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Hazel B. Greene,
Journalist,

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An Interview With Harvey Thomas
Wright, Idabel, Oklahoma.

I was born at Dallas, Arkansas, November 15, 1870.

Dallas was the county seat of Polk County until the Kansas City Southern Railroad was built through Arkansas; then the county seat was moved to Mena.

I moved from Vandervoort, Arkansas, to Garvin, Indian Territory, in about 1905. I brought a stock of general merchandise with me to Garvin, and bought out the general stock of merchandise from Mr. J. W. Kirk at Garvin. He occupied the old rock store building, of which the walls alone are standing now, so I just put my stock in there, too, and incorporated the firm of Goff, Gamble, and Wright Company. Garvin was a new town growing up and there was lots of money in the surrounding country then, mainly from Indian land sales.

Garvin was a thriving place. The Choctaw Lumber and Veneer Company installed the first rotary veneering plant in the state at Garvin, and gave employment to about two hundred men. This company also owned and operated an immense hardwood lumber mill. Their log road extended a

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distance of ten miles or more to Red River. With their sawmill and hardwood veneering plant together, they had a monthly payroll of \$15,000.00 per month, or more, and when they "went broke", that "broke" nearly everybody in Garvin. The business of Goff, Gamble and Wright Company depended upon that payroll and when that ceased our company went broke too. We sold out the remnant of our store and moved away. I went to Fort Towson where I bought the George Hall general merchandise stock, and I operated that store a couple or three years.

Garvin was incorporated when water works were voted in. They had to incorporate in order to sell the bonds. There was an excellent telephone exchange with hundreds of subscribers in town and the country was crisscrossed with numerous rural lines. I remember that one extended across Little River to my farm. From about 1906 to 1909 Garvin's volume of business was more than that of the whole county, but there was rivalry between Garvin and Idabel as to which would be the county seat of McCurtain County, and when Idabel won the coveted advantage, then Garvin began to go down. Coupled with the failure of the lumber company

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there, the town was ruined. But for years it was really a booming town. Garvin put in the first and most efficient waterworks system in the southeastern part of the state, the first concrete sidewalks and graded streets, the first bank in the county, and a number of splendid brick and stone buildings, a few of which are standing today. Among them is the splendid brick school building and the Presbyterian church which is built of native stone. Garvin is indeed almost a ghost town. I don't believe they even have a telephone exchange now. If they do it is a very limited one.

Judge C. A. Spaulding was United States Commissioner at Garvin for a number of years, and his being there and making it a Territorial Court town was worth a lot to the place.

Many men who have risen to places of prominence in the state got their start right in Garvin, and were among the original settlers of the railroad town of Garvin. There was a Garvin prior to the building of the town on the railroad, but it was, I believe, just a post office in the store of Mr. J. W. Kirk, on his farm about three miles southeast of the present town. I have been told that Garvin was named for one of the Choctaw Governors of the Choctaw Nation,

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whose name was Garvin. Mr. Kirk married a Garvin girl.

I believe she was his first wife. He was one of the leading citizens of the country, and when the railroad came through he was just as prominent in the up-building of the town as he ever was in the country.

He and his two wives are buried at the old Water Hole Church, in the cemetery there. His second wife was a McClure of the prominent Choctaw family of that time.

Garvin's history is pathetic, but such is the price of progress, in the way of hard-surfaced roads which lead elsewhere. Before the better roads, Garvin was still a fair market for the farmers in the country surrounding it.