

# American Oil and Gas Families

EAST TEXAS INDEPENDENTS



*This publication was prepared by the American Oil & Gas Historical Society. Much of the information contained herein documents the travels of Bruce Wells, photographer and Executive Director of the Society, through East Texas in September 2003, profiling several of America's oil and gas families — and historic communities.*

Oil and gas resources are organic, formed by the effects of heat and pressure on sediments trapped beneath the earth's surface over millions of years. While ancient societies made some use of these resources, the modern petroleum age began less than a century-and-a-half ago. Advances in technology have steadily improved our ability to find and extract oil and natural gas, and to convert them efficiently to fuels and useful consumer products.

From fossil resources to products, the life cycle of oil and natural gas activity involves exploration, the drilling and completion of wells, production, site restoration, transportation, and refining or processing for use as a fuel or feedstock.



# Contents

The Rest of the Story .....	4
Supplying a Nation .....	8
Innovation and Independents .....	11
East Texas Today .....	12
Profiles of Today's Independents .....	15
Documenting a Colorful History: Oil and Natural Gas Museums of the United States .....	20

*front cover:*

The East Texas Oil Museum at Kilgore College, Kilgore, Texas, features an indoor re-creation of the region's era of historic oil discoveries of the early 1930s – in what became the largest oilfield in the United States. “Boomtown, USA” is a full-scale town of stores, people, animals, and machinery.



ARKANSAS

LOUISIANA



*opposite page:*

A reflection of the oil industry's history welcomes visitors to the East Texas Oil Museum in Kilgore, Texas. Inside is a mural picturing the 1930 geologist "Doc" Lloyd and the widow Daisy Bradford, who let him drill on her farm. After two dry holes, the "Daisy Bradford No. 3" discovered the nation's largest oilfield.

*below:*

More than one million visitors have seen the wooden derrick outside the museum, which opened in 1980, the 50th anniversary of the discovery, says Museum Director Joe White. He notes that the oilfield still produces considerable amounts of oil — using large and small pumping units or "donkeys," the majority of which are manufactured in nearby Lufkin, Texas.

Reputable geologists, prospectors, and practical folk everywhere all said it. There was no oil in East Texas. Seventeen "dusters" drilled in Rusk County, Texas, confirmed that sentiment over and over. But for one tenacious wildcatter in East Texas in 1927, those opinions didn't mean a thing. Columbus "Dad" Joiner saw black gold in the parched and arid land of East Texas, and he wasn't planning on taking no for an answer. Not from oilmen, not from his friends — not even from the land itself. For almost two years, Dad Joiner and an unlikely and ever-changing cast of roughnecks and roustabouts persevered through poverty and scorn, burning everything from tires to fresh trees to power their drills. Daisy Bradford No. 1 was lost after six months and 1,000 feet because of a stuck pipe. Daisy Bradford No. 2 was lost after 11 months and 2,500 feet after the drill pipe twisted off and blocked the hole. And then came Daisy Bradford No. 3. Spudded only 375 feet away from the second hole, Daisy Bradford No. 3 would prove almost everyone wrong, and one man very, very right. After 17 months of sporadic drilling, in October 1930, Daisy Bradford No. 3 yielded Dad Joiner his "ocean of oil" and in so doing ushered in a sorely needed era of prosperity for East Texas — the oil boom.



# The Rest of the Story

Independent operators drilled wells quickly, with the quiet town of Kilgore becoming the center of activity. At one point there were 24 wells in one city block of Kilgore (“World’s Richest Acre”), and one through the terrazzo floor of the Kilgore National Bank.

The production in the East Texas oilfield eventually resulted in legislation being passed — namely the Connally Hot Oil Act of 1935, which was intended to protect foreign and interstate commerce against “contraband oil” and encourage the conservation of United States crude oil deposits. This act began a new chapter for East Texas and the domestic oil industry as a whole — the regulation era.

Oil and natural gas discoveries of the early 20th century changed the nation’s southwestern landscape from scattered agricultural communities to expanding, industrialized towns and cities. Refining improvements brought plentiful supplies of gasoline for automobiles and plastics for a new era of household products. Paved roads ran parallel to railroad tracks. New county courthouses, schools, and hospitals were built on the proceeds from oil. Many parents wanted their children to become engineers to build bridges, even cities—and perhaps to help discover oil. By the 1920s, oil-producing fields were fueling steady improvements in standards of living in many areas of Texas.

Daisy Bradford No. 3 certainly was not the first oil discovery in Texas. That credit belongs to Texas Native Americans who discovered surface oil in springs and tar pits, using it to treat rheumatism or skin diseases. Another early discovery in Texas took place in Corsicana in 1884, when town leaders were drilling for water. When they struck oil instead, they were infuriated because the black, sticky substance stuck to their boots and shoes. Eventually, the oil caught fire and almost burned down the town.

The first oil “strike” in Texas was at Oil Springs, near Nacogdoches, in 1866. The well produced ten barrels a day.

The first “gusher”— both in Texas and the United States — was Spindletop, discovered in 1901 just outside of Beaumont. Spindletop introduced to the world the modern petroleum industry and tripled the United States’ yearly production of oil in the

process. With a flow of more than 100,000 barrels per day (more than the combined production of all the other wells in the United States), Spindletop spurred people to see oil’s true potential. Before Spindletop, oil was used primarily as an illuminant. Afterward, it became the primary fuel for airplanes and automobiles. Even ships and trains that had previously run on the power of coal switched to oil. Spindletop’s copious production not only sealed Texas’ future as an oil capital, but also aided the United States in its efforts during World War I.

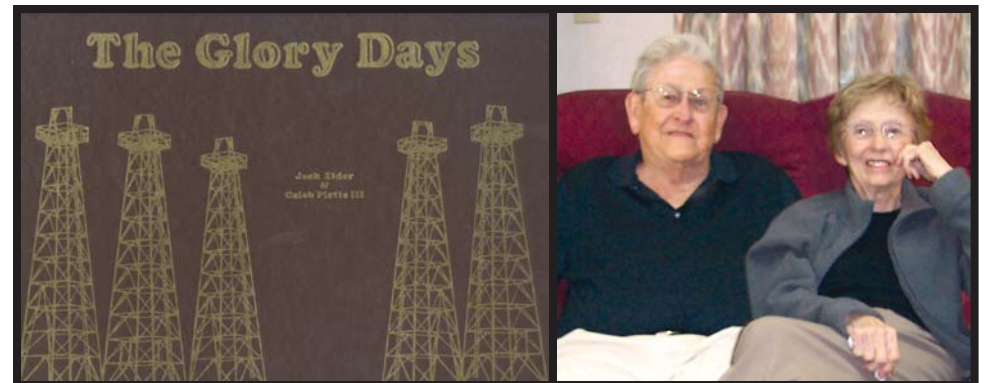
It wasn’t until a generation later that the East Texas oilfield — the largest and most prolific oil reservoir in the contiguous United States — took center stage. Ironically, East Texas was the last section of the state to be explored for oil, since extensive geological testing had indicated that profitable production from the area was unlikely.

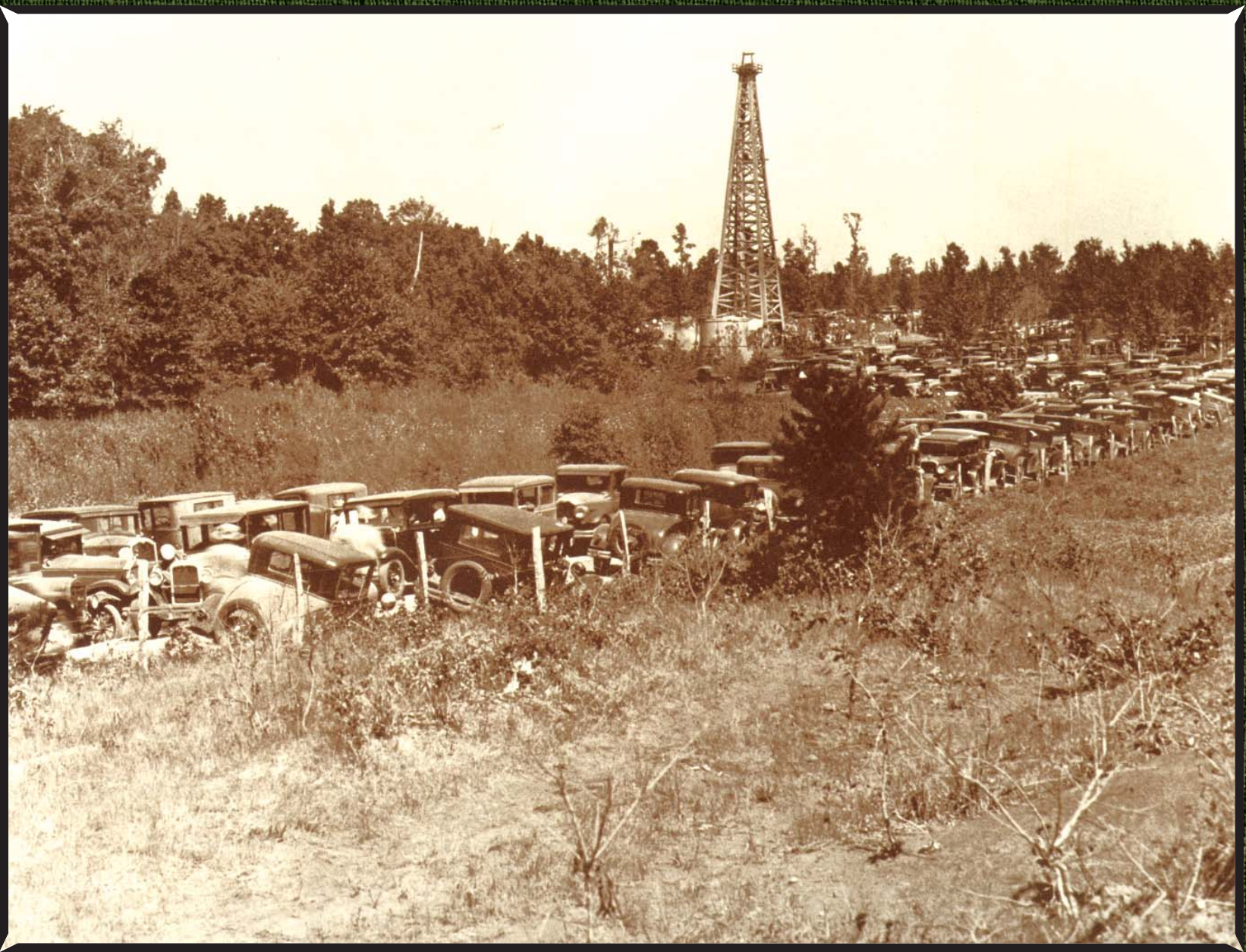
*opposite page:*

“All of East Texas waited expectantly while Columbus Marion ‘Dad’ Joiner inched his way toward oil. Thousands crowded their way to the site of Daisy Bradford No. 3, hoping to be there when and if oil gushed from the well to wash away the misery of the Great Depression.” — from *The Glory Days*, by Jack Elder and Caleb Pirtle III.

*below:*

In July 2003, the Texas House of Representatives passed a resolution (H.R. 49) recognizing the 70th wedding anniversary of Jack and Winter Elder. Jack has ranched and worked in the East Texas oilfield and operated a photography studio in Kilgore, where he thoroughly documented the town’s boom era. Winter, a former Harvest Festival Queen, has been a leading advocate of promoting Kilgore’s history. Not long ago she convinced town leaders to restore some of the once famous downtown derricks as historic attractions for visitors.









*opposite page:*

The view across Galveston Harbor from the *Ocean Star* museum includes dockyards where massive offshore drilling rigs are refurbished. Today's production from the outer continental shelf in the Gulf of Mexico provides more than 25 percent of the nation's natural gas.

The 1929 discovery of the Van oilfield by Pure Oil Corporation, along with the subsequent discovery of Daisy Bradford No. 3, had explorers rushing to East Texas, with independents drilling the first wells. One early developer, H.L. Hunt, had limited success with his first East Texas well, but went on to much bigger things. Hunt connected Daisy Bradford No. 3 and other wells to form the Panola Pipeline Company, providing a vital transportation network to bring East Texas oil to market.

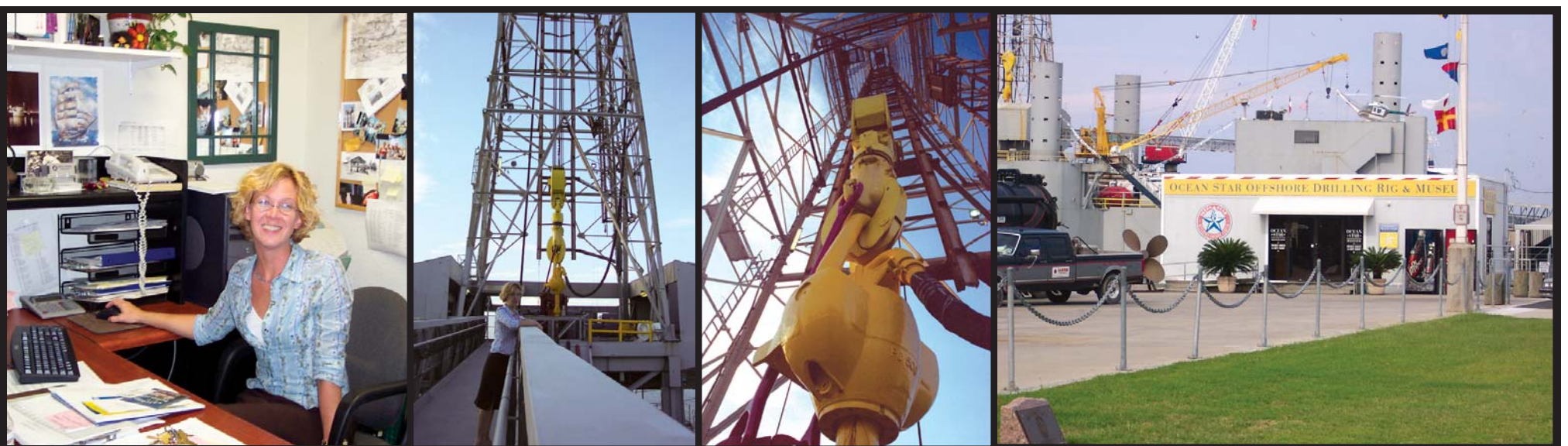
The massive production from the field and the influx of people, tradesmen, and jobs made it seem that the Great Depression — which had taken hold over the rest of the country — had spared East Texas.

Kilgore boasted two auto dealerships and 23 service stations. The oil boom meant jobs, and not just on the oilfields. Great demand arose for lumber and timber, rope, steel cable, pipe, casing, and other supplies. Shops that had once produced farm implements were now producing equipment for oil rigs. The exploding population needed food to eat, places to sleep, and ways to relax.

The Henderson Times reported that Kilgore “was changed overnight from a farmer’s headquarters to the stomping ground of hundreds of oil scouts, hangers-on, and whatnots.”

*below:*

Lisa White, Operations Director for the *Ocean Star* Offshore Drilling Rig and Museum, manages the facility. Visitors can take the skywalk out to the drill floor of the rig as part of their tour of the exhibits. To board the drilling rig and museum, visitors enter through the Gift Shop and Ticket Center on Pier 20 and take the ramp up to the facility. Lisa, who came to the museum four years ago with a degree in marine biology, says an annual black-tie gala, hosted by the Offshore Energy Center of Houston, recognizes industry pioneers and technological achievements in the offshore oil and gas industry and inducts those individuals into its Hall of Fame.



# Supplying a Nation

*below:*

**Marian Stampley has been a part-time staff member of the Spindletop/Gladys City Boomtown Museum since 2001. Among the 15 buildings of the re-created oilfield boomtown — operated by Lamar University in Beaumont — is a gift shop brimming with postcards, books, videos and maps that chronicle the dramatic 1901 discovery.**

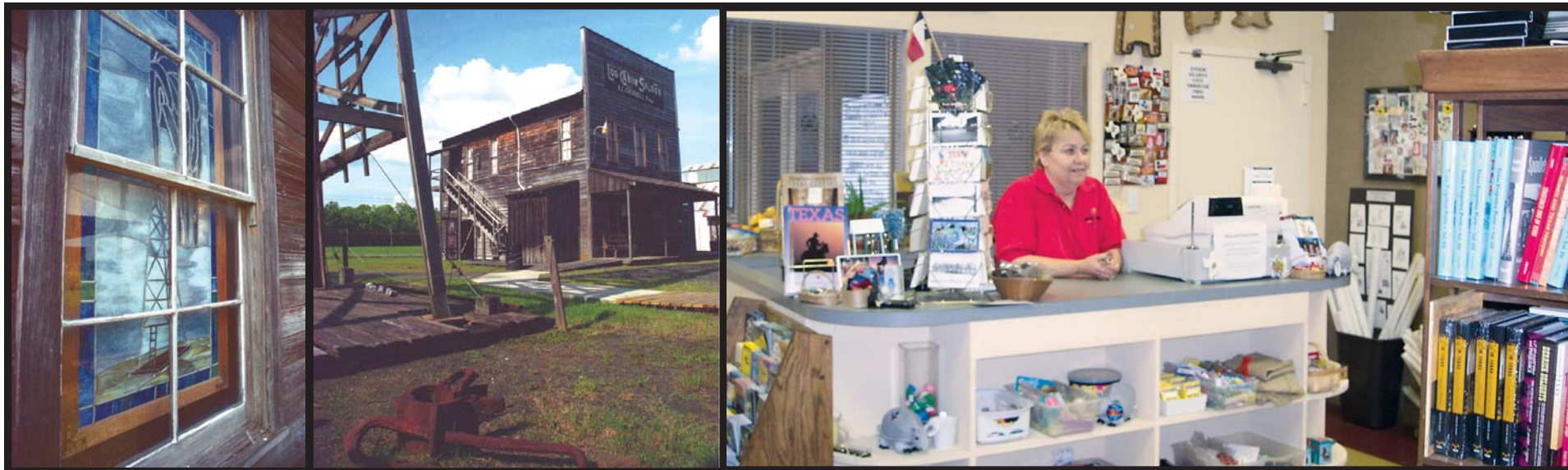
In the early half of the 20th century, throughout the United States and the world, the demand for kerosene and gasoline was skyrocketing. New inventions such as the automobile necessitated finding other sources for power. The East Texas oilfield helped make the United States one of the world's major oil exporters almost since the day it was discovered.

The vast riches of the East Texas oilfield were vital to the nation's efforts in World War II. When German submarines began routinely sinking American oil tankers traveling north from Texas en route to

refineries and other markets, the industry responded by going belowground. In August 1942, excavation started on a four-foot deep, three-foot wide, and 1,254-mile long trench from the East Texas oilfield all the way to New York City and Philadelphia. Two pipelines were laid: "Big Inch," a 24-inch pipeline for transporting crude oil, and "Little Big Inch," a 20-inch pipeline for refined products. Together they carried more than 350 million barrels of crude oil and refined products to the East Coast before the war in Europe ended in May 1945.

*opposite page:*

**The Texas Energy Museum in Beaumont was built to celebrate the historic 1901 discovery at Spindletop. The museum displays many artifacts from the early years of Texas oil, including early 1900s service equipment technology, oilfield photographs, and gasoline trucks.**







# Innovation and Independents

*opposite page:*

**Roughnecks of Pioneer Drilling Company Rig No. 10 at work. Most of today's wells are drilled in search of natural gas, typically found in deeper geological formations, sometimes three miles below the surface.**

*below:*

**An offshore platform operated by Anadarko Petroleum Corporation, an independent producer, in the Gulf of Mexico.**

Today, with major integrated oil companies focused mainly on overseas development, ensuring continued production of domestic oil and natural gas falls on the shoulders of independent companies.

With America consuming 25 percent of the world's oil produced every day, encouraging domestic sources of oil and natural gas is essential for our nation's economic health and energy security.

Technology has changed the way many companies do business, and the petroleum industry is no different. Cutting-edge technologies like seismic mapping, coiled tubing drilling, and remote sensing systems

enable oil and gas companies to accurately pinpoint underground resources, reduce their environmental "footprint," and save money and time in the process. New technologies also have increased recovery from existing wells, including those that are considered "marginal." A marginal gas well produces 60,000 cubic feet of natural gas per day or less; a marginal oil well produces 10 barrels of oil per day or less.

When combined, the oil and natural gas produced by using these and other advances in technology can go a long way toward lessening our dependence on overseas oil.

**Pioneer Drilling Company rigs drill deep to find oil and natural gas where many other Texas pioneers have searched. The San Antonio-based company provides turnkey, day work, or footage contract drilling for independent producers with leases in East Texas.**

**With rigs that can reach 18,000 feet, Pioneer provides drilling services to independent and major oil and gas exploration and production companies, including providing the drilling crews and most of the ancillary equipment needed to operate the drilling rigs.**

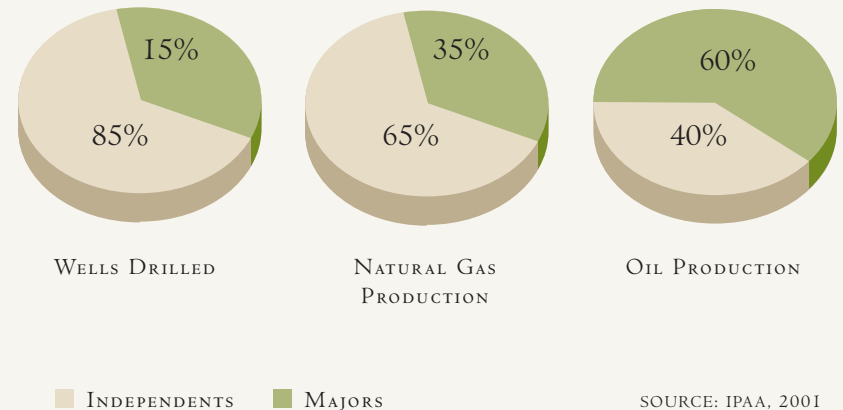
**The company conducts its operations primarily in South Texas and East Texas. Last year, Pioneer drilled wells for 64 different customers.**



## The Vital Role of Small Companies in Exploration and Production in the United States

There is no doubt the United States will rely on oil and natural gas well into this century. What's uncertain is how much of our critical petroleum supplies will come from domestic sources and how much must be imported.

Small independent producers play a key role. If our nation is to maintain abundant, reliable domestic oil and natural gas supplies, it will need to depend on small, independent exploration and production companies. The role of small companies in the lower-48 states has grown dramatically since the mid-1980s, as major integrated energy companies began concentrating their exploration and production in frontier areas such as the deep offshore areas off the U.S. coasts and foreign countries. Thousands of small independent companies, most employing fewer than 20 people, now account for 40% of U.S. oil and 65% of natural gas production in settings as diverse as rural Appalachia, offshore Gulf of Mexico, and urban landscapes in California. They play a critical role in ensuring that domestic petroleum remains a significant part of our nation's energy portfolio.



# East Texas Today

*opposite page:*

**For almost nine decades, the East Texas State Fair has been a family event for the city of Tyler and all of East Texas. “Working, Growing, Caring, Sharing – Come Join the Fun” is the theme for the 89th Annual Fair, scheduled for September 23 to October 2, 2004.**

*below:*

**The memories of early oil discoveries live on. The East Texas oilfield’s legacy includes local tax and royalty revenues that helped bring new schools, open new businesses, and build roads. Among the city parks, a Dallas-based Lone Star Technologies “Joe Roughneck” statue acknowledges the region’s exploration and production heritage.**

All you need to do to understand how East Texans value their past is to vacation there in the fall.

A stop in Van in October offers visitors a chance to join residents for a much-loved annual event — A Toast to Texas Tea, otherwise known as the Van Oil Festival.

Events include a parade, special exhibits, a 5K run, talent contests, and an Oil Queen Pageant.

“There was nothing here but a cotton gin and a grocery store,” says festival director Mark Christie. “Then, in 1929, when the rest of the country was going broke, we went boom with oil!”

Van also is home to the Van Area Oil Museum. Located in an old warehouse originally built in 1930 by the Pure Oil Co.,

this museum is home to the only existing oil derrick from the Van oilfield. The oilfield was the first of five established in Northeast Texas during the 1930s.

Kilgore celebrates its rich history by hosting an annual Derrick Fest, also held each October. The festival takes place amid the historic oil derricks in downtown Kilgore. From entertainment, to arts and crafts, to food, games, and clowns, there’s something for everyone at this two-day festival. An authentic oil well rig is on display, as well as other equipment from the oilfield industry.

Other notable stops include the “world’s richest acre” park, located at Main and Commerce Streets in downtown Kilgore. A historical marker provides details about the 1.2-acre plot of land that once housed the

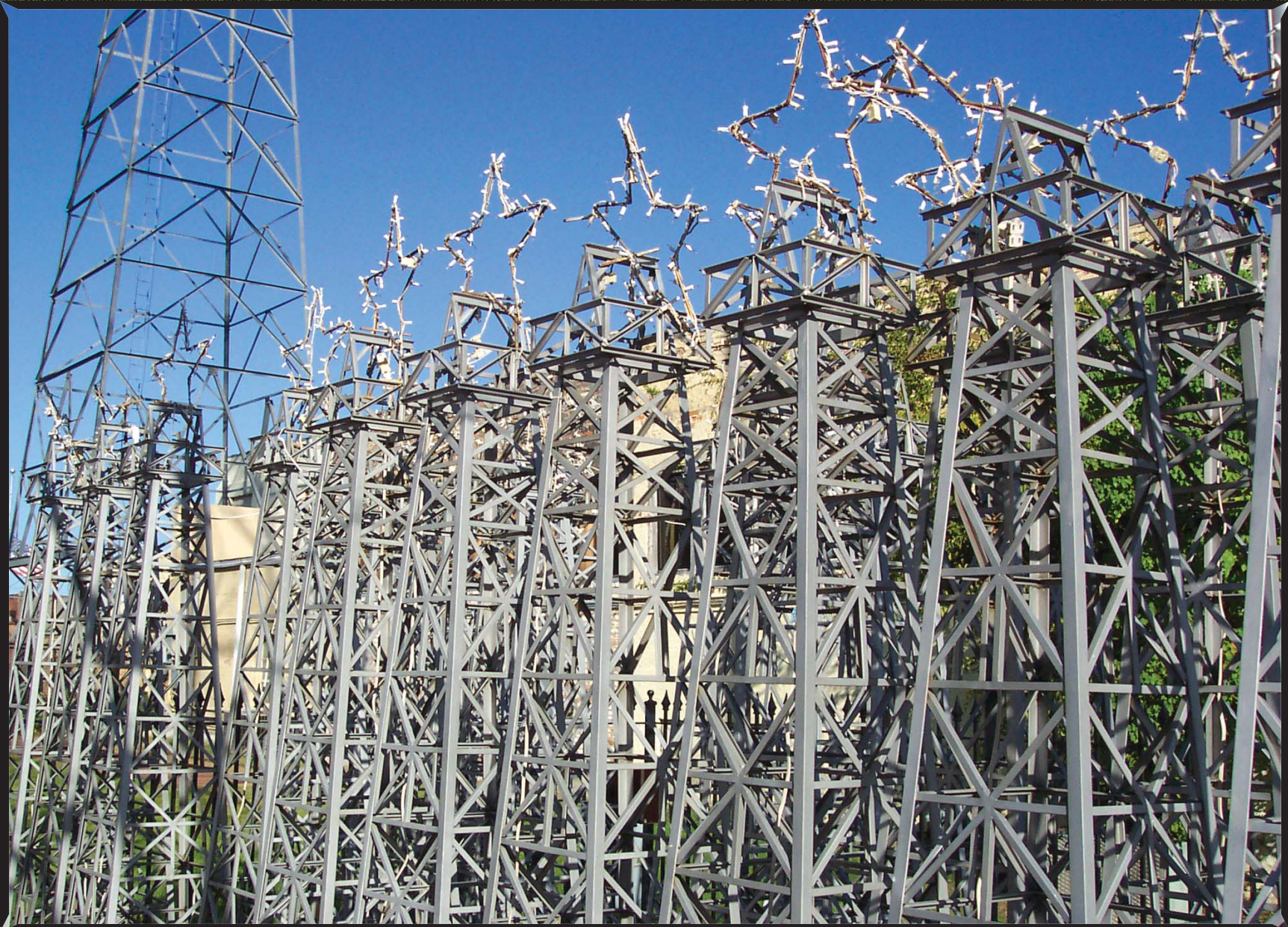
greatest concentration of oil wells in the world — wells that pumped 2.5 million barrels of oil during 30 years of production. All but one of the original derricks was dismantled in the early 1960s.

In just 10 days, Kilgore went from a quiet farming town of about 600 residents to the epicenter of the East Texas oil boom. More than 10,000 people flocked to Kilgore, finding or building housing wherever they could. Oil wells were drilled on virtually every street corner and numbered close to 1,200 within the city limits at the height of the oil boom. Some of the wells are still producing today.

The original residents of Kilgore had made their living in the lumber, livestock, poultry, and cotton industries. Many of those industries are still vital to Kilgore today.









# Profiles of Today's Independents

*opposite page:*

**“City of the Stars” brings community pride to the oil and gas heritage of downtown Kilgore, Texas. The miniature derricks await the next holiday.**

*below:*

**Independent producer Mickey D. Smith operates the Kilgore-based Four-S Production Company with the help of sister Sanny Sue Holland, pictured, and brother Denny. The Marvin A. Smith Regional Juvenile Center, which opened in 1999, is a legacy of the community spirit of their father, pictured in center.**

The domestic oil industry has changed significantly over the last 15 years. Large oil companies have focused their efforts overseas, leaving domestic oil and gas production to independent companies. Independent operators now account for 40 percent of the oil and 65 percent of the natural gas produced in the United States. Together they play a major role in the recovery of our nation’s domestic oil and gas resources.

## STARTING EARLY

Marvin Smith was greatly admired in his home of Kilgore, Texas, where he started his family’s business on the heels of the great 1930s oil boom. When he wasn’t running a paper route, delivering milk, or doing

carpentry work, Marvin Smith, who died in 1995, roughnecked in what would become the largest oilfield in U.S. history — the East Texas oilfield.

“My parents had to do everything they could to make a living,” says Mickey, Marvin’s son. “Dad ended up being a contract pumper for a guy he helped drill wells, and he looked after those wells for the next 46 years.” The senior Smith started his own service company: an oil well wireline business. He cleaned out the paraffin that accumulated inside well pipes as the oil was pumped or flowed to the surface. The East Texas Oilfield is still known for the high paraffin content of its oil.

Today, Mickey, himself a former mayor of Kilgore and former Gregg County judge, operates Four-S Oil Company, Inc., with his brother, Denny, and sister, Sanny Sue Holland.

Mickey and his brother Denny worked summers and weekends on family oil and gas leases while earning their degrees: Mickey’s from Stephen F. Austin University and Denny’s from North Texas State University.

In 1967, Mickey left Kilgore to work for the Federal Deposit Insurance Commission in Washington, D.C., but rejoined his family in Kilgore in 1972. The business quickly expanded and the Smiths bought new “swab and workover rigs” but kept their original wireline truck for sentimental reasons. “We ended up over the years with a lot of hot oil trucks — oil treating trucks used to heat oil from oil tanks and clean out the paraffin that accumulated along the sides and several inches thick on the bottom,” Mickey says.



**Clogged flow lines have always been a problem of the Woodbine Formation, the primary producing sand of the East Texas oilfield. Since the 1930s independent producers have struggled with the oil's high asphalt consistency. Mickey says there is even heavier crude oil in the Wood County of East Texas.**

*opposite page:*

**A.P. Merritt and many other producers frequently gather at T.J.'s Circle Café near Merritt Tool Company in Kilgore. Most say the cafe has the best chicken fried steak in the county.**

*below:*

**Oilfield supply company president A.P. Merritt's father began working in oilfields in the 1920s; he started his own company in 1928 – hand sharpening drill bits. Today, son A.P. Merritt's Kilgore home has been carefully converted from a 19th century yam barn. Along the original East Texas knotted pine walls are impressive oil paintings by his daughter, who lives nearby.**

The senior Smith and his sons eventually would sell their swabbing business stock to their employees, allowing an eventual buy-out with the employees owning their own company.

Today, Mickey, Denny, and Sanny Sue work on improving individual well production and continue to buy and sell oil production in Gregg, Rusk, and surrounding counties. The company has become sizeable. However, Mickey says, “In this kind of business, you have got to keep older rigs that are in good shape to help you pay for the new ones. They make just as much as the new ones, you know.”

#### ALWAYS RUNNING

“The oilfield work ethic means hard work for great reward, but mainly hard work,” says A.P. Merritt Jr., chief operating officer of Merritt Tool Company, Inc. A.P.'s observation is based on real experience. He watched his father toil in East Texas' oilfields for many years.

“Roughnecking in an oilfield builds a strong work ethic,” A.P. claims. “Drilling

crews have to be dependable above all else. They like to have a good time, but will wake up and go to work,” he says. “The guys who worked with my dad knew how to work.”

But hard work was not the only tradition A.P. grew up with. At Christmas, A.P. Sr. had his sons dress up as elves. They all decorated the front of the oilfield tool shop with holiday decorations for the children of Kilgore. Inevitably, Santa Claus (and his elves) would hand out candy, set off fireworks, and host local high school choral groups.

“It was quite a display. The flashing lights made the reindeer look like they were running,” says A.P. “I still have people come up and say they remember coming out here and listening to the music,” he adds. “My brothers and I were elves until we got to be about twelve, when we began liking the girls,” he admits. “We told him we wouldn't be wearing those leotards anymore.”

In 1928, Merritt Sr. started his own company — hand-sharpening drill bits at well sites. “When a rig went down for any

reason, they didn't care if it was two in the morning. They'd call my dad because they wanted that rig running. A drilling rig is running, always running, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.”

What began as a one-person operation at the brink of the oil boom is today a thriving 60-person company. A.P. joined the business in 1968 and soon became general manager of the company. Brothers Tommy and Mike joined soon after. Tommy is a Republican state legislator who represents the town of Longview, just north of Kilgore. Their mother Margaret serves as chairman of the board. Merita, the sister, is a retired public school teacher. She taught many oilfield workers the value of hard work and a good education, A.P. says.

Together, the family has added state-of-the-art technologies to expand the customer base beyond the oil patch. Merritt Tool is now among the most advanced machine shops in Texas.







*opposite page:*

**One downtown block in Kilgore, actually about 1.2 acres, once had the greatest concentration of oil wells in the world — producing more than 2.5 million barrels of oil. Less concentrated outside the city limits, today East Texas pumping units dot the countryside for 25 miles.**

*below:*

**“We take a lot of pride in what we do. We take care of the environment of our oilfield,” says independent producer Carlos B. “Scooter” Griffin, whose family’s 150-year ranching heritage has been recognized with a state stewardship award. “I am born to a place my family settled in 1849.”**

**Originating during the East Texas oil boom, in 1933 Tyler began hosting its annual Rose Festival. In nearby Kilgore, the Kilgore College Rangerettes first performed in 1940 — pioneers in the field of dancing drill teams now seen across the nation.**

A.P. continues to build and hone his relationships with independent producers and believes that they dominate today’s oil exploration and production, “just like they did in the 1930s.” He often hosts events for customers and Gregg County civic groups at his home. His home is a former yam barn, built in 1903. The heart pinewood still keeps termites away, he says. Inside are several paintings by one of his daughters, who lives nearby. Outside, the Merritt’s lawn recently served as the setting for a Junior Achievement awards ceremony. “My wife likes it when we host one of these things... it makes me clean up the front yard,” says A.P.

#### STEWARDS OF THE LAND

Although the boom days of the 1930s saw excesses harmful to the environment, those days are long past. Today, state and federal regulations closely govern everything about drilling and producing in the East Texas oilfield.

“We are not out to contaminate land our family has been living on for 150 years,” says

Carlos “Scooter” Griffin, president of Geo-Vest, Inc. “We are stewards of the land.”

Scooter says people critical of domestic oil producers should fly into Gregg County Regional Airport and see for themselves the unpolluted environment of pine woods and the families like his who keep production going decade after decade. Ranchers, oilfield service company employees, and royalty owners who depend on the production also would welcome the visit, he says.

Great-grandfather L.P. Griffin, an East Texas rancher, originally got the family oil business started. Today, Geo-Vest operates 52 oil and natural gas wells over 9,000 acres of family leasehold. Scooter’s father, Carlos Sr., runs the 1,300-acre ranch, which includes a 40-acre manmade lake that’s well stocked with catfish and bass. The Griffin family’s ranching roots are typical of independents in East Texas. Last year, his mother and father received the prestigious Texas Family Land Heritage award for having their ranch under continuous agricultural production for more than 150 years.

The costs of producing from reservoirs that require more and more risk, effort, and expense govern Scooter’s business decisions. Once “plugged,” a well is very expensive to be reopened, even when prices return to economic levels. He notes that, “providing tax incentives for marginal production makes sense because many states and their royalty owners depend on tax revenues and income from oil and gas. Nationally, thousands of such wells make a significant contribution when added up.” He started drilling to 11,000 feet two years ago, and has seen flow rates exceed 5 million cubic feet per day (he calls them barnburners). Scooter’s older wells produce an average of 100,000 cubic feet a day of gas and less than 10 barrels of oil a day. “Those old wells are how I’ve made my living,” he says. “I have even plugged wells that today, looking back, I wish I had never plugged,” says Scooter. “If I had known that prices would be where they are today, I would not have plugged them, I could still be producing from those plugged wells.”



# Documenting a Colorful History:



The East Texas Museum and others offer “oil patch” education and preservation programs.

With a history as rich as its product, the East Texas oilfield and the people who made their mark during the oil boom are fascinating subjects, celebrated at the East Texas Oil Museum at Kilgore College.

The showpiece of the museum is a life-size diorama called “Boomtown USA.” Visitors can stroll down a re-created street from 1930s Kilgore and experience the lives of the wildcatters and roughnecks who came to town hoping to find their fortunes. Old-time businesses line the street, as well as the tools and equipment that oil drillers used every day.

More than one million people have visited the museum in the last two decades. This year, 2004, marks the museum’s 24th anniversary.

Within two miles of Daisy Bradford No. 3 stands the Gaston Museum. This museum gives a glimpse of East Texas life from the 1930s through the 1960s. It preserves the only known surviving tent house — an oilfield tent house converted into a permanent dwelling.

To learn more about our nation’s oil and gas industry, past and present, you’ll find no better sources than the public and private museums located throughout the United States. For a partial listing, see the following pages.



A common roadside sight in East Texas: the derrick-roofed picnic table.

Texas leads all states in the U.S. in oil and natural gas production, exceeded only by the Federal offshore. East Texas — the land between the Sabine and Trinity rivers — is Southern in character, with pine-covered hills, cypress swamps, and remnants of Civil War plantations. The massive East Texas oilfield reaches into parts of Upshur, Gregg, Rusk, Smith, and Cherokee counties. In 2003, it accounted for approximately 5 percent of the oil and 19 percent of the natural gas produced in Texas.

# Oil and Natural Gas Museums of the United States

This is a partial listing of public and private museums throughout the United States devoted to the history of the oil and natural gas industry. Their collections and websites provide fascinating insights into the wildcatting legacy and the generations of innovators who helped build an industry. Many of the “producing states” support community oil and gas museums — and host public events honoring the legacies of wildcat discoveries and the pioneers who made them.

Among prominent museums dedicated to oil and gas are the Drake Well Museum in Titusville, Pennsylvania; two museums in Kern County, California; the Petroleum Museum in Midland and the Spindletop Museum in Beaumont, Texas; and the East Texas Oil Museum in Kilgore. Kansas and Oklahoma also have several energy-related museums.

Hours of operation may vary, particularly at small museums, so it is best to call before making your journey.

## Alabama

### Choctaw County Historical Museum

This small museum's fossil collection includes the vertebrae of a giant whale that once swam in the prehistoric sea that covered Choctaw County. Bottles of oil from Alabama's first oil well at Gilbertown (1944) are exhibited. The museum is located at the intersection of Alabama Hwy. 17 and County Road 14. The address is P.O. Box 162, Gilbertown, AL 36908. For hours call (251) 843-2501.



## Arkansas

### Arkansas Museum of Natural Resources

Formerly the Arkansas Oil and Brine Museum, the museum has examples of Arkansas' oil and brine industries and an adjacent oilfield park. Outdoor exhibits include four derricks, including a 1930s standard rig with a 112-foot derrick, and equipment depicting historic and modern production methods. A 25,000-square-foot exhibition center has both permanent and temporary exhibits. Admission is free. Open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday. Closed New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas. The museum is located at 3853 Smackover Hwy., Smackover, AR 71762. Call (870) 725-2877 for more information. Website: [www.amnr.org](http://www.amnr.org)



## California

### California Oil Museum

This museum in Santa Paula is housed in a restored Queen Anne Italianate-style building, built in 1890 by the Union Oil Company. Exhibits tell the story of the “black bonanza” that created wealth, work, and prosperity for generations of Californians. The museum highlights the inner workings of the oil industry through interactive displays, videos, working models, games, photographs, restored gas station memorabilia, and an authentic turn-of-the-century cable-tool drilling rig. Visitors see how Native Americans used natural oil seeps, watch a miniature drilling rig bore into the earth, and experience “wildcatting” for petroleum. Located at 1001 East Main Street, Santa Paula, CA 93061. Call (805) 933-0076 for more information. Open Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Website: [www.oilmuseum.net](http://www.oilmuseum.net)



## Kern County Museum

The Kern County Museum's newly opened “Black Gold: The Oil Experience” is a permanent science, technology, and history exhibition. The interactive facility includes a 9,640-square-foot exhibition surrounded by 2.3 acres. It presents a complete overview of how oil was created, different methods of discovery and extraction throughout history, and the changing role of industry workers and their families. Hours are Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday, 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. The Kern County Museum is located at 3801 Chester Avenue, Bakersfield, CA 93301. Call (661) 852-5000 for more information. Website: [www.kcmuseum.org](http://www.kcmuseum.org)

## West Kern Oil Museum

The West Kern Oil Museum, Inc., located at 1168 Wood Street in Taft, California is dedicated to preserving the heritage of the west side of Kern County. The museum, run entirely by volunteers, is dedicated to collecting, preserving, exhibiting, and interpreting artifacts, books, and equipment that tell the story of oil in California. The museum is open five days a week from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday, and it is open Sunday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Tours are given for schoolchildren and adults and may be arranged by calling (661) 765-6664. The address is P.O. Box 491, Taft, CA 93268. Website: [www.westkern-oilmuseum.org](http://www.westkern-oilmuseum.org)

## Illinois

### Illinois Oil Field Museum and Resource Center

This museum, still growing with a new building under construction, is located at the 4-H fairground, outside Oblong, off Illinois Route 33. Exhibits include machinery used in Crawford County and surrounding counties during the early 1900s. Visitors will find large oil rigs, motors, and other equipment both inside the building and outside on the grounds. The Illinois Oil Field Museum Foundation has acquired a 5-acre tract adjacent to the Village of Oblong with the goal of erecting a new museum building to more adequately display the collection. For more information on the Oil Field Museum and to book tours call (618) 544-3087 or write to P.O. Box 69, Oblong, IL 62449. Website: [www.theonlyoblong.com/oil\\_field](http://www.theonlyoblong.com/oil_field)



## Museum of Science and Industry, Petroleum Planet

Chicago businessman Julius Rosenwald, then chairman of Sears Roebuck & Co., in 1933 created America's first center for “industrial enlightenment.” Rosenwald restored and converted the Palace of Fine Arts, the last remaining major structure from the 1893 World's Fair, into a new type of American museum where visitors could interact with the exhibits, not just view displays and artifacts. A recently added permanent exhibit, the Petroleum Planet, offers innovative and interactive looks at petroleum chemistry, distillation, and transportation — and the many finished products. Petroleum Planet is open every day of the year, except December 25. It is located at 57th St. and Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60637. Call (773) 684-1414 for more information. Website: [www.msichicago.org/exhibit/petroleum](http://www.msichicago.org/exhibit/petroleum)

## Wood River Refinery History Museum

Formerly known as the Shell History Museum, this museum was established in 1986 by a small group of retirees who used a small trailer to sort, categorize, and store the historical artifacts. In 1992, Shell volunteers began renovating an unused research building adjacent to the refinery. The museum has over 1,000 artifacts and offers a visual review of the refinery's progress from 1917 to the present. Exhibits, photo displays, and a videotape tell the story of the Shell Wood River Refinery. Located along Route 111 in Roxana, the museum is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Wednesday and Thursday, except holidays. There is no admission charge. To arrange large group tours, please call (618) 255-3718 or write to Wood River Refinery History Museum, P.O. Box 76, Roxana, IL 62084-0076. Website: [www.wrrhm.org](http://www.wrrhm.org)

## Wabash County Museum

Oil has been important to the economy of Wabash County since 1912, when the first well was drilled on the Lucy Courter lease. A discovery of oil at Griffin, Indiana, in 1938 led to an oil boom at Keensburg, in southern Wabash County. The Oil Boom Exhibit at the Wabash County Museum is housed in a red brick Italianate house, one-half block from the business district, at 119 W. 3rd Street, Mt. Carmel, IL 62863. Mt. Carmel is on Illinois Routes 1 and 15 in the southeast corner of the state, 45 minutes north of Evansville, Indiana. Museum hours are Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday afternoon from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. The museum is closed Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Tours may be scheduled for groups at other times by calling (618) 262-8774. Website: [www.museum.wabash.il.us](http://www.museum.wabash.il.us)



The *Ocean Star* Drilling Rig and Museum features an exhibit displaying the many products made from oil.

## Indiana

### Trump's Texaco Museum

East of Indianapolis along the Old National Road, stop in Knightstown to visit Trump's Texaco Museum with its displays of nostalgia from the 1950s, when U.S. 40 bustled with cross-country travelers. The museum is housed in an old service station, which was once the location of Tydol Gas Station. Trump's Texaco opened in 1996, and the 2,000-square-foot museum houses everything from gas pumps with globes to oil cans dating from the 1920s. The "gas station" looks so authentic that people stop to buy gas. The museum is located at 39 N. Washington Street, Knightstown, IN. For directions and an appointment to visit this museum call (765) 345-7135. Admission is free. Website: [www.southernin.com/Pages/archives/april\\_00/henry\\_county.html](http://www.southernin.com/Pages/archives/april_00/henry_county.html)

### Red Crown Mini-Museum

The Red Crown Mini-Museum is a gas station built by Standard Oil Company of Indiana in 1928 and operated until 1979. The interior and exterior is filled with gas station memorabilia, mostly related to Standard and Crown Gasoline. For information, call the Knightstown Chamber of Commerce at (800) 668-1895. The museum is located at the corner of 6th and South streets in downtown Lafayette, next to Tippecanoe County Library. This is a "walk by" museum and can be viewed at any time. Admission is free. Website: [www.olgas.com/info/redcrown.htm](http://www.olgas.com/info/redcrown.htm)

## Kansas

### Kansas Oil Museum

The Kansas Oil Museum and the Kansas Oil and Gas Legacy Gallery in El Dorado are operated under the auspices of the Butler County Historical Society. The museum is dedicated to the history of the discovery and development of the oil industry in the state of Kansas. It celebrates the oil industry's growth from 1860 to the present, with emphasis on the El Dorado Field and its pioneers. The museum incorporated in 1956 and moved to its current location in 1977. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday. The museum is closed Sunday except during May to October when it is open from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. The museum is located at 383 E. Central Ave., El Dorado, KS 67042. Call (316) 321-9333 for more information. Website: [www.skyways.org/museums/kom](http://www.skyways.org/museums/kom)

## The Kansas Oil and Gas Hall of Fame & Museum

The museum was founded in 1990 in Great Bend by a group interested in preserving the history of the oil and gas industry. The main building houses the Kansas Oil and Gas Hall of Fame. The Drilling and Completion Room has a model drilling rig and explains the procedures for drilling a well from filing the "intent" to running the open hole log when the rig reaches total depth. The museum is located on 10th Street past Patton Road. Call (620) 793-5742 or (620) 792-7033 for more information or to set up an appointment to visit the museum. Admission is free. Website: [www.greatbend.com/visitor/oilgasha.htm](http://www.greatbend.com/visitor/oilgasha.htm)

### Hill City Chamber of Commerce Oil Museum

The Hill City Oil Museum in Graham County is 12 miles east of Morland. Located beneath an oil derrick on west Highway 24 in Hill City, the museum tells the story of oil from deep formations in northwest Kansas. The museum opened in May 1958. Call (785) 421-5621 for more information or to set up an appointment to visit the museum. Admission to the museum is free. Website: [www.ruraltel.net/gced/oil.htm](http://www.ruraltel.net/gced/oil.htm)

### Norman No. 1 Oil Well and Museum

This small museum's exhibits include an outdoor replica of the first oil well west of the Mississippi. It is located at First and Main, Neodesha, KS 66757. Call (620) 325-5316 for information and hours. Wilson County Website: [www.neodygrads.com/pages/museum/norman.html](http://www.neodygrads.com/pages/museum/norman.html)

### Stevens County Gas and Historical Museum

The Stevens County Gas and Historical Museum was established in May 1961 to preserve the heritage of the Hugoton Gas Field and the progressive development of Stevens County. A natural gas well drilled in 1945 is still producing. Well equipment is also on display at the site. The museum is located at 905 S. Adams, Hugoton, KS 67951. It is open 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday and Sunday. Other times by appointment. Call (620) 544-8751 for more information. Website: <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/towns/Hugoton/museum.html>

### Oil Patch Museum

The Oil Patch is a place to see, feel, and learn about oil and the machines for producing it. The story and events of the history of oil in Russell County are vividly portrayed at the Oil Patch. The museum of the Russell County Historical Society tells the story and events that make up the dramatic history of this area. The museum is located at 331 Kansas St., Russell, KS 67665. Call (785) 483-3637 for more information. Hours are daily 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Memorial Day through Labor Day. All other times are by appointment. Admission to the museum is free. Website: [www.rchs.rwisp.com](http://www.rchs.rwisp.com)

## Louisiana

### The International Petroleum Museum and Exposition – Rig Museum

The museum depicts the early offshore oil industry. Visitors can walk aboard an authentic offshore drilling rig, "Mr. Charlie," which drilled hundreds of wells off the coast of Morgan City in the Gulf of Mexico from 1954 to 1986. It was the first transportable, submersible drilling rig — and an industry springboard to the current offshore rig technology. The museum's mission is to gather, save, preserve, and interpret artifacts and information about the offshore petroleum industry and to educate others concerning the impact and significance of Cajun-born industry. The museum is located on the banks of Atchafalaya River at the intersection of Intercoastal Waterway, Morgan City. Hours are Monday through Saturday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mailing address is P.O. Box 1988, Morgan City, LA 70381. Call (985) 384-3744 for more information. Website: [www.rigmuseum.com](http://www.rigmuseum.com)

### Caddo-Pine Island Oil and Historical Museum

The Caddo-Pine Island Oil and Historical Museum is dedicated to the history and preservation of northwest Louisiana's natural resources. This is one of the few remaining regions with undisturbed oil history, where a country drive reveals steel derricks in the pine forests. The original bank building and post office of Trees City, one of the first U.S. oil company towns built by the famous wildcatter Mike Benedum, are preserved on the museum grounds. The museum is located in Oil City, about 20 miles north of Shreveport on State Highway 1. Admission to the museum is free. Hours are 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Call (318) 995-6845 for more information. Website: [www.members.aol.com/CaddoPine/](http://www.members.aol.com/CaddoPine/)

## New York

### Pioneer Oil Museum

The Pioneer Oil Museum, run by a small staff of volunteers, is located in Bolivar, Allegheny County. The museum preserves the history of southwestern New York and northwestern Pennsylvania oil regions. Its collection specifically describes the history of the industry in Allegheny and Cattaraugus Counties and includes photographs, maps, machinery, and local history. The museum is located at Main St., P.O. Box 332, Bolivar, NY 14715. The museum is open between Memorial Day and Labor Day, Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Website: [www.rin.buffalo.edu/c\\_alle/comm/cult/muse/agen/pioneer.html](http://www.rin.buffalo.edu/c_alle/comm/cult/muse/agen/pioneer.html)



## Ohio

### Ken Miller Supply's Oil, Gas, and Truck Museum

This privately built museum has large interior and exterior exhibits documenting Ohio's extensive oil and natural gas exploration and production history. The state's first commercial oil and gas well was put into production in 1860 at Macksburg in Washington County. From 1860 through 1998, over 267,000 wells were drilled in Ohio, ranking it fourth nationally behind Texas. Admission is free. Tour arrangements can be made upon request. Call Ken Miller at (330) 567-2489 or write to 7945 Shreve Road, Shreve, OH 44676.



## Oklahoma

### Healdton Oil Museum

The opening of the Healdton oil field in 1913 set into motion one of Oklahoma's greatest oil booms, establishing southern Oklahoma as a major petroleum area. By 1937, this field, the largest of nine such fields located in Carter County, had produced over two million barrels of oil, making it one of the most productive pools in the state. The museum tells the story of oil development in Carter County and provides a glimpse into the early days of oil boomtowns. The museum is located at 315 East Main Street, Healdton, OK 73438. Take State Hwy. 76 to East Main in Healdton. Admission is free. Hours are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. The Oklahoma Historical Society maintains these hours; due to limited staffing, the museum may occasionally be closed. Call (580) 229-0900 for more information. Website: [www.healdton.org](http://www.healdton.org)



### Marland Oil Museum

The Marland Estate has several small historic museums housed in original buildings that have been restored. The Marland Oil Museum presents the saga of the amazing success of E. W. Marland's early oil company. Visitors learn about the Marland family, the industry that made it possible, and the oil boomtown. The estate is open daily, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday, 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. It is located at 901 Monument Road, Ponca City, OK 74604. Call (800) 422-8340 for more information. Website: [www.marlandmansion.com/Pages/mmaroil.html](http://www.marlandmansion.com/Pages/mmaroil.html)

## Pennsylvania

### Drake Well Museum

Drake Well Museum collects, preserves, and interprets the founding of the oil industry by "Colonel" Edwin Drake for residents and visitors by educating its audiences about the persons, places, and events important to the development of the petroleum industry and its growth into a global enterprise. The museum tells the story of the beginning of the modern oil industry with orientation videos, exhibits, operating oilfield machinery, historic photographs, and historic buildings in a park setting. It showcases the world's most significant collection of documentary material focusing on the beginning of the petroleum industry, including the papers of the Seneca Rock Oil Company, well records from the Oil Creek Valley and Pithole, over 800 maps, petroleum periodicals, diaries of oilmen, pamphlets, and more. Hours: May through October, Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday, noon to 5 p.m.; November through April, Tuesday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. The address is Drake Well Museum, 205 Museum Lane, Titusville, PA 16354. Call (814) 827-2797 or fax to (814) 827-4888 for more information. Website: [www.drakewell.org](http://www.drakewell.org)



### The Pithole Visitors Center

The Pithole Visitors Center, off Rt. 227 south of Pleasantville, in Venango County, is an abandoned oil boomtown that sprang up on the Thomas Holmden Farm in May 1865. By September, 15,000 people lived in Pithole. A combination of oil running out, major fires at wells, and new wells in nearby places caused the population to shrink to less than 2,000 by 1866. Today little remains of the boomtown except cellar holes in a hillside meadow. Visitors can walk the paths of former streets and view a scale model of the city at its peak in the center, which is open Memorial Day through Labor Day, Wednesday through Saturday, and weekends in September and October from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## Penn-Brad Oil Museum

The Penn-Brad Oil Museum preserves the philosophy, spirit, and accomplishments of an oil country community by taking visitors back to the early oil boom times of the nation's first billion-dollar oil field. Guided tours are conducted by over 100 oil country veterans who volunteer their time to relate firsthand experiences. The museum, just south of Bradford on Rt. 219, Custer City, McKean County, is open Memorial Day through Labor Day. Exhibits describe past and present methods of exploring for oil. The museum features one of the few remaining wooden oil derricks in the country. Many of the historic displays were found in local homes and donated to the museum by the neighbors in the Valley of Oil. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and noon until 5 p.m. Sunday, Memorial Day through Labor Day. For more information write to The Penn-Brad Oil Museum, 50 Parkway Lane, Bradford, PA 16701. Website: [www.bradford-online.com/pennbrad](http://www.bradford-online.com/pennbrad)

### Venango Museum of Art, Science and Industry

The Venango Museum of Art, Science and Industry, located in Oil City, is a private, non-profit general museum that offers displays about early oil exploration, discovery, and production in the surrounding area. Changing interactive exhibits are also offered. The museum is open Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sunday, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. It is located at 270 Seneca St., Oil City, PA 16301-1304. Call (814) 676-2007 for more information. Website: [www.ibp.com/pit/venango](http://www.ibp.com/pit/venango)

## Texas

### Houston Museum of Natural Science

Among the comprehensive energy exhibits, the Houston Museum of Natural Science's Wiess Energy Hall explores the application of scientific concepts and advanced technology in the oil and gas industry. Visitors can explore the entire process of energy development, from how oil and natural gas are formed to the ways in which various types of energy are used. The hall incorporates interactive learning methods such as computer graphics, touch screens, holographic video displays, and virtual reality. The exhibit hall is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. The museum is located at One Hermann Circle Drive, Houston, TX 77030. For information call (713) 639-4629. Website: [www.hmn](http://www.hmn)



The Texas Energy Museum in Beaumont exhibits the chemistry of hydrocarbons.

### The *Ocean Star* Drilling Rig and Museum

Less than an hour from downtown Houston, the Offshore Energy Center (OEC) operates its one of a kind museum, the *Ocean Star* Offshore Drilling Rig and Museum, at Pier 19 in Galveston. Visitors step on board the completely refurbished jackup drilling rig and learn about how the oil and gas industry discovers, produces and delivers the energy resources from beneath the world's oceans in a safe and environmentally responsible way. In addition to the rig's pipe deck and drill floor, visitors can examine the three floors of equipment exhibits, interactive displays and videos. The OEC's Offshore Pioneers Hall of Fame is located in the museum, which chronicles the unique heritage and technological accomplishments of the Pioneers of the Industry. The museum offers educational programs developed for students, teachers and the general public, through workshops and tours. In addition, the museum offers a one-day course — "The Basics of Oil Well Drilling" — that introduces how a well is drilled and evaluated, from the rig and drilling equipment to setting casing and evaluating the formation thousands of feet below the sea floor. The museum is located at the intersection of Harborside Drive and 20th Street (entrance is on the east end of Pier 20). Call (409) 766-STAR (7827) for more information. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (until 5 p.m. Memorial Day to Labor Day). Website: [www.oceanstaroec.com](http://www.oceanstaroec.com)

### The Petroleum Museum

Located on 40 acres just south of Midland, the museum, founded in 1975, teaches the cultural and technical stories of the oil and gas industry. Interactive exhibits cover all aspects of the petroleum industry from the formation of oil, its exploration, geology, pipelining, marketing, and refining to the economic and political impact of the industry. The museum's 40,000-square-foot facility houses photographic wall murals depicting early life in the oil fields, a West Texas boomtown, a marine diorama allowing visitors to travel back 230 million years, and taped interviews with industry pioneers. The Archives Center ranks second in size to the National Archives in Washington, DC. Hours are Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. The museum is located at 1500 Interstate 20 West, Midland, TX 79701. Call (432) 683-4403 for more information. Website: [www.petroleummuseum.org](http://www.petroleummuseum.org)

### East Texas Oil Museum

The East Texas Oil Museum at Kilgore College is a tribute to the independent oil and natural gas producer. A few miles south of Longview on US 259 was a 1930 "Christmas present" in the form of a gusher that changed life in East Texas forever. It was a Sunday morning on December 28, 1930, when a Bateman Oil Company well blew in at 22,000 barrels a day. This well was nine miles from the October 1930 discovery well drilled by Columbus Marion "Dad" Joiner. Only later did people realize that the two wells had reached the same giant oil formation. The East Texas Oil Field has produced over 5 billion barrels of oil. The oil gave the Allies the petroleum reserve needed to win World War II. Hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. The museum is located on the Kilgore College campus at Highway 259 at Ross St., Kilgore, TX 75662. Call (903) 983-8295 for more information. Website: [www.easttexasoilmuseum.com](http://www.easttexasoilmuseum.com)

### Spindletop/Gladys City Boomtown Museum

The museum, operated by Lamar University in Beaumont, is a 15-building complex, which recreates Gladys City, an early 1900s-era Texas boomtown on the Spindletop oil field. The museum is an educational facility open to the public year-round. Visitors can relive the boom days on a tour through the buildings representing actual businesses in operation during the boom. The original Gladys City played a major role in the rich and colorful history of Spindletop. The museum is open for self-guided tours Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. (closed major holidays). Group tours may be arranged in advance by calling (409) 835-0823. The museum is located on Highway 69 at University Drive, Beaumont, TX. The museum mailing address is: P.O. Box 10070, Beaumont, TX 77710. Website: [www.spindletop.org](http://www.spindletop.org)

### Texas Energy Museum

Located in Beaumont's downtown Museum District, the Texas Energy Museum allows visitors to explore the fascinating world of petroleum formation and geology, historical and contemporary technologies of oil well drilling, and chemistry of petroleum refining. Talking robotic characters tell colorful stories of Spindletop and early Texas oil. Visitors take a trip on an oil tanker and experience the making of gasoline from a molecule's viewpoint. The address is 600 Main Street, Beaumont, TX 77701. The museum hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call (409) 833-5100. Website: [www.texasenergymuseum.org](http://www.texasenergymuseum.org)

### Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum

The museum, located in Canyon, is the largest history museum in Texas. It was founded in 1921 by college professor Hattie Anderson, whose dream of preserving the region's history has grown considerably. About 100,000 guests visit the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum each year. On the campus of what is now West Texas A&M University, the museum has a million artifacts, ranging from the Comanche Chief Quanah Parker's eagle feather headdress to collections of historic New Mexico and Texas art. The Don D. Harrington Petroleum Wing tells the story of the oil boom years in the Texas Panhandle during the 1920s and 1930s, and the men who made it happen. Two floors of exhibits help visitors understand the oil and gas business as it was during the early days of discovery and development. The museum is located on the West Texas A&M campus at 2503 4th Ave., Canyon, TX 79016. The hours are Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday, 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., June through August; and Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., September through May. Call (806) 651-2244 for more information. Website: [www.panhandleplains.org](http://www.panhandleplains.org)

### Oil Patch Museum

Located in Batson, the Oil Patch Museum is a tribute to drillers, tool pushers, roughnecks, and companies. Batson is on State Hwy. 105 and Farm Road 770 in southwestern Hardin County. With the discovery of an oil field a half mile north in October 1903, the town and post office were moved to a site just south of the oil field, and a city of 10,000 sprang up overnight. Museum exhibits include pictures, models, and equipment from the early days of the oil industry. Events include the annual Oil Patch Festival on the third weekend in June. Tours of the museum are by appointment. For more information call (936) 262-8162. Website: [www.bigthicketdirectory.com/museums/oilpatch.html](http://www.bigthicketdirectory.com/museums/oilpatch.html)

### Central Texas Oil Patch Museum

The Luling Oilfield was discovered by Edgar B. Davis on August 9, 1922, northwest of the small town. The field's annual production peaked at more than a million barrels in 1924 and leveled off at an average of 2.5 million barrels annually in the 1930s. In 1989, residents of Luling formed the Luling Area Oil Museum Association, and established the museum, located at 421 E. Davis St., Luling, TX 78648. Local businesses and citizens have donated historic items, time, and financial assistance to help maintain the building and displays. The Chamber of Commerce helps in keeping the museum open and offers assistance to sightseers. Hours are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon; 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Call (830) 875-3214 for more information.

### Van Area Oil and Historical Museum

The Van Area Oil Museum is located in an old warehouse originally built in 1930 by the Pure Oil Co. to house oil field materials used in the development of the Van oil field. All the oil derricks in the Van field have disappeared — but the museum obtained a derrick and relocated it on the grounds as a reminder of the bygone days. Displays include various types of oil-related memorabilia as well as history of the area and city. Open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. The museum is located at Texas Hwy. 16 and County Road 1501. For more information call (903) 963-5435.

## West Virginia

### Oil and Gas Museum

According to David L. McKain, Volunteer Director of the West Virginia Oil and Gas Museum, George Washington once acquired 250 acres in what is now West Virginia — because it contained an oil and gas spring. This was in 1771, making the father of our country the first petroleum industry speculator. The oil and gas museum is housed in a historic hardware building downtown, first built in 1874. It was burned and then rebuilt in 1900. An outside exhibit area shows a Parkersburg pumpjack (in operation) and a Spencer Machine pumpjack. The address is P.O. Box 1685, 119 Third Street, Parkersburg, WV 26101. Open weekdays 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, 12 p.m. to 5 p.m.; closed Sunday. Call (304) 485-5446 or (304) 428-8015 for more information. Website: [www.little-mountain.com/oilandgasmuseum](http://www.little-mountain.com/oilandgasmuseum)



# Acknowledgments

This publication has been developed by the American Oil & Gas Historical Society, in cooperation with the Educational Foundation of the Independent Petroleum Association of America (IPAA), Washington, DC.

IPAA will be celebrating its 75th anniversary in June 2004. The Educational Foundation, established in 1996, is a non-profit organization that supports charitable and educational programs related to energy education. One unique educational initiative funded by the foundation is the George and Barbara Bush Excellence in Education Award, which has been awarded to six Houston-area charities since the program's inception in 1997.

The American Oil & Gas Historical Society is dedicated to preserving the history of the U.S. oil and natural gas exploration and production industry. The Society provides advocacy and service for organizations that work to preserve industry history through exhibition, educational programming, and material preservation.

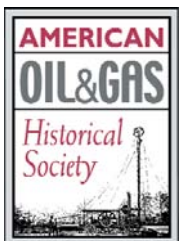
Technical assistance provided by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) was invaluable for enhancing the content of this publication. DOE's Office of Fossil Energy supports research and policy options to ensure clean, reliable, and affordable supplies of oil and natural gas for American consumers.

## **A Special Thanks to:**

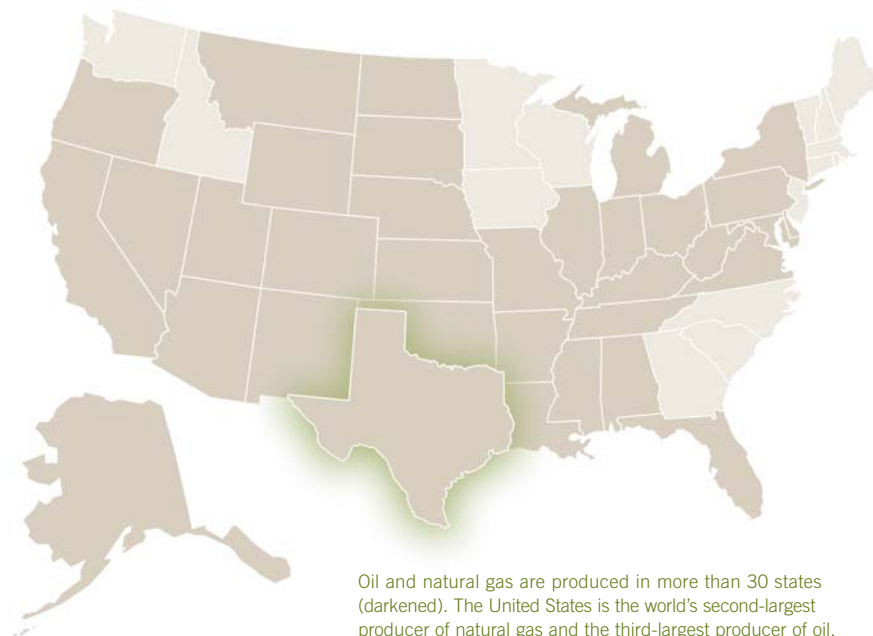
Anadarko Petroleum Corporation  
Four-S Oil Company, Inc., Longview, Texas  
East Texas Historical Association, Nacogdoches, Texas  
East Texas Oil Museum, Kilgore, Texas  
East Texas State Fair Association, Tyler, Texas  
Fredonia Hotel, Nacogdoches, Texas  
Gaston Museum, Rusk County, Texas  
Geo-Vest Inc., Kilgore, Texas  
Houston Museum of Natural Science, Weiss Energy Hall,  
Houston, Texas  
Independent Petroleum Association of America,  
Washington, DC  
Jack and Winter Elder, Kilgore, Texas  
T.J.'s Circle Café, Kilgore, Texas  
Kilgore College, Kilgore, Texas  
Kilgore College Rangerettes, Kilgore, Texas  
Lone Star Technologies, Inc., Dallas, Texas  
Merritt Tool Company, Inc., Kilgore, Texas  
Museum of East Texas, Lufkin, Texas  
Offshore Energy Center, Houston, Texas  
*Ocean Star* Offshore Drilling Rig Museum, Galveston, Texas  
Pioneer Drilling Company, San Antonio, Texas  
Pioneer Drilling Company Rig No. 10, Henderson, Texas  
Railroad Commission of Texas, Austin, Texas  
Smith County Historical Society, Tyler, Texas  
Spindletop/Gladys City Boomtown Museum,  
Beaumont, Texas  
Texas Alliance of Energy Producers, Wichita Falls, Texas  
Texas Energy Museum, Beaumont, Texas  
Texas Independent Producers and Royalty Owners  
Association, Austin, Texas  
Texas State Historical Association, Austin, Texas  
U.S. Department of Energy

## **References:**

*The Glory Days*, Jack Elder & Caleb Pirtle III,  
Nortex Press, 1986  
Railroad Commission of Texas ([www.rrc.state.tx.us](http://www.rrc.state.tx.us))



American Oil & Gas Historical Society  
1201 15th Street, NW  
Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20005  
[www.aoghs.org](http://www.aoghs.org)



Oil and natural gas are produced in more than 30 states (darkened). The United States is the world's second-largest producer of natural gas and the third-largest producer of oil. Nearly every region has some oil and natural gas potential. This document focuses on East Texas.

---

For more information, contact:

---

Bruce A. Wells  
Executive Director  
(202) 857-4785  
[bawells@aoghs.org](mailto:bawells@aoghs.org)

June 2004