

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

HALE, JAMES LEE.

INTERVIEW.

7136.

Field Worker's name Gomer Gomer

This report made on (date) August 13, 1937

1. Name James Lee Hale.

2. Post Office Address Poteau, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 2 Year 1872

5. Place of birth Near Hackett, Arkansas.

6. Name of Father J. K. Hale Place of birth Virginia

Other information about father Buried near Hackett.

7. Name of Mother Onelia Hale (nee) Gilbert, Place of birth Georgia

Other information about mother Buried near Hackett

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 1.

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Gomer Gower
Investigator
August 13, 1937.

Interview with James Lee Hale
Poteau, Oklahoma
Born May 2, 1872
Father-J. K. Hale
Mother-Omelia Hale

James Lee Hale was born on May 2, 1872, three miles east of Hackett, in Sebastian County, Arkansas; his parents being J. K. and Omelia Hale.

He attended the public school at Hackett and later graduated in law in the Cumberland University at Lebanon, Tennessee. He began the practice of law at McAlester, Indian Territory, with a brother, Jasper A. Hale, in 1894 and continued this partnership until the United States Federal Court was established at Cameron, in 1895. He then moved to Cameron and practiced his profession before that court. In September, 1900, the court was moved to Poteau, where it continued to function until its dissolution over all criminal, civil and other matters arising within its district in the Indian Territory, in addition to its prerogatives as a Federal Court. Prior to the establishment of the Federal Court at Cameron

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in 1895, no provision had been made for the punishment of misdemeanors occurring within the territorial limits; hence fights, gambling, petty larceny and all wrong-doing less than felonious, were rampant and the Territory provided a safe haven for those who were wont to indulge in these minor offences.

Old Kully Chaha, once a flourishing inland town but now a ghost town, was a particularly favorite rendezvous for patrons of the gaming table where they could play their several hunches without fear of molestation by an officious petty officer. Offenders from across the near-by state line would find it convenient to tarry here pending the passing into oblivion of an offence committed there. Then, too, in Arkansas, in common with other states, they had their Grand Jury dodgers and what could better afford a haven of security from a summons than a short trip over to "Kully" until after the adjournment of the Grand Jury. Meanwhile they could continue their chase after Dame Fortune while awaiting.

In one instance, a good citizen of Sebastian County who had repeatedly dodged the Grand Jury by slipping over into

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the Territory for the period of the Jury sessions, remained at home and was forthwith summoned to testify, to the great surprise of the members of that august body. Upon being questioned he answered that he had seen gambling going on and vast sums of money bet on the cards. The hopes of the members of the Grand Jury for information which would possibly enable them to find a bill of indictment against some one, were screwed up to the highest pitch; however, upon being asked the question where he had seen all this, he very innocently replied, "At Kully Chaha." The consternation and chagrin of the honorable Grand Jury on that occasion may be imagined, as its jurisdiction, of course, did not extend beyond the state line.

Upon the construction of the Frisco Railway in 1886 and the establishment of Cameron as a station, the once lively and sportive Kully Chaha, being about two and one-half miles distant from Cameron, succumbed to the inevitable and ceased to exist; its inhabitants "folding their tents like the Arabs" and silently stealing away."

All through his active career, Mr. Hale has been a staunch supporter and adherent of the Democratic party. He is now

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Commissioner of the United States Court at Poteau; an office to which he was appointed upon the death of the Honorable P. T. Bolger in July of last year.