



Fred A. Wemple, Jr. 1995

Fred A. Wemple, Jr., pioneer oil marketer, highway builder and civic leader, was born in Bonham, Texas in 1892. He studied engineering at New York University and law at Georgetown University. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War I.

He moved with his wife, Edith, to Midland from East Texas in 1923. He opened Midland's first drive-in service station, the Ever Ready Filling Station, on the northeast corner of North Loraine and West Wall Streets. As a wholesaler for Magnolia Petroleum Company (The Flying Red Horse), he operated his first service station for the next 34 years, closing it down in 1957 to make way for progress.

At the time of Fred's move to West Texas, the roads were in terrible condition and the area was booming with oil field activities. Fred reasoned that the marketing of petroleum products was directly related to the amount of good roads. He dedicated himself to establishing the network of roads that ultimately enhanced the explorations and development of the petroleum industry in the Permian Basin. Good roads were an absolute necessity to accommodate the scouts, landmen, surveyors and other oil personnel as well as the general public.

Fred's unique vision was soon recognized in Austin and he was appointed to the Texas Highway Commission as a member from 1947 until 1953. He served a chairman of the Commission for two years. As chairman he launched an approved Midland's Big Spring Street underpass and cut the ribbon at the forma opening.

He served as director and a member of the executive committee and president of the Texas Good Roads Association. He was recognized as the single person most responsible for the development of the great highway system envied nationwide that serves the oil industry and the State of Texas so well.

Fred A. Wemple, Jr. died September 29, 1967.

An innovative roadside park on Interstate 20 East of Midland was completed and dedicated to this man. The network of highways in the Permian Basin is a lasting monument to Fred Wemple, Jr. who dedicated 44 years of service to the people, the State of Texas and the nation.

This Petroleum Hall of Fame member was a builder of excellent highways – highways that changed and enhanced the Permian Basin petroleum industry.

