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Railroad Map of Texas, Louisiana and Part of Mississippi. Higgins Standard Oil Company Ltd. L'td. Capital Stock \$10,000,000.

Stock#: 61007mb
Map Maker: Higgins
Date: 1901 (but probably 1902)
Place: Beaumont, Texas
Color: Color
Condition: VG
Size: 30.25 x 26.75 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

An extraordinarily rare promotional map published by Patillo Higgins, the Father of Texas Oil, just months after the gusher at Spindletop transformed the global oil industry.

Born in Sabine Pass, Texas in 1863 but spending most of his life in Beaumont, Higgins' early years were marked among other things by violent racism and the killing of a sheriff's deputy, though in his early twenties he found religion. He worked first as a logger, then invested in real estate and brick manufacturing, along the way becoming an amateur geologist. An intensely stubborn man, in the early 1890s he went against the prevailing scientific wisdom, bought land at a salt dome outside Beaumont known as "Spindletop," and formed a partnership to drill for oil. The effort faced enormous financial and technical obstacles, but after a number of stops and starts the drillers struck oil on January 10, 1901, with the well flowing at the extraordinary rate of some 100,000 barrels per day—more than all other wells in the country combined. The ensuing frenzy was extraordinary: the area's population exploded, real estate prices skyrocketed, fortunes were made and lost, and innumerable frauds perpetrated on a gullible public. Soon more than 200 wells dotted the hill, leading to a short-lived oil glut until production plunged within a couple of years.

By the time of the great gusher at Spindletop, Higgins had long since been frozen out of the partnership, but he sued the drillers and obtained an out-of-court settlement. This, combined with his now immensely-valuable real estate interests in the area, provided a financial platform for him to establish Higgins



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Standard Oil Company in 1902. As the name suggests, his intention was to establish a vertically-integrated oil empire on the model of John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil. Unfortunately for Higgins, the offering seems to have failed: In the words of writer Daniel Yergin, "the public had become wary of any more stock offerings bearing the imprint of "Swindletop."" (*The Prize*, chap. 4)

Higgins published this map to promote a \$10 million stock offering to fund his grand—or perhaps grandiose—vision. The map depicts East and Central Texas, all of Louisiana and a small portion of Mississippi, with county boundaries indicated by dashed lines and solid lines delineating the region's extensive rail network. Its real point, though, begins with the four small colored areas indicating parcels ("Oil Fields") owned by Higgins, including "Higgins Oil Field #1" at "Spindletop." Fields 1, 2 and 3 are colored red to indicate their ownership by Higgins in fee simple; Field 4 is yellow, indicating that he held it under a lease. The map lays out Higgins' vision of a network of pipelines to move oil from his Company's fields to its own refineries to be built outside Houston and on Sabine Lake. From there the refined oil would then either be shipped by one of the many existing rail lines emanating from Houston or piped to Sabine Pass and loaded on tankers.

I am aware of one example of the map held in a private Texas collection, but it appears to be absolutely unrecorded in the standard bibliographic sources, and I find no record of its having appeared on the antiquarian market.

Detailed Condition:

Some mends and infill along old folds, small area of facsimile above lower neatline, and some mends and reinforcements to edge wear.