

Charles D. Vertrees 1985

The Permian Basin petroleum industry was in its infancy when Charles David Vertrees was hired as a geologist by Marland Oil Company at San Angelo in 1925. His productive life paralleled the industry's development in this oil province.

Born in Linn County, Kansas in 1899, his family moved south to the Texas border town of Brownsville where Charles graduated from high school in 1918. To finance his college education he headed for Mexico's oil fields to work as a truck driver. In one year's time he earned enough for his education. He returned to the States, graduating in 1923 from The University of Texas at Austin with a B.A. degree in geology. He returned to Mexico as a geologist for the East Coast Oil Company at Panuco. He married his college sweetheart, Eloise Faulkner, who also graduated as a geologist.

They returned to the States to San Angelo in 1925 where Marland Oil Company hired him as a paleontologist. Marland merged with the Continental Oil Company and in 1929 continental reduced its San Angelo office staff from 28 geologists to two to cut costs – Charles D. Vertrees was one who stayed. In August, 1929 he moved to Midland as District Geologist in Continental's office in the newly-opened Petroleum Building.

He had attended the first San Angelo Geological Society meeting January, 1926 and was a charter member of that group that later became the West Texas Geological Society. He served as a president in 1935. He was elected Honorary Life Member in 1957. He authored the *History of the West Texas Geological Society*, published in 1973.

He witnessed many changes in the Permian Basin's oil industry. His area included 56 West Texas and 16 New Mexico counties with only wagon roads and cow trails to follow in the early days. It was not unusual to experience four flats a day, the opening and closing of many gates on ranches where he blazed new roads, and to aid errant cows giving birth to their calves.

Continental Oil Company and "Charlie" Vertrees are credited with the Todd Ranch field, the Elkhorn Ellenburger Field, the Wasson Field and the Slaughter field, among many others.

From 1926 until 1958 he served continental, rising to Regional Research Geologist. He retired in 1958 and opened a geological consulting office in Midland, where he now resides.