



Ernest W. Marland 1979

Ernest Whitworth Marland began life in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1879 and died at Ponca City, Oklahoma, in 1941. In those 67 years his life moved through waves of prosperity and loss.

Marland was graduated from the University of Michigan in 1898 with a law degree, took up work with Guffey and Galey, the pioneer oil firm, and began to teach himself geology. He found his first oil in West Virginia in 1906, made his first million, and lost it in the panic of 1907.

His intense drive took him into the Midwest looking for oil. He formed Marland Oil Company, which ultimately became one of the larger integrated oil companies. When it merged with Continental Oil Company in the late 1920's, Marland lost his leadership of the combined enterprise. Never a quitter, he took up a new career in politics, was elected to Congress and subsequently became governor of Oklahoma.

Marland became tremendously interested in the Permian Basin in the middle 1920's, put surface mapping parties to work, and was instrumental in a number of major discoveries. Marland Oil was one of the most aggressive developers of the fields near Wink, Texas. He is honored here for this early recognition of the Basin's importance as an oil province and for two innovations that changed oil industry work here and elsewhere: the importation of the seismic methods of exploration in 1921 from Germany (an interest shared with Gulf Oil), and for forming what may have been the first oil company research organization.

Ernest W. Marland was many things to many people. To the oil industry he was a forceful, dynamic innovator of lasting effect.