an additional piece of marble measuring 52.5 cm north-south, 10 cm east-west, and 31.5 cm high inscribed with the lettering "ROSS". Ross's stone has an incised shield design within which is lettering in relief which reads:

ROBERT ROSS
1 SGT. CO. E
2 INDIAN
HOME GUARD
KANS. INF.

Below the shield are incised birth and death dates:

AUG. 13, 1845
MAY 12, 1930

Each of the two graves is covered by a slightly domed, concrete slab measuring 254 cm east-west by 115.5 cm north-south. The height, varying slightly because of uneven ground, is between 20 and 25 cm. The markers are at the western end of the grave covers.

Lewis Anderson Ross – An upright double headstone of polished grey granite on a rough grey granite base marks the burial site of Lewis Anderson Ross and his wife, Nellie Potts Ross. The base measures 103 cm x 32 cm by 14 cm high. On the base, below the name and date for Lewis Anderson Ross, has been placed a Trail of Tears marker (Photo 7). The headstone measures 76 cm north-south at the bottom and 74 cm at the top; it is 15 cm thick (east-west); the height is 49

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 14

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

cm at the sides and 53 cm at the center. Near the top of the stone is an incised floral and ribbon design. Below this is a centered, unpolished rectangle into which is incised:

ROSS

Below this family name are two unpolished rectangles with incised names and dates. These read:

NELLIE P.
1848
SEPT. 22, 1905

LEWIS A.
JULY 2, 1833
APR. 12, 1885

Below these rectangles is inscribed:

THEIR RECORDS ARE ON HIGH

Rev. Walter A. Duncan – Duncan's headstone is a large rectangular, upright slab of white marble on a white marble base (Photo 11). The base measures 123 cm north-south and 36 cm east-west by about 14 cm high (varies because of uneven ground surface). The headstone measures 92 cm north-south x 20 cm east-west (thickness) x 61.5 cm high. At the top of the stone is a carved design of leaves and acorns. Below this design is incised:

DUNCAN

REV. WALTER A.

1820 ----- 1906

Kate A. L. C. Duncan (Catherine Anne Larzalere Caleb Duncan) – This is a flat, rectangular, modern style marker of red granite with unpolished areas colored dark grey (Photo 12). At the top of the stone is an inscribed floral design; a double line surrounds the name and date information, which is incised and reads:

KATE A. L. C. DUNCAN
NOV. 12, 1842
FEB. 5, 1930

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 15

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

Near the southeastern corner of the headstone is a cast bronze marker erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution. It consists of, at the top, the D.A.R. insignia; below this is a crosspiece reading:

KATE LARZELLE DUNCAN
STATE REGENT 1896

There is some confusion about the spelling of her maiden name. It is given as Lazalere on the headstone of her sister, Carrie Ross, the wife of John Ross, Jr.

Benjamin (Cooper) King – A large, upright marker of light grey marble on a compound base marks the graves of King and his wife, Mary Elizabeth. The lower base measures 102 cm north-south x 51 cm east-west; it is about 27 cm high. The upper base is 87 cm north-south x 36 cm east-west x 22 cm high. On this stone is incised:

FATHER

MOTHER

In the center of the headstone is a long, narrow, incised design of an urn containing leaves and a lily. At the top of the stone, at each side above the personal information, is an incised design of acanthus leaves; below each design is an incised line which continued across the north and south faces of the stone. An identical line is also found below the personal information. At each side, below the line and above the personal information is a smaller, incised floral design. The incised personal information reads:

BENJAMIN
KING
BORN
MAR. 17, 1838
DIED
SEPT. 3, 1909

MARY ELIZABETH
KING
BORN
JULY 10, 1840
DIED
JUNE 17, 1908

His record is on high.

She was a kind and
Affectionate wife a fond
mother and friend to all.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 16

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

At the western end of the cemetery is a non-contributing marker which consists of a concrete base into which is set a bronze plaque which reads:

DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF
THE VETERANS OF
ALL WARS
BY THE FAMILY OF
CORPORAL
ALICE COLLINS MEIGS

Nearby is another non-contributing marker, a rectangular concrete slab, inscribed in English and in Cherokee, which reads:

HERE WE REST

The numbers shown for contributing resources within the property reflect the following:

Sites: Ross Cemetery
Structure: Walled enclosure around Lewis Ross plot
Objects: 530 gravestones that comprise the visual landscape of the cemetery; this includes the gravestone of John Ross, the most significant person buried within the Ross Cemetery.

The numbers shown for non-contributing resources within the property reflect the following:

Buildings: Latrine
Objects: Concrete and bronze veterans marker described above;
Concrete "Here We Rest" marker described above

The 530 graves of the cemetery constitute one contributing object. Among them are numerous additional members of the Ross family, some of whom also played a role in the development of the Cherokee Nation. Figure 1 shows

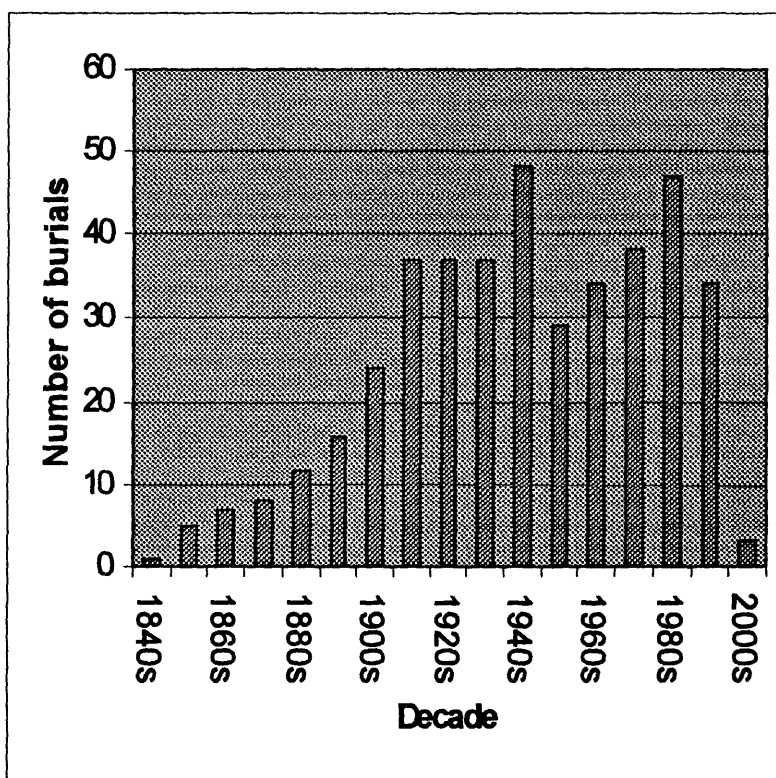
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 17

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

Figure 1. Burials by decade in the Ross Cemetery.



the distribution through time of burials in the cemetery. The increasing number undoubtedly reflects the increasing number of Ross descendants with each generation. Some unrelated members of the Park Hill community and tenants of the Ross family are buried in the cemetery. The cemetery's gravestones exhibit a wide variety of styles and materials. There are numerous, rectangular, unscribed slabs of native sandstone which mark the location of burials for people whose identity has been lost through time. The inscribed stones range from simple, marble, upright slabs through large, ornate granite markers (Photos 1, 2, and 3). There are also a few made of limestone; these are weathering more rapidly than other materials. In addition to upright stones, there are many simple, flat, rectangular markers, of which most are red or grey granite. Only a few graves have homemade concrete markers. The popularity of a single stone marking the graves of a couple began, and has then increased, during the twentieth century in this cemetery. There are also an unknown number of graves unmarked by any stone, distinguishable only by a depression. Undoubtedly, there are some graves whose locations are presently unknown.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 18

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

The Ross Cemetery is still in use. There are modern gravestones and recent burials. However, the persons of significance interred within are of transcendent importance to the history of the Cherokee Nation and the site itself continues to be significant in the Nation's consciousness. The continued use of the cemetery, mostly by descendants of John Ross, does not detract from the historic appearance or integrity of the site. Newer burials are on the periphery and it is easy to discern the older, more significant section of the cemetery. The entire property is being nominated because it encompasses the historic figures and associations for the Cherokee Nation. Even with the sporadic, continued burials, this cemetery retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, association, and feeling.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 19

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

Section 8 – Statement of Significance:

Narrative Statement of Significance:

The Ross Cemetery is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under two Criteria, A and B. It is eligible under Criterion A for its significance to the Cherokee Nation as representative of their relocation to Indian Territory and for the large number of personages buried within who had important associations to their tribal/national government. The Ross Cemetery is significant under Criterion B because it is the burial place of John Ross, who was Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation from 1828 until his death in 1866 and a number of other persons significant in Cherokee Nation governmental affairs during the 19th century. John Ross was also nationally prominent, spending much time in Washington on tribal business. Because Ross's nearby home, Rose Cottage, was burned during the Civil War and no other structures on that property remain standing, this is the only place associated with John Ross remaining in Oklahoma. It is therefore a significant reminder of the importance of this man in the history of Oklahoma and the nation. Other people prominent in the affairs of the Cherokee Nation who are buried here are John's brother *Lewis Ross*, his nephew *John McDonald Ross*, his grandson *Robert Bruce Ross*, *Archibald Campbell*, *Riley Keys*, *Benjamin Cooper King*, and *Rev. Walter A. Duncan*. *Kate A.L.C. Duncan* (Catherine Ann Larzelere Caleb Duncan), the wife of Walter A. Duncan, was the first regent of the Daughters of the American Revolution for Indian Territory. It is also the burial place for several people who came to the area which is now northeastern Oklahoma over the Trail of Tears, as well as for veterans of the War of 1812, the Civil War, and of later wars. Most of the people buried here were highly acculturated, mixed-blood Cherokees; their burial plots here cannot be distinguished from those of contemporary Euroamericans.

The period of significance begins in 1842 when the first person, John McDonald Ross, was buried here and ends in 1952, the end of the fifty year cutoff for the National Register of Historic Places.

The Park Hill locality has been occupied by Cherokees since at least 1826, when Riley Keys and his relatives settled in an area between the present towns of Tahlequah and Park Hill. About that time, Reverend Samuel Newton established a mission east of the Illinois River, at its junction with the Barron Fork, only a short distance from Park Hill. Because that location was not healthful, he moved to Park Hill in 1836, and gave the locality its name. Other houses were built by "Old Settlers" such as McCoy and Caldwell (first names unknown) around 1834. In 1837, Reverend Samuel A. Worcester, with his family and associates such as Elias Boudinot, came to Park Hill. Newton, Worcester, Boudinot, and Rev. Stephen Foreman formed the nucleus of a large Presbyterian missionary operation under the auspices of the American Board of Foreign Missions. Boudinot and Foreman were Cherokees and were advocates of the "Treaty Party" faction of the tribe, siding with those that signed the Treaty of New Echota which called for the removal of the tribe from Georgia to the west. They established a church, school, printing office, and farms to provide subsistence for the mission families and students. A post office was established in 1838, just before the forced removal of the Cherokee

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 20

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

Nation from the east. Thus, a flourishing community existed before the Eastern Cherokees arrived. After their arrival in the spring of 1839, various members of the Ross family bought existing homes from the Old Settlers and then, in a few years, built more elaborate houses for themselves. Park Hill, only a few miles from the Cherokee capitol of Tahlequah, became one of the preeminent communities of the Cherokee Nation. The community of Park Hill consisted of widely spaced homes and stores, and encompassed several plantations belonging to the Ross family and other members of the community. Several prominent leaders of the Cherokee Nation lived in Park Hill and are buried in the Ross Cemetery. Others, such as Samuel Worcester and Elias Boudinot, are buried in the mission (Worcester) cemetery about a mile and a half to the west.

The most significant person in the cemetery is John Ross.

John Ross, who is listed in the Dictionary of American Biography (Johnson 1964:178-179), is the most significant person buried here. Many of the other people buried here who were important in Cherokee history are his descendants or related to the family in some way.

John Ross was born October 3, 1790, in Georgia. He was the son of a Scottish father (Daniel Ross) and a quarter-blood Cherokee mother (Mary McDonald Ross). He was educated by private tutors and in an academy in Kingston, Tennessee. His first wife, Quatie Brown Ross, is thought to have been a full-blood Cherokee, although little is known about her. Many of John's descendants through this marriage are buried in the cemetery. Quatie died near Little Rock, Arkansas, during the Removal. His second wife, Mary Brian Stapler Ross, was a Quaker from Wilmington, Delaware. They were married in 1844 and lived in Park Hill until the Civil War. Two children were born to this marriage, and some of their descendants are also buried in the Ross Cemetery. Mary is buried in the Stapler family cemetery in Wilmington.

During the War of 1812 John Ross was an adjutant for Andrew Jackson; a small marker commemorating this service is located directly west of his tombstone (Photo 5). Later, he was elected to the Cherokee National Council and became its president. He helped write the constitution for the Cherokee Nation, and in 1828 became the Principal Chief. He held this office until his death in 1866. He opposed the removal of the Cherokees from Georgia, and traveled frequently to Washington, D.C., on tribal business. Because of this activity, he became personally acquainted with several presidents. While he was trying to rally support from white Americans to the Cherokee cause, many articles by or about him were published in leading newspapers and magazines. Other Cherokees, known as the Treaty or Ridge Party, supported removal to the west. Many of these people moved west before Removal, where they joined Cherokees who had started moving into the region which is now Arkansas and Oklahoma at least as early as 1810. These early arrivals were known as the Old Settlers or Western Cherokees. After all efforts failed to retain their homeland, in 1838 the Eastern Cherokees were driven from their homes, often at bayonet point and with nothing but the clothes they were wearing. The removal effort was under the direction of General Winfield Scott. They were driven into collection points where they were held in stockades, often with little food or bedding. The summer of 1838 was

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 21

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

hot and dry, with little water available along the way. After a couple of small groups had been moved west with high death rates, John Ross obtained permission for the Cherokee Nation to oversee the removal themselves in the fall. The people were divided into groups who were under the direction of respected Cherokees. Supplies and transportation were difficult and expensive to obtain. John Ross and his wife supervised the removal of a group of elderly, ill, and handicapped people who traveled by river boat. (The small plaque commemorating his journey over the Trail of Tears has fallen from or been removed from his gravestone.) Many people died on the way to their new homeland; those that survived arrived between January and early spring of 1839. They immediately set to work clearing land and building homes. Some of the wealthier people, including Ross family members, bought homes which had been built earlier by the Old Settlers.

Later in 1839, there was a meeting between the Eastern and Western Cherokees at the Illinois Camp Ground just north of Park Hill, near the homes of Riley Keys and David Carter, prominent Old Settlers. Finally, after much work and disagreement, a new constitution was approved and John Ross was elected Principal Chief of the combined group. For the next several years, there was much dissension. A number of people were assassinated, including several leaders of the Treaty/Ridge Party such as Major Ridge, John Ridge, and Elias Boudinot. Much hard work needed to be accomplished, including building farms, homes and stores, setting up the Cherokee national government in Tahlequah, and setting up a system of schools, which included the Cherokee Male Seminary and Cherokee Female Seminary. The latter was located in Park Hill, less than a mile from Ross' home. This home, Rose Cottage, was one of the social centers of the Cherokee Nation. In addition to the house, there were fields, orchards, and numerous outbuildings, including barns, smokehouse, workshops, and slave quarters. Although some foundations from these buildings are at least partially extant, no standing structures are present. The Cherokee Nation was beginning to thrive when the Civil War broke out. John Ross tried to keep the nation neutral, but that proved to be impossible. He reluctantly signed an agreement with the Confederacy, brokered by General Albert Pike. Ross and his family were taken into custody by Federal troops in 1862. The treasury of the Cherokee Nation, the official Cherokee records, and the family valuables were transported with them. He spent the rest of the war at home in Philadelphia or in Washington, D.C., representing the interests of the Cherokee Nation with the federal government. Rose Cottage was burned by Confederates led by Stand Watie in 1863, and his wife Mary died at the Stapler home in Wilmington, Delaware in 1865. John Ross attended a peace council in Fort Smith shortly after, and while on a visit to Park Hill wrote to his daughter that the railing and enclosure at the graveyard "stand as usual", although the grounds were full of tall weeds. He was involved with treaty negotiations in Washington, D.C. when he died on August 1, 1866. His body was taken to Wilmington and buried beside his wife. In 1867, the Cherokee National Council had his body moved back to the Ross Cemetery and erected a tall, grey granite obelisk to mark his grave (Photo 4).

There are no extant sites remaining in Oklahoma that can be directly associated with John Ross. His property, like many others, fell victim to the Civil War and the fighting that broke out among the tribal factions. His home in Georgia, occupied before he became Principal Chief, still stands and is operated as a museum.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 22

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

Other notable persons were interred in the Ross Cemetery. Many of these people were related to John Ross, and a great many of them held significant posts within the tribal government. A sampling of other significant burials is as follows:

Lewis Ross was John Ross's brother. He was born February 26, 1796 in Georgia (Photo 6). He was a member of the 1827 Constitutional Convention, and at various time a member of the Cherokee Nation's Executive Council, a Cherokee Supreme Court judge, and Treasurer. He served as the principal commissary agent for the Cherokee removal in 1838 - 1839. A small metal plaque on his gravestone commemorates this journey over the Trail of Tears. His home was about ½ mile south of Rose Cottage until he moved to Grand Saline (present day Salina, Oklahoma) in 1843. He was a business partner of his brother and was one of the wealthiest men in the Cherokee Nation. He died on February 15, 1870 and is buried beside his wife, Frances Holt Ross, in the walled enclosure just west of John Ross's grave (Photo 2).

John McDonald Ross, was the son of Lewis Ross and a nephew of Chief John Ross. He was born November 15, 1820. He attended school in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, and was the first Cherokee to graduate, as valedictorian, from what is now Princeton University, in 1842. Not long after he returned home, he became ill. He had been given a plot of land on which to build a home, and on his deathbed asked to be buried there. He died September 19, 1842, although his tombstone is marked 1841 (Anonymous 1842). His was the first burial in the Ross Cemetery (Photo 9). He did not come to Indian Territory over the Trail of Tears because he was in school and thus away from home.

Robert Bruce Ross was the son of John Ross's son Allen. He was born August 13, 1845 (Photo 10). At various times, he served in the Cherokee Council and Senate, served as sheriff and postmaster of Tahlequah, was a member of Cherokee delegations to Washington, and was chair of the Cherokee delegation that negotiated terms of allotment with the Dawes Commission. During the Civil War, he was a First Sergeant in Company E, the Second Indian Home Guard, Kansas Infantry. He died May 12, 1930 and is buried in the walled enclosure west of his grandfather's grave.

Lewis Anderson Ross was a nephew of Chief John Ross. His parents were John Golden Ross (a Scotsman) and Eliza Ross Ross, John's sister. He was born July 2, 1834, in the Cherokee Nation East. He came to Indian Territory with his parents on the Trail of Tears. After the Civil War, he served three terms in the Cherokee Senate, representing the Tahlequah District, and as national auditor in 1869 and 1884. He died June 2, 1885.

Archibald Campbell was born about 1788 and served in the War of 1812. He was present at the Battle on Tahopeka on March 27, 1824, in Alabama. In 1818, he traveled to Indian Territory to aid the Western Cherokees in a battle with the Osages at Claremore Mound. After removal, he was a member of the National Council and served as its speaker. For four years, he was an assistant to the Principal Chief, John Ross. His home was about 1/4 mile west of the Ross Cemetery. He is buried in an unmarked grave.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 23

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

Riley Keys was born May 10, 1813 (Photo 8). With other family members, he came to Indian Territory in 1826. They established farms north of the present town of Park Hill. Later, he moved a few miles eastward, across the Illinois River. At various times, he was an Executive Councillor of the Cherokee Senate, a Cherokee Supreme Court Justice, and then Chief Justice. He has been called the Abe Lincoln of the Cherokee because even when he served the Cherokee Nation, he continued to work on his farm, including the task of rail-splitting. He died June 5, 1884, and is buried beside his wife, **Minerva Nave Keys**, a niece of John Ross. Minerva was born October 19, 1829, and came to Indian Territory with her parents (Henry Nave and Susanna Ross Nave) over the Trail of Tears. She died in August 1905.

Rev. Walter A. Duncan was born in Georgia, near the old Cherokee town of Dahlanegah, in 1820 (Photo 11). He was of mixed Scots and Cherokee ancestry. At the age of twelve, he came to the Indian Territory over the Trail of Tears with his parents. After his conversion of Christianity in 1844, he became a Methodist teacher and then minister. From 1845 to 1861, when the Civil War began, he was a Methodist Circuit Rider, except for one term when he held the office of superintendent of the Cherokee National Schools and for one term represented his district as a member of the National Council. He spent the years of the Civil War in Texas as a preacher and farmer. After the Civil War, he helped organize, and then served as superintendent of, the Cherokee National Orphanage. He directed the orphanage for twelve years while remaining a member of the Indian Mission Conference. When he resigned as superintendent of the Cherokee National Orphanage, he went to his home on his farm at Park Hill. When Congress began the abolition of tribal governments, he was several times a member of the delegations to Washington which tried to secure a lessening of the drastic measures which so seriously threatened the rights and well-being of the Cherokee people. He died on October 17, 1907.

Kate A.L.C. Duncan (Catherine Ann Larzelere Caleb Duncan) was born in Wilmington, Delaware on November 12, 1842 (Photo 12). Her sister Caroline (Carrie) married John Ross, Jr., the son of Chief John Ross and his second wife, Mary Brian Stapler. The Stapler family was also from Wilmington, Delaware. Kate met and became the third wife of Rev. Walter A. Duncan as a result of this family connection. She taught at the Cherokee Orphan Asylum and the Female Seminary. She was appointed the first regent of Indian Territory for the Daughters of the American Revolution in January 1896. She died February 5, 1930.

Benjamin Cooper King was born March 17, 1838. He married Mary Elizabeth (Abbie) Kadle. He was elected Judge of Tahlequah District on August 5, 1889. He died September 3, 1909.

People who came to Indian Territory over the Trail of Tears who are known to be buried in the Ross Cemetery are: *John Ross*, *Andrew Ross Nave* (nephew and son-in-law of John Ross), *Eliza Jane Ross* (niece of John Ross), *George Washington Ross* (son of John Ross), *Lewis Anderson Ross* (nephew of John Ross), *Nannie Otterlifter Ross* (daughter-in-law of John Ross, wife of George Washington Ross), *Jane Meigs Ross Nave* (daughter of John Ross), *Elizabeth "Eliza" Ross* (sister of John Ross), *John Golden Ross* (brother-in-law of John Ross, husband of Elizabeth), *Lewis Ross* (brother of John Ross), and *Minerva Nave Keys* (niece of John Ross).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 24

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

Through long and sustained contact with Europeans in the east, the Cherokee were already highly acculturated in the ways of the white man before they were moved to Indian Territory. They had adopted many of the white institutions and had created an alphabet. The Ross Cemetery, on the surface, is reflective of this acculturation. It looks not unlike large family or town cemeteries in areas settled exclusively by whites, but there is still an undercurrent of tradition.

There are few extant sites that in the Cherokee Nation that predate the Civil War; cemeteries were probably the least-affected resources. The Ross Cemetery is rivaled in importance by only the nearby Worcester Cemetery and the Polson Cemetery in Delaware County for its importance. Each represents a faction of the Cherokee nation and the disparate pathways the tribe took in getting to Indian Territory. But for sheer numbers of persons who played significant roles in the history of the tribe, the Ross Cemetery stands alone. For that reason, it is eligible for the National Register at the state level under Criterion A. It is also the best remaining spot that can be directly associated with John Ross, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation and the most significant man in the Nation's history from the period of removal through the Civil War. For that reason, the Ross Cemetery is eligible under Criterion B at the state level of significance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 25

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

Major Bibliographical References:

Anonymous

- 1842 Obituary Notice of Ross, the Young Cherokee. Philadelphia Saturday Courier, November 12, 1842. Photocopy from Princeton University on file at the Oklahoma Archeological Survey, Norman. [Transcribed below (see page 26-27).]
- 1919 Oklahoma Burial Monument for Cherokee Head Chief's Nephew Proclaims That He Was Graduate of Princeton. Newark Evening(?) News, October 1, 1919. Photocopy from Princeton University on file at the Oklahoma Archeological Survey, Norman. [Transcribed below (see page 27 - 28).]
- 1930 Robert Bruce Ross Dies. *The American Indian* 4(9). Copy of article in Muskogee Public Library, Vertical file.
- 1999 A Memorial Tribute to Those Who Endured the Trail of Tears. The Trail of Tears Association, Oklahoma Chapter.

Carselowey, James R.

- 1937 The Cherokee Orphan Asylum. *Indian Pioneer History Papers* 19:32-38. Bound manuscripts in the Archives, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.
- 1937 Interview with Johnie Mae Duncan Korthank, August 19:1937: Rev. W.A. Duncan. *Indian Pioneer History Papers* 32:427-432. Bound manuscripts in the Archives, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

Dunkley, Lisa

- 2001 Letter in response to an inquiry about the graduation date of John McDonald Ross from the College of New Jersey (Princeton University). Manuscript on file at the Oklahoma Archeological Survey, Norman.

Duvall, Deborah L.

- 1999 *The Cherokee Nation and Tahlequah*. Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, South Carolina.

Jackson, Effie S.

- 1937 Interview with Mrs. Roy Bradshaw (Nell Stapler), December 3, 1937. *Indian Pioneer History Papers* 104:132-144. Bound manuscripts in the Archives, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma city.

Johnson, Allen, et al.

- 1964 *Dictionary of American Biography*, Volume VIII (Platt - Seward). Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 26

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

Moulton, Gary E. (editor)

1985 *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, 2 volumes. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.

Ross, Elizabeth

1937 Archibald Campbell. *Indian Pioneer History Papers* 52:454-459. Bound manuscripts in the Archives, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

1937 Some Old Farms. *Indian Pioneer History Papers* 52:488-491. Bound manuscripts in the Archives, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

1937 Husky Scythe Swinger. *Indian Pioneer History Papers* 59:51-53. Bound manuscripts in the Archives, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

1937 Interview with R. R. Meigs: Origin of Old Cemetery, November 16, 1937. *Indian Pioneer History Papers* 36:6-9. Bound manuscripts in the Archives, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

1938 An Old Duncan Home. *Indian Pioneer History Papers* 98:224-227. Bound manuscripts in the Archives, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

Starr, Emmit

1967 Starr's History of the Cherokee Indians (edited by Jack Gregory and Rennard Strickland). Indian Heritage Association, Fayetteville, Arkansas.

Still, Frank J.

1937 Interview with Mrs. Florence Caleb Smith. *Indian Pioneer History Papers* 9:470-471. Bound manuscripts in the Archive, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

1937 Interview with J. R. Hairston: The Cherokee Orphan Asylum, March 6, 1937. *Indian Pioneer History Papers* 92:42. Bound manuscripts in the Archive, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

Thornton, Wylie

1938 Interview with William W. (Wallace) Ross, April 6, 1938. *Indian Pioneer History Papers* 98:403-409. Bound manuscripts in the Archive, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

Turner, Hattie

1938 Interview with Ed Hicks, et al., April 9, 1938. *Indian Pioneer History Papers* 92:470-472. Bound manuscripts at the Archive, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 27

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

Wilson, L. W.

1937 The Ross Cemetery. *Indian Pioneer History Papers* 50:246-251. Bound manuscripts at the Archive, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

Transcription of article from Philadelphia Saturday Courier, November 12, 1842.

For the Philadelphia Saturday Courier
Obituary Notice
OF ROSS, THE YOUNG CHEROKEE

Died on the evening of the 19th September, 1842, at Park Hill, Cherokee Nation, Arkansas, JOHN McDONALD ROSS, son of Louis Ross, and nephew of John Ross, Principal Chief.

The deceased was in the 22nd year of his age, of a vigorous constitution, and uniformly good health. Eleven days before his death, he was laid upon a sick bed by an attack of bilious fever, which carried him to his grave. Youth and vigour are no security against the shafts of death. Mr. Ross had spent two years at the Classical and Commercial High School of Lawrenceville, New Jersey, previous to entering the Sophomore Class of Princeton College, in the Autumn of 1838. At the closing exercise of the school, he was honoured with the valedictory, on behalf of his class, and acquitted himself with great credit. When a member of College, he was appointed one of the Junior Orators, for the evening before the Commencement of 1840. Those who heard his Junior Oration will recollect with what earnestness he presented the wrongs of his injured race. His mother was there. She listened to his voice and wept. But those were tears of joy. The countenance that then beamed with gladness, as it looked upon a much loved son, now gazes in sorrow on the sepulchre that entombs him.

Mr. Ross was graduated with the class of 1841. His father had kindly afforded him abundant means for obtaining a liberal education, for the purpose of making him as useful as possible, on his return to the Nation, a forecast much to be commended. A younger brother is a member of the present Senior Class of Nassau Hall, and two sisters are at boarding school at Ellicott's Mills, Md.

The deceased had much national feeling. He never forgot that he was a Cherokee. Though absent more than six years from his nation, during which time they had exchanged their old home, in Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama, for their new one in the far west, he still seemed anxious to be out among them. The writer remembers on one occasion saying to him: "Well, John, after so along an absence from your tribe, and their emigration to a new country, are you not ready to leave them?"

"Oh no!" said he, with emphasis, "I long to get back to the nation."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 28

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

Parental love drops a tear at the grave of a first-born son, the hope of declining years. Fraternal affection, far from home and the scenes of childhood, mourns over the loss of an only brother. The instructor heard the sad news that he so lately his pupil, lies buried upon a far distant hill, of his own selection. The friend of the Cherokee regret the death of one, who, had he been spared, might have lived to be useful. But all will welcome the announcement that he retained his faculties to the last, and that although thoughtless in earlier life, previous to his death he indulged a hope of having made his peace with God, and exhorted all around his dying bed to do the same, and meet him in the heavenly world. "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord." S.M.H.

Lawrenceville, October 20, 1842.

Transcription of article from the Newark Evening(?) News, October 1, 1919, page 4

Oklahoma Burial Monument for Cherokee Head Chief's Nephew Proclaims That He Was Graduate of Princeton

On a hill overlooking a portion of a beautiful valley which is the scene of the earliest settlement in what is now the state of Oklahoma, stands a tombstone unique in several ways, chiefly, perhaps, to New Jersey folk, because of its association with the early history of Princeton University. The monument marks the burial place of John McDonald Ross, nephew of a head chief of the Cherokee Nation and the first graduate, of part Cherokee blood, of New Jersey's noted institution of learning. The inscription on the stone proclaims that he was "a Graduate of the College at Princeton, N.J., in 1841." [as stated previously, the actual date should be 1842]

There are elements of romance and pathos in Ross's history. His father, Lewis Ross, brother of Chief John Ross, had for years previous to the expulsion of the Cherokees from the South, been engaged in the mercantile business at Charleston, Tenn., where was the headquarters of the United States agent to the Cherokees. When the removal came Lewis Ross journeyed West, establishing a new home in the territory. "Buena Vista", the brick mansion built by him in the West, stood for many years, a reminder of the culture and progress made by the Cherokees in the long ago.[ed. note: Buena Vista was the second home, built in 1843, for Lewis Ross near present day Salina; his first home, at Park Hill, was "Prairie Lea".]

All the children of Lewis Ross and Frances Holt-Ross, his wife, had been sent East to educational institutions prior to the removal from the old nation East of the Mississippi River. Upon the completion of his college course, John, the eldest son, journeyed West and joined his kinsmen among the near-primeval scenes of the new Cherokee Nation.

Among the leading citizens of the nation who had established homes at Park Hill, in the territory, was Principal Chief John Ross. Him the young man visited. South of the chief's home, across a little valley, was a elm-shaded eminence, near the base of which flowed a willow-lined creek; at a short distance to the south the picturesque height of Park Hill

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 29

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

Parental love drops a tear at the grave of a first-born son, the hope of declining years. Fraternal affection, far from home and the scenes of childhood, mourns over the loss of an only brother. The instructor heard the sad news that he so lately his pupil, lies buried upon a far distant hill, of his own selection. The friend of the Cherokee regret the death of one, who, had he been spared, might have lived to be useful. But all will welcome the announcement that he retained his faculties give him, but before he could start the contemplated home a sudden illness seized him. He lay day after day in a room in his uncle's home, looking out across the sunlit valley to the waving fronds of the distant elms. In spite of the best medical attention of the period, his condition steadily grew worse, and, realizing that his end was near, he expressed the wish that he be buried on the site where he had dreamed of building his home. [Ed. note: At this time, his parents lived only about ½ mile south of Chief John Ross's home. This could be an error on the part of the author, or they may not have wanted to move him if he became ill suddenly.]

His wish was fulfilled. The monument that stands over his grave, now darkly stained by the changes of many seasons, was the handwork of a classmate.

The Princeton records have Ross listed, undoubtedly in error, as a son of the Cherokee head chief. They show that he prepared for college at Lawrenceville, the catalogue of the latter school stating he was there between 1834 and 1837. He was a junior orator for the American Whig Society in his junior year at Princeton.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10 Page 30

Ross Cemetery
name of property
Cherokee County OK
county and state

Verbal Boundary Description:

SE1/4, SW1/4, NW1/4, SW1/4, NW1/4, Sec. 23, T16N, R22E
S1/2, SE1/4, NW1/4, SW1/4, NW1/4, Sec. 23, T16N, R22E
S1/2, SW1/4, NE1/4, SW1/4, NW1/4, Sec. 23, T16N, R22E

The Ross Cemetery is bounded by a chain link fence. Its boundaries are also indicated on the topographic map for the area (Park Hill, Okla.). It is entered through a lane leading from a north-south road (N4530) west of the cemetery. This lane is also demarcated by the chain link fence.

Boundary Justification:

The cemetery boundaries are clearly demarcated by the chain link fence, and it is clearly marked on the Park Hill, Okla. topographic map. These are the historic bounds of the Ross Cemetery.

