Birth of an Industry

Spindletop was the largest oil well the world had ever seen. By September 1901, six more wells were producing oil in the area. Nearby Beaumont became one of the first oil-filled boomtowns. Workers, merchants, and speculators rushed to the city. Its population of 10,000 tripled in three months, and soon it swelled to 50,000.

The price of land skyrocketed along with the population. One parcel that had been priced at $150 before the geyser sold for $20,000—and the buyer resold it that same day for $50,000. In 1901 alone, 25 people invested about $335 million in Texas oil production. Some became rich; others lost their money.

Spindletop marked the birth of the modern oil industry. Large corporations such as Exxon, Gulf, and Texaco trace their origins to Spindletop. The flood they produced profoundly influenced American industry and transportation, as well as the world we inhabit today.

Reed: As you read, collect and cite text evidence.

1. Underline text that tells how Spindletop affected the community.
2. Circle words and phrases that describe growth.

Retell

Spindletop was the largest oil well the world had ever seen. By September 1901, six more wells were producing oil in the area. Nearby Beaumont became one of the first oil-filled boomtowns. Workers, merchants, and speculators rushed to the city. Its population of 10,000 tripled in three months, and soon it swelled to 50,000. The price of land skyrocketed along with the population. One parcel that had been priced at $150 before the geyser sold for $20,000—and the buyer resold it that same day for $50,000. In 1901 alone, 25 people invested about $335 million in Texas oil production. Some became rich; others lost their money. Spindletop marked the birth of the modern oil industry. Large corporations such as Exxon, Gulf, and Texaco trace their origins to Spindletop. The flood they produced profoundly influenced American industry and transportation, as well as the world we inhabit today.

Retell Retell lines 24–42. Why was Spindletop important in the history of Texas and the world? Cite details from the text in your answer.

Reed: As you read, collect and cite text evidence.

1. Circle the topic of Taylor’s email.
2. Underline the fact that Taylor shares.

We welcome input from our readers. Please e-mail us your comments!

From: TaylorCarlorey@Spindletop.net
To: schoolmaster@Spindletoponline.com
CC:
Subject: Spindletop

Dear Texas History Online,

I have an interesting fact I learned: in just two years after the Spindletop geyser, there were more than 600 oil companies with 3,000 wells and 15,000 workers in the Beaumont area. Some of those companies would make millionaires.

Thank you for the article,

Taylor Carlorey
Grade 4
Beaumont High School

Retell and Discovery

Retell Taylor’s email. How does her “interesting fact” support the idea that Spindletop was the birthplace of the modern oil industry? Cite evidence from the text in your discussion.

SHORT RESPONSE

On Text Evidence

What qualities did Higgins and Lucas have that helped them succeed in the oil business?