



Drawing of Richard D. Benson, *Courtesy of the Passaic Daily News - September 4, 1931.*

## *Robert D. Benson*

Born on May 14, 1861 in Brewerton, New York, Robert Dix Benson was a leader in the American petroleum industry. He ran one of the oldest and most successful corporations engaged in the production, transportation, manufacture and marketing of petroleum. Benson grew up in Titusville, PA.

Benson was educated in the public schools of Titusville and upon graduation, at the age of nineteen years, he entered the employ of the Tide Water Pipe Company, as secretary to his father, who was president. After one year in that position, he went one year as a special student to the University of Pennsylvania, and in 1883 he became president of the Solar Oil Company, operating a small refinery located at Buffalo, New York.

In 1888 he was elected manager of the Tide Water Pipe Company and a director of the Tide Water Oil Company. In 1896 he was elected Vice President of the Tide Water Oil Company and in 1908, Benson was chosen President of the Tide Water Pipe Company and the Tide Water Oil Company. The business of the Company is principally an export trade in case oil, shipped to South America and Asian countries.

Benson lived in Passaic, New Jersey, where he has served on the city council. He was the director in the Peoples Bank and the Trust, Guarantee Mortgage and Title Insurance Companies of Passaic and a director of the Muskogee Electric Traction Company and the Shawnee-Tecumseh Traction Company.

He was also vice president of the Associated Producers Company and the Okla Oil Company. Robert Benson was married on October 11, 1888, to Harriet Granger and they have three children: Byron D. Benson, Robert Granger Benson, and Olive Benson. He belonged to the Union League Club, of New York, and the Yountakah Country Club of Passaic.

Benson's many interests brought him in contact with thousands of people in industry, religious work, banking, philanthropy and civic improvement. He was best known for his sponsorship of both the City of Passaic and Passaic County Park systems. He was known as the "Father" of Passaic Parks. He was also the president of the Passaic Board of Education for eleven years.

In 1926 Robert D. Benson became the first president of the Passaic County Parks Commission where he oversaw the appointment of the landscape architectural firm Olmsted Brothers to conduct surveys of lands for potential parks and prepare a comprehensive plan for the development of the Passaic County Parks System. He served in that position until his death in September 1931.