

# Memorial to Frank Rinker Clark

## 1881-1974

FRANK A. MORGAN

801 Roosevelt Building, 727 West Seventh Street, Los Angeles, California 90017



Frank Rinker Clark lived during ten decades of the 19th and 20th centuries. He passed away in Tulsa, Oklahoma, January 31, 1974, at the age of 92 years and 10 months. I last saw him with his lovely wife, Gertrude, at a geological conference in 1973. He was as active and enthusiastic as on many similar occasions when we worked together during almost fifty years.

Our first meeting was near the red barn on the Yates Ranch, west of the Pecos, in 1926. His big discovery of the Yates Field for the Ohio Oil Company (Mid-Kansas-Transcontinental) had just come in, and I was glad to meet him. In fact, I was proud that he would speak to me as I was just getting started in the oil exploration business at age 28. Here was a geologist who had reached the pinnacle of achievement at age 45:

a scientist, a working geologist, and an oil finder. I learned from his associates and friends (and competitors) that he was as good as he looked in all human endeavors. His was a stature molded by characteristics which distinguished the man throughout a long and fruitful life.

Frank is survived by his wife, Gertrude; a son, Frank R. Clark, Jr., Houston; two daughters, Virginia (Mrs. Orval B. Day), Tulsa, and Rosalia Louise (Mrs. Fred Knight), Denver; three brothers; and five grandchildren.

Much of the biography which follows is from the tribute prepared by a distinguished friend, the late Kenneth C. Heald, at the time of the Sidney Powers Memorial Award of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists to Frank Rinker Clark in Calgary, Alberta, in June 1970.

Frank Rinker Clark descended from a truly pioneer family. His mother was born on the famous wagon trip led by Brigham Young from Illinois to the Salt Lake Valley. They settled at Grantsville, Utah, where Frank was born on March 14, 1881, and later the family moved to the south edge of Salt Lake City. There Frank grew up with his six brothers and three sisters and experienced the hardships inherent in and essential to survival on a family farm. After high school in Salt Lake City, he spent two years at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., where his brother, J. Rueben, was living. He returned west and earned his B.S. degree at the University of Utah in 1910. With interruptions in schooling and farming he was graduated at the age of 29, and in the meantime he managed to pass the Civil Service examination for assistant geologist in the U.S. Geological Survey.

Frank was married to Theresa Burton in 1910 and, following her death, to Miriam Natalie Broach in 1936. In 1952, some time after Natalie's death, Frank married Gertrude Mix, who survives him.

His first geological job was in the Isthmus of Tehauntepec in 1910 for the English firm of S. Pearson and Sons. His initial contract was for a period of one year, following

which he returned to the United States, where an opening as assistant geologist in the U.S. Geological Survey was waiting for him.

In the Survey, Clark spent one season estimating the tonnage of unmined coal in Ohio. He also mapped the coal resources of the Castlegate, Wellington, and Sunnyside quadrangles of Carbon County, Utah. He was among the geologists assigned by the U.S. Geological Survey to map the prospective oil fields in Osage County, Oklahoma. He resigned from the Survey on July 1, 1919, to work for the Petroleum Exploration Company and Wiser Oil Company in Kentucky, West Virginia, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Kansas. This continued until 1923, when he began work for the Mid-Kansas Oil and Gas Company, a full subsidiary of the Ohio Oil Company. He was chief geologist of the Mid-Kansas Company. Under his supervision the Mid-Kansas acquired several properties on which oil and gas fields were opened. The most noteworthy of these was a property in Pecos County, Texas, which was subleased from the Trans-Continental Oil Company, one of the many subsidiaries of the Benedum and Trees interests.

As he tells the story, Mid-Kansas traded with Trans-Continental for three blocks of leases and agreed (in return for these blocks) to drill three wells, which were so located with respect to undeveloped acreage that a well on a block would throw light on the promise of undeveloped leases. The block originally considered most accessible was in the Stiles area of Reagan County, Texas, and Mid-Kansas drilled two wildcat wells on this block, both dry holes. They drilled one well on a second block; it also was dry.

The third block was in Pecos County, Texas, and Frank happened to see a map on an engineer's desk in the Mid-Kansas office with the notation "Surrender" written on this block. Clark went into action immediately and succeeded in having the decision to surrender this sublease reversed. He then went to Texas and drove the stake marking the spot to drill. This proved very fortunate for Mid-Kansas Oil and Gas Company and its parent, the Ohio Oil Company, when in October 1926, the discovery well of the extremely rich Yates oil field was completed. He characteristically claimed no credit for his decision, but it meant millions of dollars for the company that employed him. He maintained his action would have been taken by any experienced oil geologist who had been placed in his position. Be that as it may, both the action which resulted in originally subleasing from Trans-Continental and the action which prevented the premature surrendering of that important acreage were highly important.

In 1934 he was appointed Chief Geologist and Director of Marathon Oil Company, a subsidiary of the parent company, Ohio Oil (now again Marathon Oil). In 1936 he was made a vice-president of the Ohio Oil Company and in 1946 he retired as a consulting geologist. His service with the Mid-Kansas, Marathon, and Ohio Oil Companies was highly successful, but the most spectacular single event was his recognition of the great potential of the lease block in the Yates field.

Frank Clark's standing as a petroleum geologist was attested by the recognition awarded him by his associates who elected him president of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists in 1933 following his election as vice-president in 1931. He was president of the Tulsa Geological Society in 1930, and that society made him an honorary member in 1942. The American Association of Petroleum Geologists made him an honorary member in 1958. His service to the petroleum industry was affirmed by a certificate of Appreciation awarded to him by the American Petroleum Institute in 1957 for contributions as a member of the Advisory Committee on Fundamental Research, of which he was a member from 1934 to 1953. Also, a citation was issued by the American Petroleum Institute in 1959, a Certificate of Appreciation for services on the Committee of Petroleum Reserves, of which he had been a member since 1936.

Throughout the many years as a member of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, he served on committee after committee. He was made chairman of the building committee of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists in 1952, and the construction of the present headquarters of the association in Tulsa, Oklahoma, is but one of the beneficial results of his aggressive and farsighted contributions to geology.

His concern for his fellow man was attested by the Distinguished Service Award of the Arthritis and Rheumatic Foundation in 1961, after he had been president of the Eastern Oklahoma Chapter of that organization since 1953. He continued to serve as president until 1966, when he was made Honorary President of the Eastern Oklahoma Chapter for life.

In another important area of interest, religion, Frank also was active. He served seven years in the Bishopric of the Tulsa Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and as the High Priest Group Leader of that ward and as a member of the Priesthood Executive Committee. All in the family were prominent Mormons, and his brother, J. Rueben Clark, Jr., the Ambassador to Mexico during the Hoover Administration, was the First Counselor of the Presidency and the second ranking office of the Mormon Church.

A close associate in this work, Walter M. Bowers, said, "Typical of Mr. Clark's attitude, he accepted these responsibilities at a time in his life when most men are ready to insist upon retiring to a less demanding life. . . . He is sought after for his counsel by the young and old alike. I am sure that this is not only because of his wisdom and great experience, but because of his sincere interest in and respect for the individuals seeking that counsel. . . . Mr. Clark teaches his religion by his actions as well as his words. His true Christian humility makes him stand tall among men."

It is fitting to close with a statement of a Tulsa friend and neighbor, a geologist associate over the years, Mr. William J. Sherry:

His personal integrity and loyalty, as well as his tolerance for his fellow man, is well known among his professional and personal associates. His personality, while strong, was at the same time so gentle it is little wonder that in his daily life he behaved as if with divine guidance and inspiration. His great and enthusiastic joy was in his church. His dedication to example in wholesome living and witnessing for Jesus Christ was reflected in his daily life. He stands as an example and inspiration to those of us who knew him, as well as to the many younger geologists who knew only his name and fame.

What a monument now stands—the record of a man as solid and inspiring as the Watsch Range, which he viewed from his family farm—the record of Frank Rinker Clark.

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