

CHAPTER IV: EAST TEXAS

The East Texas district, which, includes 44 counties and contains 33,993 square miles, stands out preeminently in any narrative of the oil and gas industry in the Lone Star State. To this region belongs the credit for Texas' first oil well, its first oil field, its first oil pipe line, its first steel storage, its first commercial oil field, its first complete and efficient refinery, the development of the rotary method of drilling, the adoption of crude oil as a fuel for railroad locomotives, the utilization of gas as a fuel for railroad locomotives, the greatest oil field in the history of the world, and many other records of importance which have assisted in advancing Texas to its present position in the industry.

This area of such historic significance has yielded a total recorded production of 1,521,765,905 barrels of oil to January 1, 1938, and the potential daily production of the East Texas field alone on that date was 14,650,242 barrels from 24,269 wells. Any account of the East Texas field must necessarily deal with superlatives, for its capacity to produce has far exceeded that of any other individual field in the world, and its total production of 1,096,538,282 barrels up to January 1, 1938, exceeds the total recorded production for the world for the first thirty-eight years of the industry and surpasses the total production from the United States for the years 1859 to 1901 inclusive. Although first importance belongs of right to this field, the importance of the rest of the district must not be minimized. The total production of 1,521,765,905 barrels has been secured from 36 fields, among which Mexia, Powell, Wortham, and Van have been particularly prominent.

Natural gas has also been actively developed in the East Texas area and has added materially to the income of the industry, the royalty owners, and the state. Citizens and industries of Corsicana were supplied with natural gas as fuel from the wells in the adjacent field before the beginning of the twentieth century. Gas from the Corsicana and other nearby fields was piped shortly afterward to surrounding towns and cities, and the success of that venture prompted those responsible for it to enlarge the scope of their activity and resulted in the organization of the Lone Star Gas Company to transport gas from Clay County to Fort Worth and Dallas.

The general structure of this district may be classed as a synclinal trough, or basin, dipping southward toward the Gulf of Mexico, with the Sabine uplift forming the eastern flank of the trough, and the Balcones and Mexia fault systems traversing the western and northern flanks. Surface formations dip east and southeast in the western portion of the area, south in the northern portion, and west and southwest