

Submitted by: Glen Haney - bud at ncweb.com

April 4, 1946  
The Oklahoman  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma  
page 1, photo



James Keaton, Widely Known Attorney, Dies  
Heart Ailment Fatal To Crusader For Better  
Government

James R. Keaton, 84, prominent Oklahoma attorney since 1890, died at 7 pm Wednesday at Wesley hospital of a heart ailment following an illness of several days.

Formerly vice-president of the American Bar Association and president of the state bar, Keaton was noted for more than 50 years among Oklahoma City attorneys as a stickler for legal ethics, a crusader for governmental reforms and economy in all branches of government.

Identified with numerous non-partisan campaigns...

Known for his part in the fight against the Jack Walton administration which led to the impeachment of the governor. Keaton refused to run for corporation commissioner during the Walton regime.

In later years the prominent attorney took a stand against the encroachment of oil wells within the city limits...

Keaton was born in Carter County, Kentucky, December 10, 1861. He graduated from National Normal university at Lebanon, Ohio, in 1884 and took his law degree at Georgetown university in 1890.

Keaton left Kentucky in 1884 for Texas where he became the principal of Hico high school and served as publisher and editor of the Hico Courier for two years.

Admitted to the bar in 1890 he married Lucille Johnston of Denton, Texas, the same year and formed a law firm with John H. Cotterel at Guthrie, where he practiced law until 1896, when he was appointed associate justice of the supreme court of the Oklahoma territory.

Active in the state bar association since its founding. Judge Keaton served on the executive committee of the American Bar Association for three years and in 1935 was elected vice president of the national legal society.

He was delegate from Oklahoma county to the first state Democratic convention and served on the committee on resolutions. In 1902 he became a member of the law firm of Shartel, Keaton and Wells. The firm was re-organized in 1912 as Keaton, Wells and Johnston.

Judge Keaton, a lifetime member of the Oklahoma Historical Society, was admitted to the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1937. He was a member of the Men's Dinner Club of Oklahoma City.

Survivors include a stepson, Clarence J. Keaton, 1710 N Eastern, a brother, E. F. Keaton, New Holland, Ohio. and a sister, somewhere in Kentucky.

Funeral arrangements will be announced by Street and Draper.

**HON. JAMES R. KEATON, LL.B.,**

*Associate Justice Supreme Court, Territory of Oklahoma,  
Oklahoma City.*

(September 19, 1896—April 2, 1898.)

James R. Keaton is a native of Carter County, Kentucky, born December 10, 1861, and is a son of Nelson T. Keaton and a grandson of Robert Keaton. The family is of English descent. Robert Keaton was born in the State of Virginia. Nelson T. Keaton was also born in Virginia, but during his early manhood removed to Carter County, Kentucky, where he engaged in farming and stock raising.

James R. Keaton obtained his elementary education in the district schools of his native county, and later attended the High School at Grayson, Kentucky. At the age of eighteen he commenced to teach school in Carter and Lawrence counties, Kentucky, which occupation he followed for three years. He then entered the National Normal University at Lebanon, Ohio, from which institution he graduated in the year 1884, with the degree of B. S.; then he removed to Texas, where he was principal of the Hico City school for a number of years, during a part of which time he was editor of the Hico Courier. In the year 1886 he was a member of the Hamilton County delegation to the Democratic State convention which nominated General Sul Ross for Governor. He continued as principal of the High School until the following year, when he resigned in order to devote his time to his newspaper, which he sold in the year 1888.

During his sojourn in Texas he studied law under the Honorable C. K. Bell, at Hamilton, afterwards Congressman from the Fort Worth District, and also Attorney General of the State of Texas. In 1889 he went to Washington, D. C., and entered the Law Department of the Georgetown University, from which he graduated in 1890, with the degree of LL. B. During his stay in Washington he was in the office of Colonel Enoch Totten, who was engaged in general practice, being counsel for many important interests, among which being the Pennsylvania Railway Company and the Washington & Georgetown Street Railway Company. He was admitted to the bar of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia on May 1, 1890, and to the bar of the Supreme Court of the United States on December 14, 1898.

In July, 1890, James R. Keaton located at Guthrie, Oklahoma Territory, and engaged in the practice of law. On September 19, 1896, he was appointed by President Cleveland as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the Territory of Oklahoma, and was assigned to the Third Judicial District, embracing Oklahoma, Cleveland, Pottawatomie and Greer counties, holding the first term of court in Greer County after the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States of March 16, 1896, declaring the Territory embraced therein a part of the public domain, and the act of Congress of May 2, 1896, providing for the organization of the same as a county of Oklahoma Territory.

On April 2, 1898, he retired from the bench and resumed the practice of law in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Territory. In July, 1898, he was nominated by both the Democratic and Populist conventions, in joint session, of the Territory of Oklahoma as a delegate to Congress, but was unsuccessful in the race, being defeated at the election by D. T. Flynn, his Republican opponent.

On April 1, 1902, he became a member of the law firm of Shartel, Keaton & Wells, which has continued until this day. He is an active, loyal and prominent Democrat, having served as a delegate to nearly every convention of his party in Oklahoma Territory. He is also a member of both the State Bar Association and the American Bar Association.

In 1890, at Denton, Texas, he married Mrs. Lucile (Davenport) Johnston, a native of Tyler, Texas, and a daughter of William Davenport, who was consul to Mexico from the Confederate government during the Civil War.

During his term on the bench Judge Keaton enjoyed the deserved confidence not only of the people of the Territory, but also of the Department of Justice, having received his appointment at the hands of President Cleveland without being an applicant therefor, and when it was well known that he was not in accord with the President's financial policies.