

JAMES MONROE HALL

1851 — 1935

By HARRY CAMPBELL

James Monroe Hall was born December 4, 1851, at or near Belfast, Tennessee, one of nine children of Doctor Hugh A. Hall and Elsie Ramsey Hall. Mr. Hall and his wife raised five children, Mrs. A. E. Bradshaw, Mrs. Fred Dunn, Mrs. Juanita Scott, and a son, Harry Hall, all of Tulsa. Another son, Hugh Hall, was killed a number of years ago in a railroad accident. Mr. Hall died in Tulsa, Oklahoma, May 26, 1935. He was educated at Union Academy in Marshall County, Tennessee.

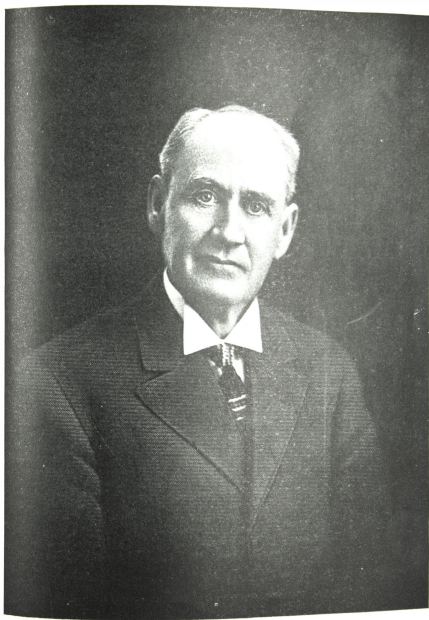
When he was about 17 years old he moved to Oswego, Kansas, where an older brother, Harry C. Hall, lived. In 1872 he went to McAlester, Oklahoma, where he took charge of a store furnishing supplies to a coal mine near that place and ran this store for about three years, when he returned to Oswego. Here he engaged in the grocery business until the year 1882, when he went to Vinita to take charge of the commissary furnishing supplies to the men constructing the Atlantic & Pacific Railway (now the St. Louis & San Francisco Railway), which was being built Southwest from Vinita. Later in the same year Mr. Hall moved to the present townsite of Tulsa just ahead of the railroad, and with his brother, Harry C. Hall, started the first store in Tulsa in a tent. Later they erected the first store building on the present townsite of Tulsa.

From that time on the history of the growth and development of Tulsa is largely the history of the activities of Mr. Hall. He continued in the mercantile business until 1903, when he sold out and engaged in the banking business for a number of years. After selling out his banking business he engaged in the real estate business for some years and was instrumental in platting a number of additions to the City of Tulsa and selling the lots.

Mr. Hall, from the time he first came to the present site of Tulsa, took an active and conspicuous part in all civic affairs and activities pertaining to the growth and welfare of Tulsa. He was instrumental in having the townsite surveyed and the streets laid out in 1883. He was instrumental in having a post-office established in Tulsa in 1883 and was the first postmaster.

Mr. Hall was a member of the Presbyterian Church, and with a Mrs. Slater, wife of a carpenter engaged in building the first railroad depot at Tulsa, and Doctor W. P. Booker, established the first Sunday School in Tulsa in 1883. Mrs. Slater was a Congregationalist and Doctor Booker a Baptist, and until 1885 this Sunday School was conducted as a Union Sunday School. It was first held in a tent where Mrs. Slater lived and later in various residences.

In 1884 Mr. Hall was instrumental in having the Presbyterian Home Mission Board with headquarters in New York erect a mission and school building on the present site of the Mid-Continent corporation building at what is now Fourth and Boston Streets. The Sunday School was held in that building and in 1885 the name was changed to First Presbyterian Sunday School. Mr. Hall was chosen the first superintendent of this Sunday School and continuously held the position of superintendent for thirty-three years.



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He was instrumental in having a school opened in the mission building, to which all children of the community were entitled to attend, a portion of the expense being paid by the Presbyterian Home Mission Board and partly by subscription paid by the parents of the children attending. This school was continued until the establishment of a public school in 1899.

The first sermon ever preached in Tulsa was preached from the front porch of the Hall store in 1883. Mr. Hall was largely instrumental in organizing the first church in Tulsa, the First Presbyterian Church in 1885. He was an active Elder in this church from its organization until he died.

In 1889 Mr. Hall, with Jay Forsythe and Joseph Price, other farseeing and enterprising business men of Tulsa, purchased the block of ground where the mission school was established from the Presbyterian Board for the purpose of holding same for public school purposes. They held title to this block of ground until the City of Tulsa was able to repay them the purchase price, when they deeded the block to the City of Tulsa for school purposes. At this time, situated on this block of ground is the Mid-Continent, Atlas-Life, Philtower, Municipal and other buildings, but the title to a large part of the block is still held by the school district of Tulsa, who collects rents from the owners of these buildings.

In 1889, through Mr. Hall's influence the town council of Tulsa passed an ordinance establishing a public school system, and Mr. Hall was chosen President of the first school board.

Mr. Hall was also largely instrumental in 1902 in organizing the First Commercial Club of Tulsa, now the Chamber of Commerce of Tulsa, and was its first President. He continued his membership until his death.

In 1921 he and other pioneers organized the Tulsa Association of Pioneers and for a number of years was President of the association, retiring as President just a few days before his death.

He was a Democrat in politics, and while he never sought political office he was always watchful and active in endeavoring to see that good men were selected for office.

He headed the delegation from Tulsa to the Democratic Territorial Convention at Ardmore in 1900, which was held to select delegates to the National Democratic Convention of that year. There was a split in the convention and two delegations were elected to the national convention and both were seated. Mr. Hall and a number of other leading citizens of the territory were chosen as a committee or commission to iron out the difficulties and establish harmony and peace in the Democratic party of the Indian Territory. This was finally accomplished satisfactorily. As far as the writer knows, Judge R. L. Williams of Durant and Mr. Robert L. Lunsford of Cleveland are the only living members of that committee.

JOHN ROBERT WILLIAMS


1866 — 1931

John Robert Williams was born at Tyler, Texas, October 30, 1866 and died at his home in Oklahoma City, February 26, 1931. He was the son of William Allen and Elizabeth Murphy Williams.

His father was a native of Texas and was from an old Southern lineage, his grandfather having come from North Carolina to Texas at an early day. His grandmother was a native of Alabama.

John R. Williams was the oldest of a family of seven children: Three sisters, Mrs. Minnie Bramlette, Mrs. Annie Laurie Bass and Mrs. Lorraine Allen, all of Dallas, Texas, and three brothers, Wynn Williams, H. W. Williams, of Oklahoma City, and W. A. Williams, Jr., San Antonio, Texas. The mother, Mrs. W. A. Williams, sr., is still living.

William Allen Williams, father of John R. the subject of this sketch, was a man of intellectual strength, highly educated and well to do financially. He had great executive ability and was a natural leader wherever he resided. He was engaged in the banking business at Greenville, Texas, for many years and was interested in lands and the cattle business. His son, John R. Williams, attended the public school and also took a course of study at Dr. Franklin's Academy at Pilot Point, Texas, a private school. Being a young man of high blood; imbued with the spirit of adventure, the tedious humdrum of office work had no appeal for him. The life of the cowboy and the freedom of the prairies allured him to join these free riders of the plains. His natural business sagacity also told him there was money in the cattle business and he wanted to identify himself with this great industry.

John R. Williams's first experience in the cattle business was in 1884. His father had become largely interested financially in a cattle ranch with headquarters near Doan's Crossing on Red River, sometime before. The ranch was known as the "Block Bar Ranch" with this brand 

This was his opportunity and with the consent of his father he sought employment on this ranch where he developed into a real cattle man. It was here on his father's ranch that he became acquainted with "Bat" Masterson, a well known officer and western character who died in New York several years ago. Masterson was working on an adjoining ranch and he and young Williams became fast friends. John R. did not devote his entire time to ranching but he kept in touch with his business interests in Texas and kept himself informed on all public questions including political events. Later he was appointed United States Commissioner under Judge C. B. Kilgore of the Indian Territory Court, with headquarters at Ryan. He held Commissioners Court from Chickasha south to Red River. He served as United States Commissioner during the Cleveland administration.

In 1894 John R. Williams returned to Oklahoma Territory, and again went into the cattle business. He established a ranch on Cobb Creek on the west line of what is now Caddo County. His ranch headquarters was only a few miles south of the Segar Colony Indian School and his brand was I-H, although he afterwards acquired several other brands. The opening of the Wichita, Kiowa and Comanche reservations caused



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great financial loss to all cattlemen who occupied the country and used it for pasture as the cattle had to be moved off the reservations and used it could be opened to settlement. The order removing the cattle before financial disaster for those engaged in the cattle business—it broke many of them as they had to throw great herds of half fat cattle on the market to be sold at any price.

When the Kiowa and Comanche country opened in the fall of 1901, John R. Williams was fortunate enough to draw a claim on which he filed his homestead right two miles southwest of Gotebo. There he established his home and made improvements on his claim. The county had been organized and the full quota of county officers had been elected. The man who was elected County Treasurer, Tom Finley, died the second year after the opening and Mr. Williams was appointed to succeed him as treasurer of Kiowa County and he left his claim and located in Hobart, the county seat. While in Hobart he also engaged in other business, being part owner of the Kiowa County Abstract Company.

From Hobart Mr. Williams moved to Oklahoma City in 1910. In the race for governor the fall of 1910, Lee Cruce appointed John R. Williams manager of his campaign. Governor Lee Cruce being the successful candidate, appointed John R. Williams secretary to the School Land Commission, a position he held for four years. This was a very responsible position as the secretary had the management of the public lands of the state and the public school funds, it was through this department that the school lands were leased and the school funds loaned, taking real estate as security. But little criticism was made of the department under this administration.

While on the ranch near the Seger Indian School he became acquainted with Mary Elizabeth Prescott de 'Les dernier. The young lady's father had long been an Indian trader, merchant and business man among the various tribes of Indians in Oklahoma. He had established a store and trading house near the Seger School and it was here that this young ranch man came for supplies and it was here that John R. Williams met the future Mrs. Williams. It was not until after the opening of the Kiowa and Comanche county that they were married at Gotebo, Kiowa County, the date being March 1902. Immediately after their marriage they moved to Mr. Williams's homestead southwest of Gotebo where they lived until his appointment as County Treasurer of Kiowa County. Mr. and Mrs. Williams were the parents of three sons, John Robert, born at Hobart in 1903, and died in Oklahoma City in 1926; Allen de 'Les dernier, born in Hobart in 1908, and William Henry, born in 1911. Allen and William Henry live with their mother in Oklahoma City.

John R. Williams was always an active worker in politics and held many places of honor and trust. He served on committees of his party and was most always able to accomplish his objects. Some say he was a shrewd politician, but it would be more correct to say that he was a good organizer. He used the same intelligence and skill in his political organizations that the successful general uses in planning his campaign.

Governor Holloway appointed him as a member of the State Board of Public Affairs September 23, 1929, a position he held until January 12, 1931, resigning a short time before his death.

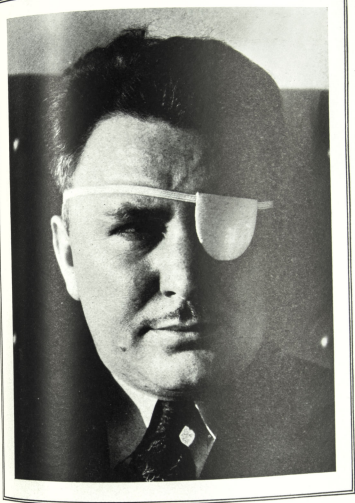
John R. Williams was one of Nature's Noblemen. A most congenial, companionable man. He was loyal to his friends and he never let politics or differences in political opinions come between him and his friends. He was an ardent Democrat, while some of his best friends were recorded with the other side. He was a friend to his friends, not only in pros-

perity, but in adversity, he did not desert them. I once heard an old Plainsman say that if you wanted to know the real character of a man you should take him with you on an overland trip across the country to California. John R. Williams was a man who would have stood that test, you could have gone with him around the world and returned with a higher regard for his character and greater respect for his friendship. He had the respect of people of every strata of society and every walk in life. There was no hauteur in his make-up. He was equally at home in a cow camp or in the most elite society. There was none of the wild west swagger about him, nor was there any effeminacy in his demeanor. John R. Williams was an honorable man, a high type of American gentleman. As a public official he served the public with fidelity and with honor to himself. He was always interested in the history and traditions of Oklahoma and Texas and was a friend of the Oklahoma Historical Society. Mrs. Williams, the widow of John R. Williams, is a member of the Board of Directors and one of the most active supporters of this Society.

—Dan W. Peery.



WILL ROGERS-1879-1935



WILEY POST - 1899-1935