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Revised Map of Jefferson County, Texas. Showing Land Surveys, Railroads, and Water Ways. By Pattillo Higgins. Up to Date 1898.

Stock#: 56388
Map Maker: Higgins
Date: 1898
Place: Beaumont, Texas
Color: Uncolored
Condition: Good
Size: 26 x 22 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

The Birth Certificate of the Texas Oil Industry. Signed: "Compliments of Pattillo Higgins."

A rare promotional map published by the Father of Texas Oil, Pattillo Higgins, pre-dating the discovery of oil at Spindletop. Upon its discovery in 1901, the gusher at Spindletop became the most productive oil well in the world, and it propelled the United States (and Texas in particular) into the role of top oil producer in the world.

This example is enriched by the inscription in the bottom margin: "Compliments of Pattillo Higgins."

The Map

This map of Jefferson County, Texas was issued in 1898 as a promotional tool for Pattillo Higgins, the "Prophet of Spindletop", a local amateur geologist and land speculator who hoped it would spur investment in lumber and oil in the area. The map features railroads, towns, canals, and names of property owners. At the lower right is the figure of Uncle Sam standing next to Sabine Pass, below him a sachel of



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money proclaims "Jefferson County / Deep Water / A Success", and below that, the Pass is called "A Door to the World." An American flag stands nearby with the motto "Uncle Sam's Deep Water. The World's Progress." The map takes particular care to highlight the wealth of lumber in the area, and the ease of transportation to many nearby commercial hubs, including, most prominently, Houston. The map very effectively communicates a sense of boundless industrial potential.

The map is rare, with only 3 records in OCLC (Houston Public, Library of Congress, and UT Austin), however, the present example is especially valuable for its association with the very beginning of the oil industry in Texas, which is made clear by the manuscript at the center of the map.

Pattillo Higgins, Spindletop, and the Lucas Gusher

If one had asked a Beaumont on January 1, 1901, what big news of recent months had most interested him, he would have said the great Galveston hurricane of September 8, or the dawning of a new century. If one had asked him on January 10, he would have said the great gusher at Spindletop - a salt dome about three miles south of Beaumont. Dubbed "The Lucas Gusher," the oil discovery on Spindletop Hill changed the economy of Texas and helped to usher in the petroleum age. -- Spindletop Gladys City Boomtown Museum, Lamar University.

The maker of the map, Pattillo Higgins, is a fascinating and controversial figure, whose stubborn enterprising nature led him to be the individual most responsible for the birth of the oil industry in Texas. (See the biography below for more about his life.)

Higgins first came across the Spindletop salt dome on an excursion with his Sunday school class. The area had a "sour" sulfur smell and mineral water seeped from the ground. Higgins was an amateur geologist and recognized these as signs of a potential oilfield. To pursue his hunch, Higgins partnered with George O'Brien, George Carroll, Emma John, and J.F. Lanier to form the Gladys City Oil, Gas, and Manufacturing Company in 1892. In the 1890s, most professional geologists held that oil would not be found along the Gulf Coast. Indeed, Higgins was thought a dilettante by many and his personal character was challenged in the local newspaper. Higgins forged on in spite of that and began drilling in 1893. Unfortunately, all of the initial three shallow drilling attempts failed to locate oil due to the shifting sands and unstable clay under the hill. Higgins held onto his ownership and leases of land over the salt dome but resigned from the company.

Higgins held onto hope of finding oil at Spindletop but had no luck finding new partners until, in 1899, he received a response from another semi-professional geologist who shared his belief about Gulf Coast oil domes. That man, Anthony Lucas, signed an agreement with Higgins and began drilling in late 1900.



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Drilling at the site was incredibly difficult. A new rotating hydraulic drill collapsed upon reaching a depth of approximately 900 feet. Not able to deal with the technical difficulties, and short on money, Lucas asked for help from John D. Rockefeller of Standard Oil. Rockefeller passed but not before persuading John H. Galey and James M. Guffey, associates of the Mellon family from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to join the project. After reaching the depth of 1,210 feet, at 10:30 AM on January 10, 1901, natural gas erupted followed by a stream of crude oil reaching 200 feet. The eruption lasted nine days, spewing out approximately 100,000 barrels of oil a day, and was finally stopped by one of Lucas's devices.

At the time of this discovery, the average oil well with a good yield produced about 50 barrels a day, or approximately 18,000 barrels a year. The Spindletop field produced 3 million barrels in its first year and 17 million the next; more than all other oil wells in the world combined. The discovery broke John D. Rockefeller's oil monopoly and made America the world's number one oil producer.

Conclusion

This map is the culmination of Pattillo Higgins' efforts to convince someone to help him drill for oil in Jefferson County. The map was published on the eve of what would become the most significant Texas oil discovery of all time.

Detailed Condition:

Small hole in the lower right quadrant.