



## **#23: J. W. Hall – Humble Businessman and Politician**

J. W. Hall. No one remembers who he is these days. That's understandable. He died over 76 years ago. But, he was one of the best friends Humble ever had. James William Hall was born in Montgomery, Alabama on December 7, 1868. He moved to the Houston area in the early 1900s.

Shortly after the Humble oil boom began, he opened a hardware store in Humble. The J. W. Hall Hardware and Furniture Store was a fixture on Main Street for many years. Building on his reputation as a businessman in Humble, J. W. Hall earned a position on the Humble School Board, where he served for six years (1908-1914). He was also elected to the Harris County Commissioners Court in 1908...a very powerful elected position. The Commissioners Court was responsible for allocating and spending tax money for the whole of Harris County, setting elections, building and maintaining roads, overseeing schools, libraries, parks, and much more. In that position, Mr. Hall was instrumental in securing land near Bordersville so Humble could build a school over there (the Colored School), and he was responsible for the building of the Houston-to-Humble Road, long before there was a freeway in the area. This shell road ran from downtown Houston all the way to downtown Humble. It's now called the Old Humble Road. During those years, he also served as a Vice-President of the Humble State Bank.

The old wooden building that housed the Hall Hardware store was destroyed in the 1912 Downtown Humble Fire. For weeks after the fire, the Houston Chronicle and Houston Post reported on the aftermath of the fire. Since Mr. Hall was well-liked and well-known across the county, they were always sure to mention his store and the amount of damage it suffered. A brick building replaced the old wooden store. After J. W. Hall sold it, it became the Harvey Hardware Store and still sits across Main Street from the Green Oaks Tavern.

Hall used his political experience to run for other State and local offices. He was elected as the local Texas State Representative for the Humble area (1919-1922, 1925-1926), and then moved up to be the local State Senator (1927-1928). In every one of these positions, he was always looking out for the interest of the Humble community. When the Humble School District transformed into the Humble Independent School District in 1919, it was J. W. Hall that filed the bill in the State Legislature.

In 1928, he was elected to another powerful position: Tax Assessor for Harris County, where he served from 1928 through 1938. Ill health eventually forced him to step down from this position. He retired to his home in the small town of Little York, Texas (long before it became just another suburb in north Houston), where he died on October 15, 1943.