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Journalist  
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An interview with Laura James Gardner,  
Valliant, Oklahoma.  
Biography of Edmund J. Gardner, dec'd.

Birthplace-----Near Wheelock Church in 1877

Died-----Two years ago.

Buried in Wheelock cemetery

Father-----Jerry Gardner.

Mother-----Jenny James. (No kin to Laura.)

Edmund J. Gardner was born at the old Gardner home near Wheelock church which was established there by one of his forefathers. Mr Gardner's grandfather was one of the most prominent Choctaws who came over the "trail of tears" with the Reverend Alfred Wright, and was one of his assistants and advisers, when a small group of the most intelligent of them were planning to establish a government as nearly as possible like the one which they had left behind them in Mississippi. They had, in the Choctaw Nation in Mississippi, three districts, with a principal chief and sub-chiefs.

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When Edmund Gardner was about thirteen years old, the family moved from the old home to a farm on the Washita River and just across the river was old Hamburg, where plenty of bad whiskey could be bought and from which place tough characters were always going over and bringing it back past the Gardner home. Edmund Gardner went to school until he reached the third grade in the common schools of the neighborhood. He realized though that education was essential to success in life, so he educated himself by studying arithmetic and grammar and by reading good books, magazines and newspapers and keeping up with current events. His first appointment to public office was that of postmaster at Clear Creek, then later he was clerk and treasurer of Towson County under the Choctaw Government.

He had a repair shop in his store when he was postmaster at Clear Creek and people all up and down the mail route, from Goodland to Ultima Thule, would send jewelry and watches to him to be repaired.

We were married when I was fourteen years old and he was eighteen. I am supposed to be about a

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quarter Cherokee Indian and look it but my Cherokee blood was never proven. My name was Laura James, and I was raised in Benton, Saline County, Arkansas. We moved to Wheelock when I was about twelve. There was a little old neighborhood school house about a quarter of a mile west of Wheelock; I got all of my schooling there and that was just a part of a term. My husband read and studied all the time. He set aside ten per cent of his earnings for books, magazines and newspapers. I was never studious like he was, even if I had had time, which I did not with the raising of my ten children, seven of whom are living.

In 1906 he was elected mayor of Valliant, after having served as town clerk, and county clerk of Towson County. And all the time he was studying law, and opened a law office under the firm name of Gardner & Cochran, the last named being Judge E.E. Cochran of Idabel. But he did not like the law as a business so he quit.

In 1910 he was appointed assistant postmaster at Valliant and served for four years. Then he ran a jeweler's and watch repairing shop in Valliant, for a year or two.

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INTERVIEW.

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Then he was appointed postmaster by President Harding. It has been said that my husband was the only Choctaw who ever learned the trade of watch making.

Mr. Gardner worked out a new system of shorthand, a complete phonetic alphabet consisting of sixty-seven characters, with a name for each and invented a writing machine operated with five keys used for the phonetic alphabet. He found seventeen different gadgets or inventions after he died. He wrote a great deal too. I have a stack of manuscripts of his that he wrote about the Choctaw Nation and its people, after they came to the Indian Territory from Mississippi. One article is entitled, "What Wheelock means to me, or Why Wheelock is interesting to me".