

DOLLIE RADLER HALL

PIONEER LEGEND

(1897 - 1995)



DOLLIE RADLER HALL played many pioneering roles as the first female exploration manager in an oil company. She was instrumental in the first reflection seismic oil discovery in the world, the discovery of oil in the Williston Basin, and opening the door to other women as managers in oil companies and to hiring married women.

Dollie was probably the most remarkable female petroleum geologist in our history. Born an illegitimate child of an imprisoned Oklahoma outlaw and raised in western Oklahoma, she was five when her father was released and returned to Oklahoma to marry her mother. Both of her parents were crippled, her mother from a birth defect, her father from multiple bullet wounds when he was captured in a shoot-out. As a child she was responsible for much of the work maintaining their house, small store operations and livestock, including breaking horses. She was brilliant, studious and had a photographic memory.



After working her way through Oklahoma "Normal" school and teaching unruly country school students for a short period of time, Dollie was admitted to the University of Oklahoma in 1916. Nearing the end of World War I, she was crossing campus when she fell into a fortuitous conversation with a geology student. She asked him what geology was, and he proceeded to tell her about earth studies and how this was used to find oil to supply the growing demand because of both the war and the rapidly expanding automobile industry. The very next day she changed her major to geology and rapidly completed her requirements for a bachelor's degree. Dollie greatly impressed one of her professors, Dr. Charles Decker, and assisted him as he prepared a paper to be delivered at the AAPG's third annual meeting in Tulsa in 1920. At the meeting Decker sang her praises to the Chief Geologist of Amerada Petroleum Corp., Sydney Powers, a man who would become one of the most hailed and respected petroleum geologists in the country. Powers was impressed and contacted her to interview with Amerada, whereupon he hired her on the spot. In her first year at Amerada she worked full time while continuing her studies at OU and completed her master's degree in one year, becoming the first female to be granted a Master's Degree in geology at OU.

Within three years Dollie was promoted to management and began to take over much of Powers' management responsibilities in the Tulsa office. In 1927, at age 30, Dollie received a further promotion giving her responsibility for directing operations and making recommendations for exploration, leasing, and drilling with a staff of 100.

In 1928 Dollie, along with managing three offices, managed the first reflection seismic geophysical crew's shooting and did the interpretation of the data. It had been decided, likely by Amerada President Everett DeGolyer, to test the new technique in Oklahoma instead of Texas because he knew his staff in Tulsa had been having excellent success finding anticlines with surface and subsurface work. Sidney Powers was still Chief Geologist but Dollie had largely taken over most of the daily management and exploration duties. Utilizing reflection seismic data, Dollie played a dominant role in a 1928 discovery well in Pottawatomie County. At this time Powers was critically ill and in and out of the hospital. This discovery led to the global use of seismic reflection technology.

In 1932 after Powers passed away, Dollie became "acting" Chief Geologist and continued her responsibility for the operations, recommendations for exploring, leasing, and drilling, and authorizations of capital expenditures by the exploration department. One of Dollie's many exploration contributions was having the foresight to develop the hitherto unpromising Fitts pool in Oklahoma, which increased Amerada's income by \$1,000,000 per year at a time when oil was selling for 67 cents a barrel. Her colleague, Jim Ferguson, poetically recounted the many fields that she brought into production in Oklahoma. Later, Dollie played an instrumental role in Amerada's first discovery in the Williston Basin of North Dakota, which opened up the amazing potential in the Basin. She had taken to the field to study the Paleozoic outcrops and subsurface potential, and then convinced Amerada's President to drill the discovery well in 1950, although at the time she was not given the credit she deserved having retired from Amerada in late 1949.

During Dollie's career at Amerada, as at most other companies in most industries, women were often overlooked for pay raises or promotions, and early in her career it was rare for married women to work outside of the home, especially in a professional role. However, Dollie was so important to Amerada that when she married Charles Hall in 1933 she not only kept her job, but she was able to hire other female geologists and geophysicists, both single and married. In 1937, after running the exploration department as "acting" Chief Geologist for five years, Dollie was basically demoted when Amerada promoted her friend and protege, Roger Denison, to the job in Tulsa as "Chief" Geologist, the title that had been denied her. However, she got along well with Denison whom she had mentored when he joined Amerada. She continued her work finding oil, mentoring and training new employees. Dollie's husband, Charlie, died in 1967, leaving her alone at their small ranchette in Broken Arrow. After her retirement from Amerada in 1949, she moved to Tulsa and set up a consulting business, and soon had a new discovery in Seminole County. Over time Dollie established substantial income from both her royalties from Amerada and from her discoveries as a consultant.



Dollie's success and compassion resulted in her becoming the matriarch of her extended family. During the Depression, she was very generous with her extended family, letting cousins live with her when they had no place to go, and providing financial assistance as needed. They described Dollie as the kindest person they had ever known, never ever raising her voice and always generous.

Dollie was munificent with her success, sharing her knowledge and talent, and was a tremendous philanthropist, giving generously to OU, to civic associations, and to many programs for children. Dollie is also remembered as a great mentor to students at OU throughout her career, as well as being active in professional societies. She was the first female Honorary Member of the Tulsa Geological Society. In 1963 she was the first woman to become an Honorary Member of AAPG. Dollie was also a founder of the AAPG Energy Minerals Division and maintained her AAPG membership for 74 years until her death in 1995 at age 97.

For her tremendous professional and ground-breaking career, for her generosity and compassion to her family and a plethora of geologists that she mentored, the Directors of the Oklahoma Geological Foundation are pleased to present Dollie Radler Hall as a Pioneer Legend.

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