

OKLAHOMA  
TERRITORY

## TERRITORIAL TALES

Bits of  
History  
Before  
Statehood

INDIAN  
TERRITORY

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# Indians Called Smart Politicians

Although Indians frequently were outdone by white officials because of broken treaties and other tricks, the red men were said by those who knew them well to be astute politicians.

One observer wrote that "the politics of the State of Oklahoma are as a child's play in comparison with the political maneuvers of the Choctaw and Cherokee politicians."

He said these two tribes are by nature given to the study of politics and their sons are "carefully trained in the art and chicanery that is ever the key to political supremacy."

Shortly after statehood, the Society of American Indians claimed a membership of more than 1,500 Indians and whites, including educators, officials, business and professional people. It urged Indians to stop looking backward and to look forward.

One of its statements read: "The society call upon the Indian to think more of what he owes to his country, his race and what he owes to himself as a man, rather than to think overmuch what the government owes him."

During the winter of 1888-1889, the Five Civilized Tribes were represented in Washington by delegations of their top leaders. Among them was L.B. Bell, known as Hooley by his Cherokee tribesmen.

When Hooley was asked by a member of a congressional committee what he did for a living, it was reported that Hooley's face took on a serio-comic expression before he replied:

"Various things. I practice law a little, farm some, run for office occasionally, now and then I take a hand of poker, and never miss a horse race if I can get to it. The rest of my time I spend in trying to fool God like you white people do."