

FOSSETT, W. D.

THIRD INTERVIEW

#9281

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Louise S. Barnes.

This report made on (date) November 18, 1937

1. Name William D. Fossett

2. Post Office Address Kingfisher, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 3 Year 1852

5. Place of birth Watertown, N. Y.

6. Name of Father John Fossett Place of birth Dublin, Ireland

Other information about father Was a farmer.

7. Name of Mother Susan Fossett Place of birth Scotland.

Other information about mother _____

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 3.

Louise G. Barnes
Investigator,
11-18-37

Interview with W. D. Fossett
Kingfisher, Oklahoma.

William D. Fossett was born November 3, 1851, on a farm near Watertown, N. Y., and when he was four years old accompanied the family to Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and in 1863 went with them to Minnesota. He was reared as a farm boy and received a common school education.

In 1873 he went to Kansas and engaged in the cattle business on the Smoky River, near Solomon City. He had some experience about this time as a marshal in Texas, and upon returning to Kansas became one of the first marshals in Caldwell. For several years he dealt extensively in live stock, often going to Monterey, Mexico, and driving as many as five hundred horses, sometimes to Emporia, Kansas, where he shipped the animals to Michigan and to other Eastern points.

Mr. Fossett had many narrow escapes with the outlaws during these times. His natural courage and presence of mind alone saved him on more than one occasion, and he has many thrilling accounts of hairbreadth escapes. As a United States Marshal he was particularly set apart for death and his life was frequently threatened and more than once

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he was a target for the assassin and several of his deputies were killed but he seemed to live a charmed life.

While he was marshal at Caldwell he had a lively encounter with seven outlaws who attempted to rob the bank. He continued to hold the position of marshal for seven years, at the end of which time he resigned.

While on a trip to Monterey, Mexico, to buy horses, his party of seven was ambushed by Mexican bandits who killed and plundered the bodies of five of the party.

In 1882 Mr. Fossett located upon a ranch in Kingman County, Kansas, and there engaged in cattle raising. Later he took contracts for building sections of the Missouri Pacific and the Bald Knob & Memphis railroads. He then became interested in the construction of a levee along the Mississippi River.

On April 22, 1889, he located on a farm on the present site of Kingfisher, and as thousands of people selected lots on the same location, the first decision of the local office was against him, but, appealing the case, he received a favorable verdict which finally was sustained by the Secretary of the Interior. False affidavits, however,

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were filed and the whole matter from the beginning had to be reviewed. It was not until the close of three years lawsuit that Mr. Fossett received his patent to forty acres, which was proved up under the townsite act, and for which he paid \$10.00 an acre. His suit, which gained widespread attention was the first contested case in the Territory.

He was appointed chief office deputy marshal at Guthrie by Frank M. Thompson, on November 6, 1897, and served for several years. Mr. Thompson was Territorial Treasurer under Governor C. M. Barnes. Mr. Fossett has retired now and makes his home in Kingfisher.