Oil and Urbanization on the Pacific Coast tells the story of oilman Ralph Bramel Lloyd, a small business owner who drove the development of one of America's largest oil fields. Lloyd invested his petroleum earnings in commercial real estate—much of it centered on automobiles and the fuel they require—in several western cities, notably Portland, Oregon. Putting the history of extractive industry in dialogue with the history of urban development, Michael R. Adamson shows how energy is woven into the fabric of modern life, and how the “energy capital” of Los Angeles exerted far-flung influence in the US West.

A contribution to the relatively understudied history of small businesses in the United States, Oil and Urbanization on the Pacific Coast explores issues of interest to multiple audiences, such as the competition for influence over urban development waged among local growth machines and outside corporate interests; the urban rivalries of a region; the importance of public capital in mobilizing the commercial real estate sector during the Great Depression and World War II; and the relationships among owners, architects, and contractors in the execution of commercial building projects.

MICHAEL R. ADAMSON is the author of A Better Way to Build: A History of the Pankow Companies. Based in the San Francisco Bay Area, he is an independent scholar whose essays on business and urban history and US foreign economic policy have appeared in many peer-reviewed journals and scholarly collections.

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CARL ABBOTT, AUTHOR OF HOW CITIES WON THE WEST: FOUR CENTURIES OF URBAN CHANGE IN WESTERN NORTH AMERICA

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