

DATA SHEET

Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Oklahoma	
COUNTY: McCurtain	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER APR 4 1975	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON:
Gardner, Jefferson, House

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
3 mi. W of Eagleton off D.S. 70

CITY OR TOWN:
Eagletown vic

STATE: **Oklahoma** CODE: **40** COUNTY: **McCurtain** CODE: **089**

No. 3. Hon. Carl Albert

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in-progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Lewis R. Stiles

STREET AND NUMBER:
Route 1 - Box 223 A

CITY OR TOWN: **Broken Bow** STATE: **Oklahoma** CODE: **40**

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Office of the County Clerk

STREET AND NUMBER:
McCurtain County Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN: **Idabel** STATE: **Oklahoma** CODE: **40**

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

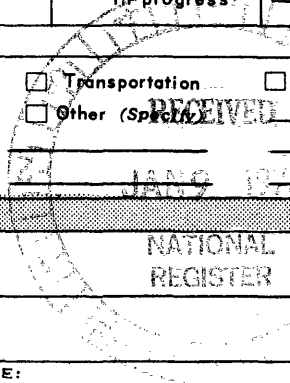
TITLE OF SURVEY:
Oklahoma Historic Sites Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: **1958** Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Oklahoma Historical Society

STREET AND NUMBER:
Historical Society

CITY OR TOWN: **Oklahoma City** STATE: **Oklahoma** CODE: **40**



STATE: **Oklahoma**

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7. DESCRIPTION

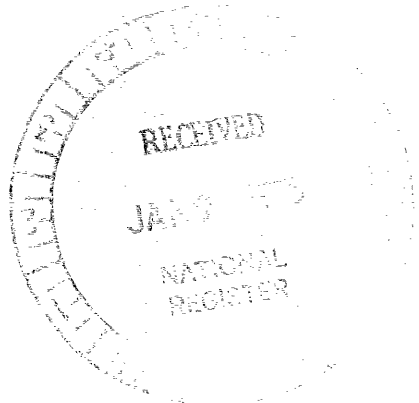
CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One) Basically			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Gardner House was begun in 1884, probably not completely finished until 1887. Choctaw builder James Dyer hand planed and carved the solid walnut stairway and other interior features. Rough timber for the two-story structure was hauled by ox team from Paris, Texas. It was put together with wooden pegs and square nails.

Basically, with porches and balconies, the bluntly T-shaped house is 38 x 47 feet. It contains 9 (or 10) large, high-ceilinged rooms and two original chimneys. Five fireplaces, both upstairs and down, were built of native sandstone. Some modernization was done in 1942 (involving mostly the filling in of a downstairs corner at the rear), but the house can be said to remain basically unchanged. It is obviously in need of considerable routine maintenance work.

As noted in No. 8, the historic structures that antedated the house itself have long since disappeared - Bethabara Mission without a trace. Stones do indicate, however, the location of the Eagle County Courthouse. The Execution Rock, while perhaps impossible ever to authenticate, is at least interesting, as is the giant cypress and the still visible remains of the Fort Smith-Fort Towson Road.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1884 - 1907

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The still handsome two-story frame house of Jefferson Gardner dates only from the mid-1880s, but its site -- on the west bank of the Mountain Fork River just south of the old Fort Smith-Fort Towson Road -- played an important role in almost all aspects of life in the Choctaw Nation from 1832 until the nation itself was dissolved with statehood in 1907.

Rev. Loring S. Williams came west with the early Choctaw emigrants, crossing the Mountain Fork here in 1832 (~~the only crossing then for miles upstream and down~~) to establish a mission school he called Bethabara. (The Hebrew word means "crossing" and at the time this was the only practical crossing for miles upstream and down.) The first Eagletown post office was established here in 1834, with Rev. Williams the first postmaster. In 1837, however, ill health forced him to leave the area and Bethabara Mission was closed. But the strategic river-crossing location continued to be occupied.

George Hudson, who became Principal Chief of the Choctaw Nation in 1860, was probably the next to live here. On this site, too, in 1850, the first Eagle County Courthouse was built, a log affair. It served until 1884 when it was replaced by a square frame building, that was used until the Choctaw government was abolished. Though it stood for many years, largely unused, it is marked now only by a few foundation stones. Immediately to the northeast of the Courthouse site, between it and the Bethabara Mission site (see enclosed sketch) is a stone believed to be the Choctaw's Execution Rock. About 200 yards to the northeast, just to the north of the old military road, stood -- and still stands -- the road's surest landmark: a 2,000-year-old cypress, the state's largest (an official breast-high 43 feet, 7 inches in circumference). Under it, legend has it, the Choctaws made their first stop in what is now Oklahoma. In any event it was a familiar sight to tribal members making their tragic "Trail of Tears" westward to new homes in the wilderness.

Jefferson Gardner was born near Wheelock (some 25 miles to the west) in 1847. Both his parents were mixed blood Choctaws. Well educated for his day, he entered public service early in life, serving in a variety of governmental jobs while farming and ranching in this area. In 1878 he went into the mercantile business at Eagletown,

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Debo, Angie, The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic, University of Oklahoma Press, 1934, p. 59 ff., 174 ff.
 Foreman, Grant, The Five Civilized Tribes, University of Oklahoma Press, 1934, p. 38 ff.
 Fry, Phil, "Patriarch of Trees," Oklahoma's Orbit, Oklahoma Publishing Co., Aug. 9, 1970, p. 2
 Hudson, Peter, "Recollections of Peter Hudson," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. 10 (1932), pp. 503-510
 Meserve, John Bartlett, "Chief Smallwood and Chief Gardner," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. 19 (1941), pp. 216-220

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		34° 02' 47"	94° 37' 24"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

15/350150
3768280
CD

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **c. 6 acres**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **Kent Ruth, Deputy**

ORGANIZATION: **Oklahoma Historical Society** DATE: **September 1974**

STREET AND NUMBER: **Historical Building**

CITY OR TOWN: **Oklahoma City** STATE: **Oklahoma** CODE: **40**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name Donald L. Coffin

Title SHPO

Date 1-6-75

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

A. B. Mortensen
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 4/4/75

ATTEST:

W. H. [Signature]
Keeper of The National Register
APR 3 1975

Date _____

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Oklahoma	
COUNTY	
McCurtain	
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(Number all entries)

No. 8. Significance

Gardner, Jefferson, House

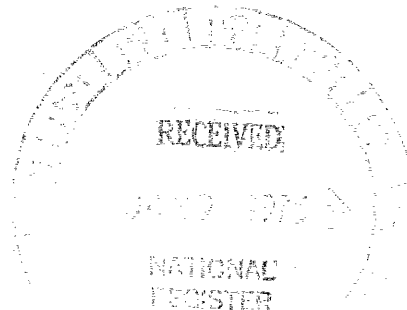
then the Choctaw's principal town in this corner of the Nation. He served as postmaster for many years (the office had long since been moved to the town), opened a cotton gin, and became a wealthy, influential leader.

In 1884, the year he became treasurer of the Choctaw Nation, Gardner moved to the Bethabara Mission site, built a store and the comfortable house that still stands. Records show that he owned over 1,100 acres of land in this area at one time. In 1888 he was chosen circuit judge, a position he filled until 1894, when he was elected Principal Chief of the Choctaw Nation.

Ironically, his reaching the Nation's highest position marked the beginning of the end of his successful career. Pressure was beginning to build for the Choctaws to accept allotments of land and open the Nation to all comers. Gardner vigorously opposed the move. The Nation was badly divided on the issue and he lost in his bid for re-election in 1896. His political loss was matched by financial losses. He retired to Eagletown, a broken man. He died in 1906.

Gardner was only a one-half blood Choctaw, but he had "the vision of the full blood in tribal affairs," according to John Bartlett Meserve. "He lingered from an age which was rapidly departing, being the last chief of the old regime." This may well have made him "a political misfit" so far as the allotment controversy is concerned, Meserve admits, "but be it said to his credit, he stood adamant in his support of the age-old traditions of his people as he understood them. . . .The honesty and integrity of Jefferson Gardner was salvaged from that hectic period."

The stature of Gardner, as well the three-quarter-century role this immediate site played in the religious, educational, commercial and political life of the Choctaws, would appear to make the Gardner House and area immediately surrounding it worthy of National Register recognition and protection.



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Jefferson Gardner House and immediately surrounding area

N



Scale: 8" equals 1 mi.

open

Mt. Fork River

open

Big Cypress

Old Road

Old Road

To Fort Towson

Bethabara Mission Site

Execution Rock

Eagle County

Courthouse Site

Eagletown Post Office

and Store Site

Gardner House

Farm Lane

Mt. Fork River

To Fort Smith

U. S. 70

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