

end of 1913 was 16,700,000 barrels, or 40,170 barrels per acre, exceeding all other major fields in southern California and rivaling the McKittrick Field which was discovered in 1898.

Of most importance is the effect this field had on the industry, attracting many due to its peculiar location to downtown Los Angeles. The discovery of the Los Angeles City Oil Field would soon lead to other fields being discovered throughout the Los Angeles Basin during the early 20th Century, including the proving of seven giant fields (Brea-Olinda, Beverly Hills, West Coyote, East Coyote, Montebello, Richmond and Santa Fe), with the Los Angeles Basin area becoming one of the major oil-producing areas in the world.

The Los Angeles City Oil Field continues to remain active today, albeit wells continue to be abandoned, and concerns regarding vapor migration creating a significant risk to public health, safety and welfare exist.

THE HISTORY OF OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENT IN ALABAMA

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Alabama has a long history of oil and gas activity dating back to 1865, when the presence of *tar springs* and asphaltic rocks in the Tennessee Valley region led to the drilling of the first oil and gas exploration wells in the state. The first exploratory well in southwest Alabama was drilled in Choctaw County in 1884 and sporadic exploration for oil and natural gas continued in this area during the early part of the 20th Century. In 1902, the first commercial production of natural gas in the southeastern United States was established near the city of Huntsville, Alabama and in 1909, commercial quantities of natural gas were discovered near Fayette in northwest Alabama. As a result of these activities, Alabama's first oil and gas law was enacted in 1911 and, in 1940, the Legislature created a precursor to the present State Oil and Gas Board of Alabama (OGB).

In 1944, Alabama became an oil producing state when a commercial discovery was made in the Cretaceous Selma Chalk at Gilbertown in Choctaw County and, subsequently, the Legislature created OGB as it exists today in 1945. Thus, 2005 marks the 60th anniversary of the agency. Since the establishment of OGB, events in Alabama's oil and gas history have included a number of discoveries that have proven significant: the giant Citronelle Field in 1955; Jurassic Smackover hydrocarbons in 1967; onshore Jurassic Norphlet Formation hydrocarbons in 1968; Paleozoic oil and gas in the Black Warrior Basin in the early 1970s; Norphlet

gas in Mobile Bay in 1979; and onshore and offshore shallow Miocene gas in 1979. Another extremely important event was the establishment of coalbed methane production in the Black Warrior Basin in 1980. Coalbed methane currently accounts for about 1/3 of Alabama's gas production. Alabama is currently ranked 9th in the nation in production of natural gas and 15th in the liquid hydrocarbons.

SCANDAL: A SHORT HISTORY OF THE TEAPOT DOME AFFAIR

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In the Roaring Twenties, when Al Capone and Babe Ruth reigned, when World Series fixing and Darwinian evolution had their days in court, the Teapot Dome scandal held a unique and infamous place. Grave questions about government integrity arose, questions with which we continue to struggle. In our ongoing debate over the use of natural resources between the forces of business and environmental conservation, still binding parameters were established.

Drilling was allowed by President Warren Harding's administration of oil reserves in the Elk Hills of south-central California and on the central Wyoming high plains near a curiously teapot-shaped rock formation. These lands were legislatively protected during the preceding Taft and Wilson administrations. Senator Robert La Follette, a Wisconsin Republican who led a progressive third party movement in 1924, and Gifford Pinchot, Theodore Roosevelt's Forest Service chief who became Governor of Pennsylvania in 1922, began an inquiry. The debate that emerged questioned both geologic evaluation of the oil reserves, which was the administration's excuse for its actions, and the motives of those involved in the business transactions leading to the drilling.

Thorough Senate and legal inquiry spanning nearly a decade exposed Harding's Secretary of the Interior, Albert B. Fall, a colorful Westerner and one of New Mexico's first senators. Fall was found guilty of accepting bribes from oil interests. In similar investigations for bribing Fall, millionaire oil industry pioneers Harry Sinclair and Edward Doheny were, as the result of costly dream-team style legal defense, never found guilty of or punished for bribery.

Unmatched until the Watergate and Clinton-Lewinsky affairs, the Teapot Dome investigations and trials were fodder for headlines from the early 1920s to the early 1930s. Personalities such as Harding's successor, *Silent* Calvin Coolidge, Theodore Roosevelt's son, Archie, and Fall's New Mexico cowboy crony, Oliver Lee, who formerly rode with Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid, lent celebrity and notoriety.