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W. A. Nelson
Investigator
October 30, 1937

Interview with Mrs. J. B. Cullison
1315 W. Maine, Enid, Oklahoma

JUDGE J. B. CULLISON

James B. Cullison was born in Henry County, Iowa, near Mt. Pleasant, the son of Elisha and Matilda McCabe Cullison. His father was born near Cynthia, Kentucky, and was a landowner. He drove stock to Quincy, Illinois, for sale. The mother was also born near Cynthia and was a very devout Christian, the mother of twelve children. The two younger of Judge Cullison's brothers and sisters did not survive infancy, leaving him the youngest surviving child. Nearly all of the family in which he was a son, have also passed on. He does have a surviving brother living at Clarinda, Iowa. This man is now retired but he was once a steward of the insane asylum at Clarinda, Iowa. His name is F. Dean Cullison.

Before coming to Oklahoma, we lived in Hugtown in Southwest Kansas. This town is remembered as the place where Sam Wook was killed in a county seat town fight.

The family moved to Paulton, Missouri, when the Judge was six months old. His father died when Mr.

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Gullison was seven years old, just after the Civil War. Then the mother moved the family to Kirksville, Missouri, to educate her children at the State Normal school, and his elder brother, George, graduated in the first class in that school. Fifty years later he delivered the commencement address there. George was first a teacher, then a lawyer, later a principal of the high school and normal school at Allerton, Iowa, then admitted to the bar. He became district judge at Earlan, Iowa. His widow and several children live there now.

Mr. Gullison's mother died when he was fourteen years old.

Mrs. Gullison met the judge at Allerton, Iowa, where his brother George was principal of the graded and normal school, in the fall of 1877. Her father, Alonzo White Sharp, was in the Iowa Senate about 1854. Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Gullison were married at Niffoa near Allerton, Wayne County, Iowa, in 1888. Mrs. Gullison's maiden name was May Mary Sharp.

Mr. and Mrs. Gullison made the trip from Hugoton in the far southwest of Kansas by wagon to Kingfisher.

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One of their first stops was at Bird's Point near where Pond Creek is now; it was on the elevation on the north side of the Salt Fork River. When they crossed the river the next morning, Mrs. Cullison says they noticed a little fenced grave, where a soldier had been killed many years before in the Indian Wars. They had left Kansas about the middle of July, 1893, and arrived in Kingfisher about the 6th of August. The next night they camped by a creek in North Enid. There were quite a number of campers there and that night they had company, men and ladies from among the other campers, calling on them. Mrs. Cullison said they never felt afraid as they camped along. A man from Hennessey met them in the northern part of the Cherokee Strip and told them the woods were full of wild turkeys. He had killed a wild turkey which proved what he said.

They did not stop at the Government springs as it was a little to the side of the trail. They hardly knew it was there. When they came to the townsite of Enid, Mr. Cullison jokingly said, "Here is where I am going to locate." Later in fact they did move to near this place.

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The next night they arrived at Hennessey. Going on as they went down the hill to Dover, they stopped to buy bread. But when they reached the Cimarron, Mrs. Cullison got out and walked across as she was afraid of quicksand. They reached Kingfisher just before sundown. Some friends, Grant and Lou Humphrey, formerly of Kansas who were '89ers, met the Cullisons. But they still slept in their wagons that night for although a little house had been procured for them they did not occupy it till the next day.

Kingfisher looked like quite a town. Judge Roberts who later was register of the land office there, was one of the first men Mr. and Mrs. Cullison met. They waited there six weeks for the opening. Among the early settlers, was a Dr. Myles who died long ago. Lou Humphrey is gone too. Grant Humphrey and his wife, however, are still living.

Mr. and Mrs. Cullison prepared for the race. They traded their mules for ponies and trained these ponies daily. They secured the aid of Victor Cannegan, who was familiar with the country, having been through it

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some time previously. So when he took Charles Hare, Ora Hare, the elder Mr. Hare, and Judge Cullison into the country, he knew where he was going. He was also familiar with the section lines, and the day of the run, he came up the section line leading up to the claim which Mr. Cullison took. This claim was six miles west of that white mill near the Rock Island depot. Mr. Connegan took a claim, one half a mile south of the Cullisons. Afterward when the railroad went to Fairmont (Frisco) it ran diagonally across the Cullison place from northwest to southeast.

Mr. Cullison made the run of about sixteen miles in fifty-six minutes. His team was so fast that he had to unhitch them before they would stand still so he could put up a flag on his claim. He had a one seated buggy with two ponies. The Hare boys staked a claim across the road to the east. That night some one came over to Mr. Cullison. "They are trying to take my claim," he declared. "Get down behind your saddle and shoot them if they attempt it," advised Mr. Cullison. Soon after he found out the man he advised them to shoot was a close friend.

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Mr. Gullison filed on the SW of Sec. 17, Township 22, Range 5, on his birthday, the twenty first of September, 1893. It was his 36th birthday. He had his first office, probably the first one in town with board sides, right on the square north of the land office.

The family had been waiting at Kingfisher. Just as soon as the run was made Mrs. Gullison came up with the children. They shipped their goods to North Knid, from which place they were hauled to Knid. Mr. Gullison built a house where the Gentry Motor Company is at 302 North Grand Avenue and they moved in on the 25th of September. There were no windows and no doors in the house and only a dirt floor. Nearly everyone was in tents, but there were ten thousand people on the town-site, whose favorite cry was; "O, Joe, here's your male." For rafters, we nailed up slats.

Shortly after they built a house 12x18, with doors, windows, and floor, on East Hill. This they moved on their claim in January, 1894. Here (on East Hill) they had their horse, wagon, chickens and even their dog stolen, which was a real hardship to them.

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In January they moved a house on the claim. There were no neighbors nearer than a mile and a half and Mrs. Cullison had four children to look after. The Judge was trying to do locating on the public lands and a law business. As they had no team, he would come back Wednesday night and Saturday night leaving Mrs. Cullison alone much of the time. Mrs. Cullison says she does not know how he got out those six miles everytime. Sometimes he would rent a horse and get out that way.

One night Mr. Connegan came over and wanted to stay and Mrs. Cullison didn't know what to do as he had helped them get located. However just then Mr. Cullison came home and they let him stay. They made final proof after living on the place fourteen months. Later, they sold the place, and Mr. Leavengood lives there now. But the Cullisons have been real homesteaders. They stayed two summers. It was very dry but they raised sod corn and melons. The land was fine but the water was bad, being salty so that they had to haul drinking water from Bear Creek. Occasionally they had to use the water off their own place but they could not soften it and were afraid to drink it.

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They moved north of the (old) Masonic building where they had a home one and a half stories high, two rooms upstairs and two in front and two in the back down stairs. This is where they were living when Dick Yeager was shot.

Around the corner on Maine Street, on the opposite side of the street, lived Mrs. Robinson, ^{and} the husband of a woman boarding there shot Mrs. Robinson, intending to shoot his wife. It was night but the court was still in session, and the man's wife ran up to the court room for protection and created quite a commotion.

Another evening Mrs. Cullison said they heard shooting. It was the Williams Eisenburg-Patterson affair, so well known in early Enid history. However there was little of this kind of thing in the Cherokee Strip, less actually happened than you will see in the movies.

In 1897 Mr. Cullison was appointed Registrar of the Land Office. He served as registrar for five years until the land office was discontinued. Shortly after that he developed the Cullison addition of Enid. This is one half mile north of Randolph Street. He bought it to get

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away from the railroad, then they put two railroads in over there. They lived out on the addition a number of years. Then Mr. Cullison was appointed Probate Judge. When Oklahoma became a state, he was made county judge, a slight promotion. Then in 1910, they made him district judge. The district at that time was of four counties, including Garfield. Afterwards two more counties were added. Then another judge was appointed to cover the larger district. Judge Roberts, former Registrar of the Land Office in Kingfisher was Mr. Cullison's co-judge. Later, when Mr. Cullison went to the Supreme Court, Judge Hybrant was made judge. He served as district judge for eighteen years until 1928. He was never defeated for office, until the present change in politics. In 1928, he was elected associate Justice of the state supreme court. While serving in this capacity, Mr. and Mrs. Cullison lived for six years at the Skirvin Hotel in Oklahoma City. At the expiration of his term he was elected Vice-Chief Justice. Had he been elected again he would have been made Chief Justice.

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At the close of his term of service, he came home to Enid. When a judge, he always felt his responsibility. He related at the Bar Association at a gathering at Tulsa, where nine of the Justices of the State Supreme Court were made guests of honor (as well as to many other gatherings of lawyers) Governor Haskell sitting at his table, "I never walked up the steps of the courthouse that I did not offer a prayer that I might administer justice." He was not goody-goody but true.

When he was admitted to the bar, 125 lawyers were admitted at the same time. He was the last one of the group left in Enid, since Kurren Sturgis passed away. There may be some of the group possibly living elsewhere. Mr. McKeever said of Judge Cullison, that he hated sin, but loved the sinner, or in other words, tempered justice with mercy. On September 11, 1936 he died. He lacked just ten days of being 79 years old.

The Cullisons were actively interested in the Methodist Church. In the confused state of affairs, there had been some work of a pastoral nature done previously, but Reverend Miriam Potter will be remembered

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always as a most consecrated minister who took hold of the church before it had a building, and built the first Methodist Church at Grand and Maple. It was later moved to its present location. Reverend Potter had the true missionary spirit. Mrs. Cullison joined the Methodist Church at Kirksville, Missouri, at sixteen and she has been a member for sixty years.

To Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Cullison were born seven children, one dying in infancy, as follows: James B. Cullison lives at Evanston, Illinois. He is manager of the Hail Department of several old line insurance companies with eleven subsidiaries. His business office is in Chicago. One of the larger companies is the Aetna, another the Great Northern. He is the manager for this latter for the United States and Canada. He is conceded to be the best informed man on hail insurance in the United States. He has about 6,000 men under him.

Mrs. June Cullison Otjen, a daughter, lives at 1315 West Maine, Enid. With her at the present time is Mrs. J. B. Cullison. Mrs. Otjen has recently published

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a book of fiction, "Atahualpa". This is based upon a real character, the last chief of the Incas. Her husband is Past Commander of the Spanish American War Veterans. He has a record for distinguished service in the Philippine War.

May Gullison Myers, another daughter, was born shortly after the opening of the Strip as I said. She and Mr. Myers live on a farm near Dover. She is interested in music, wherever it affects the community. She also takes part in home demonstration clubs, farm women's clubs, and in this field she has won prizes.

Douglas L. Gullison, of New York City, another son, is an investment engineer, who appraises banks and other large public buildings for loans. His wife is a New York City lady. He was in the service twenty-two months, during the World War, but did not get across to his great dissatisfaction.

Mrs. William J. Vaught is a graduate of the school of Civics and Philanthropy in Chicago, and has had charge of several circuits of girls in Redpath Chautauqs. She is a member of the Institute of Child Life at Philadelphia

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and is an organizer of mother's clubs throughout the East. She graduated from Northwestern University. Her business headquarters are in Washington. They live at Cottage View, Maryland. She has two daughters in the University of Maryland.

The youngest daughter is Jeanette Cullison Johnston who married Glenn W. Johnston. They reside in Kingfisher. Glenn is a son of W. B. Johnston, the well known Enid grain buyer and pioneer who died not long ago. He owned an elevator in Kingfisher.

Note by Mrs. J. B. Cullison:

I feel happy in my children and in my seventeen grandchildren. Everyone was born perfect physically and with good sense. All are respectable and respected. I care more for that than to be known as a fashionable woman.