

HALL, JAMES BENTON

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W. T. Holland,
Investigator,
Jan. 21, 1938.

An Interview With James Benton Hall
Bixby, Oklahoma.

I got the name "Benton" from Thomas H. Benton, who in his youth lived in Tennessee.

My father, John Warren Hall, was a native of Tennessee. He served during the duration of the Civil War, in the Confederate Army, being in some of the major battles, Missionary Ridge, Chickamauga and others.

My mother, Salina (McClellan) Hall, was a native of Alabama. I was born at Scottsboro, Alabama, March 29, 1868. I grew up there, attending the schools of Alabama and later finishing my schooling at the University of Kentucky. After finishing I went to work for Green and Caldwell, a wholesale hardware firm of Chattanooga, Tennessee. This was 1890. I worked there until 1893, when I came to Tulsa.

I was working in the office one night after all the others had gone. After I got through I was tired, and I wanted a change. I had become tired, it seems, of my job.

Our firm had accounts with firms in Tulsa, Muskogee, and Ardmore, so I said to myself, "What about the 'wide open' spaces?"

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I immediately got down our Dunn and Bradstreet reports, and looked up the ratings of the various firms out West and found that J. M. Hall, of Tulsa, had good rating; the Turner Hardware Company of Muskogee and the Ardmore Hardware Company all had good ratings, so my decision to go to Tulsa was made because my name was Hall, so I wrote to Mr. Hall about a job. He was on his way to St. Louis and when he got there, he wired me to come.

I came here in 1893, worked first in Tulsa for the Halls, J. M. and H. C., brothers. H. C. Hall established stores in Red Fork and Sapulpa. The Red Fork and Sapulpa stores were owned jointly by H. C. Hall and others.

I came to Tulsa in a passenger coach hitched to a local freight. They did not have a fine passenger train for some time after 1893.

I worked, keeping books, for the Halls in Tulsa, Red Fork and Sapulpa, just where and when I was needed.

I was employed at Catoosa when Erwin was killed by French, in the well known holdup there. Erwin shot French. He was later captured and duly executed. In the '90's Catoosa was a busy place and sometimes a wild place. Many herds of cattle were shipped from there.

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I had an unpleasant experience while in Red Fork. It was after Dutch John had been killed. Dr. Bland and Mr. McElroy operated ranches, one north of the Cimarron and one south. McElroy was north of the River.

The Miller brothers who were related, in some way, to McElroy, and who formerly worked for Bland and McElroy, began to get a foothold themselves, and it happened to be between McElroy's ranch and the Cimarron River.

Trouble grew up regarding the range, anyway Dutch John, a Miller man, was killed. I was arrested and taken to Fort Smith with about twenty others, but I was quickly released. I had never even been on this ranch, nor near it and could prove that I had not, so I was released at once.

Dr. Bland (J.W.C.) and McElroy operated pretty extensively in cattle, and lost many heads of cattle to rustlers, which started the trouble. Dutch John was considered the leader of the rustlers.

My first marriage was to Jennie Moore, daughter of Colonel Moore. She died of appendicitis after an operation. The doctors did the best they knew, but operations then were rare, and their experience limited.

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My second wife, Nellie Henshaw, is still living.
We were married in 1904.

I was a typical "tenderfoot" when I reached Tulsa. The boys had a lot of fun at my expense. I was unused to the ways and customs of the West, and especially gun-shy. A friend or two took me in charge and gave me some friendly advice and instructions, so after that I stood my ground, and the pranks passed.

I had my first experience of "Indian Giving" at Tulsa. Indians would come into town with a likely looking pony, and sell it to some one, then in a day or two another Indian would come in and claim it and take it away, saying that it had been stolen.

I was in business at Bixby for years, and that is now my home.