



*...Bringing History To Life*

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## **The Teapot Dome Scandal - II**

**Lead: Trusted by his friend President Harding, Secretary of Interior Albert B. Fall brought disgrace to the administration and served time for his trouble.**

**Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: In 1921 Interior Secretary Fall convinced Secretary of the Navy Edwin Denby to transfer control of naval oil reserves to his Department. It was government policy to hold oil-rich land for**

**national defense purposes. Since Navy ships were propelled by oil-fired engines it was in the national interest to hold this land in reserve. During war the oil could be pumped out for emergency purposes. Some Navy experts believed that reserves in places such as Elk Hills, California and Salt Creek, Wyoming were being drained by private oil wells on the edge of government land, and they insisted that this endangered reserve should be immediately pumped and stored above ground.**

**In response to this danger, in 1922 Albert Fall began to lease certain oil reserves to private companies who then would pump it out and sell it back to the government on the market at a profit. Though this exploitation of government land angered many conservationists, it was all strictly legal. However, Albert Fall was on the take. Facing serious financial reverses, in the Spring of**

**1922, Fall had begun secretly to make private, noncompetitive leases available to his friends in exchange for cash and interest-free loans. He granted exclusive rights to the Elk Hills property to Edward L. Doheny of Pan-American Petroleum. The Wyoming reserves were given to Harry F. Sinclair of the Mammoth Oil Company. This property was called Teapot Dome because of the unique geological shape of its huge underground oil cavity. Almost immediately, rumors of a fix began to circulate in Washington but an investigation headed by two Democratic Senators, Thomas Walsh of Montana and Robert M. LaFollette of Wisconsin, ground on for two years with little success. Next time: the Teapot explodes.**

**At the University of Richmond's School of Professional and Continuing Studies, I'm Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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