



Edith Whatley McKanna

1899 - 1986

Inducted 1991

Edith Whatley was born on her family's farm in McLennan County, Texas but she grew up in Fluvanna. As a young girl, Edith enjoyed accompanying her father when he checked on his drilling ventures. After completing high school, she attended Columbia University, then married James McKanna. James was an independent oil operator who, along with Edith's father, helped develop the shallow Sharon Ridge oilfield in the early 1920s. Along with James' interest in the oil business, Edith also shared his passion for flying, becoming the first woman in Texas to receive a pilot's license. When James died in 1932, she moved back east with their daughter. During World War II, she volunteered to serve in the Civil Air Patrol and donated her plane to the war effort. In 1945, with the war over, McKanna returned to Texas, formed the Imperial Oil Company and began securing leases. By 1949, Edith controlled 85,000 acres in Scurry and Kent counties and had seven producing wells. That year, *Time* magazine referred to her as the "Lady in the Oil Patch," and in 1951, U.S. Vice President Alben W. Barkley awarded Edith Whatley McKanna a scroll of distinction in the field of petroleum as one of the Southwest's most distinguished women.