

NECROLOGY

OMAR ELLSWORTH NULL
(1862-1954)

Omar Ellsworth Null, one of Hills County's most eminent and important citizens, died at the Shattuck Memorial Hospital, January 11, 1954, at the age of nearly 92 years. Funeral services were conducted by the Reverend B. P. Harrison and were held in the Methodist Church at Arnett, on January 14, 1954. Interment was in the DeWitt Cemetery, beside his wife, Melissa, who preceded him in death July 20, 1935.

He was born in Delaware County, Indiana, near Muncie, the county seat, May 23, 1862. The son of George Andrew Null and Mary Ann Miller Null. When in his early teens, he immigrated with his parents to Cowley County, Kansas, where they homesteaded near Red Bud. He engaged in various activities as a youth, among them he was employed as foreman on a cattle ranch in the Indian Territory operated by Carlton, Van Huskirk and Cook some twelve miles northwest of where Stillwater now stands. He joined Payne's Colony in 1882 and planned to make the run with them, but never made a go with any of them.

Mr. Null was united in marriage with Mary Melissa Wakek, daughter of Adam Wakek and Mary Walker Wakek of Red Bud, Kansas, on March 15, 1885. To this union there was born seven children: Chester A. Null; Mrs. Laura A. Plank; Mrs. Mary Ida Cooley; Weaver F. Null, deceased; Bonnie Null, deceased; Mrs. Zella Velma Vincent; and Robert H. Null, deceased.

In August 1894, Mr. Null immigrated with his family to Day County, Oklahoma where he homesteaded a claim on Mosquito Creek six miles north of Grand. His first home was a dugout. The next thing of importance was establishing a school district, with some four families with thirteen children. Ike Millon, John Fowler, David Moorhead and O. E. Null met out on the prairie and proceeded to organize a school district in the rough. Their first school home was a dugout. Mrs. Emma Fowler was the first teacher at \$20.00 per month. A Sunday School was organized next, for he believed that the foundation of society rested in schools, churches and Sunday schools. In his early youth he was united with the Presbyterian Church.

Mr. Null soon became identified with the County government. His first official capacity was deputy County Clerk. He was also County Surveyor helping the newly arrived settlers locate the corner stones to their claims. Looking into the future he realized that these settlers would have to have abstract of title to their land, should they want to sell or mortgage their possession. To meet this future demand, he organized the first abstract office in Grand, in 1902. His first abstracts were written in long hand. He also introduced the first typewriter in Grand. At Grand he served as Deputy District Clerk, under federal jurisdiction, resigning that job to Chester, his son, he was given a Commission as U. S. Land Commissioner, a position he held until Statehood.

Mr. Null has been in the vanguard for everything that advanced his community's interest. He was active in the support of his home town, Arnett, for the County Seat as shown by his activities in purchasing and plating the Town of Arnett.

After Statehood he transferred his abstract business to Arnett, and with his son, Chester, incorporated under the present title, O. E. Null and Son.



OMAR ELLSWORTH STILL.

Inc., Abstracters. As an abstracter he was a deep student of Oklahoma law in regard to land titles. A prominent attorney once said to him in confidence, "I would rather have the opinion of O. E. Null on the merits of a land title than any lawyer in Oklahoma." He had a cool analytical mind and no legal point escaped him.

All classes of people came to him to straighten out their land titles, to examine the records at the court house; a lot of this work would be free. A poor homesteader trying to get a loan, in these cases O. E. Null was a soft touch. A friend joked him about the free advice he handed out. His reply, "You know the adage about 'bread cast upon the water'?" In his case it returned a thousand fold. Maybe not in a material way, but in love and friendship and high regard he was more than compensated.

At Statehood election he was elected Clerk of the District Court and twice re-elected, quitting that office in 1915, the only such officer Ellis County ever had. In 1917 he organized the first National Farm Loan Association and has served our people with long time, low interest farm loans.

In politics, Mr. Null was a staunch Republican. When he first came to Day County, it was not popular to be a Republican, most of the first settlers being Democrats from Texas. Day County officials were elected by position for anyone who could get fifty signatures to a petition could run for office. When the settlers began to flock in from the North about the time that Flynn's "Free Homes Bill" was enacted by Congress, the political picture of the County changed. It was here that O. E. Null showed his pioneer spirit. He called a meeting of all the Republicans in the County to perfect an organization. It was well attended and a spirited one. The next election was held on party lines, each party with a full ticket.¹

After the death of his wife, Melissa, he made his home with his daughter, Mrs. Zella Vincent. About this time he turned over most of the work in his abstract business to his son, Chester, and paid more attention to the National Farm Loan Association of which he was Secretary-Treasurer.

He was a member of the I.O.O.F. for more than fifty years, and a Woodman of the World, both associations with the friends that he loved. His hobby was carpentry for he liked to build things. He was a great student of history, especially Oklahoma History, and a life long member of the Oklahoma Historical Society, always interested in its activities as a close observer. His newspaper stories entitled, "I Remember," recalled some of his interesting early day experiences with the human touch.

Mr. Null wishing to preserve the early history of Day County moved the first log house built in the area of Arnett, to serve as a museum. The house was built by Asa Derrick for Tom Black on Turkey Creek in 1898. It is made from cedar timbers, hewn out of native red cedars. The house was torn down and each log marked, before being hauled to Arnett where they were re-assembled in their original position. This cabin is standing adjoining his abstract office, showing the contrast between the primitive and modern buildings.

Through adversity and prosperity, Omar E. Null was always the friend when called upon. At his passing, one who had known and loved him many years said of this old pioneer, "They don't make 'em any more; they have lost the moulds."

—O. H. Richards

Arnett, Oklahoma

¹ *Northwest Oklahoman*, Shattuck, Oklahoma, January 14, 1954, "Obituary."