



## Columbus Marion Joiner Oilman

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In 1930 in East Texas, wildcatter C. M. "Dad" Joiner (1860–1947) discovered the largest single pool of petroleum ever found in the lower 48 states.

**C**olumbus Marion Joiner was born to James and Lucy Joiner in 1860 near Center Star in Lauderdale County, Alabama.

**Law and Politics** By the age of 23, Joiner had his own law practice in Tennessee. Six years later, he was elected to the Tennessee state legislature, where he served until 1891.

**Oklahoma** In 1897 Joiner moved to Oklahoma, where land was relatively inexpensive. By 1906 he owned 12,000 acres of Oklahoma farmland, which was worth \$200,000. The next year, he lost his money and land during an economic panic.

Trying to regain his fortune, Joiner turned to the Oklahoma oil fields. He became a wildcatter, someone who drills oil wells in the hope of finding oil where it's not known to exist. In 1913 he drilled his first oil well in Seminole, Oklahoma. In the following years, he probably drilled 100 more wells. Ironically, he almost discovered both the Seminole and Cement oil fields but stopped drilling 200 feet short. They were later discovered by other oil companies.

**A Move to Texas** In 1926, at the age of 66, Joiner moved on to Texas. He believed there was oil in Rusk County, though geologists thought otherwise. He leased more than 4,000 acres and in 1927 started drilling with barely any money and with terrible equipment.

In 1930 Joiner drilled at a site eight miles east of Henderson, using a flimsy pine rig and battered tools. His first two wells there were unsuccessful, but in the summer, his crew found good signs of oil in one spot. Joiner and his associates went further in debt to continue drilling, but the third well, Daisy Bradford No. 3, began gushing on October 3, 1930, at a depth of 3,500 feet. This opened up the East Texas oil field, the largest oil field in the world at the time and still the largest in the lower 48 states. Joiner was nicknamed Dad because he was the "father" of that field and was 70 years old.

**Oil** Joiner had not drilled in the center of the field but on the eastern edge, because that was the spot where his rig had broken down. Nevertheless, the well was productive. However, the real oil boom in Rusk County started after December 1930 when another well was completed near Kilgore, Texas. This well was drilled into the same oil pool, but it produced much more oil. Joiner had opened a billion-barrel oil reserve. Approximately 14,000 wells were eventually drilled in this major oil reserve.

**Financial Disaster** In his efforts to continue drilling, Joiner had gone deeply into debt. Worse yet, he oversold shares in his well, meaning that investors owned more than 100% of his oil venture. Almost immediately after the well came in, creditors and investors demanded repayment. He became involved in some 200 lawsuits, draining his fortune.

After 1940, Joiner retired in Dallas. He sold his well and leases for \$1 million to Haroldson L. Hunt. Although he had been worth \$3 million as late as 1938, Columbus Marion Joiner died virtually penniless in 1947. The town of Joinerville, Texas, which developed because of the discovery of oil, was named for him.

### Review Questions

1. How old was Joiner when the Daisy Bradford No. 3 oil well struck oil?
2. How big was the oil pool that the Daisy Bradford well tapped?

### Critical Thinking

3. **Making Comparisons** How does a wildcatter differ from other oil producers?
4. **Analyzing Causes** How did overselling shares cause Joiner to lose his fortune?