

**IDA MAY  
BARNARD  
McFARLIN  
1868-1938**



**OIL  
FORTUNES  
LEADS TO  
PHILANTHROPY**

Robert McFarlin was an oilman who is best-known for amassing a fortune by drilling for oil near Glenpool. His wife Ida insisted that they use their millions in oil revenue to support churches and schools in every town where they lived through the years.

Ida May Barnard was born in 1868 in Pilot Point, Texas. She married Robert Martin McFarlin of Waxahatchie, Texas in 1885, after he completed two years at nearby Marvin College. They moved to Vernon, Texas in 1888 and later to Norman in 1892 to work as cattle farmers and operate a feed store while Ida raised daughter Leta Mae born in 1889 and Robert Boger in 1891. Unfortunately, the tragic death of two-year-old Robert of typhoid fever and a severe drought forced them to relocate to Hughes County in 1895. After the birth of their daughter Pauline Caroline in 1897, they moved to Holdenville in 1901.

Not a particularly successful farmer, Robert moved into land speculation after Creek Nation allotments were completed. With James Chapman, he formed the Holdenville Oil and Gas Company in 1903 and drilled for oil on ten acres of Kiefer land he purchased with borrowed capital. They discovered the land was located in the huge and lucrative Glenn Pool oil field. James became Robert's son-in-law when he married Leta in 1908.

The men formed McMan Oil Company in 1912, using parts of both their names for the company. McMan was a leader of the development of an even larger Cushing oil field. So successful was this company, they were able to sell it to Magnolia Oil Company for \$39 million. They also formed the McMan Oil and Gas Company. They sold the oil company to the Dixie Oil Company, a subsidiary of Standard Oil Company of Indiana, for \$20 million in 1922.

The McFarlins moved to Tulsa in 1915, where Ida became interested in using their fortune to preserve churches and schools in Oklahoma and Texas. Their most significant projects included McFarlin College, a Methodist church in Norman, and an auditorium on a college campus in Dallas. After arriving in Tulsa, they helped finance a small Methodist school called McFarlin College. It merged with Henry Kendall College, which had moved from Muskogee to Tulsa in 1907, as the University of Tulsa in 1920. The McFarlins contributed \$300,000 to build the McFarlin Library at the university in 1926.

The McFarlins had only one stipulation with their gift – the view of downtown Tulsa can never be blocked. The McFarlin Library, built in 1929, gave the appearance of a medieval fortress, with the tower having an electric elevator – innovative for 1929 – and a spiral chute for book delivery.

In 1924, the Methodist Church in Norman asked for help to build a new church building. Remembering the support given by the church when their infant son died, the McFarlins made a generous contribution. In addition, they established a \$600,000 endowment to support maintenance of the McFarlin Memorial United Methodist Church. In 1925, the McFarlin family donated \$600,000 to build the McFarlin Memorial Auditorium on Dallas' Southern Methodist University campus, in honor of Robert's parents.

Both Robert and Ida were inducted in the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1935. Ida died in November 1938 at age 70 followed by her husband Robert in November 1942. They are buried at the IOOF Cemetery in Norman near their infant son where a sundial marks his grave. Their philanthropy is still visible today.