



### #34: The Legendary Humble Iron Works

While many companies have formed in Humble over the years, very few have grown to the stature of an internationally known company. One was certainly the Humble Oil Company. But another was one few people know the history of: the original Humble Iron Works. During those early years in Humble, when oil derricks were everywhere, one man became a legend for his abilities as a mechanic. His name was Harry S. Cameron, and his little Humble Iron Works went on to become manufacturing behemoth known as Cameron Iron Works.

Harry Sellers Cameron was born in Indianapolis in 1872, the son of W. S. Cameron and Estelle Mulkey. He studied architectural and mechanical engineering at Christian Brothers College in Memphis and apprenticed at a machine shop before eventually moving to Texas. In 1913, the **Humble Iron Works** machine shop was opened by Cameron, T. W. Horn and P. O. Davant. Harry Cameron developed an outstanding reputation for his ability to repair drilling rigs and at forging high grade steel. He also manufactured special purpose tools for drilling operations. In 1918, it became the **Cameron-Davant Company**. The new company's machine shops were in Humble, Goose Creek and Houston.

In 1920, Oilman James Abercrombie purchased a controlling interest in Harry Cameron's shops and re-organized the company as Cameron Iron Works. It started with \$25,000 capital, five men, two lathes, a drill press, and hand tools. In 1922, Abercrombie and Cameron developed a major invention: the first successful blow-out preventer for oil wells, which revolutionized the oil and gas industry. During the 1920s, 30s and 40s, Cameron Iron Works was the major provider of oil well supplies and specialty items, including tool joints, fishtail bits, drill collars, drive shoes and pump repair parts.

During World War II, it changed its focus to the manufacture of army ordinance (including gun barrels, mounts and rockets). During the Korean War, in addition to armaments, it had manufacturing, research and development in power generation, jet engine parts, and even a guided-missile program. At the height of the company's success, it was involved in the energy energies (including atomic power), petrochemical, military, and the aerospace industries. It employed 12,300 people across thirty-eight countries. This was a far cry from its simple origins in the town of Humble.

The company was merged with Cooper Industries in 1989. It went through numerous divisions and acquisitions before being acquired by Schlumberger in April 2016. Unfortunately, Harry S. Cameron didn't live long enough to see his company grow to such an international success. He died in 1928 at the age of 55.