

OKLAHOMA
TERRITORY

TERRITORIAL TALES

Bits of
History
Before
Statehood -

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INDIAN
TERRITORY

Lobbyists Limited At Early Session

After his first term as governor of Oklahoma, Charles N. Haskell was asked what he considered to be the "most beneficial and effective single act" in his official life.

He wrote his inquirer that it was one of the first rules adopted by the Constitutional Convention, which he had written: a rule to limit the work of a lobbyist before a convention.

"I well remember that when the convention assembled in Guthrie on Nov. 10, 1906, practically all of the best rooms in the hotel had been engaged for the winter by paid lobbyists for the great corporations," Haskell wrote. "In several instances, suites of five or six rooms were well stocked with cigars and drinks to make lobbyists and visitors comfortable and probably hilarious.

"The day this rule ... was adopted, these lobbyists vacated all their hotel rooms and removed to Oklahoma City. ... The following Friday, an invitation was extended at the insistence of these lobbyists to the whole Constitutional Convention to come to Oklahoma City Saturday afternoon on a special free train and receive a banquet Saturday night and return to Guthrie on a special train at their pleasure."

When this invitation was presented to the convention, Haskell moved to put it on the table without acceptance because he thought it was improper, for several reasons, to accept favors. By an almost unanimous vote, the convention adopted his motion.

"From that time until the end of the Constitutional Convention, I believe that no body of men ever worked with more loyalty to the public welfare and with more freedom from improper influence," Haskell recalled, according to J.B. Thoburn's "History of Oklahoma."