

THE WRIGHT FAMILY

Judge Edward H. and Cora Coleman Wright

By Bob Kosters

This article would be lengthy indeed if we were to try to cover fully the lives and all the accomplishments of Judge Wright and his wife, Cora. We will, however, attempt, with the generous help of daughters, Julia and Eleanor to put some of this history on record for the Duvall Historical Society.

When I first knew the Wrights, they lived beyond the school and just this side of Cherry Creek on the place where the Don Bevans now reside. The judge, at that time was practicing law from the "kitchen table", as he would say, and running his farm. On the side, they had purchased the 80 acre farm in Cherry Valley and moved there in 1924. In the mid 40's, they moved into Duvall, across the street from the Hixs, and just up the hill from the bank which their son, Ed, was managing at that time. Judge Wright had his law

office in the Franke building from the time he moved to town until he passed away. I recall one day, sitting in his office as he was helping me with something, he noticed my midwest origin, and he told me then of his days in the midwest, and how he had met or rode on the train with Teddy Roosevelt when Teddy was campaigning for office.

We also remember the only occasion we saw the Judge in action in King County Superior Court. In a suit involving a number of local people in the early 1940's, Mr. Wright served as attorney for two of the defendants. As a spectator only, I watched as a half dozen lawyers with their leather brief cases, came in and sat down at the long tables where their clients were sitting. But Judge Wright was seated off to the right side in a rocking chair. It was apparent that the court had given him a special place and chair out of respect for the white haired Duvall attorney. The proceedings began with comments from the presiding judge and some of the attorneys. When Mr. Wright spoke

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up, and with a few well-chosen words, the case came to a halt, Judge Wright's clients were dismissed from the suit, and all the defendants were to receive proper notification of any future trial date.

Judge Wright also received recognition by the Seattle press in 1949, as the rural justice of the peace for Cherry Valley precinct, who had taken a case from Novelty precinct, which did not have a justice of the peace. The County Sheriff had refused to serve the warrant, because of a law made by the 1935 legislature, which said rural justices of the peace had no jurisdiction outside their own precinct unless the prosecuting attorney approved. Judge Wright took the matter to court and the court ruled that the legislature had erred in giving this power to the prosecuting attorney. The Judge won this case and many others during his long career.

Judge Wright was born in Tecumseh, Nebraska, on March 24, 1871, and was raised at Afton, Iowa, southwest of Des Moines. After graduating from Drake University at Des Moines in 1893, he began his law practice in a tent on the Cherokee Strip in Oklahoma. He married Cora Coleman at Kulm, North Dakota, on June 10, 1896, where Cora's family lived at that time. After the Wrights were married, they went back to the Afton area where he had been raised and Cora had been teaching music at Afton College. The Wrights were in Iowa for a year or two, and then lived at Armour, South Dakota, for a time, and it was there that their first child, Warren was born in 1899. The Wrights next lived in Valley City, North Dakota, where daughters, Lucile and Eleanor were born, and then on to Fargo, North Dakota, where Julia and Edward were born. In addition to starting a family, Mr. Wright also edited a weekly newspaper for a time, and ran for the North Dakota Supreme Court, losing by only a few votes. In 1909, the Wright family came to South Bend, Washington, in a private railroad car that the judge had rented for the trip. The South Bend years were busy ones with the Judge practicing law, and Cora involved in music. Mr. Wright was elected Superior Court Judge for Pacific and Wahkiakum counties in those days, and from that time was known as the Judge. The Wrights went to Seattle in 1916, and the law firm of Lockerby and Wright, took up offices in the 14th floor of the new Smith Tower.

It was 1924, when the Wrights left their big twelve room house on Lake Washington in Seattle, and moved to the farm on Cherry Creek. The Wrights were now in their fifties, but seemed not to have slowed down as they now had a farm to take care of in addition to their other duties. Having already given you some background on the Judge, we will now give some of Mrs. Wright's earlier history, though not the space this lady deserves.

Cora Coleman was born at Conover, Iowa, on Aug. 17, 1874. She was an accomplished pianist and vocalist, hav-

ing studied at the Chicago and New England Conservatories of Music. She taught at colleges in the midwest and southern colleges, and also the college at Fargo, North Dakota, when they lived in that city. Mrs. Wright gave private lessons in Seattle and later in Duvall. Cora Wright would appear in local programs and at times would play duets with Velma Hill, a student of hers. She was proud of the accomplishments of her children and grandchildren, and was an inspiration to grand-daughter Martha Wright whom she taught to sing, and lived to see become a Broadway success. This lady was dearly loved by many relatives and friends and passed away in April, 1951. The Judge passed away about a year later in March of 1952.

I am grateful to the Wright daughters, Julia Orvis of Seattle and Eleanor Karmin of Puyallup for furnishing information for this article. Son, Warren (now 90 years old) lives in Seattle. Daughter, Lucile Wiederrecht died in 1976 and son, Edward died Dec. 26, 1988, and his passing reminded us of the days when, if a bank loan for cattle or real estate or an appraisal of property were needed, Ed, the banker would do it, and if legal papers were involved, he would take you down the street to his father, the judge.

It was those kind of times, and those kinds of people that made our town of Duvall attractive.



L-R Back: Judge Wright, Cora Wright, Mr. Wiederrecht (Martha's father), Eleanor Karmin (Judge's daughter), Front: Martha Wright, Her mother, Lucile Wiederrecht.