

3-1968

Lyne Toliaferro Barret, a Pioneer Texas Wildcatter

C. K. Chamberlain

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ethj>



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Tell us how this article helped you.

Recommended Citation

Chamberlain, C. K. (1968) "Lyne Toliaferro Barret, a Pioneer Texas Wildcatter," *East Texas Historical Journal*: Vol. 6: Iss. 1, Article 5.
Available at: <http://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ethj/vol6/iss1/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by SFA ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in East Texas Historical Journal by an authorized administrator of SFA ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact cdsscholarworks@sfasu.edu.

**LYNE TOLIAFERRO BARRET,
A PIONEER TEXAS WILDCATTER**

C. K. CHAMBERLAIN

Lyne Toliaferro Barret might well be called the father of the oil industry of Texas. However, C. A. Warner says that Texas oil is much older than Barret and in fact that Texas is the birthplace of the oil industry in North America, for the first recorded use of oil in the new world was on the Texas coast by the survivors of the De Soto expedition.¹ Although De Soto died in May 1542, his men under Luis de Moscoso, in an effort to contact Francisco Vasquez de Coronado who they knew was leading an expedition to the east in search of "quivira," may have come as far west as present day Waco. Moscoso decided that he could not contact Coronado and led his men back to the Mississippi where they constructed crude boats which would enable them to float down the Mississippi and then along the coast until they reached Spanish settlement in Mexico. After reaching the Gulf of Mexico it was necessary to touch the shore from time to time for protection against storms and to secure fresh water. On July 25, 1542, Moscoso was forced to take shelter in a creek on the Texas Coast where they remained for two days. They found an oily pitch-like substance floating on the surface of the creek, which the Spaniards called "cope" and which they used to repair the bottoms of their vessels. Oil historians believe the creek could be any one of several creeks which empty into the Gulf between High Island and Sabine Pass.²

Europeans, after coming to North America, found oil seepage in a number of areas, particularly in present-day Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, and in Texas. Tradition has it that Indians regularly visited these oil springs and used the oil for medicinal purposes. The oil was used as a liniment and as a bath and it must have had value in keeping infections out of wounds. In all probability the oil also was taken internally. A well known Indian trail and the so-called Spanish Trail ran near Oil Springs in Nacogdoches County. Texas Indians in all probability used the oil as it was used in other areas, and the Spanish who returned to East Texas in 1779 under Antonio Gil Y'Barbo also frequented the trail and used the oil to grease their cart and wagon wheels, to preserve their harness, and also for medicinal purposes.

Before the end of the eighteenth century in areas particularly in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, and Kentucky an important salt manufacturing industry developed. Wells were bored seeking brine from which salt was refined. Drillers, seeking brine water in these areas, frequently found a thick, oily substance which burned explosively when ignited. At times this oily substance was found several hundred feet under the surface, and was recognized as identical to a well-known product called "rockoil." It was necessary to rid the water of the oil before it could be made to produce salt. Some salt producers dug cisterns where the water was allowed to settle and after the oil came to the surface it would be dipped off and allowed to flow into streams. This custom was found both dangerous from fire and destruc-

tive to fish. In some places in Kentucky there was so much oil in some salt wells that the wells had to be abandoned. After the value of oil was discovered some of these wells were opened and became oil producers.³

Samuel M. Kier, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, an enterprising salt producer, had problems of oil in his salt wells and became convinced, perhaps in self-defense, that the oil had value as a medicine which came from, as his advertisement stated, four hundred feet below the earth's surface.⁴ By 1850 Kiers Petroleum, or 'Rock-Oil' was a well known remedy all over America. Kier bottled crude oil in eight ounce bottles which were wrapped in a circular which set forth its values as a cure-all, and of course the circular, as a good patent-medicine, gave directions as to how it should be used. Its greatest value according to the circular was as a liniment, but it was recommended also for cholera, liver complaints, bronchitis, and for tuberculosis. The dose recommended was three teaspoons three times a day. Kier's advertisements carried many testimonials from individuals who had received benefits from his "Rock-Oil."

In the meantime in Burkesville, Kentucky, there was a large output of petroleum sold under the name of "American Medicinal Oil" said to have been shipped to many places in the United States and to Europe.

Although Kier and others did a good business in rock-oil no one apparently thought of drilling for petroleum for its own sake, even though individuals had used the oil, which was obtained from springs or that which had been brought to the surface with salt-water, for sundry purposes. In 1854 George H. Bissell, a graduate of Dartmouth College, on a visit to his old college, was shown a bottle of rock-oil and was told it was better than coal for making an illuminating oil. Bissell was impressed with the commercial possibilities of the oil.⁴ Whale oil was expensive and had an unpleasant odor. Oil received from coal mines was limited in quantity. Bissell must have realized that Americans wanted to stay awake at night and wished to be able to see, hence that there were great possibilities of wealth if an unlimited supply of cheap lighting fluid could be produced. Bissell organized the Pennsylvania Oil Company and sent a sample of the Pennsylvania oil to Professor Benjamin Silliman, Jr., a chemist at Yale, who reported that a number of valuable products could be manufactured from crude oil. The next problem was to obtain oil in sufficient quantities to make development worthwhile. Who first suggested that oil might be obtained by drilling wells cannot be ascertained. Professor Silliman had made his report in 1855 but it was not until 1858 that a representative of the Pennsylvania Oil Company, which had changed hands and was then known as the Seneca Oil Company, was on the grounds in northwestern Pennsylvania with instructions to find oil. A stockholder who owned only a few shares of stock, Edwin L. Drake, or Colonel Drake, as he was called, was chosen for this task. Drake had no experience as a well driller. He did have, however, great determination, and a pioneer instinct.

Some historians claim the idea of drilling for oil was entirely Drake's. Bissell and Silliman, however, must have known that much of Kier's oil came from salt wells and in all probability Drake was sent to the oil springs of Titusville, Pennsylvania, with instructions to drill for oil. Drilling an oil well in the remote Pennsylvania county was a difficult task. Titusville

was on Oil Creek, fourteen miles from where it joined the Allegheny River, and forty miles by stage-coach from Erie. Drake's inexperience, the remoteness of the region and the general skepticism of the community caused many long delays. In the spring of 1859 Drake secured a driller from Kier who was continuing to pump his salt wells and bottle his medicine and in August of the same year 'Drake's folly,' as the people called his well, began to produce some twenty barrels of oil a day. An oil boom immediately started.

Lyne Toliaferro Barret was born in Appomattox, Virginia, on November 7, 1832, the youngest of nine children of Sarah Toliaferro Barret and Charles L. Barret. Charles L. Barret decided, in 1842, to move his family to Texas. Although there were war scares in Texas in 1842—in fact there were two Mexican invasions in that year—the Barrets were not easily frightened. On the way to Texas, Charles Barret died. Sarah and her nine children decided to go on to Texas. It would have been easy, under the conditions, to have returned to Virginia. John and Thomas, her two oldest sons, were in their late teens or early twenties and were able to manage a good sized plantation. The family first settled in San Augustine County and the mother purchased land during the Republic of Texas. The Barret family prospered in San Augustine but nevertheless in a few years moved to Melrose in Nacogdoches County. School terms were short in Melrose and in the one-teacher school the teacher taught all the grades. Lyne and his brother and sisters were well educated for Sarah Barret did not rely entirely on the community school for she was able to employ a tutor who taught her children when the community school was not in session.⁷

Lyne (Tol) Barret grew to be a tall, rather slender, well-built young man, with reddish or blond hair.



Lyne (Tol) Barret

The Barret brothers hunted and fished and frequently visited Oil Springs which was not far from Melrose, where oil came to the surface and ran into Oil Springs Branch. This curious freak of nature must have fascinated Lyne and in all probability he and his brothers took oil to the plantation to grease their wagons and other machinery and they may have used the oil as medicine. The field notes of E. C. Palmer, a surveyor, made in 1885 on the Mora estate state that the estate included an oil spring, which was the Oil Springs that the Barrets visited, and which Palmer says was visited by many people for medical reasons.⁸

Newspapers reached Melrose telling of Samuel M. Kier's success in bottling oil in Pennsylvania and selling it for medicine, and also of the bottled oil coming in from Kentucky. Some alert druggist in Nacogdoches or Melrose may have even stocked the medicine. A man of Barret's education, imagination and intellect perhaps read Professor Silliman's report of 1855 and that the Seneca Oil Company was planning to drill for oil. If oil was valuable in Pennsylvania why would it not be just as valuable in East Texas? In 1849 Barret secured a lease covering the Skillern tract which included some of the oil springs⁹ near Melrose. Frank X. Tolbert says the lack of machinery may have prevented him from drilling the first oil well in the United States and in the world.¹⁰ It was in August, 1859, at Titusville, that Drake's Folly justified itself by beginning to produce some twenty barrels of oil a day, and the first oil boom in the world was under way. Nothing but the discovery of gold had caused so much excitement.

In the meantime, Barret, on August 26, 1857, married Angelina Martha Thomas. Angelina had grown up in the home of Tom Johnson and the Johnsons and the Barrets owned most of Melrose and a great deal of the surrounding country. Lyne and Angelina became the parents of nine children. The only daughter and next to the youngest child, Era, married Benton Wilson, and died in Nacogdoches in April, 1966.¹¹

Barret found it impossible to get his well started before the coming of the Civil War, and the war stopped all his plans. Soon after the war began, the Confederate Congress passed a conscription law that included a number of exemptions. Perhaps the exemption which caused the greatest amount of dissatisfaction among the non-slave owning Southerners was the release from military service of plantation owners who supervised as many as twenty slaves. The purpose of the exemption was to secure proper police supervision of each plantation.¹² Lyne Barret immediately asked for and received an exemption from military service so that he could serve as overseer for his mother's plantation.¹³ The Barrets were still a wealthy family at the beginning of the war.¹⁴

Before the war was over Barret entered the Confederate service as a quartermaster and served with distinction. Many receipts for payments in goods by individuals for the army are found in the Barret papers, and after the war Barret used paper for bookkeeping purposes, which had been printed for his use as quartermaster.

Soon after the end of the war Barret began to try to arouse interest in his oil project at Oil Springs, and he was able to interest certain individuals in Waco and Austin.

From Liberty he wrote his Confederate Army friend, George W. O'Brien of Beaumont:

The great excitement of this age is oil. It promises to lay in the shade "The Great South Sea Bubble" or any other bubble of any age. This region of Texas will be wild upon the subject in a few months. A company has been organized and a cash capital of \$25,000.00 paid to experiment at Sour Lake in Hardin County, and a man and the money have already gone north to buy the necessary machinery to search the bowels of the earth for oil. Millions of dollars are now ready to be invested as soon as the results in Hardin County are known. None doubt but that oil will be found and the excitement will not wait the slow process of experiments, and if we are prepared for excitement we will make our fortune. What is the use of toiling and struggling with aching brains and weary hands for bread when gold so temptingly invites you to reach out and clutch it?

Barret urged O'Brien to purchase leases around Beaumont.¹³ This, of course, was a guess on Barret's part but proved to be a good guess.

For a time after the war ended, however, there was confusion in Texas, for there was no civil government. General P. H. Sheridan, after a time, established military government, and Provisional-Governor A. J. Hamilton soon began the process of re-establishing civil government. Hamilton in early 1866 called on the people of Texas to vote for delegates to a state convention, which met and made the Constitution of 1866.

Barrett did not wait for the making of a new constitution, for he and his associates on October 9, 1865, leased the Skillern tract, and the Daniel C. Vail tract was leased the next day. Barret called his company the Melrose Petroleum Company and his associates in these leases were P. B. Hollingsworth, Chas. A. Hamilton, and John B. Earle. The lease contracts gave the Melrose Company exclusive privilege of mining operations on the land where S. W. Skillern then lived and upon which the springs known as Petroleum or Oil Springs were situated. Skillern and his associates were paid one hundred dollars in cash at the time the contract was signed, and were to be paid two hundred dollars in thirty-six days, and they were to receive one-twelfth of all mineral or oil which might be procured or found on the land. Barret's company agreed to put the works in operation within five years or forfeit the contract. Timber on the land was not to be unnecessarily destroyed, nor the land injured except for necessary mining operations.¹⁴ This was the first lease in Texas on which a producing well was completed.¹⁷

In creating the Melrose Petroleum Company, Barret and his associates agreed that each would advance a sum of money so that the company would have operating capital, and a test well was begun on the Skillern tract on December 20, 1865. Barret was made president of the company and on December 21, 1865, he sent a receipt for \$1,090.00 to Earl B. Hamilton. This at least was some of the money Hamilton had promised as part of the operating capital of the company.

When the Melrose Petroleum Company was created no one knew under what circumstances the company might exist. Slaves had been freed and labor and cash were hard to come by in Texas in 1865 and 1866. A Constitutional Convention convened on February 7, 1866, and proposed a new Constitution for Texas. If this Constitution was adopted changes might be necessary in the contract between Barret and his associates for Section thirty-one of Article VII of the proposed Constitution provided that no private corporation could be created unless the bill creating it passed both houses of the Legislature by a two-thirds vote, and the Legislature by a two-thirds vote could revoke the charter of any company.

The proposed Constitution was accepted by the people of Texas in an election in June, 1866; the Eleventh Legislature convened on August 9, 1866; and the Melrose Petroleum Company petitioned for the right to carry on its business in Texas. In the meantime, John T. Flint of Waco, a lawyer, a member of the law firm of John T. Flint and D. T. Chamberlin, became a prominent member of the company. Flint, as a lawyer, took the lead in presenting the company's petition to the Legislature. The Eleventh Legislature granted a charter to the Melrose Petroleum Oil and Manufacturing Company on November 2, 1866. The petitioners were given a charter for twenty-five years to engage in mining for petroleum, iron, coal, and salt-water, and had the privilege of erecting works to manufacture the minerals mentioned or any other valuable minerals they might find. The company was allowed to elect a president, and other necessary officers and to make any regulations not inconsistent with the laws of Texas. The capital stock was placed at three million dollars, and the company was given the right to lease or buy any property needed in their business. The principal office was placed in Waco, but it might be moved anywhere in the state provided a month's notice was given in the nearest newspaper.¹⁹

During the summer of 1866, and before the Eleventh Legislature met, Barret continued to work at bringing his well into production. On June 7, 1866, Peyton F. Edwards wrote Barret at Melrose that he was sending Dr. Benjamin T. Kavanaugh, of Marshall, to talk with him. Edwards, in introducing Dr. Kavanaugh said, "He is the man who works wonders with his divining rod." Edwards also said that Kavanaugh wished to sell Barret the patent right for 'Bulters Artisian Auger' for Nacogdoches County. It did not take Barret long to trade with Dr. Kavanaugh, for on June 9, the two signed a contract giving Barret the exclusive right to sell 'Bulter's Auger' in Nacogdoches County. Barret was to pay Kavanaugh \$750 for this exclusive right if a paying well was brought in. Barret also purchased an auger from Kavanaugh for fifty dollars. Kavanaugh was to deliver the auger to Shreveport and Barret was responsible for getting the auger from Shreveport to his well at Oil Springs.

In boring his well, Barret utilized some of the principles now involved in the rotary rig. Barret's auger was eight feet long and eight inches in diameter. The auger was fastened by clamps to a joint of pipe and rotated by a large wheel which was driven by cogs from a drive shaft by a steam engine. The auger was mounted on a tripod over the well. When it was necessary to remove the auger, the rope which was attached to the auger was fastened to the harness of a mule and the mule was driven away from the tripod until the auger reached the surface.²¹



Tripod

On May 14, 1866, Flint wrote Barret that he had paid B. P. Hollingsworth \$300 refunding him for his expenses to the North, presumably to inspect the Pennsylvania oil fields.²² Flint complained he had no report on Barret's activities and he wanted a full statement. In this letter Flint suggested that it might be a good policy to form a company under New York Corporation laws and to sell stock.

Barret's associates in Waco were not always pleased with their investment and indicated they would sell but a letter in the Barret papers dated June 14, 1866, countermanded an earlier letter and said they did not want to sell. This letter was signed by John T. Flint, Charles A. Hamilton, J. B. Earle and C. A. Hamilton. Flint, later on, again offered to sell his interest.²³

Perhaps because of the unsettled conditions in Texas, or because he believed a New York Company would have more prestige, and that there was surplus capital in New York, Flint again wrote Barret on June 23, 1866 that he was preparing a charter for a New York Company and was sending a man to New York to promote the company and to sell Texas oil lands. If the mission was not successful, which it was not, Flint was not to make a charge to the company. Both Flint and Hollingsworth wrote Barret they were sending a drilling company to Nacogdoches and that Barret ought to make a contract with them. Hollingsworth said Barret could continue to drill his own well, and the new drillers could drill some other place.²⁴ Barret must have objected for there is no record of the new drilling company's coming to Oil Springs.

Barret's auger passed through several weak veins of oil and at a depth of 106 feet the auger dropped through a vein six inches deep, when oil, water, and gas gushed to the top of the well.²³ Barret reported his well to have a capacity of ten barrels a day. Warner says he cased his well with iron pipe, capped it and went to Pennsylvania to secure finances and experienced help.²⁴



Pipe at a well

Barret must have experienced many delays, some financial and otherwise, for the well he began in late 1865. On October 2, 1866, he wrote Colonel William Clark, a signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence and the editor of the *Nacogdoches Chronicle*, who had published an article about the importance of oil, that he agreed with him. In the *Chronicle* letter Barret expressed the wish that the people of Nacogdoches and surrounding counties would get together and decide on the best way to produce oil. He was convinced there was a plentiful supply of oil in the area. Barret said he had

decided to go North and see different oil machinery working before he bought for his own field.²⁷

Barret immediately notified his partners of his success but he also informed them of the difficulty of keeping water out of the well. Hollingsworth who was somewhat of an engineer, wrote October 10, for Barret to make a bag out of strong cloth or leather two or three feet long the size of the well and fill it with wheat or some other small grain and attach a rope to the bag and push the bag well below where water entered the well. The grain when wet would swell and Hollingsworth thought would prevent the water from reaching the oil; otherwise, the water might push the oil out of the well. When the bag was drawn to the surface the water would come with it and only the oil would be left. Hollingsworth cautioned if the well filled with water it would have to be pumped out and the most of the oil would be lost. There is no record that Barret tried this suggestion. Barret needed a pump and Flint wrote October 23 that a man by the name of Moore was drilling a well in Angelina County and that Moore would lend him his pump. Flint complained that Earle, one of the partners, had gone to Nacogdoches for evidence of oil, but that Barret was in Shreveport and that Earle had returned to Waco with no information. Flint knew Barret was making arrangements to go North for he had canceled his proposed trip to New York and he did not think it necessary for both to make the trip.

Barret must have left for New York in early November. He wrote his wife from Shreveport that he had determined to go North and that his brother, William, was waiting for him in New Orleans. He believed he had good prospects of making a large amount of money out of his petroleum interests. He told Angelina to keep the Negroes who were on the farm and he would pay them well when he returned in five or six weeks. "Anything that you do will be right . . . Kiss the boys and tell them to be good boys until Papa returns. God bless you all. Your husband, L. T. Barret."²⁸

Flint wrote November 25, 1866, before Barret returned from the North, that the Waco partners would be willing to sell fifty acres of the Skillern tract for \$20,000 or their part for \$10,000. This offer, Flint wrote, had been made to John G. Stuart of Palestine, but of course the offer would have to be satisfactory with Barret and Hollingsworth. Nothing came from the offer. Flint may have been attempting to get back the money he had invested so there could be only profit if the company made money.

Barret carried samples of his oil with him on his trip North and was successful in interesting John F. Carll, a civil engineer, in his project. Brown Brothers of Titusville, Pennsylvania, agreed to furnish \$5,000 worth of machinery and Carll was to go to Texas with the machinery. When Carll arrived at Oil Springs, Barret was led to believe he was satisfied with the discovery well but before the promised machinery had arrived Carll decided to drill another well using Barret's crude drilling equipment. The new exploratory well was not to be put down on the Skillern Track but on the Doctor Leake Place some one mile west of Melrose.²⁹ The Leake test was carried to a depth of about eighty feet without encountering any oil. Warner says since oil was produced in great quantities in Pennsylvania, Carll aban-

done the Texas venture and returned home. The *Oil Investment Journal* of November 18, 1906, carried Barret's story. Barret says that, unfortunately for him, on the very day machinery was to be used to test his discovery well, Carll received instructions from his company, because of the low price of oil and unsettled conditions in Texas, that it would be inadvisable to continue the Texas project further.²⁰ The machinery was returned to Pennsylvania and Barret was not able to secure any additional financial backing. Barret's wife had inherited a large amount of land and he had used some of this land as security for the loans he had received from Carll, but, in general, during and immediately after the Reconstruction period northern capital was not interested in Texas investments.

In 1867 Flint made extensive efforts to sell his interest in the Melrose Petroleum Oil and Manufacturing Company. J. B. Hamlett, of Beaver, Anderson County, wrote Barret on May 14, 1867, that he had received a letter from Flint in which Flint offered to sell his stock, but that he could not raise the money to buy the Flint, Hamilton, and Earle interest and he appeared to believe that Flint was trying to trick him. Flint on August 28, 1867, perhaps in desperation, wrote Barret that he understood Barret wanted to buy the interest of the Waco partners and that they were willing to sell, and if Barret was short of cash they would take land if the title was good.²¹

After Carll returned to Pennsylvania there was friendly correspondence with Barret. On July 27, 1868, Carll wrote he was sorry that Barret had not been able to get his well into real production. Carll told of the situation in Pennsylvania and predicted that oil would sell for ten dollars a barrel in the fall of 1868 and that now was the time for Barret to bring his well into production.

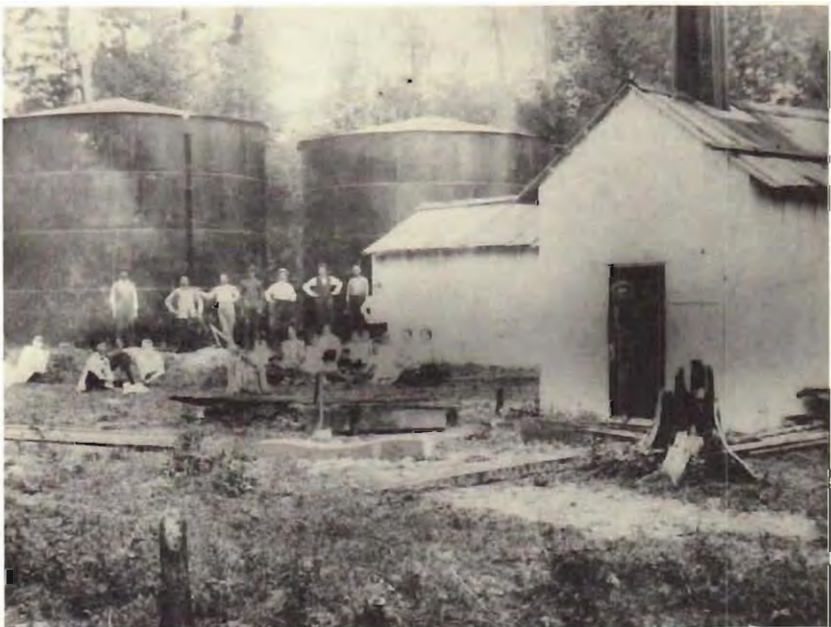
Oil may have sold for a good price in 1868 but by 1870 the price had fallen and Carll was possibly in some financial trouble. In a letter dated April 4, 1870, Carll says he was sending Barret the power of attorney that Barret had requested. Carll mentioned that a remittance of Barret's note was due and that he wanted to pay Brown Brothers who had not received any payment from the amount that Barret had sent in 1867.²²

Finally Carll sued in District Court in Nacogdoches County. Carll's petition claimed that Barret, V. J. Simpson, and A. J. Simpson had signed a note for \$3000 on March 1, 1867, and that \$700 of the principal plus interest from March, 1867, was due him. The case was dismissed at the cost of the plaintiff.²³ A settlement must have been made out of court for Carll's lawyer, Rich S. Walker, gave Barret a receipt for \$560 payment on December 6, 1874.²⁴ There is no record of further payment hence this must have been a settlement in full.

Because Barret was unable to secure the necessary finances he was forced to abandon his oil project and the field lay dormant until 1887. In 1887, B. F. Hitchcock with the assistance of E. H. Farrar, of New Orleans, organized the Petroleum Prospecting Company, capitalized at \$100,000. The company brought J. E. Prince and a crew of Pennsylvania drillers who set up a cable-tool rig near Oil Springs and began operations. At about 180 feet the well blew in and between 250 and 300 barrels of oil flowed on the ground

for the drillers had not prepared tanks or a reservoir to care for it. After the first day the well quit flowing and a pump was put on it.²⁴ Warner says this well was located a few hundred feet from a well that had been dug about sixty feet by hand at about the same time Barret was drilling his discovery well.²⁵

J. P. Mangham, of Nacogdoches, told C. A. Warner in 1936 or 1937, that he worked for the Petroleum Prospecting Company from 1885 to 1887 and that he was present when their well number one came in at a depth of 180 feet and produced twenty-five barrels a day. The oil at first was hauled off by mule teams, and the pipe line to Nacogdoches was layed in 1888 or 1889. Mangham said that at one time as many as 150 men worked at Oil Springs, Mangham was a cooper and coopered the wooden barrels for the first shipment of oil out of the Oil Springs field. The work was done at first under a large tree, but later a building was built for that purpose.²⁶



Petroleum Prospecting Company, Oil Springs

The Petroleum Prospecting well brought Texas its first real oil boom and this was a direct result of Barret's efforts twenty years later. People flocked into Nacogdoches from a wide area. The Petroleum Prospecting Company exhibited a great deal of enterprise and by the spring of 1889 had drilled some forty wells. The company built an office and a storage house containing

four wooden tanks of 250 barrels each; two iron tanks of a 1000 barrel capacity; an engine house and a stationary engine; several portable engines and several derricks at Oil Springs; fourteen and one-half miles of pipe line from Oil Springs to Nacogdoches, and a 2000 barrel tank on Irion Hill in Nacogdoches.

Four other companies had entered the Nacogdoches field by 1890 and altogether they drilled some ninety wells. The most important of these four companies was the Lubricating Oil Company which was located on Bayou Visitador some three or four miles northeast of Barret's well. The Lubricating Oil Company had the usual holdings necessary for drilling wells, but also established an oil refinery, which was the first refinery in Texas.³⁷ By 1890, with the increase of production in Pennsylvania, it was recognized that production at Oil Springs was not exceptionally profitable and the field was abandoned.

Leah Hardeman Wilson, the mother of the late Benton Wilson of Nacogdoches, writing to the *Sentinel* in 1914 tells of the oil boom in Oil Springs. The Wilsons lived near Melrose and when her children were small in the late 1870's she persuaded her husband to go on a camping trip to Oil Springs. They had difficulty in finding the way, and when they finally found the springs there was such a growth of weeds and brush that they were afraid of snakes. After one night at Oil Springs, and experiencing a rain storm, all of the family was more than anxious to return home. Then in about 1887, Mrs. Wilson visited Oil Springs again, and:

The whole place was alive with tents, houses, oil derricks and men, women, and children. Husband sold groceries there with Mettauer. Charley Bird (colored) ran a hack to Nacogdoches and back every day, bringing and carrying passengers to Oil City for it was now a little city. Oil excitement ran high, the oil company had a large boarding house; their men made barrels and tubs at the factory; hammers and saws were heard in every direction, with a shingle machine running with the rest in 1887. Now the place is dead (1914) but the railroad runs by the site of the spring.³⁸

After Barret's failure to produce oil and the accompanying financial losses he entered the mercantile business in Melrose as a partner with Blackstone Hardeman. The mercantile business was not entirely successful and at Barret's death he owned one hundred and eight acres of land. Barret's mother at one time owned a tremendous acreage and his wife inherited a large estate.³⁹

Lyne T. Barret died in his home at Melrose, March 23, 1913, at the age of eighty. Angelina Barret died April 4, 1920 at the age of seventy-eight. Both are buried in the Melrose Cemetery.

History records many instances in which the pioneer reaped little benefit from his ideas, his vision, his energy, and his investments. Those who came later received the profits.

Lyne Barret was such a pioneer.

NOTES

1. C. A. Warner, *Texas Oil and Gas Service 1543* (Houston, 1939), 1.
2. *Ibid.*, 1. See also Carl Coke Rister; *Oil: Titan of the Southwest* (Norman, 1949), 3.
3. Ida M. Tarbell, *The History of the Standard Oil Company* (New York, 1925), 4.
4. Rister; *Oil: Titan of the Southwest*, 4.
5. Tarbell, *The History of the Standard Oil Company*, 5.
6. *Ibid.*, 6, 7.
7. Interview with Mrs. Frank Shofner of Nacogdoches, granddaughter of Lyne T. Barret.
8. Barret Papers. East Texas Collection, Paul L. Boynton Library, Stephen F. Austin State College. Hereinafter cited as Barret Papers.
9. Warner, *Texas Oil and Gas Since 1543*, 6.
10. Frank X. Tolbert, *The Story of Lyne Toliaferro (Tol) Barret, Who Drilled Texas' First Oil Well*, 2. This is a sixteen page pamphlet published by Texas Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Association, May, 1966, Dallas, Texas.
11. Interview with Mrs. Frank Shofner, of Nacogdoches, a granddaughter of Barret.
12. Clement Eaton, *A History of the Southern Confederacy* (New York, 1965), 91. This exemption led to the saying that the Civil War was a rich man's war and a poor man's fight.
13. Barret Papers.
14. Sarah Barret died in 1867 and was buried near Melrose on family property that is now owned by the Stallings family. The cemetery is no longer in existence.
15. Tolbert, *The Story of Lyne Toliaferro (Tol) Barret Who Drilled Texas' First Oil Well*, 5. Tolbert says O'Brien was active in the development of the Lucas gusher which brought in the Spindletop Field.
16. Barret Papers.
17. Warner, *Texas Oil and Gas Since 1543*, 6. John Nathan Cravens, in *James Harper Starr*, p. 152, says that James Harper Starr had dug a well on the Edwards estate which is sometimes said to be the first oil discovery in Texas. Starr employed a man by the name of Hardeman who in all probability was the same Bunch Hardeman who drilled for Barret. Starr's well must have been drilled in 1867 or 1868.
18. Warner, *Texas Oil and Gas Since 1543*, 6.

19. H. P. N. Gammel, *The Laws of Texas* (Austin 1898-1837), Vol. V. *Special Laws of the Eleventh Legislature*, 1866, p. 1457. The Texas Constitution of 1866 was replaced by the Constitution of the Radical Republicans in 1869. Hence the Constitutionality of the law creating the company might have been challenged. Some Radicals did not want to recognize any law passed in Texas after Texas seceded from the Union.
20. Barret Papers.
21. Warner, *Texas Oil and Gas Since 1543*, 6.
22. *Ibid.*, 10.
23. Barret Papers.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Warner, *Texas Oil and Gas Since 1543*, 6.
26. *Ibid.*, 7. Mrs. Frank Shofner, a granddaughter, says he cased his well with cypress and is convinced that by digging a few feet the cypress could be found. Delbert Teutsch, Nacogdoches Fire Chief, has done a great deal of work restoring Oil Springs. Teutsch attempted to dig in search of the cypress casing but encountered quicksand some three or four feet below the surface and had to abandon the project.
27. Barret Papers.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Gladys Hardeman, "The First Oil Well in Texas and the Southwest." This is an unpublished manuscript included in the Barret Papers.
30. Rester, *Oil: Titan of the Southwest*, 6.
31. Barret Papers.
32. Civil Minutes, Nacogdoches District Court, Vol. K. p. 586.
33. Barret Papers.
34. Rester, *Oil: Titan of the Southwest*, 6-7.
35. Warner, *Texas Oil and Gas Since 1543*, 13.
36. Teutsch Collection. Delbert Teutsch, Nacogdoches Fire Chief, has an excellent collection of pictures.
37. Rester, *Oil: Titan of the Southwest*, 7-8.
38. Barret Papers. The railroad had been built after the oil boom by a lumber company.
39. Interview with Mrs. Frank Shofner. When the oil boom came in 1887 Barret was interested but did not have the money to invest. He did not want to involve his mercantile business. A Nacogdoches man, Ben Wettermark, became a member of one of the companies.