



**PETROLEUM
HISTORY
SOCIETY**

ARCHIVES

Newsletter of the Petroleum History Society

November 2003; Volume XIV, Number 6

P.H.S. Lunch and Annual Awards Presentations – November 26, 2003

Speaker: Norman Lussier

Explosives Manufacturer

“The First Commercial Shaped Charge Plant in Canada”

Shaped charges, as used by the oil industry, are mechanical devices powered by high explosives to create holes through the steel well casings to establish the flow of oil or gas from the formations to the well bore. Adoption and commercialization of this explosive technology by the oil industry from the French-to-American Military took place in 1946/47. After about 50 years shaped charge devices are still the most effective method of perforating well casings from a cost/benefit perspective. The center of North American manufacturing for the North American oil industry was and remains in Texas, USA. The original patents for the assembly and use of shaped charges have since expired and assembly methods evolved into proprietary trade secrets. Today most patents are product design-based not assembly-based.

Since 1982, **Norman Lussier**'s company has been a distributor for a major Texas-based supplier of shaped charges to independent perforating contractors in the Canadian market. In 1987/88, a license was obtained for this proprietary information from them in order to manufacture shaped charges in Alberta. An attempt to build and finance this project initially with various financial suppliers and later with Canada's sole military manufacturer was not successful for various reasons. In 1997/98, the writer's Company self-designed and built, with financial assistance, its own assembly plant at Standard, Alberta. Norm is a 1962 graduate of Queen's University and a long term player in Canadian explosives.

TIME: Noon, Wednesday, November 26, 2003

PLACE: Fairmont Palliser Hotel (133 - 9th Avenue S.W.) – Canadian Pacific Room (check marquee).

COST: \$25.00 Members and \$30.00 Guests (most welcome)

**R.S.V.P. if you wish to attend to: Clint Tippett, 691-4274 or
clinton.tippett@shell.ca by noon Monday, November 24**

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Archives is published approximately 8 times a year by the Petroleum History Society for Society members. Back issues are archived on our website at:

www.petroleumhistory.ca

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THE PETROLEUM HISTORY SOCIETY
THE BULL WHEEL



Next Board Meeting: The Executive and Board are reminded that the next meeting will be at noon on January 14, 2004 at the offices of Board Member Sean Callaghan.

Next Luncheons: The Society has been trying to firm up a slate of talks for spring. We have arranged for P.H.S. Member Tina Crossfield to discuss "Oil Archives at the Okotoks Heritage House" in February and we hope to be able to have David Mitchell, one of the early Presidents of A.E.C. address us at our late-March Annual General Meeting. If you would like to present the results of a project that you've been working on, please let us know and we will fit you in. Contact Clint Tippett, President P.H.S., at 691-4274 or Director Debbie Knall at 780-463-3859 (Edmonton). Thanks again to Debbie for all her hard work.

Website Inquiries: P.H.S. Past President Micky Gulless has been kind enough to respond to a wide range of questions that have come to us via our website. If you consider yourself knowledgeable about petroleum history or are a trivia buff and would like to help Micky out on this front, please let her know and she can forward the E-mails to you for your attention.

2002 Awards: The Board has decided upon the recipients of the 2002 Awards and the related presentations will be made at this month's luncheon on the 26th. Those award winners are:

1. **P.H.S. Book of the Year for 2002:** Peter C. Newman for "Continental Reach – The Westcoast Energy story", Douglas and McIntyre, 258 p.
2. **P.H.S. Article of the Year for 2002:** Tammy Nemeth for "Consolidating the Continental Drift: American Influence on Diefenbakers's National Oil Policy", Journal of the Canadian Historical Association, New Series, v. 13, pp. 191-215.
3. **P.H.S. Lifetime Achievement Award for 2002:** Robert D. (Bob) Bott
4. **P.H.S. Multimedia Award for 2002:** Good Earth Productions for "Birth of a Boom - Turner Valley Gas Plant": an episode of the History Lands "Canada's Heritage Sites" series.
5. **P.H.S. Preservation Award for 2002:** The National Film Board of Canada.

Congratulations to all our winners and thanks for raising the profile of petroleum history!

P.H.S. Pin Sets: Our pin sets (of 6) have recently been reduced in price from \$100.00 with a gift one year P.H.S. membership to \$40.00 without a gift membership. Please contact Joyce Wright at 252-4143 if you are interested in buying one or several sets. These make great and original Calgary- or Western Canada-related gifts – and Christmas is just around the corner! A comprehensive description accompanies each plush boxed set. One of the pins features **Norman Wells** with the following description. *“Led by geologist Ted Link in 1919, a crew of six drillers and an ox named “Nig” made a six-week, 1900 kilometer journey northward by railway, river boat and on foot to the site now known as Norman Wells along the Mackenzie River. The ox helped to build a log house [wow!] and put the drilling rig in place before being butchered to provide food for the drillers [that’s gratitude!] during the long cold winter. Drilling resumed in the spring with the world’s most northerly oil discovery coming in on August 23, 1920.”*

Monument at Little Chicago: A movement is afoot to erect a monument honouring the early days of Turner Valley at the former location of Little Chicago between Hartell and Longview. Helen Goldenberg of “Little Chicago Revisited” is seeking to raise money for this purpose. Helen can be reached at 281-2225.

Lucky and Unlucky Unique Well Identifiers (UWI’s): Have you ever noticed if certain well locators are lucky and others not so much? If you’ve ever looked at the Western Basin this way and wish to share your experiences, you might be able to help someone avoid drilling a dry hole! Let us know!

New Provincial Archives of Alberta Location: The new archives facility was opened on October 5, 2003. It is located at 8555 Roper Road (corner of 51 Avenue and 86 Street) in southeastern Edmonton. The building has 11,000 square meters of space including 85,000 linear meters of shelving in 20 climate-controlled vaults. A two-storied conservation lab, reading room, small conference centre, library, exhibits area and staff offices complete the picture.

Crushed Again: Received a while ago the latest issues of History Now and Alberta History from the Historical Society of Alberta. Once again, one would get the impression that the province is (or was) populated by cowboys and that the oil industry doesn’t even exist!

Gyro Club Request for Speakers: P.H.S. Member Alan Clark has asked if there are any members (or others) who would like to address the Gyro Club with which he is affiliated. The original organization was started in Calgary in 1921 by Clarence Loughheed and Alan is a member of the related Stampede City Club. If any of you would like to take this opportunity to promote petroleum history through a presentation, please contact Alan at 213-3716.

Membership: Past President Micky Gulless has informed us that P.H.S. membership currently sits at 147. This is almost double where it was several years ago and this growth reflects all the hard work of our volunteers. Congratulations!

Licence Plates: Does anyone know if there are some provinces or states that feature rigs or wells on their vehicular licence plates? I have one – but let’s see what else is known.

Winners (and Losers): In a recent issue of the Globe and Mail’s Report on Business Magazine, the Canadian business was profiled with multiple categories of good things and not-so-good things. Vernon “Dry Hole” Hunter made it in under the nickname column where he was attributed with having found oil at Leduc in 1946! The Petroleum Club is slammed under the “Least Appreciative” heading for not allowing Pat Carney to enter in 1985 despite her role in the dismantling of the National Energy Program.

Current Status of the Plans for the Development of The Turner Valley Gas Plant Site

A luncheon presentation to the Petroleum History Society by
Ian Clarke and Monica Field of
Historic Sites and Cultural Facilities Branch of Alberta Community Development
(Summary by Clint Tippett)



On October 29, 2003 the Society was fortunate enough to be addressed by these two individuals from the Alberta Government who are deeply involved in the plans and attempts to promote the redevelopment of the Turner Valley Gas Plant site as an interpretive facility.

Ian began by reviewing the initiatives that had existed in the past for this purpose, including the Hell's Half Acre Project and the Turner Valley Oilfield Society. The currently low level of funding for this plan reflects government response to fluctuating budgets (and indirectly to changing oil and natural gas prices). Most of the effort on the old plant is now related to environmental remediation related to mercury, asbestos and other nasty materials. Plans for the interpretation piece are unfortunately on ice. One ray of hope, though, was that the picture for the ultimate product now includes more of the exploration and production sides of the industry as they existed in Turner Valley, rather than just the gas processing piece as seemed to have been the focus before. There was also the suggestion that more of a people focus would be involved, rather than just an attempt to explain gas processing technology. Both of these broadenings will hopefully add to the attractiveness of the project to the general public. Finally, the involvement of the Federal Government through its site heritage industrial site declarations should reinforce the need to move ahead with this work – although this is apparently a very slow process.

Ian and Monica both expressed the opinion that if this historic site is to be revived as an interpretive centre that support from the broader industry and community will be required.

Ian and Monica's talk and the situation surrounding it was the subject of a good overview by Calgary Herald reporter David Bly who attended the luncheon and presented his comments in his "Heritage" column on October 31. Nice to see that we were instrumental in raising the profile of this issue in the Calgary region. Let's think about how we can help to make this happen both as individuals and through the Petroleum History Society!

INDUSTRIAL WORLD HERITAGE SITES

By Clint Tippett

I was recently reviewing an issue of *World Heritage*. This publication is produced under the jurisdiction of UNESCO who, as you all know, is the lead United Nations agency for World Heritage Sites. We are all familiar with the natural UNESCO World Heritage Sites that have been established, for example the four Canadian Mountain Parks (including the Burgess Shale) and Dinosaur Provincial Park. World Heritage Sites of the cultural variety would include Smashed-in-Head Buffalo Jump, Sgaang Gwaii (Anthony Island in Haida Gwaii) and the old town of Lunenburg. The latter include Industrial World Heritage Sites including the recently named Zollverein Coal Complex in Germany and Great Copper Mountain in Falun, Sweden. A short portion of the article in question provides some background:

“The United Kingdom has five industrial sites inscribed on the World Heritage List which, considered together, make it possible to retrace the major steps in the progress of the Industrial Revolution in the British Isles throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Each of the sites owes its importance in varying degree to the exploitation of natural resources close to their source – either for raw materials or sources of power. Each is marked by discoveries and invention; the introduction of new processes of manufacture; skills in enterprise and management; paternalistic socio-economic organization; technological and architectural innovation and developments in town planning. Together these sites played a major part in the fundamental restructuring of society, with its economic reordering and technological advances that we now call the industrial revolution.

The United Kingdom cannot claim to have a monopoly in these fields: the World Heritage List contains sites – such as Kutna Hora in the Czech republic and Banska Stiavnica in Slovakia – where advances in mining and harnessing of water power predate the developments in the U.K. But it is symptomatic of the role played by the United Kingdom that five of its Mainland World Heritage sites are industrial, and that this represents a significant proportion of the total of thirty-three industrial sites on the World Heritage List – a total that includes such technological masterpieces as the Pont du Gard in France, built by the Romans. In its most recent Tentative List, the United Kingdom has deliberately focussed on industrial sites because of the country’s role in the industrialization of the world. In essence the story of these five sites revolves around iron and textiles, their production and the societies that developed from them. However, the repercussions of this story reverberated not merely within the British Isles but to the far corners of the globe.

The discoveries made at Coalbrookdale and Blaenavon and their subsequent exploitation there pre-staged the railways of the world and the international steel industry. The factory system that was initiated at Cromford, developed at New Lanark and refined at Saltaire, foretold systems of education and welfare that have been in a state of continuous evolution ever since. The model village that was established at New Lanark by Robert Owen is credited with being the inspiration for the “*cite ouvriere*” in France and the Garden City in England. Several Owenite communities were also set up in the United States, notably at New Harmony, Indiana. The list of antecedents and successors is endless. All these places are still inhabited communities subject to change and with numerous stakeholders. The United Kingdom has therefore developed management plans for these sites, which aim to achieve the right balance between conservation, access, the interests of the local community and sustainable use of the sites.”

Does anyone think that Turner Valley might fall into this category? What else might in Canada?

THE OIL WELLS OF CANADA

We pause here to reproduce the description from the graphic pen of the Rev. David Savage, of an important industry of Canada, which has its chief seat in the western part of this peninsula:

“The oil industry of Canada has come to be no insignificant factor in the commerce of the country, though its historical record is a very brief one. Our oil-producing section lies almost wholly within the limits of the county of Lambton, in the townships of Enniskillen, Moore, and Sarnia. Enniskillen has much the most prolific yield. Within this township are located the villages of Oil Springs, Oil City, and last, but not least, the town of Petrolia, which is the emporium of the oil trade in Canada. It is a strange-looking region this: the flat country covered with a forest of derricks, the surface disfigured by excavations for underground tankage, whose capacity is a matter of astonishment to strangers – underground tankage is preferred, as it keeps the oil at a more equitable temperature, and thus obviates much waste from evaporation. Pipe-lines run in all directions with receiving ‘stations’ at regular and irregular intervals. We have heard an estimate of the pipe-laying used for the conveyance of oil in this section of country as reaching a longitudinal measurement of between thirty and forty miles. Fireproof iron tanks, engine-houses, treating-houses, still-houses, barrel-houses, agitators – all these latter at headquarters – vary, if they do not improve, the local scenery. A visit to the refineries on a dark, and, if possible, a stormy night, is an indispensable part of the programme of sight-seeing for a stranger. The roar and rage of the furnaces, the flare of the lights, the intense fiery glow flung upon all near objects, animate and inanimate, set off the more conspicuously by an inky background of surrounding darkness, all this together makes up a picture which, for weirdness and wildness, may pass for a not very inferior reproduction of some of the scenes of Tartarus of classic story. A burning oil-tank, the representation of which is given on page 367, happily an event of not frequent occurrence, is a scene unique in its horror, and once seen it is remembered forever.

Excerpt from “Our Own Country, Canada, Scenic and Descriptive, being an account of the extent, resources, physical aspect, industries, cities and chief towns of the provinces of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, the Northwest Territory and British Columbia, with sketches of travel and adventure, by W. H. Withrow, D.D., F.R.S.C. (Author of “History of Canada”, “Catacombs of Rome”, A Canadian in Europe”, etc.), illustrated with three hundred and sixty engravings, Toronto, William Briggs, 1889.” Courtesy of Doug Cass, Treasurer, P.H.S.

“ALL HELL FOR A BASEMENT”
RUDYARD KIPLING’S CONNECTION TO MEDICINE HAT
By Bob Bott

[Editor’s note – the following is part of a response written by Bob to a question from the program “As It Happens” concerning the connection between a quote from the author Rudyard Kipling and the city of Medicine Hat in southeastern Alberta. Thanks to Bob for sharing this with us.]

“Your letter writer got it almost right. Rudyard Kipling did indeed call Medicine Hat the town with “all Hell for a basement” during a visit there in 1907. He was referring to the prolific natural gas field discovered just 300 metres below, which since 1899 had provided energy for a booming town and industries such as plaster manufacturing and meat processing. In the early days, some residents had their own private gas wells for cooking, heating and lighting. Medicine Hat was the first municipality in Western Canada to provide natural gas service, and for several years, beginning in 1906, the Canadian Pacific Railway bottled Medicine Hat natural gas to provide lighting on passenger trains. Today a municipal gas company continues to provide the residents with natural gas from its own wells.

However, there is some uncertainty about exactly what inspired the “all Hell for a basement” remark. Kipling may have been impressed that streetlights in Medicine Hat were left burning 24 hours a day. This seemingly profligate practice was so remarkable it was reported in Ripley’s Believe It or Not. Continuous burning prolonged the life of the lamp mantles, and also saved the expense of hiring lamplighters. Or Kipling may just have been impressed by the economic activity made possible by natural gas. The latter was suggested by Medicine Hat’s commissioner of industries, John T. Hall, in an address to the Empire Club of Canada in Toronto on 6 February 1908: *“...We had a visit recently in the gas region from Rudyard Kipling. He went up on one of the great Mogul engines operated by natural gas. They put a few inches of coal in’ the bottom of the grate, have a short pipe burner about six feet long attached to the end of the tube, they turn on the gas, it kindles the coal from above down, and at the same time makes steam in the boiler. Kipling is a man who wants to see everything. Afterwards his description of the gas belt was embodied in this statement: ‘You people in this district seem to have all Hell for a basement.’...”* [A Mogul was a heavy-duty steam engine used both for railway locomotives and for stationary applications such as water pumping, sawmilling or electricity generating.] A CBC-TV program, Canada99, suggested yet another explanation in a program about the oil and gas industry titled “All Hell For a Basement” aired on 27 December 1965, produced by Michael Rothery and written by Ben Maartman. According to the program notes, “the source of the title is a remark by Rudyard Kipling on seeing a flaring gas well in Medicine Hat, Alberta.” Whatever the explanation -- gas lights burning all day long, a giant engine, a booming town, a flaring well, or all of the above -- Kipling was certainly impressed. However, I have never heard the other part of the equation suggested by your letter writer, juxtaposing “hell below” with “heaven above.” No question that a big blue Alberta sky could inspire heavenly thoughts, though. And I, for one, think that the song you played would make a fine anthem. Keep up the interesting programs.”

Footnote from Bob: Kipling also visited the Brick and Coal Company in Redcliff, about 10 kilometers northwest of Medicine Hat. According to *The Golden Years of Redcliff* (Cecil T. Hall, 1962): *“Kipling was entertained by a workingman’s noonday meal given by the heads of the staff. In an after dinner speech, Mr. Kipling, the man of fame, expressed himself by saying that Medicine Hat was born lucky, but Redcliff had all hell for a basement. This remark seemed quite appropriate as he has visited the coal mine below where he stood and witnessed an inspiring sight, the burning of the gas from the new gas well under 450 pounds of pressure. The gas fifty years later still supplies gas to the brick industry and the coal is still there in unlimited quantities. Today Redcliff has some thirty odd gas wells producing an abundance of gas after fifty years of commercial and domestic use ...”* Now a really assiduous historian would determine whether the Redcliff talk came before or after the interview with the Medicine Hat News. Obviously Kipling thought he had found an apt turn of phrase. [By the way, my letter to “As It Happens” was reduced to one sentence on the air about leaving the streetlights burning continuously.]

"AND THE GRASS GREW GREENER"

By R.J. Bob Dunn

With Bob's permission - from the poetry Compilation:
"And the Grass Grew Greener as I Meandered through the Oil Patch"
published 2000 by Dunderosa Publications

(Continued from the Last Issue of Archives)

The Ratholers were called,
And the rig was hauled
To the site down the road apiece,
The sump was made, the matting laid,
And they tidied up then lease.

The Rathole crew did what Ratholers do,
The Conductor barrel was set,
They ordered some mud, and got ready to spud
The well to see what they'd get.

The drilling report, was terse and short,
"Everything's underway,
We've started down, and turned around,
We're right on target today."

If it hadn't been, for the unforeseen,
There'd be no tale to recall;
By deep underground,
The drill bit found
Trouble that started it all!

Unbeknown to the crew, and the engineer too,
The drill bit had glanced off a rock,
The deeper they went, the drill string just bent,
They were headed for twelve o'clock!

Now it's mighty rare to end up with just air,
But this is a real cause for alarm!
This terrible blinder, brings them up under
A two hundred year old pig farm ...

Half a mile of manure,
With two centuries to cure,
Lies working beneath the plain,
It causes a buildup
Of a pool that's just filled up
With volatile Piggy Propane!

To Be Continued!