

# More Boomed Against Than Booming in the Oil Fields of Texas

### Venturing Into Wichita Falls Without a Silk Shirt and Into the Ranger District Minus Rubber Boots, the Fortune Seeker Feels He Has Nobody but Himself to Blame for Emerging Millionless

By HINTON GILMORE.

**A**FTER a month spent in an attempt to establish the proverbial fortune from the conventional shoe string, I have emerged from the oil fields of Texas with the shoe string considerably frayed, the fortune unrealized and a distinct feeling that I have been more boomed against than booming.

Now that it is all over, I am willing to admit that it was probably my own fault, for I went into the Burkburnett district without a silk shirt and into the Ranger field without a pair of rubber boots. These omissions were alone sufficient to prevent me from succeeding.

A silk shirt is the sine qua non, the medus operandi and the vade mecum of oil prosperity in the district centering about Wichita Falls, which is the mecca of the shoe string adventurers. To go into Wichita Falls without a silk shirt is a branch of etiquette. To come out minus a silk shirt is not a serious matter, on the theory doubtless that to get out with any kind of shirt is commendable. But to go in without one is to brand oneself as the sheerest tenderfoot and one need expect little consideration from the oleaginous outfit if regarded in the madras of the millionless.

**A Bad Start.**  
From the very moment of my entry into the oil belt I was persona non grata. Hotels wouldn't let me register, restaurants wouldn't take time to feed me and even the newsboys hesitated to offer their wares in my presence, deterred largely, I am led to believe, because the silken sheen of the select shirting was not apparent in my outfitting.

Perhaps I should modify this statement. The hotels did permit me to register. They have large registers and welcome the addition of new names, but they didn't provide me with a room. At one time I came rather close to getting a room, because a clerk told me that as soon as one of

advantageously, I now feel sure, because inside information is greatly craved and occasionally exploited in the oil belt.

For instance, I might have overheard this driller talking in his sleep. He might have said something about the geological outlook on some particular well. Armed with this information and appropriately dressed in a silk shirt I could have circulated quietly among a few observant shoe-stringers at the oil stock exchange and by adroit use of my sure fire tip I think I might have manipulated matters in a way that would have netted me a certain profit. But I didn't think of the scheme until it was entirely too late.

**Demand Inside Information.**

The oil boomers desire inside information. They are constantly looking for underground tips, so to speak. Above all they dot on geology. And right here it may be well to advise those who are thinking of going to Texas to make a million in a month to post themselves on geology. Ignorance of that subject was another fault in my armor. I never had felt the need of geology in my whole life. I am interested in phenology and zoology, but geology never seemed important. I was wrong. Geology is everything in the oil fields and every oil man must be an amateur geologist.

The whole state of Texas has been charted by geologists and maps can be bought showing the different geological formations. These are very pretty maps, but the names of the different geological structures are extremely hard to pronounce. There is

as well as I did the Pennsylvania. There are a great many other formations of various sizes and colors. They make a very imposing map, but they are very difficult to speak of in public.

That is just one of the geological matters the shoe-stringer must master. Another is the question of strata through which an oil well is drilled. Before going to Texas I imagined that they simply drilled a hole in the ground and let it go at that. On the contrary, a driller finds more scenery on the way down than the average tourist does on a transcontinental journey. Every day brings a new shale or a new line or possibly a new sand. The driller usually sends postcards to his friends in Tulsa, saying: "Passed through the black line formation to-day. Having a good time. Wish you were with me."

the black sheep of the oil family, is a low place where oil wouldn't be discovered for anything. One of the best outdoor pastimes in Texas is to go out in an automobile at \$6 an hour and hunt anticlines.

There are dozens of professional geologists in Texas who hunt anticlines for \$100 a day and all ammunition furnished. Any company desiring to catch an anticline alive and bring it into Wichita Falls and fame it can hire one of these geologists and accomplish the desired result in a couple of days. The professional geologist is a man of wisdom. He proves it by investing in oil wells only on very rare occasions.

Thus far the geologists have not definitely stated just where the oil really originated. As a result of their silence several theories are abroad.



STREET SCENE IN RANGER.

### Better Versed Now in Haberdashery, Right Handed Gushers, Lingo of Amateur Geologists, Ways of Brokers When They Outnumber Investors 16 to 1 and Hotels Where You Register but Get No Room, He Is Eager to Try It Again

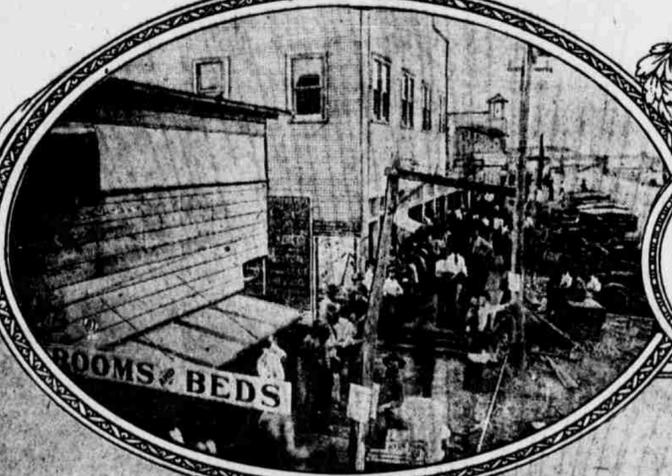
One is that the oil is the exudation of great masses of vegetation away back in the carboniferous era. Others claim that the oil comes from great schools of fish imprisoned in ages past by some great cataclysm. After looking over the oil field and observing the trend of speculation I am inclined to accept the fish theory as being correct.

The geological map is just one of the wall decorations to be seen in the office. In real life an oil well is shortly harnessed to a pipe line, but on a blue print the precious petroleum spouts into the skyline with an utter disregard of the price of gasoline.

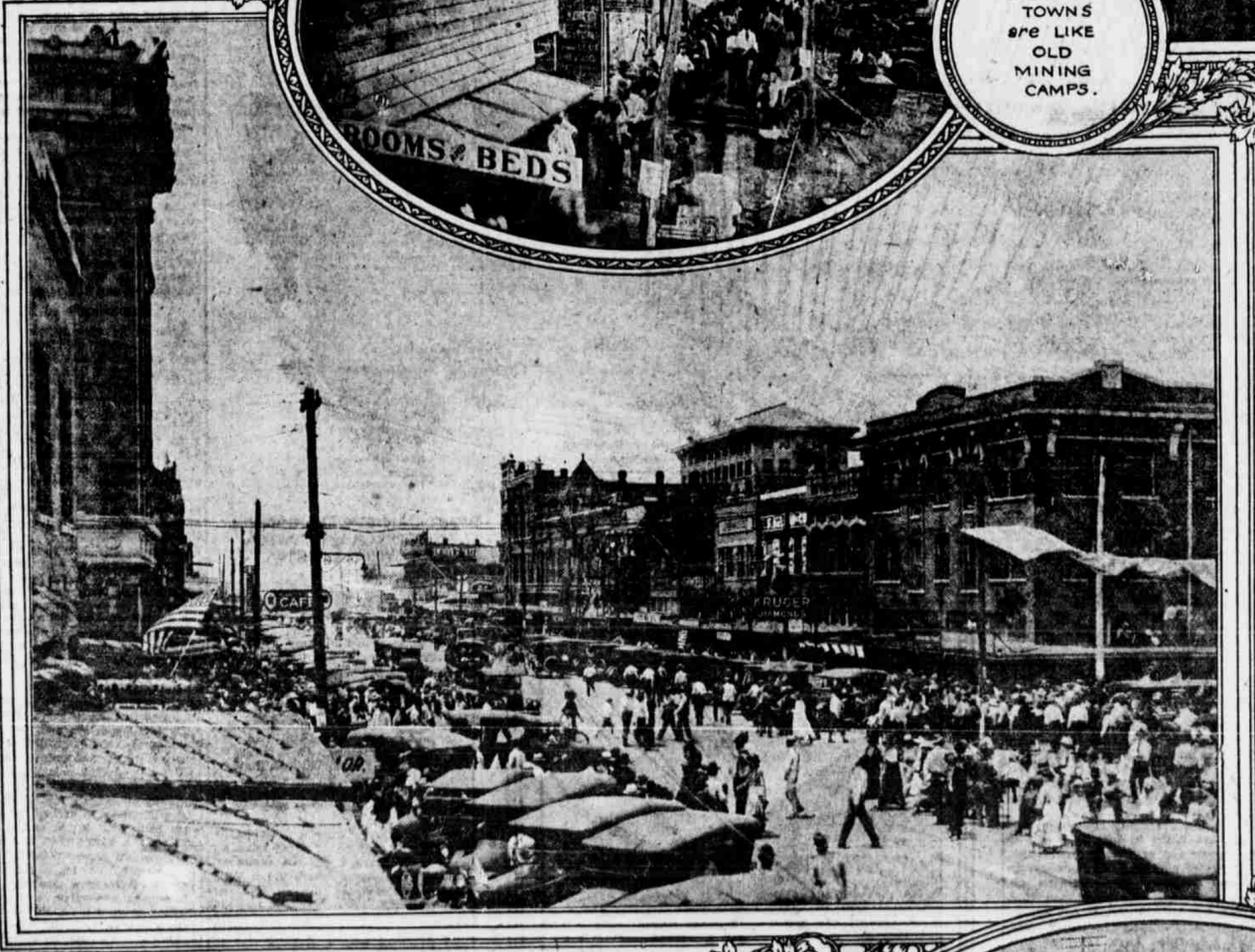
All oil men are natural artists and they soon learn to draw an oil derrick with the oil flowing gracefully and bountifully over the top of the rig. It gets to be a habit in a little while, this thing of drawing derricks. The man who plans to put in the name for half of the capital stock of a company first bathes his soul in rapturous music, drinks divinely at the inspiring springs of poetry, orders a case of the nearest possible beer and then goes into a boathouse during which the name suddenly bursts upon him. This name breathes romance, idealism, dividends, silk shirts—everything that a shoe-stringer holds dear.



CENTRAL STOCK EXCHANGE, WICHITA FALLS, MAY 9 1919.



OIL BOOM TOWNS ARE LIKE OLD MINING CAMPS.

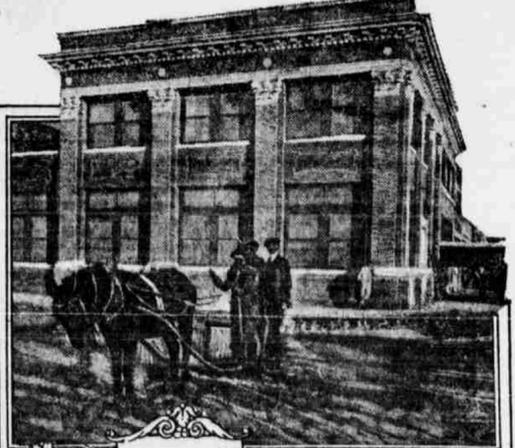


THE MAIN STREET IN WICHITA FALLS

files of the oil companies. There is also the inevitable map of the Burkburnett district or the Ranger field, depending upon the location in which one happens to be shoe-stringing at the time. Although the oil field maps are not as attractive to some as the geological maps, the latter being highly colored and looking like the cut-out dolly section of the Sunday newspaper, I prefer the oil field atlas.

Such a map is literally filled with oil derricks and most of the wells are spouting oil. Looking at one of these blue prints, one feels that a tremendous average oil hunter when he goes into a telephone booth to call up his bank by long distance idles away the delay by drawing oil derricks on the wall of the telephone booth.

One odd thing about these oil maps is that the gushers are all spouting in the same direction. I asked a large number of hotel clerks why the oil always spouts over the right hand side of the well, but they could not explain it. The only possible reason that I can see is that there must be a strong wind from the west which blows the oil in an easterly direction.



RANGERS FIRST STREET CAR

In this connection I heard a very sad story of a young man from Ohio who went to Texas to get rich. He captured a ferocious young anticline, formed an oil company and put his stock on the market. Everything went along splendidly until some critical Texan discovered that the gushers on the Ohio's oil map gushed to the left instead of the right. The public would not have anything to do with a left handed oil well and the company failed.

**There's Much in a Name.**  
Next in importance to a silk shirt, a good anticline and a bunch of right handed blue print gushers, the essential element in the formation of an oil company is a good name. The more one sees of the rhythmic, fanciful titles now in use in Texas the stranger it seems that Mr. Rockefeller could have succeeded with a company named the Standard. The men who name the collars and the summer resorts could take primary lessons from these Texas oil men on the subject of beautiful nomenclature.

Oil companies are not to be christened hastily, like children or battie-

the nine men occupying cots in the ladies' parlor of the hotel made his departure I was seventh on the list in line for the cot. I was only in Wichita Falls for two weeks and I never got quite within speaking distance of the cot. But I registered almost every day. While I was waiting for my shoe string to become a million I spent my idle hours in registering at various hotels.

In time I found a pleasant cot in a tent on the outskirts of the town, which I leased under fairly convenient circumstances. I was permitted to occupy the cot up to 7 o'clock each morning, when I vacated to make room for a driller who, being very plutocratic, demanded rest immediately after returning from a night shift in the oil field.

It has occurred to me since leaving the district that I could have made profitable use of the fact that I slept in the same cot as a driller from the oil field. Such proximity to inside information could have been handled

a nice, zig-zaggy pink patch of geology which they call the Pennsylvania formation. How a Pennsylvania formation happened to be away down there was always a puzzle to me, but it's there and I soon learned to pronounce it. But as soon as I got out of the Pennsylvania pink I was totally ignorant again. I could only discuss leases in the Pennsylvania formation and that undoubtedly cut down my chances to succeed. A discouraged farmer from Iowa wanted to give me a lease for transportation back to Des Moines, but I couldn't take it because I suddenly discovered to my profound dismay that the lease crept over into a dark green geological formation that I couldn't spell or pronounce.

**Permian a New Formation.**  
After I had been around Wichita Falls for a while I added another formation to my fund of geology. This was an irregular yellow arrangement which I believe they called the Permian, but I never liked the Permian

Some of these strata are as hard to pronounce as the formations. I soon learned of one they call the Smithwick shale, and I did practically all of my conversational drilling in that layer. Occasionally I slipped down a little further and drilled verbally in the Marble Falls formation, but I did my best work in the Smithwick shale. I talked about that particular shale so much when I was in Texas that I began to have a great personal admiration for Mr. Smithwick, and although I never met him I am still very glad to have the opportunity now and then to say a good word for his shale.

There are other little geological facts that the prospective petroleum plutocrat should learn before going to Texas. It is well, for example, to have a strong fondness for an anticline and to be able to speak disrespectfully of a syncline. An anticline, as far as I have been able to learn, is a hump of a hill beneath which the oil is supposed to lurk, and a syncline being



TRAFFIC JAM IN RANGER, TEX.