

**PETROLEUM  
HISTORY  
SOCIETY**

# ARCHIVES

Oct 1987

*First Luncheon Meeting a Big Success*

## Hell's Half Acre quite a saga

By Tannis Dunn

The proposed Hell's Half Acre Interpretation Centre will recount the fascinating history of Alberta's oil and gas industry, provide for an unequalled entertaining and learning experience, and preserve the authenticity of Turner Valley's heritage.

In a presentation given to the Petroleum Historical Society September 24, 1987, Larry Clausen addressed the audience on a number of topics relevant to the Hell's Half Acre project.

Larry, who spoke on behalf of The Turner Valley Oilfield Society, gave a brief history of events that have affected the small town over the past seven years.

In 1980, Turner Valley came to the realization that with the rapid growth occurring in Calgary, it had created the need for an increase in the usage and development of their own land. From cultivating a system of parks and recreational areas, to conserv-

ing and upgrading the quickly deteriorating historical areas in the downtown, ideas flowed on how to redevelop the abundantly historic town.

In 1984, the development of an Oil and Gas Interpretive facility at Turner Valley was recommended by The Turner Valley Oilfield Society. The changing and developing of mainstreet businesses, gift shops and most all areas of town, would reflect the theme of oil and gas.

In 1986, The Turner Valley Oilfield Society and Western Decalta Petroleum Ltd. began researching the feasibility of an oil and gas interpretive centre in Turner Valley.

Currently, The Turner Valley Oilfield Society and Western Decalta Petroleum Ltd. are discussing the development of the project with Alberta Culture.

"As a result of the decommission of the Madison Natural Gas Plant, the use of the facility was most important to us," said Larry. There is a significant amount of history in the gas plant, as it is the earliest and only remaining model of its kind in Canada.

Larry said Hell's Half Acre would take a "Disney" approach to tourism by offering people of all ages the chance to have fun and enjoy themselves, while at the same time learning about a major part of Alberta's history.

A review of the goals and objectives of Hell's Half Acre gave focus to the importance of the project and the need for its continuing development. The main goal is to develop, construct and operate a world-class interpretation centre and tourism attraction at the Turner Valley gas plant site which offers a first class tourism, learning and family experience.

Of the many objects of the project, an emphasis was put on its tourism potential. It would provide every tourist with the opportunity to experience the actuality of the oil and gas industry as it was in the early 1900's. Not only would it promote Turner Valley as a tourist attraction, but it would elicit precious tourist dollars into Turner Valley and surrounding areas.

Petroleum History Society  
Luncheon Presentation:

**Grant MacEwan\***

on

**History, Petroleum and the  
Environment**

Time: 12:00 noon

Date: Wednesday, November 18

Place: Palliser Hotel

Cost: Society Members, \$15; non-members:  
\$17.00

RSVP: Jeniffer Thiedemann: (403) 269-6721

\*See Biography of Grant MacEwan, p. 4.

# Editorial

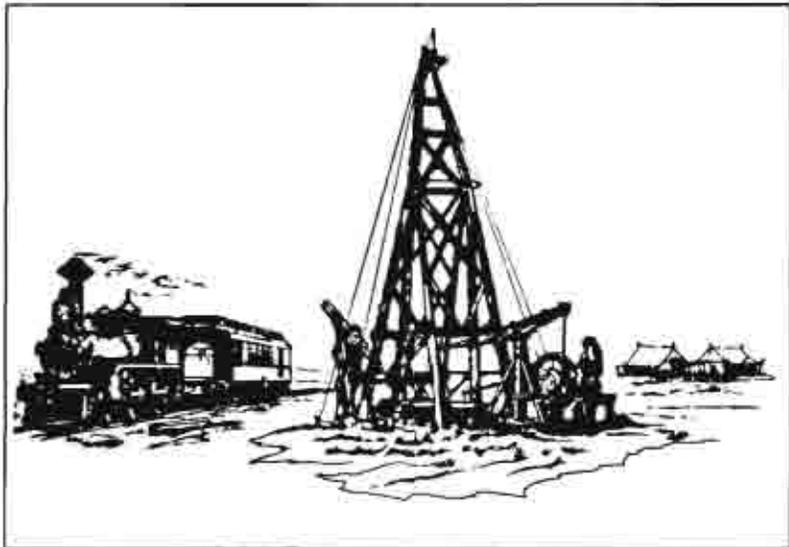
## What we're all about

The stated purpose of the Petroleum History Society is to collect, conserve and disseminate information relevant to the history of the petroleum industry in Canada. To fulfill this purpose, the Society is actively engaged in locating and supporting the preservation of artifacts, documents, photographs, oral histories, and other historically significant items bearing on the industry. As well, the Society encourages and supports the preparation of corporate histories.

Is there really a desire or even a need to conserve old documents, photographs, personal remembrances and rusty artifacts? When a study into the feasibility of a Centre for Petroleum Industry History was conducted by the Society last year, this question was posed to over eighty industry people, journalists, archivists, librarians, historians and representatives of government and private organizations. The answer was an unqualified "Yes!". The study identified people requiring this material to include those listed above, as well as public relations officers, geographers, students, school and university teachers, geoscientists, planners of cultural facilities and parks, and private collectors.

The petroleum industry in Canada "officially" began in Ontario with the formation of the J. M. Williams Company in 1857 and the production of as much as 150 gallons of crude oil per day by hand pump from a well only 49 feet deep. However, knowledge of hydrocarbon occurrences in Canada predate the arrival of European explorers, with native peoples using petroleum products for lighting and medicinal purposes. Henry Kelsey saw samples of oil saturated sands collected from along the Athabasca River as early as 1719. Prior to 1857, explorations by such adventurers as Peter Pond, Alexander Mackenzie, Dr. John Richardson, Captain John Palliser and Henry Youle Hind documented the occurrences of oil sands, black pitch or bitumen and seepages in Western Canada and the Arctic. The first significant natural gas discovery in Western Canada was made at Langevin Station, Alberta in 1883, and oil was discovered in 1902, leading to the boom and bust of Oil City in what is now Waterton National Park.

The history of the petroleum industry has been a long and often exciting one filled with geological field parties exploring the Arctic islands and the mountains and foothills from the U.S. border to the



*An artist's conception of the first gas well drilled in western Canada, at the CPR's Langevin Siding near Medicine Hat, in 1883*

Beaufort Sea, cable tool and rotary rigs, frontier towns, technological advances in geophysics and reservoir engineering, wild wells, challenging pipelines, entrepreneurs, intriguing mergers and bankruptcies, realized and broken dreams. However, much of the documentation and personal commentary of this rich history has been lost forever with the passing of the early pioneers. Personal and corporate papers, photographs, maps and other materials were trashed and burned as valueless by well-intentioned heirs and corporate data retention policies, or stored in boxes to rot in basements, attics and garages. This tragedy continues today.

The goal of the Petroleum History Society is to root out the existing material of historical significance and ensure that it finds its way to the appropriate, publicly-accessible storage site such as a museum or archive. The Society also encourages organizations to undertake their own histories and to preserve their significant artifacts, and encourages the recording of the personal comments of significant contributors to the petroleum industry. It is only through these projects that events in which you and I participated, and those events witnessed by our predecessors, contemporaries and successors, will be accurately recorded and made accessible to all Canadians.

*W.R.S. McLellan,  
President, Petroleum History Society*

## New items at the Glenbow

The Glenbow Museum was established in 1955 as the Glenbow Foundation by Calgary oilman Eric L. Harvie. Since that time the Archives Department has attempted to collect and preserve permanently valuable historical records relating to the history of the petroleum industry. To this end, we have gathered papers from numerous industry professionals (geologists, lawyers, managers) as well as some records from firms engaged in oil exploration.

We have also cooperated in the Petroleum Industry Oral History Project from 1981 to 1985 that recorded the experiences of over 200 early oilmen. In recent years we have received a number of new collections that will contribute to a further understanding of the industry's history. They include:

1) papers of Max Bell, Calgary businessman, 1940s-1970s who was heavily involved with a number of oil companies;

2) administrative files of the Canadian Society of Exploration Geophysicists, 1950s-1980s,

3) papers of consulting geologist Joseph S. Irwin, 1920s-1960s,

4) geological and geophysical reports by Imperial Oil re Canol Project, 1942-44,

5) an addition to our holdings of the papers of the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists, 1978-1982,

6) legal files of Royalite Oil Company, 1921-1970s, 7) an addition to the administrative and regulatory files of the Canadian Petroleum Association, 1977-1984,

8) research files of historian May Jones relating to her 1978 masters thesis on the Canadian petroleum industry,

9) reference files of Calgary oil journalist Frank W. Dabbs, 1970s-1980s,

10) business files of consulting engineer John Gregg, 1940s-1980s,

11) business and personal files and photographs of Neil McQueen, 1920s-1970s,

12) photographs relating to Atlantic #3 well collected by Aubrey Kerr, 13) photographs of oil and gas exploration carried out by Western Minerals, 1950s-1960s.

While certain of these collections have partial restrictions and have not been fully described, researchers are welcome to enquire about the use of these and other collections at Glenbow.

The Glenbow Archives will continue to collect petroleum history material and are always appreciative of donations of books, papers and photographs.

## Society membership drive a hit

The Society's Fall membership drive was a major success, and resulted in eleven new corporate members and some two dozen new individual members. On behalf of the society, the executive welcome the following new members

### Sustaining Institutional Members

Petro-Canada Inc.  
Texaco Canada

### Institutional Members

Alberta Natural Gas Company Ltd.  
BP Canada Inc.  
Chevron Canada Resources Limited  
Gulf Canada Resources  
Home Oil  
Independent Petroleum Association of Canada  
Norcen Energy Resources Limited  
Pembina Resources  
Western Decalta

### Individual Members

Barkwell, Donald  
Czaja, Ed  
Duncan, Stephen  
Elliott, Norm  
Geddes, J. Howard  
Hansen, Carl  
Milne, Lindsay  
Nielsen, Arne  
Shepherd, Ralph H.  
Smith, Raymond I.  
Stacy, Don  
Stoneman, Douglas  
Wadsworth, Kenneth  
Brown, Margaret  
Connell, Gordon

Davis, Thomas  
Duncan, Russell  
Falcon, Peter  
Fietz, Bill  
Frey, John  
Gilbert, Ned  
Gulless, Micky  
MacCalder, John  
Nehring, Reubin

## The Phantom Cartoonist Unveiled

**NEWS ITEM:** Tough times hit all levels of oil industry



"Lunch at the Petroleum Club sure ain't what it used to be!"

*Don C. Smith, It Only Hurts When You Produce!, Calgary, Oilweek Publications, 1987.*

The 1970s were a political cauldron bubbling over in the energy business, with one issue after another arousing passions across the country -- but nowhere less than in Calgary. In that context, it was inauspicious but not unusual when *Oilweek*, the industry's weekly technical magazine, received an anonymous cartoon on Alberta's tax reduction plan in February, 1973. What was unusual was that those anonymous cartoons kept on coming: the magazine received 304 of them during the following decade, or more than two each month. The last was received in 1983.

Despite widespread speculation in the oil patch, the cartoonist remained a mystery until 1986, when Amoco's Don C. Smith, a petroleum engineer, told a group of friends and colleagues at his retirement party that he had been the phantom cartoonist.

When the truth became known, *Oilweek* found petroleum companies to sponsor a souvenir volume of the cartoons to commemorate Smith's brand of comment on industry politics. *It Only Hurts When You Produce!* is a limited edition volume, with each of 500 copies numbered and signed by the author. The following selection of cartoons from the phantom cartoonist is reproduced with the author's permission.

*Peter McKenzie-Brown  
Canadian Petroleum Association*

**NEWS ITEM:** Calgary oilmen undertake winter activities.



"Must be Clyde's car, he ain't much of a skier -- but he is a realist!"

**NEWS ITEM:** Petroleum Association introduces louse leaf statistics handbook.



"We got the idea from trying to keep up with changes in royalty and taxation!"

**NEWS ITEM:** Oil self-sufficiency by end of century predicted.



"What century?"