

**OILFIELD MOVIES, THEIR THEATER POSTERS
AND LOBBY CARDS
SELECTIONS FROM PRE-1975.**

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POSTER PRESENTATION

Arguably, the 1956 movie *Giant*, is the most well-known Hollywood depiction of the early North American oil booms, but over twenty *A* and *B* movies share the search for oil as a primary theme. *Giant* was nominated for ten Academy Awards, winning one for Best Director. As Forbes staff writer, Christopher Helman, wrote (3/08/2010), *Oil makes good drama* and *There's not many industries that can turn a roughneck into a millionaire overnight*. The 1948 black and white, docufiction, *Louisiana Story* about a young Cajun boy and oil drilling in the Louisiana swamp, was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Writing and won a Pulitzer Prize for its score.

Many well-known Hollywood actors/actresses starred in oilfield movies. *War of the Wildcats* (1943), originally released as *In Old Oklahoma*, was an early movie in John Wayne's career. In 1969, his role as Chance Buckman, in *Hellfighters*, was patterned after the real-life oilfield firefighter, Paul "Red" Adair (1915-2004). The 1940 movie, *Boom Town*, which also contained some oilfield firefighting scenes, starred Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy, Hedy Lamar, and Claudette Colbert. The Burkburnett, Texas oil boom was the inspiration for this movie. *Giant's* cast included James Dean, Elizabeth Taylor, and Rock Hudson. Gary Cooper and Barbara Stanwyck starred in the 1953 movie, *Blowing Wild*. James Stewart searched for oil in coastal Louisiana in *Thunder Bay* (1953). Jack Nicholson starred in the 1970 movie *Five Easy Pieces*, which received four Academy Award nominations. *Oklahoma Crude* (1973) starred George C. Scott, Faye Dunaway and Jack Palance (as the evil oilman).

Lesser known oilfield movies, some of which probably fall into the *B* category, include *The Oil Raider* (1934), *Wildcat* (1942), *Sin Town* (1942), *Strike it Rich* (1948), *Double Deal* (1950), *The Big Gusher* (1951), *The Houston Story* (1956), and *The Magnificent Roughnecks* (1956 with Mickey Rooney). Even Superman found himself in the oilfields in, *Superman and the Molemen* (1951), where an oil well drills into the subterranean home of small human-like creatures. *Black Gold*, a silent film from 1928 with an all-black cast, was perhaps the earliest oilfield movie. This movie title was used for oilfield movies again in 1936, 1947 and 1962. The Rex Beach screenplay and novel *Flowing Gold* (set in the Ranger oil field of Texas) was the basis for the movie of the same name (1940).

In theaters, movie posters and lobby cards (11" x 14") advertised the oilfield movies with headlines such as, *A blazing gusher of thrills! (Big Gusher)* and *The brawling, mauling story of the biggest bonanza of them all (Thunder Bay)*. A secondary theme in many of these movies is romance as shown by poster headlines such as; *The Earth explodes as untamed men clash for power and a woman (War of the Wildcats)*; *Two Texas toolpushers wildcatting for oil and dames (Magnificent Roughnecks)*; *Terrifying in their lust for oil! Thrilling in their love for a woman (Flowing Gold)*; and *They've got the hottest, meanest jobs on earth! This is the true story of the men who fight oil field infernos around the clock and their women who go through hell every night (Hellfighters)*. Strong-willed women in the oilfields are portrayed by Susan Hayward in *Tulsa* (1949) and Jane Wyman (starring with Charleton Heston) in *Lucy Gallant* (1955), which was later re-released as *Oil Town* (1961). One of the *Tulsa* theater poster headlines read, *Meet Cherokee Lansing...half wildcat...half angel, all woman. The lusty, brawling saga of a city of adventure! Gushers, rags-to-riches, greed, women, and villains; all the ingredients for an oilfield movie.*