

Archibald Leon "A. L." Derby 1875 - 1956



Archibald Leon "A. L." Derby got the oil bug early. He followed the wells west from Pennsylvania & landed in Arkansas City, Kansas. In 1916, Derby worked as a wildcatter, drilling wells in Western KS but dreamed of establishing his own integrated oil operation that controlled the entire process from exploration through retail sales.

Derby moved to Wichita, KS in 1917 after the Butler County strike and became a partner in an oil brokerage firm. He moved swiftly into oil leasing and production, operating under the name of The Great plains Petroleum Company. In 1922 he purchased the assets of a refinery and pipeline operation and organized The Derby Oil Company. Within three years, Derby owned more than 100 filling stations between Denver and Omaha, including 13 in the Wichita area alone.

In 1926, the company sold off its bulk oil and service stations to Marland Oil Company (later Conoco) to raise enough money to expand and improve his refinery and drilling operations. The sale included a 5 year non-compete

provision, but as soon as the period was up, Al Derby jumped back into the service station business.

In the late 1930's, Derby was instrumental in the creation of Sovereign Service, a marketing organization for independent dealers supported by a number of mid-continent refiners. After World War II, Derby concentrated on an expanding chain of retail service stations as well as numerous dealer operated units and a large jobber/marketing arrangement with Plester. In 1955, Colorado Interstate Gas purchased Derby and with his large oil production system allowed for greater expansion of the Derby refining and marketing network. In 1973, Colorado Interstate Gas became part of the Coastal Corporation and in 1988 Derby stations along with others in the Coastal organization were rebranded Coastal.

Mr. Derby was a producer, refiner and marketer. He was a pioneer in the oil fields of Butler and Greenwood counties in Kansas. Mr. Derby founded the Derby Oil Company.

SOURCE: Gas Station Shop Talk. DerbyGasMan. October 2012.

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