

The Bandera PROPHECY

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Today in Texas History

By Bandera Spirits of Texas

On this day in 1866, the first producing oil well in Texas came in at a depth of 106 feet at Oil Springs in Nacogdoches County.

The Melrose Petroleum Oil Company, which had been organized in December 1865 by Lyne Taliaferro (Tol) Barret and four partners, began drilling in the summer of 1866. Taliaferro, a Nacogdoches County merchant born in Virginia in 1832, had first contracted to lease 279 acres near Oil Springs in 1859, but the Civil War put a temporary halt to his exploration.

The first well produced about 10 barrels a day, but the low price of oil and the political unrest accompanying Reconstruction made the development of the field unfeasible. Barret suffered extensive financial losses and returned to the mercantile business in Melrose. Later he saw the field developed with an oil boom in 1887.

Barret died in 1913. Though he received little acclaim during his lifetime, in 1966 memorial markers were dedicated at his grave in Melrose and at Stephen F. Austin State University to mark the 100th anniversary of the drilling of the first producing oil well in Texas.