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**Pop Goes the Weasel:  
How Greed and a Good Barbecue Hoodwinked a Small Town**

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### **Abstract**

On October 4, 1921, Sure Pop Oil Company held a barbecue to celebrate the newly built oil derrick and attract new investors in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. The Eureka Springs Historical Museum has photos from the celebration. Local lore suggests that the oil company owners were "confidence men" who were out to "fleece" the citizens of Eureka Springs. A clearer picture of the Sure Pop Oil Company and its president can be attained by studying newspaper articles and census records. Start with the zeal after the discovery of oil in El Dorado, Arkansas, coupled with the lack of federal and state legislation protecting investors, and throw in a dash of human greed, and you have a recipe for disaster.

Keywords: Arkansas history, Arkansas oil speculation, Eureka Springs history, Eureka Springs, Arkansas,

On October 4, 1921, over 2,500 people attended a barbecue picnic in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, to celebrate drilling a widely rumored oil reserve underneath the town, perched on the edges of the Salem and Springfield Plateaus. The Sure-Pop Oil Company hosted the picnic, and C. H. Harrison and Fred Thompson were in attendance to represent Sure-Pop. Ironically, Sure-Pop was to conduct the drilling and sampling on the land of Claude A. Fuller, an attorney and the Eureka Springs mayor. The real purpose of the picnic was to sell shares. On July 31, 1922, the oil derrick and drilling rig burnt to the ground, and Mr. Harrison left town to obtain a new rig in Dallas, Texas. He was never to return. Sure-Pop had no insurance to cover the loss. Eventually, the local Sure-Pop offices closed and released the employees. No investor recouped their investment. Various historical and political forces would intersect to create this small-town drama that foretold the Wall Street market crash. Perhaps the situation could have been avoided if the Securities Act of 1933 had been in place. While the intention to commit fraud by the president and officers of Sure-Pop Oil Company cannot be proven, the failure to find oil and have a return on their investment negatively impacted Eureka Springs at a time when it was already in economic and population decline due to World War I.

The late teens and early 20s were a time when many Americans were keen to invest. According to *Easy Money: Oil Promoters and Investors in the Jazz Age*, economic and cultural reasons created a national drive to get rich. First, post-war prosperity was caused by the United States diverting manufacturing and agriculture to the war effort. Additionally, the government had a strict ration program that prevented purchasing items for the home, like furniture and paint. Herbert Hoover restricted shoe and hat styles in addition to meat and flour rationing. Many consumers were saving money that they might have used for discretionary spending. The government allowed price inflation in goods and agricultural products. Despite this, most Americans had a feeling of optimism after the war.

Another interesting phenomenon was that, for the first time, there was a concerted national effort through newspapers to market Liberty Bonds. The Liberty Bond campaign was the first time many rural or small-town dwellers could purchase an investment vehicle like a bond. Also, because of newspapers, advertisers could market goods through newspaper ads and investments. The only ones feeling a pinch during the war were those on fixed incomes, government workers, and farmers. While the price of agricultural commodities went up during the war, afterward, the prices plummeted, causing financial strain for farmers. Additionally, the price of land did not go up proportionately.

According to *Easy Money*,

“swarms of itinerant stock salesman rode the trains and drove the dusty rural roads of America to gather in the dollars of new investors. They accepted any purchase however, small. . . These stock peddlers were always ready to cultivate small investors. More reputable brokerage houses also dealt directly with the new crop of investors, sending them newsletters, tip sheets, telegrams, and promotional letters and following up with phone calls. Brokerage firms as well as individual promoters often selected certain groups for ventures. . . Farmer, factory workers, clergymen, and unmarried women were favorite targets.”<sup>1</sup>

Since the end of the Civil War, Eureka Springs had been a respite for the unwell. Many doctors recommended taking the cure at Eureka Springs, and many hospitals, spas, and resorts catered to the needs of medical tourists. It would also find itself the home to many retirees and

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Olien and Diana Hinton, *Easy Money: Oil Promoters and Investors in the Jazz Age*, electronic (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 24.

widowed women on restricted income. With travel restricted because of the war, Eureka Springs found its prosperity waning while the rest of the country was experiencing a surfeit. This economic downturn, coupled with increased marketing pressure, may have been the catalyst that allowed Sure-Pop Oil Co. promoters to take advantage of this pool of small investors.

1921 kicked off the Arkansas oil boom when Bruce Hunt discovered oil one mile southwest of El Dorado.<sup>2</sup> By June of that year, Arkansas produced 908,000 barrels of oil. According to the February 3, 1921, *Eureka Springs Flashlight* headline "Oil Making Millionaires: Gusher Turns to Gold Flood."<sup>3</sup> The story details how three men made money on the first well in El Dorado; Dr. Samuel Busey, a medical doctor and geologist, partnered with David Armstrong, a farmer who believed his land contained oil, and Wang Hing, a "Chinese laundryman," invested in the oil operation.

Interestingly, a secondary market for land leases started. The same article stated, "Lease-traders gather at the Confederate monument in town every day for their 'curb-market'. . . A merchant made \$1,500,000 through trade leases."<sup>4</sup> Although legislators took a special train from Little Rock to inspect the well, there is little evidence of concern over the rapid inflation occurring. In an additional article from February 23, the *Flashlight* states, "Oil at El Dorado Puts Arkansas where She Belongs."<sup>5</sup> Although disparaging the greed and insecurity of oil speculation, the article talks about the oil speculators and townspeople making money in El Dorado, whetting the appetite of a town already used to speculation and oil of a different variety, snake oil.

As early as 1917, the *Flashlight* wrote that a Major F. A. Porter had purchased 200 acres of land outside of Eureka Springs, believing he would find oil, and had developed plans to begin exploration. The paper stated that if oil flowed in Eureka like the water, then "there will be such a boom, that the boom of 1879 will seem as nothing."<sup>6</sup> In 1919, an F. Prudom, a real estate investor, developer, and hotel owner, boasted, "I don't think there is oil here. I know there is oil here."<sup>7</sup> The real estate boom of Eureka was twenty years prior, and many Eurekaans were looking for the city to "blossom again like a rose."<sup>8</sup>

While oil companies discovered black gold in Arkansas, a man from Waco, Texas, started drilling for oil in Burkburnett, Texas. His name was Charles Homer (C. H.) Harrison (early census records show Harrison going by Homer while draft registrations show him as Charles Homer Harrison). The oil company he founded was called Sure-Pop Oil Company. A partner in his company was George Frederick Thompson, also of Waco. Harrison was the son of John Franklin Harrison, owner of a Dallas construction company, and had a brother in the oil business. On February 9, 1919, in the *Corpus Christi Caller*, an advertisement appeared for Sure-Pop Oil Co. shares in block 74 of the Burkburnett Oil Fields in Wichita County, Texas.<sup>9</sup> A follow-up ad with a map appears in the February 16 edition. (Fig. 1)

<sup>2</sup> Emon Mahony, "THE DISCOVERY OF OIL IN EL DORADO, ARKANSAS," *El Dorado News-Times*, January 10, 2021, <https://www.eldoradonews.com/news/2021/jan/10/discovery-oil-el-dorado-arkansas/>.

<sup>3</sup> S.A. Diehl, ed., "Oil Making Millionaires; Gusher Turns to Gold Flood," *Eureka Springs Flashlight*, February 3, 1921, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Diehl, ed., "Oil," 7.

<sup>5</sup> S.A. Diehl, ed., "Oil at El Dorado Puts Arkansas Where She Belongs," *Eureka Springs Flashlight*, February 24, 1921.

<sup>6</sup> S.A. Diehl, ed., "Good Things in Store for Eureka Springs," *Eureka Springs Flashlight*, January 25, 1917.

<sup>7</sup> S.A. Diehl, ed., "F. Prudom Still Boosting for E.S.," *Eureka Springs Flashlight*, May 15, 1919.

<sup>8</sup> Diehl, ed., "F."

<sup>9</sup> "Advertisement for Sure-Pop Oil Shares for the 'Burkburnett Oil Pool' Found in February 19, 1919 *Corpus Christi Caller*" (Washington D.C., n.d.), accessed March 26, 2022.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1919. CORPUS CHRISTI CALLER. PAGE FIVE—B-3

**At The Liberty Theatre TODAY**

**Wilks St. Clair & Company**

**"Too Much Married"**

**Babbling Tongues**

**JAMES MORRISON**  
**GRACE VALENTINE**

**Sunday and Monday, Feb. 16 and 17**

**BUSINESS DIRECTORY**  
RELIABLE CORPUS CHRISTI FIRMS

**KANSAS COUNTY CALLED TO PAY FOR DEAD HORSE**


**MISSISSIPPI TRANSPORTS**  
LIFT FIFTY-TON CARGO  
VESSELS FOR THE YEAR

**Krueger Machinery Company**

**EDISON MAZDA LAMPS**

**General Electric Railway and Light Company**

**ALMOST OVER THE TOP**



**YOU MUST HURRY IF YOU GET ANY "SURE POP" OIL STOCK**

**"SURE POP" OIL CO.**

Figure 1. Almost Over the Top. Advertisement for Sure Pop Oil Co. Corpus Christi Caller. February 16, 1919. University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas

In May 1919, reports came in on the drilling activity of the Sure-Pop well in Lot 74 in newspapers across Texas. By May 24, they are drilling at 1,750 feet with 12 feet of sand. On May 28, 1919, an item appeared in the social column of the *Tallahatchie Herald*,

"Mr. Frank Provine, who has been spending some weeks in the oil fields of Texas, retired home last evening. Mr. Provine and his brother-in-law, Mr. Harrison, recently promoted the "Sure-Pop" Oil Company and the company had the good luck this week of striking a "gusher," a well that is among the best in the section and which it is reported will yield some twenty-five hundred barrels of crude oil per day. About one twentieth of the capital stock was placed in Charleston and since the lucky strike it is no trouble now to behold millionaires in Charleston. While the editor of this paper had no such luck, we join with the many friends of the lucky fellows in rejoicing over their good fortune."<sup>10</sup>

The visit was good news for the family of Mr. Provine, and the June 9 *El Paso Herald* reports that Well No. 1 is drilling at 1,760 feet and standardized, a term used when the well is producing. Then, on June 10, an advertisement appeared in the *Fort Worth Record*. (Fig. 2)

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<sup>10</sup> "Mr. Frank Provine. . .," *The Tallahatchie Herald*, May 28, 1919.

## *Sure Pop Decides to Sell Holdings; Offered \$300,000*

DALLAS, June 9.—At a meeting of the stockholders of the Sure Pop Oil company, held Monday forenoon at the Main Oil Exchange, it was decided to sell the company's holdings of five acres in block 74, Burkburnett, at a minimum of \$300,000. C. H. Harrison, trustee, presided. He promoted and managed the Sure Pop company.

The company has an offer of \$300,000 for its holdings and the stockholders voted to name R. L. Harris and Ray Hesbitra a committee of two to serve with the trustee in consummating the deal.

The company is only capitalized at \$50,000 and in the event the holdings are disposed of at \$300,000 the shareholders will receive six for one on their investment.

The name of the bidding concern has not been made public.

Figure 2. *Sure Pop Decides to Sell Holdings; Offered \$300,000.* Fort Worth Record, June 10, 1919. [newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com)

The same notice appeared in the June 14, 1919, edition of *The Nebraska Daily Press*. Interestingly, the *Daily Press* clip had a notation at the bottom for when the article should run. On June 13, the *Daily Oklahoman* reported that Sure-Pop was paying dividends of \$5.00. On June 16, the *El Paso Herald* reported that Well No. 1 produces 25 barrels a day, while other wells at the Burkburnett site reported 2,500 barrels per day. On June 17, in the *Pine Bluff Daily Graphic*, Texas Crude Oil Company also advertised "for the benefit of stockholders" the intended takeover of Sure-Pop Oil Co. and "Duke of Dublin" property in block 74.<sup>11</sup> They

<sup>11</sup> "Advertisement for 'Texas Crude Oil Co. For the Benefit of Stockholders. . .,'" *Pine Bluff Daily Graphic*, July 17, 1919, <http://www.newspapers.com/>.



announced that the acquisition of both these wells would increase production by between 5,000-8,000 barrels. The Duke of Dublin well constituted 3,000 of that production. Again, this same ad would appear in the *Fort Worth Record* with the addition of where to buy more shares. While the Sure-Pop Well No. 1 produced oil, there was a disconnect between what the Fort Worth paper and what the *El Paso Herald* reported. C. H. Harrison lauded himself as a promoter and manager, so the duplicate articles blanketing the papers originated probably from him, while the Herald used third-party reporting. What was the purpose of the press releases? The purpose was to acquire fresh funding for a new project.

In the June 20 edition of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, a line item appeared in a status report on oil wells and drilling operations in Wichita County, Texas, "Sure-Pop Oil Company's No. 2 Vogel, Block 74, Rig."<sup>12</sup> On September 12, Sure-Pop is asking for \$200 per barrel of oil. This article in the *El Paso Herald* includes data provided by a third-party service, J. S. Curtiss and Co.<sup>13</sup> It may explain why the data provided varies from the self-reported Sure-Pop data. On September 17, the *Herald* reported that Well No. 2 had a casing set. The *Petroleum Journal* concurred. Then on September 26, a notice appeared in the *Arizona Daily Star*, "Sure-Pop to Pay Fifty Per Cent Dividend."<sup>14</sup> By December 12, Well No. 2 produced 1,200 barrels per day, and \$300 per barrel was the asking price, but the Sure-Pop Stock is trading at \$2.00 per share. On February 20, 1920, the *Fort Worth Record* published an article on the leading oil producers in Texas compiled from state tax returns from the fourth quarter of 1919. The largest producer was Texas Oil Company, with oil valued at \$5,489,504. Sure-Pop produced oil valued at \$59,982.50.

A pattern developed in newspaper coverage as Sure-Pop Oil Co. sought to extend itself after achieving moderate success. An advertisement or society column announcement advertising Sure-Pop Oil Co.'s newest oil lease, followed by status reports on how the well was progressing, then there would be an offer from a consortium to buy out investors. On August 29, 1920, an article in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reported that Sure-Pop Oil Co. acquired the Scott Oil Lease in Vernon, Texas, in Wilbarger County. On September 14, *The Evening Index* of San Bernardino, California, reported,

"The Hub rooming house on I street changed hands this week, the new owners taking possession yesterday. Mr. and Mrs. Prather, who bought the roaming house about a year ago, have moved to Riverside, where they will make their home. Mr. Prather is representing the Sure-Pop Oil Co. of Texas and will open an office in Riverside."<sup>15</sup>

By October 17, the Wilbarger Scott Lease Well No. 1 collapsed, and drilling had begun on a new hole. On January 9, 1921, Sure-Pop Scott Lease Well No. 2 was drilling at 2,136 feet. However, on February 21, 1921, the *Fort Worth Record* wrote that the Sure-Pop Oil Co. "abandoned their No. 2 Scott." After Sure-Pop's success in Wichita Falls, we see a failure in Vernon, Texas, and a no-show in Riverside, California.

In May 1921, C.H. Harrison and Fred Thompson arrived in Eureka Springs to promote drilling an oil well. The local business community raised \$10,000 to purchase a tract of land

<sup>12</sup> "Completions in Waggoner Pool Add 12,000 Barrels to Daily Production at Burkburnett," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 20, 1919, <http://www.newspapers.com/>.

<sup>13</sup> H.D. Slater, "Oil Quotations," *El Paso Herald*, September 12, 1919

<sup>14</sup> "Sure Pop Company to Pay Fifty Per Cent Dividend," *Arizona Daily Star*, September 26, 1919, <http://www.newspapers.com/>.

<sup>15</sup> "Colton Realty Shows More Activity," *The Evening Index*, September 14, 1920, <http://www.newspapers.com/>.

from Claude A. Fuller. Mr. Fuller was twice the mayor of Eureka Springs and would later serve in the Arkansas House of Representatives and then represent Arkansas as a United States Congressman. The business owners purchased the land at the behest of Hugh A. Tucker, a geologist from Dallas. There is evidence that local citizens besides Mr. Fuller leased property to Sure-Pop. Figure 3 is a check written by Sure-Pop and signed by Harrison to T.J. Walker for \$50 for a lease. (Fig. 3)

D-52

**C. H. HARRISON, Trustee**  
**Sure Pop Oil Company**  
 DALLAS, TEXAS  
 EUREKA SPRINGS, ARKANSAS

Oct 18<sup>th</sup> 1921

Please find herewith attached (CHECK) for \$ 50 payable to your order, for which you are requested to send me duly acknowledged assignment of that part of an oil and gas lease covering 10 acres out of

NE 10<sup>th</sup> Secs SE 1/4 of SE 1/4

Section 36 Township 21 North, Range 27 West, in Carroll County, Arkansas.

Copy of lease assignment appears on reverse side.  
 Should this check not reach you before advance in price I agree to its return.

Make all checks payable to the SURE POP OIL CO.  
 Received the above settlement in trust for the SURE POP OIL CO.

Salesman { W. Coulson  
 Witness {

NAME T. J. Walker and  
 STREET E. Burton  
 CITY Eureka Springs, Ark

CECIL WALKER, EUREKA SPRINGS, ARK.

Figure 3. Sure Pop Check written to T.J. Walker for Land Lease. Document from the archives of the Eureka Springs Historical Museum. D-S2

By July, contractors had begun work on the rig and scaffolding. By August, C. H. Harrison's promotion machine was in full swing. Harrison sent weekly status reports to the local papers. Harrison reportedly sent a recommendation letter from Col. George Thompson (Fred's father), a fellow oil speculator and investor. Sure-Pop began a brisk business selling "leases" or shares to the public. (Figs. 5 & 6)



Figure 4. Sure-Pop Share Certificate No. 1601. Document in the archives of the Eureka Springs Historical Museum. D-S2-75-2-1



Figure 5. Sure-Pop Share Certificate No. 1609. Document in the archives of the Eureka Springs Historical Museum. DS-2-75-2-4



On September 17, 1921, a news item appeared in the *Daily Arkansas Gazette*. The article indicated that Sure-Pop Oil Co. would resume drilling on the C.A. Fuller farm near the White River Bridge. (Fig. 7) In October, the *Joplin Globe* reported that drilling had begun on the 10,000-acre oil lease. On October 28, it was reported in the *Star Progress* of Berryville that a "good showing of gas had been encountered." Col. Thompson was waiting in readiness for Sure-Pop to strike oil, and he would immediately send the standardized drill rig and additional equipment to Eureka.



Figure 6. Grey, Lucien. *White River Near Eureka Springs, Ark.* Postcard from the archives of the Eureka Springs Historical Museum. PC-69-S

On October 4, the people of Eureka Springs attended a picnic at the Sure-Pop Oil Co. to view their oil well. On November 3, the *Eureka Springs Flashlight* published a photo of the crowd at the rig. (Fig. 8) An interesting aspect of this narrative is the barbecue. According to the Oliens in *Easy Money*, farmers were frequently a target of investment schemes. The book talks of a tire and rubber company promoters who threw a barbecue in 1921 to attract farmers in Henry County, Missouri. The idea of free food was so attractive that the farmers left University of Missouri College of Education agriculture experts waiting on a railroad siding to attend the barbecue.<sup>16</sup>

On November 11, the casing for the oil well arrived in Eureka Springs, and the well was drilling at 540 feet. Also, Sure-Pop announced in November that they would no longer be selling shares and that a leasing deal with a consortium named Associated Bankers Association was on

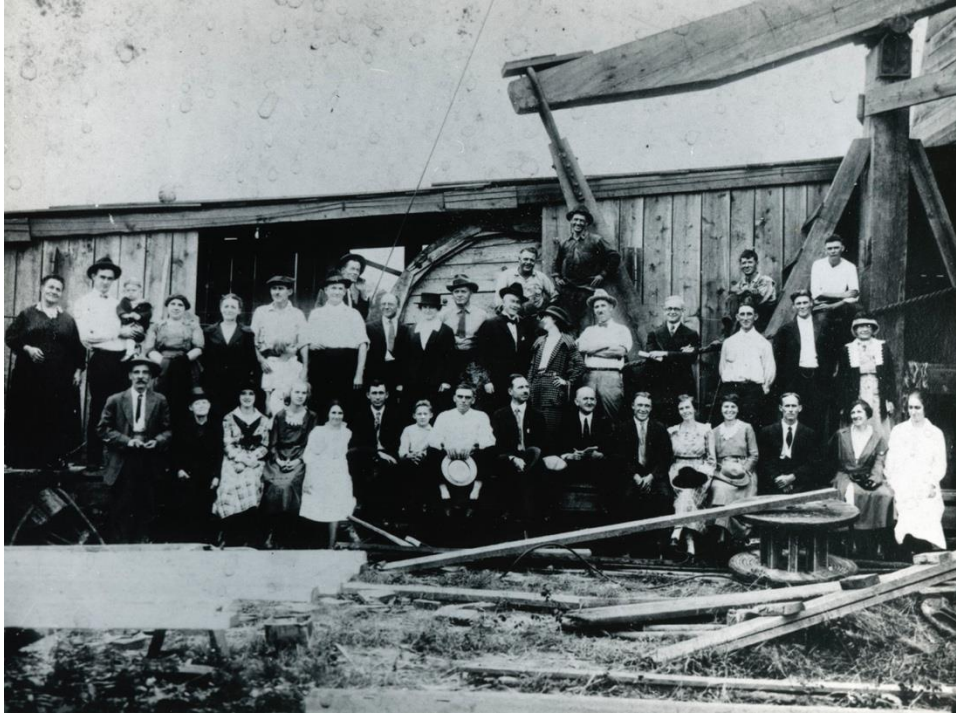


Figure 7. Deep Test for Oil and Gas Sure Pop Oil Co. Photograph from the archives of the Eureka Spring Historical Museum. BES-06-111

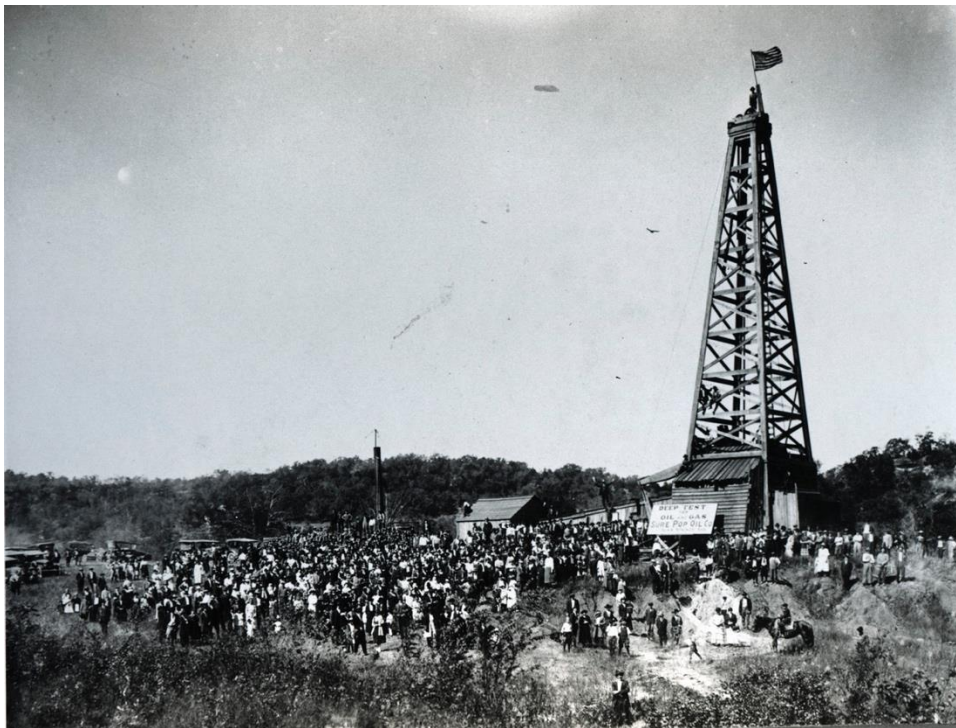
the horizon. The consortium deal was much like that of Texas Crude Oil Company, where a company with C. H. Harrison as trustee bought out the oil leases. Fred Thompson would be traveling to Chicago to close the deal. Fred Thompson would represent both Associated Bankers and local Sure-Pop interests. By December 2, the drilling was at 750 feet, and there were indications of oil in the water used in the drilling process. On December 16, the *Star Progress* reported that oil had been struck at 1,000 feet, but not how much oil it was.

<sup>16</sup> Roger Olien and Diana Hinton, *Easy Money: Oil Promoters and Investors in the Jazz Age*, electronic (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 24-25.





*Figure 8. Men, women, and children posed by Sure-Pop rig and pump jack, 1921. Photograph from the archives of the Eureka Springs Historical Museum. BES 11-210*



*Figure 9. Crowd Gathered in Front of Sure-Pop Oil Rig, 1921. Photograph from the archives of the Eureka Springs Historical Museum. PH-105-CSL*

Then misfortune fell. On January 13, 1922, the *Star Progress* reported, "We understand the drill has become wedged in the bottom of the Sure-Pop oil well over near Eureka Springs, and after two weeks tugging at the tool it is still tighter than Dick's hatband, all efforts to loosen it is proving unavailing."<sup>17</sup> On January 22, C.H. Harrison arrived back in Eureka Springs after spending the holidays on Texas. In February, Sure-Pop circulated a newspaper advertisement throughout the country asking for "high class salesmen and brokers." The ad appeared in the *Daily Arkansas Gazette*, the *Times-Dispatch* in Richmond, *The Nashville Banner*, and *The Raleigh News and Observer*. The *Eureka Springs Times-Echo* and *Flashlight* are silent because they are missing from the archives for these dates.

Suddenly, on Monday, July 31, 1922, a flurry of news activity started again. The *Fayetteville Daily Democrat* reported on the front page that the derrick and equipment belonging to Sure-Pop Oil Company of Eureka Springs burned to the ground. A fire occurred between 2:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m. on July 31, 1922. The fire loss was estimated at \$20,000, and no insurance exists. Reportedly, Harrison sent for additional drilling equipment, and Sure-Pop was excited to resume operations as they have been drilling around 1,350 feet. The same day, Harrison left for Texas. The Sure-Pop office in Eureka would stay open and it would be business as usual. In September, Mr. Harrison said that the well in Texas was in total production, and Sure-Pop would use money from those wells to restart work in Eureka Springs. Within a short time, the local office closed its doors. No record of Mr. Harrison or Mr. Thompson returning to Eureka exists. Both local books on Sure-Pop report Mr. Harrison completely disappearing from the record.

However, that is not the end of the story. On August 4, 1924, the heirs of George Thompson (including Fred Thompson) sued C. H. Harrison for not paying back monies invested in a joint-stock venture as Sure-Pop Oil Company in Wichita County, Texas. The 1940 United States Federal Census showed a Homer C. Harrison living at 210 Madison Street in Vandalia, Illinois. His previous address was in Dallas, Texas. The entry listed his occupation as "Oil Lease Producer." By 1942, he lived on Main Street in Mount Vernon, Illinois. His World War II draft card showed his employment in a "self-oil business." The local newspaper wrote of Mr. Harrison donating to the community chest and taking frequent trips with his wife. He was an active member of the Mt. Vernon Christian Science church. On May 19, 1956, his obituary appeared in the Mount Vernon Register-News. It does not appear that Harrison was living a life of anonymity.

The question remains. Did Mr. Harrison and George Thompson purposely defraud the citizens of Eureka Springs? Or were they just out of funding for their multiple projects and using Eureka Springs Sure-Pop money to pay for other oil drilling projects? Access to financial records is necessary to say with 100% certainty. However, there are distinct similarities with an oil promotion fraud called the "Home-Stake Oil Swindle" Robert Trippet perpetrated in the 1950s through 1970s out of Tulsa, Oklahoma. In the case of Home Stake, Trippet used his family connections to lend credibility to his scheme. Mr. Trippet's father was a bank president and state banking regulator in Oklahoma, while Harrison's father was in construction in Texas. Robert Trippet roped in his brother-in-law to assist him in organizing what appeared to be a legitimate business; so did Harrison. Harrison used his brother-in-law, Frank Provine, as an investment salesman selling shares in Sure-Pop's ventures.

Another similarity was how investment money was collected and used. In the case of Home-Stake and Sure-Pop, each company promised an astronomical return on investment to lure

<sup>17</sup> "We Understand the Drill. . .," *The Star Progress*, January 22, 1922, <http://www.newspapers.com/>.



**LEGAL NOTICE**  
**IN THE CHANCERY COURT**  
**OF CARROLL COUNTY**  
**WESTERN DISTRICT**  
**ARKANSAS**  
**NO. 1070**  
 Grace Walden ..... Ex Parte  
 And .....  
 Grace Walden ..... Plaintiff  
 Vs.  
 Joe Davidson, B. H. Blocksor  
 and Daniel T. Parsons, if living  
 and if deceased their un-  
 known heirs, spouses, assigns  
 personal representatives, de-  
 visees and successors  
 Defendant  
 And  
 The Sure Pop Oil Company  
 its unknown successors, gran-  
 tees and assigns  
 And  
 The unknown Statutory Trus-  
 tees, Officers, Beneficiaries and  
 Creditors, respectively, of The  
 Sure Pop Oil Company  
**WARNING ORDER AND**  
**ORDER OF PUBLICATION**  
**OF NOTICE**  
 The State of Arkansas to each  
 and all of the above-named De-  
 fendants, GREETINGS:  
 You and each of you are  
 hereby notified that an action  
 has been commenced against  
 you in the Chancery Court of  
 Carroll County (Western Dis-  
 trict), Arkansas, to try, ascer-  
 tain and determine the estates,  
 titles and interest of plaintiff  
 and all other persons to the  
 property hereinbelow describ-  
 ed, to quiet plaintiff's title, and  
 to bar all claims and interests  
 of the defendants, and each of  
 them, and all other persons, in  
 and to the following described  
 property located in Carroll  
 County, Arkansas, to-wit:  
 All that part of the South  
 Half (S½) of the Northeast  
 Quarter (NE¼), Section 24,  
 Township 21 North, Range 27  
 West, South of the meanderings  
 of Butler Creek, LESS AND  
 EXCEPT one and one-half  
 (1½) acres, more or less, as  
 described and recorded in Book  
 59 at page 602, in the office  
 of the Circuit Clerk & Ex-Of-  
 ficio Recorder in and for the  
 Western District, Carroll Coun-  
 ty, Arkansas, now containing  
 40 acres, more or less.  
 All of the Southeast Quarter  
 (SE¼) of Section 24, Town-  
 ship 21 North, Range 27 West,  
 160 acres, more or less.  
 All of that part of the South  
 fractional Half of the North-  
 west Quarter (NW¼), Section  
 30, Township 21 North, Range  
 26 West, lying North of White  
 River, LESS AND EXCEPT  
 that part taken by the United  
 States of America as a part of  
 Table Rock Lake, and now con-  
 taining 22.48 acres, more or less,  
 subject also to Easement des-  
 cribed as Tract No. 00-4109E-1  
 held by the United States of  
 America.

Figure 10. Newspaper  
 Clipping of Legal Notice  
 from 1967 vs. Sure-Pop  
 Oil Co.

in investors. Both used investment money to pay for the drilling. A typical oil promotion fraud is to overcharge for drilling costs and, when the exploration does not find oil, to not refund the difference to investors between what they paid and the actual costs. An employee of Home-Stake had perpetrated this type of fraud before working for Home-Stake.<sup>18</sup> There is no way of knowing if Sure-Pop also inflated drilling costs. What can be known is that Sure-Pop, like Home-Stake, paid investors back on earlier speculative schemes with money from current investors. This use of investors' money is a hallmark of a Ponzi scheme.

This type of scheme lures investors by making promises of high returns on their investments. However, instead of using the investor's contribution to invest in profitable ventures, the fraudster uses the money to pay off earlier investors. As the scheme grows, recruiting new investors to pay off the earlier investors becomes increasingly complex, leading to the scheme's collapse.<sup>19</sup>

The Ponzi scheme has been illegal since the 1930s when the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) was established and granted the authority to regulate and enforce laws related to investment fraud. The SEC works to protect investors and maintain fair, orderly, and efficient markets. It investigates and prosecutes cases of investment fraud, including Ponzi schemes, to bring justice to victims and prevent future occurrences. In the case of Robert Trippet, he was found guilty of ten felony counts of fraud, sentenced to three years of probation, and fined \$100,000.<sup>20</sup> Harrison was never charged with or convicted of fraud. However, a yellowed newspaper clipping from 1967 in the Eureka Springs Historical Museum show Eureka Springs investors filing suit against Sure-Pop and Harrison to recover financial losses and reclaim land. The Sure-Pop Oil Company scheme had repercussions as late as 1967. (The newspaper these legal notices were cut from is not known at this time. These clippings were in the personal archives of Cecil Walker and donated to the Eureka Springs Historical Museum.) (Fig. 11)

America.  
 All of that part of the South-  
 east Quarter (SE¼) of North-  
 east Quarter (NE¼) of Section  
 25, Township 21 North, Range  
 27 West, North of White River,  
 LESS AND EXCEPT that part  
 taken by the United States of  
 America as a part of Table  
 Rock Lake, and now containing  
 16.82 acres, more or less, sub-  
 ject also to Easement described  
 as Tract No. 00-4109E-1 held  
 by the United States of Ameri-  
 ca.  
 All of the Northeast Quarter  
 (NE¼) of the Northeast Quar-  
 ter (NE¼), Section 25, Town-  
 ship 21 North, Range 27 West,  
 containing 40 acres, more or  
 less.  
 The East part of the West  
 Half (W½) of the Northeast  
 Quarter (NE¼), East of Branch,  
 the conditional line, Section  
 25, Township 21 North, Range  
 27 West, LESS AND EXCEPT  
 that part taken by the United  
 States of America as a part of  
 Table Rock Lake, now contain-  
 ing 30.90 acres, more or less,  
 subject also to Easement des-  
 cribed as Tract Nos. 00-4109E-1  
 and 00-4109E-2 held by the  
 United States of America  
 You and each of you are  
 further notified that unless you  
 file an answer or other plead-  
 ing, or shall otherwise appear  
 and defend against the afore-  
 said Petition within thirty (30)  
 days after the 2nd day of Feb-  
 ruary, 1967, judgment by de-  
 fault will enter against you  
 and each of you.  
 WITNESS my hand and seal  
 of the Chancery Court of Car-  
 roll County, Arkansas, this 1st  
 day of February, 1967.  
 Eileen Harvey,  
 Chancery Clerk  
 By Ruby Bailey  
 Deputy Clerk  
 Pub. Feb. 2, 9, 16, 23, 1967

<sup>18</sup> David McClintick, *Stealing From the Rich: The Home-Stake Oil Swindle* (New York, NY: M. Evans, 1977), 29.

<sup>19</sup> McClintick, *Stealing*. . . , 56-57.

<sup>20</sup> McClintick, *Stealing*. . . , 293.



The difference between the two schemes is in who they targeted as investors. Robert Trippet focused on wealthy individuals seeking investments to avoid federal income tax. C.H. Harrison focused on every Eureka Springs, Arkansas, citizen regardless of age or wealth. In a 1976 oral history interview with the Eureka Springs Historical Museum, Clyde Perkins recounts that Sure-Pop sold investments to "poor widow women" who would "scrape together \$50." He also talked about a friend, Thomas Littrell, who invested \$700 he had saved to start a business. An oil promoter approached Perkins about buying shares. Perkins was 15 years old then and said he did not care to buy something he could not see. Perkins shared that Littrell "rode him" about investing in the company, but given Littrell's losses, he was glad he did not invest. The photos in the Eureka Springs Historical Museum archives show a festive atmosphere on the day of the barbecue. Men, women, and children are in attendance. How many of them would lose money to Sure-Pop? No records exist to calculate the losses incurred by the people of Eureka Springs. Anecdotal evidence from newspaper clippings and interviews shed light on the desperation felt. The editor of the Flashlight begged in an editorial column for Harrison to send word. Harrison never replied. No investors received compensation. The only citizen who seemed to make money was Clyde Fuller.

The town was dependent on medical tourism economically. As medicine advanced, the use of healing springs declined. The population of Eureka Springs also declined until the 1980s, when the first bed and breakfast inn in Arkansas opened, and tourism rediscovered the quaintness of this small town.

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