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Story as given by T. F. Cunningham

1-22-51  
(Buland 441)

I was born in Muskogee, April 21, 1880.

My father was Ross R. Cunningham, born in Ft. Gibson in 1856.

My mother Eliza Colston was born in 1847 close to Ft. Gibson.

My father was killed when I was about two years old. He had an argument with a man named Napoleon Bly and turned around and walked off. Bly shot him in the back and left the country.

My grandfather was a white man, born in Tennessee. He came to this country between 1820 and 1840. He was one of Ft. Gibson's first Post Masters. A home that he built about 1866 is still standing. At one time grandfather owned a livery stable in Muskogee, which he sold to John Cobb in 1880. He moved to Eureka Springs, Arkansas and died in 1917.

My grandmothers name was Frances Nave.

My mother married David Andre in 1890. He was a harness maker by trade, had a shop in Ft. Gibson and managed one in Muskogee for a man named Elliot. Andre was born in Ft. Gibson. I do not know the year.

Mother and he lived on the Grand River close to the fort and he was very friendly with the soldiers. A school was established at the post for the post children and soldiers that wanted to go to school. On account of the friendship between my step father and the officers at the

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fort, I was allowed to go to the post school. I remember studying McGuffeys second reader, with a soldier at the fort. I seemed peculiar to me as he was a grown man. One of the teachers was Sargent Dodge and the other was the post Chaplain. The next school I attended was the Trival School of the Cherokee Nation, at Ft. Gibson. My aunt Minnie Cunningham Vann was the principal and Emma Beck was her assistant. Later I attended Bacone School.

I remember one of the games we played was shinney. We used a tin can. We would also play what we called town ball. Part of the time we played with a foot ball. Marbles was a great game in that time. I went rabbit hunting once in a while.

I was on January 29, 1902 to Emily Harnage,<sup>Scott</sup> daughter of John Stringer Scott and Loretta Beldora Harnage. She was born August 16, 1882 at Ft. Gibson and went to school in St. Gibson and at Bacone College.

My first job was as clerk in Dr. J. S. Fullers Drug Store. After that I was assistant post master in Ft. Gibson. Hubbard Ross was the Post Master. I was also city clerk in Ft. Gibson for quite a long time and was mayor in 1911 and 1912.

Before 1900 cotton and corn were about the only crops raised. After that they began to raise potatoes around Ft. Gibson. In the early days all the bottoms were not cleared. The farmers would plant corn in the clear spots and make 70 or 80 bushels per acre. Some time the corn was plowed once and sometimes not at all.

I can remember when the Jeff Davis home here was still in good repair.

The supplies for the military post here were shipped to Gibson Station by train and wagons were sent to haul them to the Fort. Tom French had a ferry over the Grand River, at that time. His home is still standing on the other side of the river. One winter there was a very hard freeze and the Grand River was frozen solid. Sawdust was thrown on the ice all the way cross the river, and wagons with four horses crossed on the ice. They came back from Gibson Station with heavy loads of supplies and again crossed on the ice. I do not believe the river has ever frozen over that solid since that time. Ice for the Fort was always cut when the river would freeze in the winter, and stored for the summer.

In the Civil War days my grandmother owned a home just out of Ft. Gibson. The Union soldiers confiscated the place, and used it for a pest house. After the small pox was over the soldiers burned the house. Grandmother later sewed the government for burning her home, but was never able to get anything out of it.