

Marland's Grand Home Centennial Articles – February 2016

1920 to 1930

Note: Second in a series of twelve monthly articles on Marland's Grand Home.

The Roaring Twenties

By 1920 Marland Oil had become a major player in the nation's oil production. The home was now the site of many community parties. E.W. Marland's friends would visit playing cards in the basement recreation rooms late into the night. Friends could enter the recreation area by the stairwell descending to a side northeast corner door or from the main part of the home. The basement also included the first indoor underground swimming pool in Oklahoma. Marland particularly enjoyed swimming; and he noted that even though his younger lutenients (as he called his upper management employees) could beat him on the athletic field, he could out last them in the pool. In total, the basement consists of three large rooms for socializing, two fireplaces, a pocket billiards table and bar, the swimming pool and changing stations, the laundry and boiler room and other various storage closets. The recreation area of the home now houses the 101 Ranch collections and a stone arrowhead and tool collection from ancient American Indian tribes.

Polo and Fox Hunting Introduced

E.W. Marland was English and Scottish by birth. His father's father was an English schoolmaster and his mother was a Scottish McLeod. Marland loved all things English and so brought both fox hunting and polo to Ponca City hoping to make Ponca City the horse capitol of the United States. While at the home Marland hosted many a fox hunting party where guests would first have breakfast and then go east toward the Arkansas River to "ride to the hounds" as the sport was referenced. Polo was popular in Ponca City with four teams: the Reds, the Blues, the Whites and the Yellows. General George Patton played for a rival Army team visiting Marland while in town. Horse and Hound Shows were held for the public to show off their prize mounts, fox hounds and other ponies. E.W. Marland especially enjoyed horseback riding. He is quoted as saying, "*When I was working hard at my office and had a job that required concentration, I found that golf was just another kind of concentration, but I could get on a horse and ride around with a free mind. Now that was real relaxation!*" The Horse and Hounds exhibit is located on the 2nd floor landing of the home. Equipment representing fox hunting and polo is on display there.

Marland Funds Archeological Dig

E.W. Marland started an Indian Museum, with artifacts found in an archeological dig along the Arkansas River north of Newkirk, Oklahoma. As was popular in the 1920s, wealthy men often funded archeological digs, as did the British Lord Carnarvon with King Tut's Tomb in Egypt. Marland hired Dr. Thoburn of the University of Oklahoma to lead the expedition. Items from an ancient 1700s Wichita Tribal encampment were found. One-third of the artifacts were given to Chilocco Indian School, one-third to the Oklahoma Historic Society and one-third stayed with Marland in Ponca City. With these artifacts, Marland started the Ponca City Indian Museum in the basement of the Ponca City Library. Items eventually moved to the Marland's Grand Home when the City of Ponca City purchased the site in 1967 and are now on display in the basement swimming pool dressing space area.

American Indian Museum

In keeping with the spirit of the American Indians who helped Marland to acquire his oil, the home displays American Indian exhibits and artifacts of local tribes. Chief White Eagle of the Poncas became a good friend of E.W. Marland. In 1923 the Ponca Tribe made Marland an honorary member based on the friendship he had developed with the tribe. Items such as moccasins, bags, pipes, clothing, jewelry, toys, pottery, and baskets are part of the collection. A special Ponca display includes the two Ponca Chiefs, Standing Bear and White Eagle, along with Big Snake, Standing Bear's brother. All three were a part of a formal delegation to Washington D.C. representing the Ponca Tribe.

Serious Condition for Mary Virginia

Despite being active in several charitable causes around town, Mary Virginia Marland had been ill for quite some time. From the years of 1918 to the mid-1920s she took an additional residence in Kansas City in a large home Marland purchased for her. This enabled her to have access to her doctor, Dr. Abraham Sophian, a renowned internist. It was believed that Mary Virginia suffered from some sort of cancer, but without adequate records today, her fatal condition is still uncertain. She died in 1926 at her home in Ponca City. Stated cause of death on her death certificate was pneumonia. A room dedicated to Mary Virginia can now be found on the second floor with a vintage medical display included.

Marland Oil Becomes 300 Million Dollar Company

The 1920s were the golden era in Ponca City and for E.W. Marland. He had amassed over 550 service stations across the nation, built a first class oil refinery, and had vast holdings of oil and wells in several countries. He gave to almost every public cause in Ponca City, paying church

bills, constructing city parks and an airfield, as well as donating land for an orphanage and a hospital.

End of an Era

Marland Oil was poised to grow into a world-wide company doing business across the globe. However, Marland's New York banker, J.P. Morgan Jr., who had a reputation for taking over smaller companies through underhanded means, had other ideas. Morgan bought a majority number of shares of Marland Oil stock and called in loans to get controlling interest at a time when no laws prevented doing so. Marland was forced to hand over his home at 1000 E. Grand Avenue, which belonged to the Marland Oil Company, to the new owner of what was now called Continental Oil Company (CONOCO), Dan Moran.



During the 1920s in Ponca City, plays were a popular past time with the locals writing the scripts and then performing the productions with costumes included while at social gatherings. Shown here at a Shakespearian themed party are George Marland (top left) as Hamlet and Lydie Marland (far right) as Juliet.



Fox hunting party east of Ponca City close to what is now Lake Ponca.



Marland Oil station on Classen Blvd. in Oklahoma City in 1923.



Chiefs White Eagle and Standing Bear of the Ponca Tribe.