

ROSS, S. W.

INTERVIEW
EDITOR FROM THE HILLS

#12228

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Elizabeth Ross,
Investigator,
Nov. 24, 1937.

An Interview with S. W. Ross,
Park Hill, Oklahoma.

EDITOR FROM THE HILLS.

The "Indian Arrow", a newspaper which was established at Vinita, Indian Territory, where the first issue appeared on Friday, February 10, 1886, was published for a number of years. Before the close of 1888 the office was removed to Fort Gibson, and in 1889 to Tahlequah. Several editors served during a rather brief period. One of these was a man whose home was in the Caney locality, some miles east of Tahlequah. This man, whose name was William J. Lergen, was becoming somewhat advanced in age. In his more young and active days he had been employed in large printing offices in cities like Memphis, Tennessee; and Little Rock, Arkansas. He was a practical printer and a writer of considerable ability. For several months Mr. Lergen was employed in the office of the Indian Arrow in the year 1892, but upon completion of his temporary task in the office he returned to his home in the hill country of the Tahlequah District.

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The Indian Arrow in course of time required a new editor. Several had resigned, and the principal owner of the newspaper in considering whom he should select as editor decided to appoint William J. Largen, who was sometimes referred to as "Uncle Bill" or as "old Bill". For a number of years after ceasing to work in large printing office Mr. Largen had traveled through portions of Indian Territory as a "drummer", or salesman. He visited rural stores, two of which were operated a few miles apart in the Caney locality, so called because the Caney Creek flows through the section.

One of the stores was operated by L. and L. Keys. The members of the firm were Levi and Lucinda Keys, an old and highly respected couple of Cherokee and white nationality, whose home was near their store, in which was maintained the Cahillan postoffice of which Levi Keys was postmaster. Upon retiring from his position as a traveling salesman William J. Largen, who had relatives living at Fort Smith, Arkansas, boarded for some time in the Keys' home. Sometimes he assisted Mr. Keys, who was often called "Uncle Levi", in the store.

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After staying in the Keys' home for some time William J. Largen surprised the Caney neighborhood people one day when he married a young Cherokee woman, who was a full-blood, or practically so. A veteran of the Confederate states army, Mr. Largen was old enough to be the young woman's father. They lived in a house in the old neighborhood. It was from this house that William J. Largen went over to Tahlequah to become editor of the "Indian Arrow".

Upon reaching the Cherokee Capital Mr. Largen busied himself in the printing office, setting some of the type himself, but having the assistance of two other compositors for awhile. He rented a house for he contemplated bringing his wife and infant daughter to Tahlequah. In the interval he stayed in the house at night, having a mattress spread upon the floor, with blanket and comfort. There was a heating stove in the room, and upon this stove William J. Largen partially roasted portions of beef steak, and boiled coffee. His bread was procured from the bakery. He would have differently he said when he moved his family and household effects to Tahlequah, which however, he failed to do. After a brief tenure as editor of the "Indian Arrow", Mr. Largen's services were dispensed with by the man who held the largest

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interest in the newspaper. This man became dissatisfied with the manner in which the affairs of the office were being conducted and consequently declared a vacancy in the editorial chair. So the erstwhile editor returned to his home in the wooded region near the Caney Creek and thereafter had no connection with printing offices.

After several years the wife of William J. Lergen died. Their family consisted of two daughters and two sons. Other years passed and Mr. Lergen, now old, finally returned to Fort Smith, Arkansas, where he remained until his death a number of years ago. He was the only man of the Caney Creek locality who was a printer, and the only person from that section who became editor of an Indian Territory newspaper.