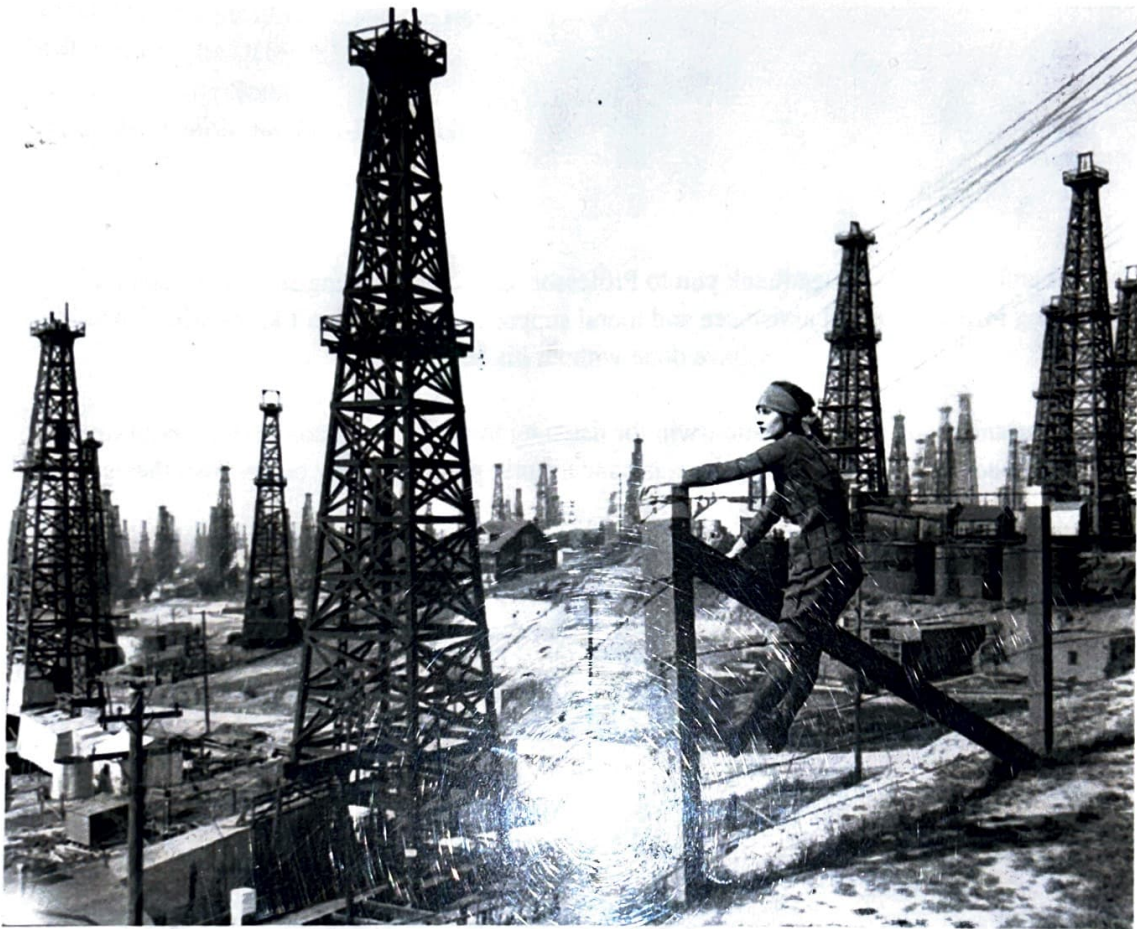


## **“There is Power in the Blood”**

**The Growth of the Californian Oil Industry and its Resistance to Standard Oil**



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History Honors Thesis 2017-2018**

First and foremost, a huge thank you to Professor Marcuse, for being such a mensch and providing infinitely useful assistance and moral support. I honestly don't know what I would have done without his help.

A thousand thank yous to Leslie Irwin for listening to my constant complaints about my workload despite the fact that she was concurrently plugging away on her own thesis.

Thank you to my dad for taking out the time to edit my entire thesis. I hope to one day be able to work with grammar and words as well as he does.

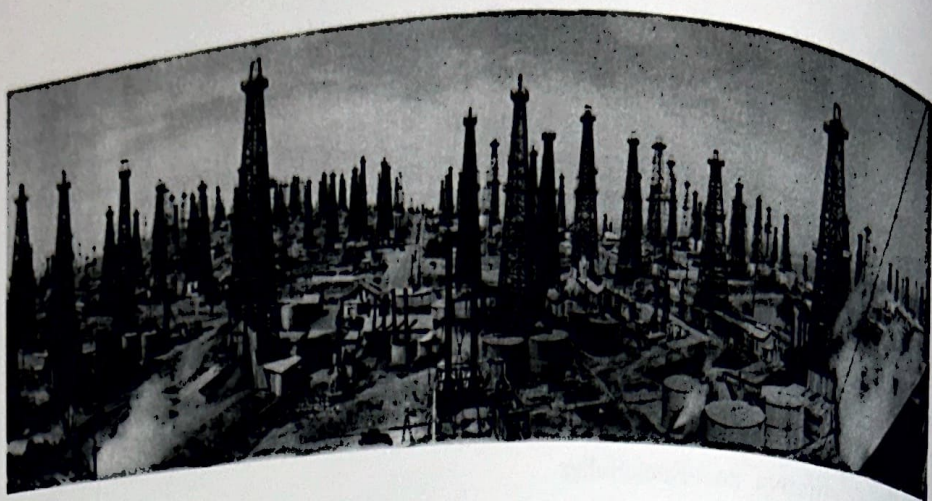
And, of course, thank you to Johnny Greenwood for composing the *Phantom Thread* score, which helped me work for countless hours at the library.



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## Preface

Since high school, I have been fascinated with the effects of big business on culture and livelihood. I read *The Jungle* in 9th grade and my eyes were opened to the horrors of progress that were (and still are) cloaked by the use of the very same word—progress. In the often nebulous and sparse overview of United States history provided to students in California in eleventh grade, I was once again captivated by stories of captains of industry, the conquerors of the economic sector of the quickly-growing nation that was the nineteenth century United States. It was a morbid fascination. The overt cruelty and selfishness of these “great” men was horrible at times, yet I found myself reading book after book, watching film after film. From *Gangs of New York* to *There Will Be Blood*, I watched them all.

When it came time to write my thesis, I settled on the aforementioned topic because I found it so fascinating, and was eager to look at that narrative in the context of Californian history and culture, which was also near and dear to my heart. Coming from Long Beach, a city that is well aware of—and constantly trying to preserve—its quintessentially Californian roots, I have seen the effects of the oil industry on absolutely everything, from the terrain to individual homes, and even cemeteries.



Thus, I settled on my topic: John D. Rockefeller's ominous sweep toward the west. Rockefeller said it himself, when he expanded his business: "individualism was gone, never to return."<sup>1</sup> This quote disturbed and captivated me. This man (along with a few others in power) knowingly, and proudly, altered the very economic topography of the entire nation to line his own pocketbook.

I took this quote to heart and decided to answer the following question: What happened to the independent, preexisting oil businesses in Southern California after Standard Oil arrived? I thought that I had my answer cut out for me. I thought that, like the rest of the nation, the Southern California oil market was completely swallowed by the behemoth Standard Oil, and that only a few survived (namely Doheny and Getty). It fit the narrative that I had explored for the past near-decade of my life.

What I found, however, was a thriving market both before and after Standard Oil arrived. Indeed, Standard Oil barely broke into the Southern California oil market at all. When it did, obviously some businesses could no longer compete. However, many of the businesses that failed did so because of other reasons, such as financial scandals and the Stock Market Crash of 1929. Additionally, Standard Oil did not suddenly arrive in California and immediately ignite a string of crash-and-burn failures in other companies. It became incorporated in California's oil market slowly and cautiously, controlling some— but not all— of the area's oil businesses.

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Sampson, *The Seven Sisters: The 100-year battle for the world's oil supply* (New York: Bantam Nonfiction, 1991), 35.

Anthony Sampson was a British author and journalist who focused on political history. Critics and historians considered his book, *The Seven Sisters*, to be an exposé and the seminal work on the international oil community. His first chapters provide general insight into the American oil industry in the second half of the nineteenth century as well as some of Rockefeller's ethos.



Altogether, Standard Oil did not have the same impact that it did throughout the rest of the country (namely the East Coast). Indeed, it did not have the impact that I thought it would.

Because of the foregoing revelations, I decided to shift the focus of my research into *why* so many of California's independent oil companies were able to stay afloat well after the sun had set on the oil industry in the United States and shifted toward the Middle East. The more I researched, the more I realized how integral of a factor Californian identity was in this confrontation. As I will discuss later, the state of California was established on the principles and hopes of the entire nation: Manifest Destiny, freedom, free enterprise, and, most importantly, opportunity. Essentially, California was built on the nation's collective desire to strike it rich.

It was this very philosophy that kept Standard Oil from extending its monopolistic tentacles to Southern California. Of course, Standard Oil enjoyed a great deal of success by entering the West Coast's sphere. Overwhelmingly, however, preexisting businesses did not respond in the same way that they did in many of the other spheres that were enveloped by Standard Oil. Through a comparison between the California and Pennsylvania oil markets' respective responses to Standard Oil, I discovered that multiple differing factors between the two states caused drastically different outcomes. Pennsylvania's cultural focus on traditional Quaker moderation and quietness allowed for Standard Oil to easily conquer its relatively sleepy oil economy. By the time Standard Oil arrived in California, the state already had a significant oil industry that resulted from a variety of factors, namely the state's already-booming economy. Additionally, California's preexisting oil companies were already utilizing Rockefeller's cutthroat tactics (pipelines and horizontal/vertical integration) by the time he arrived, whereas Rockefeller was the only one to pioneer and use those techniques in the east.



I also discovered that timing played an integral role in the success of California's independent oil business over that of Pennsylvania. The latter was conquered by Rockefeller during the heart of the Gilded Age. However, by the time that he reached California, he was an old man whose company had already suffered greatly due to the anti-trust politics of the Progressive Era, especially the Sherman Antitrust Act.

Ultimately, all of these factors culminated in a successful independent oil sphere in California, but a near-monopoly in Pennsylvania. The outcomes of this narrative promote an idea of the uniqueness of California in both the business sector as well as all other aspects of life—a philosophy that persists to this day.

I chose the title of my thesis because of a particular hymn that is sung in the 2008 film *There Will Be Blood*, which was loosely based on Upton Sinclair's book, *Oil!*, which was loosely based upon the life of Edward Doheny (which I will detail in Chapter Five). The hymn struck me as an apt title for my thesis for a number of reasons. The image of blood as oil was a theme that stretched across all parts of my research—a comparison which I found to be particularly compelling. The hymn stresses the power of innocence against evil, which, I believe, applies to the struggle of independent businesses against the oft-considered malevolent force of Standard Oil. And, finally, the use of a hymn as a title evokes the religious justification that Rockefeller and so many other Robber Barons used to justify their conquest over the business sector of the United States. Ultimately, as we will see, unlike in other parts of the country, there was power in the blood that created Southern California, in the hard work and risk and passion that molded the wholly unique region.



## Chapter One: The Californian Identity

"...in all the world, there neither was nor would ever be another place like this City of Angels. Here the American people were erupting, like lava from a volcano..." -Carey McWilliams

California was founded on the belief that it was the culmination of every ideal that Manifest Destiny brought along with it. By default, it harbored the wishes and dreams of every American—those of freedom, wealth, and the pursuit of happiness. American identity in the nineteenth century was wrapped in the idealism of expansion into the vast, open, territory of the West, and with each state moving farther and farther away from the east coast, the dream seemed to be even easier to achieve. It was as if the Jeffersonian ideal of individualism and living off the land could finally be realized, despite the controlling webs of commerce in the East that had sprung up in the 1840s. Indeed, the West was at once a symbol of the escape from the confines of that rigid economic system and an opportunity for the everyman to someday reach, and even surmount, the same amount of wealth and status as those in control in the East.

No greater place was there to achieve this goal than California.

Frederick Jackson Turner summed up these sentiments in his Frontier Thesis in 1893. This speech, which was delivered at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, is one of the most well-known examples of text explaining the motivations of the vast majority of Americans in the nineteenth century. Written after the West was "closed" (meaning conquered by white men and thus civilized), it reminisced about the promise of the West and expressed hope that this westward expansion would not merely be limited to the coasts of California. To Turner, and needless to say to the white Americans of the East, expansion was "the distinguishing feature of



American life.”<sup>2</sup> The West could be molded to fit the purest of American ideals— free enterprise and individuality— and “[s]o long as free land [existed], the opportunity for a competency [existed].”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the West was the ever-promising physical manifestation of the very philosophies on which America was founded.

The great paradigm on which the basis of Manifest Destiny was founded was that, in the pursuit of the aforementioned ideals, the rights and lives of The Other— Native Americans, blacks, women, and many immigrants— were cast by the wayside. This is a conversation that could easily occupy a completely separate thesis, so I will not explore this in greater detail. However, it is imperative to mention the importance of the fact that white men were the nearly exclusive vessels through which Manifest Destiny was embodied and executed.

At the moment when gold was discovered at Sutter’s Mill in 1848, California became the perfect opportunity for the aforementioned vessels to pursue their collective destiny and strike it rich in the mysterious, rolling hills of the far West. California’s connection to enterprise, albeit preexisting, was cemented with the Gold Rush. In 1848, San Francisco was populated by 1,000 people; in 1850, there were 20,000.<sup>4</sup> In 1849 alone, 18,000 men took the overland route to

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<sup>2</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner. “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” (Speech, Chicago, Illinois, 1893.) PBS Socal.

The Turner Thesis, also referred to as the Frontier Thesis, is one of the most iconic and well-known works to discuss the American West and the ideals of those who created it. It was written and delivered at the “close” of the West in 1893 and laments the loss of the conduit of American ideals—expansion—but expresses hope that America will expand even farther eastward. It provides invaluable insight into the national sentiment and anxieties as the turn of the twentieth century neared.

<sup>3</sup> Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*.

<sup>4</sup> “California Gold Rush,” Harvard University Library Open Collections.



California. 17,000 took the more perilous route around the Cape Horn.<sup>5</sup> Men from the East flooded to California after being given promises of gold, land, and a return to pre-industrialized America, with the caveat, of course, that they would have access to all of the technological advancements and benefits made available by Industrialization.

The economic draw of California was not a purely American sentiment. Chinese immigrants came to California to try their hand at the riches that the United States had to offer. They referred to their destination—which they considered to be a temporary home in which to remain just long enough to bring wealth back to their families—as “the Gold Mountain.” Even though Chinese immigrants had no intention of staying (whereas American migrants desired to stake a claim and create their own little commonwealth, so to speak) their motivations were the same. California represented the same thing to both groups. It was a beacon of opportunity—to the east for Chinese and to the west for Americans—to create something from nothing.

Slowly but surely, commerce began to make its way south to what is now Los Angeles. The gold boom opened the doors wide for businesses of all kinds. From clothing (such as blue jeans, pioneered by Levi Strauss) to a network of trade and travel from what was previously the barely-settled San Francisco Bay, entrepreneurs from across the nation and around the world came to enjoy the benefits of the underdeveloped market in California. This not only benefitted Northern California; the effects of the Gold Rush reached all the way down the coast. Los

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Glass Cleland. *A History of California: The American Period*. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1922), 42.

This book was written in 1922 after the death of the author of its previous edition, Dr. Charles E. Chapman. The materials gathered in this edition date back to 1910, which was when Chapman began gathering materials for his magnum opus. This book, though quite obviously dated in its sentiments, succeeds in “[escaping] a provincial and localized point of view,” linking California to the rest of the United States as well as around the world. Additionally, it provides insight into the sentiments of Californians about their history a mere seventy years after the state was added to the union.



Angeles, which was previously a sleepy town, was settled by various wealthy landowners who had made their way north from Mexico to raise cattle and grow grapes for wine.



During the Gold Rush,

this stretch of land was used for many of the same reasons as when the land had been

Los Angeles, as depicted by William Rich Hutton ca 1847. A town on the cusp of earth-shattering change.

owned by Spain. The land was used so heavily for cattle production to feed the overwhelming influx of people in the San Francisco area that Los Angeles became known as “Queen of the Cow Counties,” and it led the state in beef production. In 1854, more than 100,000 cattle roamed in the area.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, Southern California, with its decidedly Mediterranean climate, was a major supplier of fruits of various kinds. The region provided significant contributions to the produce market via citrus and grapes. In 1860, over a million pounds of grapes were shipped annually from San Pedro.<sup>7</sup> Over six thousand acres of land in Los Angeles were used to cultivate grapes, as well as considerable amounts of wheat (which, at one point, reached \$5 a bushel),

<sup>6</sup> Cleland, *A History of California*, 303.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 309.



barley, and corn in order to fuel the commerce in the north.<sup>8</sup> With its vast fields and ranches, Southern California proved to be an integral aspect of the growth of cities up north. As the cities grew, so did Los Angeles. One editor in the area wrote:

The Queen of the Cow Counties bangs all creation in with her productions. Whether it be shocking murders, or big beets... tall corn, mammoth potatoes, ponderous cabbages... smart men, office seekers, coal holers, scrip or fights... she stands out in bold relief, challenging competition.<sup>9</sup>

If San Francisco gained a reputation for rowdiness, Los Angeles gained a reputation for debauchery. It was considered to be the "toughest and most lawless city west of Santa Fe."<sup>10</sup> Soldiers who did not return home from the Spanish-American War, criminals who were rejected from the streets of San Francisco, and Mexican traders all occupied the city. Streets were lined with bordelos, bars, and gambling halls. Crime ran rampant, and law enforcement turned a blind eye. Thirty-one murders occurred between January and September of 1851 alone.<sup>11</sup> It was a hodgepodge of different backgrounds, classes, and ethnicities. Practically everyone tried their hand at striking it rich—either in San Francisco (then moving on to Los Angeles) or in Los Angeles. The thrill-seekers who inhabited California came to strike it rich in its wild, open

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<sup>8</sup> JM Guin, *Historical and biographical record of southern California; containing a history of southern California from its earliest settlement to the opening year of the twentieth century. Also containing biographies of well-known citizens of the past and present* (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company), 137.

This almanac, containing biographies, statistics, and anecdotes concerning southern California, is a gold mine of information written at the time of my research. It provides invaluable background and information on California's early years and the culture that shaped the state.

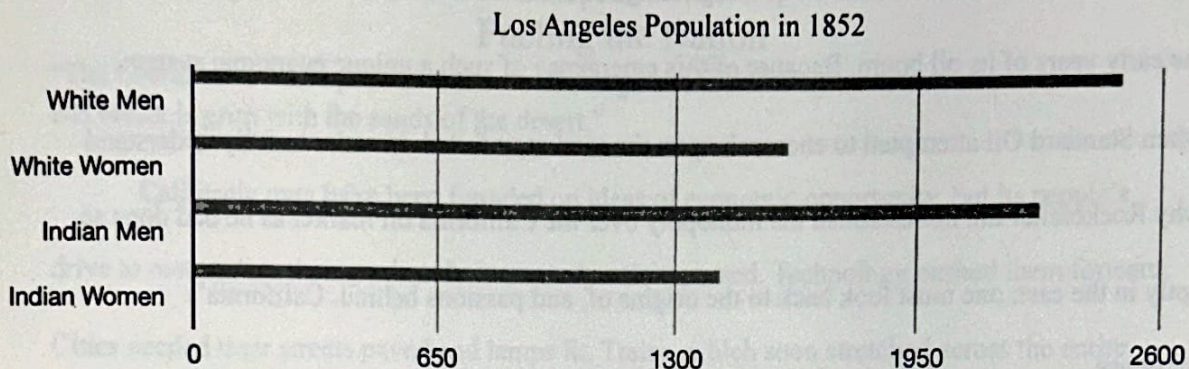
<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>10</sup> William Wilcox Robinson. *Los Angeles from the Days of the Pueblo: A Brief History and Guide to the Plaza Area* (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1959), 55.

This book provides detailed information about the creation and growth of Los Angeles from an intimate point of view. Writing during the middle of the twentieth century, Robinson was a prolific author and historian who focused on Southern California history, writing primarily on San Bernardino and Los Angeles Counties.

<sup>11</sup> Cleland, *A History of California*, 298.





market. The city became the perfect example of what we now know to be the mythical “Wild West.”

This since-glorified image of America was, in actuality, quite different from depictions in Clint Eastwood movies. Vigilante justice ran rampant, and lynchings were commonplace. The *Pacific Sentinel*, a newspaper based in Los Angeles, described the city in 1856 as “strange... volcanic... windy, dusty... murdering, bloody, lynching, robbing, thieving.”<sup>12</sup> Racial divides were strictly enforced. Though there were roughly the same number of Native Americans and whites in California in the 1852 census, it comes as no surprise that whites enjoyed the freedoms accorded to their race. Alternately, Native Americans were often indentured, which propagated the capitalist foundation on which Los Angeles was built.<sup>13</sup> These socioeconomic racial divides persisted throughout the entirety of the narrative that I discuss in my thesis.

Simply, the collective goal of Americans in California was to make money. Following what they believed to be their God-given right (and responsibility) to move westward, conquer, those who came to California expected to be rewarded with land and a hand in the future and well-being of the nation and all that it had to offer.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 319.

<sup>13</sup> Guin, *Historical and Biographical Record of Southern California*, 137.



As we will soon see, the unique beginnings of the state of California directly influenced the early years of its oil boom. Because of this emergence of such a unique economic system, when Standard Oil attempted to encroach upon the market, it failed. In order to fully understand why Rockefeller did not establish the monopoly over the California oil market as he had done so aptly in the east, one must look back to the origins of, and passions behind, California's existence.



## Chapter Two: Fueling the Nation

"The Locomotive—His prow is wet with the surge and foam of either ocean;  
His breast is grim with the sands of the desert."

California may have been founded on ideas of economic opportunity, but its people's drive to materialize their goals only increased as time passed. Technology pushed them forward. Cities needed their streets paved and lamps lit. Trains, which soon stretched across the entire nation, brought not only a near-unbearable influx of people but even more of a need for natural resources. The necessity for oil was greater than ever before.

The state's mass enthusiasm for wealth and freedom did not end when the state began its incorporation into so-called civilization with the creation of the Transcontinental Railroad; in fact, the new technology only inspired further aspirations of enterprise. The railroad was a symbol of progress and business, the "first modern business [enterprise]" in North America.<sup>14</sup> Twelve years after the creation of the State of California, President Lincoln signed into effect the Pacific Railway Act of 1862. This authorized and subsidized the creation of two railroads: one built by the Union Pacific Railroad that would stretch westward from Omaha, Nebraska, and one built by the Central Pacific Railroad that would stretch eastward from Sacramento, California. The second Pacific Railway Act was passed on July 2nd, 1864, in the final years of the Civil

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<sup>14</sup>A.D. Chandler, Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1993, 4.

Written by a member of the Dupont family, *The Visible Hand* is a seminal piece of literature concerning industrialization and the subsequent rise of Robber Barons in the nineteenth century. In *The Visible Hand*, Chandler discusses the shift in the American economy after the 1850s, which was when it drifted away from the market economy and "traditional enterprises" toward what he calls "managerial capitalism." The time of transition is discussed at length and provides insight into the world which I detail in my thesis.



War. This act enabled railroads to sell their own bonds and be granted more land by the government, which expedited the railroad building process and resulted in the driving of the railroad's final spike on May 10th, 1869, at Promontory Summit in, what is now, Utah.

The nation— its people and businesses— was finally united across its vast lands.

The railroads not only provided an influx of people, thus bringing more business to Southern California, but it also provided the need for oil on the west coast— and lots of it. Americans had previously used oil to light lamps (in both residential and municipal settings), and asphaltum, the crudest form of oil, was used to pave the new streets of San Francisco. However, the promise of profit made off of the constant cross-country travel created an entirely new market for the oil industry, one larger than any that had been seen before. Los Angeles was more than eager to take advantage of this opportunity. In the early 1870s, Los Angeles County donated five percent of the assessed valuation of its total property to the Southern Pacific Railroad, which amounted to over \$600,000.<sup>15</sup> Because Los Angeles only had



This 1913 map displays the importance of the addition of Los Angeles to the Central and Southern Pacific Railroad lines. The subsequent benefits it experienced upon being so closely linked with nearby commerce can be assumed.

<sup>15</sup> Jason Cooke, "Property as a Pillar of Oil Based Capitalism: the case of the Southern Pacific Company in Southern California, 1865-1926." *Journal of Historical Geography* 8 (2014).

Jason Cooke is a historian for University of Toronto's Department of Geography & Planning. His article provides insight into the foundations of the California economy and its connections to the rest of the United States, especially the East. The article stresses the importance of the Southern Pacific Railroad and its need for oil-based energy in the formation of California's oil economy.



15,000 residents in 1870, the city was willing to risk anything to take part in the great national network that the railroads provided.<sup>16</sup> Not only did this link Los Angeles to San Francisco, but it also became part of the journey to and from Mexico, and the journey eastward throughout the United States. To say that the county's investment— which was well over \$10 million in 2018 dollars— was successful would be an understatement. The vast changes that the county saw in the coming years concerning travel and industry proved to be unparalleled.

The best way to understand this growth is to look at numbers. In 1852, Los Angeles was home to only four thousand white Americans.<sup>17</sup> By 1900, the city's population had skyrocketed to 102,479. This does not include the thousands of others residing in what we now know as Greater Los Angeles: Wilmington, Long Beach, San Pedro, etc.<sup>18</sup> People could now journey westward to fulfill those very same aspirations as the first pioneers had harbored, though now without the high risk involved. Their forefathers' journeys across the nation in wagon trains often took months. Now, Americans could complete the journey in as few as eighty-three hours, as opposed to the weeks (even months) that the journey once took.

This is not to say, however, that the journey was a breeze. In the late 1870s, a first-class ticket cost well over \$80, which did not include food or beds. Thus, the majority of Americans could only travel third-class, which was half the price, but came with absolutely no amenities. Whereas the *first class* trip took eighty-three hours, the third class trip could take up to ten days, and tickets only reserved a spot on a narrow wooden bench. Even travel within the confines of Southern California was expensive; it cost nearly \$3 (the equivalent of \$45 in 2018 dollars) for a

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<sup>16</sup> Cooke, "Property as a Pillar of Oil Based Capitalism."

<sup>17</sup> Cleland, *A History of California*, 137

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 144



passenger to travel the mere twenty miles from Wilmington to Los Angeles.<sup>19</sup> By modern standards, train travel seems lengthy, uncomfortable, and expensive. But to those searching for opportunity in the 1870s, the train—whether from Indianapolis to Los Angeles or merely within Los Angeles county itself—was a godsend, to say the least. Though railroads had been a part of the nation's commerce for most of the century, the Transcontinental Railroad completely overhauled the relationship that Americans had with distance, travel, and the nation as a whole. To say that it changed the very fiber of America would be an injustice to not only its immediate effects on Americans but its legacy as well.

Not only did the incorporation of Los Angeles into the national commerce network impact the number of people settling there, but, as so aptly stated by Jason Cooke, “the vast network...provided the needed integration to stimulate and mobilize the regional development of fossil fuel energy resources.”<sup>20</sup> There had been considerable demand for oil and related resources prior to the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad to “[lift San Franciscans] out of the mud” by the incorporation of paved streets.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, California was a major contributor to the United States' asphalt supply: by 1893, the state produced nearly fifty thousand tons of asphalt per year.<sup>22</sup> These staggering numbers show the nation's reliance upon asphalt to pave its cities'

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 139

<sup>20</sup> Cooke, “Property as a Pillar of Oil Based Capitalism.”

<sup>21</sup> Gerald T. White, *Baptism in Oil: Stephen F. Peckham in Southern California 1865-66*. (San Francisco: Book Club of California, 1984), 120-121.

*Baptism in Oil* describes one of the forerunners in the California oil business, a self-made man named Stephen F. Peckham who was a chemist, geologist, and entrepreneur who paved the way (no pun intended) for the California oil boom. His life was indicative of those of so many others who came to California. Though his narrative predates my research, *Baptism in Oil* provides a necessary look into the California oil market right before the boom.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 121.



streets, yet the demand for asphalt paled in comparison to the demand for oil that emerged as a result of the Transcontinental Railroad.



## Chapter Three: Pennsylvania and the East

John D. Rockefeller, the father of the infamous Standard Oil Monopoly, is undeniably one of the most well-known and influential figures in American history. Whether referred to as a captain of industry or robber baron, Americans have studied and been fascinated by him for over a hundred years. His narrative is one of astounding wealth, cruelty, and scope. The empire that he created effectively altered the economic makeup of the entire world, shifting it permanently toward a corporation-based system that left little to no room for independent ventures to succeed. Indeed, despite governmental curbs on the scope of Standard Oil, its fragments are still in existence today. British Petroleum, Exxon, Chevron, and Mobil have since been created from the scattered pieces of the scattered Rockefeller empire, dominating the international oil trade even today.

What was it that made Rockefeller so vastly influential? What factors contributed to his control of 95% of the oil business by 1878?<sup>23</sup> In order to answer these questions, we must look back at the history and culture of Pennsylvania, which has its roots in the religious refuge movement of the seventeenth century.

In 1681, Quaker William Penn was given a royal charter by Charles II of England to create a haven for Quakers. Though what became Pennsylvania had already been home to a

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<sup>23</sup> Gilbert Holland Montague, *The Rise and Progress of the Standard Oil Company* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1903), 1.

Gilbert Holland Montague was an author, lawyer, and member of the United States Attorney General's Committee to Study Antitrust Laws from 1953-1955. At the age of twenty-three, he wrote *The Rise and Progress of the Standard Oil Company* while pursuing his bachelor of laws from Harvard. This book has a decidedly antitrust point of view, highlighting the opportunistic and selfish nature of Rockefeller and how that impacted his success. *Rise and Progress* was published in 1903, less than a decade before the Standard Oil breakup; it is indicative of the changing attitudes toward big business that dominated the Progressive Era.



number of Native American groups, including the Iroquois Nation, by the turn of the eighteenth century, the state consisted almost entirely of white Quakers.

From its very beginning, Pennsylvania was decidedly a place of order and peace.

Members of the Religious Society of Friends fled England on the basis of religious intolerance in search of "common-right and freedom."<sup>24</sup> They sought to create a society based upon their principles, which included reflecting the purity of God into one's everyday life: emotional purity and restrained behavior and speech.<sup>25</sup> Northwestern British Quakerism, which was the primary form of Quakerism present in the Pennsylvania colony, placed such emphasis on order and purity as "a solution to the disorder in southeastern England caused by rapid commercialization and urbanization."<sup>26</sup> These principles were reflected in the creation of the Pennsylvania colony, then the state of Pennsylvania. The Quaker ideal of restraint, order, moral interconnectedness, and spiritual harmony were apparent not only in the ways in which Pennsylvanians interacted and constructed their daily lives, but also in their business and urban plans. Philadelphia, the capital of Pennsylvania and cultural hub of the region, was the first planned city in the United States. Ultimately, these traditions, so steeped in religious doctrine, remained present in the region as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries ushered in new cultural waves of social upheavals, economic change, and European immigrants with varying religious backgrounds.

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<sup>24</sup> John Lilburn et al., *An Agreement of the People*, 1647.

<sup>25</sup> Barry Levy, *Quakers and the American Family: British Settlement in the Delaware Valley*. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 128.

*Quakers and the American Family* provides an in-depth look at Quaker lifestyle in America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with significant information on the tenants of Quakerism found specifically in Pennsylvania. Barry Levy is a professor of early American history at Amherst College, specializing in social history in the New England colonies. He is considered by many academics to be the expert in his field.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.



This devotion to order influenced the creation of the state of Pennsylvania. Its bill of rights echoes Quakers' beliefs in a passage that is wholly Pennsylvanian. No echo of the following sentiments can be found in the California constitution:

That a frequent recurrence to fundamental principles, and a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance... and frugality are absolutely necessary to preserve the blessings of liberty...<sup>27</sup>

Thus, Quaker doctrine made its way into the fiber of the state's political structure, and even increased as time passed. Until the close of the eighteenth century, the state became even more dictated by religion, despite the recognition of a separation of church and state in the newly-formed nation.

Unlike some of its more developed neighboring states such as New York, Pennsylvania remained fairly quiet. Quakers performed a quiet devotion to their duties, namely "their wives, their children, and their businesses," which were mostly rural and agricultural jobs.<sup>28</sup> This is not to say that the state was wholly asleep. Instead, it had formed a governmental and economic system that was in harmony with, and secondary to, their religion.

The differences between this origin and that of California are quite obvious. The devout Quakers that established Pennsylvania would have looked upon the origins of California and the people who settled there—especially Southern California—as absolutely heretical. The rough-and-tumble, individualist, lifestyle in the west stood in stark contrast to the gentrified, community-based, world that had been established in Pennsylvania by Quakers two centuries prior.

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<sup>27</sup> Robert Whitehill et al., *Pennsylvania State Constitution of 1776, Declaration of Rights*. 1776.

<sup>28</sup> Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, 9.



Pennsylvania experienced vast economic growth during the Industrial Revolution in the 1840s, and was completely revolutionized when it experienced an oil boom in the final years of the decade. In 1848, a Pennsylvania native named Samuel Kier discovered oil and began selling it via his newly-formed company, Seneca Oil. He was considered to be the first oil baron, having made \$40,000 per year by 1853 (\$1.25 million in 2018 dollars).<sup>29</sup> In a sense, Doheny was the Samuel Keir of the West: both were the first in their region to make a massive profit out of the oil that had been there since long before white men settled the continent. Samuel Kier was not the only one to benefit from this newly-discovered economic asset.

In 1858, Edwin Drake settled in the Quaker town of Titusville. Thereafter, he gained nationwide notoriety for drilling the first commercial crude oil well. His wealth lasted for only two years, after which there was such a surplus of oil on the market that the price was driven too far down, forcing Drake to abandon the oil business.<sup>30</sup>



An 1859 advertisement depicting Edwin Drake and his revolutionary methods—a promise of what the oil fields of Pennsylvania had to offer.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Strauss, "Oil Makes a Comeback in Pennsylvania," *The New York Times*, April 22, 2015. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/23/business/energy-environment/oil-makes-a-comeback-in-pennsylvania.html>.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.



These discoveries were not isolated. Titusville was previously a sleepy establishment, but after Drake's oil well proved to be so successful, the town quickly exploded into a bustling community. The quietness of Quaker life, which was still alive and well in the state, and the Quaker devotion to "moderation and temperance," provided fortune-seekers the perfect opportunity to achieve their goals in a relatively untouched market.

Though his name has since been forgotten, Franklin Tarbell was one of the many men who flocked to Titusville in pursuit of wealth. Like so many others, he never achieved the affluence he had so desired. Instead, he is known as the father of the notorious muckraker Ida M. Tarbell, who wrote about her father as an "industrialist" who "put his faith in... experience" and constantly looked for ways in which to streamline the oil process.<sup>31</sup> By all accounts, Tarbell could have been vastly successful. He did experience mild success, but this was cut short by the arrival of something much greater than himself into the state of Pennsylvania: Standard Oil. He was not alone in this incapability to succeed. His often undiscussed narrative, though seemingly unimportant, is representative of the narratives of so many others who attempted to achieve wealth in Pennsylvania and failed because of Rockefeller's immense power.

Ultimately, it was the above mentioned differences in Pennsylvania and California's respective cultures that created two vastly distinct oil booms. California survived the arrival of Standard Oil; Pennsylvania did not. Because of Pennsylvania's relative disinterest in unabashed capitalism, Rockefeller entered a relatively open market and was thus able to dominate.

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<sup>31</sup> Ida Tarbell, letter, August 14 1934; Ida Tarbell, letter, May 9 1939.





## Chapter Four: The Octopus

"The American Beauty rose can be produced in all its splendor only by sacrificing the early buds that grow up around it." John D. Rockefeller

During the years that this thesis discusses (and, to an extent, today), California's identity was a similar, though decidedly more extreme, version of the identities of other states in its region. Pennsylvania's identity functioned in a very similar way. Though their origins, geography, and peoples were inherently different, both states shared one unifying factor: John D. Rockefeller (who entered both as an outsider). My focus in writing this thesis is not to write a biography on Rockefeller; everyone from Ron Chernow to Ida Tarbell has already done so. However, it is imperative to understand the man behind the business, as well as his early successes, in order to fully understand the later years in which he came to California.



The man who became the richest man in the world was not always that way. He was born into a "quiet country life" in Ohio and was raised by his father, a philandering "botanic physician."<sup>32</sup> He was passionate about business from a young age, and enthusiastically began work at age sixteen. His ruthlessness and desire were apparent from the very beginning. Rockefeller felt as if his wealth was properly justified. An unofficial disciple of the popular Methodist reverend John Wesley, he believed that "[t]he fault does not lie in the money, but in them that use it."<sup>33</sup> He hired a soldier to fight in his place during the Civil War in order to continue to remain home and cultivate the fortune he set out to achieve. After a string of fairly successful jobs in various industries, Rockefeller set his sights upon the burgeoning oil industry in the northeast.

Rockefeller's timing was his best asset in these early years. Essentially, he was lucky to be the right age, at the right place, and at the right time. Because of the war, the federal government made it a point to subsidize the oil business in order to support the North's need for transportation, which led to an inundation of oil. So much was produced and in such a careless fashion that wasted oil spilled into creeks and rivers even after oilmen took all that they could.<sup>34</sup>

Rockefeller used this timing to his advantage; the rest of his success can be chalked up to skill and intuition. He frequently bought out less successful competing refiners, undercut his competition, and bought out his rivals. In fact, he was so ruthless that his business dealings in the

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<sup>32</sup> Ron Chernow, *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr.* (New York: Random House, 1998), 11.

<sup>33</sup> John Wesley, "The Use of Money," Sermon, 1972.

<sup>34</sup> Williamson and Daum, *American Petroleum Industry* (82-194)



first half of the 1870s became known as "The Cleveland Massacre."<sup>35</sup> He himself was very aware of his actions and their consequences:

Controlling all refineries, I shall be the only shipper of oil. Being the only shipper, I can obtain special rates of transportation which will drive out and keep out competitors; controlling all refineries, I shall be the only buyer, and can regulate the price of crude as I can the price of refined.<sup>36</sup>

In a combination of both luck and expertise, Rockefeller snatched at the opportunity to tap into the quickly growing Pennsylvania oil market. Though he still operated out of Ohio, in 1862, Rockefeller partnered with two other entrepreneurs to purchase wells in Titusville, Pennsylvania. There, he co-founded the Rockefeller & Andrews Oil Company, which was a near-instant success.

One major business accomplishment in Pennsylvania was not enough for Rockefeller. Soon after the creation of the Rockefeller & Andrews Oil Company, an opportunity arose for him to add to his already-immense wealth. After the massive and well publicized failure of the previous reigning oil company in the state, the South Improvement Company, in 1872 Rockefeller set out to fill the void that remained. From that point on, as described by the Cleveland Herald, what was once the South Improvement Company became "*alias* Standard Oil

<sup>35</sup> Segall, Grant. *John D. Rockefeller: Anointed with Oil*. 44

<sup>36</sup> "History of the Standard Oil Company." McClure's Magazine, January, 1903.

McClure's magazine was a place infamous for muckrakers to report their findings. Years later after it ceased publication, the famous journalist Ida Tarbell stated, "Although McClure's Magazine is no longer on the newsstands, it does occupy a permanent place in the history of the period that it served, because it worked itself into the literary and economic life of the country." For my research, the magazine provided useful information about the mechanics that Rockefeller used when creating his business empire. Though the magazine has a decidedly anti-robber baron slant, the narrative that it provides is extremely valuable.



Company.”<sup>37</sup> His method of eating companies from the inside and controlling all aspects of the trade became his trademark horizontal integration method.

The Pennsylvanian economic landscape, still adjusting to the new growth ushered in by the Industrial Revolution, obviously did nothing to stop this. By 1879, Standard Oil created the world's first long-distance pipeline, the Tidewater Pipeline, which connected Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia, and Buffalo. Because of this, no preexisting small oil business in Pennsylvania could compete. Ultimately, the men who had flocked there, such as Franklin Tarbell and Lyman Stewart, were forced to give up their attempts to pursue lives as oilmen, which they so desperately craved. By the end of the decade, Rockefeller controlled 90% of the nation's refining capacity. Within twenty years of beginning his oil business, he had successfully established himself as one of the most influential and wealthy businessmen in the entire world.

Even though his brilliance in controlling his business lasted throughout the rest of his life, (thus maintaining his empire's international status) his luck eventually shifted. Pennsylvania was one of the first states in the nation to spearhead a series of legal battles against Standard Oil. In typical Quaker fashion, the state fought back in the civil judicial system. (In stark contrast, the Californian conflict against Standard occurred in the state's grease-slicked streets and stock market.) The goal of the legal battles, which sought to indict Standard Oil's principle officers for criminal conspiracy, was never fully realized. However, the actions of Pennsylvania lawmakers began a wave of judicial and political attacks on Standard Oil in the following decade.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.



This backlash to the monopoly culminated in the form of the 1890 Sherman Antitrust Act. Even though it targeted all of the newly-emerging big businesses of the Gilded Age, the Antitrust Act seemed to specifically pinpoint Standard Oil (the attorney of which, Samuel Dodd, first invented the trust). Ultimately, the act established the illegality of any combination "in the form of trust or otherwise that was in restraint of trade or commerce" and promised a fine of \$5000 and a year-long jail sentence to those who did not comply.

The true impact of this new legislation was not fully realized by those in Standard Oil until 1911, when the Supreme



Rockefeller and his wife in 1911.

Court called for the dissolution of Standard Oil, citing its violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act. Thereafter, the company was separated into seven distinct companies: Standard Oil of New Jersey, Standard Oil of New York, Standard Oil of California, Standard Oil of Indiana, Standard Oil of Kentucky, The Standard Oil Company, and The Ohio Oil Company. Though this proved to be a significant dissolution of the near-supreme power that Rockefeller once held, for many, this ruling proved to be too little, too late.

By 1891, the Pennsylvania oil boom reached its peak. In that year, the state produced 31 million barrels of oil, which was 58% of the nation's supply.<sup>39</sup> However, the vast influx of

<sup>39</sup>G.R. Hopkins and A.B Coons, "Crude petroleum and petroleum products, in *Statistical Appendix to the Minerals Yearbook, 1932-33*, US Bureau of Mines, 1934, p.306.



revenue that the boom produced went overwhelmingly into the hands of John D. Rockefeller. After that year, the nation turned its eyes toward the burgeoning oil industries in Texas, California, and Wyoming. Pennsylvania's moment of notoriety had ended.

There are multiple factors that contribute to why Standard Oil succeeded in Pennsylvania and not in California. The entirety of Standard Oil's affiliation with the Pennsylvania oil market, as discussed in this chapter, occurred during the heyday of robber barons in the United States: the Gilded Age. Because of this, Rockefeller was able to conduct his business with little to no governmental curbs on his power. He could be as powerful as he desired. However, by the time that Standard Oil reached California, the nation's sentiments had long since turned away from the sympathy with the über wealthy that the Gilded Age had forged. Because of the Sherman Antitrust Act, these men, especially Rockefeller, were no longer able to carry out their grand plans of insurmountable wealth. Though timing may seem like a frivolous difference between the California and Pennsylvania oil industry experiences, it played a pivotal role in how much power Rockefeller was able to gain and hold over independent businesses.

Additionally, another integral aspect of Standard Oil's success in the east was Pennsylvania's devotion to a quiet, homegrown economy. Developed from its Quaker roots, it created an oil industry that was ripe for the picking, so to speak. This stands in stark contrast with California's more raucous beginnings. In both states, a sense of community was born from their unique origins, but, as we will see in the following chapters, only in California was this sense of community enough for California oilmen to effectively take a stand against Standard Oil.



## Chapter Five: The Boom

Like so many Americans before him, Edward Doheny, a native of Wisconsin, came to California to provide he and his family with a comfortable life. The son of impoverished Irish immigrants, Doheny understood the American drive for betterment and fortune and identified with it throughout his entire life. He considered himself an entrepreneur from an early age. In 1873, still a teenager, he joined the U.S. Geological Survey Department and began a business of buying, breaking, and selling horses in Kansas. His very first attempt at building a fortune brought him a two thousand dollar profit.<sup>40</sup> He could not keep still for long. In the 1880 census, he was listed as a painter in Prescott, Arizona, though he mined on the side, a venture which proved to be fruitless.<sup>41</sup> He then moved on to a sleepy town called Kingston in what is now New Mexico, where he came into contact with Charles Adelbert Canfield, a fellow opportunist who had a reputation for being a "hardworking, devoted family man."<sup>42</sup> These men would work together for the rest of their lives.

It was after Doheny's encounter with Canfield that his luck began to shift. By May 1882, Doheny had taught himself the basics of mining and applied economics. With a similar method used to run his horse business nearly a decade before, he bought land from young, failed, miners

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<sup>40</sup> Margaret Leslie Davis, *The Dark Side of Fortune: Triumph and Scandal in the Life of Oil Tycoon Edward Doheny* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press: 1998), 9.

Margaret Leslie Davis is a historian with a focus on biographical accounts of some of what she calls Los Angeles's "empire builders." Her work on Doheny is an intimate one, juggling statistical evidence of his feats and progress as well as his personal life, the latter of which I believe to be a quintessentially Californian one. I believe that his story, though perhaps not his success, was shared by many who migrated to California in search of prosperity in the oil market.

<sup>41</sup> Prescott, Yavapai, Arizona. 1880 *United States Census*. United States Census Bureau. page.462B.

<sup>42</sup> Davis, *The Dark Side of Fortune*, 9.



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<sup>41</sup> Prescott, Yavapai, Arizona. 1880 *United States Census*. United States Census Bureau. page.462B.

<sup>42</sup> Davis, *The Dark Side of Fortune*, 9.



at rock-bottom prices and mined on the land. He bought land throughout Arizona at low prices, which he retained for nearly a year, then sold again at a profit for \$6,000.<sup>43</sup> Between July 1882 and 1883, he made nearly \$12,000, which he used to purchase even more mines in 1885.<sup>44</sup> His search for wealth in any business he encountered was indicative of the lives of so many others who migrated to the west.

It was at this time that Canfield became a prominent figure in Doheny's life. Canfield was eight years older than Doheny, and acted the part. He was known as an honest, stable, hardworking man. Whereas Doheny was a self-avowed bachelor, Canfield had a wife and two children for whom he constantly felt pressure to support via his entrepreneurial ventures (most of which did not supply his family with the prosperity he so desired to give them). Canfield always looked to greener pastures and consequently moved throughout the West in order to pursue them.

In 1883, Doheny met and married Carrie Wilkins in Silver City, New Mexico. He was a father by December 1885.<sup>45</sup> As a result, Doheny's responsibilities were now much greater. This brought the two men closer together and made them even more eager to make their fortunes. Canfield decided to try his hand at the California markets (whatever they might bring) and left Doheny with a mentally ill wife and a string of unsuccessful mining ventures. After getting wind of Canfield's success as a real estate speculator in California, Doheny decided to follow in his friend's footsteps.

It is imperative to note the resurgence of the Californian economy in the 1880s created by one of the largest land booms that the nation had ever seen. By 1885, professional boomers—

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 13.



men and women who went from town to town throughout the west, driven only by money—began to arrive in Los Angeles, causing the value of land to skyrocket. By 1887, \$98 million worth of land had been sold (over \$2 billion in 2018 dollars). In 1887 alone, \$200 million worth of land was sold (\$4 billion in 2018 dollars).<sup>46</sup> It seemed like the perfect opportunity for Doheny and Canfield to finally earn their respective fortunes.

Unfortunately for Canfield and thousands of others like him, the boom was only temporary. By the end of 1887, the economy screeched to a halt. After losing almost all of the money he had earned via land speculation, Canfield left for San Diego where he tried his hand at gold mining. Doheny arrived in Los Angeles in the winter of 1891 where he was greeted with the information of his friend's misfortunes. He decided to follow Canfield to San Diego, where they formed the Pacific Gold and Silver Extracting Company, which failed miserably within a year. Defeated, they decided to move back to Los Angeles.<sup>47</sup>

In 1893, a combination of nature and sheer luck provided Angelenos—and especially Doheny and Canfield—with the ultimate economic opportunity. Following is a brief background of the events that led up to this.

In 1892, after months of floundering between business ventures and living in a hotel to which he owed months' worth of board, Doheny happened upon an old wagon filled with mysterious, greasy chunks. He asked the driver what he was hauling, to which the driver responded, "It's *brea*," or pitch, from "[a] hole out near Westlake Park."<sup>48</sup> Up to this time, oil and

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<sup>46</sup> Guin, *Historical and Biographical Record of Southern California*, 137.

<sup>47</sup> Davis, *Dark Side of Fortune*, 20.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

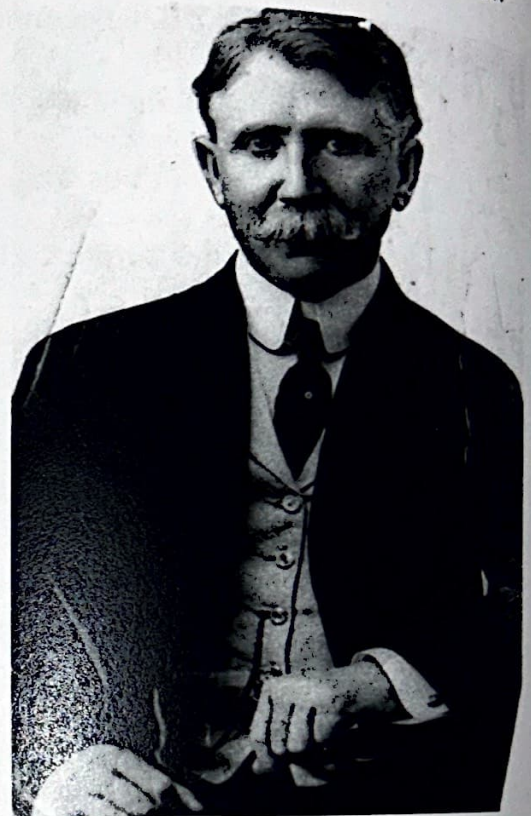


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its related products had been discovered and utilized by Americans in relatively small amounts for nearly thirty years.

The first mention of oil in the area came in 1543 from Juan Cabrillo, the Portuguese explorer who sailed up the coast of California. He learned a method of caulking his boat with "asphaltum" from the Chumash peoples of the now-Santa Barbara area. The Native Americans of Southern California gathered their tar from pits and from slicks on the coast in what are now La Brea and Santa Barbara, respectively. In some places along the coast, the oil was so plentiful that "the entire sea took on an iridescent hue."<sup>49</sup>

Thus it was that, in 1892, Edward Doheny happened upon the sleepy oil industry at the eve of its monumental boom. It was a shaky industry, but Doheny calculated a business plan and eventually enlisted the help of Canfield, who was able to raise \$400 in loans to jumpstart their business.<sup>50</sup> They could not afford the latest equipment, only a tiny crew, so



A young Edward Doheny, ca. 1900.

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<sup>49</sup> Kenny A. Franks and Paul F. Lambert, *Early California Oil: A Photographic History, 1865-1940* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1985), 3.

*Early California Oil* provided invaluable information and background for me when I first began my thesis. It proved to be immensely helpful when providing quantitative and pictorial evidence later in my research as well. Lambert and Franks have written multiple books together on the American West, from Oklahoma to Pawnee society. They have co-authored two books on oil.

<sup>50</sup> Davis, *The Dark Side of Fortune*, 23.



they set to work digging on their newly-bought lot on the corner of Patton and State Streets in Los Angeles. They dug throughout 1892 (a year which proved to be a tragic one for Doheny; his eight-year-old daughter, Eileen, died suddenly of a heart problem, an event for which Doheny was not present).<sup>51</sup> Both Canfield and Doheny dug over 155 feet deep, only to become drastically ill after exposure to the gas fumes. Nearly ready to give up on the entire operation, Canfield borrowed money from an old friend whose financial support allowed the crew to build a twenty-foot-tall oil derrick. They built it based on a picture in a magazine.<sup>52</sup>

On April 20, 1893, Doheny and Canfield finally made the discovery for which they had waited their whole lives. Two hundred feet below the surface, they hit oil. Weeks passed, and each day consisted of filling empty barrels full of oil. At Doheny's suggestion, the product was sold at \$2 a barrel, which was \$0.50 below the going rate on the market.<sup>53</sup> Buyers jumped at the offer, and by 1894, he was able to pay off all of his debts, buy another site nearby, and hire an entirely new crew of workers. Though not wealthy yet, Doheny said that he finally "felt like a millionaire."<sup>54</sup>

Wealth and notoriety soon followed this massive discovery. During the next five years, Doheny drilled eighty-one wells in and near Los Angeles which, collectively, produced 350,000 barrels of oil.<sup>55</sup> By the mid-1890s, he was the primary supplier for the Atchison, Topeka, and the

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 24-25.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>54</sup> BC Forbes, *Men Who Are Making the West* (BC Forbes Publishing Company, 1923), 110.

<sup>55</sup> Davis, *The Dark Side of Fortune*, 29.



Santa Fe Railway. This, in turn, enabled him to use their oil-rich lands throughout Orange and Kern Counties.<sup>56</sup>

In the meantime, Canfield set his sights on the oil fields in Coalinga, California, an area which was noted for its barrenness. The *San Francisco Evening Post* noted the area as "desolate prairie and... torturous fields amid barren hills."<sup>57</sup> But what others found to be hideous, Canfield found to be life-changing. By 1899, Canfield's oil wells supplied the greatest quantity of oil out of all the oil producers in the entire state of California. They produced 70,000 barrels of crude each month, which made Canfield a millionaire.<sup>58</sup>

Doheny and Canfield were not the first to discover successful wells in California. In fact, the first commercially successful well was drilled by Charles Mentry in 1876: the Pico No. 4 oil well. This was located in Pico Canyon, an area about forty miles northeast of downtown Los Angeles. The well was so successful that a town was built around it, aptly called Mentryville. By 1880—a mere four years after its initial success—the town consisted of a hundred families. However, many of these people were boomers, and by 1900, they had moved on. Charles Mentry died at age fifty-four in 1900, and now his name is almost wholly forgotten to those outside of Mentryville's current residents. Charles Mentry's brief, but decidedly influential, narrative was an exemplar of the luck and timing involved in winning a fortune in California's fast-paced, burgeoning economy.

Ultimately, it was Doheny and Canfield's discovery that spearheaded the influx of entrepreneurs to Los Angeles who wished to pursue their luck in the region's quickly-burgeoning

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 31.



oil game. What came next was an unprecedented boom in the creation of oil companies based in Los Angeles, which eventually turned the city into a “greasy, vibrant, oil-soaked” metropolis.<sup>59</sup> Men and women, immigrants and Americans born and raised in California, old and young, flocked to partake in arguably the most influential economic movement since the California Gold Rush of the late 1840s.

Despite the fact that Frederick Jackson Turner declared the West to be closed in 1893 (which, coincidentally, was the same year in which Doheny and Canfield made their grand discovery), the same motivations that had previously pushed Americans westward throughout the nineteenth century now inspired them once more.

In 1839, John L. O’Sullivan, the man who coined the infamous phrase “Manifest Destiny,” declared the United States to be “the nation of progress, of individual freedom... freedom of conscience, freedom of person, freedom of trade and business pursuits...”<sup>60</sup> These ideals, of course, did not expire in 1893, even though Turner declared the nation’s “free land” had been completely settled by that point.<sup>61</sup> The same desires for opportunity and promise still lived on in the hearts of many Americans, pushing them around the United States in pursuit of it. California’s oil boom provided the perfect opportunity for these Americans to once again do so. It drew people from throughout the nation and, indeed, the world.

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<sup>59</sup> Franks & Lambert, *Early California Oil*, 74.

<sup>60</sup> John L. O’Sullivan, “The Great Nation of Futurity,” *The United States Democratic Review*, 6:23 (1839), 426-430.

John L. O’Sullivan’s name may not be recognized by many, but his idea of Manifest Destiny is one that has sculpted American history and has since been studied in every United States history class. O’Sullivan was an American columnist who wrote extensively on the annexation of what later became Texas and Oregon. His philosophies were indicative of those of the entire nation as its members moved westward. I would argue that the sentiments expressed in his writings are still apparent in various aspects of American imperialism and industry today.

<sup>61</sup> Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.”



One such person was a Ms. Emma Summers, a piano teacher and native of Kentucky, who daringly tried her hand at the oil game and, ultimately, succeeded. In the July, 1911 edition of *Sunset Magazine*, Summers was spoken of with great reverence and awe, and with great attention to the fact that it was a *woman* who was able to challenge some of the state's most influential oil producers:

The names of men who have made fortunes since a sea of oil was discovered under California's crust are known the length and breadth of the state, and beyond. Men like to have it so. But only now and then does the public hear of Emma A. Summers, who for twenty years has been a power in the Los Angeles oil-field and who is to-day perhaps the largest individual oil producer in the world. Alone, with her own money, she produces a thousand barrels a day, and in addition she buys enough oil to supply contracts aggregating two and a half million dollars a year.<sup>62</sup>

Emma Summers, the same woman showcased in *Sunset Magazine* and dubbed "The Oil Queen of California" actually did not set her sights upon creating a fortune until much later in life. The daughter of a wealthy landowner in Kentucky, she was sent to Boston at a young age to study music with the intention of instilling in her a sense of culture and refinement to prepare her for the life of a socialite and homemaker. However, on what her father considered to be a whim, Summers decided to leave home and move to Tennessee to teach music lessons. She subsequently married and moved to Los Angeles with her new husband, where she "took her place beside her husband as bread-winner."<sup>63</sup> Though this was an unconventional arrangement,

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<sup>62</sup> Bertha H. Smith, "Emma A. Summers, Oil Operator," *Sunset*, July 1911, 50.

Though Emma Summers was a vastly influential player in the early California oil boom, there is not much information on her that remains aside from a few newspaper articles and amateur blog posts. This *Sunset* article was a goldmine when I discovered it. Written during Summers' peak, the article describes her life, business, and philosophies. The article makes multiple mentions of how Summers was anomalous among her gender and how her success was surprising. In this sense, the article provides insight into how Summers was perceived during her time, despite her undeniable success.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.



Angelenos took quickly to Summers' talent and kindness. She was so popular that she kept seven pianos in her kitchen in order to provide lessons to the extraordinary amount of children and adults who became her pupils.



Emma Summers inspecting one of her oil wells.

By 1893, Summers had \$700 in the bank (the equivalent of approximately \$18,000 in 2018 dollars). In a risky, but ultimately shrewd, business move, she joined funds with another investor to buy a well for \$1,800 (\$47,000 in 2018 dollars).<sup>64</sup> The well brought her mild success, which encouraged her to buy more wells. As a result, she accrued \$10,000 in debt (a quarter of a million dollars in 2018 dollars). Her piano lessons could hardly pay off such a debt, but she resolutely stated that she “had to keep on.”<sup>65</sup> This tenacity proved to be one of her most admirable and beneficial traits.

Emma Summers viewed these business ventures as something of importance with which to fill her time. She abhorred boredom and sank herself into her oil business, overseeing every aspect of it. To many, it was a strange sight to see a woman about the oil fields with so many surly men, yet Summers spent hours upon hours “in the forest of rigs where the smoky engines and wheezy pumps filled the air with dirt and dismal noises.”<sup>66</sup> The oil fields were no place for a

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 51.



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lady, which perhaps made them all the more alluring to Summers, who was not one to shy away from a challenge.

At the height of her oil career, which lasted well over twenty years, Summers owned 155 wells throughout Los Angeles and, even then, she taught music lessons during her time away from the oil fields. Her empire encompassed half of the original Los Angeles oil field by 1900.<sup>67</sup> Due to the size of her business, she operated out of a suite of three offices in the fashionable Mason Opera House in downtown Los Angeles. She actively participated in the stock exchange, and by 1909, she opened a painting company to which she appointed her brother, T.A. McCutcheon, as manager. Much like Rockefeller with other businesses in the east, Summers was in constant contact with any notable company operating in Los Angeles, whether it was a popular hotel, the Los Angeles Railway Company, or Pacific Light and Power, with an influence upon all of them. She continued to do so until she retired in 1930, after which she lived a private life until her death in 1941.

With an unequaled sense of wherewithal and drive for success, Summers was a fixture of Los Angeles culture, and she was a perfect example of the liberties that California's open market provided. Even though this market was far from egalitarian, it provided a platform on which Summers, a woman, could compete against some of the most powerful men of the region—and succeed. Her success was not met with overwhelming joy, however. Men looked down upon her with a sense of superiority and jealousy, but, as the author of the *Sunset* article so aptly stated, “that [was] merely because she... followed the golden rule of business and [did] unto others as

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<sup>67</sup> Franks and Lambert, *Early California Oil*, 74.



they would have done unto her— and done it first.”<sup>68</sup> The pursuit of “free land, the opportunity for competency, and economic power” motivated the ever-progressing Summers as it had pushed her predecessors to California.<sup>69</sup>

This spirit seemed to have a resurgence upon the oil boom. Doheny, Canfield, and Summers were far from the only ones to have been struck by it. At this same time, a man rose to power whose name has been disregarded by so many, but whose contribution to the infrastructure of California is still enjoyed today. Some may recognize his name as founder of Biola University and one of the sponsors of *The Fundamentals* (a set of essays written between 1910 and 1915 which established modern-day Christian fundamentalism). The man behind the acts, Lyman Stewart, like so many others, was drawn to the California Oil Boom and eventually founded Union 76, a successful mega corporation that lasted until the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Like so many others, he came from humble beginnings and found fortune in the hills of Los Angeles. Stewart was born on July 22, 1840, in northwestern Pennsylvania (which concurrently happened to be home to a burgeoning oil industry). However, during his youth (and the formative years of the Pennsylvania oil boom) he had no ties to the industry; his father was a tanner, and Stewart dropped out of school at eleven to become his apprentice. Stewart’s primary

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<sup>68</sup> Smith, “Emma A. Summers: Oil Operator,” 52.

<sup>69</sup> Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.”



motivations were religious; he hoped to save \$125 to become a missionary.<sup>70</sup> In a change of heart, however, he decided to invest his money in an oil well in Pennsylvania, which quickly failed. He tried once more and struck oil, but prices of oil were too low to justify pursuing the project further. He desperately needed money and direction, and he joined the Union Army at the start of the Civil War. After his service, he returned to Pennsylvania to try his hand at the market again, this time with the business companionship of Wallace Hardison, a man with whom he would work until the beginning of the twentieth century.

Nominal success (overridden by excessive failures) befell the hopeful Stewart. Rockefeller's stifling control continuously pushed him further and further from achieving financial success—as was the case with most small oil businesses in Pennsylvania at the time—so Stewart and Hardison decided to migrate to California. While searching for his window of opportunity, Stewart pursued an education at the University of Southern California.

During this time, the two oilmen created the Hardison and Stewart Oil Co., which was a drilling service that subcontracted to larger oil companies of its era. In 1890, when Stewart was fifty years old and no longer the young man he once was in the oil fields of Pennsylvania, his company was incorporated as the Union Oil Co., and Stewart became head of all affairs and management.<sup>71</sup> He became president four years after the creation of the company and utilized his

<sup>70</sup>Cecilia Rasmussen, "Oilman's legacy lives on in LA," *Los Angeles Times*, March 2, 2008, <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/mar/02/local/me-then2>

Cecilia Rasmussen is a retired columnist for the Los Angeles times with a focus on California history in her column, "Then and Now." When asked about her research methods, she said, "I have to see a place in order to write about it. Occasionally, I'd go into court records. My usual method was to track down a descendant mentioned in an obituary, court document or newspaper cutting." Thus, her article on Lyman Stewart, although brief, is detailed and intimate, providing insight into his multifaceted life.

<sup>71</sup> Rasmussen, "Oilman's legacy lives on in LA."



business expertise to create something larger than himself. Little did he (or the world!) know that his company would go on to be one of the most successful oil companies in the nation, that success would last for decades, and that it would successfully bar Standard Oil from fully taking advantage of the rich oil economy of Southern California.

The reasons for Stewart's success come from a variety of causes. Most importantly, he employed many of the same methods that Rockefeller utilized in the east. From the very beginning of Union Oil, Stewart paid attention to all aspects of the industry. In 1891, only a year after incorporating Union Oil, he oversaw the installation of the first petroleum research laboratory in the west in Santa Paula. He simultaneously worked with multiple industries connected to the that of oil—from ships to railroads—and pushed them to convert their fuel from coal and wood to oil. His company also built the world's first oil tanker, which was able to carry 6,500 barrels of oil at a time to San Francisco to be sold.<sup>72</sup> Stewart had an eye for marketing, business, and relations that was evident in his success. Just as Rockefeller notoriously controlled various aspects of oil production, which contributed significantly to Rockefeller's ability to create a near-monopoly, Stewart also wielded influence over all industries associated with his own. In future years, as we will see in Chapter Six, Stewart's seedling of a company proved to be

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<sup>72</sup> Fred L. Hartley, "Address at the National Dinner of the Newcomen Society" (1976) in *The Spirit of '76: The Story of the Union Oil Company of California*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 8.

Fred L. Hartley was the president of Union Oil from 1964 to 1988. He was known for his devotion to his company, integrity, and vision. His speech, delivered a decade before his retirement, describes the history of his company from 1859 until the year in which the speech was delivered. This account of the company casts it and its leaders in a favorable light; Hartley was the president as well as a staunch laissez-faire capitalist with an abhorrence for governmental intervention. Additionally, as the speech was delivered during the bicentennial, it is unabashedly influenced by American exceptionalism and patriotism. Because of this, this speech not only provides important details into the life of Lyman Stewart and the history of Union Oil but also further evidence that the ideals written about by O'Sullivan and Turner were still widely embraced by the later years of the twentieth century.



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a major contender to Standard Oil and an embodiment of all that the mega corporation hated in its competition.

In a paper as brief as this one, it is impossible to cover the entirety of the nuances and scope of the California oil boom. In explaining the origins, motivations, successes, and legacies of Doheny, Summers, and Stewart, I hope to have shed light on the universal aspirations of those who flocked to the state in the hope of wealth. Though, needless to say, most did not achieve the same level of notoriety or affluence, the entrepreneurs whom I have discussed serve as a microcosm of the Southern California environment. All who came to Los Angeles to pursue a fortune did so with the recent memory of the expansion of the West and with the same ambitions as their forefathers. To them, California served as the final dominion of freedom in America, a culmination of all that the country had to offer.

It was this very idealism of the state— as well as the belief in its abilities to provide the opportunity that other places simply could not— that created a region known for its vigor and undying passion for progress. In the oil business, this was unique to the western states, most notably California and Texas. These same principles did not apply to the eastern states that had seen their oil booms come and go decades before. It was in the West that one of the greatest economic empires was bred and flourished. This permanently altered the industrial makeup of not only the region, not only the nation, but the world.



## Chapter Six: California, Post-Rockefeller

The economic and cultural topography of California's oil industry remained largely the same throughout the first half of the twentieth century, despite the fact that Rockefeller formally entered the California oil industry in 1900. Though he entered both the Pennsylvania and California oil markets, the unsurpassed economic growth in California that I described in the previous chapter was not nearly as short lived or hopeless as in Pennsylvania. California's oil boom flourished well throughout the twentieth century. Between 1900 and 1937, California produced 16.45% of the world's oil output. Two cities in Los Angeles County, Long Beach and Santa Fe Springs, alone produced nearly 4% of the world's oil.<sup>73</sup>

News of the boom rapidly reached the east coast, attracting men from all walks of life, from Lyman Stewart to John D. Rockefeller. In 1900, Standard Oil bought the Pacific Coast Oil Company, which was an already-successful company that had previously operated out of the Santa Maria Basin.<sup>74</sup> Though a successful business endeavor, it did not supplement the Standard Oil empire as Rockefeller had hoped it would; thus, in 1906, he partially integrated Pacific Coast Oil with another preexisting entity, Standard Oil Company of California (intentionally named by its founders to attract Rockefeller's attention and hopefully his pocketbook— they succeeded).

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<sup>73</sup> Franks and Lambert, *Early California Oil*, 231.

<sup>74</sup> Arthur M. Johnson, "California and the National Oil Industry," *Pacific Historical Review* 39:2 (1970): 158.

Arthur Johnson is a public historian with a focus on business. He was a professor of history at the University of Maine until he became president of the university in the 1980s. The article that I used provided detailed and often quantified information concerning the few years immediately before and after the arrival of Standard Oil in California (though the article encompasses much more than that). It also provides valuable comparisons and connections to other oil states throughout the nation, from Texas to New Jersey.



However, Rockefeller's desires of expanding his empire from coast to coast could not seem to come to fruition for two major reasons.

Despite the fact that the Sherman Antitrust Act was passed in 1890, it was not until 1911 that a ruling came down upon Standard Oil that permanently disabled the company. *Standard Oil Company of New Jersey v United States*, Standard was, according to the Supreme Court in conjunction with President Taft, who was notorious for his passion for trust busting, in direct violation of the Antitrust Act. Therefore, Rockefeller had to relinquish his company's hold on its subsidiaries. This came at a most inopportune time for Rockefeller, having just seriously begun his venture into the California oil fields only five years before. In an already established economy, five years was not enough for even the oil emperor himself. This timing was unfortunate, to say the least. Perhaps in Standard Oil's heyday in the 1870s, it would have been able to exercise the same power over California as it had over Pennsylvania. But now, it could not.

Times were changing. The days of the Gilded Era trusts were over. Though they had paved the way for bigger corporations to begin dominating international markets in later years, the backlash toward them during the first decades of the twentieth century was so influential that it sculpted an entire era with its progressivism. Thus, men like Rockefeller were quickly becoming relics. Taft's presidency, with his mission to not only carry out, but intensify, Roosevelt's antitrust agenda, marked the zenith of the Progressive movement. By the time that the United States became embroiled in the first world war, the economy began the shift back to mega corporations that dominated markets. However, in contrast with the past, these mega



corporations were not only national but international entities with greater access to technology and resources.

Furthermore, the preexisting oil market in California was already so well established by the time that Rockefeller entered it that it proved to be unbreakable. Ultimately, California Standard only controlled about 30% of the state's oil production, whereas the next three largest companies produced 43% of California's oil in 1913.<sup>75</sup> Though 30% control of a state's industry by a single company is undeniably impressive, it is nowhere near the amount of control that Rockefeller wielded in the eastern markets. Who were these Californian entrepreneurs that made up the other 70% of the California oil business that Rockefeller tried to hard to control?

Most notably, Union Oil created its own thriving business via Lyman Stewart's tactics, as discussed in the previous chapter. In doing so, Union Oil assisted other businesses in resisting the shadow of Standard Oil. In 1910, Union allied with the Independent Producers Agency, which consisted of multiple smaller, independent oil companies, to create a network of pipelines from Kern County, located southeast of Los Angeles County (and home to another concurrent, albeit smaller oil boom) all the way to the Pacific Ocean.<sup>76</sup> In contrast, in Pennsylvania, most independent oil businesses were unable to compete with Standard because of their inability to fund a pipeline and transport the amount of oil needed to contend with Rockefeller. However, the

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>76</sup> Ralph Arnold and V. R. Garfias, "Geology and Technology of the California Oil Fields," *Bulletin of the American Institute of Mining Engineers* 87 (1914): 390-392.

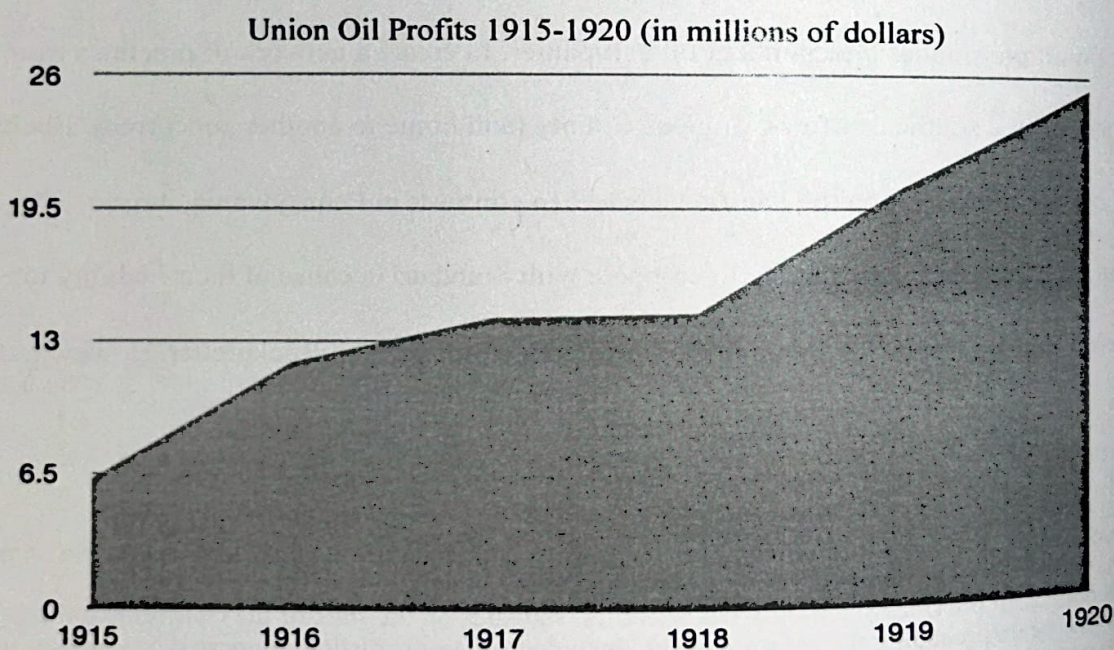
This document provides seemingly never-ending statistics on the state of the California Oil fields from the years preceding the creation of the document. These statistics compare the successes of California to those of other states as well as those of other countries. The document provides detailed information on specific companies' finances as well as scientific information about their various processes. It was written to be discussed and reviewed by other members of the American Institute of Mining Engineers.



preexisting members of the oil market, in standard California boomer fashion, were adamant on succeeding.

The creation of the pipeline networks was not the only attempt by Union Oil to maintain its autonomy in such a competitive and quickly-changing market. Similarly to how Rockefeller swallowed up contending businesses in order to add to his own, Lyman Stewart's son, William, oversaw the acquisition of the Pinal Dome Oil Company in 1917, which was a company that, until recently, had enjoyed a significant amount of success.<sup>77</sup>

Union Oil, by the hand of Lyman Stewart, successfully utilized many of Rockefeller's tactics. From the creation of a pipeline to horizontal and vertical integration, Stewart's business method was strikingly similar to that of Rockefeller, and these methods were effectively passed down to his son. It is important to note that both Stewarts made these business decisions both to



<sup>77</sup> Fred L. Hartley, "Address at the National Dinner of the Newcomen Society," 11.



preserve their own company, but also did so to preserve individualism among corporations in California. Perhaps Lyman Stewart, Sr. drew from his past, when he was elbowed out of Pennsylvania by Rockefeller, and utilized his life's experiences to be a more conscientious businessman.



An elderly Lyman Stewart (center, looking at camera) with his colleagues. Stewart, along with these men, founded the Bible Institute of Los Angeles in 1908. This institute later became Biola University.

In 1922, the company took further precautions by incorporating Union Oil Associates to act as a holding company and prevent foreign interests from interfering in the business.<sup>78</sup> This effort largely succeeded. In 1921, the company was worth more than \$26 million (over \$360 million in 2018 dollars), and it controlled multiple other oil and oil-related companies, from transportation and refining businesses to other production companies.<sup>79</sup> Union Oil successfully utilized Standard's methods of combining horizontal and vertical integration and it was more than able to compete with the octopus itself, at least in California.

<sup>78</sup> John Moody, *Moody's Manual of Railroad Investments* (New York: Analyses Publishing Company, 1922), 1175.

Moody's Manual was a popular economic encyclopedia/business manual published from 1900 until 1922. It provided detailed information, specifically geared toward investors and entrepreneurs. For my research, it provided invaluable statistics about all contemporary companies associated with the oil business, and information and statistics about companies' subsidiaries, stock, balances, officers, and histories.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 1176-8.



Union Oil aided in keeping the Californian economy alive and it perpetuated the idea of California as an economic goldmine well through the Great Depression.

For example, oilmen like Sol Alexander, a migrant from Chattanooga, Tennessee, came to California with his father, who was a hopeful oilman who had taken to heart the stories of the promise that the Golden State harbored. In a 1982 interview conducted by California State University, Long Beach, Alexander recounted his experience in the oil industry and overall culture in Southern California. His experience began soon after he graduated from Poly High school in 1922, when a fellow DeMolay member offered him a job in the San Pedro oil fields driving trucks to deliver Union Oil products. Alexander held that position for three years until he was promoted to selling Union products. Though his job was stable and did not require much manual labor, he was taken aback by the sheer number of men who were employed by Union as drillers. These drillers, despite the dangers and the physical rigor of the job, were willing to take the risk for the \$15 per day pay (\$210 in 2018 dollars).<sup>80</sup>

Union Oil notoriously kept close tabs on its employees, another survival mechanism that helped it keep afloat. Alexander made a decent living and was able to buy himself a house within two years of obtaining his job as a salesman, and Union tracked every cent of his paycheck. At the dawn of the Great Depression, however, Alexander was fired from the company and, as a result, set out on his own to try his hand as an independent oilman like his father.

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<sup>80</sup> Sol Alexander, interview by Kaye Briegel, California State University of Long Beach, Long Beach, April 30, 1982.

In the 1980s, the California State University of Long Beach conducted a series of interviews with petroleum entrepreneurs of Long Beach's past in order to help index and thus preserve the city's history. The interview with Sol Alexander provided significant insight into his personal life, career, and philosophies, all the while illuminating the environment of the years after the Los Angeles oil boom.



Alexander was able to support himself through this work until the point of the interview, nearly sixty years later. He embodied everything that migrants to California had embodied for a hundred years prior: risk-taking, a burning desire for financial independence, and most importantly, tenacity. At first, he supported himself by rustling customers from Union Oil. But then he joined various successful oil companies in the area, including Sinclair Oil and Bachmann Oil, the latter of which he worked for a quarter decade. The company remained successful well into the 1950s, but began to fail once after the oil industry Middle East took over the international market.

Throughout these years, Alexander supplemented his income by buying and selling wells throughout Los Angeles County which involved transactions with a vast network of independent oilmen via the Oil Field Service Association. Created in 1932 to provide a community to oilmen from all aspects of the region's business, the Association held monthly meetings at which everyone from geologists to drillers spoke.<sup>81</sup> All members of the industry harbored the survivalist's desire to succeed, and it was because of this collective sense of endurance that these men were able to do so. This was quintessentially a Californian phenomenon, borne from the very principles on which California was founded.

After leaving Bachmann oil, Alexander found a job with the Signal Hill Oil and Gas Company as a consultant in their Long Beach office, where he stayed for three and a half years. When greener pastures presented themselves, he demoted himself to a mere advisor to Signal Hill Oil and Gas and went to work for Julian Petroleum, the founder of which planned "to put

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.



Standard Oil out of business."<sup>82</sup> Of course, this never happened, but it was businesses like Julian and *all* others at which Alexander worked that contributed to the inability of Standard to truly succeed in the Southern California market. Sol Alexander represents the constancy in the California oil market despite the arrival of Standard Oil.

There were countless more like Sol Alexander, all able to make a living despite the presence of Standard Oil. Bo Cockriel, a migrant from Kansas City, Missouri, came to California in 1917 to strike it rich in whatever way he could. He also was interviewed by California State University, Long Beach, and detailed his affiliation with the oil industry, from real estate to electricity with Edison. By the start of the Great Depression, Cockriel turned to the business of investing and drilling new oil wells, which lasted all the way until the city of Signal Hill began to pass environmental ordinances that effectively halted much of the business in the area. According to Cockriel, it was the shift toward environmentalism that effectively handicapped the industry, not the presence of Standard Oil of California.

The business provided him with a steady income, and he was able to send all six of his grandchildren to college, something he made note of multiple times in the interview. To Cockriel, the wealth he procured from the oil business was a result of his hard work, but it was also "dependent on the people [he associated] with."<sup>83</sup> The oil industry's thriving, pulsing environment provided a community in which a tenacious, money-oriented man could find his

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Bo Cockriel, interview by Kaye Briegel, California State University of Long Beach, Long Beach, September 20, 1989.

Conducted as part of the same project as the Sol Alexander interview, and much in the same manner, this interview focused on Bo Cockriel, who placed a focus on the oil community as opposed to the financial benefits he reaped from it. Though a much shorter interview than the one with Sol Alexander, Cockriel provides insight into the heart of the industry more than Alexander did in his interview.



equals. Eventually, he went on to co-found the Long Beach Petroleum Club in 1953, which drew elite members of oil companies from around the nation, most notably Shell, Mobil, and Texaco. He made no mention of the presence of Standard Oil's members. Much like the Oil Field Service Association, the Long Beach Petroleum Club provided a sense of camaraderie within a group of people with the same common enemy: the specter of Standard Oil. The men and women who frequented organizations such as these prolonged the survival of independence in the California oil industry, and their efforts can be seen today—from the now-dance-hall Petroleum Club to the derricks scattered between bungalows on Signal Hill.

As in describing some of the major players in the early years of the oil boom, it is impossible to make note of every successful entrepreneur associated with the industry in the following years. However, I believe that the stories of Sol Alexander, Bo Cockriel, and Union Oil are imperative in order to understand the persistently unruly and independent oil market in Southern California in the first half of the twentieth century. The archetypal pioneer spirit continued to live on in California via its oil business. The narratives of the men whom I have described in this essay prove this continuing resilience and vibrancy.



## Conclusion

"It was that population that gave to California a name for getting up astounding enterprises and rushing them through with a magnificent dash and daring and a recklessness of cost or consequences, which she bears unto this day - and when she projects a new surprise the grave world smiles as usual and says, 'Well, that is California all over.'" -Mark Twain

Over a hundred and fifty years ago, Americans in the east looked upon California as the final bastion that protected the ideals upon which the nation was founded: rugged individualism, opportunity, and freedom from the restraint of the gentrified east. In California, anything and everything could happen, whether you were an impoverished immigrant or an American down on his luck. Postcards circulated depicting mammoth-size fruit and happy farmers, photographs were published showing miners with their pans filled with gold, and the moment in which Edward Doheny discovered oil in 1893, word spread across the nation more quickly than wildfire. His rags-to-riches story provided motivation for even more Americans to pursue everything that California had to offer and effectively spearheaded one of the largest oil booms in the nation. It was as if the myth of prosperity that California harbored only intensified with time.

Tales of California's promise drew people from all walks of life and from all corners of the nation. The state instilled in all of them a drive to succeed. In the early 1890s, when Emma Summers arrived in California with her husband, she had no intention of becoming a wealthy entrepreneur. However, with all the hustle and bustle around her, she found herself drawn to the oil industry and all that it promised to provide. By the end of her life, she had become a landmark figure in Southern California, a unique figure in the oil fields and business offices of Los Angeles. Summers was a decidedly successful woman, driven by her tenaciousness and risk-



taking. Her unusual narrative provides insight into the lesser-known narratives of the California oil boom and highlights its extent and scope.

Lyman Stewart, on the other hand, created one of the most successful oil businesses in the nation by utilizing a variety of Rockefeller's methods. He bought out competing and failing companies, oversaw the production of technology that would expedite the production and transportation of oil, and, most importantly, created a pipeline with other independent oil producers in Southern California. Because of this, Rockefeller could not succeed in the region—unlike Pennsylvania, where his control over the pipeline gave him seemingly limitless power over the industry. Lyman Stewart's narrative extends into that of his son. Together, they created a company that lasted through the entire twentieth century.

Though not as successful as the figures that I have discussed previously, Sol Alexander and Bo Cockriel both embodied that unique California spirit and illustrated the lasting vigor of the Southern California oil industry. They took advantage of all that the industry had to offer by jumping from company to company and taking part in all aspects of business. Their tenacity is not unique to only them. They both created organizations to perpetuate a sense of community among oilmen. Though their stories are not widely told, their contributions to the history and culture of Southern California are invaluable.

The stories of these men and women did not end where our narrative leaves us. Despite significant industrial and technological changes in the later half of the twentieth century, California still prides itself in its contribution to the international oil market. And the battles between independent companies within the state's oil industry—between large and small, international and local—have persisted. It was not until 2005 that Chevron, a descendent of



Standard Oil, bought Unocal, which was once Union Oil.<sup>84</sup> It took more than a century for the wishes of Rockefeller to be realized and for Standard Oil to gain significant power over the California oil market. Needless to say, he never achieved such goals during his lifetime, and even as of 2005, California is home to a bustling oil market that exists without fear of monopoly.

Economy has always been at the forefront of Californians' minds, even before the territory became a state. From the Gold Rush to the oil boom, the state has acted as host to a variety of successful industries which have been created by a variety of people—some successful only temporarily, others with legacies, others with nothing. But all experienced a drive to better themselves, to find within themselves the same principles and goals on which the nation was founded.

Such is the spirit of California.

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<sup>84</sup>Johnson, "California and the National Oil Industry," 159.



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<sup>84</sup>Johnson, "California and the National Oil Industry," 159.





This Spring Break, I had the pleasure of visiting Signal Hill and looking at it through an entirely different lens.

Throughout my life, I have visited the area and even the historic Sunnyside Cemetery (located at the base of the hill) many times. On this particular visit, thanks to my research, I was able to locate the spot in which Ansel Adams took the photo to the left in 1939. I took the photo below.



Seventy-nine years later, Signal Hill is disparate in so many ways. Oil rigs that once covered the entire area like a swarm of bees, constantly buzzing, have since been reduced to a few dozen rigs here and there. The area is no longer inhabited by land speculators, opportunists, and outlaws (which is for the best, I think!). Nevertheless, Signal Hill still retains glimpses of its past—and takes pride in doing so. I was grateful to be able to experience this during my visit and see the remnants of the world I researched.



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