

WOODS, ED.

INTERVIEW

8812

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

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#8812

WOODS, ED.

INTERVIEW.

Field Worker's name Virgil CourseyThis report made on (date) October 6, 19371. Name Ed Woods2. Post Office Address Altus, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) \_\_\_\_\_

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 19 Year 18785. Place of birth Kansas6. Name of Father J. O. Woods Place of birth Ohio

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Jane Block Place of birth Texas.

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 \_\_\_\_\_.

An Interview with Ed Woods, Altus, Oklahoma.

By - Virgil Coursey, Investigator.

October 6, 1937.

When I was twenty-three I left the state of Kansas and went to Weatherford where my brother, James Russell Woods, lived. James worked for his father-in-law who was engaged in the implement business. James had written me urging me to come down for the land opening at Lawton. He stated that he had a homestead picked out and wanted me to get one adjoining his. I was unincumbered and decided to make the trip. I started on an old bicycle which broke down just before I reached my destination, so I sold it and went on my way. This was in 1901. When I got there my brother had gotten out of the notion of drawing. "I was never lucky" was his remark. He had been to El Reno to put up a binder for his father-in-law and was tired and not in a frame of mind to register for the drawing. But I insisted that I had made the trip for that purpose and we literally dragged him to the place where every one registered. We all registered and the incident was forgotten.

The firm wanted another binder put up away out across the country so James and I decided to go do the work and take off a day or so for fishing. We went. Just as we got

the binder set so it would tie a knot the lady on the farm announced dinner and we went in to eat. Before we had finished eating we saw a team of black horses, foaming with sweat, rushing toward the house. A man alighted from the wagon and asked if "Jim" Woods was there. My brother indicated that he was the man wanted. Then the visitor said, "I have a warrant for your arrest". James looked rather dumbfounded but before he could manage a reply the visitor clarified the situation by stating that he had a telegram from Mr. Kimball, Jim's father-in-law, stating that Jim (James Russell) had drawn number one claim at Lawton.

We all exploded with excitement, throwing our hats into the air and shouting, that is, all but James. He looked quite awed that we should make such a demonstration.

"Why I am only one of the one hundred and twenty-five to draw claims for that day". The claims were drawn at the rate of a hundred and twenty-five a day until they were all taken.

It took us some time to convince James that number one claim was by far the most valuable claim that would be drawn, and that he would be given his choice of any lot of a hundred

and sixty acres adjoining the town site of Lawton, a piece of land one mile square on which was located the land office.

We were eager to learn all the details of the drawing and drove back to Weatherford that night. My brother was swamped with offers from bankers, real estate men and others in an effort to beat him out of his rights. Even the newspapers took up the fight and printed all manner of cartoons picturing James as the land hog who gobbled up other peoples rights. A lady from Kansas City drew claim number two and many people suggested that since she was a woman, my brother should let her have first choice, or at least arrange it so that their claims would have equal value. He even received threatening messages. On the other hand he was to take advantage of this right and select his land according to the dictates of his own conscience. James decided that since he had drawn claim number one he was entitled to make the selection which would be the most valuable, so he indicated that his claim should run along the entire side of the townsite, a very good choice. There were literally thousands of people living in tents around the town site. I helped build a fence around my brother's claim and we had a hard time getting

the fence straight because there were so many people camping on the ground. About a hundred and twenty wells were drilled on the claim and people were averse to moving off the land. It was finally necessary to call out the soldiers from Fort Sill.

After we got the fence and a dugout built, I went back to Weatherford to move my brother's family. I was anxious to know if I, too, had drawn a claim and went to the post office often. We got everything loaded on the wagon and as we went through town I decided to ask for the mail one time more. I found a notice that I had drawn a claim near Frederick.

I made haste to get to my claim which was four miles north of Frederick. I dug a well and built a sod house and returned to Lawton for a visit. When I came back to my claim I noticed that the door to the house had been opened. It was night and I was a little afraid of entering the house. I opened the door and struck a match, and a cow jumped through the window and fled into the darkness. I relinquished my claim and lived at various places for quite some time and finally married. We have been living in Altus

now for a number of years.

Note:

Mr. Woods says that his brother's name has through error been given as "John R. Woods" instead of James Russell Woods in numerous articles describing the drawing of number one claim.

- Field worker.