

Frank Phillips

1873 - 1950



President and cofounder of Phillips Petroleum Company, Frank Phillips was born on November 28, 1873, in Scotia, Nebraska. He was the eldest son of ten children in the family of Lewis Franklin and Lucinda Josephine Faucett Phillips. Because of a grasshopper infestation, the Phillipses moved to Iowa in 1874 and settled on a farm near Conway. As a boy Phillips experienced the toil, poverty, and frustrations of rural life. While on the farm, he earned his first wages by digging potatoes for ten cents a day.

After admiring the dapper dress of a barber who wore striped pants, at age fourteen Phillips left the farm and schoolroom to apprentice in a barbershop in nearby Creston, Iowa. After learning the trade, he ventured west to barber a year in Colorado and Utah Territory boomtowns. By the time he was twenty-four, Phillips had returned to Creston and purchased two barbershops.

In 1897, Frank married Jane (Gibson) and they had John Gibson Phillips, who was born on December 9, 1898. Frank and Jane later took in two young orphaned sisters, renamed them Mary Francis and Sara Jane Phillips, and reared them as their own.

Jane's father, John Gibson, gave Phillips a position in his Creston bank and ushered him into the world of high finance. Frank Phillips was always determined to do big things. It was in 1903, while working as a bond salesman that he heard about the new oil field which had just been discovered at Bartlesville, Indian Territory. Moving to the new oil town, Frank Phillips went into business for himself using his savings to organize the Citizens Bank and Trust Company.

He soon found that the banking business extended into oil operations and began to acquire a few oil leases. He started in the oil business in Bartlesville, Oklahoma where he developed the Osage leases. His oil interests grew until in 1917, at the age of 44, when he and his brother, L. E. Phillips, incorporated Phillips Petroleum Company. The Phillips Petroleum Company expanded into production of oil, gasoline and natural gas liquids research.

For the first 21 years of the Company's operation, Frank Phillips served as president. At his suggestion K.S. Adams was elected president in 1938. Frank Phillips then served as chairman of the board of directors of the Company until 1949 when he was asked to be relieved of all responsibilities of active management request that he not be reelected as chairman of the board. The new title of honorary director and honorary chairman was then created for him by special action of the board of directors.

Frank Phillips, known as "Uncle Frank" by employees and friends, contributed large sums to the Boy Scouts of America and other youth programs. He also organized The Frank Phillips Foundation, Inc., which owns and operates Woolaroc Museum.

Among his many appointments, honorary memberships and honorary degrees, he was most proud of his admittance to the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1939, the French Government decoration of Chevalier of the Legion of Honor in 1929, and the Silver Buffalo for Distinguished Service of Boyhood, the highest award presented by the Boy Scouts of America. In 1949, he was awarded the distinguished service citation by the University of Oklahoma.

Mr. Phillips would say, "Work hard and demonstrate loyalty." He will be remembered for his great personal achievements and his unselfish interest in the welfare of people.

SOURCE: <https://www.woolaroc.org/history-of-woolaroc>