

## THE OKLAHOMA STATE DEPOSITORY FOR OIL-WELL SAMPLES

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There is probably no other area of similar size where so much data on the subsurface has been available as in the State of Oklahoma. By far the greatest amount of such information is in the rock samples which have been obtained in the process of drilling more than one-hundred-thousand wells for oil and gas in this State. For many years all of the major oil companies have made a practice of collecting such samples from the wells in which they have a financial interest and often from "wildcat" wells in which they have no direct financial interest.

Samples from the critical wells are usually examined and studied while the well is being drilled in order to determine the particular horizon which has been encountered. Samples from other wells are stored and sometimes filed in company warehouses or rented buildings so that they may be studied in detail later as a basis for correlation and a guide for future development programs.

Because of the large amount of space required to house collections of hundreds of thousands of such samples, many oil companies have resorted to the practice of discarding samples of older wells to make place for those from newer wells. Invaluable research material which it has cost millions of dollars to obtain has thus been irretrievably lost. Some of the universities and colleges have acquired part of this discarded material for use in their instructional program and as a basis for research but only a small fraction of the total has thus been preserved.

About two years ago, some of us began working on a plan for a permanent oil-well-sample depository or library where good representative well samples from all over the State could be preserved. The States of Colorado, Texas, and Nebraska have such depositories. The two major obstacles were first, the lack of sufficient fire-resistant storage space, and second, the expense of collecting and filing the material and making it available to interested parties when needed.

When the buildings and facilities of the Naval Aviation Base just north of the city of Norman became available to the University of Oklahoma, the School of Geology requested and received the assignment of two large fire-proof buildings as the nucleus for such a depository. The use of other frame buildings nearby was promised when additional space should be needed.

A meeting of representatives of oil companies was then held in Oklahoma City and plans for initiating and financing such a well-sample depository were discussed. Representatives from twenty-four different organizations attended. It was agreed that the tentative formulation of policies should be left to a committee of five, consisting of the Director of the Oklahoma Geological Survey, the Director of the School of Geology of the University of Oklahoma, and a representative from each of three different oil companies.

This committee met a few weeks later and agreed on certain fundamental principles of organization and financing, which are now being submitted to all parties in the State that should be interested in such a project. The future of the depository will be determined by the results of this inquiry.

The salient points of the proposed organization are these:

1. The depository will be under the control of a board of directors, acting through the Research Institute of the University of Oklahoma. This board of directors will consist of representatives appointed by each of the organizations contributing to the financial support of the project. This board may elect three or five of its members to serve as an executive committee and be in active direct control of the project.

2. Both contributing and noncontributing memberships will be recognized. The contributing members are those organizations that are being asked to subsidize the depository at least for the first year or until such time as it becomes self supporting. The noncontributing members will be those which use the services for a stated fee.

3. A fee will be charged all members for the examination of samples, but there will be a fee differential between the contributing and noncontributing members.

4. The depository will not be of the circulating type but samples must be examined in the office of the manager.

5. A full-time manager will be employed and given such secretarial help and filing personnel as necessary.

6. The depository will subscribe to the established sample-washing distributors in order to keep up with new wells but will receive samples of older wells direct from the storage warehouses of the individual oil companies.

7. The depository is to be located on the North Campus of the University of Oklahoma; the School of Geology of the University of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Geological Survey will be considered as contributing members of the depository.

If the depository can be operated on a basis such as outlined above, it is believed that it will be of great service not only to the larger oil companies, but also to the smaller companies, to the individual geologist, and to the thousands of future geologists that desire research material of the subsurface of the State of Oklahoma.

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