

shown me, I would label it and place it amid the stacks (my pitiful version of a Hoover filing system). Despite the darkness of the material, each new discovery gave me some hope that I might be able to fill in gaps in the historical chronicles—those spaces where there seemed to exist no recorded witnesses or voices, only the silence of the grave.



.... ***Crime scene photograph of Blackie Thompson, who was gunned down in 1934 after he escaped from prison*** Credit 70

The case of Red Corn’s grandfather was one of those voids. Because there had been no investigation into the death, and because all the principal figures were deceased, I couldn’t find any trail of evidence to follow. Virtually all traces of the grandfather’s life and death—of passions and turmoil and possible brutal violence—had seemingly been washed away.

The conversation with Red Corn, though, prompted me to probe more deeply into perhaps the most puzzling of the Osage murder

cases—that of Charles Whitehorn. The murder, which bore all the markings of a Hale-orchestrated hit, took place in May 1921—the same time period as the slaying of Anna Brown, in what was considered the beginning of the four-year Reign of Terror. Yet no evidence had ever surfaced implicating Hale or his henchmen in Whitehorn's murder.

Though the case had never been solved, it had originally been a prime focus of investigators, and when I returned to New York, I gathered evidentiary material related to the crime. In one of the tottering piles in my office, I found the logs from the private detectives hired by Whitehorn's estate after his death. Their reports read as though they'd been torn from a dime-store novel, with lines such as "This dope is coming to me from a reliable source."

As I read through the reports, I jotted down key details:

Whitehorn last seen alive in Pawhuska on May 14, 1921. Witness spotted him around 8:00 p.m. outside Constantine Theater.

Body discovered two weeks later—on a hill about a mile from downtown Pawhuska.

According to undertaker, "The position of the body indicated that he had fallen in that position and had not been carried there."

Weapon: a .32 revolver. Shot—twice—between the eyes. A professional hit?

The reports noted that the attorney Vaughan had been eager to help the private eyes. "Vaughan who is well acquainted with the Indians stated that his real interest in the case was to...have the guilty party prosecuted," a private detective wrote. Neither the private detectives nor Vaughan had any inkling that Vaughan would eventually become a target—that within two years he, too, would be murdered—and I found myself pleading with them to see what they could not see.

Comstock—the attorney and guardian who, despite Hoover's initial suspicions, had proven to be trustworthy—had also tried to assist the private detectives investigating the murders. "Mr. Comstock had

received some information,” a private detective wrote, noting that Comstock had reported that on May 14 an unidentified man had been seen lurking on the hill where Whitehorn’s body was subsequently found.

Because the Whitehorn case was officially unresolved, I expected the trails of evidence to disappear into a morass. In fact, the reports were bracing in their clarity. Based on leads from informants and from circumstantial evidence, the private detectives began to develop a crystalline theory of the crime. After Whitehorn’s death, his part-white, part-Cheyenne widow, Hattie, had married an unscrupulous white man named LeRoy Smitherman. The private eyes learned that the marriage had been orchestrated by Minnie Savage—a “shrewd, immoral, capable woman,” as one investigator put it, who ran a boardinghouse in Pawhuska. The private eyes suspected that she and Smitherman, as well as other conspirators, had arranged Whitehorn’s killing in order to steal his headright and fortune. Over time, many of the investigators came to believe that Hattie Whitehorn, who had quickly spent some of her husband’s fortune after his death, was also complicit. An informant told a private eye that there was no doubt Hattie Whitehorn was a “prime mover in killing Charley Whitehorn.”

An undercover private eye was placed in Savage’s boardinghouse. “He could hear what was said over the telephone,” another detective wrote in his report, adding that the undercover “man will make good I think but will need some coaching.” Meanwhile, Minnie Savage’s sister became a rich source of information for investigators. She divulged that she had seen what was likely the murder weapon: “Minnie was making up the bed and the gun was under the pillow and Minnie picked it up....It was a rather large gun, dark color.” Despite all this, the private detectives somehow failed to secure enough evidence to prosecute any of the suspects, or perhaps the private eyes were bought off.

When the first federal agents from the Bureau of Investigation began to probe the case, in 1923, they also concluded that Savage, Smitherman, and Hattie Whitehorn were responsible for the murder.

“From the evidence thus far gathered,” an agent wrote, it appeared that “Hattie Whitehorn caused him to be murdered in order that she might get hold of his estate.” Hattie denied any involvement in the crime but told one agent, “I am as smart as you are. I have been warned about you.” She added, “You are just getting into my confidence, and if I tell you you will send me to the electric chair.”

By that point, there had been several disturbing twists in the case. Hattie’s new husband, Smitherman, had fled the country for Mexico, taking with him her car and a chunk of her money. Then a man named J. J. Faulkner—whom an agent called an “unprincipled, hypocritical crook”—insinuated himself into Hattie’s life, evidently blackmailing her with information that she’d shared with him about her role in the murder. (One of Hattie’s sisters was heard yelling at Faulkner that he was an SOB and should stop extorting Hattie; Faulkner snapped back that he knew all about Hattie and the murder, and they’d better be careful about how they spoke to him.) In a report, Agent Burger and a colleague stated, “We are strongly of the belief that Faulkner has succeeded in obtaining some sort of confession from Hattie, and is using it to make her do as he sees fit, by threatening her with prosecution and exposing her, and that his object is to gain control of her...property at her death, and get money from her while she lives.”

Before long, Hattie became incurably sick. Agents noted that she seemed “liable to die at any time.” Remarkably, none of the agents expressed suspicions over the nature of her illness, even though so many victims during the Reign of Terror had been poisoned. Faulkner had a wife, and she told agents that he was “refusing to allow Hattie to be sent to a hospital...in order to keep her under his influence.” According to Hattie’s sisters, Faulkner had begun to steal money from her while she was “under the influence of a narcotic.”

The sisters eventually managed to admit Hattie to a hospital. Agents, believing that she was about to die, tried to persuade her to give a confession. In a report, agents wrote that she had admitted to Comstock that “she does know the facts and has never told what she knows” and that “they”—presumably Minnie Savage and other

conspirators—had sent Hattie away at the time Whitehorn was murdered. But Hattie never disclosed anything further. Not surprisingly, she recovered from her mysterious illness after being dislodged from Faulkner’s grip.

By the time Tom White showed up to begin his investigation, in 1925, the bureau had all but dropped the Whitehorn case. Agent Burger wrote dismissively that it was an “isolated murder,” unconnected to the systematic killings. The case did not fit into the bureau’s dramatic theory of the murders: that a lone mastermind was responsible for all the killings, and that when Hale and his henchmen were captured, the case of the Osage murders was solved. Yet, in hindsight, the fact that Hale appeared to have played no role in the Whitehorn plot was the very reason the killing was so important. Like the suspicious death of Red Corn’s grandfather, the plot against Whitehorn—and the failed plot against his widow—exposed the secret history of the Reign of Terror: the evil of Hale was not an anomaly.

25 THE LOST MANUSCRIPT

You must go out there and see what is happening,” Kathryn Red Corn told me when I visited the Osage Nation again, in June 2015. And so following her directions, I drove through Pawhuska and headed west across the prairie, through the tall grasses, until I saw what she’d vividly described to me: scores of metallic towers invading the sky. Each one stood 420 feet tall, the equivalent of a thirty-story skyscraper, and had three whirring blades. A single blade was as long as the wings of an airliner. The towers were part of a windmill farm, which spanned more than eight thousand acres and was expected to eventually supply electricity to some forty-five thousand homes in Oklahoma.

More than a hundred years after oil was discovered in Osage territory, a new revolutionary source of energy was transforming the region. But this time the Osage viewed it as a threat to their underground reservation. “Did you see them?” Red Corn said of the turbines, when I returned. “This company came in here and put them up without our permission.” The federal government, representing the Osage Nation, had filed a lawsuit against Enel, the Italian energy conglomerate that owned the wind farm. Citing the terms of the 1906 Allotment Act, the suit alleged that because the company had excavated limestone and other minerals while building the foundations for the turbines, it needed the Osage’s approval to continue operations. Otherwise, Enel was violating the Osage’s sovereignty over their underground reservation. The company insisted that it wasn’t in the mining business, and thus did not need a lease from the Osage. “We don’t disturb the mineral estate,” a representative of the project told the press.

On July 10, 2015, at dawn, a chief and two dozen members of the Osage Nation gathered beneath the windmills for a prayer to Wah'Kon-Tah. As the first sunlight burned through the thin, blue mist and radiated off the blades, a prayer leader said that the Osage were a “humble people, asking for your help.”

Not long after, a court sided with Enel, saying that though the government’s interpretation of the Allotment Act would no doubt benefit the Osage, the “defendants have not marketed or sold minerals or otherwise engaged in mineral development. As a result, they are not required to obtain a lease.” Plans were already under way for a second wind farm in the county.



.... *The new windmill farm built above the Osage's underground reservation* Credit 71

New government environmental regulations for oil drilling were having an even more profound effect on the Osage's underground reservation. The regulations, issued in 2014, were costly to satisfy,

and as a consequence oilmen had virtually stopped drilling new wells, given that they produced only marginal returns. An oil producer told a reporter, “For the first time in a hundred years, there’s no drilling in Osage County.”

I continued researching the murders, but there were fewer archives to examine, fewer documents to find. Then one day at the public library in Pawhuska I noticed, tucked amid volumes of Osage history, a spiral-bound manuscript titled “The Murder of Mary DeNoya-Bellieu-Lewis.” It appeared to have been assembled by hand, its pages printed on a computer. According to an introductory note, dated January 1998, the manuscript was compiled by Anna Marie Jefferson, the great-great-grandniece of Mary Lewis. “My great-grandmother...first told me the story about Mary,” Jefferson wrote. “I first heard about this around 1975.” Jefferson began to gather, from relatives and newspaper clippings and other records, bits of information about the murder—an endeavor that spanned two decades. She must have left a copy of the manuscript with the library, determined that the story not fall into the chasm of history.

I sat down and began to read. Mary Lewis, who was born in 1861, was an allotted member of the tribe. “With this money she was able to enjoy a prosperous life,” Jefferson wrote. Lewis had two marriages that ended in divorce, and in 1918, in her mid-fifties, she was raising a ten-year-old adopted child. That summer, Lewis took her daughter on a trip to Liberty, Texas, a small city about forty miles from Houston, on the banks of the Trinity River. Lewis was accompanied by two white men: Thomas Middleton, who was a friend, and a companion of his. With Lewis’s money, they bought a houseboat and stayed on the river. Then, on August 18, Lewis vanished. After authorities failed to investigate—“They never would have done anything,” one of Lewis’s relatives said—her family hired a private detective. He discovered that after Lewis’s disappearance Middleton had pretended to be her adopted son in order to cash several of her checks. In January 1919, after the police detained Middleton and his

companion, the private detective interrogated them. He told Middleton that he would “one hundred times rather find the old lady alive than dead,” adding, “If you can give any information to locate her, that will help you.”

Middleton insisted that he didn’t know where she had gone. “I am not a bit afraid,” he said.

He and his friend didn’t divulge anything. But two witnesses revealed that on the day Lewis disappeared, they had seen, a few miles from her houseboat, a car heading toward a snake-infested swamp. On January 18, 1919, investigators, with their pant legs rolled up, began to comb the thicket of vegetation. A reporter said that one of the lawmen had “scarcely stepped in the water of the bayou when his feet struggled for freedom. When he reached to the bottom to disengage them he brought up a thick growth of woman’s hair.” Leg bones were dredged up next. Then came a human trunk and a skull, which looked as if it had been beaten with a heavy metal object. GREWSOME FIND ENDS QUEST FOR MARY LEWIS, a headline in a local newspaper said.

Middleton’s companion confessed to beating Lewis over the head with a hammer. The plot was conceived by Middleton: after Lewis was killed, the plan was to use a female associate to impersonate her so that the friends could collect the headright payments. (This strategy was not unique—bogus heirs were a common problem. After Bill Smith died in the house explosion, the government initially feared that a relative claiming to be his heir was an impostor.) In 1919, Middleton was convicted of murder and condemned to die. “There was a point in Mary’s family that they were relieved the ordeal was over,” Jefferson wrote. “However, the feeling of satisfaction would be followed by disbelief and anger.” Middleton’s sentence was commuted to life. Then, after he had served only six and a half years, he was pardoned by the governor of Texas; Middleton had a girlfriend, and Lewis’s family believed that she had bribed authorities. “The murderer had gotten only a slap on the hand,” Jefferson wrote.

After I finished reading the manuscript documenting Lewis's murder, I kept returning to one detail: she had been killed for her headright in 1918. According to most historical accounts, the Osage Reign of Terror spanned from the spring of 1921, when Hale had Anna Brown murdered, to January 1926, when Hale was arrested. So Lewis's murder meant that the killings over headrights had begun at least three years earlier than was widely assumed, and if Red Corn's grandfather was poisoned in 1931, then the killings also continued long after Hale's arrest. These cases underscored that the murders of the Osage for their headrights were not the result of a single conspiracy orchestrated by Hale. He might have led the bloodiest and longest killing spree. But there were countless other killings—killings that were not included in official estimates and that, unlike the cases of Lewis or Mollie Burkhart's family members, were never investigated or even classified as homicides.

26 **~~~** **BLOOD CRIES OUT**

I returned to the archives in Fort Worth and resumed searching through the endless musty boxes and files. The archivist wheeled the newest batch of boxes on a cart into the small reading room, before rolling out the previous load. I had lost the illusion that I would find some Rosetta stone that would unlock the secrets of the past. Most of the records were dry and clinical—expenses, census reports, oil leases.

In one of the boxes was a tattered, fabric-covered logbook from the Office of Indian Affairs cataloging the names of guardians during the Reign of Terror. Written out by hand, the logbook included the name of each guardian and, underneath, a list of his Osage wards. If a ward passed away while under guardianship, a single word was usually scrawled by his or her name: “Dead.”

I searched for the name of H. G. Burt, the suspect in W. W. Vaughan’s killing. The log showed that he was the guardian of George Bigheart’s daughter as well as of four other Osage. Beside the name of one of these wards was the word “dead.” I then looked up Scott Mathis, the owner of the Big Hill Trading Company. According to the log, he had been the guardian of nine Osage, including Anna Brown and her mother, Lizzie. As I went down the list, I noticed that a third Osage Indian had died under Mathis’s guardianship, and so had a fourth, and a fifth, and a sixth. Altogether, of his nine listed wards, seven had died. And at least two of these deaths were known to be murders.

I began to scour the log for other Osage guardians around this time. One had eleven Osage wards, eight of whom had died. Another guardian had thirteen wards, more than half of whom had been

listed as deceased. And one guardian had five wards, all of whom died. And so it went, on and on. The numbers were staggering and clearly defied a natural death rate. Because most of these cases had never been investigated, it was impossible to determine precisely how many of the deaths were suspicious, let alone who might be responsible for any foul play.

Nevertheless, there were strong hints of widespread murder. In the FBI records, I found a mention of Anna Sanford, one of the names I had seen in the logbook with the word “dead” written next to it. Though her case was never classified as a homicide, agents had clearly suspected poisoning.

Another Osage ward, Hlu-ah-to-me, had officially died of tuberculosis. But amid the files was a telegram from an informant to the U.S. attorney alleging that Hlu-ah-to-me’s guardian had deliberately denied her treatment and refused to send her to a hospital in the Southwest for care. Her guardian “knew that was the lone place she could live, and if she stayed in Gray Horse she must die,” the informant noted, adding that after her death the guardian made himself the administrator of her valuable estate.

In yet another case, the 1926 death of an Osage named Eves Tall Chief, the cause was attributed to alcohol. But witnesses testified at the time that he never drank and had been poisoned. “Members of the family of the dead man were frightened,” an article from 1926 said.

Even when an Osage ward was mentioned as being alive in the log, it did not mean that he or she had not been targeted. The Osage ward Mary Elkins was considered the wealthiest member of the tribe because she had inherited more than seven headrights. On May 3, 1923, when Elkins was twenty-one, she married a second-rate white boxer. According to a report from an official at the Office of Indian Affairs, her new husband proceeded to lock her in their house, whip her, and give her “drugs, opiates, and liquor in an attempt to hasten her death so that he could claim her huge inheritance.” In her case, the government official interceded, and she survived. An investigation uncovered evidence that the boxer had not acted alone

but had been part of a conspiracy orchestrated by a band of local citizens. Though the government official pushed for their prosecution, no one was ever charged, and the identities of the citizens were never revealed.

Then there was the case of Sybil Bolton, an Osage from Pawhuska who was under the guardianship of her white stepfather. On November 7, 1925, Bolton—whom a local reporter described as “one of the most beautiful girls ever reared in the city”—was found with a fatal bullet in her chest. Her death, at twenty-one, was reported by her stepfather to be a suicide, and the case was quickly closed without even an autopsy. In 1992, Bolton’s grandson Dennis McAuliffe Jr., an editor at the *Washington Post*, had investigated her death after discovering numerous contradictions and lies in the official account. As he detailed in a memoir, *The Deaths of Sybil Bolton*, published in 1994, much of her headright money was stolen, and the evidence suggested that she had been assassinated outdoors, on her lawn, with her sixteen-month-old baby—McAuliffe’s mother—beside her. According to the log, her guardian had four other Osage wards. They had also died.

Though the bureau estimated that there were twenty-four Osage murders, the real number was undoubtedly higher. The bureau closed its investigation after catching Hale and his henchmen. But at least some at the bureau knew that there were many more homicides that had been systematically covered up, evading their efforts of detection. An agent described, in a report, just one of the ways the killers did this: “In connection with the mysterious deaths of a large number of Indians, the perpetrators of the crime would get an Indian intoxicated, have a doctor examine him and pronounce him intoxicated, following which a morphine hypodermic would be injected into the Indian, and after the doctor’s departure the [killers] 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 poison.’” Other observers in Osage County noted that suspicious deaths were routinely, and falsely, attributed to “consumption,” “wasting illness,”

or “causes unknown.” Scholars and investigators who have since looked into the murders believe that the Osage death toll was in the scores, if not the hundreds. To get a better sense of the decimation, McAuliffe looked at the *Authentic Osage Indian Roll Book*, which cites the deaths of many of the original allotted members of the tribe. He writes, “Over the sixteen-year period from 1907 to 1923, 605 Osages died, averaging about 38 per year, an annual death rate of about 19 per 1,000. The national death rate now is about 8.5 per 1,000; in the 1920s, when counting methods were not so precise and the statistics were segregated into white and black racial categories, it averaged almost 12 per 1,000 for whites. By all rights, their higher standard of living should have brought the Osages a *lower* death rate than America’s whites. Yet Osages were dying at more than one-and-a-half times the national rate—and those numbers do not include Osages born after 1907 and not listed on the roll.”

Louis F. Burns, the eminent historian of the Osage, observed, “I don’t know of a single Osage family which didn’t lose at least one family member because of the head rights.” And at least one bureau agent who had left the case prior to White’s arrival had realized that there was a culture of killing. According to a transcript of an interview with an informant, the agent said, “There are so many of these murder cases. There are hundreds and hundreds.”

Even cases known to the bureau had hidden dimensions. During one of my last visits to the reservation, in June 2015, I went to the Osage Nation Court, where, in many criminal cases, the Osage now mete out their own justice. An Osage lawyer had told me that the Reign of Terror was “not the end of our history,” adding, “Our families were victims of this conspiracy, but we’re not victims.”

In one of the courtrooms, I met Marvin Stepson. An Osage man in his seventies with expressive gray eyebrows and a deliberate manner, he served as the chief trial court judge. He was the grandson of William Stepson, the steer-roping champion who had died, of suspected poisoning, in 1922. Authorities never prosecuted anyone

for Stepson's murder, but they came to believe that Kelsie Morrison—the man who had killed Anna Brown—was responsible. By 1922, Morrison had divorced his Osage wife, and after Stepson's death he married Stepson's widow, Tillie, making himself the guardian of her two children. One of Morrison's associates told the bureau that Morrison had admitted to him that he had killed Stepson so that he could marry Tillie and get control of her invaluable estate.

Stepson's death was usually included in the official tally of murders during the Reign of Terror. But as I sat with Marvin on one of the wooden courtroom benches, he revealed that the targeting of his family did not end with his grandfather. After marrying Morrison, Tillie grew suspicious of him, especially after Morrison was overheard talking about the effects of the poison strychnine. Tillie confided to her lawyer that she wanted to prevent Morrison from inheriting her estate and to rescind his guardianship of her children. But in July 1923, before she had enacted these changes, she, too, died of suspected poisoning. Morrison stole much of her fortune. According to letters that Morrison wrote, he planned to sell a portion of the estate he had swindled to none other than H. G. Burt, the banker who appeared to be involved in the killing of Vaughan. Tillie's death was never investigated, though Morrison admitted to an associate that he had killed her and asked him why he didn't get an Indian squaw and do the same. Marvin Stepson, who had spent years researching what had happened to his grandparents, told me, "Kelsie murdered them both, and left my father an orphan."



.... ***Marvin Stepson is the grandson of William Stepson, who was a victim of the Reign of Terror.*** Credit 72

And that was not the end of the plot. After William Stepson and Tillie died, Marvin's father, who was three years old at the time, became the next target, along with his nine-year-old half sister. In 1926, Morrison, while serving time in prison for killing Anna Brown, sent a note to Hale, which was intercepted by guards. The note, filled with grammatical errors, said, "Bill, you know Tillies kids are going to have 2 or 3 hundred thousand dollars in a few years, and I have those kids adopted. How can I get possession or control of that money when I get out. You know I believe I can take these kids out of the State and they can't do a dam thing...they could not get me for Kidnapping." It was feared that Morrison planned to kill both children. An Osage scholar once observed, "Walking through an Osage cemetery and seeing the gravestones that show the inordinate numbers of young people who died in the period is chilling."

Marvin Stepson had the judicious air of someone who had spent his whole career serving the law. But he told me that when he first learned what Morrison had done to his family, he feared what he might be capable of doing. “If Morrison walked in this room right now, *I’d...*” he said, his voice trailing off.

In cases where perpetrators of crimes against humanity elude justice in their time, history can often provide at least some final accounting, forensically documenting the murders and exposing the transgressors. Yet so many of the murders of the Osage were so well concealed that such an outcome is no longer possible. In most cases, the families of the victims have no sense of resolution. Many descendants carry out their own private investigations, which have no end. They live with doubts, suspecting dead relatives or old family friends or guardians—some of whom might be guilty and some of whom might be innocent.

When McAuliffe tried to find the killer of his grandmother, he initially suspected his grandfather Harry, who was white. By then, Harry had died, but his second wife was still alive and told McAuliffe, “You should be ashamed of yourself, Denny, digging up things about the Boltons. I can’t understand why you’d want to do such a thing.” And she kept repeating, “Harry didn’t do it. He had nothing to do with it.”

Later, McAuliffe realized that she was probably right. He came to believe, instead, that Sybil’s stepfather was responsible. But there is no way to know with certainty. “I did not prove who killed my grandmother,” McAuliffe wrote. “My failure was not just because of me, though. It was because they ripped out too many pages of our history....There were just too many lies, too many documents destroyed, too little done at the time to document how my grandmother died.” He added, “A murdered Indian’s survivors don’t have the right to the satisfaction of justice for past crimes, or of even knowing who killed their children, their mothers or fathers, brothers

or sisters, their grandparents. They can only guess—like I was forced to.”

Before I left Osage County to return home, I stopped to see Mary Jo Webb, a retired teacher who had spent decades investigating the suspicious death of her grandfather during the Reign of Terror. Webb, who was in her eighties, lived in a single-story wooden house in Fairfax, not far from where the Smiths’ home had exploded. A frail woman with a quavering voice, she invited me in and we sat in her living room. I had called earlier to arrange the visit, and in expectation of my arrival she had brought out several boxes of documents—including guardian expense reports, probate records, and court testimony—that she’d gathered about the case of her grandfather Paul Peace. “He was one of those victims who didn’t show up in the FBI files and whose killers didn’t go to prison,” Webb said.



~~~ ***Mary Jo Webb*** Credit 73



~~~ *The open prairie north of Pawhuska* Credit 74

In December 1926, Peace suspected that his wife, who was white, was poisoning him. As the documents confirmed, he went to see the attorney Comstock, whom Webb described as one of the few decent white attorneys at the time. Peace wanted to get a divorce and change his will to disinherit his wife. A witness later testified that Peace had claimed his wife was feeding him “some kind of poison, that she was killing him.”

When I asked Webb how her grandfather might have been poisoned, she said, “There were these doctors. They were brothers. My mother said that everyone knew that’s where people would get the dope to poison the Osage.”

“What was their name?” I asked.

“The Shouns.”

I remembered the Shouns. They were the doctors who had claimed that the bullet that had killed Anna Brown had disappeared. The doctors who had initially concealed that Bill Smith had given a last statement incriminating Hale and who had arranged it so that one of them became the administrator of Rita Smith's invaluable estate. The doctors whom investigators suspected of giving Mollie Burkhart poison instead of insulin. Many of the cases seemed bound by a web of silent conspirators. Mathis, the Big Hill Trading Company owner and the guardian of Anna Brown and her mother, was a member of the inquest into Brown's murder that failed to turn up the bullet. He also managed, on behalf of Mollie's family, the team of private eyes that conspicuously never cracked any of the cases. A witness had told the bureau that after Henry Roan's murder, Hale was eager to get the corpse away from one undertaker and delivered to the funeral home at the Big Hill Trading Company. The murder plots depended upon doctors who falsified death certificates and upon undertakers who quickly and quietly buried bodies. The guardian whom McAuliffe suspected of killing his grandmother was a prominent attorney working for the tribe who never interfered with the criminal networks operating under his nose. Nor did bankers, including the apparent murderer Burt, who were profiting from the criminal "Indian business." Nor did the venal mayor of Fairfax—an ally of Hale's who also served as a guardian. Nor did countless lawmen and prosecutors and judges who had a hand in the blood money. In 1926, the Osage leader Bacon Rind remarked, "There are men amongst the whites, honest men, but they are mighty scarce." Garrick Bailey, a leading anthropologist on Osage culture, said to me, "If Hale had told what he knew, a high percentage of the county's leading citizens would have been in prison." Indeed, virtually every element of society was complicit in the murderous system. Which is why just about any member of this society might have been responsible for the murder of McBride, in Washington: he threatened to bring down not only Hale but a vast criminal operation that was reaping millions and millions of dollars.

On February 23, 1927, weeks after Paul Peace vowed to disinherit and divorce the wife he suspected of poisoning him, he was injured in a hit-and-run and left to bleed out on the road. Webb told me that the familiar forces had conspired to paper over his death. “Maybe you could look into it,” she said. I nodded, though I knew that in my own way I was as lost in the mist as Tom White or Mollie Burkhart had been.

Webb walked me outside, onto the front porch. It was dusk, and the fringes of the sky had darkened. The town and the street were empty, and beyond them the prairie, too. “This land is saturated with blood,” Webb said. For a moment, she fell silent, and we could hear the leaves of the blackjack rattling restlessly in the wind. Then she repeated what God told Cain after he killed Abel: “The blood cries out from the ground.”

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There is no greater gift to an author than the Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers at the New York Public Library. The Cullman fellowship allowed me essential time for research and the opportunity to plumb the library's miraculous archives. Everyone at the center—Jean Strouse, Marie d'Origny, and Paul Delaverdac, as well as the fellows—made for a year that was productive and fun.

The fellowship also guided me to an unexpected source. One day, Kevin Winkler, then the director of library sites and services, informed me that he knew about the Osage murders. It turned out that he was a grandson of Horace Burkhart, who was a brother of Ernest and Bryan Burkhart. Horace was considered the good brother, because he was not involved in any of the crimes. Winkler helped me to get in touch with his mother, Jean Crouch, and two of his aunts, Martha Key and Rubyane Surritte. They knew Ernest, and Key, who has sadly since died, had known Mollie as well. The three women spoke candidly about the family's history and shared with me a video recording of Ernest that was taken shortly before he died, in which he talked about Mollie and his past.

Several research institutions were critical to this project, and I am indebted to them and their staffs. Particularly, I want to thank David S. Ferriero, the archivist of the United States, as well as Greg Bognich, Jake Ersland, Christina Jones, Amy Reytar, Rodney Ross, Barbara Rust, and others at the National Archives; everyone at the Osage Nation Museum, including Lou Brock, Paula Farid, and the former director Kathryn Red Corn; Debbie Neece at the Bartlesville Area History Museum; Mallory Covington, Jennifer Day, Rachel Mosman, and Debra Osborne Spindle at the Oklahoma Historical Society; Sara Keckeisen at the Kansas Historical Society; Rebecca Kohl at the Montana Historical Society; Jennifer Chavez at New Mexico State University Library; Joyce Lyons, Shirley Roberts, and Mary K. Warren at the Osage County Historical Society Museum; Carol Taylor at the Hunt County Historical Commission; Carol Guilliams at the Oklahoma State Archives; Amanda Crowley at the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum; Kera Newby at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum; and Kristina Southwell and Jacquelyn D. Reese at the University of Oklahoma's Western History Collections.

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Aaron Tomlinson took exquisite photographs of Osage County and was a wonderful traveling companion. Warren Cohen, Elon Green, and David Greenberg are great journalists and even greater friends who provided wisdom and support throughout the process. And my friend Stephen Metcalf, who is one of the smartest writers, never tired of helping me to think through elements of the book.

At *The New Yorker*, I'm blessed to be able to draw on the advice of so many people brighter than I am, including Henry Finder, Dorothy Wickenden, Leo Carey, Virginia Cannon, Ann Goldstein, and Mary Norris. Eric Lach was a relentless fact-checker and provided keen

editorial suggestions. I asked far too much of Burkhard Bilger, Tad Friend, Raffi Khatchadourian, Larissa MacFarquhar, Nick Paumgarten, and Elizabeth Pearson-Griffiths. They pored over portions of the manuscript, and in some cases all of it, and helped me to see it more clearly. Daniel Zalewski has taught me more about writing than anyone, and he spread his magical dust over the manuscript. And David Remnick has been a champion since the day I arrived at *The New Yorker*, enabling me to pursue my passions and develop as a writer.

To call Kathy Robbins and David Halpern, at the Robbins Office, and Matthew Snyder, at CAA, the best agents would not do them justice. They are so much more than that: they are allies, confidants, and friends.

As an author, I have found the perfect home at Doubleday. This book would not have been possible without my brilliant editor and publisher, Bill Thomas. He is the one who first encouraged me to pursue this subject, who guided me through the highs and lows, and who has edited and published this book with grace and wisdom. Nor would this book have been possible without the unfailing support of Sonny Mehta, the chairman of the Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Nor would it have been possible without the remarkable team at Doubleday, including Todd Doughty, Suzanne Herz, John Fontana, Maria Carella, Lorraine Hyland, Maria Massey, Rose Courteau, and Margo Shickmanter.

My family has been the greatest blessing of all. John and Nina Darnton, my in-laws, read the manuscript not once, but twice, and gave me the courage to keep going. My sister, Alison, and my brother, Edward, have been an unbreakable ballast. So have my mother, Phyllis, who offered the kinds of perfect touches to the manuscript that only she can, and my father, Victor, who has always encouraged me; my only wish is that he were well enough to read this book now that it is done.

Finally, there are those for whom my gratitude goes deeper than words can express: my children, Zachary and Ella, who have filled my house with the madness of pets and the beauty of music and the

joyfulness of life, and my wife, Kyra, who has been my best reader, my greatest friend, and my eternal love.

A NOTE ON THE SOURCES

This book is based extensively on primary and unpublished materials. They include thousands of pages of FBI files, secret grand jury testimony, court transcripts, informants' statements, logs from private eyes, pardon and parole records, private correspondence, an unpublished manuscript co-authored by one of the detectives, diary entries, Osage Tribal Council records, oral histories, field reports from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, congressional records, Justice Department memos and telegrams, crime scene photographs, wills and last testaments, guardian reports, and the murderers' confessions. These materials were drawn from archives around the country. Some records were obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, while FBI documents that had been redacted by the government were provided to me, uncensored, by a former law-enforcement officer. Moreover, several private papers came directly from descendants, among them the relatives of the victims of the Reign of Terror; further information was often gleaned from my interviews with these family members.

I also benefited from a number of contemporaneous newspaper dispatches and other published accounts. In reconstructing the history of the Osage, I would have been lost without the seminal works of two Osage writers: the historian Louis F. Burns and the prose poet John Joseph Mathews. In addition, I was greatly aided by the research of Terry Wilson, a former professor of Native American studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and Garrick Bailey, a leading anthropologist of the Osage.

The writers Dennis McAuliffe, Lawrence Hogan, Dee Cordry, and the late Fred Grove had conducted their own research into the Osage

murders, and their work was enormously helpful. So was Verdon R. Adams's short biography *Tom White: The Life of a Lawman*. Finally, in detailing the history of J. Edgar Hoover and the formation of the FBI, I drew on several excellent books, particularly Curt Gentry's *J. Edgar Hoover*, Sanford Ungar's *FBI*, Richard Gid Powers's *Secrecy and Power*, and Bryan Burrough's *Public Enemies*.

In the bibliography, I have delineated these and other important sources. If I was especially indebted to one, I tried to cite it in the notes as well. Anything that appears in the text between quotation marks comes from a court transcript, diary, letter, or some other account. These sources are cited in the notes, except in cases where it is clear that a person is speaking directly to me.

ARCHIVAL AND UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

Comstock Family Papers, private collection of Homer Fincannon

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|----------|--|
| FBI | Federal Bureau of Investigation declassified files on the Osage Indian Murders |
| FBI/FOIA | Federal Bureau of Investigation records obtained under the Freedom of Information Act |
| HSP | Historical Society of Pennsylvania |
| KHS | Kansas Historical Society |
| LOC | Library of Congress |
| NARA-CP | National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Md.
Record Group 48, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior
Record Group 60, Records of the Department of Justice
Record Group 65, Records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation
Record Group 129, Records of the Bureau of Prisons
Record Group 204, Records of the Office of the Pardon Attorney |
| NARA-DC | National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
Records of the Center for Legislative Archives |
| NARA-FW | National Archives and Records Administration, Fort Worth, Tex.
Record Group 21, Records of District Court of the United States, U.S. District Court for the Western District
Record Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Osage Indian Agency
Record Group 118, Records of U.S. Attorneys, Western Judicial District of Oklahoma |
| NMSUL | New Mexico State University Library
Fred Grove Papers, Rio Grande Historical Collections |
| OHS | Oklahoma Historical Society |
| ONM | Osage Nation Museum |
| OSARM | Oklahoma State Archives and Records Management |
| PPL | Pawhuska Public Library |
| SDSUL | San Diego State University Library |
| TSLAC | Texas State Library and Archives Commission |

UOWHC University of Oklahoma Western History Collections

Vaughan Family Papers, private collection of Martha and Melville
Vaughan

NOTES

1: THE VANISHING

In April, millions: For more information on the Osage's notion of the flower-killing moon, see Mathews's *Talking to the Moon*.

"gods had left": Ibid., 61.

On May 24: My description of Anna Brown's disappearance and the last day she visited Mollie Burkhart's house is drawn primarily from the testimony of witnesses who were present. Many of them spoke several times to different detectives, including FBI agents and private eyes. These witnesses also often testified at a number of court proceedings. For more information, see records at NARA-CP and NARA-FW.

"peculiar wasting illness": Quoted in Franks, *Osage Oil Boom*, 117.

"Lo and behold": Sherman Rogers, "Red Men in Gas Buggies," *Outlook*, Aug. 22, 1923.

"plutocratic Osage": Estelle Aubrey Brown, "Our Plutocratic Osage Indians," *Travel*, Oct. 1922.

"red millionaires": William G. Shepherd, "Lo, the Rich Indian!," *Harper's Monthly*, Nov. 1920.

"une très jolie": Brown, "Our Plutocratic Osage Indians."

"circle of expensive": Elmer T. Peterson, "Miracle of Oil," *Independent* (N.Y.), April 26, 1924.

"outrivals the ability": Quoted in Harmon, *Rich Indians*, 140.

"That lament": Ibid., 179.

"even whites": Brown, "Our Plutocratic Osage Indians."

"He was not the kind": *Oklahoma City Times*, Oct. 26, 1959.

Ernest's brothers, Bryan: His birth name was Byron, but he went by Bryan. To avoid any confusion, I have simply used Bryan throughout the text.

"All the forces": Statement by H. S. Traylor, U.S. House Subcommittee on Indian Affairs, *Indians of the United States: Investigation of the Field Service*, 202.

"very loose morals": Report by Tom Weiss and John Burger, Jan. 10, 1924, FBI.

"She was drinking": Grand jury testimony of Martha Doughty, NARA-FW.

"Do you know": Grand jury testimony of Anna Sitterly, NARA-FW.

"I thought the rain": Ibid.

Fueling the unease: Information concerning Whitehorn's disappearance is drawn largely from local newspapers and from private detectives and FBI reports at the National Archives.

Genial and witty: It should be noted that one newspaper account says that Whitehorn's wife was part Cherokee. However, the FBI files refer to her as part Cheyenne.

"popular among": *Pawhuska Daily Capital*, May 30, 1921.

"Oh Papa": Quotations from the hunters come from their grand jury testimony, NARA-FW.

"The body was": Report by Weiss and Burger, Jan. 10, 1924, FBI.

"It was as black": Grand jury testimony of F. S. Turton, NARA-FW.

"That is sure": Grand jury testimony of Andy Smith, NARA-FW.

2: AN ACT OF GOD OR MAN?

A coroner's inquest: My descriptions of the inquest were drawn primarily from eyewitness testimony, including that of the Shoun brothers. For more information, see records at NARA-CP and NARA-FW.

"not faintly": Quoted in A. L. Sainer, *Law Is Justice: Notable Opinions of Mr. Justice Cardozo* (New York: Ad Press, 1938), 209.

"A medical man": Quoted in Wagner, *Science of Sherlock Holmes*, 8.

"She's been shot": Grand jury testimony of Andy Smith, NARA-FW.

"An officer was": Quoted in Cordry, *Alive If Possible—Dead If Necessary*, 238.

"terror to evil": Thoburn, *Standard History of Oklahoma*, 1833.

"I had the assurance": Grand jury testimony of Roy Sherrill, NARA-FW.

"religion, law enforcement": *Shawnee News*, May 11, 1911.

"The brains": Grand jury testimony of David Shoun, NARA-FW.

"keep up the old": Quoted in Wilson, "Osage Indian Women During a Century of Change," 188.

Mollie relied: My description of the funeral is drawn primarily from statements by witnesses, including the undertaker, and from my interviews with descendants.

"devotion to his": A. F. Moss to M. E. Trapp, Nov. 18, 1926, OSARM.

"It was getting": Statement by A. T. Woodward, U.S. House Committee on Indian Affairs, *Modifying Osage Fund Restrictions*, 103.

The funeral: The Osage used to leave their dead aboveground, in cairns. When an Osage chief was buried underground, in the late nineteenth century, his wife said, "I said it will be alright if we paint face of my husband; if we wrap blanket around my husband. He wanted to be buried in white man's grave. I said it will be all right. I said we will paint face of my husband and he will not be lost in heaven of Indian."

"It filled my little": From introduction to Mathews, *Osages*.

3: KING OF THE OSAGE HILLS

"TWO SEPARATE MURDER": *Pawhuska Daily Capital*, May 28, 1921.

"set adrift": Louis F. Burns, *History of the Osage People*, 442.

"Some day": *Modesto News-Herald*, Nov. 18, 1928.

So Mollie turned: My portrait of William Hale is drawn from a number of sources, including court records, Osage oral histories, FBI files, contemporaneous newspaper accounts, Hale's correspondence, and my interviews with descendants.

“fight for life”: Sargent Prentiss Freeling in opening statement, *U.S. v. John Ramsey and William K. Hale*, Oct. 1926, NARA-FW.

“He is the most”: Article by Merwin Eberle, “‘King of Osage’ Has Had Long Colorful Career,” n.p., OHS.

“like a leashed animal”: *Guthrie Leader*, Jan. 5, 1926.

“high-class gentleman”: Pawnee Bill to James A. Finch, n.d., NARA-CP.

“Some did hate”: C. K. Kothmann to James A. Finch, n.d., NARA-CP.

“I couldn’t begin”: M. B. Prentiss to James A. Finch, Sept. 3, 1935, NARA-CP.

“I never had better”: Hale to Wilson Kirk, Nov. 27, 1931, ONM.

“We were mighty”: *Tulsa Tribune*, June 7, 1926.

“willing to do”: J. George Wright to Charles Burke, June 24, 1926, NARA-CP.

“How did she go”: Testimony of Mollie Burkhart before tribal attorney and other officials, NARA-FW.

“When you brought”: Coroner’s inquest testimony of Bryan Burkhart, in bureau report, Aug. 15, 1923, FBI.

“You understand”: Grand jury testimony of Ernest Burkhart, NARA-FW.

“the greatest criminal”: Boorstin, *Americans*, 81.

“perhaps any”: James G. Findlay to William J. Burns, April 23, 1923, FBI.

“the meanest man”: McConal, *Over the Wall*, 19.

“diseased mind”: *Arizona Republican*, Oct. 5, 1923.

“This may have”: Private detective logs included in report, July 12, 1923, FBI.

“absolutely no”: Ibid.

“Honorable Sir”: *Pawhuska Daily Capital*, July 29, 1921.

“ANNA BROWN”: *Pawhuska Daily Capital*, July 23, 1921.

“There’s a lot”: Quoted in Crockett, *Serial Murderers*, 352.

“If you want”: Roff, *Boom Town Lawyer in the Osage*, 106.

“would not lie”: Ibid., 107.

“sausage meat”: Grand jury testimony of F. S. Turton, NARA-FW.

“the hands of parties”: *Pawhuska Daily Capital*, May 30, 1921.

“Have pity”: Frank F. Finney, “At Home with the Osages,” Finney Papers, UOWHC.

4: UNDERGROUND RESERVATION

The money had: In describing the history of the Osage, I benefited from several excellent accounts. See Louis F. Burns, *History of the Osage People*; Mathews, *Wah’kon-Tah*; Wilson, *Underground Reservation*; Tixier, *Tixier’s Travels on the Osage Prairies*; and Bailey, *Changes in Osage Social Organization*. I also drew on field reports and Tribal Council documents held in the Records of the Osage Indian Agency, NARA-FW.

“we must stand”: Louis F. Burns, *History of the Osage People*, 140.

“finest men”: Ibid.

“It is so long”: Quoted in Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage*, 343.

“to make the enemy”: Mathews, *Osages*, 271.

Lizzie also grew up: Existing records do not indicate her Osage name.

- “industrious”: Probate records of Mollie’s mother, Lizzie, “Application for Certificate of Competency,” Feb. 1, 1911, NARA-FW.
- “The race is”: Tixier, *Tixier’s Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 191.
- “the beast vomits”: Ibid., 192.
- “I am perfectly”: Quoted in Brown, *Frontiersman*, 245.
- “Why don’t you”: Wilder, *Little House on the Prairie*, 46–47.
- “The question will”: Quoted in Wilson, *Underground Reservation*, 18.
- “broken, rocky”: Isaac T. Gibson to Enoch Hoag, in *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1871*, 906.
- “My people”: Mathews, *Wah’kon-Tah*, 33–34.
- “The air was filled”: Quoted in Louis F. Burns, *History of the Osage People*, 448.
- the most significant: The Office of Indian Affairs was renamed the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1947.
- “This little remnant”: Gibson to Hoag, in *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1871*, 487.
- “It was like”: Finney and Thoburn, “Reminiscences of a Trader in the Osage Country,” 149.
- “every buffalo dead”: Quoted in Merchant, *American Environmental History*, 20.
- “We are not dogs”: Mathews, *Wah’kon-Tah*, 30.
- “Tell these gentlemen”: Information on the Osage delegation, including any quotations, comes from Mathews’s account in *ibid.*, 35–38.
- “Likewise his daughters”: Frank F. Finney, “At Home with the Osages.”
- “There lingers memories”: Ibid.
- “The Indian must conform”: Louis F. Burns, *History of the Osage People*, 91.
- “for ambush”: Mathews, *Wah’kon-Tah*, 79.
- “big, black mouth”: Mathews, *Sundown*, 23.
- “It is impossible”: Quoted in McAuliffe, *Deaths of Sybil Bolton*, 215–16.
- “His ears are closed”: Mathews, *Wah’kon-Tah*, 311.
- “A RACE FOR LAND”: *Daily Oklahoma State Capital*, Sept. 18, 1893.
- “Men knocked”: *Daily Oklahoma State Capital*, Sept. 16, 1893.
- “Let him, like these whites”: Quoted in Trachtenberg, *Incorporation of America*, 34.
- “great storm”: *Wah-sha-she News*, June 23, 1894.
- “to keep his finger”: Russell, “Chief James Bigheart of the Osages,” 892.
- “the most eloquent”: Thoburn, *Standard History of Oklahoma*, 2048.
- “That the oil”: Quoted in *Leases for Oil and Gas Purposes, Osage National Council*, 154.
- “I wrote”: *Indians of the United States: Investigation of the Field Service*, 398.
- Like others on the Osage tribal roll: Many white settlers managed to finagle their way onto the roll and eventually reaped a fortune in oil proceeds that belonged to the Osage. The anthropologist Garrick Bailey estimated that the amount of money taken from the Osage was at least \$100 million.
- “Bounce, you cats”: Quoted in Franks, *Osage Oil Boom*, 75.
- “ack like tomorrow”: Mathews, *Life and Death of an Oilman*, 116.
- “It was pioneer days”: Gregory, *Oil in Oklahoma*, 13–14.

“Are they dangerous”: Quoted in Miller, *House of Getty*, 1881.

5: THE DEVIL’S DISCIPLES

“the foulness”: Probate records of Anna Brown, “Application for Authority to Offer Cash Reward,” NARA-FW.

“We’ve got to stop”: H. L. Macon, “Mass Murder of the Osages,” *West*, Dec. 1965.

“failing to enforce”: *Ada Weekly News*, Feb. 23, 1922.

“turned brutal crimes”: Summerscale, *Suspicions of Mr. Whicher*, xii.

“to detect”: For more on the origin of the phrase “the devil’s disciples,” see Lukas, *Big Trouble*, 76.

“depart from”: Pinkerton’s National Detective Agency, *General Principles and Rules of Pinkerton’s National Detective Agency*, LOC.

“miserable snake”: McWatters, *Knots Untied*, 664–65.

“I fought in France”: Shepherd, “Lo, the Rich Indian!”

“My name is”: William J. Burns, *Masked War*, 10.

“perhaps the only”: *New York Times*, Dec. 4, 1911.

“a thousand times”: Quoted in Hunt, *Front-Page Detective*, 104.

That summer: Descriptions of the activities of the private eyes derive from their daily logs, which were included in bureau reports by James Findlay, July 1923, FBI.

“Mathis and myself”: Report by Findlay, July 10, 1923, FBI.

“Everything was”: Grand jury testimony of Anna Sitterly, NARA-FW.

“This call seems”: Report by Findlay, July 10, 1923, FBI.

“General suspicion”: Ibid.

“Consequently I left”: Ibid.

“The watchful Detective”: Pinkerton’s National Detective Agency, *General Principles and Rules of Pinkerton’s National Detective Agency*, LOC.

“weakens the whole”: Ibid.

“shot her”: Report by Findlay, July 13, 1923, FBI.

“clue that seems”: Ibid.

“We are going”: Report by Findlay, July 10, 1923, FBI.

“she came out”: *Mollie Burkhardt et al. v. Ella Rogers*, Supreme Court of the State of Oklahoma, NARA-FW.

“a love that”: Ibid.

“prostituting the sacred bond”: Ibid.

“Burns was the first”: “Scientific Eavesdropping,” *Literary Digest*, June 15, 1912.

“a little baby”: Grand jury testimony of Bob Carter, NARA-FW.

“The fact he”: In proceedings of *Ware v. Beach*, Supreme Court of the State of Oklahoma, Comstock Family Papers.

“Operative shadowed”: Report by Findlay, July 13, 1923, FBI.

“endowed with”: Christison, *Treatise on Poisons in Relation to Medical Jurisprudence, Physiology, and the Practice of Physic*, 684.

“agitated and trembles”: Ibid.

“untrained”: Oscar T. Schultz and E. M. Morgan, “The Coroner and the Medical Examiner,” *Bulletin of the National Research Council*, July 1928.

“kind-hearted”: *Washington Post*, Nov. 17, 1935.

“Be careful”: *Washington Post*, Sept. 6, 1922.

“the most brutal”: *Washington Post*, July 14, 1923.

“CONSPIRACY BELIEVED”: *Washington Post*, March 12, 1925.

6: MILLION DOLLAR ELM

“‘MILLIONAIRES’ SPECIAL’”: *Pawhuska Daily Journal*, March 18, 1925.

“PAWHUSKA GIVES”: *Pawhuska Daily Capital*, June 14, 1921.

“MEN OF MILLIONS”: *Pawhuska Daily Capital*, April 5, 1923.

“Osage Monte Carlo”: Rister, *Oil!*, 190.

“Brewster, the hero”: *Daily Oklahoman*, Jan. 28, 1923.

“There is a touch”: *Ada Evening News*, Dec. 24, 1924.

“Come on boys”: *Daily Journal-Capital*, March 29, 1928.

“It was not unusual”: Gunther, *The Very, Very Rich and How They Got That Way*, 124.

“the oil men”: Quoted in Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 129.

“I understand”: Quoted in McCartney, *The Teapot Dome Scandal*, 113.

“Veterans of”: *Pawhuska Daily Capital*, April 6, 1923.

On January 18: My description of the auction is drawn from local newspaper articles, particularly a detailed account in the *Daily Oklahoman*, Jan. 28, 1923.

“the finest building”: Thoburn, *Standard History of Oklahoma*, 1989.

“What am I”: *Daily Oklahoman*, Jan. 28, 1923.

“Where will it”: Shepherd, “Lo, the Rich Indian!”

“The Osage Indian”: Brown, “Our Plutocratic Osage Indians.”

“merely because”: Quoted in Harmon, *Rich Indians*, 181.

“enjoying the bizarre”: Ibid., 185.

some of the spending: For more on this subject, see *ibid.*

“the greatest, gaudiest”: F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crack-Up* (1945; repr., New York: New Directions, 2009), 87.

“To me, the purpose”: Gregory, *Oil in Oklahoma*, 40.

“The last time”: Ibid., 43.

“like a child”: *Modifying Osage Fund Restrictions*, 73.

“racial weakness”: From the decision in the case of *Barnett v. Barnett*, Supreme Court of Oklahoma, July 13, 1926.

“Let not that”: *Indians of the United States: Investigation of the Field Service*, 399.

“I have visited”: H. S. Traylor to Cato Sells, in *Indians of the United States: Investigation of the Field Service*, 201.

“Every white man”: Ibid., 204.

“There is a great”: *Modifying Osage Fund Restrictions*, 60.

“We have many little”: *Pawhuska Daily Capital*, Nov. 19, 1921.

“a flock of buzzards”: Transcript of proceedings of the Osage Tribal Council, Nov. 1, 1926, ONM.

“Will you please”: *Pawhuska Daily Capital*, Dec. 22, 1921.

“bunched us”: *Indians of the United States: Investigation of the Field Service*, 281.

7: THIS THING OF DARKNESS

One day, two men: My description of the discovery of Roan’s body and the autopsy comes from the testimony of the witnesses present, including the lawmen. For more information, see records at NARA-FW and NARA-CP.

“He must be drunk”: Grand jury testimony of J. R. Rhodes, NARA-FW.

“I seen he”: Ibid.

“Roan considered”: Pitts Beatty to James A. Finch, Aug. 21, 1935, NARA-CP.

“We were good”: Lamb, *Tragedies of the Osage Hills*, 178.

“Henry, you better”: Testimony of William K. Hale, *U.S. v. John Ramsey and William K. Hale*, Oct. 1926, NARA-FW.

“truly a valley”: *Tulsa Daily World*, Aug. 19, 1926.

“his hands folded”: Grand jury testimony of J. R. Rhodes, NARA-FW.

“\$20 in greenback”: Ibid.

“HENRY ROAN SHOT”: *Osage Chief*, Feb. 9, 1923.

“Man’s judgment errs”: Charles W. Sanders, *The New School Reader, Fourth Book: Embracing a Comprehensive System of Instruction in the Principles of Elocution with a Choice Collection of Reading Lessons in Prose and Poetry, from the Most Approved Authors; for the Use of Academies and Higher Classes in Schools, Etc.* (New York: Vison & Phinney, 1855), 155.

And so she decided: Mollie’s secrecy regarding her marriage to Roan was later revealed in *U.S. v. John Ramsey and William K. Hale*, Oct. 1926, NARA-FW.

“Travel in any direction”: *Daily Oklahoman*, Jan. 6, 1929.

“do away with her”: Report by Findlay, July 13, 1923, FBI.

“paralyzing fear”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.

“dark cloak”: *Manitowoc Herald-Times*, Jan. 22, 1926.

Bill Smith confided: My description of Bill and Rita Smith during this period and of the explosion is drawn largely from witness statements made to investigators and during court proceedings; some details have also been gleaned from local newspaper accounts and the unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White. For more information, see records at NARA-CP and NARA-FW.

“Rita’s scared”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.

“Now that we’ve moved”: Ibid.

“expect to live”: Report by Wren, Oct. 6, 1925, FBI.

“county’s most notorious”: *Osage Chief*, June 22, 1923.

“I’m going to die”: Shoemaker, *Road to Marble Hills*, 107.

“It seemed that the night”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.

“It shook everything”: Statement by Ernest Burkhart, Jan. 6, 1926, FBI.

“It’s Bill Smith’s house”: Quoted in Hogan, *Osage Murders*, 66.

- “It just looked”: Quoted in Gregory, *Oil in Oklahoma*, 56.
- “Come on men”: *Osage Chief*, March 16, 1923.
- “He was halloing”: Grand jury testimony of David Shoun, NARA-FW.
- “Rita’s gone”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.
- “Some fire”: Report by Wren, Dec. 29, 1925, FBI.
- “blown to pieces”: Grand jury testimony of Horace E. Wilson, NARA-FW.
- “I figured”: Grand jury testimony of F. S. Turton, NARA-FW.
- “The time of the deed”: Report by Burger and Weiss, Aug. 12, 1924, FBI.
- “They got Rita”: Report by Frank Smith, James Alexander Street, Burger, and J. V. Murphy, Sept. 1, 1925, FBI.
- “He just kind”: Grand jury testimony of Robert Colombe, NARA-FW.
- “I tried to get”: Grand jury testimony of David Shoun, NARA-FW.
- “beyond our power”: *Osage Chief*, March 16, 1923.
- “should be thrown”: Report by Wren, Dec. 29, 1925, FBI.
- “loose upon”: *Indiana Evening Gazette*, Sept. 20, 1923.
- Amid this garish corruption: Details of Vaughan’s investigation and murder were drawn from several sources, including FBI records, newspaper accounts, the Vaughan family’s private papers, and interviews with descendants.
- “parasite upon”: Advertisement for Vaughan’s candidacy for county attorney, Vaughan Family Papers.
- “help the needy”: Student file of George Bigheart, accessible on Dickinson College’s Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center website and held in Record Group 75, Series 1327, at NARA-DC.
- “OWNER VANISHES”: *Tulsa Daily World*, July 1, 1923.
- “Yes, sir, and had”: Grand jury testimony of Horace E. Wilson, NARA-FW.
- “shot in lonely”: *Literary Digest*, April 3, 1926.
- “dark and sordid”: *Manitowoc Herald-Times*, Jan. 22, 1926.
- “bloodiest chapter”: John Baxter, “Billion Dollar Murders,” Vaughan Family Papers.
- “I didn’t want”: Grand jury testimony of C. A. Cook, NARA-FW.
- “WHEREAS, in no”: Report by Frank V. Wright, April 5, 1923, FBI.
- part-Kaw, part-Osage: Charles Curtis would later serve as vice president of the United States during the administration of Herbert Hoover.
- “Demons”: Palmer to Curtis, Jan. 28, 1925, FBI.
- “Lie still”: Testimony of Frank Smith, included in Ernest Burkhart’s clemency records, NARA-CP.
- “a horrible monument”: Bureau report titled “The Osage Murders,” Feb. 3, 1926, FBI.
- “in failing health”: Mollie Burkhart’s guardian records, Jan. 1925, NARA-CP.

8: DEPARTMENT OF EASY VIRTUE

- “important message”: White to Hoover, Nov. 10, 1955, FBI/FOIA.
- “as God-fearing”: Tracy, “Tom Tracy Tells About—Detroit and Oklahoma.”
- “bureaucratic bastard”: Quoted in Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover*, 112.

“In those days”: Transcript of interview with Tom White, NMSUL.

“rough and ready”: James M. White (Doc White’s grandnephew), interview with author.

“bullet-spattered”: Hastedt, “White Brothers of Texas Had Notable FBI Careers.”

During the Harding: For more information on J. Edgar Hoover and the early history of the FBI, see Gentry’s *J. Edgar Hoover*; Ungar’s *FBI*; Powers’s *Secrecy and Power*; and Burrough’s *Public Enemies*. For more background on the Teapot Dome scandal, see McCartney’s *Teapot Dome Scandal*; Dean’s *Warren G. Harding*; and Stratton’s *Tempest over Teapot Dome*.

“illegal plots”: Quoted in Lowenthal, *Federal Bureau of Investigation*, 292.

“Every effort”: Quoted in Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover*, 129.

“gilded favoritism”: *Cincinnati Enquirer*, March 14, 1924.

“I was very much”: J. M. Towler to Hoover, Jan. 6, 1925, FBI/FOIA.

“You brought credit”: Hoover to Verdon Adams, Oct. 19, 1970, FBI/FOIA.

“We were a bunch”: Quoted in Burrough, *Public Enemies*, 51.

“any continued”: C. S. Weakley to Findlay, Aug. 16, 1923, FBI.

“unfavorable comment”: W. D. Bolling to Hoover, April 3, 1925, FBI.

“undercover man”: Report by Weiss and Burger, May 24, 1924, FBI.

“We expect splendid”: Ibid.

“a number of officers”: Findlay to Eberstein, Feb. 5, 1925, FBI.

“responsible for failure”: Hoover to Bolling, March 16, 1925, FBI.

“I join in”: Palmer to Curtis, Jan. 28, 1925, FBI.

“acute and delicate”: Hoover to White, Aug. 8, 1925, FBI/FOIA.

“This Bureau”: Hoover to White, May 1, 1925, FBI/FOIA.

“I want you”: Transcript of interview with White, NMSUL.

“office is probably”: Hoover to White, Sept. 21, 1925, FBI/FOIA.

“I am human”: White to Hoover, Aug. 5, 1925, FBI/FOIA.

“There can be no”: Hoover to Bolling, Feb. 3, 1925, FBI.

9: THE UNDERCOVER COWBOYS

“The two women”: Report by Weiss and Burger, April 29, 1924, FBI.

“unbroken chain”: Transcript of interview with White, NMSUL.

“almost universal”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Aug. 12, 1924, FBI.

“I’ll assign as many”: Transcript of interview with White, NMSUL.

These agents were still: Information on the members of Tom White’s team comes largely from the agents’ personnel files, which were obtained through the Freedom of Information Act; White’s FBI reports, letters, and writings; newspaper accounts; and the author’s interviews with descendants of the agents.

White first recruited: The former New Mexico sheriff was named James Alexander Street.

White then enlisted: Eugene Hall Parker was the former Texas Ranger who was part of White’s undercover team.

“where there is”: Personnel file of Parker, April 9, 1934, FBI/FOIA.

In addition, White: The deep undercover operative was an agent named Charles Davis.

“Pistol and rifle”: Personnel file of Smith, Aug. 13, 1932, FBI/FOIA.
“the older type”: Personnel file of Smith, Oct. 22, 1928, FBI/FOIA.
“He is exceedingly”: Louis DeNette to Burns, June 2, 1920, FBI.
“Unless you measure”: Hoover to Wren, March 28, 1925, FBI/FOIA.
“The Indians, in general”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Dec. 31, 1923, FBI. Prior to Tom White’s taking over the investigation, Burger had worked on the case with Agent Tom F. Weiss; all of Burger’s reports were filed jointly with him.
“any of these dissolute”: Report by Weiss, Nov. 19, 1923, FBI.
“PROCEED UNDER COVER”: Harold Nathan to Gus T. Jones, Aug. 10, 1925, FBI.

10: ELIMINATING THE IMPOSSIBLE

One after the other: My descriptions of the bureau’s investigations into the murders come from several sources, including FBI reports; agent’s personnel files; grand jury testimony; court transcripts; and White’s private correspondence and writings.

Finally, Agent Wren arrived: Wren also pretended at times to be representing certain cattle interests.

“Wren had lived”: White to Hoover, Feb. 2, 1926, FBI/FOIA.

“My desk was”: Grand jury testimony of Horace E. Wilson, NARA-FW.

“I don’t know”: Ibid.

“made a diligent”: Grand jury testimony of David Shoun, NARA-FW.

“When you have eliminated”: Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four* (London: Spencer Blackett, 1890), 93.

“It is a matter”: Report by Weiss, Sept. 1, 1923, FBI.

“I never had a quarrel”: Report by Burger and Weiss, April 22, 1924, FBI.

“very self-contained”: Ibid.

“Were you thick”: Report by Weakley, Aug. 7, 1923, FBI.

“We interviewed”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Feb. 2, 1924, FBI.

“unusually shrewd”: Ibid.

“Talks and smokes”: Ibid.

“This arrangement”: Ibid.

“He may efface”: Tarbell, “Identification of Criminals.”

When Hoover became: The bureau’s Identification Division initially collected fingerprints from files maintained by the U.S. Penitentiary in Leavenworth penitentiary and by the International Association for Chiefs of Police.

“the guardians of civilization”: Quoted in Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 150.

“We have his picture”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Feb. 2, 1924, FBI.

He reported back: Morrison initially claimed, falsely, that Rose implicated her boyfriend.

“Why’d you do it”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Feb. 2, 1924, FBI.

“If he is not”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Aug. 16, 1924, FBI.

11: THE THIRD MAN

“I do not understand”: Hoover to White, June 2, 1926, FBI.

“interesting observation”: Hoover to Bolling, June 1925, FBI.
“paid by suspects”: Weiss and Burger to William J. Burns, March 24, 1924, FBI.
“We old fellows”: Grand jury testimony of Ed Hainey, NARA-FW.
“There was Indians”: Trial testimony of Berry Hainey, *State of Oklahoma v. Kelsie Morrison*, OSARM.
“They went straight”: Report by Weakley, Aug. 15, 1923, FBI.
“perjured himself”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Jan. 8, 1924, FBI.
“Third man is”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Jan. 10, 1924, FBI.
“Stop your foolishness”: Ibid.

12: A WILDERNESS OF MIRRORS

“strangle”: Report by Smith, Sept. 28, 1925, FBI.
“seen part”: Ibid.
“information contained”: Findlay to Burns, Dec. 19, 1923, FBI.
“handed to”: Eustace Smith to Attorney General, March 15, 1925, FBI.
“reprehensible”: Report by Weiss and Burger, July 2, 1924, FBI.
“sole object”: Ibid.
“frightened out”: Report by Weiss and Burger, July 12, 1924, FBI.
“son-of-bitches”: Report by Weiss and Burger, July 2, 1924, FBI.
“Look out”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Aug. 16, 1924, FBI.
“Keep your balance”: Transcript of interview with White, NMSUL.
“has known”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Feb. 11, 1924, FBI.
“It is quite”: Report by Weiss and Burger, April 11, 1924, FBI.
“Pike will have”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Aug. 14, 1924, FBI.
“shape an alibi”: Grand jury testimony of Elbert M. Pike, NARA-FW.
“discuss this case”: Report by Weiss, Nov. 19, 1923, FBI.

13: A HANGMAN’S SON

“Mr. White belongs”: Daniell, *Personnel of the Texas State Government*, 389.
“I was raised”: Adams, *Tom White*, 6.
“BLOOD, BLOOD”: *Austin Weekly Statesman*, March 31, 1892.
“If a mob attempts”: *Bastrop Advertiser*, Aug. 5, 1899.
“RAVISHED IN BROAD”: *Austin Weekly Statesman*, Sept. 1, 1892.
“Truth to tell”: *Austin Weekly Statesman*, Nov. 22, 1894.
“hung by the neck”: *Austin Weekly Statesman*, Nov. 16, 1893.
“Let the law”: *Austin Weekly Statesman*, Jan. 11, 1894.
“Sheriff White has been”: *Dallas Morning News*, Jan. 13, 1894.
“Ed Nichols is”: Ibid.
“He kicked”: Adams, *Tom White*, 8.
“Every school boy”: Quoted in Parsons, *Captain John R. Hughes*, 275.
“Get all the evidence”: Leonard Mohrman, “A Ranger Reminisces,” *Texas Parade*, Feb. 1951.

“the same as a cowpuncher”: Transcript of interview with Tom White, NMSUL.

“Here was a scene”: Quoted in Robinson, *Men Who Wear the Star*, 79.

Tom learned to be a lawman: Tom White practiced firing his six-shooter. It was the Rangers who had recognized the revolutionary power of these repeat revolvers, after long being overmatched by American Indian warriors who could unleash a barrage of arrows before the lawmen could reload their single-shot rifles. In 1844, while testing out a Colt five-shooter, a group of Rangers overran a larger number of Comanche. Afterward, one of the Rangers informed the gun maker Samuel Colt that with improvements the repeat revolver could be rendered “the most perfect weapon in the world.” With this Ranger’s input, Colt designed a lethal six-shooter—“a stepchild of the West,” as one historian called it—that would help to irrevocably change the balance of power between the Plains tribes and the settlers. Along its cylinder was engraved a picture of the Rangers’ victorious battle against the Comanche.

You picked up: To hone his aim, White practiced shooting on virtually any moving creature: rabbits, buzzards, even prairie dogs. He realized that being an accurate shot was more important than being the fastest draw. As his brother Doc put it, “What good is it to be quick on the draw if you’re not a sure shot?” Doc said a lot of the legends about Western gunmen were “hooey”: “All that business about Wyatt Earp being a quick draw artist is exaggerated. He was just a good shot.”

“You don’t never”: Adams, *Tom White*, 19.

“the lawless element”: Ben M. Edwards to Frank Johnson, Jan. 25, 1908, TSLAC.

“We had nothing”: Hastedt, “White Brothers of Texas Had Notable FBI Careers.”

“avoid killing”: Adams, *Tom White*, 16.

“An officer who”: Quoted in Parsons, *Captain John R. Hughes*, xvii.

“the Sheriff has”: Thomas Murchinson to Adjutant General, March 2, 1907, TSLAC.

“I am shot all”: Quoted in Alexander, *Bad Company and Burnt Powder*, 240.

“Tom’s emotional struggle”: Adams, *Tom White*, 24.

“proved an excellent”: Adjutant General to Tom Ross, Feb. 10, 1909, TSLAC.

“fell, and did not get up”: *Beaumont Enterprise*, July 15, 1918.

“One wagon sheet”: Adjutant General to J. D. Fortenberry, Aug. 1, 1918, TSLAC.

14: DYING WORDS

“If Bill Smith”: Grand jury testimony of David Shoun, NARA-FW.

“often leave”: Ibid.

“If she says”: Ibid.

“He never did say”: Grand jury testimony of James Shoun, NARA-FW.

“Gentlemen, it is a mystery”: Grand jury testimony of David E. Johnson, NARA-FW.

“You know, I only”: Ibid.

“I would hate”: Grand jury testimony of James Shoun, NARA-FW.

“If he did”: Report of Smith, Street, Burger, and Murphy, Sept. 1, 1925, FBI.

“You understand in your study of”: Grand jury testimony of David Shoun, NARA-FW.

“Did he know what”: Ibid.

“The blackest chapter”: *Survey of Conditions of Indians*, 23018.

“an orgy of graft”: Gertrude Bonnin, “Oklahoma’s Poor Rich Indians: An Orgy of Graft and Exploitation of the Five Civilized Tribes and Others,” 1924, HSP.

“shamelessly and openly”: Ibid.

“A group of traders”: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 10, 1925.

“For her and her”: Memorandum by Gertrude Bonnin, “Case of Martha Axe Roberts,” Dec. 3, 1923, HSP.

“There is no hope”: Ibid.

“Your money”: Shepherd, “Lo, the Rich Indian!”

15: THE HIDDEN FACE

“controlled everything”: Report by Wren, Davis, and Parker, Sept. 10, 1925, FBI.

“Hells bells”: Grand jury testimony of John McLean, NARA-FW.

“drunken Indian”: Ibid.

“I don’t think it”: Grand jury testimony of Alfred T. Hall, NARA-FW.

“I knew the questions”: *Tulsa Tribune*, Aug. 6, 1926.

“Photographs taken by means”: Bert Farrar to Roy St. Lewis, Dec. 22, 1928, NARA-FW.

“Absolutely”: Grand jury testimony of John McLean, NARA-FW.

“Bill, what are you”: Grand jury testimony of W. H. Aaron, NARA-FW.

“Hell, yes”: *U.S. v. John Ramsey and William K. Hale*, Oct. 1926, NARA-FW.

“If I were you”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.

“notorious relations”: Report by Burger and Weiss, Aug. 12, 1924, FBI.

“I, like many”: Hale’s application for clemency, Nov. 15, 1935, NARA-CP.

“is absolutely controlled”: Report by Wright, April 5, 1923, FBI.

“capable of anything”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Jan. 10, 1924, FBI.

“MOLLIE appears”: Report titled “The Osage Murders,” Feb. 3, 1926, FBI.

16: FOR THE BETTERMENT OF THE BUREAU

“many new angles”: Edwin Brown to Hoover, March 22, 1926, FBI/FOIA.

“a crook and”: Report by Wren, Oct. 6, 1925, FBI.

“dominated local”: Report titled “Osage Indian Murder Cases,” July 10, 1953, FBI.

“conditions have”: Hoover to White, Nov. 25, 1925, FBI/FOIA.

“slender bundle”: Quoted in Nash, *Citizen Hoover*, 23.

Hoover wanted the new: For more information regarding Hoover’s transformation of the bureau, see Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover*; Powers, *Secrecy and Power*; Burrough, *Public Enemies*; and Ungar, *F.B.I.* For more on the dark side of Progressivism, also see Thomas C. Leonard’s journal articles “American Economic Reform in the Progressive Era” and “Retrospectives.”

“days of ‘old sleuth’ ”: *San Bernardino County Sun*, Dec. 31, 1924.

“scrapped the old”: Quoted in Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 146.

“He plays golf”: *San Bernardino County Sun*, Dec. 31, 1924.

“I regret that”: Hoover to White, Sept. 21, 1925, FBI/FOIA.

“I have caused”: Hoover to White, May 1, 1925, FBI/FOIA.
“You either improve”: Quoted in Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover*, 149.
“I believe that when”: Hoover to White, April 15, 1925, FBI/FOIA.
“I’m sure he would”: Quoted in Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover*, 67.
“supposed to know”: Tracy, “Tom Tracy Tells About—Detroit and Oklahoma.”
“honest till”: Adams, *Tom White*, 133.
“I feel that I”: White to Hoover, Sept. 28, 1925, FBI/FOIA.
“with the betterment”: White to Hoover, June 10, 1925, FBI/FOIA.
“I do not agree”: Memorandum for Hoover, May 12, 1925, FBI/FOIA.
“The first thing”: Quoted in Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover*, 170.
“directed against”: Quoted in Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 154.

17: THE QUICK-DRAW ARTIST, THE YEGG, AND THE SOUP MAN

“diaspora”: Mary Jo Webb, interview with author.
“I made peace”: *Osage Chief*, July 28, 1922.
“Gregg is 100 percent”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Aug. 12, 1924, FBI.
“A very small man”: White to Grove, June 23, 1959, NMSUL.
“a cold cruel”: Criminal record of Dick Gregg, Jan. 9, 1925, KHS.
“gone places”: White to Grove, June 23, 1959, NMSUL.
“my life would”: Report by Weiss and Burger, July 24, 1924, FBI.
“Bill Smith and”: Statement by Dick Gregg, June 8, 1925, FBI.
“That’s not my style”: Quoted in article by Fred Grove in *The War Chief of the Indian Territory Posse of Oklahoma Westerners* 2, no. 1 (June 1968).
“on the level”: White to Grove, June 23, 1959, NMSUL.
“an outlaw”: Ibid.
“Johnson knows”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Aug. 14, 1924, FBI.
“HENRY GRAMMER SHOOTS”: Lamb, *Tragedies of the Osage Hills*, 119.
“CHEROKEES NO MATCH”: *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, Aug. 5, 1909.
“that Indian deal”: Report by Burger, Nov. 30, 1928, FBI.
The legendary quick-draw: There were also suspicions that Grammer had been shot as well and had a bullet wound near his left armpit.
“taking care”: Grand jury testimony of John Mayo, NARA-FW.
“Hale knows”: Report by Weiss and Burger, July 2, 1924, FBI.
“damned neck”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Aug. 16, 1924, FBI.
“making all the propaganda”: Report by Wren, Nov. 5, 1925, FBI.
“I’m too slick”: Document titled “Osage Indian Murder Cases,” July 10, 1953, FBI.
“like he owned”: Transcript of interview with White, NMSUL.

18: THE STATE OF THE GAME

“We’ve been getting”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL. In bureau records, Lawson’s first name name is spelled Burt; in other records, it is

sometimes spelled Bert. To avoid confusion, I have used Burt throughout the text.

“hot Feds”: White to Grove, May 2, 1959, NMSUL.

“We understand from”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.

“Some time around”: Report by Smith and Murphy, Oct. 27, 1925, FBI.

“Have confession”: White to Hoover, Oct. 24, 1925, FBI.

“Congratulations”: Hoover to White, Oct. 26, 1925, FBI.

“Once, when he”: Homer Fincannon, interview with author.

“not to drink”: Report by Wren, Oct. 6, 1925, FBI.

“illness is very suspicious”: Edwin Brown to George Wright, July 18, 1925, NARA-CP.

“Understand I’m wanted”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.

“like a leashed”: *Guthrie Leader*, Jan. 6, 1926.

“You could look”: Transcript of interview with White, NMSUL.

“We all picked Ernest”: Statement by Luhring in grand jury proceedings, NARA-FW.

“small-town dandy”: Transcript of interview with White, NMSUL.

“We want to talk”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.

“If he didn’t”: Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover*, 386.

“perfect”: *Tulsa Tribune*, Jan. 5, 1926.

“too much Jew”: Report by Weiss and Burger, April 30, 1924, FBI.

“Blackie, have”: Grand jury testimony of Smith, Jan. 5, 1926, NARA-CP.

“After being so warned”: Statement by Ernest Burkhart, Jan. 6, 1926, FBI.

“I relied on”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.

“Hale had told”: Statement by Ernest Burkhart, Feb. 5, 1927, NARA-CP.

“Just a few days”: Statement by Ernest Burkhart, Jan. 6, 1926, FBI.

“You have got”: Grand jury testimony of Frank Smith, NARA-FW.

“All that story”: Transcript of interview with White, NMSUL.

“When it happened”: Statement by Ernest Burkhart, Jan. 6, 1926, FBI.

“I know who killed”: Grand jury testimony of Frank Smith, NARA-FW.

“There’s a suspect”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.

“like a nervy”: *Tulsa Tribune*, March 13, 1926.

“I guess”: Grand jury testimony of Smith, NARA-FW.

“a little job”: Statement by John Ramsey, Jan. 6, 1926, FBI.

“white people”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.

“It is an established”: Memorandum by M. A. Jones for Louis B. Nichols, Aug. 4, 1954, FBI.

“Weren’t you giving”: Grand jury testimony of James Shoun, NARA-FW.

“We are all your friends”: Testimony of Mollie Burkhart before tribal attorney and other officials, NARA-FW.

“My husband”: Macon, “Mass Murder of the Osages.”

“ever saw until”: Quoted in Gregory, *Oil in Oklahoma*, 57.

“We have unquestioned”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.

“money will buy”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Feb. 2, 1924, FBI.

“We don’t think”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.

“I’ll fight it”: Ibid.

19: A TRAITOR TO HIS BLOOD

“an evidently”: *Literary Digest*, Jan. 23, 1926.

“more blood-curdling”: *Evening Independent*, Jan. 5, 1926.

“King of the Killers”: Holding, “King of the Killers.”

“Hale kept my husband”: Lizzie June Bates to George Wright, Nov. 21, 1922, NARA-FW.

“OSAGE INDIAN”: *Reno Evening-Gazette*, Jan. 4, 1926.

“OLD WILD WEST”: *Evening Independent*, March 5, 1926.

“The Tragedy”: White to Hoover, Sept. 18, 1926, FBI.

“We Indians”: Bates to Wright, Nov. 21, 1922, NARA-FW.

“Members of the Osage”: Copy of resolution by the Society of Oklahoma Indians, NARA-FW.

“When you’re up”: Quoted in Irwin, *Deadly Times*, 331.

“Townspeople”: *Lima News*, Jan. 29, 1926.

“not only useless”: Edwin Brown to A. G. Ridgley, July 21, 1925, FBI.

“ablest legal talent”: *Sequoyah County Democrat*, April 9, 1926.

“When a small-natured”: Sargent Prentiss Freeling vertical file, OHS.

“I never killed”: Lamb, *Tragedies of the Osage Hills*, 174.

“not to worry, that he”: Statement by Burkhart in deposition, Feb. 5, 1927, NARA-CP.

The bureau put: One night in December 1926, Luther Bishop, a state lawman who had assisted on the Osage murder cases, was shot and killed in his house. His wife was charged with the murder but was later acquitted by a jury. Dee Cordry, a former police investigator and an author, examined the case in his 2005 book, *Alive If Possible—Dead If Necessary*. He suspected that Hale, in a final act of revenge, ordered the killing.

“Long face”: Report by W. A. Kitchen, March 2, 1926, FBI.

“Kelsie said”: Report by Smith, Feb. 8, 1926, FBI.

“get her out”: Grand jury testimony of Dewey Selph, NARA-FW.

“We’d better”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.

“Before this man”: White to Hoover, March 31, 1926, FBI.

“Whatever you do”: Report by Burger, Nov. 2, 1928, FBI.

“bumped off”: Grand jury testimony of Burkhart, NARA-FW.

“I’ll give you”: Transcript of interview with White, NMSUL.

“We think”: White to Hoover, June 26, 1926, FBI.

“intentionally guilty”: Wright to Charles Burke, June 24, 1926, NARA-CP.

“That is all”: Testimony of Mollie Burkhart before tribal attorney and other officials, NARA-FW.

“Dear husband”: Mollie to Ernest Burkhart, Jan. 21, 1926, NARA-FW.

“It appeared”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.

“Bill, I have”: Ibid.

“Very few, if any”: White to Hoover, July 3, 1926, FBI.

“Seldom if ever”: *Tulsa Tribune*, March 13, 1926.

“new and exclusive”: *Bismarck Tribune*, June 17, 1926.

“Hale is a man”: *Tulsa Tribune*, March 13, 1926.

“Judge Not”: Quoted in Hogan, *Osage Murders*, 195.

“Your honor, I demand”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.

“traitor to his”: *Tulsa Daily World*, Aug. 20, 1926.

“This man is my client”: *Tulsa Daily World*, March 13, 1926.

“He’s not my attorney”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.

“high-handed and unusual”: Leahy memorandum, clemency records, NARA-CP.

“nerve went”: White to Hoover, June 5, 1926, FBI.

“I never did”: Testimony from Ernest Burkhart’s preliminary hearing, included in *U.S. v. John Ramsey and William K. Hale*, NARA-FW.

“Hale and Ramsey”: Transcript of interview with White, NMSUL.

“I looked back”: *Tulsa Tribune*, May 30, 1926.

“quite a tyrant”: Quoted in Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover*, 117.

“PRISONER CHARGES”: *Washington Post*, June 8, 1926.

“ridiculous”: White to Grove, Aug. 10, 1959, NMSUL.

“fabrication from”: White to Hoover, June 8, 1926, FBI.

“I’ll meet the man”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.

“the whole damn”: Kelsie Morrison testimony, in *State of Oklahoma v. Morrison*, OSARM.

“bump that squaw”: Morrison’s testimony at Ernest Burkhart’s trial, later included in *ibid*.

“He raised her”: *Ibid*.

“I stayed in the car alone”: Statement by Katherine Cole, Jan. 31, 1926, NARA-FW.

“Don’t look”: My description of Burkhart changing his plea derives from trial coverage in local papers, Grove’s nonfiction manuscript, and a 1927 letter written by Leahy and held at the NARA-CP in Burkhart’s clemency records.

“I’m through lying”: *Tulsa Daily World*, June 10, 1926, and Grove’s nonfiction manuscript.

“I wish to discharge”: *Tulsa Daily World*, June 10, 1926.

“I’m sick and tired”: Unpublished nonfiction account by Grove with White, NMSUL.

“I feel in my heart”: *Daily Journal-Capital*, June 9, 1926.

“Then your plea”: *Tulsa Daily World*, June 10, 1926.

“BURKHART ADMITS”: *New York Times*, June 10, 1926.

“was very much”: White to Hoover, June 15, 1926, FBI.

“Too much credit”: Quoted in a 1926 missive from Short to Luhring, NARA-FW.

“That put us”: Transcript of interview with White, NMSUL.

“whose mind”: *Tulsa Daily World*, Aug. 19, 1926.

20: SO HELP YOU GOD!

“The stage is set”: *Tulsa Tribune*, July 29, 1926.

“not testify against him”: Report by Burger, Nov. 2, 1928, FBI.

“The attitude of”: *Tulsa Tribune*, Aug. 21, 1926.

“It is a question”: *Ibid*.

“Gentlemen of the jury”: *Tulsa Daily World*, July 30, 1926.

“the veteran of legal battles”: *Tulsa Tribune*, July 29, 1926.

“Hale said to me”: *Tulsa Daily World*, July 31, 1926.

“I never devised”: Lamb, *Tragedies of the Osage Hills*, 179.

“the ruthless freebooter”: *Tulsa Daily World*, Aug. 19, 1926.

“The richest tribe”: *Daily Journal-Capital*, Aug. 20, 1926.

“five to one”: *Tulsa Tribune*, Aug. 21, 1926.

“Is there any”: For this quotation and other details from the scene, see *Oklahoma City Times*, Aug. 25, 1926.

“I will kill”: Report by H. E. James, May 11, 1928, FBI.

“Such practices”: *Daily Oklahoman*, Oct. 8, 1926.

“this whole defense”: Oscar R. Luhring to Roy St. Lewis, Sept. 23, 1926, NARA-FW.

“Will you state your name”: *U.S. v. John Ramsey and William K. Hale*, Oct. 1926, NARA-FW.

“Your wife is”: Ibid.

“I don’t work”: Statement by Ernest Burkhart at his 1926 trial, NMSUL.

“The time now”: Closing statement of Oscar R. Luhring, *U.S. v. John Ramsey and William K. Hale*, Oct. 1926, NARA-FW.

“There never has been”: Ibid.

“Hale’s face”: *Daily Oklahoman*, Oct. 30, 1926.

“A jury has found”: *Tulsa Daily World*, Oct. 30, 1926.

“‘KING OF OSAGE’ ”: *New York Times*, Oct. 30, 1926.

“one of the greatest”: Leahy to U.S. Attorney General, Feb. 1, 1929, FBI/FOIA.

“if I ever get the Chance”: Morrison to Hale, included in *State of Oklahoma v. Kelsie Morrison*, OSARM.

“watered”: Testimony of Bryan Burkhart, *State of Oklahoma v. Kelsie Morrison*, OSARM.

“Did you go out”: Ibid.

“Sheriffs investigated”: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Nov. 4, 1926.

“There is, of course”: Hoover to White, Jan. 9, 1926, FBI.

“NEVER TOLD”: Newspaper article, n.p., n.d., FBI.

“Look at her”: Memorandum by Burger, Oct. 27, 1932, FBI.

“So another”: *The Lucky Strike Hour*, Nov. 15, 1932, accessed from <http://www.otrr.org/>.

“a small way”: Hoover to White, Feb. 6, 1926, FBI/FOIA.

“We express”: Quoted in Adams, *Tom White*, 76.

“I hate to give up”: Mabel Walker Willebrandt to Hoover, Feb. 15, 1927, FBI/FOIA.

“I feel that”: Hoover to Willebrandt, Dec. 9, 1926, FBI/FOIA.

“giant mausoleum”: Earley, *The Hot House*, 30.

“Why, hello”: *Daily Oklahoman*, n.d., and transcript of interview with White, NMSUL.

21: THE HOT HOUSE

“How do you raise”: Adams, *Tom White*, 84.

“ugly, dangerous”: Rudensky, *Gonif*, 32.

“Warden White showed”: Ibid., 33.

White tried to improve: Believing it was imperative for prisoners to keep busy, White allowed Robert Stroud, a convicted murderer, to maintain an aviary in his cell with some three hundred canaries, and he became known as the Birdman. In a letter, Stroud’s mother told White how grateful she was that someone who understood “human nature and its many weaknesses” was in a position of authority over her son.

“The Warden was strict”: Adams, *Tom White*, 133.

“I had a ray”: Rudensky, *Gonif*, 27.

“I have no”: Autobiography written by Carl Panzram, Nov. 3, 1928, Panzram Papers, SDSUL.

“I could hang a dozen”: Nash, *Almanac of World Crime*, 102.

“He does high”: Leavenworth report on Hale, Oct. 1945, NARA-CP.

“treated as”: White to Morris F. Moore, Nov. 23, 1926, NARA-CP.

“Would I be imposing to ask your”: Mrs. W. K. Hale to White, Sept. 29, 1927, NARA-CP.

“It was a business”: Deposition of Hale, Jan. 31, 1927, NARA-CP.

“evidence of repression”: Leavenworth report on Hale, Aug. 1, 1941, NARA-CP.

He allegedly arranged: Hale appealed his conviction, and in 1928 an appeals court shockingly overturned his verdict. A man who had assisted the defense team subsequently confessed that Hale had someone who had “done the fixing.” But Hale was promptly tried again and convicted, as was Ramsey.

“IT IS FURTHER”: Probate records of Mollie Burkhart, File No. 2173, NARA-FW.

On December: My descriptions of the escape attempt are drawn primarily from FBI records obtained through the Freedom of Information Act; a transcript of an interview with one of the convicts that was conducted by the author David A. Ward; Tom White’s letters; newspaper accounts; and Adams, *Tom White*.

“I know you’re going”: *Dunkirk Evening Observer*, Dec. 12, 1931.

“Shoot him”: Adams, *Tom White*, 114.

“White asked me”: *Pittsburgh Press*, Dec. 14, 1939.

“I am sure”: *Dunkirk Evening Observer*, Dec. 12, 1931.

“come back”: Ward, *Alcatraz*, 6.

“The funny part”: Ibid.

“He had begun”: Adams, *Tom White*, 109–10.

“The experience affected”: *Pittsburgh Press*, Dec. 14, 1939.

“The days of the small Bureau”: Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover*, 169.

“I looked up”: Quoted in *ibid.*, 58.

“We do not have to”: White to Hoover, July 1, 1938, FBI/FOIA.

“appreciate a personal”: Special Agent in Charge in El Paso to Hoover, Feb. 12, 1951, FBI/FOIA.

“I would be glad”: White to Hoover, Sept. 3, 1954, FBI/FOIA.

“certainly bear”: Hoover to White, Sept. 9, 1954, FBI/FOIA.

“confronted with”: Gus T. Jones to Hoover, June 16, 1934, FBI/FOIA.

“unjust, unfair”: Wren to Hoover, Aug. 2, 1932, FBI/FOIA.

“Often when I read of you”: Wren to Hoover, Oct. 4, 1936, FBI/FOIA.
“After the Director”: White to Hoover, Nov. 10, 1955, FBI/FOIA.
“I would like to keep”: White to Grove, Aug. 10, 1959, NMSUL.
“I hope this”: White to Hoover, March 20, 1958, FBI/FOIA.
“We should furnish”: M. A. Jones to Gordon Nease, April 4, 1958, FBI/FOIA.
“Sickness of any kind”: Bessie White to Grove, Sept. 21, 1959, NMSUL.
“I am hoping”: Tom White to Grove, Jan. 4, 1960, FBI/FOIA.
“I am sincerely sorry”: J. E. Weems to Grove, June 28, 1963, NMSUL.
“born on this land”: White to Hoover, Feb. 15, 1969, FBI/FOIA.
“He died as he had lived”: Adams, *Tom White*, in postscript.
“militate against”: Special Agent in Charge in El Paso to Hoover, Dec. 21, 1971, FBI/FOIA.

22: GHOSTLANDS

“Stores gone”: Morris, *Ghost Towns of Oklahoma*, 83.
“only shreds and tatters”: Louis F. Burns, *History of the Osage People*, xiv.
Over several weekends: For more detailed information on Osage dances, see Callahan, *Osage Ceremonial Dance I'n-Lon-Schka*.
“To believe”: Louis F. Burns, *History of the Osage People*, 496.
“Mrs. Mollie Cobb”: *Fairfax Chief*, June 17, 1937.
“anyone convicted”: Copy of Osage Tribal Council Resolution, No. 78, Nov. 15, 1937, NARA-FW.
“The parole of Ernest”: *Kansas City Times*, Dec. 21, 1937.
“should have been hanged”: *Daily Journal-Capital*, Aug. 3, 1947.
“It will be a far cry”: *Oklahoma City Times*, Oct. 26, 1959.
“HEADRIGHTS KILLER”: *Daily Oklahoman*, Feb. 14, 1966.
“OSAGE OIL WEALTH”: *Literary Digest*, May 14, 1932.
“In five years”: *Hamilton Evening Journal*, Sept. 28, 1929.
“Because she died”: Paschen’s “Wi’-gi-e,” in *Bestiary*.
“I think somewhere”: Webb-Storey, “Culture Clash,” 115.

23: A CASE NOT CLOSED

“PAWHUSKA MAN’S”: *Daily Oklahoman*, July 2, 1923.
“sufficient evidence”: Report by Smith, Sept. 28, 1925, FBI.
“Mr. Burt is one”: *Hearings Before the Joint Commission of the Congress of the United States*, 1505.
“very intimate”: Report by Weiss and Burger, April 11, 1924, FBI.
“split on the boodle”: Ibid.
“murderer”: Report by Wren, Nov. 5, 1925, FBI.
“I think Herb Burt”: Report by Smith, April 3, 1926, FBI.

24: STANDING IN TWO WORLDS

“He had property”: Tallchief, *Maria Tallchief*, 4.

“firebombed and everyone”: Ibid., 9.

“I am in perfect health”: Hale to Wilson Kirk, Nov. 27, 1931, ONM.

“This dope is”: Report by Findlay, July 13, 1923, FBI.

“Vaughan who is”: Ibid.

“Mr. Comstock had”: Ibid.

“shrewd, immoral”: Report by Burger, Aug. 12, 1924, FBI.

“prime mover”: Report by Findlay, July 13, 1923, FBI.

“He could hear”: Ibid.

“Minnie was making”: Ibid.

“From the evidence”: Report by Burger, Aug. 12, 1924, FBI.

“I am as smart”: Report by Burger, Aug. 13, 1924, FBI.

“unprincipled, hypocritical”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Jan. 10, 1924, FBI.

“We are strongly”: Ibid.

“liable to die”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Dec. 26, 1923, FBI.

“refusing to allow”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Jan. 2, 1924, FBI.

“under his influence”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Jan. 10, 1924, FBI.

“she does know”: Report by Weiss and Burger, Dec. 26, 1923, FBI.

“isolated murder”: Report by Burger, Aug. 13, 1924, FBI.

25: THE LOST MANUSCRIPT

“We don’t disturb”: U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Oklahoma, *U.S. v. Osage Wind, Enel Kansas, and Enel Green Power North America*, Sept. 30, 2015.

“defendants have not”: Ibid.

“For the first time”: *Tulsa World*, Feb. 25, 2015.

“scarcely stepped”: *Pawhuska Daily Capital*, Jan. 30, 1919.

“GREWSOME FIND ENDS”: Quoted in “The Murder of Mary Denoya-Bellieu-Lewis,” PPL.

26: BLOOD CRIES OUT

“knew that was”: E. E. Shepperd to U.S. Attorney’s Office, Jan. 8, 1926, NARA-FW.

“Members of the family”: *Daily Oklahoman*, Oct. 25, 1926.

“drugs, opiates”: Quoted in Wilson, *Underground Reservation*, 144.

“one of the most beautiful”: Quoted in McAuliffe, *Deaths of Sybil Bolton*, 109.

“In connection with”: Bureau report titled “Murder on Indian Reservation,” Nov. 6, 1932, FBI.

“Over the sixteen-year period”: McAuliffe, *Deaths of Sybil Bolton*, 251.

“I don’t know”: Ball, *Osage Tribal Murders*.

“There are so many”: Interview by F. G. Grimes Jr. and Edwin Brown, June 17, 1925, FBI.

“Bill, you know”: Report by Smith, Oct. 30, 1926, FBI.

“Walking through”: Robert Allen Warrior, “Review Essay: The Deaths of Sybil Bolton: An American History,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 11 (1995): 52.

“You should be ashamed”: McAuliffe, *Deaths of Sybil Bolton*, 137.

“Harry didn’t do it”: Ibid., 139.

“I did not prove”: From McAuliffe’s revised and updated edition of *The Deaths of Sybil Bolton*, which was renamed *Bloodland: A Family Story of Oil, Greed, and Murder on the Osage Reservation* (San Francisco: Council Oak Books, 1999), 287.

“There are men”: Quoted in Wallis, *Oil Man*, 152.

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