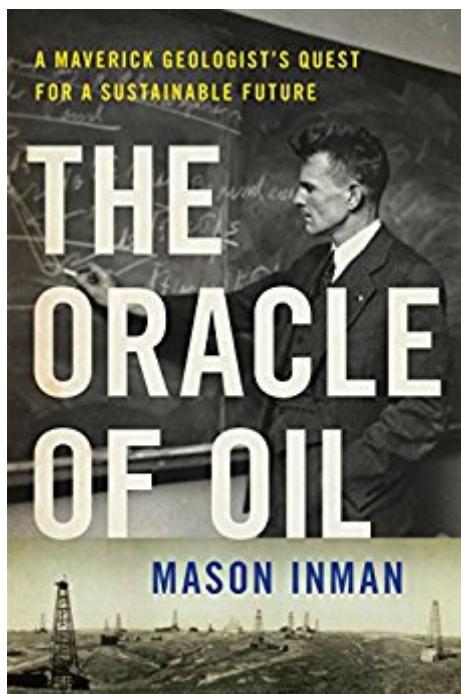


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# The Oracle Of Oil: A Maverick Geologist's Quest For A Sustainable Future



## Synopsis

The first comprehensive biography of Marion King Hubbert, the "father of peak oil." In 1956, geologist and Shell Oil researcher Marion King Hubbert delivered a speech that has shaped world energy debates ever since. Addressing the American Petroleum Institute, Hubbert dropped a bombshell on his audience: U.S. oil production would peak by 1970 and decline steadily thereafter. World production would follow the same fate, reaching its peak soon after the turn of the millennium. In battles stretching over decades, Hubbert defended his forecasts against opponents from both the oil industry and government. Hubbert was proved largely correct during the energy crises of the 1970s and hailed as a "prophet" and an "oracle." Even amid our twenty-first-century fracking boom, Hubbert's underlying logic holds true "while remaining a source of debate and controversy. A rich biography of the man behind peak oil, *The Oracle of Oil* follows Hubbert from his early days as a University of Chicago undergraduate to his first, ill-fated forays into politics in the midcentury Technocracy movement, and charts his rise as a top geologist in the oil industry and energy expert within the U.S. government. In a deeply researched narrative that mines Hubbert's papers and correspondence for the first time, award-winning journalist Mason Inman rescues the story of a man who shocked the scientific community with his eccentric brilliance. The *Oracle of Oil* also skillfully situates Hubbert in his era: a time of great intellectual ferment and discovery, tinged by dark undercurrents of intellectual witch hunts. Hubbert emerges as an unapologetic iconoclast who championed sustainability through his lifelong quest to wean the United States "and the wider world" off fossil fuels, as well as by questioning the pursuit of never-ending growth. In its portrait of a man whose prescient ideas still resonate today, *The Oracle of Oil* looks to the past to find a guiding philosophy for our future.

## Book Information

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## **Customer Reviews**

Mason Inman has brought to light the genius of M. King Hubbert at a time when we need it most. Previously, I knew Hubbert as the inventor of the Peak Oil Theory, but I was unaware of both the depth and scope of his work. Hubbert was a rigorous geologist whose knowledge of natural resources extended far beyond oil. He foresaw the oil crises of the 1970s, hydraulic fracturing, the shortcomings of nuclear and the eventual transition to solar power as the most abundant natural resource. In addition to his remarkably prescient forecasts, grounded in a firm grasp of data and physics, Hubbert was also visionary in imagining broader changes in our economic system required to share the vast abundance brought about by technological advancements. Just a few of the innovations he and a group of avant-garde intellectuals suggested in the 1930s include shared vehicles, highly energy efficient buildings, products built to last, and new communications networks. Although often branded as a pessimist, Hubbert recognized that the energy transition from finite fossil fuels to clean renewables is necessary and vital for sustainable prosperity in the 21st century. His clairvoyant message, and the value of his deep insights, have been brilliantly presented in this book, which I highly recommend.

I am reading The Oracle of Oil by Mason Inman. It is well researched and well written. I rank it with the all time best books on energy. I say energy because King Hubbert also developed expertise on nuclear power and solar energy. Hubbert discovered how fracking worked about six decades ago. He first contemplated resource limits as a college student during the 1920's. He became involved with Technocracy during the depression years. He first did oil field work while going to college. After joining the Columbia Geology Department, he attempted to bridge the gap between geology and physics. Later he worked for the US Government and Shell. Hubbert was awarded the Vetlesen Prize, the closest equivalent of a Nobel Prize for petroleum scientists.

I can truly recommend this book, which deals with one of the crucial (and yet barely acknowledged) challenges of our time. It's a captivating portrait of an astonishing man. And the research behind it is amazing.

This is the best book about the history and current status of the crude-oil and natural-gas industry. I had long studied the peak-oil work of M. King Hubbert and expanded on his work using an asymmetric peak function: see [...] and [...]). The book ended with the uncertain future of fracking for tight oil and shale gas. To learn how that has developed in the U.S. look at [...] and [...] and [...]

a sympathetic biography of an awkward customer. unfortunately by an author who could not appreciate the power of Hubber'ts application of fundamental physics to the subsurface problems he attacked. the bitter unresolved controversy with morris muskat, which reverberates to this day, deserves more than the sketchy reference in the text. an account by a petroleum enginneer is probably required to do justice to Hubbert's philosophy and his achievements.

More a biography on the scientist's body of work, peak oil, than on his life - though there was some of his history in this and for some people, their life story \*is\* their work. Very well written and \*extremely\* well researched and sourced. An interesting read.

A sound, excellent work, and very pleasant to read too, about a little known yet crucial figure in the history of our thermal-industrial society !

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