

WOODRING, VIOLA

INTERVIEW

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Interviewer, Alene D. McDowell,
October 13, 1937.

Interview with Viola Woodring,
116 $\frac{1}{2}$ West Third Street,
Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

Born November 6, 1862,
Iroquois County, Illinois.
Parents J. C. Morgan Ohio.
Sybil Byers-Morgan, Illinois.

Experiences of Bartlesville's first physician.

My father, J. C. Morgan, born in Ohio, died near the age of seventy years and is buried in White Rose Cemetery, in Bartlesville.

My mother, Sybil Byers-Morgan, was born near Chicago, Illinois; died at the age of seventy-four, and is buried in White Rose Cemetery, in Bartlesville.

I removed to Kansas from Illinois with my parents when I was a child and settled at Elk City, Kansas.

On May 3, 1881, I married Dr. George F. Woodring, a native of Tennessee at Elk City, where we lived for several years.

My husband received his early education in Tennessee. He received his professional education at the Giles College

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and the Hospital Medical College at Louisville, Kentucky, from which he graduated in 1876. He practiced at Luncker Hill, Tennessee, for four years after his graduation, then removed to Elk City, Kansas, where I met and married him.

In September, 1889, we came to the Indian Territory in a covered wagon and settled in Bartlesville. The only livestock we brought with us besides our team was one cow. We lived on the north side of the Caney River for many years. The Bartles Hotel was just completed and my father, J. O. Morgan, and my brother, Frank, rented the hotel from Mr. Bartles and operated it. We lived in the hotel for a short time, then Doctor built a home northwest of the hotel. His office was across the road on the west

side of the Bartles store.

At that time there were only two doctors in our vicinity, Doctor Tan, a negro, whose office was on the southwest side of the store and my husband, Doctor Woodring.

Before we came to the Indian Territory, Doctor practiced his profession and in his spare time he helped in the drug

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store at Elk City for one-half the profits. We rented a two-room house and our furniture cost \$18.00. My first carpet was a home made rag carpet that completely covered the floor.

My sister and her husband, Jet McFadden, came to Bartlesville at the same time we moved here. Jet McFadden had charge of the Bartles store, and later worked for Frank Overlees and Charles Keeler.

One of the most exciting experiences I witnessed in the early days was the robbery of the Bartles store. It was in the evening and my brother-in-law was eating his supper. My father was milking when my little son, Guy, ran in the house and told us the store was being held up and asked for his father's gun. The robbers had Mr. Bartles upstairs and were taking possession of the store. There was no gun at the hotel and Doctor had his gun at the office.

We started across the street and the robbers started shooting at us. About that time Mr. Bartles' son, Joe, rode up on his pony and when they shot at him, he tumbled off his horse and they thought he was shot. He had fallen from his horse near the river bank. He then circled around,

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crossed the river at the dam, notified the citizens on the south side of the river, and returned to the store.

There were two robbers, supposedly a part of the Bill Doolin gang. Their swag did not amount to much, perhaps \$300.00 in currency, a number of checks and considerable merchandise.

Joe gathered his rifle, mounted his horse and followed them. He supposed he was behind them, but instead took a shorter trail and reached the Coon Creek crossing ahead of them. When he realized where he was, he exchanged a few shots with them. Joe fought them Indian style, leaning over behind his horse and shooting under it. This left one of his feet sticking above the saddle, into which one of the robbers put a bullet.

The only thing Joe did with his rifle was to shoot the hat from one man's head, which he has to this day as a relic of this encounter. The robbers made good their escape.

Doctor Woodring's most exciting experience:

Ben Newton was one of the noted outlaws of the Territory in the '80s and '90s. He was one of the trio which held

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up and robbed a train at Red Rock. This was learned from a confession of another fellow, Jackson, who was killed by a deputy marshal out on Buck Creek. Newton was finally captured. One night while the officers were looking for him, someone came for the doctor and brought a note sent by Newton telling him to keep quiet.

Newton had come along on Turkey Creek and found a good place to camp. He took the saddle from his horse and lay down to sleep. In twisting his belt around so that his revolver would not be under him it was discharged; the bullet lodging in his knee. He managed to alarm a friend and sent for the doctor.

Doctor did not wish to incur the ill will of any such man or their friends so he made the trip alone.

Joe Bartles and some other fellows wanted to go along for a large reward was on Newton's head. Doctor prevailed upon them not to go and they stayed behind.

The messenger who delivered the note followed about a mile behind the doctor to see that nobody was following.

He found Newton, made examination of the wound, and told him the only hope of saving his leg was to get to town

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where facilities were available. Newton did not want to go but he wanted to keep his leg so agreed to go to town.

First, he handed Doctor his Winchester, revolver and a big knife made from a file and said he had no more use for them. He was then loaded into a spring wagon and brought to the hotel and put in a room where he was cared for.

When they arrived everybody was excited and rushed out to see the desperado except one fellow, Stewart, a very unusual man, who was the nephew of Mrs. Thurston at Dewey. He was sitting on the porch at the store reading a paper and he never looked up from his paper.

Of course, when Doctor and Newton arrived at the hotel, the marshal grabbed him and when he was well enough to travel took him over to Vinita. He tried to escape once while he was at the hotel.

One time Doctor Woodring amputated an outlaw's arm who had blood poison from a shot gun wound. Before Doctor gave him the anesthetic he made a confession. Doctor never repeated a confidence given him, not even to me. While

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operating on this fellow, Doctor cut a little place on his finger and by the next morning had contracted blood poison from his patient. His temperature was high and during the delirium he told of the confession the outlaw had made.

e never related this to anyone.

Doctor often made trips to Pawhuska to care for the Osage Indians. I have heard him tell of how they lived in their tepees. One time he told of a family of six sleeping in a row on the ground in the tepee.

I remember one night, Mr. Bartles asked Doctor to help him hide his money in the timber near the store. I did not want Doctor to help for I was afraid some outlaw would try to make him tell where it was hidden. After all the lights in the town were out, Doctor went out into the yard. I peeped out of the window and he was hidden behind some high weeds so Mr. Bartles would not see him.

While we lived on the north side of the river, we attended all the entertainments held on the south side. Doctor would put on his gun boots and carry me on his back across the shallow part of the river.

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After the railroad was built through Bartlesville and the depot was erected on the south side, Mr. Bartles moved his town four miles north and started the town of Dewey. Our house was moved to Dewey. It is the first house north of the fairground, on the west side of the road. This house had three rooms and a summer kitchen. We moved to the south side of the river and rented a house on North Delaware from Mrs. George Keeler. We later bought a four-room, frame house from a school teacher who was leaving town. My parents owned a home at Sixth and Osage. The drillers who drilled the first oil well in Bartlesville boarded and roomed with my parents.

Doctor was one of the first deacons of the Christian Church and I am the only charter member of this church.

The only time I ever saw Doctor angry was when Fred Iseli, who owed him a doctor bill, refused to pay it. Doctor garnisheed his wages. One day we were crossing the river to come over to the south side when we met Mr. Iseli, who was angry and became very insulting to Doctor. Finally, Doctor became angry and I thought he was going to fight.

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At one time Doctor was successful in oil operations but withdrew entirely from commercial life and devoted all of his attention to his profession, specializing in children's diseases. Doctor O. S. Sumerville was one of his closest friends through many years of practice and was with him to the last.

Doctor erected the Woodring building on Second Street where he maintained his office for many years.

Doctor loved children and soon their confidence and because of his love for them and interest in them, he felt he accomplished what others could not do when the child withheld this trust. He practiced here for a longer period than any other physician in the city and many times I see women with grown children who sing praises to Doctor Woodring for the medical care he gave them when they were children. Doctor practised until two days before his death, in 1932.