

WALTON, JACK

INTERVIEW

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Investigator, Carl R. Sherwood,
November 11, 1937.

Interview with Jack Walton.
Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

Jeter T. Cunningham was born December 1, 1943, near Tahlequah in the Cherokee Nation. His forefathers were land grants, and his father came from Chattanooga County, Georgia, in 1838.

His father, Andrew Cunningham, was a white man born in Mississippi in 1812, and possessed a very good education. He was in the mercantile business in Georgia.

When Andrew Cunningham first came West and settled among the Cherokees he located near Maysville, Arkansas, where many immigrants of that period first established their homes, and he there married Maria, daughter of Jeter Lynch, an Irishman, whose Cherokee wife was Nancy Martin. Mrs. Cunningham was the widow of Johnson Thompson, a Cherokee who had two sons, James F. and Joseph L. who died and were buried near Maysville. The issue of marriage of Andrew and Nancy Cunningham were Jeter and Babra; the latter married L. B. Bell, and died near Vinita. Mr. Cunningham died in 1850, and his wife died in 1894. Jeter Cunningham was reared like most other sons

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of farmers of the period and received his education in the pay-schools of the country.

As he was nearing his majority, the Civil War began and he joined the Confederacy, enlisting in Company A under Captain Hugh Tinnin of the First Cherokee Regiment under Colonel Stand Watie first, but later commanded by Colonel J. M. Bell.

Before he joined the first Regiment his Company was in the battle of Wilson Creek with the Fourth Arkansas Infantry, Pierce's Brigade and in the Pea Ridge fight as an artillery company of Hart's Battery.

The company to which Mr. Cunningham belonged was in the assault on the garrison at Fort Gibson, having a small engagement at Fort Smith, Mr. Cunningham was then part of the regiment which was sent into the Western country to treat with the wild Indians and was somewhere near Fort Cobb when the war ended.

The command was included in the surrender of General Buckner's Army some time after peace was restored. For the first two years after the war, Mr. Cunningham was located on Blue River, near where the Texas Oil Company's pumping station is in operation just north of Durant.

He then sold merchandise and handled cattle, gathering together a few dollars with which he resumed his station as a farmer and stockman upon his return to the vicinity of his old home.

He settled on a new farm up on Grand River and built up his fortunes as a farmer for ten years. He opened a drug store in Vinita in company with Doctor Trott and two years later moved to Tahlequah and became a drug clerk. Later, he began a career of office holding among the Cherokees.

He was a Downing adherent and was first elected Clerk of the Delaware District, which office he filled for eight years and while holding this position he spent his spare time reading law books.

From being clerk, he was elected to the National Council, then was made associate Justice and then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Nation. His last office was that of Executive Secretary, under Chief Joel B. Mayes.