

Mary Woods, Richest El Paso Negro, Dies

Woman Who Was Born a
Slave Leaves an Estate
Worth \$160,000.

Mary Woods, El Paso's wealthiest negro woman, died at 11 o'clock Saturday morning at her home, 1620 Wyoming street, after a long illness.

Mary Woods was one of the characters of old El Paso. She was an ex-slave from Missouri, where she was said to have been the house servant of the Velar family before the war. She came to El Paso after the war and was married to John Woods, who was a constable here following the civil war and afterward conducted a grocery store on El Paso street. Together they bought the little adobe house which stood on the corner of Mills street (then St. Louis street) and Mesa avenue. They paid \$3500 for the house and ground, the abstract shows. That was 20 years ago, and the property is now valued at \$150,000, and a 12-story concrete and steel building is to be erected on the site of the one time adobe house by the Commercial National bank, to cost \$150,000.

After her husband died, the aged negress always declined to sell the downtown property. Several years ago she leased the building which now stands on the site to A. W. Bittick. Recently this lease was renewed for a period of 75 years by Mr. Bittick, who is associated with the Commercial National in the construction of the 12-story office and bank building.

Mary Woods had two brothers living in Frederickstown, Mo., and two nephews in El Paso. She made a will shortly before she died, although the contents of it have not been made public. The estate is valued at \$160,000. Allen Woods, a nephew, cared for her and attended to her business for her.