Writers usually present Dick Wick Hall as a unique humorist, a man who pounded out delightfully amusing pieces on his battered typewriter in the hot Arizona desert and set America laughing in the early 1920s. And they are right, for the reading of a half-dozen issues of his *Salome Sun* will convert nearly anyone into an admirer — one with a smile on his face.

Hall has even been compared with Mark Twain and Will Rogers, as "embodying some of the literary capacity of Twain and the droll insight of Rogers..." But he never took himself or even his success as a humorist with great seriousness. In fact, when *The Saturday Evening Post* invited him to contribute, he declined, saying he was too busy. It was only after repeated requests that the Post editor finally asked him "just to bundle up some of the back numbers of the *Salome Sun*" and send them in. They would copyright them and select the ones they wanted to use. As Hall later said in a brief autobiographical sketch, he just wrote for fun, and "I'm not an author..."
— I'd starve to Death if I had to do This for a Living." Yet soon his feature articles and stories were appearing in the Post and Red Book magazine, and his Salome Sun was syndicated through several prominent newspapers. The Post then contracted for his entire literary output. Yet in spite of success which would impress many serious, hard-working writers after a lifetime of effort, the one thing that Dick Wick Hall took most seriously was the fight for improvement of "his" part of Arizona—"Happy Valley" and "Salome—Where She Danced," as he called it.

Though he approached all his other ventures more or less light-heartedly—newspaper publishing, mining, real estate promoting, writing—the one thing that changed his attitude was getting a good road built for western Arizona. About this he was belligerently serious. Then he could use words like swords—and did. Dick Wick Hall was many things, from worldly-wise promoter to altruistic dreamer, road-side philosopher to aggressive fighter for improvement, filler of gasoline tanks to famous humorist. In a sense he was also one of the bridges between the old and the new Arizona. His colorful life was a part of the historic development of the state. He lived with the Indians prospected in the hills, published a boom town newspaper, and also carried on business in the nation's major cities.

Hall deserves consideration because of his writing, his contribution to the growth of the state, and his sense of values as indicated by the bits of common sense philosophy scattered through his amusing paragraphs. He could compete in modern metropolitan life but preferred to live in and enjoy the desert.

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3 Dick Wick Hall, "An Arizona Alibi," The Saturday Evening Post, vol. 197, no. 24 (May 80, 1925), p. 64. Note Hall's use of capital letters. He explained, facetiously, "The typewriter I first learned to write on had lost a lot of its teeth, it was so old and so many of the little letters gone, and I got so used to hitting the capitals where the little ones were gone I can't get out of the habit—and I think it looks better anyway to have a few capitals scattered around."

4 Miller, "Life and Times," p. 27; Hall to Grace M. Sparkes, Sept. 23, 1925, Dick Wick Hall Collection, Arizona Pioneers' Historical Society, Tucson.

Dick Wick Hall

As he grew older, Hall became less a promoter and more a builder of his part of Arizona. He said that most of the people coming through Salome would “sympathize with me — ‘What a Place to Live!’ — and don’t realize How Sorry I am for them; knowing, as I do, that I am finding Something for which they are still Seeking.” He said the desert was a place of wonderful peace and quiet “where I can get acquainted with myself and maybe find the Something which every man in his own Soul is consciously or unconsciously Searching for — Himself.”

Hall’s family came from southwestern Iowa, where his parents, Thomas and Florence, operated a small “market garden” farm near Creston. Their first son, Will, was born in 1874. On March 20, 1877, they were proud to announce the birth of a second son, DeForest. Three years later Ernest was born, and when DeForest was seven, Emma was born. As a boy, DeForest was called “Dick.” Some forty years later Dick described the day of his birth as the Coldest Day in the history of the World — even though March twentieth is supposed to be the first day of Spring.... the thermometer hanging over the fireplace that day registered thirty-five degrees Below Zero.... I certainly got a Cold Reception into this world, which is one reason I have been Looking for a Warm Spot ever since. I think maybe I have found one, out here at Salome — in the Southwest Corner of Hell, as some Strangers sometimes call it.

The Hall children attended the local school in Creston and helped on the farm. Dick had a description for that too:

I acquired a lot of Early Piety crawling around on my hands and knees planting and weeding Onions and Cabbages and Celery and Beets and such stuff. After crawling far enough to get around the world and never getting outside the garden fence, I decided it was time to Stand Up and travel and see the world....

Hall, “Alibi,” p. 64.

Author’s interview with Mrs. C. A. Baldwin, Hall’s sister, Emma, in Phoenix. The author had two interviews with Mrs. Baldwin; unless otherwise stated, the reference is to the first one on Feb. 17, 1969.

Hall, “Alibi,” p. 16.

Ibid.
But before young Hall left the family home he evidenced an inclination that would appear all the rest of his life, even in his *Salome Sun*. He was greatly interested in plants and animals, and built up a collection of mounted birds and animals carefully arranged in naturalistic settings. His work was done well enough that the University of Nebraska later acquired the collection. Dick's sister, Emma, said that she was little interested in an older brother's activities, but she also admitted that "I was the only seven year old girl in Creston to be wakened every morning by my brother with his bird calls."\(^{10}\)

After finishing high school in Creston, Dick enrolled at the University of Nebraska, where he studied engineering and took courses in Ornithology. He made a trip to Florida to collect snakes, birds, and other specimens for the university and the Smithsonian Institution. Hall described his activities on this trip as "catching Rattlesnakes in the Swamps at so much per Rattle. I caught more swamp fever than snakes." Then he added: "The unsophisticated newspaper man who furnished me with free transportation for my impressions of what I saw, absolutely and wisely refused to print what I wrote. . . ."\(^{11}\)

Although he regretted it later, Hall left college after only one year. Hall was fascinated by Indians, and in 1898 he went to the Omaha fair and Indian congress, where nearly all of the tribes in the country were represented. Anxious to learn more about their ways, he hired out as a guard at the government building in order to be around them.\(^{12}\)

Hall went to work for the railroad in Creston for a short time after he returned from the fair. However, an old family friend from the west, Charles H. Akers, then secretary of the Territory of Arizona, visited the family and intrigued Dick Hall with his stories of the western country and the wonderful opportunities in Arizona.\(^{13}\) Hall found it difficult to resist the

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\(^{10}\) Baldwin interview.


\(^{12}\) Baldwin interview; Miller, "Life and Times," p. 4.

\(^{13}\) Baldwin interview. As a youth, Akers had run away from his home in Missouri. He arrived in Creston on the day a murder had occurred, and was locked up in jail along.
A photograph of the Thomas Hall family (above) taken during the summer of 1888 shows (l. to r.) Laura Burtt, a cousin; Will, 12½; Emma, 3½; Thomas; Ernest, 7½; DeForest, 10½; and Florence. Dick Wick Hall taken about 1900 (left) and during the 1920s (below).

— APHS Photos
lure of Akers's stories, and when he chanced to read of the Hopi country and of Indians dancing with live rattlesnakes in their mouths, he left for the Southwest. "I landed in Arizona in 1898 with $14.35, at a time when everything was wide open," Hall said. "I was young and curious, and the unrestrained exuberance of Youth led me blithely along through a Postgraduate Course of Education Not Written Down in Books." 14

Hall lived with the Moki, or Hopi, Indians. He developed a great respect for them, their religious dances and ceremonies, and their snakes. He wore the native apparel and learned their ways and customs, and was finally taken into the tribe, a rare distinction for anyone other than their own people. The Indians named him "Chief of the Big Feet." 15

Hall eventually returned to the white man's civilization, and worked in the Phoenix office of Secretary Akers during one session of the legislature. He next spent two summers in the Tonto Basin country, northeast of Phoenix, the locale of the Tewkesbury-Graham sheep and cattle war. The major battle of the feud had occurred in 1887, but during Hall's stay, fighting still occasionally broke out. Hall tended a truck garden and fed both sheepmen and cattlemen. "I often wonder nowadays why someone didn't shoot me; but good gardeners were scarce and it would have been foolish to shoot a man down on his knees weeding onions," he wrote. 16

By the time Hall returned to Phoenix, his brother, Ernest, was living there, and both worked at the newly constructed capitol building. Dick briefly managed the Phoenix Arizona Graphic, but said later, "I managed and buried the 'Arizona Graphic,' all in twenty-eight weeks." 17

with all other strangers in town. Thomas Hall got the boy released, and Akers stayed with the Halls for several months before moving on and eventually arriving in Arizona.

14 Miller, "Life and Times," pp. 4-5; Hall, "Alibi," p. 64.
15 Baldwin interview; Miller, "Life and Times," p. 5; Hall, "Alibi," p. 64.
17 Miller, "Life and Times," p. 5; Fred Gilman Jopp, "At the Laughing Gas Station; The Sage of Salome Uncorks His Philosophy of Life," Sunset, vol. 51, no. 6 (December, 1923), p. 56.

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Dick Wick Hall

When the Oro Grande Mine was discovered near Wickenburg in 1901, he and his brother left for the boom town with visions of adventures, new mines, prospecting, and sudden riches. However, they were soon publishing another newspaper, the Wickenburg News-Herald, “started with a dime, a broken leg and lots of nerve.” During the two years this venture lasted, the paper was used to boost the town and the mining business with great vigor. Nevertheless, the publication was running deeply into debt, and in an effort to save the paper Hall printed an edition in 1903 having the front page sprinkled with a film of gold and copper dust. In it he made a plea for financial support from the mining companies — the first published example of his light and facetious doggerel:

The past ten months serve to remind us
Editors don’t stand a chance;
The more we work we find behind us
Bigger patches on our pants.

Then let each one show how they like us,
Send what you can to Dick Wick Hall;
Or when the fall winds come to strike us
We won’t have no pants at all.19

This was the first appearance of his new name, “Dick Wick.” There are several versions of the reason for this name change; none left by Hall himself. His sister, Mrs. C. A. Baldwin, has explained that Dick had become a good friend of Henry Wickenburg, for whom the town was named. “Old Man” Wickenburg had come to Arizona with the California Column in 1862 and had stayed to prospect and discover the famous Vulture Mine. He suffered many disappointments, had no family, and was a lonely old man when Dick was there. So Hall, who had never liked his own given name and had no middle name, decided on the change, mostly to please the old prospector. First, however, he wrote his parents of the change

to avoid hurting their feelings. He made his new three-part alliterative name legal in the courts, and Old Mr. Wickenburg was touchingly grateful.  

The rest of the Hall family had moved to Arizona about a year earlier, in 1901. Thomas Hall had settled on a ranch southwest of Phoenix and the family's new location made it possible for the Hall boys to stop frequently at the family home. Dick's sister, Emma, who was seventeen then, was always his favorite in the family. He would talk with her about their respective problems, and was concerned about her education and later her plans for marriage. If he discovered she needed anything - a new dress or a buggy - he would buy it for her as if money was his least problem.  

In Wickenburg the newspaper was sold and Dick and Ernest worked at prospecting and contracting. Dick "grub-staked" other prospectors from time to time. One of these, a man called "Shorty" Alger, struck a rich pocket of ore west of Wickenburg. Thirty thousand dollars worth of yellow metal was taken out of a fifteen-foot pit in just a few days. The area was soon filled with other gold-seekers, but the bonanza proved to be an isolated pocket. The tenderfeet went home but Dick Wick Hall stayed. He had seen the nearly uninhabited desert of western Arizona and was enchanted with it. He made "Happy Valley" his home for the rest of his life.  

As Hall reported later of his first disappointing mining venture in the area, Alger and the two men who had been with him, Barker and Griffin, were "working for me. But they forgot about me when they filed their claims." He said he had to buy them out. Then he began to promote the sale of shares in the


21 Baldwin interview.

Dick Wick Hall

"Glory Hole" and exploded a "ton" of dynamite in it to discover where the vein led. The blasting only proved that the ore had been in the bottom of a pocket. The upper parts of the geologic formation had been eroded away. Though the surrounding area was thoroughly prospected, no extension of the "Glory Hole" riches was ever found.\textsuperscript{23}

Hall accepted his "luck" and began to make other plans, though he did continue with his mining ventures. In 1904 he and his brother, Ernest, and a Standard Oil Company executive named Charles H. Pratt, formed the Grace Development Company and filed claim on 100,000 acres in the valley between the Harcuvar and the Harquahala Mountains. They were counting on the railroad being built through their land and they established the town of Salome. Tracks were laid through the valley in 1906 but missed the embryonic settlement by about a mile. They had to move the town.\textsuperscript{24}

As for the town's name, Mrs. Grace Salome Pratt was supposed to have taken off her shoes only to discover that the desert sands were hot. Hall disclaimed responsibility for it. "Everybody seems to think I'm the man who made Salome dance, but it wasn't my fault at all. I told her to keep her shoes on or the sand would burn her feet."\textsuperscript{25} It is quite clear, however, that Hall saw the possibilities in the name, whether Mrs. Pratt ever tested the heat of the sand or not. He ever afterward referred to the town as "Salome — Where She Danced." Perhaps the Grace Development Company was also named after the same lady, to compensate for the exploitation of her middle name.

One of Hall's mining experiences made headlines for days in the Phoenix papers in 1909. A March 15 issue of one of the papers announced assays of newly discovered ore as high as $338,510, and stated that the ore also probably contained

\textsuperscript{23} Author's interview with Ernest Douglas, April 8, 1969. The author had two interviews with Mr. Douglas, now editor of \textit{Arizona Farmer-Ranchman} magazine. Douglas knew Hall for most of the years Hall was in Arizona, and Douglas was present at the dynamiting of the "Glory Hole."

\textsuperscript{24} Heald, "Salome."

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
copper and silver. On March 16 the headlines read: “Gold Strike Excites Town” and “Dick Hall Arrived With His Yellow Wealth.” Subheads read: “Procession From Depot” and “It Was Led by Two Former Cripple Creek Miners Bearing the Precious Ore On a Board Stretcher. Crowd Filled the Street.” The story went on:

Phoenix is as near wild with a gold excitement as this staid old farming community ever gets. Dick Wick Hall came to town yesterday from Salome with his cargo of gold and formed the head of a big procession from the depot uptown, he and the gold exhibits being the center of attraction all the rest of the afternoon and evening until he finally hid out.

The third day’s paper carried a still bigger headline: “Rush To The Big Gold Strike.” It was followed by a three-column story on page one which reported that Hall had “organized the Salome Bonanza Mines Company, the incorporators being himself, his brother, Ernie, and his father, Thomas Hall. The capital stock is $1,000,000.”

Perhaps Hall had this occasion in mind when he said in 1925: “I have been mining and prospecting for twenty-five years and have never found or developed a Real Mine yet, even though I sold one once for a Million Dollars — which I didn’t Get Yet.” Mrs. Baldwin said, however, that he always did well enough in mining to live well. “He was always very extravagant,” she said. Hall’s light-hearted attitude about practically everything he did was exemplified by a deliberately ungrammatical remark he made later when asked about his life: “I started with nothing, so I knew I couldn’t lose nothing.”

Salome became an established town, with a half-dozen buildings, a thousand city lots, and that most important attraction — a good well. Hall lived in the town and carried on various activities for the fourteen years or so before he started

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28 Arizona Republican, March 15, 16, and 17, 1909.
27 Hall, “Alibi,” p. 64.
28 Baldwin Interview.
Dick Wick Hall

his *Salome Sun*, which was to make him famous. He continued in mining and worked at land promotion and real estate and even risked a venture in the Texas oil fields. When the town of Chandler, Arizona, was established in 1912, Hall handled the sale of most of the lots through his Los Angeles real estate office. He started the Avondale Company when the land in that part of the state was first put under cultivation.\(^{30}\)

In Los Angeles Hall met Daysie Sutton, his future wife. She too must have learned to like the desert. She came to Salome with her husband and was still living there after his death.\(^{31}\) Perhaps Hall explained his feeling about the desert best in his own words:

I have lived for considerable periods in such Large Towns as New York, Pittsburgh, Omaha, Fort Worth, Los Angeles—and even Phoenix—and I have made considerable money at times; but I weary of it after a time and always come back to Salome, to the Mind-Resting Quiet, the Soul-Satisfying Peace and the Vibrant Mysteriousness of the Desert. The average person in a Large Town Gives Up So Much and Gets So Little out of Life. What does it all lead to in the End—this Money-chasing, Jazz-crazy, Luxurious Civilization the World is drifting into? I Wonder—and the Desert is a Wonderful Place to do a Lot of Wondering in.\(^{32}\)

As the years went by, Hall’s little settlement grew. It came to include a store, a boarding house, a garage, a saloon and a post office. Hall served as postmaster at one time, and also as one of the trustees of the newly formed school district. The saloon became a school house and when the number of pupils dropped to less than the required eight, the teacher “would get word to her sister, married and living in Wickenburg, to ‘send Margaret down’ to fill out the roster.” Hall himself described Salome’s growth: “For many years the town prospered and has an Average Annual Growth of 100%.”

\(^{30}\) Miller, “Life and Times,” p. 25; Baldwin interview.

\(^{31}\) Baldwin interview.

\(^{32}\) Hall, “Alibi,” p. 64.
population...after 19 years, being Just 19 People.” \(^{33}\) Through these years the only access to Salome was by railroad or by following the dirt trail west from Wickenburg. Chuck holes and sand pockets developed and grew worse. Travelers simply drove around the worst spots and made their own new road. \(^{34}\) But in 1920 a new state highway was routed through the valley and Hall established his roadside “Laughing Gas Service Station.” \(^{35}\)

Out of this combination of events were to come the principal activities of Hall’s last five years. The highway was established but apparently was not well maintained. Hall said, “I knew the big bumps and chuck holes made folks cross and sore so I went down the road twenty-five or thirty miles each way from the town (Salome, I mean) and put up a lot of silly signs.” Some of them read: “Arizona Roads Are Like Arizona People, Good, Bad and Worse,” “Tickle Lizzie’s Carburetor With Our Laughing Gas,” and “Smile, Smile, Smile. You Don’t have To Stay Here, But We Do.” There were many others.

“About three miles down the road I put up a sign, ‘City Limits,’ just to make sure they didn’t get through here without knowing it,” Hall said. \(^{36}\) Nearer the town he erected a tall, narrow vertical sign. It presented a drawing of “Salome” herself, a single curving line topped with an oval depicting a smiling face and appropriate lines for arms and legs. Of course, it read, “Salome—Where She Danced,” and “All the bumps and curves are not on the road.” \(^{37}\)

In those early days of the “Laughing Gas Station,” Hall greeted one customer with the following:

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\(^{33}\) Anna D. Hansberger, County Superintendent of Schools, to Hall, June 26, 1923, Dick Wick Hall Collection, APHS; Niehuts, “Hall Days,” p. 9; McKenney, “Dick Wick Hall,” p. 11.

\(^{34}\) Baldwin interview.

\(^{35}\) Heald, “Salome.”


THIS IS SALOME
Drive right up in your old Tin Lizzie, lift up the hood and I'll get busy. Our laughing gas is sure some fuel, it smiles at miles and kicks like a mule. Your tank's half full — what shall it be? Shall I fill 'er up or give 'er three? How about water and a little oil? Better take some — see the radiator boil? How about springs? Don't you need a tire? Further ahead they'll charge you higher. If there's anything else you need today, buy it now 'fore you drive away. If you don't want to buy, just say Hello and give us a smile before you go. We're always glad to see you here and we'll give you a laugh for a souvenir.

Also, travelers were soon chuckling over free copies of the Salome Sun, "Made with a laugh on a mimeograph by a Rough Neck Staff." This was Hall's single sheet "newspaper" which was to make him famous. It "Made the whole world laugh," as an English journalist put it.

There have been various reasons given as to why Hall started the Salome Sun. One is that he had made the long, rugged trip to Yuma to ask the county supervisors for road improvement. When his request was ignored, he came home "seething with anger" and launched the Salome Sun. "It was to be the newspaper of the neglected north country — but from the very start most of its space was taken in uproarious disdain of the politicians of 'Yumaresque' county. His campaign was brilliant and unrelenting." Another reason given was that he started the little paper to amuse the travelers, to try to make them a little happier when they stopped at his service station. According to his sister and the artist who illustrated the paper, Claude George "Put" Putnam, Hall simply started it to amuse himself between customers while he was at the station. The first mimeographed edition appeared in 1921. It was not long, however, before he was using it for all three purposes. Finally,

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39 Heald, "Salome."
his writing and campaigning for better roads took so much of his time that he gave up most of his mining activity, although he never lost interest in it entirely.43

Hall's *Salome Sun* carried on with verse and prose, wild imagination, and outrageous exaggeration. He lampooned the jazz-age, flappers, and prohibition. He drew characterizations from his friends and neighbors and invented colorful characters such as “the Reptyle Kid,” “Wiggle Ear Watson,” “Gila Monster Jake,” and “Cactus Callie.” But he never made any of them appear either pious or profane. He also invented a pet frog, and in one issue of the *Salome Sun* proposed to tell “The Truth about that Salome Frog.”

Salome, Yumaicreque County, Arizona — “Where She Danced” — was dry long before Volstead was weeds. The Lord initiated the Dry Act here. We are not altogether Dry here, however. It does rain once in a while, but never twice. We had a Big Rain in February. That was in the Year 1904 or 1905, if I remember rightly.

The Frog was not born here. Neither was I. I found the Egg up in the Owens River Valley. . . . I thought it was a Wild Duck Egg, but on the way home it hatched out a Frog. I raised him on a bottle. . . .

The Salome Frog is 7 years Old and even though he can’t swim yet, it isn’t his fault. He never had a chance but he lives in Hopes. . . . He is older and wiser now and getting like the rest of the Natives. He just sits and thinks.44

Hall continued to write about his frog until it became probably the most famous non-existant animal in the United States during the early twenties. Statues were made of it, people wrote to Hall about it, and tourists began to drive out of their way to travel through Salome and see Dick Wick Hall and his pet seventeen pound frog.

The saga of Salome, as Hall was sometimes called, also built a fictional “Greasewood Golf Course,” or “Lynx.” In writing about this he spoofed the game of golf, recently become


44 Quoted in Niehaus, “Hall Days,” p. 11.
Artist Charles C. Colley's drawings reproduce "Put" Putnam's original illustrations for Hall's articles.
Dick Wick Hall

a national craze. He teased city people about their fears of the desert. The "Lynx" was "laid out" over some twenty-three miles of the hottest, roughest acres in the West. Hall warned players against the natural "hazards" of poison water holes, bandits, crouching tarantulas, Gila monsters, and jumping cactus. He often ended his "Lynx" pieces with the admonition: "All Cal"dys & Horses Lost On the Course MUST BE PAID FOR."

Hall also reported the "Society News": "IT is getting Too Hot to Quarrel much these days, so the Ladies Aid Society didn't meet this week." Earlier he described the workings of the Ladies Aid Society as follows:

Two Women in One town is Just enough, or else several hundred. When there is only Two, all they can do is Talk to Each Other and Try to Listen, while they are thinking What they are going to say themselves as soon as they Get a Chance; but when you get Three, there is the Devil to Pay. Two can't say anything about Each Other except to themselves and they have to be Careful, but when you get Three Women in One Town, they will all get to Twoing it back and forth and Talking about the Other One, no Matter which One it is. Our Ladies Aid Society used to get along fine, with just Mrs. Madden & Mrs. Hansen, but since Mrs. Scruggins came and joined it, we wouldn't Dare print some of the Things we have Heard. Maybe Next Week we will.

Other bits that often appeared in the Salome Sun were comments such as: "Good Clothes and Good Neighbors both Wear Longer when they ain't Used Too Often" or "I Wonder how many City Folks ever saw a Sun Rise on the Desert or one of our February Sun Sets — one of those Unbelievable Riots of Gorgeously Brilliant and Passionately Hued Complexion..." or "Too much Pink Paint on some girl's faces makes me think of the Pretty Red Label on a can of Spoiled Tomatoes." And

45 Heretofore, Hall's material has been difficult to find. Stories appeared in the following issues of The Saturday Evening Post: Jan. 3, Feb. 14, 28, May 2, 30, and Sept. 26, 1925; June 5, 12, and Oct. 9, 1926. Five pieces are reprinted in Boyer, Arizona in Literature, pp. 495-511. The best collection easily available is in Nutt, Dick Wick Hall. Quotations from the Salome Sun may be found in Hall's syndicated columns, which appeared in many leading newspapers throughout the United States until his death in 1926. Twenty-six of these columns are in the Charles G. Nash Collection, APHS. Following quotations from the Sun are from vol. 7, nos. 1, 7, 12, and 22 of this collection.
he frequently ended with: "Well, I got to quit now and go and Water the Frog again."

Hall decided the Salome Sun should have illustrations, and wrote a story about "our Special Artist," "Put" Putnam, "who drifted in here awhile ago and has been picking the thorns off of the Cactus on our Cow Ranch for his Board, so as him and the Cows can Both Eat, and he will make these Pictures . . . when he is resting and picking the thorns out of his fingers and feet." Actually, Putnam was the art director for a Los Angeles advertising firm that had been doing work for Hall for years. Putnam and Hall made a contract and "Put" did all the art work for Hall’s material. Putnam left what is probably the most accurate of several stories about the humorist’s discovery by The Saturday Evening Post. Karl Harriman, the editor of Red Book magazine, had stopped at the "Laughing Gas Station" for directions "to help find his way across the burning sands" and left with copies of the Sun. He was greatly amused and sent them to a friend, Thomas L. Masson, the editor of "Short Turns and Encores" in the Post.

At first, Hall was reluctant to submit material, and the Post printed excerpts from old copies of the Sun. The first full length story appeared in the magazine in the January 3, 1925, issue. For this Putnam modeled a grotesque frog with a canteen on its back. Its title was: "Salome, Where the Green Grass Grew." A series of stories followed in the Post, and a newspaper syndicate distributed Hall’s material to a group of metropolitan daily papers.

Hall sometimes met Putnam in a favorite Los Angeles cafe where the writer told the story he was about to write while the artist sketched on the tablecloth. They would then buy the tablecloth and Putnam would convert the sketches into finished illustrations while Hall typed his story. "Together we would wrap the ms. and pictures and ‘taxi’ over to the post office and shoot them to Tom Masson, S.E.P.," Putnam said. "Dick never received a rejection slip to my knowledge."46

THAT SALOME FROG
The material appearing in the *Post* reached a very large number of American people. The magazine in 1925 was printing 220 pages a week and was the largest and most influential publication of its kind in the country. This distribution, the newspaper syndication, and pieces appearing in various other publications — until the *Post* contracted for Hall's entire output — gave Dick Wick almost instant and extremely wide readership. Mail came into Salome from all over the United States and from such overseas places as New Zealand, England, and India. Salome was the most widely advertised town of its size in the world.47

Hall has been called a "kindly man and a wise philosopher," and his writing was described as "an unsophisticated, relaxed type of humor which is refreshing as a drink of fresh, cool water and is like a touchstone in its wisdom and honesty." The effect his work had on people was aptly described as follows: "His service station was not only an oasis on the desert but his personality was an oasis on the sometimes drab desert of the world's people."48

Hall himself said, as he always continued to promote the interests of his town, "Salome is a wonderful place to live in, especially if you are not afraid of yourself. It is the finest place in the world to get acquainted with yourself — and God." He said if people doubted his sanity because of the foolish things he wrote, "I don't mind, because it is a Sad World, in many ways, and I am often Sad myself; and if I can help a Lot of Folks to Smile and Laugh away their Troubles, I will be doing some good and have some excuse for living, no matter whether they Laugh At Me or With Me."49

47McKenney, "Dick Wick Hall," p. 10; Mrs. W. R. Wallace to Hall, Sept. 13, 1923, from Wellington, New Zealand, Dick Wick Hall Collection, APHS; Baldwin interview; Nutt, *Dick Wick Hall*, p. 9.
49Jopp, "Sage of Salome," p. 29; Hall, "Alibi," p. 64. Of course, many examples could be quoted to illustrate Hall's remarkable facility for switching back and forth between serious causes and light-hearted jests. Of particular note was a parody he did on Omar Khayam quoted by Bert Fireman in his column "Under the Sun," *The Phoenix Gazette*, July 8, 1935.
Dick Wick Hall

But Hall did more than make people smile. All during the years he was writing for his Salome Sun and the national magazines, a battle raged between him and those he saw as opponents of improvement of his part of Arizona. He was interested in the road from Wickenburg, through Salome, to the Colorado River. When he turned to this effort the twinkle in his eye changed into a glint. This was when he forgot humor and ‘used words like swords.’ Some have accused Hall of waging his good roads campaign for a selfish purpose, and there was undoubtedly some selfish interest involved.\(^5\) Improving the roads would surely help his service station business, but more important to him was his dream of improving his part of the state whether it helped him or everyone. If a selfish motivation had been the only or main one, he would have forgotten about the bumpy roads and concentrated on his writing, which would have been much more profitable than concern over improved highways.\(^5\)

The scene of Hall’s battle for better roads was Salome, in the northern half of Yuma County, while the area’s political influence was centered at Yuma, in the southwestern corner of the county. Yuma residents resisted building a good road across the north end of the county where it would bypass their town. And citizens of northern Yuma County resented the county officials’ reluctance to act in their favor. Hall had been rebuffed in Yuma, and he “pulled out all the stops” in his campaign. When some of his quips about “Yumaresque County” were quoted and a story in the Literary Digest said that he was attracting tourists to western Arizona, the county and state officials must have taken notice.\(^5\)

Hall received encouragement in his fight from Grace M. Sparkes, who served as Arizona Immigration Commissioner

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\(^6\)Baldwin interview, April 5, 1969. The opinion expressed in this paragraph is the writer’s, although Mrs. Baldwin definitely confirmed it.

\(^7\)“Dick Wick Hall and His Laughing Gas Station,” Literary Digest, vol. 85, no. 11 (June, 1925), p. 71.
and Secretary-Treasurer of the Yavapai County Chamber of Commerce. Her office was an important center for the good roads movement in Arizona. Once when she suggested that Hall try to use the Post for his campaign, he replied that he could not do it directly, but only if he could work something into a good western story. His reply also revealed something of his attitude toward the road effort and his writing. "The great trouble with me is that they don't want and won't take anything serious. The only way I can satisfy them is by acting foolish — so I reckon I am ruined for life." He seemed to be more anxious about the road than his writing career, and said once, "I have never in my life been as enthusiastic over anything as I have the building of this road." 53

Hall's methods were conventional, sometimes novel, and sometimes incendiary. He wrote letters, sent telegrams, and traveled to the various towns. He wrote his congressmen and other officials. He accused the governor of partiality to Yuma and confronted Senator Carl T. Hayden with an accusation of lack of support. 54 In the Sun he ridiculed the Yuma officials and offered a reward to anyone who could tell a lie about Yuma, claiming it was impossible. He said the Mexicans, who once had Yuma, had sneaked up one night and moved the international boundary so the United States would have to take the town. This was what started the trouble between the United States and Mexico, he said. Even the territorial prison had been moved away from Yuma because the prisoners refused to stay there, he said. Once he had printed and distributed a handbill which said: "DANGER! Don't go by Yuma. Tourists are warned not to attempt to go to Los Angeles by way of Yuma — 100 miles out of the way and through terrible sand dunes that drift like snow, where planks, brush and boards are used for miles to keep cars from being buried." 55

53 Hall to Miss Sparkes, Feb. 25 and March 2, 1925, Grace M. Sparkes Collection, Arizona Collection, ASU. Hall's letters and other writings figure prominently in this collection. Another Sparkes collection is at APHS.
54 Hall to Sen. Carl T. Hayden, telegram, Feb. 22, 1925, Sparkes Collection, ASU.
Dick Wick Hall

When the seventh Arizona legislature met, Hall sent the members a page and a half letter presenting a dramatic, colorful, persuasive argument for action on his road. Finally he decided it was necessary to detach the northern part of Yuma County and annex it to Yavapai County. Always colorful, he wrote Miss Sparkes: "We are seriously contemplating asking for a divorce so that we can get married to you if you are willing. We might better be in Hell than a part of Yuma." He said their taxation without representation was worse than in revolutionary days. While Miss Sparkes referred this proposal to official boards, Hall obtained legal advice, circulated a "Declaration of Independence," and planned meetings of the voters. "HOW LONG, OH LORD, HOW LONG, MUST WE CONTINUE TO SUFFER THIS OPPRESSION." The papers picked up his arguments and gave them further publicity. The pressure created — by various organizations, others who were interested, and Hall's own very effective participation — was great.

A month before Hall's untimely death, he was working hard on the road campaign, and though he neglected his writing he took time even when he was ill to reassure Miss Sparkes. With sad irony he wrote her "just a line so you won't think I'm dead." Although Hall was obviously bold in many ways, he had very bad teeth and was "scared to death of a dentist." It has also been reported that he had an advanced case of Bright's disease. Finally, he did go to a Los Angeles dentist who extracted all his teeth. In a few days he died. Obituaries appeared in publications from New York to Los Angeles. Many of the messages that arrived at Salome referred to his efforts to improve his area, some crediting him with the greatest indi-

58 Letter dated Feb. 21, 1925; Miss Sparkes to Hall, Nov. 6 and 18, 1925; Hall to Miss Sparkes, Oct. 29 and Nov. 13 and 15, 1925. Copy of "Declaration of Independence," late November, 1925, Sparkes Collection, ASU.
57 The Daily Silver Belt (Miami, Ariz.), undated clipping in Sparkes Collection, ASU.
58 Hall to Miss Sparkes, March 10, 1926, Sparkes Collection, ASU.
vidual contribution. One editorial said, "his untimely death stilled the achievements of a truly great man," and another stated: "Prescott will never get over being grateful to him...." 60

Dick Wick Hall was buried in Salome and his prospector friends brought selected pieces of gold bearing rock from which Claude Putnam designed a suitable monument with a bronze plaque. Dick Wick Hall days are still celebrated every fall in Salome. 61

If Dick Wick Hall had lived a decade or two longer (he died at forty-nine) he could have seen the realization of his dream for good roads in Arizona. In a short time, a bridge was built over the Colorado and the highway was improved. Perhaps he could have concentrated more on writing — developing the depth and breadth of its content within its vehicle of humor — to have made a significantly more serious contribution to American literature.

A review of Hall’s life leaves the impression — which is confirmed by people who knew him best — of a dual personality. 62 Part of his nature yearned for peace, quiet, and the wide open spaces, while the other restlessly sought change and improvement. The combination produced a most remarkable man and his talent for vivid expression allowed America to share his thoughts. He experienced unusual success as a national humorist, but was more serious about a comparatively localized improvement project.

60 New York Times, April 30, 1926, Arizona Highways, vol. 36, no. 9 (September 1960), p. 5; Arizona Journal Miner (Prescott), April 30, 1926; letters and telegrams, Sparkes Collection, ASU.
62 Baldwin Interview, April 5, 1969; Douglas Interview, April 5, 1969;