

Sour Lake, Texas

Now one of the smallest towns in the area, Sour Lake, Texas, located in The Big Thicket National Preserve, once used its natural resources as a resort town but soon turned into a forest of oil derricks pumping oil day and night.

Try and imagine a lake fed by numerous sulfur springs, making the water smell unusually foul. Would you want to go for a swim or spread the mud on your skin? Well, early Native Americans and then Anglo entrepreneurs in the new settlement used the lake's sulfur water and mud to help heal sores. The mineral baths were so popular that a posh health resort thrived in the mid-1800's, and attracted such famous guests as Sam Houston, wishing to sooth and heal his war wounds. The mud was also bottled and sold to ladies as a complexion mud pack.

During the Civil War, the sulfur water was good for other uses as well, including batteries! The Union blockade made it impossible for telegraph operators in the south to get sulfuric acid for batteries. One clever telegraph operator decided to use water from Sour Lake in his batteries. They ended up functioning just as well as those made with sulfuric acid.

In 1903, the town which had long relied on its natural spring-fed lake, quickly turned into an oil driven town. Overnight Sour Lake filled up so tightly with oil derricks that the bottoms of the rigs touched each other. Thirty-five hundred barrels of oil were being produced daily and new wells were being drilled rapidly. This small town produced an astonishing 90 million barrels of oil by 1948, and the town would become the birthplace of Texaco.

Today, locals say that that the oil gave them their economy but the water gave them their heritage.

Source(s):

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