



Claude W. Brown
1904-1993
Inducted 1985

Claude W. Brown was born in Talpa, Texas on December 7, 1904. He grew up in Ballinger, Texas and graduated from high school in 1922. His first interest in oil production was through a small check his mother received from land she inherited in Oklahoma.

After high school graduation, Brown went to Mexia to work as a roustabout for his great uncle, J.K. Hughes. From Mexia, Brown moved to Currie, Wortham and Coricana, never straying from Texas, but longing to return to West Texas. That opportunity came in July 1924 Brown moved to booming Cross Plains to be in charge of drilling and production of 50 wells in Brown County.

There he met and married Christine McGowan on February 20, 1926, daughter of the leading merchant in Cross Plains. The Browns then moved to Coleman, Texas where their only daughter, Claudyne was born. With the onset of the depression and having lost everything, Brown bought, on credit, a \$65 automobile, drove into McCamey in 1935 and began to "get things done".

Even when the price of oil dropped to 10 cents a barrel, Brown stayed busy, opening a second hand oil field supply store from scratch, selling pipe and oil field equipment. By 1939, he owned six supply stores in Mexico. Meanwhile, Brown had traded casing for off-set acreage and began buying salvage wells near McCamey. He made those productive with deeper drilling and new methods of recovery.

In 1948, Brown introduced his daughter to Ed Thorpe, a young geologist from Louisiana in his office. They married in 1950 and in 1951 Brown and Thorp Oil Company was formed. Offices were set up in McCamey and Beaumont. The company discovered the Brown and Thorpe Field near Girvin, Texas in 1951 and built the McCamey Pipe Line 65-mile gathering system to transport oil from fields in Pecos County into McCamey. They also discovered the Omega and Tragedy Gas Field. In 1967, Brown bought controlling interest in McCamey's Security State Bank, the bank that issued Brown his first loan, a \$1500 note in 1936.

Although Brown was deeply immersed in private enterprise, he also pursued politics and civic affairs. A former mayor of McCamey, he was a delegate to Democratic National Conventions, and served as president of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce and the Permian Basin Petroleum Association. He served on the State Industrial Commission and the National Board of the Petroleum and Gas Unit of the National Defense Executive Reserve.