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# RICHEST INDIANS: Osages Have Received $252,700,000 from "Black Gold"

In 1935, some 3,500 Osage Indians proved their right to the title of "wealthiest Indian tribe in America" by drawing an income of $5,000,000 from their oil and gas leases.

Tho this brought the total they have received from "black gold" in the last thirty-two years to $252,700,000, the Osages found much to grumble about. They contend that since 1904, when oil firms first began piping the liquid from the stretch of Oklahoma soil which their Nation owns, they have been receiving only 97 per cent. of the value of their oil, altho they had originally agreed to do business on a 100 per cent. basis.

Last week, the Department of Justice began action against six companies to recover the 3 per cent. (which now totals about $25,000,000), on the ground that the deduction is a "fraudulent practise." The defendants argue that they have merely been carrying on a practise as old as the industry itself—a deduction of 3 per cent. for non-refinable material such as sand, water and basic sediment which all crude contains.

**Historic Stream**—If the Osages get their $25,000,000, it will be merely the continuation of a stream of gold into which this particular tribe has been dipping its hands almost since the days of its first contact with the white man.

A branch of the South Sioux Nation, the Osages (an Americanization of Wa-zha-zhe, "Waters of the Earth") had won fame as "the owners of much money" as early as 1800.

Tradition says that at that time a group of Spaniards wandering through the Osage territory (now Southwest Missouri) discovered silver, mined it, then cached it in a great cave at what is now called Monegaw Springs. When they returned some time later to reclaim their treasure, they were attacked by the Indians and, with the exception of one man, killed off. On his death-bed, the lone survivor revealed to the tribal chief the hiding place of the silver.

The tribe thus became suddenly wealthy and its chief was named Monegaw: "Owner of Much Money."

In 1874, General Custer discovered gold in the Black Hills—which the white man had thought valueless and had given to the Osages as a reservation.

For a while the tribe was again owner of much money. Then there came a rush of settlers and gold hunters, and again the savages were shoved into new territory—this time an apparently skimpy reservation in Oklahoma.

**Boom**—Toward the turn of the century, an optimistic prospector wandering through the new home of the Osages, stumbled upon oil—and the Owners of Much Money entered an era of prosperity such as not even their white neighbors had heard of. In 1926, the peak of the oil boom, gold was showering upon the 2,229 Osages who had oil head-rights at the rate of $13,400 yearly for each one.

The members of Chief Fred Lookout's tribe were not stingy with their new wealth. They bought clothes, big cars, lavishly ornate homes. One, more ambitious than his fellows, saved his money, moved to Los Angeles and built a huge colonial house in competition with the finest the movie stars owned. Then he discovered he was unable to sleep amid such luxury and moved out to the garage, where his home was more on the style of his old reservation.

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