

The Pipeline

Your Conduit for Information about Oil 150



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Featured Events

[January 31, 2009, Titusville Oil 150 Groundhog Breakfast.](#) The VFW, Titusville Council on the Arts and TRI will sponsor breakfast at 206 St. John Street in Titusville, PA. Contact the Titusville Council on the Arts at 814-827-2381 or TRI at 814-827-6556.

[February 7 and 14, Oil History Workshop.](#) Oil historian and author Neil McElwee presents “Pennsylvania’s Great Oil Companies.” This workshop will be presented in two parts. Admission is \$25 for both days. Sessions are from 1:00-4:00 p.m. at the Oil City Library, 2 Central Ave., Oil City, PA. Contact Oil Region Alliance 814-677-3152, ext. 110.

[February 13-15, 2nd Annual Oil Country Bluegrass Festival.](#) Twenty Bluegrass bands from the tri-state area will provide music that is open and free to the public. They will play both contemporary and traditional music that was popular during the Oil Boom. The event will be held at the Arlington Hotel, 1 Seneca Street, Oil City, PA. Donations accepted; reservations required for lodging. Contact Ron Shoup at (814) 676-3465 or rshoup@csonline.net.

Remembering Past Oil Industry Anniversaries

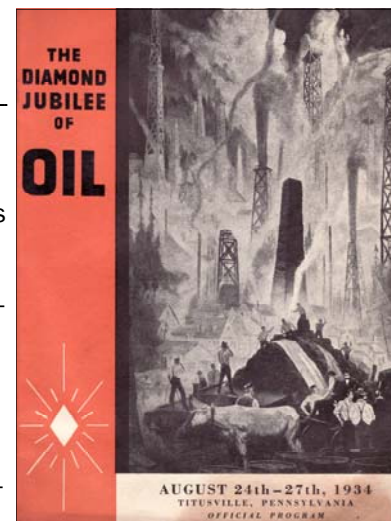
by Jeff Spencer, Black Pool Energy

The following is the text from a presentation given by Jeff Spencer of Black Pool Energy to an industry group in Houston, Texas.

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the Drake well. The oil region of Pennsylvania has planned many activities to commemorate the event (oil150.com), but will any of us in other parts of the country, *especially the oil industry itself*, celebrate and publicize our early oil heritage?

The following is a brief history of the commemorative events that occurred for the 1934 Diamond Jubilee of Oil (75th year) and the 1959 Centennial Celebration (100th year). In both celebrations, both the local communities and the oil industry participated.

The 1934 Official Program of the Diamond Jubilee of Oil (32 pages; 50 cents) lists an impressive schedule of events for the four-day celebration (August 24-27): sightseeing tours, baseball games, a parade, firework display, “Mardi Gras”, band concerts, and a formal ball. Entertainment included a “Diamond Jubilee Symphony Orchestra” and the 60-member Pittsburgh Male Chorus.



(Continued Page 3)

Editor’s Column—Mark’s Remarks Steam Power and the Early Oil Industry



Mark Heim

Edwin Drake’s oil strike was the first time in America steam power was utilized for drilling an oil well. According to oil historian Samuel T. Pees, “even though steam drove the engines of the industrial revolution, the suddenness of the oil boom in northwestern Pennsylvania caught the captains of industry flat footed” (www.petroleumhistory.org). This was a wholly new undertaking demanding specialized knowledge and technology. The technology of choice was steam.

The use of steam power for drilling salt water wells dates to the 1840’s but its use was limited because most drillers

still relied on the treadle and spring pole.

Col. Drake and associate Billy Smith made use of a stationary boiler and a 6 horse power Long John steam engine to operate their cable tool drilling operation. The engine is thought to be manufactured at the Erie City Iron Works, Erie, Pennsylvania. Drake purchased the engine for \$500.

As the petroleum industry developed in Northwestern Pennsylvania, oil companies became dependent on steam for more than drilling. Steam powered the refineries; while river and rail traffic needed it for the commerce of oil. Stationary portable steam engines in the oil fields resembled early railroad locomotives both in design and appearance of the boilers.

(Continued Page 2)



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Newsletter Editor-in-Chief

Mark Heim

Holiday Display Contest Winners Announced

by Will Wingo

The first of several display contests in the Oil Region was held during December, 2008.

Five entries for the Christmas window display were received—four from Bradford, PA and one from Oil City.

Sunset Bay Tanning Resort, The Main Street Mercantile, Ott & McHenry Pharmacy, and the Bradford Area Chamber of Commerce all along Main Street, Bradford, Pennsylvania and Gate and Burns Realty, 1st Street, Oil City provided colorful displays incorporating the Oil 150 and derrick theme for holiday visitors to enjoy.



These winners were provided with Oil 150 hand-hammered Drake Well coasters in recognition of their efforts in this contest.

The regional storefront window display contest will continue through the end of 2009 and a lawn decorating contest will be announced in April, 2009 for individuals interested in supporting the events of Oil 150 by decorating their landscapes with an Oil 150 theme.

(Continued from Page 1) [Mark's Remarks](#)

The portable models were mounted on a wheeled frame and moved by teams of horses from site to site.

Among the very early makers of the portable models were: Wood and Mann of Utica, New York; Wood, Taber and Morse of Eaton, New York; Farrar and Trafts of Buffalo, New York; and Leidecker Tool Company of Marietta, Ohio. Several manufacturers located in the original oil region were: Oil Well Supply of Oil City, Pennsylvania; Titusville Iron Works of Titusville, Pennsylvania; Boivard and Seyfang of Bradford, Pennsylvania; Nagle Engine and Boiler Works of Erie, Pennsylvania; and Keystone Driller Company of Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania.

For reasons of safety, many early oil field folks considered a stationary locomotive boiler located some distance from the oil drill rig and storage tanks the best arrangement. The steam engine would be located in an enclosed space with a belt connecting the engine to the machinery. All of these fixtures were arranged more or less in alignment: first the boiler; then the enclosed engine, belt, rig and tanks. In this manner the oilmen kept sparks from the boiler away from the rig and the tanks.

Steam power remained a reliable source of energy in the oil industry for the next 100 years or so. As time progressed, so did the technology of both steam and oil. Drillers progressed from spring poles to cable-tool drilling to rotary drilling. The heating of steam boilers used to power the drilling rigs progressed from wood to coal to fuel oil and natural gas and on to diesel fuel and electricity.

Steam powered the oil industry for many of the early years and well beyond. As the oil industry made itself up as time passed, the technology of that early energy source improved and changed. The purpose remained the same as it was in 1859 - to strike oil for commercial use. The rest is his-story.



Oil 150 is an educational non-partisan celebration administered by the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism (ORA). ORA is classified by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. ORA is registered with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Charitable Organizations. ORA also administers the Oil Region National Heritage Area, designated by Congress in 2004.

(Continued from Page 1) Past Industry Anniversaries

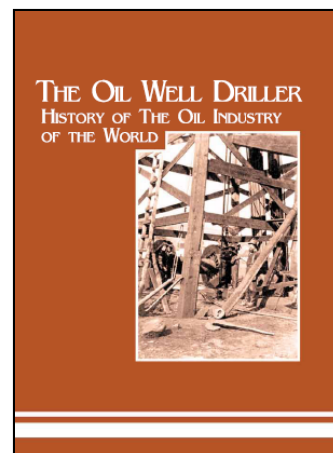
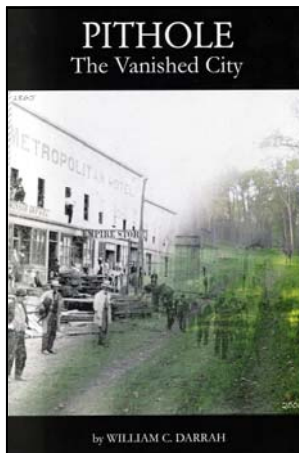
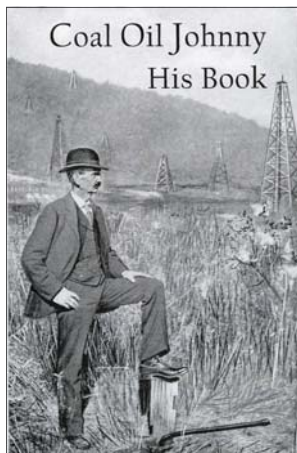
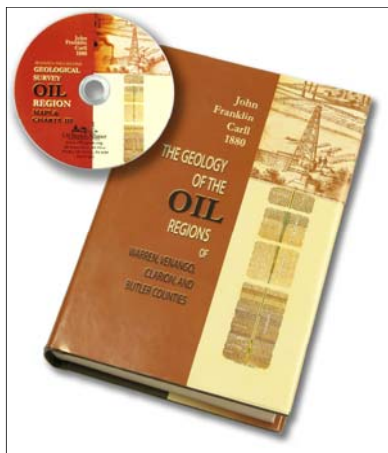
Standard Oil of Indiana provided a two-reel motion picture, "The Romance of Oil" and an historical pageant, "The Story of Oil," played to the crowds. The dedication ceremony for the Drake Well Memorial Park included speeches by Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, Axtell Byles of the American Petroleum Institute, and the governors of Pennsylvania and Ohio. Although not listed in the program, a contest for "The Homeliest Man in the Oil Fields" was also held and was won by Henry English (www.webspawner.com/users/lbdave/soconyvacumndoy.html)!



The Centennial celebration of 1959 included the first day ceremonies (August 27th) for a United States postage stamp. This was viewed as a significant accomplishment, as efforts for a stamp in 1934 and 1949 were unsuccessful. Many individuals and companies designed cachets for the first day covers (http://geoinfo.nmt.edu/staff/scholle/1134cachets_lg.html). Over 800,000 first day covers were cancelled and mailed from Titusville. Norman Rockwell created a cachet authorized by the American Petroleum Institute. Many companies mailed the

first day covers to customers with enclosed cards or letters, signed by company officers, expressing pride in the industry's accomplishments. The list includes SOHIO, Quaker State, Pennzoil, Shell, United Refining, Kendall Refining, Citizens Coal Co, Bradford Supply Co., Universal Cyclops Steel, and ESSO.

The Centennial celebration included the musical composition, "Drake's Well", words and music by Alfred J. "Bud" Baird of Titusville. One line in the song is a bit of exaggeration; "It was the first well drilled in this whole world"! As with the 1934 celebration, there were fireworks and festivities. Speakers included the presidents of Standard Oil New Jersey and Sun Oil Company. NBC "Today" show host Dave Garroway broadcasted a live show from the grounds of the Drake Well Memorial Park (American Oil & Gas Historical Society, 2007, vol.4, no. 4, p.8).

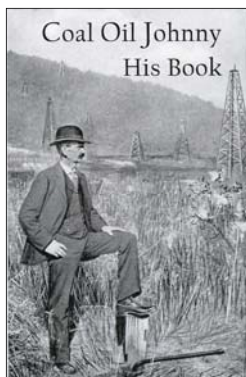


Oil 150 invites you to celebrate the 150th anniversary of an industry that has fueled more progress than any other in the history of civilization. Immerse yourself in the 150-year saga of American innovation and ingenuity. You will discover the people, places, and events of Pennsylvania's Oil Region with every turn of the page.

Visit www.oil150.com to find these oil history titles and other educational resources.

Coal Oil Johnny—His Book

Reviewed by Emily Hoover



Coal Oil Johnny - His Book - Story of His Career as Told by Himself, by John Washington Steele, 2006 reprint, 211 pages, \$20.00. Published by Oil Region Alliance, P.O. 128, Oil City, Pennsylvania

16301. www.oilregion.org

"I am not going to offer any apologies for my course as a 'high flyer'... knowing what I do now, it would not be repeated did opportunity offer; but had I possessed a better insight into the ways of the world to begin with...the probability is that such a character as 'Coal-Oil Johnny' would never have been known or used to scare children with when they were bad."

These are the words of John W. Steele, more commonly known as "Coal Oil Johnny," one of the most famous characters of the early oil region. A native of the valley of Oil Creek in northwestern Pennsylvania, he inherited a fortune which led to years of revelry and extravagance. In a short time, Steele had spent nearly all of his money, forcing him to give up his luxurious lifestyle and go back to his former life. In 1901, Steele published an autobiography entitled *Coal Oil Johnny: His Book*. With the help of author S. H. Gray, Steele retells the story of his life from the beginning until the time of the book's publication.

Steele begins his narrative by describing his childhood, having been adopted by Culbertson and Sarah McClintock upon the death of his biological parents. The McClintock's owned a farm along Oil Creek in Venango County, Pennsylvania. Steele tells of the death in 1855 of Culbertson McClintock, who left the farm to his wife on the condition that Steele would inherit the property upon her own death. Four years later, the famous Drake Well was drilled in nearby Titusville, Pennsylvania. The McClintock Farm

was one of the many farms that rapidly became filled with oil wells and oil leases.

During the initial phase of the oil boom, Steele was employed as a teamster. His experiences in teaming as well as his experiences with oil-hauling packet boats provide readers with a clear picture of life in the early oil regions. For Steele, this life would not last much longer. In early 1864 his adoptive mother, Sarah McClintock, died as a result of burns received in a stove fire from crude oil. Upon the death of his beloved "Aunt Sally," Steele inherited the farm along with a \$24,500 fortune plus major royalties.

Suddenly finding himself a rich man, Steele began to spend his money by buying an expensive team of horses. Shortly after Sarah McClintock's death, Steele moved to Philadelphia along with his wife and young son. During this time Steele frequently made trips back and forth from Philadelphia to the farm. On one of these trips he met William H. Wickham with whom he would eventually made arrangements to buy the farm. Wickham would later become

the mayor of New York City.

By October of 1864, Steele had taken his family back to the farm, leaving them there as he returned to Philadelphia. This marks the point in which Steele began to lead the life of extravagance for which he would later gain fame. He began to buy expensive clothes as well as a carriage. The carriage, decorated with spouting oil derricks, became famous around Philadelphia. It was also in Philadelphia where Steele received the moniker "Coal Oil Johnny." Steele relates that an "insignificant street urchin" once remarked on the carriage saying, "Yep, that's Coal Oil Johnny and his gang."

The name stuck between Steele and his friends, eventually becoming picked up by the press.

The rest of the autobiography narrates the financial downfall of "Coal Oil Johnny." Steele describes his forced return back to Oil Creek and the initial reception he received from family and friends. He also discusses his travels following his bankruptcy as he tried to find work.

(Continued Page 5)

Oil 150 Celebrates First Night



On December 31, 2008, Oil 150 rang in the New Year at Oil City, Pa's First Night celebration. The event, sponsored by the Oil City Arts Council, featured musicians, dancing, dramatic readings, humor, and more. Revelers were able to view the Oil 150 lighted sign in Justus Park. The highlight of the event was the annual fireworks display, partially funded by Oil 150.

(Photos by Mike Henderson)



(Continued from Page 4) Book Review by Emily Hoover

The book ends with his moves to Iowa and Nebraska with his wife and son. He describes his simple life there, and his desire to keep away from the public and the press due to his former life-style.

Steele wrote the book in order to set the record straight about his life and dispel the myths and fictional accounts. Steele's descriptions of life on Oil Creek before and after the oil boom are especially interesting. Readers can grasp a better understanding of the immense changes brought into the Oil Creek Valley upon the drilling of the Drake Well in 1859. Steele's narrative

provides both a view of the culture of 19th century cities as well as how wealthy people lived during that time.

John W. Steele's autobiography, *Coal Oil Johnny: His Book*, has already become a classic in oil history literature. It is a great read on the truth be-

hind the legend of "Coal Oil Johnny." Steele's story is still alive today as the myths surrounding his life continue to survive. By reading Steele's account, readers can obtain the facts – according to Steele – about this early oilman and his fortune.

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