

Previously the Memphis District had included the Arkansas and White basins; the Vicksburg District had contained the Red area. The Southwest territory was being carved into smaller Corps jurisdictions that would focus more intently on providing projects and public works.

The stage was being set for tremendous changes.

## **NEWT GRAHAM AND THE TULSA VISION.**

The father of the Tulsa District was Newton R. Graham, a newspaperman turned banker whose lifelong ambition was to open the Arkansas basin to the world's waterways.

"Newt Graham was the acknowledged leader for the comprehensive development of the Arkansas River," recalled Bob Kerr, ". . . in nearly a half-century of volunteer effort . . ."

"Graham almost single-handedly won the new District (Corps) Office for Tulsa, in the interest of Arkansas navigation . . ."

Like other historians, Kerr described Graham with great affection and warmth. He recalled him as "a little dynamo" with a thatch of silver hair, a dimpled chin, and blue eyes that shone brightly behind rimless glasses who "ducked his head with characteristic modesty" when his accomplishments were pointed out.<sup>16</sup>

He had help, of course. This help came from a constellation of dealers in what Kerr called "white gold", and what they meant by white gold, of course, was water. They played the politics of water as deftly as they dealt in the politics of the region's famed black gold — oil.



### **NEWT GRAHAM: FATHER OF THE TULSA DISTRICT**

*When Larry Silvey, the editor of a 1979 historical book called The Tulsa Spirit, set out to describe the region's guiding lights over the years, he began, first up on page one, with Newt Graham:*

*"Newton R. Graham was a young man when on March 6, 1957, he died. To be sure, he was also elderly in years — 73 years, in fact; chronology does that to you. But Newt Graham was a Tulsan through and through, and as much as anybody he personified in a consistent manner the youthful exuberance of the Tulsa Spirit.*

*"N.R. Graham, the capitalist/banker, the businessman/volunteer, the seer of better things. Newt Graham helped stage a 50,000-person spontaneous celebration in Tulsa four days before World War I actually ended; the wire services said it*

*was over, and that was good enough for him.*

*"But more importantly, Newt Graham . . . was a person of dedicated vision: he saw, when few others could fantasize the reality, a waterway from Tulsa to the sea — a waterway that would create in Eastern Oklahoma a monument to government and free enterprise working together in a common direction toward human betterment.*

*"Newton R. Graham was young in spirit all his life because he cultivated his sense of idealism while embellishing his sense of realism. He artfully combined understanding, empathy, and persuasion to pursue a goal he would not live to see happen.*

*" . . . Thanks, Newt, for your help."<sup>17</sup>*