

Who are the parents of Eulis Rainwater?

by Susan Chance-Rainwater, Sep 2020

In 1942, Eulis Rainwater filled out his WWII draft card, giving Livingston Co, Kentucky as his place of birth. He was born, he said, in April 1895.

Livingston County has been home to only one line of Rainwaters, the family of Robert Parks Rainwater, and later his son William Newton Rainwater. While all of R. P. Rainwater's family lived in the county between 1850-1860, by 1870, he and most of his children had moved elsewhere. Only William Newton Rainwater remained in Livingston County.

William married Elizabeth Cain in 1871. By about 1887, the couple had apparently divorced. Elizabeth then married James Henry Ringstaff. She died in 1892. William is found in Indian Territory in 1900, but in no record thereafter.

William and Elizabeth were the parents of six daughters – Mary, Hattie Evaline, Alice, Ann, and Alma – identifiable through marriage records, death records, and interlocking census records. It's possible that there were other children, but these are the only ones I can clearly identify.

Which brings me to Frank.

Eulis' 1959 obituary names Mr and Mrs Frank Rainwater as his parents. You would think that somewhere between 1900 and 1959, I would have run across Frank, unless he died right after Eulis was born. That's possible. Frank could be a child of William and Elizabeth Rainwater, born between 1880 and 1887, that is, born after the 1880 census, but before the couple divorced. If Frank was born in late 1880, he would have been 15 when Eulis was born. So, it's possible.

It's also possible that Eulis is the illegitimate son of one of the older daughters, and the 1900 census sort of suggests this. Agewise, this would have to be Mary or Alice.

In 1900, Alice Rainwater is living with her step-grandmother. She is listed as single and the mother of no children.

Mary is listed as Mary Westbrook, in the household of her husband Thomas. She also is the mother of no children, but her household contains a boy named Winn Rainwater, born in April 1895 who is identified as her son. Technically, he's listed Thomas Westbrook's son, because the relationships are to the head of household. So the birthdate is a match, the name is not, and the relationship is unclear. Still, that date of birth is interesting.

By 1910, Eulis, recorded as Ulis, is boarding in an unrelated household. Mary Rainwater Westbrook had died by 1910, Thomas Westbrook had not, so if Eulis was Thomas Westbrook's son, I would expect them to still be living in the same household. My reading, therefore, is that Mary died, and Eulis was boarded out because he was Mary's relation, not Thomas's.

To summarize:

- Eulis says he was born in Livingston Co, KY
- He also says he was born in April 1895
- Winn was born in Livingston Co, KY in April 1895
- There is no direct evidence of Frank, but the obituary names him
- Eulis is listed as a "son" in 1900, but the evidence identifying Mary as his mother is in conflict.
- His surname in 1900 is Rainwater, not Westbrook

I think that Winn is Eulis. The evidence of the location and date of birth are too strong to ignore. I further think that he is in Mary Westbrook's household because her brother Frank was his father and had died before 1900. After his aunt's death, he was boarded out, and changed his name from Winn to Eulis. Finally, the obituary's saying he is the son of "Mr and Mrs Frank Rainwater" suggests that the obituary's writer doesn't know his mother's name, and Eulis may also not have known.

Finding a marriage record or other evidence for Frank would certainly clear things up.

SOURCES

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- 2983: "Eulis Rainwater rites set Friday," pg 18, Southern Illinoisan, Carbondale, IL, 8 Jul 1959

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