



**PETROLEUM  
HISTORY  
SOCIETY**

**ARCHIVES**

*Newsletter of the Petroleum History Society*

*September, 2000; Volume XI, Number 5*

**NEXT LUNCHEON – SEPTEMBER 27, 2000**

John Wall, B.Sc., M.Sc., Ph.D., Geological Survey of Canada (G.S.C.)

**TOPIC: “*Microfossils: The Early Years Of Plains Exploration*”**

In the 1940s numerous shallow holes were cored across the Plains, resulting in recognition of various microfossil marker-beds useful in mapping structure. In 1945 an electrologging device introduced for small diameter borings provided another method of correlation between test holes. Our Speaker generously shares his wealth of paleontological experience that began in 1945-46 with the Imperial Core Drill Group in eastern and central Alberta. In 1947 John joined Charlie Stelck (now Professor Emeritus, U. of A.) in the long term investigation of the Cretaceous biostratigraphy and micropaleontology of Alberta and British Columbia. Initially sponsored by only Imperial Oil, this research drew the attention and eventual joint support of the U. of A. and the Research Council of Alberta. In 1958 John joined the Geology Division of the Research Council as micropaleontologist and remained in this capacity until 1974. Much of this period John served as U. of A.'s sessional lecturer in micropaleontology. In 1974 he transferred to the G.S.C. in Calgary. In addition to work on the Mesozoic microfaunas and biostratigraphy of the Canadian Arctic Islands, John provided ongoing biostratigraphic support to colleagues in the Western Canada Sedimentary Basin. He began phased retirement from the GSC in 1988 with a part-time appointment. In 1993 he was designated “Emeritus Research Scientist”, a position still held.

**Date: Wednesday, September 27, 2000**

**Time: Noon (receipts at the door)**

**Place: Palliser Hotel Penthouse Room**

**Cost: \$20 for members, \$22 for guests (most welcome)**

**RSVP** Clint Tippett, 691-4274 by Noon, Monday, September 25, 2000.

***In This Issue ...***

Next Luncheon	1
Calendar of Events	2
June 15 Presentation	3
Oilpatch Book Review	4

**Next Luncheon – November 2000. To be announced.**

***if you missed...***

*“History of the World Petroleum Congress (WPC),  
1933 - 1959”*

Thursday, June 15, 2000.... with  
Aubrey Kerr, Author, Historian, Honourary CSPG Member

**.....see the condensed version in this issue of Archives**

**THE PETROLEUM HISTORY SOCIETY**  
**Calendar of Events and Daily Tips**

**Next Director's Meeting:** October 4, 2000.

**New Oilpatch Books:** "*IN BALANCE, An Account of Alberta's CA Profession, 1910-2000*" by P.H.S. Director Peter McKenzie-Brown, \$29.95, hard cover, 278 pages, photos – available from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Alberta (1-800-232-9406; e-mail: k.holmgren@icaa.ab.ca).

**FORWARD:** "*This history offers benchmarks, context, relationships, knowledge and, one hopes, a little better understanding of the present. Observations about these things should help us. Perhaps, too, it might just be enjoyable to read about ourselves. We might also agree that historical perspective gives us background to confront criticism, influence complex events before us right now, make changes for the better, and confidently address the unknown.*"

**Excerpt-Chapter 6: FROM LEDUC TO SUEZ (1946-56):** "*The story of the rapid growth of the Alberta-based petroleum industry has often been told. For the purposes of this history, however, the key factor is the economic impact of the industry in the years since Leduc. This can only be seen through a simple comparison. In the late 1940s, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba had roughly equal populations – under a million souls each. Half a century later, Alberta's population had more than tripled., while the populations of the other two provinces had increased relatively little. For most of that period, oil and gas were the drivers behind Alberta's astonishing growth.*"

**Society E-Mail Address:** [petroleumhistorysociety@canada.com](mailto:petroleumhistorysociety@canada.com). All members with e-mail service please take a moment to send in your address to Bonnie Mech, Director, Membership Committee " [bonnie\\_mech@pancanadian.ca](mailto:bonnie_mech@pancanadian.ca) " to build our file.

**PHS Member Honoured:** Helen Turgeon – Canadian Petroleum Hall of Fame recipient for outstanding contributions to the industry. A mother of six and grandmother of 12, Helen also had time to be an indispensable executive secretary to some of the highest figures in the industry for decades. As well, Helen has been a leading light of an international educational and social league for industry personnel, the Associations of Desk and Derrick International. She was named Canadian Oil Woman of the Year in 1984 by Southam Communications. She has been a Member of the Petroleum History Society since inception and regularly edits or co-authors oilpatch books such as Aubrey Kerr's "Judy Creek and Beyond" and his latest project "Corridors of Time II".

Helen joins 55 other industry and community builders so honoured since 1997. Selections to its ranks from across the country has helped developed a provincial, regional and national profile. Organizers have set out to preserve a record of the evolution of one of Canada's biggest and most resilient industries, with a special emphasis on its human side. Helen will be admitted formally into the Hall at a banquet dinner and induction ceremony, held for the first time in Calgary, on September 29 at the Westin Hotel.

**June 2000 Turner Valley Field Trip:** Conducted in conjunction with the World Petroleum Congress(W.P.C.) June 11 from 08:00 to 14:00. P.H.S. members and Talisman Energy staff served as guides. Although sold out, both buses left two-thirds full owing to conflicts with concurrent events. Talisman printed the Society's comprehensive Tour Guide on the Turner valley area and graciously donated an additional 100 copies to P.H.S. for future trips.

**To All PHS Members:** Current membership is 88 with 5 new memberships since last meeting. Includes 1 Corporate, 8 Sustaining, 57 Individual and 22 Lifetime members.

**National Petroleum Show:** 12–15 June 2000. P.H.S. volunteers manned a table, distributed hundreds of brochures, fielded countless questions, displayed and sold Members' books.

**Tip For The Day:** (from *The 365 Stupidest Things Ever Said* by Ross & Kathryn Petras) "*You'll never make it – four-groups are out. Go back to Liverpool.*" Decca Records executive to the Beatles in 1962.

PRESENTATION TO THE PETROLEUM HISTORY SOCIETY LUNCHEON MEETING--15 JUNE 2000  
(by Neil Leeson, Director, P.H.S.)

**A lasting memory of the June 11-15, 2000 World Petroleum Congress, hosted by Calgary, was the unprecedented security by any Canadian standard. Cautious protection for dignitaries was prudent; squads of riot-equipped police on every corner, armed commuter trains, barricaded downtown districts – all lent an air of surreal overreaction. One wonders if Calgary's White Hat image suffered more than it gained in the eyes of our international guests. Such improvised nationalism conflicts with our historical culture of compromise, generosity, trust and goodwill.**

“ The first World Petroleum Congress (W.P.C.) was held in London's Royal Institution Lecture Theatre in the summer of 1933. That year gasoline was already the most important product of petroleum. The Schlumberger Brothers unveiled electrical coring in Romania, were already obtaining answers about potential and resistivity of the wellbores they were investigating and had patented a dip (deviation) meter. Despite the depths of the Great Depression, war clouds on the horizon and a petroleum industry in infancy, over 244 learned papers were read by an international assembly of scientists. Subsequent W.P.C.'s gained international recognition for introducing similar visionaries sharing their knowledge, discussing issues and challenges.

At this first W.P.C., emissions and corrosion were both noted as the worst menaces to industry, costing \$125 million in losses. Industry leaders hinted they knew that the problem was an electro-chemical phenomenon, which was under research. Before closing, a resolution passed that would ensure continuation of the congress, “so valuable in many respects, that its existence should be perpetuated and should be held triennially”.

Hidden in these proceedings was a learned treatise, “The Oil Prospects of Western Canada”, written by the insightful British engineer Campbell Murray Hunter, president of Hunter Valley Oil Co. The most important aspect of his paper was Hunter's prescient comments on Alberta's potential and current wells that are still relevant 67 years later. “When the oil industry is suffering from over-production, it may at first sight appear inopportune to call attention to a great almost virgin oil region. But past experience teaches that periods of over-production do not last indefinitely so it behooves petroleum technology to be always looking ahead.” Hunter's paper covered foothills geology in a logical sequence. “Strike and block faulting is prevalent and great care has to be exercised in locating wellsites if fault planes are to be avoided”. Hunter persisted to “broadly outline its salient geological features and to attempt to draw aside the curtain which hides fortunes. The occurrence of oil in so many formations led to identification of Middle Devonian as a source rock”, albeit to the north in the Great Slave Lake area.

To Hunter Western Canada was “a vast area that merits most thorough and systematic exploration”. Tests by all usual criteria, such as the assistance of innumerable oil and gas seepages, favourable oil genetic conditions present in formations ranging from Upper Cretaceous to Middle Devonian (reef that would not be discovered for 10 years at Leduc), give promise of many important oilfields, the discovery of which can only be a matter of time.”

The 1937 W.P.C. was held in Paris, with Berlin scheduled to be host in 1940. Not until 1951 was the third W.P.C. held in The Hague. The 1955 W.P.C. in Rome featured about 4700 participants, including 26 Canadians representing 22 companies. One of the geological sessions held at the 1959 Congress in New York City was chaired by Ira Cram and featured L.V. Illing. This author presented a detailed learned dissertation on the deposition and diagenesis of Upper Paleozoic carbonates in the Alberta Foothills. At the time he was a consultant to Shell Oil, a company which had and still maintains its dominant position in that gas-prone area.

Such is the early history of the World Petroleum Congresses. The triennial cycle continues to this day, a tribute to international cooperation. Calgary was the latest benefactor.

Book Review  
by Peter McKenzie-Brown, P.H.S. Director

***“THE COLOR OF OIL” - Oil Shows Its Colours***

Possibly the best book about the oil business since Daniel Yergin’s Pulitzer Prize-winning volume *“The Prize”*, a masterful narrative published in 1991.

The *“COLOR OF OIL”* offers a thorough and authoritative analysis of the global industry, using as its central theme the industry’s colours.

For example, the industry’s financial impact on the global economy is based on the idea that the colour of oil is green (the colour of money). A technical chapter on exploration and production is based on the idea that the colour of oil is black. A chapter on the U.S. impact on the oil industry begins with the idea that the colour of oil is red, white and blue.

You get the idea.

The authors are both US academics, and they are both engineers by training. However, they both have direct experience with the petroleum industry - Economides as a technical advisor to a number of U.S. corporations; Oligney as a corporate honcho who, according to his bio, “negotiated one of the first joint ventures in the former Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan.”

The authors bring a strongly business-oriented focus to their book, and offer refreshing insights into much of its well-traveled history.

To give some idea of the perceptivity of this book, consider that it was published at the beginning of 2000 when the T.S.E. Oil and Gas Index languished around 6000. There was widespread gloom about the future of oil and gas investment.

Wrote the authors, “Now is the time to buy energy stocks. They will escalate in value substantially in the early 2000s. The wise investor buys for the long-term because energy is the world’s biggest business, and it continues to move unstoppably forward.”

The index is now one third higher. Market psychology seems to be changing, with more investors wanting to hold oil and gas stocks in their portfolios. If another period of energy crisis looms, as many pundits claim, this book will be a good primer to help understand what is happening.

*The Color of Oil: The History, the Money and the Politics of the World’s Biggest Business* by Michael Economides and Ronald Oligney; copyright 2000.

Published by Round Oak Publishing Company, 200 pages; \$37.95. Available at DeMille Books.