

## HOW MY GRANDFATHER RAN FOR REPRESENTATIVE

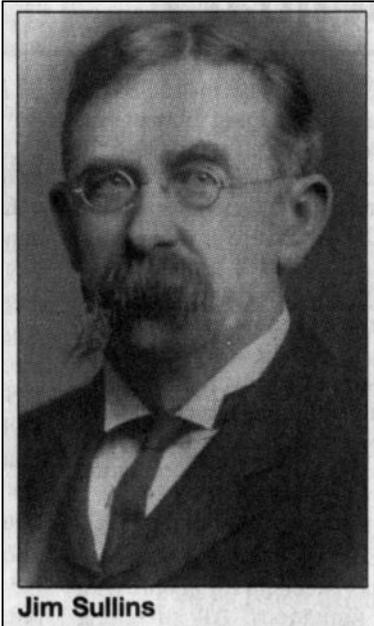
By Charlene Sullins

Writer's Corner

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*Editor's note: With Election Day set for Thursday, Miss Charlene Sullins, daughter of Charlie Cleveland Sullins, shares with us the story of how her granddad Jim's candidacy emerged to run for representative as it had been told to her by her dad in this week's Writer's Corner.*

Jim (James Jasper Sullins), who was married to Betty Jane Shanks Sullins, owned a 225-acre farm in the lower end of Putnam County in the 11<sup>th</sup> district with three acres being in Smith County. He was a farmer by trade but took part in government and politics.



He was a democrat in the old principled Democratic party. He was elected justice of the peace, representing the 11<sup>th</sup> district for 15 years in the county court. He married people, tried people for wrongs they did, issued warrants for people, etc.

His formal education is unknown. He educated himself from his own law books. He took an active part in the county court justice of the peace meetings. He was called the tax payer's watch dog. At that time, people who owned property had to put in so much time working on the roads.

The county court passed a road law bearing down on poor people.

A judge Whitson, who presided over the county court, asked, "What do you think of our road law?" my grandpa Jim rose to his feet and said, "I can tell what I think about it in a mighty few words, it's the most dastardly piece of legislation ever passed over on any people," and sat down.

After the county court adjourned, people from all over the county met him in the court house lobby saying, "We're going to run you for representative to ear that road law up."

He was reluctant to run but Charlie finally persuaded him to do so. He announced it in the Putnam County Herald and then came down ill with a fever and was unable to electioneer but once at Cookeville court house, when a gubernatorial candidate was making a speech there, he knew he could see a lot of people. His son, Dolph, electioneered for him.

Dolph was road superintendent and extremely well-liked, Jim had no cards struck and the only money he spent were for newspaper announcements. He would not change or amen what he stood for to get votes.

An ad taken out by Sullins prior to the election read:

"As the election is close at hand, and I am a Candidate for the Legislature, and have seen but few of you on account of sickness in my family, and while telling you why I haven't been to see you I want to briefly call your attention to my Platform that was published some time ago in the Putnam County Herald.

I told you if you sent me down to represent you in the next General Assembly, I would repeal the present Road Law; in fact, I told you in that Platform I would be on hand voting to lower your Tax instead of raising them.

I have heard some inquiries as to my stand on the so-called Stock Law.

As far as I know, the Tax Payers are content with that Law as it is, and I see no reason why any member of the Legislature should consume time with Laws Tax Payers are content with, while there are so many Laws they are not content with, that needs abolishing and repealing that would take the entire time of 75 days or longer.

Now Ladies and Gentlemen, if what I have promised you meets your approval; I would thank you indeed, for you vote and influence.

Respectfully, J. J. Sullins.”

While electioneering at the court house, a man out form Cookeville in the upper end of the county, went to Jim and said, “I control 75 votes in my district, how do you fell about the Whitson road law?” Jim said, “I’m against every bit of it from A to Z.” The man said, “I am for it.” Jim replied, “My friend, all I know to tell you is to vote for my opponent, I understand he is for it.”

After winning the election, someone told Jim the man said, “I found out where Sullins is at, I could not shake him.”

Jim got all the 75 votes. He went on to the legislature and got the road law repealed. He did not run anymore as he had to be away from home so much and the pay was so little.

Afterwards, Jim continued to be a member of the county court until his death in 1935. All together, he served 22 years. John Henry Denny, trustee of Putnam County in the 1950s, said Jim was a good politician.

#### **James “Jim” Jasper Sullins/Sullens**

b. 27 August 1861, TN – d. 27 May 1935, Buffalo Valley, Putnam Co., TN, md **Elizabeth Jane "Betty" Shanks**, b. 8 December 1859, TN – d. 30 December 1935, d/o **Craven Michael Shanks & Nancy Catherine Hendley**. James Jasper Sullins/Sullens, s/o **Jesse Sullins/Sullens & Martha Carr**. James “Jim” & Elizabeth Jane are both buried in Smellage Cemetery, Boma, Putnam Co., TN.



Memorial to the family of James Jasper Sullins in Smellage Cemetery, Boma, TN.

\*See more Writer’s Corner stories at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>