

The Gush-worthy Petroleum Building

August 15, 2017



Ogee is thrilled to be consulting on the redevelopment of the Petroleum Building in Longview, a mid-century office building constructed to house oil-related companies that was designed by Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson-- who also had a hand in the

Astrodome. Read on to learn more about this unique mid-century building and how it came to be.

Gushers in East Texas near Longview were rapidly being discovered in the early 1930s, all of which were tapping the enormous, 130,000-acre East Texas Oilfield. The oilfield stretched nearly 45 miles from north to south and from four to eight miles wide, transforming the formerly agrarian economy of East Texas into several boomtowns and oil-related cities. The production of the oilfield skyrocketed from 27,000 barrels in 1930 to nearly 110 million barrels by 1931. From 1930 to April 1949, it produced 2.6 billion barrels.

Earl Hollandsworth and Lee Travis, "two of the most colorful East Texas businessmen in the industry," began their careers in oil in 1933, and developed their drilling company, Hollandsworth Drilling Company, into one of the largest of its kind in



the Southwest, drilling more than 1,500 wells in East Texas alone. Operations extended to Colorado, Utah, Indiana, Oklahoma, and Louisiana. In 1951, they retired from the drilling and well servicing business (though they remained operators, a position which funded their future investments) and sold the company to Trans-Tex for \$1,000,000. Soon after the sale of the company, Hollandsworth and Travis embarked on real estate developments in downtown Longview. Operating as Earlee Industries, the partners purchased Down Town Auto Park, located at 310 N. Fredonia, which was constructed in 1953 (and would later be redeveloped as the Petroleum Building). One year later they announced plans for construction of a \$1.25 million modern office building utilizing an existing parking garage. Early announcements of the building touted air conditioning throughout, extra-large elevators, modern building materials, and customizable partition arrangements within tenant spaces. Redevelopment of the Down Town Auto Park was completed in 1956. On the day of the open house, thousands of visitors inspected the "swank edifice." At the open house, Houston investment banker David C. Bintliff praised Earlee Industries, saying:

Tonight we are paying special tribute to Lee Travis and Earl Hollandsworth for their ingenuity and foresight which has resulted in the Petroleum Building. It took imagination to see the latest possibility of a five-story parking garage and it was daring to convert it into the beautiful building we see today. And it took keen concern for community welfare on the part of these two fine citizens to make this building possible.



Several articles published in the newspaper discussed at length the building's "ultra-modern" amenities and beautiful design, praising Earlee industries for their vision in building such a structure in Longview. Of particular note by the media was the parking garage, which was housed on the first two floors of the building. The garage included a communication system, with intercoms at each elevator lobby throughout the building, so that tenants may call for their cars as they made their way to the garage. The building housed oil-related industries into the 1970s, and is currently being redeveloped as much-needed affordable apartments. Read more about the redevelopment [here](#).