

# Edwin Laurentine Drake Encyclopedia Article

## Edwin Laurentine Drake

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# Edwin Laurentine Drake

**1819-1880**

American petroleum engineer who pioneered a new method of oil drilling. In his early years, Drake was a jack-of-all-trades, working as a hotel clerk, railway express agent, and conductor before finding a position with a Pennsylvania oil company. While there, he studied the use of cable tools in salt-drilling, and came to the conclusion that the same method could be used to drill for oil. Drake pioneered the use of an iron pipe in drilling, which kept the bore hole from filling up. He was the first to strike petroleum at its source, at a depth of 69 feet (21 m). His work led to oil drilling expeditions around the globe, and to the development of petroleum engineering.