



The Greatest Gamblers: The Epic of American Oil Exploration

Ruth Sheldon Knowles

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"Oil," writes Ruth Sheldon Knowles, "is the most hazardous, expensive, heartbreaking gambling game in the world." And, as this book dramatically proves, the men who have been the gamblers of the American oil business have been some of the most colorful and fantastic personalities in our history.

The Greatest Gamblers is the story of our remarkable oilmen and the vast industry they have created—from its simple beginnings in 1859 at Titusville, Pennsylvania, to the big-business oil operations of today. Here are the wildcatters, the prospectors, the scientists, the hunch players (Mrs. Knowles points out that independent oilmen have discovered more than three-fourths of America's oil fields). Here you will meet "unlucky" Dad Joiner, whose fortunes changed only in his seventies when a worthless ten-acre tract of Texas wasteland proved the key to one of America's two biggest oil fields; and H. I. Hunt, who parlayed an oil lease he won at a poker game into an oil business that made him one of the richest men in the United States.

Harry Sinclair ... Tom Slick ... Mike Benedum ... Everette DeGolyer ... Charles Canfield ... Edward Doheny — the pages of this book are crowded with the stories of such men, their tough boom towns, their dogged persistence and wild successes, and the brutal competition they faced.

But *The Greatest Gambler* is also the story of a prospectors' rush that has become an organized industry. An absorbing portion of the book tells how the industry has found new uses for petroleum and its by products, and how this sometimes involved as much heartbreak as prospecting. There were the ships that exploded when oilmen first tried to market petroleum as marine fuel, the locomotive roundhouse that blew up when they first tried to convert railroads to oil. Mrs. Knowles discusses knowledgeably the present predicament of the petroleum industry and what is necessary to find and develop America's remaining great oil and gas resources. *The Greatest Gamblers* is a lively and authoritative account of what is probably the most fascinating and adventurous business of all.

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Joseph Sutton:

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