

## Edna Woods Vandiver

*Written by her daughter, Loree Vandiver Lee*

I don't know enough about my mother's life to be able to really write her life story, but unless I write something of the little I do know, my children and grandchildren will know even less about her.

Her life was short. She was born October 26, 1883, and died June 20, 1921, at the age of 37, but she is represented by a large posterity. She was born in Adair County, Missouri, the first of her parents' four children. I recently found a record of her birth in a film of the Adair County birth records confirming the information I already had. The record didn't give her name but gave her sex and the fact that she was the first child, gave her birth date as above and her birth place as Wilson Township, gave her parents' nationality as American, her father's age as 26 and his birth place, Pennsylvania; her mother's age as 22 and her birthplace, Missouri, gave her mother's maiden name as Maggie P. Sleeth and her father's name as Chester Woods and his occupation as farmer.



Woods Family  
Edna, Wylie  
Chester, Elta, Margaret Priscilla, Mae

I know almost nothing about her childhood and teen years. I was only 8 years old when she died and can't remember having heard any stories of her childhood. She grew up on a farm and must have attended the nearest rural school. Her parents were religious people and she no doubt attended church regularly also. I can only guess at what her home life was like. Her brother, Wylie, was 2 years younger than she was, her sister, Mae, was 4 years younger and her sister, Elta, nearly 10 years younger. Missouri farms at that time could not have had the conveniences of today and I'm sure the children all learned to work. I have every reason to believe that theirs was a well respected family in the community.

I will try to give a description of my mother. I believe she was about 5 feet 4 inches tall and normally weighed in the 120's. She had brown eyes and brown hair lighted with red, the red being a legacy from her red haired, Irish Grandfather Sleeth. As a little girl, I used to stand behind her and watch her comb her hair, and hope that mine would be that color when I got big. That she was good looking can be seen by the pictures we have of her as a young woman. As a

teenage girl, I remember a lady in Fairfield telling me emphatically, “Your mother was a beautiful woman!” and Mrs. Naser added to this that she had a “peaches and cream” complexion.

I don't know a great deal about Mother's early years, but I know she attended what is now Northeast Missouri State College in Kirksville and taught four terms of school in the rural schools of that area before she and Dad were married. After her marriage, it is not hard to imagine what her life must have been like. Her babies were born in rapid succession. Willard was 14 months old when Clifford was born. Merrill arrived 19 months later and another 15 months brought Herschel, number 4 when the oldest was just 4 years old. A little less than 2 years later, it was a baby girl, Loree. Several months earlier, Mother and her sister, Elta, had been in an accident. A frightened horse ran away and tipped their buggy over on a steep grade. Mother was thrown against a telephone pole and her leg was badly broken between the knee and hip. Her mother came and helped out in the crisis and no doubt her help was needed for quite a while.



Edna Woods Vandiver  
Age 25

It was at this time that the scene of Mother's life changed from Missouri to Idaho. Until that time, she had always lived in the same county in which she was born. Then with a three month old baby and four little boys, ages two to six, and still on crutches after her accident, she left the only surroundings she had ever known and faced a new life in a very different setting. They had barely left the state when the first misfortune of their new venture befell them. I have a brief account of it in her own words written on the back of a post card picture of her four little boys and mailed from Spokane, Washington, to her Aunt Ella Steele in Waitsburg, Washington. It is postmarked March 26, 1913, just 5 days after they had arrived at the Steve Vandiver home near Spokane. It reads in part: “...Left La Plata 17<sup>th</sup>, 8 P.M. on the Wabash. At 2:20 A.M. we wrecked near Marshalltown, Iowa. Everything went to the ditch topsy turvy but sleeper and fortunately we were in it. Baggage and coaches all burned so lost all we had but what little we were carrying.”

I think the stay at Uncle Steve's home must have been as brief as they could make it. Both Steve's family and our family were soon settled on farms at Mountain Home, Idaho. In March 1915, just 2 years after leaving Missouri, Mother made another move, this time to Camas County, Idaho, and there she spent the last six years of her life. It makes me sad to think that the last part of her life was spent in such a forsaken place. This is the only part of my Mother's life that I can remember and I was too young then to realize that it was a forsaken place or to understand that once her life had been much better.

Mother must have been expecting her sixth baby when we moved to Camas County for in June of 1915, a stillborn baby boy was born. Being only 2½ years old at the time, I knew nothing about the birth of this baby. The first birth in the family that I can remember was Mae, born August 19, 1916. Next came Willis on June 2, 1919. It is only since I have grown up that I have been able to understand and appreciate what a difficult time my mother must have had as she had her babies and took care of her family in those two tiny rooms so small that the boys had to sleep out in the “shop”. Nevertheless, we were a well cared for family and both the house and the family were kept very clean. Mother was never a complainer or fault finder and, as a child, I never realized that her life was difficult.

In the fall of 1919, Dad managed to scrape together enough money for Mother to take us



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three youngest children and go to Missouri for a visit. We went by train and spent about two months from September to November. I'm sure Mother greatly enjoyed that time spent with her family, her relatives and her friends in her old home. I'm sure no one could guess at that time that she would live less than two more years.

I am much inclined to agree with Dad that Mother died of a bad doctor. He thought that if there had been no doctor at all when the baby was born, only “Aunt Annie” Thurber, that Mother would have been just fine. She died leaving a husband and children who needed her desperately, but life without her had to continue. Even after her death, she continued to influence her children as we grew up trying to be what she would have expected us to be. Her influence lives on in her posterity.