



# Finding Oil: The Nature of Petroleum Geology, 1859-1920

*Brian Frehner*

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Oil has made fortunes, caused wars, and shaped nations. Accordingly, no one questions the idea that the quest for oil is a quest for power. The question we should ask, *Finding Oil* suggests, is what kind of power prospectors have wanted. This book revises oil's early history by exploring the incredibly varied stories of the men who pitted themselves against nature to unleash the power of oil.

Brian Frehner shows how, despite the towering presence of a figure like John D. Rockefeller as a quintessential "oil man," prospectors were a diverse lot who saw themselves, their interests, and their relationships with nature in profoundly different ways. He traces their various pursuits of power from 1859 to 1920 as a struggle for cultural, intellectual, and professional authority, over both nature and their peers. Here we see how some saw power as the work they did exploring and drilling into landscapes, while others saw it in the intellectual work of explaining how and where oil accumulated. Charting the intersection of human and natural history, their story traces the ever-evolving relationship between science and industry and reveals the unsuspected role geology played in shaping our understanding of the history of oil.

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