

WOODS, TICE

INTERVIEW

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

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Field Worker's name Grace Kelly,This report made on (date) April 14, 1938

1. Name Tice Woods,
2. Post Office Address Henryetta, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location) South of Henryetta.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month Kansas Day _____ Year 1881
5. Place of birth _____

6. Name of Father G. D. Woods, Place of birth Illinois

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Mary Ellen Harris Place of birth Illinois

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 8

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Grace Kelly,
Investigator,
April 14, 1938.

Interview of Tice Woods,
Henryetta, Oklahoma.

Tonkawa in 1897

I came from Missouri to western Oklahoma in 1897 in a wagon. Some other boys and I were looking for work and we had heard that there was plenty of it down there. Tonkawa was the end of the railroad from Blackwell so it was a pretty busy town. There were about twenty stores and three saloons. That was a farming country with wheat as its principal crop so there was an elevator there. A few cattle were shipped out of Tonkawa but not as many as from other parts of the state. The mail was carried in three directions out of Tonkawa as the train only ran north of there. There was also much freighting out of there with teams and wagons. People would bring in loads of produce and leave loaded down with supplies.

Wheat Harvest.

I worked for two years in the wheat harvest. Wheat was cut with a binder and some was stacked and some

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shocked. After the wheat was threshed it was hauled to the elevators and shipped. Most of it went north to be ground as there were no mills at Tonkawa. Between harvest times I worked in a saloon but there is nothing interesting to tell about that. Men of every class came to saloons but the women didn't. Not many women drank in those days and the ones who did never drank in public.

Henryetta-1900.

I heard there was going to be a great deal of work at Henryetta as the coal mines were opening up and the town was building and besides it was a good farming country so I decided to travel farther south. When I got to Henryetta there were a great many tents. I don't know just how many, over a hundred but not over two hundred and fifty. There were about two frame houses and one or two log houses not far from the tent town; these houses would be in the town now though. At first the lots were sold but no deeds could be given. The owner only owned the right to build improvements on the land. In other words the sale wasn't legal. Then the Government

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took over the land and resold the lots, then the buyers received clear titles to the lots.

Crazy Snake.

In 1901 Crazy Snakes organized a government out at the Hickory Stomp Ground and rebelled against the Government and especially against the white people coming into his country. He made quite a show and was threatening toward the farmers out there. The Government sent some soldiers who captured as many as they could find of these Indians and shipped them off to jail until they promised to behave themselves. A lot of the white people didn't pay any attention to this uprising and can't remember anything about it for they weren't afraid of the Indians. Other white people who lived a little distance away did not know enough about this rebellion for it to be impressed on their memory. Many men knew about the uprising but as little of it was told to their wives as possible so that the women would not worry nor be afraid. They say that the next uprising was in 1908 but Arnold McMullen and I

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were working on a stone building on 4th and Main on the northeast corner when this uprising took place. This building is still standing and has the date 1907 on it.

Bill Merrei, a United States Marshal, United States Marshal Patty, Deputy United States Marshal Bill Morey and Bob Crawford went to the Hickory Ground to search for stolen meat. They came to Henryetta and told that they had found some papers that had the names of persons who were to take the different stores and buildings in Henryetta when they took possession of the town. That scared the town folk and a big bunch of the men were ready to follow these officers out there to clean them out. I was working but told them that if they needed me I was ready to go. Every man was furnished a new 45 - 70 Springfield rifle for \$1.50 and the shells were given free with the gun. These guns still had bayonets on them when we got them. After dinner a bunch of these men was brought in, all were walking except two crippled ones who were brought in in a wagon. All of them had been searched for arms before they started in. At first

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they stopped down where the K.O. & G. depot is now but the K. O. & G. Railroad hadn't come through Henryetta then. We all, everybody, went down there to see the prisoners who were mostly negroes. I talked to one of the crippled prisoners in the wagon who had been shot in the hip. He told me that he was running away, crawling over a rail fence when he was shot. He said that he was shot at a distance of more than seven hundred yards and the gun with which he was shot must have been the "longest shooting" gun on earth.

The excavation for the Morgan building was in progress on 4th and Main on the northwest corner. The prisoners were brought up there, set on the bank and their pictures taken. I don't know why anyone wanted to take that picture but there was a photographer in town and I guess he couldn't get anyone else to have a picture taken. As soon as the train came in these prisoners were put on it and sent to Muskogee to the jail.

Texas Cattle.

In 1902 a lot of Texas cattle were shipped into

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Henryetta. They were almost starved to death. They were so skinny that they would get down in the cars and the others would trample them to death. Other cattle would get down after they were in the pasture and would be too weak to get up again and they would die. All these cattle would be skinned, the hides sold and the carcasses hauled away, later the bones were gathered up and sold. Some people claimed that these animals had what was known as the tick fever but I think they were starved.

A Dishonest United States Marshal.

I helped to steal a good bunch of fat cattle and didn't know I was stealing them until a long time after it was over. A United States Marshal, Bill Merrel, hired me to go with him and his son - I later found out that this boy wasn't his son, but a boy named Quinn - to gather a bunch of his cattle that he wanted to put in a different pasture. Merrel would see a fat steer, look in his little brand book, look back at the brand on the steer and tell me to drive the steer into the herd. I noticed that he always picked the fattest steers but supposed he had a reason for doing it-- and he did.

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After a big herd was gathered, he said the two boys could take them across to the other pasture and he and I could come back to town. I later learned that the two boys took them to Eufaula, loaded them on the train and shipped them to market. Mr. Merrill and his wife left town, went across the mountain and camped for about three days. One night he came to my house, called me outside and paid me the \$3.00 he owed me for helping with the cattle. He told me that he and his wife were leaving the country but he didn't want to leave without paying me what he owed me so he came back for that purpose. Even then I didn't "catch on" until people started to talking about the stolen cattle. Of course, I didn't tell what I knew about the affair.

That taught me just because a man was a United States officer was no reason to trust him. There were good, brave and honest United States Marshals but there were more than one who were as bad as the men they were after. Many an outlaw was an ignorant boy at the beginning.

First Gas Wells of Henryetta.

The first gas well at Henryetta was in the alley between

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Second and Third Streets and between Trudgeon and Division, back of the place where the Red Ball Transfer Company is now. The next gas well was on Sixth and Corporation Streets. These gas wells were both drilled by a Mr. Wright who is now dead. J. W. Moore, of Moore Street, Henryetta, was his helper. These wells were Henryetta's first gas supplies. The gas now comes from Tiger Mountain.

Indians Dried Liver and Apples.

I went to the house of a mixed blood Creek one time; he was part Indian and part Freedman or negro. There was a very long clothes line in the back yard and it had beef liver hanging on every inch of it. It was in the middle of the summer time and the flies were bad but the meat was drying out there unprotected. I have known Indians a long time but I'd never seen them eat such filthy stuff as that before.

I had often seen my wife's people drying apples. They peeled and sliced them, then the roofs of all the houses were covered with them. Apples were always dried during the dry part of the summer time.