

Ted Link

“To be an oil geologist, you have to learn to live a dog's life.”

Ted Link, Imperial Oil's geologist in charge of Western Canada, considered hands-on experience the only way to figure out how to reach the black gold under the earth's surface. Innovation had been his tool at Norman Wells between 1919 and 1922 when he transported drilling rigs by oxen, fixed airplanes with glue, and survived several plane crashes.

He believed that “the entire province is underlain by sedimentary rock, which can be regarded as possible sources of hydrocarbons.” Link mapped Turner Valley as early as 1923 and, working with a combination of data and imagination, was convinced that there was oil in the Devonian reefs. Moved to Imperial's head office in Toronto, he continued to promote exploration of Leduc. In February 1947, when head office ordered him to stop drilling, Link pretended he hadn't seen the order. Two days later Leduc No. 2 blew in.

Link hated boardrooms and committee meetings. At 51, in 1948, he left Imperial Oil and went out on his own, still following elusive oil patch dreams.

Lucky Link

Ted Link combined imaginative theory with well-grounded data – geology as both art and science.

Link was committed to finding big oil in Alberta. In the late 1920s he focused on the Turner Valley field. In the '30s he mapped fields in Alberta and Saskatchewan, his search reaching northern Alberta in the 1940s.



Ted Link plane table surveying up Vermillion Creek,
Fort Norman area, NWT
Glenbow Archives NA-5056-13

Using aerial photography, stratigraphic test wells, drill tests, and sound theory, Link explored the area south and east of Edmonton. These efforts convinced his employer, Imperial Oil, to drill wells at Leduc No. 1 and 2. Link had found big oil.

“You do your best and point to the spot you believe is rich. Then you throw your hands up and watch the drilling,” he said. “And, believe me, if you are lucky, you’re a genius, and if you keep on being unlucky, you’re a bum. Even with a doctor’s degree.”

Full Name: Theodore August Link

Born: 1897 – Died: June 25, 1980

Additional Resources

- **Alberta on Record**
<https://albertaonrecord.ca/ted-link-fonds>
- **The Geological Society of America**
<https://rock.geosociety.org/net/documents/gsa/memorials/v12/Link-TA.pdf>

Our Collections

Glenbow Museum

<https://www.glenbow.org>

Glenbow Western Research Centre | Glenbow Library and Archives

<https://libguides.ucalgary.ca/glenbowlibraryandarchives>

Glenbow Library and Archives | Digital Collection

<https://digitalcollections.ucalgary.ca/asset-management/2R340826N9XM?WS=PackagePres&Flat=1>