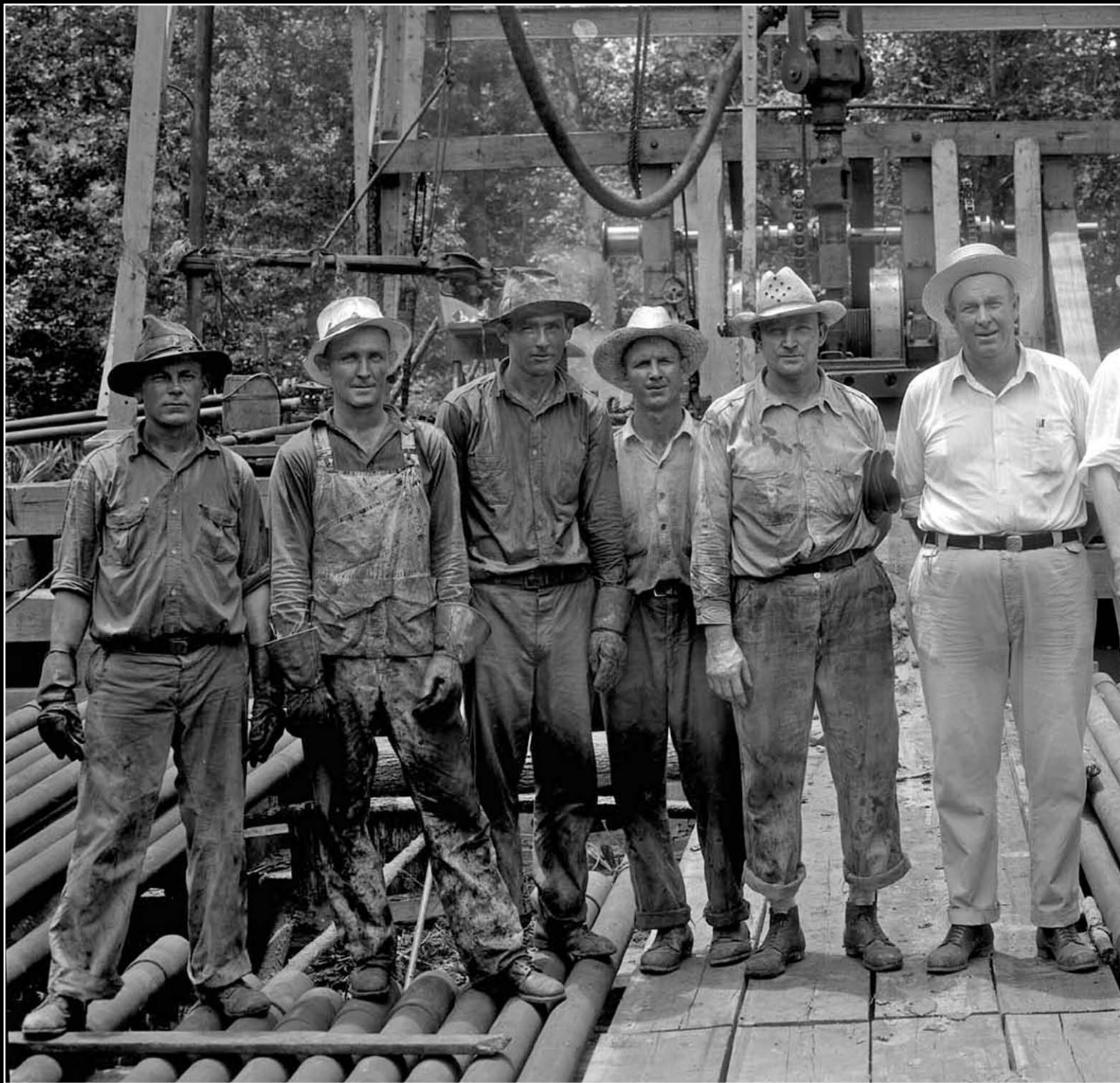


All photos courtesy of Story Sloane's Gallery, Houston, Texas.



Faces of Texas Oil

By Story Sloane III



The history of the oil industry in Texas is comprised of many elements. The towering wooden derricks, both cable and rotary, of the early twentieth century would give way to the even bigger steel-framed derricks of the 1930s and on. The art of pounding a hole into the ground would evolve rapidly, providing innovative advancements of drilling technologies. Old drillers remember when the fishtail bit reigned as the best tool available to get the job done; well, that held true until the rotary bit came on the scene. If the operator was lucky enough to produce a genuine Texas gusher, then he needed a pipeline to hook the well up to a battery of storage containers. The refining process would produce gasoline and motor oil, creating service stations that still, even decades later, remain permanent landmarks in our society. Perhaps the most important element of this fantastic industry is the human element. A combination of investors, company men, driller/wildcatters, engineers, and roughnecks provided the necessary glue to bind this growing industry together. The following images illustrate the early faces of Texas oil.

Story Sloane III is a native Houstonian and holder of one the city's premier private historic photo collections. He is an advocate for preserving Houston's history and the owner of Story Sloane Gallery.

One sure fire way to tell the company men from the roughnecks was the style of dress each chose to wear on location. Only a company man could get away with wearing a white shirt on the derrick floor. This 1930s rig was located in East Texas near Saratoga.

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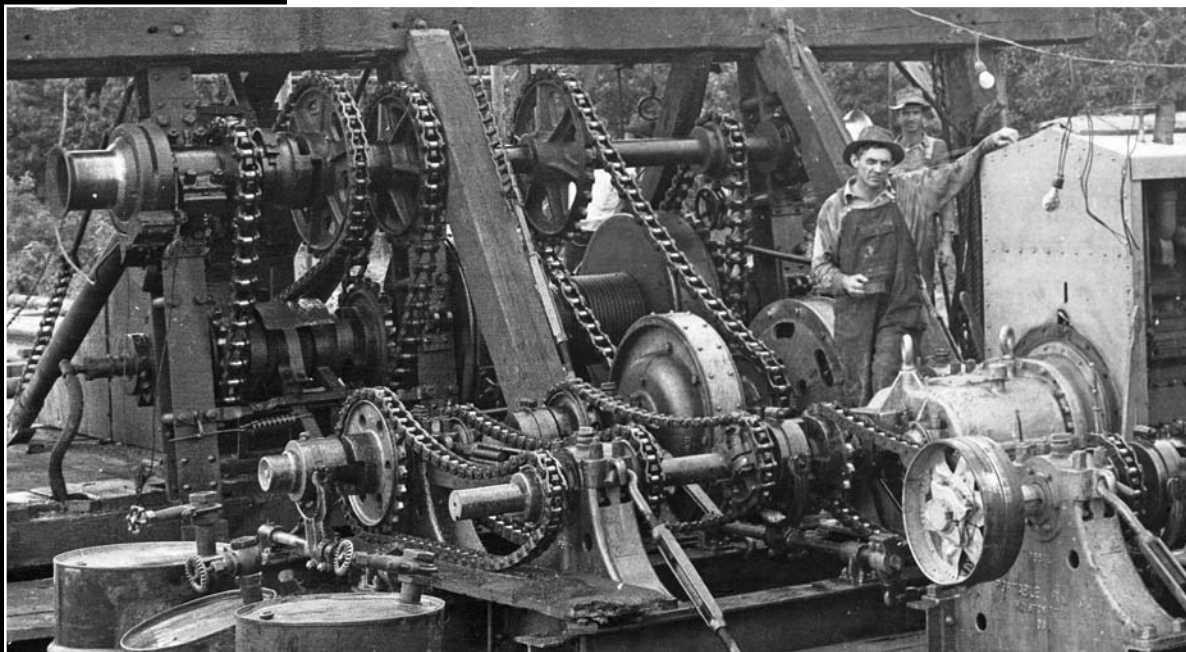
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The act of having a good smoke while drilling a well was commonplace and is illustrated here by driller Jack O'Neil and his crew in 1924. This rig stood just outside of Laredo Texas. Note man's best friend camouflaged against a roughneck.





It takes a little more than a college degree at this end of the game. These roustabouts make sure the gears and chains of power stayed greased.



One of the most famous faces of Texas oil was Michel Halbouty, pictured here in his 1927 lab.

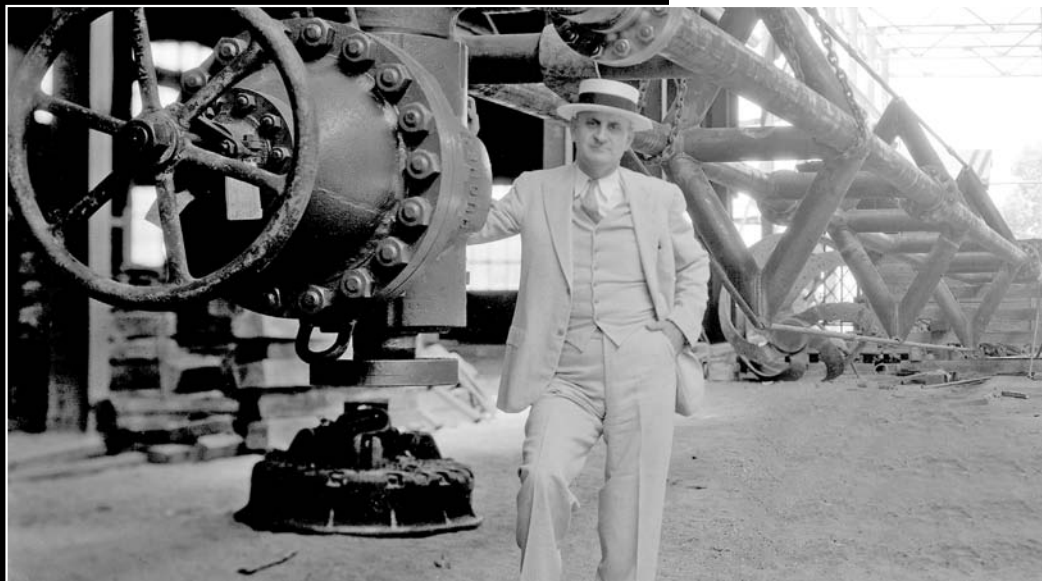
The investors and company men of Franklin Oil climb high on this central Texas cable rig for a 1918 public relations photo.



The Pierce Junction oil field was considered the closest oil patch to Houston. Located near the future Astrodome site south of town, this 1928 drilling crew consisted of seasoned veterans and one apprehensive teenager.



Many in the field considered it bad luck to have a woman on a well site—unless you were the wife of a driller. This mid 1930s LaSalle and rig were located in west Texas.



Home-grown, self-taught Texas oil well fire fighter H.L. Patton would end up losing an arm and his brother putting out oil fires all over the world. Pictured here at the Hughes Tool pipe yard, this pioneer would live to the ripe old age of 100.



Technological advancements in the industry like this early 1930s logging tool gave many engineers the opportunity to share in the wealth.