



Martin Yates, Jr. 1993

Martin Yates Jr. grew up in Missouri, edited a newspaper, heeded the call for adventure and headed west to Artesia, New Mexico, to homestead. There he eventually formed a real estate partnership called Yates and Dooley.

Traces of oil in artisan (flowing) water wells west of the Pecos River induced several oilmen to drill in the area. Yates and Dooley invested in some of the wells but the unstoppable water flow in the wells ruined oil production.

Yates felt that moving further east, across the Pecos, the water problems could be avoided. He approached Van Welch, manager of a partnership which was about to pack up its drilling rig and head back east. They worked out a partnership (Flynn-Welch-Yates). Yates acquired huge amounts of cheap leases and a drilling crew that would work for part-cash and part-leases. The first well they drilled discovered oil and gas but not enough to consider a success.

The partnership moved further east for the next well. This well discovered a huge gas deposit, but there was no market for gas. Yates let his wife Mary pick the next drilling site based primarily on her intuition. The well came in! Martin Yates had discovered and oil field almost 300 miles west of the closest successful oil well.

Yates along with partners continued drilling wells, built a pipeline and a refinery and found new fields. In 1928 they found not oil but potash. Their discovery eventually created what were for many years the biggest potash mines in the world.

Martin Yates and his children stayed in the oil business, steadily expanding southeastern New Mexico's oil horizons and production. The Empire Abo field, found in 1957, was proclaimed that year's major oil discover in the United States.

Martin Yates died in 1949. His descendants remain successful and active in the petroleum industry. Due to his foresight, industry and leadership, Martin Yates Jr. is considered the "Father of the New Mexico Oil Business."