

and Anna Brown, and that Hale would not hesitate to kill the rest of Lizz  
Smith's children. A short time prior to his murder Smith had had a violent  
altercation with Hale relative to a \$6,000.00 indebtedness which Smith  
claimed was due him by Hale. Shortly after this altercation, on the night  
of March 10, 1923, the house of William E. Smith was blown up by having a  
five-gallon keg of nitro-glycerin exploded under it, blowing the home to  
atoms and killing Rita Smith, wife of W. E. Smith, and Nettie Brookshire,  
a white servant girl instantaneously, and horribly mangleing the body of  
William E. Smith, who lived a few hours, however, and stated his belief  
that Hale had had him killed.

It was developed through investigation by Bureau agents that  
William K. Hale had hired John Ramsey and Al "Ace" Kirby to murder  
William E. Smith and his wife and had subsequently paid Ramsey approximately  
\$1600.00 for performing the murder. These facts were proven by means of  
a confession obtained from John Ramsey himself, as well as the confession of  
Ernest Burkhardt, who pointed out Smith's house to Ramsey and Kirby,  
acting under instructions from Hale, and who sought out Ramsey on the day  
of this murder to inform him that William K. Hale and Henry Grammer, an  
order to alloy suspicion, were going to Fort Worth, Texas, to a gentlemen's  
conference, and that William E. Smith and his wife should be murdered that  
night. It developed further that William K. Hale had attempted to hire  
the notorious outlaw, Al Spencer, to commit this murder, but Spencer  
refused, stating that while he had no compunction at robbing a train or  
blowing a safe and killing individuals in even an instant, he had not sunk  
so low as to murder helpless individuals for money. After Spencer's  
refusal Hale attempted to hire "Blackie" Thompson, Dick Gregg, and his  
father, John Gregg, to murder William Smith and his family, all of whom  
refused.

William K. Hale became afraid that "Ace" Kirby, who participated  
in the murder of the Smith family as set out above and who actually placed  
the five-gallon can of nitro-glycerin under the Smith house and set it off,  
would make known Hale's connection with these murders, and accordingly  
persuaded Kirby to attempt the robbery of a grocery store near the Kansas-  
Oklahoma State line, assuring Kirby that the owner of the grocery store  
possessed certain valuable goods. The owner of the store was in turn informed  
of the exact hour of the contemplated robbery and as Kirby forced entrance  
into the grocery store through the window, greeted him with several loads of  
bullet from a shotgun, thereby removing a witness who could have implicated  
Hale and his associates.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] b7D

In addition to the solution of the murders, themselves, Bureau agents discovered that Nellie Burkhardt, full-blood Osage Indian wife of Ernest Burkhardt, who alone remained between William Hale's nephew, Ernest Burkhardt, and the fortune of the Lizzie Q. family, at the time the Government commenced its investigation of the case was dying from what was believed to be slow poisoning. It is an established fact that as soon as she was gotten out of the control of Burkhardt and Hale she immediately regained her health and is living today.

In conducting investigations of these murders one Special Agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation posed as an Indian medicine man in an undercover investigation, claiming to be in search of relatives who had moved to Oklahoma several years before. He made a lot of medicine around Fairfax, consisting mostly of sweetened water, and was taken in by the Indians, visited in their homes, attended their ceremonials, thereby gaining much useful information. Not only did the agent acting as a medicine man in actually dispensing the sweetened water to the Indians gain their confidence and cooperation, but he also served as an Indian medicine man in the inner circle and tribal councils, helping them to make plans for the administration of their tribal problems and government.

Another Special Agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, working undercover on the case, posed as an insurance salesman and actually sold life insurance of a legitimate character, thereby gaining entrance to the homes of influential citizens and gathering useful information, which the citizens refused to give to government agents openly because of their fear of William K. Hale. In connection with this sale of life insurance, of course, information about the personal habits and other types of information available to insurance companies would be obtained, and frequently this information would have a direct bearing on the different angles of the case under investigation. This agent contacted William K. Hale himself under his guise of an insurance salesman, and almost succeeded in selling him a policy.

Still another Special Agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation played the part of a DJ in Texas cowboy, and established close association with many of Hale's intimates and employees, all of whom unknowingly contributed useful information. The agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation who were working undercover on this case often met in remote

3218



and dangerous places in the Osage country, such as the woods previously known as a meeting place by Al Spencer and his outlaw gang, at Dead Man's Hill, where many murders and robberies had been plotted. Two agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, together with a lieutenant of the State Bureau of Criminal Identification of Oklahoma, upon one occasion sat up for two nights and days with a convict witness before obtaining a statement from him. The interesting incidents occurring in the investigation and the trial of the guilty parties involved in these murders are too numerous to mention.

Burt Lawson whose "bonus" confession caused Bureau agents many hours of weary work, upon his release into custody of the agents, proved to be a glutton, who ate tongue steak and French-fried potatoes three times a day. Upon his first visit to a cafeteria with agents, upon reaching the cashier he was found to have four pieces of pie and three pieces of cake upon his tray and complained of the fact that he had no room for a meat dish.

Dewey Selph, a material Government witness, testified to the fact that he was hired by William K. Hale to murder Kelscy Morrison's wife. He was released from the Syracuse, Kansas, Jail to testify, and while being held at Guthrie, Oklahoma, with other material witnesses who had been transferred from the Kansas State Penitentiary, he was left in a jail cell of which all the bars were found to have been partly sawed. He showed his appreciation by breaking out the sawed bars and was subsequently located by Bureau agents clad only in his underclothing, attempting to hide in a barrel at a pressing shop at Pawhuska, Oklahoma, where he was having his suit pressed. He gave as his reason for the jail break that he intended calling on a lady friend, who, incidentally, was his ex-wife, Cecilia Bigheart, full-blood Osage woman.

On another occasion Selph walked out on a broken jailer, taking with him the jailer's pistol, and afterwards stole an automobile, in which he made his escape. He was recaptured by Bureau agents at a subsequent date and returned to testify at the trial of Hale. Dewey Selph's next attempt to escape, after having been returned to the Arkansas State Penitentiary to complete a sentence there, resulted fatally for him.

While the trial was actually in progress a Bureau agent obtained information to the effect that Hale was receiving letters from a witness who had perjured himself at Hale's former trial. This agent searched Hale's cell and located in the backclothing two letters from the witness stating that he had perjured himself in Hale's behalf at the last trial and intended doing so again. This witness was subsequently sent to the State Penitentiary for life on a charge of murder, and the statements were introduced against Hale at his final trial.

An attorney for Hale located two tremes and carefully schooled them in helping prepare a defense for the trial of Hale. The alert agents

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of the Bureau discovered this situation, secured confessions from them, thereby prevented their appearance at the trial. Some witnesses actually testified voluntarily at the trial of Hale and Ramsey and received subsequent sentences because of their perjured testimony. Most notable among them was P.C. Moberly, who was given a sentence of two years in the Federal Penitentiary and fined \$100.00. Other friends and relatives of Hale were sentenced for being in contempt of court and for interfering with the legal progress of the court.

John Ramsey, upon his trial for murder, offered an alibi to the effect that he was not in Fairfax, Oklahoma, on the date of the murder for which he was being tried. Investigation by agents of the Bureau resulted in the production of the hotel register of an old Indian woman who had formerly operated a hotel at Fairfax, Oklahoma, reflecting that Ramsey was actually registered in this hotel on the day of the murder. This Indian woman, it developed, had been furnished whiskey by a lawyer presumably working in the interest of Hale, in an attempt to have her change her testimony. This lawyer was subsequently sentenced to eighteen months in a Federal Penitentiary for this action on his part.

Upon the successful conclusion of the cases against Hale and Ramsey and the other individuals involved in the murders, the Cange Indians, through their tribal council, passed resolutions, enrolled upon the records of the tribes, expressing their appreciation of the great service rendered by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in breaking up the vicious murder ring which had been preying upon that tribe for years.

William K. Hale and John Ramsey were tried four times - twice in the Federal District Court at Guthrie, Oklahoma, once in the Federal District Court at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and once in the Federal District Court at Pawhuska, Oklahoma, resulting in their being convicted for the murder of Henry Roan and sentenced to life imprisonment in the Federal Penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas. These two convictions were in the Federal Court, due to the fact that the United States had jurisdiction over the actual place where Henry Roan was murdered. Other sentences imposed in the state courts for murders over which the United States had no jurisdiction were Ernest Parkhart, life imprisonment for his part in the murder of William E. Smith and Family; Welsy Morrison, life imprisonment for the murder of Anna Brown, while Bryan Parkhart, brother of Ernest Parkhart, turned state's evidence in state court and was never convicted.

It is interesting to note that upon the first trial of Hale and Ramsey the Federal District Court ruled that it had no jurisdiction over the case, only to be reversed by the Supreme Court of the United States within the comparatively short period of twenty-five days. From the second trial of Hale and Ramsey in the Federal Court at Guthrie a hung jury resulted. The case was retried at Oklahoma City in the Federal District Court at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and both Hale and Ramsey were

3920



convicted and given life sentences. Hale appealed and had his conviction reversed upon the ground that the case had been tried in the wrong district. This decision automatically reversed Ramsey's conviction also. Upon their last trial Hale and Ramsey asked for a severance and were tried separately in the Federal District Court at Pawhuska, Oklahoma, resulting in convictions and sentences as set forth above.

One other interesting sidelight to these cases is the fact that "Billie" Hale, the beautiful daughter of W. K. Hale, within a comparatively short time after her father had been sent to the penitentiary, married a wealthy full-blood Osage Indian, erected a home, and at present lives within a few hundred yards from the spot where Anna Brown's murdered body was found.

P. O. Box 308  
Butte, Montana  
March 3, 1949

Director, FBI

ATTENTION CRIME RECORDS

Re: JOHN RAMSEY  
CRIME ON INDIAN RESERVATION  
(MURDER)

Dear Sir:

On March 2, 1949, HARLAN L. HILL, United States Probation Officer, Boise, Idaho, advised SA DAVID W. MURRAY at Boise, that he had that date directed a letter to WALTER K. URICH, Parole Executive, United States Board of Parole, Washington, D. C., relating to the above captioned individual who is presently paroled under HILL's supervision. HILL stated this letter requested URICH to confer with the Director concerning information appearing in the comic book entitled "STEVE SAUNDERS, Special Agent, FBI" for March, 1949. In connection with the information appearing in this comic book, HILL related the following:

RAMSEY served 21 years of a life sentence for his participation in the Osage Indian Murders in Oklahoma. He was paroled from the United States Penitentiary, Leavenworth, Kansas, some time ago and is presently living with a son at McCall, Idaho. His FBI number is 34165. Some time ago RAMSEY appeared at HILL's office in Boise with the March issue of the above mentioned comic book. He told HILL that a person living in McCall had called his attention to the fact that the name, JOHN RAMSEY, appeared in the picture story concerning the Osage Indian Murders. Since that time gossip in the small McCall community has plagued RAMSEY, who is 69 years old. His protest to HILL related to the use of his name in the story. HILL stated that the article reports the details of RAMSEY's participation in the Osage Indian Murders and infers that the story is based on an actual FBI case and indicates the characters in the story are authentic with the exception of STEVE SAUNDERS, Special Agent. HILL assumed the article had been prepared with the cooperation of the FBI.

HILL feels the net result of the article, especially since it names RAMSEY, has interfered with RAMSEY's parole adjustment. At present

DWM:PCL  
AMSD

3222



Director, FBI

March 5, 1949

Re: JOHN RAMSEY - CIR (MURDER)

RAMSEY wishes to leave McCall and locate elsewhere but does not have the funds to do so. RAMSEY told HILL he felt his debt to society had been partially paid and sees no reason why fictitious names were not used in the preparation of the article. HILL expressed the same sentiment and in his letter to his superior asked that attempts be made to consider the advisability of permitting articles for public consumption to use the real names of subject parties.

Attempts were made at Boise to secure the March issue of the aforementioned comic book with negative results. News stands are now featuring the May, 1949, issue of this publication.

The above is being furnished for information purposes inasmuch as it would appear there is a possibility the matter may be brought to the attention of Bureau officials by the Parole Executive of the United States Board of Parole.

Very truly yours,

W. G. BANISTER  
S A C

Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice

P. O. Box 306  
Butte, Montana  
March 5, 1949

Director, FBI

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CRIME ON INDIAN RESERVATION.  
(MURDER)

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HILL feels the net result of the article, especially since it name RAMSEY, has interfered with RAMSEY's parole adjustment. At present



DWM:FCL  
AMSD

RECORDED - 62  
INDEXED - 62

19 MAR 15 1949

ET-2

3224



Director, FBI

March 5, 1949

Re: JOHN RAMSEY - CIR (MURDER)

RAMSEY wishes to leave McCall and locate elsewhere but does not have the funds to do so. RAMSEY told HILL he felt his debt to society had been partially paid and sees no reason why fictitious names were not used in the preparation of the article. HILL expressed the same sentiment and in his letter to his superior asked that attempts be made to consider the advisability of permitting articles for public consumption to use the real names of subject parties.

Attempts were made at Boise to secure the March issue of the aforementioned comic book with negative results. News stands are now featuring the May, 1949, issue of this publication.

The above is being furnished for information purposes inasmuch as it would appear there is a possibility the matter may be brought to the attention of Bureau officials by the Parole Executive of the United States Board of Parole.

Very truly yours,

*W. G. Banister*

W. G. BANISTER  
S A C

## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

FRY:mb

TO

MR. NICHOLS

DATE: March 9, 1949

FROM

W. A. JONES

SUBJECT

JOHN RAMSEY

SUBJECT OF I.C. #62-5033

The attached letter from Butte reflects that the U. S. Probation Officer at Boise, Idaho, has advised one of our Agents that he has directed a letter to Walter F. Urich, Parole Executive, U. S. Board of Parole, Washington, D. C., protesting use of John Ramsey's name in the comic book entitled "Steve Saunders, Special Agent" for March, 1949. This book, as you know, is published by Parents' Institute, Inc., which publishes "True Comics" with which we have cooperated for many months by furnishing I.C. material. The case involving Ramsey is that in which he was a codefendant with William K. Hale, charged with the Osage Indian murders. Both Hale and Ramsey were given life terms. In the I.C. memo John Ramsey is described as "a bootlegger, fifty year old typical rough type western criminal who had served a penitentiary term for rustling cattle, former member of the notorious Henry Grammer gang, actual murderer of William E. Smith, Rita Smith, Nettie Brookshire, and Henry Roan." In all about two dozen Osage Indians died under suspicious circumstances. It will be recalled that this case was one of those illustrated in the book published by the Editors of Look Magazine and Ramsey and Hale were identified by name in this volume.

The attached memo points out that Ramsey is 69 years old and told the Probation Officer that he felt his debt to society had been partially paid by his service of 21 years of his life sentence and that he sees no reason why fictitious names were not used in the preparation of the article. There appears to be no allegation of misstatements in the "True Comics" presentation of this case. In view of the wide publicity given this case in past years, Ramsey's prior criminal record, and the aggravated nature of his participation in the sordid crimes against the Osage Indians, it is not believed any special consideration should be given him.

Attachment

63 APR 4 1949

RECORDED - 62

INDEXED - 62

EX-22

10 MAR 17 1949

3226



SAC, Oklahoma City

Director, FBI

WILLIAM E. HALE  
OSAGE INDIAN MURDERS  
RESEARCH (CRIME RECORDS)

August 14, 1953  
G.I.R.

As you may recall, in the 1920's, William E. Hale and others were convicted in connection with the murder of various Osage Indians. As an expression of appreciation, the tribal council of the Osage Indians adopted resolutions commending Bureau Agents for their investigation in connection with these murders.

Bureau files do not contain copies of these resolutions but reflect that they are enrolled on the tribal records.

You are instructed to obtain, if possible, photographic copies of these resolutions and forward them to the Bureau under above caption not later than September 1, 1953.

RECORDED - 6

62-562-210  
AUG 19 1953  
38

Follow-up made September 1, 1953

MAILED 4  
AUG 17 1953  
COMM - FBI

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

AIRTEL

Transmit the following Teletype message to:

FBI, OKLAHOMA CITY

8-28-53

DIRECTOR, FBI -- ATTENTION: CRIME RECORDS

WILLIAM K. HALE, OSAGE INDIAN MURDERS RESEARCH (CRIME RECORDS).

REBULET DATED AUGUST 14, 1953. INVESTIGATION AT OSAGE INDIAN AGENCY, PAWUSKA, OKLA., REFLECTS THAT RESOLUTION COMMENDING AGENTS T. B. WHITE, FRANK S. SMITH, JOHN L. BURGER, JOHN K. WREN AND ALEX STREET, ALONG WITH SEVERAL OTHER INDIVIDUALS AND ATTORNEYS, A MATTER OF RECORD. PHOTOSTATIC COPIES ARE BEING PREPARED AND WILL BE RELEASED TO BUREAU UPON APPROVAL OF OSAGE INDIAN COUNCIL WHICH MEETS SEPTEMBER 14, 1953. TRIBAL ATTORNEY DOES NOT DESIRE TO RELEASE WITHOUT CONSENT OF TRIBAL COUNCIL BUT ADVISES COUNCIL WILL APPROVE. UACB WILL OBTAIN PHOTOSTATS AFTER 14th AND FORWARD TO BUREAU.

ELLSWORTH

70-748  
GHE:vlb

Noted 9-1-53  
RECORDED - 28  
EX-126

62-5033-1  
14471-3  
AUG 31 1953

Approved: *32*

Special Agent in Charge

Sent

Per

8 SEP 9 1953

Mr. Nichols

3208



SAC, Oklahoma City

August 28, 1953

Director, FBI

WILLIAM K. HALE, ET AL  
OSAGE INDIAN MURDERS  
RESEARCH (CRIME RECORDS)

C.I.R.-7

4-1

As you may recall, Lizzie Q or Lizzie Kile was the mother of Mollie Burkhart, Rita Kile Smith, and Anna Brown, the latter two being victims in the murder plots. There is some indication in Bureau files that Lizzie Q had a fourth daughter, Minnie Kile, who was said to be married to one Bill Smith. Rita Kile Smith, at the time of her death, was the wife of W. E. (Bill) Smith, also a murder victim.

Anna Brown was murdered on May 22, 1921. Minnie Kile Smith died in early 1922. W. E. Smith and his wife, Rita Kile Smith, were killed in March, 1923.

Bureau files reflect that Anna Brown died intestate, her estate going to her mother Lizzie Q, her sisters Mollie Burkhart and Rita Kile Smith, and a half sister, Grace Burkhart. There is no mention of Minnie Kile Smith as being one of her heirs.

The Bureau desires to know:

1. If Lizzie Q had a daughter named Minnie?
2. If the Bill Smith who was said to be married to Minnie was identical with the Bill Smith who was married to Rita Kile Smith?
3. What connection, if any, did Minnie's death have in the general scheme of the murderers to center the inheritance of Lizzie Q's family in the hands of Ernest Burkhart, Mollie's husband?

Some light may be shed on this problem by checking the marriage records of Osage County to determine when W. E. Smith married Rita Kile Smith.

The Bureau also desires general data concerning Osage County and its towns. This data will probably be readily available from the local Chamber of Commerce.

This material should be forwarded to the Bureau under above caption not later than September 3, 1953.

Follow-up made September 3, 1953.

RECEIVED  
SEP 28 1953  
RECORDED-52  
SEP 15 1953

3229

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

AIRTEL

Transmit the following ~~TELETYPE~~ message to:

FBI, OKLAHOMA CITY

9-3-53

DIRECTOR, FBI -- ATTENTION: CRIME RECORDS

WILLIAM K. HALE, OSAGE INDIAN MURDERS RESEARCH (CRIME RECORDS).

REURLET DATED AUG.-28, 1953, RECEIVED OKLA. CITY SEPT. 1, 1953.

NO AGENT AVAILABLE PAWTHUSKA, OKLA., UNTIL SEPT. 4, 1953, AT WHICH

TIME INFORMATION DESIRED WILL BE OBTAINED AND FURNISHED BUREAU.

ELLSWORTH

GHE:vlb  
70-748

RECORDED-108

62-5033-821  
144-1111-4  
31 SEP 10 1953

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

SEP 16 1953 Special Agent in Charge

Sent \_\_\_\_\_ M Per \_\_\_\_\_

3280



Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : DIRECTOR, FBI  
FROM : SAC, OKLAHOMA CITY (70-748)  
SUBJECT: WILLIAM K. HALL, ET AL  
OSAGE INDIAN MURDERS  
RESEARCH ( CRIME RECORDS )

DATE: September 8, 1953

Rebuletts 8/14, 28/53

Through the cooperation of MR. T. B. HALL, Superintendent, Osage Indian Agency, Pawhuska, Oklahoma, photostatic copies of the resolutions commending Bureau agents and others for their investigation and subsequent prosecution of the above captioned murders were obtained prior to the meeting of the Osage Indian Tribal Council on September 14, 1953 and are being forwarded as enclosures.

LIZZIE Q. or LIZZIE KILE had a daughter named MINNIE. She was one of the four daughters, namely, MINNIE, MOLLIE, ANNA and RITA.

BILL SMITH was identical with W. E. ( BILL ) SMITH who was married to RITA KILE SMITH, both of whom were murdered in March, 1923.

LIZZIE Q. (Osage allottee #282) was born in 1849. She was married to JIMMY NE-KAH-E-SEY (Osage allottee #281) who died March 18, 1913. They had four daughters, MINNIE (Osage allottee #295) who was born in 1890; MOLLIE (Osage allottee #296) born in 1887; ANNA (Osage allottee #258) born 1896; and RITA (Osage allottee #294) born in 1891.

MINNIE married BILL (W. E.) SMITH sometime about 1912 (exact date not reflected on records) and died in September, 1916. SMITH had formerly been married and had a daughter, ELIA ROGERS. The estate left by MINNIE was probated one half to LIZZIE Q., her mother and the other half to W. E. SMITH.

ANNA was murdered May 22, 1921 and her estate was probated to LIZZIE Q.

LIZZIE Q. died July 17, 1921 and her estate was divided between RITA KILE SMITH and MOLLIE BURKHART, each receiving one half share.

RITA KILE SMITH married W. E. (BILL) SMITH in 1920. SMITH had formerly been married to MINNIE and had inherited one half of her estate. At this time W. E. SMITH and RITA owned one half the estate of MINNIE and also one half the estate of LIZZIE Q. The other half of LIZZIE Q.'s estate was owned by MOLLIE BURKHART. According to the testimony taken while probating the estate of W. E. and RITA SMITH, they became worried and were of the opinion that someone

ONE: CUL  
Encl. 12

RECORDED

CRIME RECORDS

SEP

328



might attempt to murder them and without anyone's knowledge had an attorney draw a will, leaving one half their estate to ELLA ROGERS, daughter of W. E. SMITH, and the other half to GRACE BIGHEART, a half sister of RITA, less five dollars which they bequeathed to MOLLIE BURKHART, sister of RITA. This will was not common knowledge at the date of the explosion which resulted in the death of RITA on March 10, 1923 and SMITH'S death March 14, 1923. If the will had not existed MOLLIE BURKHART would have inherited all the estate of the SMITHS. After much litigation the court probated the will, giving ELLA ROGERS one half, MOLLIE BURKHART one sixth, the GRACE BIGHEART estate one sixth and JOHN BIGHEART JR., one sixth.

MOLLIE BURKHART died June 16, 1937.

The area that now constitutes Osage County was purchased in 1872 by the United States Government from the Cherokee Nation for use as a reservation for the Osage Tribe, and during that year the Osages moved onto their reservation. The transaction was not completed, however, until June 14, 1883, the date of the execution of the deed. The price paid was \$1,099,127.41, which is about 70 cents an acre. Some years later the bonuses and royalties from the oil leases on each of the many tracts of 160 acres within the reservation amounted to more than twice the purchase price of the entire reservation; and for a period of eight years beginning in 1920, the average annual income of each member of the Osage Tribe exceeded the original price of the reservation.

The Osage Indian Reservation was owned in common by the tribe for 34 years. Then, by an act of Congress approved June, 1906, the land included in the reservation was divided among the 2,229 members, each receiving an allotment of 657 acres. The coal, gas, oil and other minerals were reserved by this act to the Osage Tribe in common for a period of 25 years following April 8, 1906. This period of ownership in common has had several extensions, the last being by an act of Congress which advanced the date to April 8, 1933.

Osage County, the largest county in Oklahoma, containing an area of 1,470,059 acres, is in the northeastern part of the State adjoining the Kansas-Oklahoma line. The boundaries of this county coincide with those of the Osage Indian Reservation. It is 2298.6 square miles in size, which is more than twice as large in area as the entire State of Rhode Island and nearly 250 square miles larger than the State of Delaware.

At the present time it contains the following towns: Pannuska, Pop. 6,500; Fairfax, pop. 2,300; Barnsdall, pop. 1,500; Hordy, pop. 2,300; Shidler, pop. 800; Osage, pop. 500; Avant, pop. 200; Wynona, pop. 200; Burbank, pop. 200; Webb City, pop. 200; and a portion of the county borders on the city limits of Tulsa, Oklahoma.



and has several large housing developments.

At the time of the above captioned murders, the county was experiencing a boom in the exploration and development of the oil and gas fields and there were numerous towns and villages which are no longer in existence or are at the present time very small, consisting of Post Office, store and railroad station with loading pens for stock. The following towns were in existence at that time:

Apperson*	Avant	Barnsdall	Burbank
DeNoya *	Fairfax	Foraker	Crainola
Hodiny	Nelagoney	Osage	Pawhuska
Shidler	Webb City	Wynona	Cooper *
Iyman *	Lep *	Bowring	Hulah *
Woolverine *	Bigheart *		

\* Towns now nonexistent.

The county has several ranches containing over 10,000 acres and the raising of commercial beef cattle is a major agricultural industry. The oil production has fallen from the boom days but several of the older fields are being water flooded and the recovery of oil by this method will amount to as much oil as was originally taken from the various pools. The North Burbank pool in the Naval Reserve lease is expected to produce 75 million more barrels during the next twenty years.

There is enclosed with the photostatic copies of the above mentioned resolution, various material obtained from the Pawhuska Chamber of Commerce concerning Pawhuska and Osage County.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

To: COMMUNICATIONS SECTION.

SEPTEMBER 14, 1953

Transmit the following message to: SAC, OKLAHOMA CITY

AIR-TEL

RECORDED - 79

~~70-14471-4~~  
62-5033-822

WILLIAM R. HALE, ET AL, OSAGE INDIAN MURDERS, RESEARCH (CRIME RECORDS). REUBEN SEPTEMBER EIGHT LAST. REFERENCED LETTER

LISTS ALL TOWNS WHICH WERE IN EXISTENCE AT THE TIME OF THE MURDERS

DESIGNATING BETWEEN THOSE WHICH ARE NOW IN EXISTENCE AND THOSE

WHICH ARE NOT. NO MENTION IS MADE OF GRAY HORSE OR GRAYHORSE, A

TOWN WHICH WAS VERY INTIMATELY CONNECTED WITH THE STORY OF THE

MURDERS. THE BUREAU DESIRES YOU TO IMMEDIATELY ADVISE BY AIR-TEL

THE STATUS OF THIS TOWN AND ITS CORRECT SPELLING.

HOOVER

Li:pa

21 14 53 PM

U S DEPT OF JUSTICE

FBI

SPECIAL DELIVERY ROOM

1953

SEP 14 1953

VIA

COMM-FBI

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Per

3234



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

AIRTEL

Transmit the following Teletype message to:

FBI OKLAHOMA CITY

9/18/53

GHE:PM

DIRECTOR

WILLIAM K. HALE, ET AL, OSAGE INDIAN MURDERS, RESEARCH (CRIME RECORDS).

REBUAIRTEL 9/14/53. PROPER SPELLING OF GRAY HORSE IS TWO WORDS.

GRAY HORSE WAS AN INDIAN COMMUNITY APPROXIMATELY SIX MILES SOUTHEAST  
OF FAIRFAX, OKLAHOMA, AT TIME OF MURDERS. IT WAS A CROSSROADS  
WHICH HAD ONE STORE THAT HAD FORMERLY BEEN AN INDIAN TRADING POST  
IN THE EARLY DAYS, AND FOUR OR FIVE HOUSES. THERE HAS BEEN NO STORE  
THERE FOR ABOUT TEN YEARS, BUT THE COMMUNITY IS STILL KNOWN AS  
GRAY HORSE.

ELLSWORTH

70-748

RECORDED - 22

SEP 21 1953

63 SEP 28 1953

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Agent in Charge

Sent \_\_\_\_\_

M

Per \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Nichols  
Mr. Rosen

3235

Date of Removal 10-21-54

Report  
Letter  
Enclosure ✓

Office Memo

submitted by

Dated 8-4-54

has been removed for Mr. Lunn

to be sent to Attached to a memo going  
to the Director's office

Subject Osage Indian Murder Case

Synopsis

This is to be removed from file upon the return of the item and  
forwarded to the Coordinator of Mail and Files

Removed by

Date Request Received

File Number 62-5033-724

3236



## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Mr. Nichols

DATE: August 4, 1954

FROM : H. A. Jones

SUBJECT: OSAGE INDIAN MURDER CASES

Attached is a six-page memorandum concerning the Osage Indian murder cases which you requested. Emphases have been placed on the dramatical highlights of the Bureau's investigation in these cases.

Attachment

LEG:djg

RECORDED-48

SEP 14 1954

EX-125

SEP 23 1954

2 DEC 1 1954

3237

August 4, 1954

## OSAGE INDIAN MURDER CASES

The investigation of the brutal Osage Indian murder which occurred in the early twentieth century was one of the most complicated and difficult investigations ever conducted by the FBI. Just prior to initiation of the FBI's investigation, nearly two dozen Osage Indians died under suspicious circumstances. The entire Osage Indian tribe, as well as the white citizens of Osage County, Oklahoma, were horror-stricken and in fear for their lives.

The tribal council passed a resolution requesting the aid of the Federal Government in solving these murders, and the FBI's investigative machine went into action.

In June, 1906, the Federal Government enacted a law under which the 2,229 members of the Osage tribe were to receive an equal number of shares known as head rights. The Osage Indian Reservation, which is identical with Osage County, Oklahoma, consists of a million and a half acres of Indian allotted land. An Osage Indian born after passage of this act would inherit only his proportionate share of his ancestor's head rights. Oil was later discovered on the Osage reservation, and overnight the Osage tribe became the wealthiest people per capita in the world.

Among the many adventurous prospectors and other white men who drifted into the Osage territory was a man whose desire for riches and power was devoid of scruple - William K. Hale, later dubbed "King of the Osage," who was a cowpuncher from Texas. He became immensely wealthy through his dealing with the Osage Indians and eventually became a millionaire. Hale's nephews, Ernest and Bryan Burkhart, who either came with Hale to Osage or joined him later, were employed by Hale and completely dominated by him.

Lizzie Q, otherwise known as Lizzie Kile, was an Osage squaw who in 1920 was already old and in poor health. Lizzie Q's estate approximated \$200,000. She had three daughters, Anna, Mollie and Rita. Anna was a notorious character who had had several affairs with white men from time to time, and she was formerly married to one Odie Brown. In 1920 Anna's estate approximated \$100,000. Anna had been somewhat intimate with at least one of the Burkhart boys but apparently she was too notorious for even the Burkharts to contract a formal marriage; however, Anna had money and the stake was large. Rita married one William E. Smith, a white man, with whom she lived up to the time of her death. Mollie became the wife of Ernest Burkhart, Hale's nephew. Mollie appears to have been the intended means of drawing to Hale, through the Burkharts, the assets of the entire family.

62-5033-824  
ENCLOSURE

3238



In 1920 Lizzie Q, the aged mother, was brought to Ernest Burkhardt's home where she lived with her daughter Mollie and her son-in-law. She was the second of the family taken directly under the wing of Hale in the general scheme. Early in 1921 Lizzie Q developed a malady which very evidently would result in her death. She had been induced to make a will, leaving the bulk of her estate to Ernest Burkhardt's wife and children. But there were even higher stakes to be won. If the old woman should outlive Anna Brown, then, under the law of the State, Lizzie Q's fortune would be increased by half of Anna Brown's estate. However, if Anna should outlive her mother, the greater part of her fortune would be diverted to collaterals.

On May 27, 1921, a hunting party found the body of Anna Brown in a ravine about three miles from Fairfax, Oklahoma. She had apparently been dead for five or six days, and a bullet hole was discovered in the back of her badly decomposed and swollen head.

At Anna's death the estate of Lizzie Q was augmented by half of Anna's estate. The next expected happening occurred two months after Anna Brown's death when Lizzie Q passed away at the home of her daughter, Mollie Burkhardt, the wife of Ernest Burkhardt. Lizzie Q's estate plus half of Anna Brown's estate therefore passed in bulk to the Burkharts.

After Anna Brown's death, an investigation was immediately started and her brother-in-law, William E. Smith, was the most active member of the family in pursuing the investigation. Both he and his wife were very outspoken in their belief that W. K. Hale and his nephews were responsible for the murder. Bryan Burkhardt was arrested and charged with the murder of Anna Brown in the state courts; however, he was acquitted.

Anna Brown had a cousin, a picturesque full-blooded Osage Indian named Henry Roan. In January, 1923, Roan was living with his wife Mary, also a full-blooded Osage, and their children at Fairfax, Oklahoma. On February 6, 1923, an Indian boy found an automobile in a rocky swale a few miles northwest of Fairfax. On the front seat was the body of Henry Roan--a bullet hole in his head.

Shortly after Roan's death, Hale presented for payment a \$25,000 insurance policy on the life of Henry Roan.

William E. Smith, the husband of Rita and the brother-in-law of Anna Brown, was living in a comfortable home with his wife and a white servant girl named Nettie Brookshire. Smith had continued his active investigation of the murder of Anna Brown and had a bitter altercation with Hale, due not only to his letting it be known that he had evidence involving Hale in the murder of Anna, but also because he demanded that Hale pay him \$6,000 he allegedly owed him. On March 10, 1923, less than two months after Henry Roan's body was found, Smith's home at Fairfax was demolished by an explosion. His wife, Rita, and their 17-year-old white servant, Nettie Brookshire, were killed instantly.

their bodies being blown asunder. Smith himself was rescued from the debris and lingered for about four days when he died. Before he passed away he made a dying declaration that the only enemies he had in the world whom he could suspect of blowing up his home were Hale and the Burkharths.

After the passing of Rita Smith, the only member of Little O's family remaining was Mollie Burkhart, Ernest's wife. In addition to wiping out Smith's \$6,000 claim against Hale and eliminating a man anxious to see the Hale-Burkhart faction brought to justice, this triple murder was calculated to further enrich the Ernest Burkhart family by approximately \$150,000 from the estate of Rita Smith, since Mollie Burkhart was Rita's only surviving sister. However, this had been circumvented by a joint will made by Rita and her husband under which the survivor of the two was to acquire the estate of the first to die. Since Smith survived Rita by approximately four days all of the property passed to him and, at his death, to a daughter of Smith's by a former marriage, a girl living in Arkansas unknown to Hale and the Burkharths.

The FBI entered the investigation of these brutal murders in 1923 and spent years of painstaking investigation in unraveling the mystery and gathering from all parts of the country the necessary evidence to convict the guilty parties. Special Agents, carefully selected because of their knowledge of Indian and frontier life, drove thousands of miles through the oil fields day and night in the heat, cold, rain, snow and mud in running out innumerable leads, many of which were designed to confuse them and throw them off the trail of the true perpetrators.

Private detectives, many of whom were hired by the murderers themselves to frustrate the investigation, had spent many months on the cases, interviewing numerous persons many times.

To overcome some of the obstacles with which they were faced, some of the Agents assumed undercover capacities including an insurance salesman, an Indian "medicine man," a cattleman, a prospector and a plain Texas cowboy. The lives of the Agents investigating these murders were constantly in danger since the area abounded with robbers and killers.

FBI investigations revealed that William K. Hale, a millionaire rancher, was the mastermind behind the murders which were further designed to augment his wealth.

Investigations revealed that on the night of her murder, Anna had been plied with liquor by Kelsey Morrison, a neat-appearing white man of very bad reputation, and Bryan Burkhart, who were accompanied by Morrison's Osage wife. They drove by the ranch house of William K. Hale who gave Morrison a .32 caliber automatic pistol to kill Anna. From Hale's house the party drove to within a few hundred feet of where the body was later found, and while Bryan Burkhart held the drunken Anna,



Morrison shot her through the back of the head. Morrison later confessed that he had murdered Anna at the instigation of Hale. Morrison testified to these facts at Hale's trial and was corroborated by his wife and a bootlegger who stated from the witness stand that he saw Anna being murdered while delivering whisky ordered by Morrison and Burkhardt.

Agents learned that Hale had hired John Ramsey, a 50-year-old bootlegger and typical rough type western criminal, to murder Henry Roan. Hale bought Ramsey a \$500 Ford car prior to the Roan murder as part payment for the deed and paid him \$1,000 in cash after the murder had been committed.

John Ramsey did not even know Roan's name when he murdered him but had simply had Roan pointed out to him on the streets of Fairfax, Oklahoma, as the Indian Hale wanted killed. Ramsey made friends with Roan through Roan's fondness for whisky and took him out on several occasions, ostensibly to furnish him liquor but in reality to murder him. Upon each occasion, Ramsey lost his nerve, but on January 26, 1923, he persuaded Roan to drive to the bottom of a canyon. Here he shot Roan through the back of the head with a .45 caliber pistol. Hale later expressed anger that Ramsey had shot Roan in the back of the head since it had been planned to make it appear that Roan committed suicide. Hale was a self-appointed pallbearer at Roan's funeral, and Ramsey, upon viewing the body, pretended to be deeply affected.

The facts surrounding the murder of Roan were corroborated by the confessions of Ramsey and Ernest Burkhardt who was present at all negotiations relative to the murder.

Investigation revealed that Hale hired John Ramsey and Asa "Ace" Kirby to murder William E. Smith and his wife. Ernest Burkhardt, acting under instructions from his uncle, pointed out Smith's house to Ramsey and Kirby and sought Ramsey out to tell him when the Smiths should be murdered.

Agents learned that a five-gallon keg of nitroglycerin had been placed under the Smith residence and ignited.

Agents also learned that Hale had attempted to hire Al Spencer, the notorious outlaw, to kill the Smiths, but Spencer declined, saying that he had no compunction at robbing a train or blowing a safe and killing individuals in the course of such crimes, but he had not sunk so low as to murder helpless individuals for money. After Spencer's refusal, Hale attempted to hire other criminals to murder William Smith and his wife, but all refused.

After the Smith massacre, Hale became afraid that Kirby would make known Hale's connection with the murders. Accordingly, he persuaded Kirby to attempt the robbery of a grocery store where the

would allegedly find valuable gems. The owner of the store was in turn informed of the exact hour of the contemplated robbery, and as Kirby forced entrance into the store through a window, he was killed with several shotgun blasts resulting in his death. Thus, another witness who could have implicated Hale and his associates was removed.

Ernest Burkhardt proved to be the weak link in the Hale organization and was the first to confess. Burkhardt was a weak-willed individual completely dominated by Hale and would not hesitate to do anything his uncle desired. When John Ramsey learned how much evidence the FBI Agents had compiled, he too made a complete confession of his part in the murders.

In addition to the solution of the murders, Agents discovered that Mollie Burkhardt, Ernest's fullblooded Osage wife, was dying from what was believed to be slow poisoning. It is an established fact that when she was removed from the control of Burkhardt and Hale, she immediately regained her health. At Mollie's death, Ernest Burkhardt, Hale's nephew, would have acquired the entire fortune of the Lizzie family.

Hale's lawyers employed every device, legal and illegal, to obtain their clients' freedom. Defense witnesses committed perjury, and many of the prosecution's witnesses were intimidated and threatened. Many individuals subsequently received sentences for their perjury as a result of FBI investigations.

William K. Hale and John Ramsey were tried four times - twice in the Federal District Court at Guthrie, Oklahoma, once in the Federal District Court at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and once in the Federal District Court at Pawhuska, Oklahoma. They were convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment in the Federal Penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas, for the murder of Henry Roan. The United States had jurisdiction only over the place where Henry Roan was murdered.

Other sentences were imposed in the state courts for murders over which the United States had no jurisdiction. Ernest Burkhardt received life imprisonment for his part in the murder of William E. Smith and family. Kelsey Morrison was given life imprisonment for the murder of Anna Brown. Bryan Burkhardt turned state's evidence in state court and was never convicted.

Information obtained by an FBI Agent indicated that in connection with the mysterious deaths of a large number of Indians, the perpetrators of the crime would get an Indian drunk, have a doctor examine him, pronounce him intoxicated and give him a hypodermic injection of morphine. After the doctor departed, the



gang members would inject an enormous amount of morphine under the armpit of the drunken Indian which would result in his death. The doctor's certificate would subsequently read, "Death from alcoholic poisoning."

This case established the need for a pioneering effort signed to bring to law enforcement all the scientific aids which in later years have been of so much assistance to the FBI in its investigations.

In the so-called autopsy, for example, of Anna Brown's body, which was discovered five or six days after her death on May 27, 1921, it was reported that no bullet was discovered. Similarly, no evidence was preserved in many of the other deaths prior to the FBI's entry into the case.

The case along with others pointed to the need of applying science to crime detection which was accomplished with the establishment of the FBI Laboratory in 1932.

Upon the successful conclusion of the cases against Hale and Ramsey and the other individuals involved in the murders, the Osage Indians, through their tribal council, passed resolutions which are enrolled on the records of the tribe. These resolutions express appreciation for the great service rendered by Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in breaking up the vicious murder ring which had been preying upon the Osage tribe for years.

# Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO :

Mr. Jones

DATE: September 10, 1954

FROM :

L. B. Nichols

SUBJECT :

OSAGE INDIAN MURDER CASES

Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Ladd \_\_\_\_\_  
Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Belmont \_\_\_\_\_  
Clegg \_\_\_\_\_  
Glavin \_\_\_\_\_  
Harbo \_\_\_\_\_  
Rosen \_\_\_\_\_  
Tracy \_\_\_\_\_  
Mohr \_\_\_\_\_  
Tele. Room \_\_\_\_\_  
Holloman \_\_\_\_\_  
Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

With reference to your memoranda of August 4 and 10, 1954, concerning the Osage Indian Murder Cases, it is noted that some of the principal subjects are out of jail and still alive. In the event this material is used, Mr. Tolson has expressed the view that very careful consideration must be given not to utilizing actual names of any principals or so identifying them in any way that we may be subjected to a libel suit by the principals. We should keep this in mind in the event any articles or motion picture films are made on this case.

JJM:ptm

*replied*  
*in*

*NO*

RECORDED-48

62-5033-825

9 SEP 14 1954

INDEXED-48

EX-125

SEP 22 1954

3244



Date of Removal 10-21-54

Office Memo

Letter  
Enclosure

submitted by

Dated 8-10-54

has been removed for Mr.

to be sent to attached to a memo to Director

Subject Asage Indian Murder Case

Synopsis Wm. K. Hale

This is to be removed from file upon the return of the item and forwarded to the Coordinator of Mail and Files

Removed by K...

Date Request Received

File Number 62-5033-876

3245

## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Mr. Nichols

DATE: August 10, 1954

FROM : H. A. Jones

SUBJECT: OSAGE INDIAN MURDER CASES

William R. Hale

You requested additional information regarding scientific crime detection and status of principal subjects to supplement a six-page memorandum dated August 4, 1954, on this subject. Accordingly, the attached is submitted.

Attachment

LEG:lmz

RECORDED - 56

13 SEP 28 1954

EX - 107

66 DEC 1 1954

71 OCT 1 1954

SEP 30 1954

3246



## EXAMINATION OF EVIDENCE

Anna Brown's body was discovered on May 27, 1921. It was concluded that she had been dead five or six days. The so-called autopsy was performed by local doctors and the burial was by a local undertaker. The doctors and the undertaker were allegedly tied in with the Osage outlaws. It was denied that a bullet was ever discovered by these individuals.

Henry Roan's body was located February 6, 1923. Officers surmised that he had been dead approximately ten days. A local inquest was held but no pertinent evidence was developed.

The Smith massacre occurred on March 10, 1923. A chemist from Oklahoma A. & M. was called in to conduct an examination of the Smith premises. This investigation concluded that a large quantity of TNT or nitroglycerin had been placed under the house. This information later proved of value when questioning suspects.

The Osage Tribal Council in March, 1923, requested the services of the Department of Justice in this matter. The FBI, then called the Bureau of Investigation, entered the case after it was determined that the United States had jurisdiction over the place where Henry Roan was killed.

This case and similar cases demonstrated the need for scientific aids in crime detection which led to the establishment of the FBI Laboratory in 1932.

62-5030-824

3247

STATUS OF PRINCIPAL SUBJECTS

William K. Hale, John Ramsey, Ernest Burkhardt and Kelsey Morrison each received sentences of life imprisonment either in Federal or state courts for their participation in the Osage Indian murders. Available information indicates the following:

Hale was paroled in July, 1947. He was fingerprinted in Phoenix, Arizona in August, 1952, during a convict registration.

John Ramsey was paroled from the United States Penitentiary, Leavenworth, Kansas, in November, 1947, after which he began residing with a son in Idaho. In 1949, he complained to his probation officer because his name had been used in a comic book entitled "Steve Saunders, Special Agent" which was published by True Comics.

Kelsey Morrison was paroled in 1931. Subsequently, he was convicted for violation of the National Prohibition Act and received a four-year sentence. In 1936, he was conditionally released from prison, and in May, 1937, he was killed in a gun battle with police officers in Fairfax, Oklahoma.

Ernest Burkhardt was confined to the Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester, Oklahoma, from which he was paroled in 1937. In April, 1941, charged with theft in Federal District Court, Northern District of Oklahoma, he was sentenced to serve seven years at the Federal Penitentiary, Atlanta, Georgia. He was conditionally released in August, 1946.

62-5033-8

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TO : Mr. Nichols

DATE: October 21, 1954

FROM : W. A. Jones

SUBJECT: THOMAS B. WHITE, SR.  
FORMER SPECIAL AGENT  
CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES  
AUSTIN, TEXAS

Osage Indian Cases

As you requested, this is a summary of pertinent information concerning Thomas B. White, Sr. In a letter to the Director dated September 3, 1954, White indicated that he expected to attend the American Prison Association Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, which will be held from October 22, through October 29, 1954. White stated that he hoped to stop by and see the Director after the convention on his return trip to Texas. By letter dated September 9, 1954, the Director wrote White that he looked forward to seeing him in Washington in October. In response to White's query about the story of the Osage Indian murder cases being filmed and his offer to afford information about the cases, the Director wrote that he had no knowledge that a definite decision had been reached to make such a film but that he would bear White in mind if definite plans concerning the picture should be called to his attention. In the event that the Director should care to review the facts in this case, memoranda concerning the case and the present status of the principal subjects of the Osage Indian murder case are attached.

White EOD with the Bureau as a Special Agent on August 13, 1917, when he was thirty-six years of age, and resigned March 6, 1927, at which time he was acting as Warden at the United States Penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas. His record of service with the Bureau was good, and he has been very cooperative with Bureau Agents since his resignation. White has had extensive experience as a prison warden, and on March 1, 1951, he retired from the position as warden of the Federal Correctional Institute at La Tuna, Texas. At the present time, Mr. White is chairman of the Board of Pardons and Paroles, State of Texas, Austin, Texas. His son, Thomas Bruce White, Jr., is

Attachments (2)

cc - Mr. Holloman

JPL:pac

RECORDED - 3

EX-130

62-5033-821

OCT 27 1954

DEC 9 1954

3249

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6 Memo to Mr. Nichols  
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9

October 21, 1954

10  
11 Special Agent assigned to the El Paso Division, having  
12 entered on duty as an Agent on November 6, 1939. Bufiles  
13 reflect a great deal of very cordial correspondence with  
14 White, and since his retirement his relationship with the  
15 Bureau has been most favorable. (67-1712, 94-4-6190,  
16 67-123849)  
17

18 RECOMMENDATION:

19 That if the Director's commitments allow, he see  
20 Mr. White on the occasion of his contemplated visit to the  
21 Bureau after the convention of the American Prison Association  
22 on October 29, 1954.  
23

24 "OK." HOOVER.  
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325



FBI

Date: 4/14/56

Transmit the following message via AIR TELAIR MAIL

(Priority or Method of Mailing)

From SAC, Phoenix

To: Director, SI and SAC, Butte

PERSONAL ATTENTION  
MR. L. B. NICHOLS,  
Assistant to the DirectorWILLIAM KING HALE  
MISC. - INFORMATION CONCERNINGRe BuPhonecall, 4/13/56. *WTC 5/11/56*

Phoenix PD record C 2120 reflects registration of WILLIAM KING HALE as ex-convict in 1952, he having served time for murder in Leavenworth Penitentiary. HALE was described as 78 years in 1952, born Greenville, Texas. His address in 1953 was shown as 120 East Ocotillo Road, Phoenix, which is the residence of MAX A. COHEN, oilman.

~~Pretext call to mail at COHEN residence determined HALE, now 80 years of age and in good health, presently residing 400 Hubbell Street, Miles City, Montana, c/o ROY DERENBERGER.~~

For information Butte, Assistant to the Director NICHOLS requested very discreet determination of whereabouts and the general activities of HALE who was one of ringleaders in the Osage Indian Cases, investigated by the Bureau in the 1920's. BUTTE discreetly confirm HALE's whereabouts and determine in general what he is doing now and advise Bureau by airtel addressed to the personal attention of Mr. NICHOLS.

RECORDED  
CROSBY

62-6033-828

EN - SE 43

3 - Bureau

2 - Butte

1 - Phoenix (80-0)

RJVL/bje

(6)

Approved: *WTC 4/16*  
Special Agent in Charge

Sent \_\_\_\_\_ M Per \_\_\_\_\_

58 MAY 1 1956

305



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

AIRTEL

Transmit the following ~~Teletype~~ message to: BUREAU 6/5/56

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI

FROM: SAC, BUTTE

WILLIAM KING HALE  
INFORMATION CONCERNING

PERSONAL ATTENTION  
Mr. L. B. NICHOLS,  
Assistant to the Director

Re Phoenix airtel to Bureau and Butte, 4/14/56.

RALPH W. LOOP, United States Commissioner and Police Judge, Miles City, Montana, on May 2, 1956, advised SA DANIEL A. CURNAN that he is acquainted with WILLIAM KING HALE, wa. Billy Hale, the subject of the Bureau case once recounted in a detective magazine as the "FBI's Strangest Case". LOOP said that he was reared in the vicinity of Carnegie, Oklahoma, near the place where HALE operated and that he on occasions has discussed old times in the State of Oklahoma with HALE. LOOP said that HALE arrived in Miles City, Montana area about four to five years ago and was first employed on a ranch owned by BENNY BINION, now a Federal prisoner as a result of conviction for Federal income tax evasion. This ranch is located north of Jordan, Montana, in Garfield County. HALE was employed for about one year on this ranch.

After termination of this employment, HALE worked as a dishwasher in the Range Riders' Bar and Cafe, Miles City, Montana, owned and operated by DOLA N. WILSON. LOOP advised that HALE was periodically employed at this establishment until the fall of 1955, during which time HALE was a fellow employee of PAUL DAVIS, whom LOOP describes as a former prison mate of HALE at the U. S. Penitentiary, Leavenworth, Kansas, having been convicted of the crime of murder. DAVIS is presently employed at the Red Rock Village, a motor-restaurant-drive inn combination east of Miles City.

LOOP, employed as a real estate salesman for Hatch Real Estate Agency, Miles City, Montana, said that HALE has attempted to persuade some wealthy persons from around Kansas City,

Bureau  
Phoenix (80-0)  
Butte, (62-1179)

Mr. Nichols

DAC:rc

Approved:

Special Agent in Charge

RECORDED - 15

TRANSMIT VIA AIR MAIL

Sent M Per

JUN 20 1956

3252



2  
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8 TO: DIRECTOR, FBI

RE: WILLIAM KING HALE 6/5/56  
INFORMATION CONCERNING

9  
10 FROM: SAC, BUTTE

11  
12 Missouri, to purchase a ranch in the vicinity of Miles City,  
13 Montana, but was unsuccessful.

14  
15 LOOP said HALE lives with a family by the name of DEREMBURGER  
16 in Miles City with whom he apparently became acquainted while  
17 working on the BINION ranch, as some members of the DEREMBURGER  
18 family reside in the vicinity of Jordan, Montana.

19  
20 Mrs. ROY WATSON, 815 North 5th Street, Miles City, Montana,  
21 on May 8, 1956, advised SA CURNAN that HALE lives with ROY  
22 DEREMBURGER and family at 400 Hubbel Street, Miles City.  
23 Mrs. WATSON said that ROY DEREMBURGER presently is employed  
24 at the U. S. Range Livestock Experimental Station, Fort  
25 Keogh, Miles City, Montana. WATSON said that HALE occasionally  
26 takes trips to the State of Texas accompanied by Mrs. ROY  
27 DEREMBURGER.

28  
29 On May 18, 1956, CHARLES WILSON, bartender, Range Riders'  
30 Bar and Cafe, son of DOLA N. WILSON, advised that the employ-  
31 ment records of his establishment reflect that BILLY HALE,  
32 SSN 516-40-2273, began his employment as a dishwasher on  
33 April 1, 1954, and terminated his employment on December 15,  
34 1955. CHARLES WILSON advised that the records indicate that  
35 HALE was periodically employed during this time.

36  
37 The Butte Division will immediately furnish to the Bureau  
38 any pertinent information concerning the activities of HALE.

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## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Mr. Nichols

DATE: November 28, 1956

FROM : J. B. Jones

SUBJECT: William K. Hale

There are attached excerpts concerning the above-captioned case taken from "The FBI Story, A Report to the People," by Don Whitehead published by Random House, 1956. These excerpts are from page(s) 113-118, 336 of the book.

The full text of the book may be found in the FBI Library.

Enclosure

ENCLOSURE

NOT RECORDED

5 MAR 11 1957

66 MAR 12 1957

CRIMINAL REC

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BANKER WILLIAM K. HALE returned from the annual Texas Fat Cattle Show to find his home town of Fairfax, Oklahoma, gripped by excitement . . . and fear.

As he walked up Main Street from the railway station, his friends stopped him to tell him the news. Their stories were confused, but he gathered that while he was in Fort Worth, an explosion had literally rocked the town. A few people who happened to be up and about at three o'clock that morning had seen a sheet of flames engulf the Bill Smith home—and then came the blast that ripped the big house apart.

"Killed Rita and the maid and Bill's dying . . . blew 'em to hell and gone . . . not much left of the house but a pile of kindlin' wood." Some people recalled hearing an automobile race through the town a few minutes before the explosion. No one could describe the car or driver.

Despite the confusion, Hale knew what it was. It was murder. The banker stopped to talk with his friend, the mayor, and discuss the terrible thing that had happened.

Hale left the mayor's office and walked on up the street, thinking of Bill Smith. He had known Bill and his wife, Rita, for years. They had lived out in the country until recently, when they decided to move into town. Rita's sister, Mollie, was married to one of Hale's nephews. So there really was a distant family relationship.

Banker Hale still had the Smith murders on his mind a few days later when he sent for Asa Kirby, who frequently did odd jobs for him. The two men talked for a while and then Kirby left the Hale house.

Later, Hale strolled downtown. He entered one of the Main Street stores and chatted confidentially with the proprietor. There was talk around town that the storekeeper had a valuable collection of diamonds in his safe.

That night the merchant didn't go home. He locked himself in the store and waited with a shotgun in his hands. It was about 2:30 A.M. when he heard the rear window of the store being pried open. And then a dark figure was framed in the window.

The shotgun roared, blasting "Ace" Kirby out of the window, mortally wounded. Dead men tell no tales—and Kirby would never be able to name the man who had paid him and a companion to blow up the home of Bill Smith.

That was Osage County, Oklahoma, in March, 1923, a dark and bloody hunting ground if ever there was one; and the craftiest hunter

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ENCLOSURE

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of them all in this oil-and-Indian kingdom was William K. Hale, banker, cattleman, merchant, politician and killer-by-proxy.

Throughout the Roaring Twenties there was no stranger case than that of Hale, who became known as "King of the Osage Hills."

For twenty years, Bill Hale was a power above the law in Osage County, growing rich from frauds and murders planned behind a front of respectability. He didn't kill with his own hands. He hired his killers. If anyone talked too much . . . well, there were ways to shut him up. Nobody had ever proved that Bill Hale had done anything wrong.

Before the turn of the century, Bill Hale had left his family's ranch near Greenville, Texas, and drifted into the "bandit hills" of Osage County. This was rough, broken country where outlaws hid in the ravines and caves, safe from pursuit until they were ready to ride again. Hale had no trouble making friends.

He lived in a tent for a time, scratching out a living by trading with the Indians. Curiously, when an Indian reported some of his cattle missing in one part of the county, Hale would turn up in another part with quantities of fresh meat for sale.

One day Hale went to collect a small bill from an Indian customer, only to find the man had just died. This wasn't misfortune for Hale—it was opportunity knocking for the first time.

Hale saw a lawyer and arranged to have a lien filed against almost everything the Indian had owned, including land, cattle and household possessions. It was sheer robbery, and the Indian's relatives prepared to fight the claim. But out of the badlands came Hale's friends to swear the Indian rightfully owed Hale the money. Yes, sir, they had heard Bill Hale plenty of times demanding payment from the Indian. Moreover, the Indian had acknowledged the debt. There wasn't a shred of documentary proof to support the claim, but Hale won his case.

After that it was easy. Rarely did an Indian die that there wasn't a claim of some kind against his property, filed either by Hale or by some other white man.

Then came the deluge of wealth for Osage County. Drillers struck oil and almost overnight the Osage Indians became the richest people per capita on earth. By reason of the "head rights" granted by the federal government to some 2,200 full-blooded Osage Indians, they were eligible to share the royalties paid on each gallon of oil pumped from their reservation. And there were the bonuses, too, from the lease sales. When an Osage died, his "head right" was passed on to his heirs. In this manner some Indians had more than one share in the tribe's pooled income.

Suddenly these Indians who had lived in poverty were fabulously wealthy. They bought huge houses and then spent most of their time



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6 in tents in the back yard. Grocery bills of more than \$1,000 a month  
7 for one family were not uncommon. They vied with each other to see  
8 who could get the largest car. One Indian went to Oklahoma City and  
9 bought a new, shiny hearse with glass sides. He liked to ride through  
10 the countryside and admire the scenery from the depths of a comfort-  
11 able rocking chair. The hearse was driven by a high-priced uniformed  
12 chauffeur.

13 The Osages were like children released in a vast new wonderland.  
14 But it was a wonderland that was to bring them misery, and even  
15 death.

16 The swindlers, gamblers, prostitutes, pimps and touts moved in to  
17 share the Osage wealth. White men married Indian women solely to  
18 get their hands on the oil money. Others developed a sudden "concern"  
19 for the Osages' welfare, and arranged to have themselves named legal  
20 guardians with control over their wards' money. Loan sharks charged  
21 exorbitant interest rates. Salesmen asked, and received, outrageous  
22 prices for their merchandise. Some Indians protested bitterly. But there  
23 were few to listen.

24 Bill Hale prospered as the Indians prospered. By 1920 the one-time  
25 cowpoke had moved from his tent in the badlands into control of a  
26 50,000-acre ranch stocked with cattle and fine horses. He controlled a  
27 bank in Fairfax, and owned part interest in a mercantile store and an  
28 undertaking establishment. Whenever a full-blooded Osage died, Bill  
29 Hale prospered in some fashion.

30 The number of unsolved murders of Indians increased. They found  
31 Charlie Whitehorn with two bullet holes in his forehead. Joe Yellow  
32 Horse died frothing at the mouth and Bill Stetson, the great Osage  
33 roper, and Nina Smith, both full-bloods, died violently. Folks said it was  
34 poisoned whiskey.

35 Barney McBride, a white oil man, was enraged by the scandalous  
36 treatment of his Indian friends. The tribal chiefs appealed to him to  
37 help put a stop to the thievery and the murder and McBride set out  
38 for Washington to make a protest. His body, horribly mutilated, was  
39 found stuffed in a culvert near Meadows, Maryland. He died before  
40 filing the protest.

41 Joe (Gray Horse) Bates died, too, and Bill Hale produced a deed  
42 to his lands. When George Bigheart died, Hale allegedly had an argu-  
43 ment at his deathbed over a deed which Hale claimed had been made  
44 to him. George Bigheart's lawyer was reported to have said the deed  
45 was fraudulent. The lawyer later fell—or was thrown—from a train.  
46 He was ground to death by the wheels.

47 Then the "King of the Osage Hills" got the most brilliant idea of his  
48 life. He must have wondered why the scheme hadn't occurred to him  
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