



William G. Skelly 1979

William Grove Skelly was the son of an oil teamster, and the sight and sounds of drilling were part and parcel of his boyhood experience. He was born near Erie, Pennsylvania, in 1878, learned about oil in Oil City, and began a remarkable career as an industry pioneer, philanthropist and civic leader.

He was a determined man, and his determination was to build an oil business of his own. At the age of 26 he hit oil for the first time. Soon he was moving into the Mid-Continent region, wildcatting and jumping hard wherever the plays began. Bill Skelly was a factor, and a large one, in such legendary booms as Electra, Desdemona, Burkburnett and Ranger. In the Permian Basin, his Skelly Oil Company helped create the great fields of Winkler County and influenced oil development elsewhere through one of the larger field offices in the region.

Bill Skelly not only built his own oil company but integrated it vertically and made it one of the industry's commercial dynamos in Oklahoma, Kansas, Texas and other states. It is now a valued and major part of Getty Oil Company's domestic operations in the mid-part of the nation.

Skelly, as with so many other oil men whose contributions to the public good are seldom recognized, gave untiring leadership to a multitude of causes in Tulsa and other places. He was generous in his giving, both of himself and of his resources. He seized on new technology, such as early radio and aviation, and helped move them within reach of the public at large. He was, in short, more of a giver than a getter. His death in 1957 deprived us of his companionship but not of the permanent and impressive example he set for us all.