

## **From the Civil War to the Jazz Age: Isaac Canfield's 60-year Career as an Oil Dowser**

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### **Abstract**

Isaac Canfield started his oil-industry career in Titusville, Pennsylvania in the 1860s, during the Civil War. His oil career ended with his death in 1924, when the nation was enthralled with jazz and bootleg gin. In between, Canfield discovered the second and third oil fields in Colorado (Florence in 1881, and Boulder, the first oil discovery in the Denver basin, in 1902). He also chose the location for the discovery well of the Electra field in Texas, and has a reasonable claim to have drilled the first (though non-commercial) oil well in New Mexico in 1906. He did all his oil exploration by dowsing with a forked stick he called ""the bobber.""

Canfield and his bobber were not infallible by any means. He drilled many dry holes, perhaps more dry holes than producers. But he never gave up, and by the time of his death had accumulated a record of discoveries that most geologists would envy.

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