

# Ivan BROWN

*Class of 1919*

By Dr. Clarence G. Oliver, Jr.

Old-timers tell the story that customers sometimes would remove their glasses, clean the lens, and take another look with disbelief at the large, artistic words, “Si’s Recreation Parlor,” on the plate glass window of Ivan D. Brown’s office at Arkansas Valley State Bank. The window which reached from floor to ceiling had been retrieved by Brown from the downtown pool hall when the business closed. Keeping it was an indicator of Brown’s wry wit.

The “Si’s” window was popular throughout the time Brown served in the bank leadership role until his death in 1972. During a later remodeling project, it was removed—but preserved by family members who had been well taught the need to “preserve history.” It is now on display at the Broken Arrow Historical Museum.

Brown was an old-fashioned banker who recognized that a handshake confirmed a deal, and who was known on busy days at the bank to speed up payroll check-cashing time by pulling cash from his pocket for customers who didn’t have time to wait in line for a teller. He broke traditions, and people loved it.

This Great Graduate representing the class of 1919, was a prankster for most of his life. An example came when he was an 11th grader and was “expelled” because of an end-of-school-year prank. He wasn’t really “expelled” but, he was suspended for a full week. The following year, he graduated with honors and headed off to the Roswell Military Institute, Harvard University and the



University of Oklahoma, continuing his family’s tradition of higher education. By attending Harvard, he became Broken Arrow High School’s first Ivy Leaguer.

In 1924, Brown was employed as an assistant cashier at the Citizens State Bank in Bixby. He eventually became the major stockholder of that institution as well as Broken Arrow’s Arkansas Valley State Bank (now AVB Bank). The rest of his life was devoted to serving the community and helping people.

Knowing that she is part of a bank that has been owned by the same family for more than 100 years underscores for Kelly Kimbrough Rash, Brown’s granddaughter and current Chairman of the Board, the family’s deep interest in and commitment to the community.

The close ties between the city and one of its leading bankers was seen during the time leading up to Broken Arrow’s 2002-2003 Centennial Celebration. Residents were asked to nominate current and former citizens to be named on the list of Broken Arrow’s “100 Outstanding Citizens of the Century (1902-2002).” Ivan Brown is on that list with multiple nominations.

Preserving the community’s history was a high priority for this Great Graduate. His office and home were filled with artifacts and writings, many which were donated to the Broken Arrow Historical Museum. A major exhibit there is the result of his early effort to save the Childers family log cabin that was built in 1836.

Brown’s life is too full to summarize in this brief write-up. Recognizing him posthumously as a Broken Arrow High School Great Graduate, even 93 years after his graduation, seems most appropriate.