



Howard R. Hughes, Sr.
1869 - 1924
Inducted 1973

A product of the Show-Me State, Howard Hughes prepared for college by attending military academies, then entered Harvard College in 1893. Next came law school at the State University of Iowa. He didn't finish, but left to practice law with his father. The lead and zinc mining industry interested him, so he moved to Joplin, Missouri to enter the business. There he learned about the Lucas Gusher in Spindletop, Texas, and was inspired to quickly learn the practical end of the oil-drilling business. He partnered with Walter Sharp and together they had some success in their early ventures. Eventually Hughes turned his attention toward the widespread problem of drill bits that were ineffective on medium to hard rock formations. He invented a bit with cone-shaped rollers covered in teeth that would chip and crush hard rock rather than scrape it. Ultimately, he secured a patent for his revolutionary bit and by 1909 the Hughes bit was in wide use nationally and internationally. That same year, Hughes and Sharp formed the Sharp-Hughes Tool Co. in Houston to manufacture bits. It was renamed the Hughes Tool Company after Sharp's death in 1915. Over the years Howard Hughes received 73 patents related to the rotary drilling industry.