



**Harold Hamm:  
From Cotton Bristles to Continental Resources**

**By Lori Williams**

How do you measure the economic impact of a sack of cotton, picked on a dusty acre of land in Lexington, Oklahoma? Or number the families and communities sustained by a venture that developed into a top producer of petroleum in America? That cotton put money in a pocket that bought seed for a sharecropper who needed a bountiful harvest to feed a baker's dozen of children. The youngest child felt the crumbling earth and the cotton bristles, and wasn't afraid to dig a little deeper. Harold Hamm's company wasn't called a grassroots startup for nothing.

Today, Oklahoma City based Continental Resources has over 900 employees and \$3.5 billion in sales. It is one of the top ten oil producers in the United States as well as one of the most entrepreneurial: The company was one of the first to utilize horizontal drilling to tap into deeply embedded reservoirs of oil and gas. Continental also pioneered the discovery of oil in a 450 million year old crater that is 24 times the size of Hamm's hometown. The impact of that meteorite is measured in barrels of oil and cubic feet of gas, i.e., 20 million and 130 billion, respectively.

The economic impact of Harold Hamm's company is measured in more than dollars and cents. Ancillary businesses expand to provide equipment needed in drilling areas such as the Three Forks Reservoirs in North Dakota and the Anadarko Woodford in Oklahoma. Tax revenue fuels construction of infrastructure, highways, and schools. A diabetes research center opens at the University of Oklahoma and a petroleum engineering chair is created at Oklahoma State University. For this entrepreneur, digging deeper does more than fuel an industry; it empowers families and builds communities.