

WEST, LLIS

INTERVIEW

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

WEST, ELLIS

INTERVIEW

#5177

Field Worker's name O. C. DavidsonThis report made on (date) March 23, 1937

1. Name Ellis West
2. Post Office Address Muskogee, Oklahoma
3. Residence address (or location) 714 Galveston
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 6 Year 1869
5. Place of birth Porum, Indian Territory.

6. Name of Father John C. West Place of birth _____
Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Marguerite E. Hickey Place of birth _____
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 4 sheets.

WEST, ELLIS

INTERVIEW

#5177

O. C. Davidson,
Field Worker.

I was born at Porum, Indian Territory, December 6, 1869. My grandfather, John W. West, who was half Irish and half Cherokee Indian, was born in Tennessee, March 29, 1811, and died April 4, 1867. My grandmother, Ruth Fields West, a fullblood Cherokee Indian, was born in Tennessee, December 11, 1815, and died September 22, 1869.

They came to the Indian Territory the year of 1838 in the removal of Indians to this country and settled on a farm where Westville, is now.

On August 10, 1843, my father, John C. West was born.

Later on, Grandfather moved up on Grand River to the old Ross Salt Works at the mouth of Saline Creek where the town of Salina, now stands and purchased the salt works and operated them for many years.

During the Civil War these salt works were confiscated by the government.

My father ran away from home when he was only sixteen years of age, and joined the Southern Army. He fought in the Civil War with General Stand Watie. He was in the battle at Elk Creek and also in the battle at Fort Gibson in 1862. Fortunately, he escaped without injury in either battle, although his brother, George West, was killed in the battle at Fort Gibson. Before the war was over many Cherokees left this country and went to Rusk County, Texas. My father went with

WEST, ELLIS

INTERVIEW

#5177

-2-

them and they came back to the territory in 1866. They came back mostly in ox wagons, and some on horseback. On that return trip my father and my mother, Marguerite E. Hickey, were married on Red River. My grandmother on mother's side, Rachel Fields Hickey, came from Georgia to the Indian Territory in 1833 on horseback; but she only stayed a short time and went back to Georgia and stayed until the removal in 1838.

My father was an Indian Policeman. He got his first commission in 1884 and served forty-seven years. The last four years he was captain of the Indian Police. He also served as city marshal of Muskogee from 1889 to 1892. During this time he also carried a commission as deputy United States Marshal under Colonel Jacob Yowes of Fort Smith, Arkansas. He also served under Thomas B. Needles, the first United States Marshal of the Indian Territory after the Federal Court was established in Muskogee. Judge Shackelford was the first Federal Judge in the Indian Territory. Colonel Waldron was the first District Attorney and Major Nelson was the first United States Commissioner.

In the year 1885, John Middleton killed the sheriff of Lamar County, Texas, and came to Briartown. My father and Polk Burris, a deputy sheriff from Lamar County, Texas, and Jack Duncan, a detective from Texas, trailed him to Belle Starr's place, six miles southwest of Porum on the Canadian River but failed to capture him. So the Texas

WEST, ELLIS

INTERVIEW

#5177

-3-

officers turned the papers over to my father and returned to Texas.

In the spring of 1886 Belle and Sam Starr, Frank Cook and John Middleton robbed the Treasurer of the Seminoles, and went back to Younger's Bend. John Middleton stole a horse from Reverend McCarty at Hoyt, Indian Territory, and he (Middleton), Belle Starr and Frank Cook started to Dardenelle, Arkansas. John Middleton was drowned in the Poteau River just above Fort Smith, Arkansas. My father and a man they called Captain Gunn, a tax collector from Paris, Texas, and deputy sheriff named Millsap, also from Paris, Texas, went up the Poteau River a short way above Fort Smith where they had buried Middleton, dug up the body and identified it. They then followed Belle Starr and Frank Cook to Dardenelle, Arkansas; captured Cook and brought him back to Fort Smith, where he was tried and sent to the penitentiary for five years.

Because my father was an officer the Starr gang wanted to get revenge on him in some way. On the Seventeenth day of December, 1886, Sam Starr undertook to kill my father's youngest brother, Frank West, and did, but my uncle Frank also killed Starr.

My father served as sheriff of the Canadian District during the years of 1894- 1895.

I was the first constable elected at Porum after statehood, which office I held for eight years. I also served as deputy sheriff and city marshal at Porum. I was an officer there during the Starr

WEST, ELLIS

INTERVIEW

#5177

-4-

and Davis feud, when several men were killed. Those killings could have all been avoided but the officers in Porum didn't want to capture Bob Davis, they wanted to kill him. Davis came to me and told me that if I would get the papers for his arrest that I would not even have to come after him; he would come in and give himself up to me; but I told him that they would not let me have the papers for they knew that I wouldn't kill him and they wanted him killed.

During the Civil War the Northern Soldiers buried a lot of ammunition on the battle ground at Elk Creek and years later a man named Newberry cleared up the ground. In plowing he uncovered twenty-four solid cannon balls and twelve, twelve pound bomb shells. He gave me one of the bomb shells. I started to take it home, and carried it several miles on my horse but finally I gave out carrying it and my father, who was along in a hack, would not let me put ^{it} in the hack for fear it would explode, so I had to throw it away.

I have two revolvers that were used in the Civil War. They are of 44 caliber, six shot single action with 8-inch barrels of heavy gun-metal with copper trigger guards and walnut stocks. They look very much like the Madison Colt Revolver of today but they are of the old cap and bull type. The ramrod is hung underneath the barrel and works with hinge and lever and tamps the cylinders and requires a separate cap on each chamber. I once killed a wolf with one of these revolvers at a distance of a hundred and sixty yards.