



Student Handout 3
History of Arkansas's Oil and Natural Gas Industry
Smackover Oil Strike

In 1908s Sidney Umsted operated a large sawmill and logging venture two miles north of town. When oil was discovered in northern Louisiana in 1919, Umsted decided there was the potential for oil in south Arkansas. After Busey struck oil in 1921, Umsted selected a drilling location one mile south of the Ouachita River on land leased from local farmer Charlie Richardson. On July 29, the drill bit spun into gear 2,000 feet below. The result was a gusher, and the Richardson No. 1 discovery created a frenzy of drilling activity. Within a year, 1,000 producing wells had been completed in the field that covered 60 square miles. By this time, Umsted owned an estimated 3,000 acres of oil leases and an additional 1,000 acres outright.

The little town's population had increased from a mere ninety to 25,000 and its uncommon name would quickly attain national attention. By 1925, the Smackover field produced more than 77 million barrels of oil, the largest oil field in the nation at the time.

Assignments #3 –

- A. Draw the chart below on your own paper. Using the information from Student Handout 1 and this handout, fill in the chart to show how the oil strikes of El Dorado and Smackover were similar.**

- B. Use internet sources to learn the history of Smackover's unusual name. Summarize what you learn. Give 5 additional facts you find interesting about the town's history.**

City	El Dorado	Smackover
Speculator		
Year of Strike		
Population Increase		