



Levi Smith
1869-1932
Inducted 1985

A native of West Virginia, Levi Smith was born in 1869. As a young man, he worked as an oil field building contractor and then began a long association with Benedum-Trees, working for them in Illinois, Louisiana, Mexico, and overseas. In 1919, Smith headed for the oil fields of Desdemona, Texas to work as a director and an officer for the Transcontinental Oil Co., a new Benedum-Trees organization. In 1923, when the Santa Rita No. 1 well came in, Smith took a leave of absence from Transcontinental and traveled to the site to observe the well's performance. Analyzing his own sand and oil samples, along with what he'd seen first-hand, Smith convinced Benedum-Trees to buy in. They established Big Lake Oil Company and purchased a large acreage share in the field. Smith became president of Big Lake Oil and began a drilling campaign in the Big Lake field. Their first eight wells were busts, but well number nine was successful. Elsewhere, Smith convinced his friend Ira Yates to drill a well on his land, and in 1926 the Mid-Kansas Transcontinental No. 1A Yates well opened the historic Yates Field.