

ARCHIVES

Newsletter of the Petroleum History Society

November 2014; Volume XXV, Number 6

P.H.S. Lunch and Learn Meeting – Wednesday, November 26, 2014

Libya and Tunisia – Then and Now

by David Milner – Petroleum Industry Veteran

The Near East and Middle East have returned to the limelight over the last decade with the Arab Spring movement that originally promised to remove autocratic rulers and replace them with democratically-elected governance. Unfortunately these early glimmers of hope were soon replaced with civil wars based on both sectarian and religious factionalism. The stability that characterized the previous regimes has been superseded by the failure of national governments all the way from Tunisia to Afghanistan, including the current hotspots of Iraq and Syria where battles are underway with group like ISIS who wish to fundamentally change the region, including its national boundaries. This evolution has, of course, naturally involved the petroleum industry and many people from the West have been involved and have witnessed, to various degrees, the changes that have overtaken the region.

Our speaker this month is David Milner, formerly an employee of Imperial Oil, who travelled to Libya and Tunisia in both professional and personal capacities over a period of forty years, stretching from the days of the Six Day War between Israel and its Arab neighbors through to a recent visit. David will describe the changes that he has seen, as aided by a selection of photographs. A more complete description of both David's presentation and his biography can be found on page 4 of this issue of Archives.

Time: Time: 12 noon, Wednesday, November 26, 2014.

Presentation approximately 12:30 - 1:00 p.m.

Place: Calgary Petroleum Club, 319 – 5th Avenue S.W. – Viking Room (check marquee)
Business casual dress.

Cost: P.H.S. Members \$30 and Guests \$35 (most welcome).

Cash or cheque only at the door. Payment can be made in advance by credit card or by email. Please advise with reply.

Lunch: Soup, sandwiches and cookies. Gluten-free? Vegan? Advise with reply.

Reply if you wish to attend to: Micky Gulless, 403-283-9268 or

micky@petroleumhistory.ca by noon, Monday, November 24, 2014, if not sooner.

Those who register but do not come, or cancel after the deadline, will be invoiced.

Those who do not register by the deadline may not get a seat.

The Bull Wheel



Time to Renew Your P.H.S. Membership: Most members need to renew their membership for 2015. (Check your membership Status on your mail label or email, or contact Micky at 403-283-9268 or micky@petroleumhistory.ca.) Please renew your annual membership for \$30 by:

- email transfer via your own bank's website to micky@petroleumhistory.ca
- credit card via PayPal if you have an email address. Contact Micky for a PayPal invoice
- cheque to Petroleum History Society mailed to Micky Gulless, 1638 Broadview Rd NW, Calgary T2N 3H1

Edmonton takes a historical beating (1): As fun as it is to engage in inter-city rivalry, two recent announcements do not bode well for petroleum history in Edmonton. On October 9, the Calgary Herald carried a story about the imminent closure of the Edmonton Petroleum Club in 2015 after 56 years. As it said in the note: *"It was built and furnished for less than \$1 mm. Open since January 9, 1958, it has played host to Bob Hope, Gene Autry, three-martini lunches, raunchy stag parties, fashion shows, farmers' markets, trade shows and news conferences. There were six founding members, oilmen like Paul Bowlen and Samuel Coultis who had enjoyed their visits to petroleum clubs in the U.S. and ponied up \$50 each before going to look for land and more members. By the end of the first year, that roster stood at 247."* The club now has 500 members. Apparently one of the contributing factors has been the closure of the nearby Muni airport and the subsequent removal of building height restrictions. This has led to a local building boom for high rises. Exact plans are still being developed. Having been to a wedding reception at the Club, I would have to say that it is a good facility although removed from the downtown, where one might expect it to be (as for the Calgary Petroleum Club). To their credit, the Edmonton Club supported the research for and publication of a very nice 50th anniversary book several years ago – something that the Calgary Petroleum Club has yet to do.

Edmonton takes a historical beating (2): As reported in the Calgary Herald on October 15, the Gateway park facility on the southern entry to Edmonton is going to be abandoned as a visitor centre on December 31 and may re-emerge as a police substation. The current "approach" is considered "dated" by city officials. Apparently most visitors (to the Centre, not to Edmonton) just want to use the washrooms. The historical connection is that the park is home to the Leduc #1 discovery rig along with quite a bit of other drilling equipment and signage within the building. The fates of the rig and other items are not known.

University of Alberta gets touchy: Perhaps due to the two items above, the U. of A. reacted negatively to a claim by the University of Calgary that the latter is "Canada's Energy University" – deriding this assertion as "insulting" and "preposterous". The U. of A. pointed to its valuable oil sands research over the last century, for example that of Karl Clark. Assertions of solidarity soon emerged to sooth these wounds.

WD-40 – the secret ingredient: We have all used this handy lubricating fluid. According to a recently-received e-mail, this product's name is short for "Water Displacement #40". It began as a result of a search for a rust preventative solvent and degreaser to protect missile parts. WD-40 was created in 1953 by three technicians at the San Diego Rocket Chemical Company. Its name comes from the project that was to find a "water displacement" compound. They were successful on their 40th try, thus WD-40. The Convair Company bought it in bulk to protect their Atlas Missile parts. It now has many other uses. What is surprising is that the basic ingredient is actually fish oil, although it doesn't say that on the can. This is in contrast to 3-in-1 lubricant that has a different pedigree which does say "contains petroleum distillates".

Evolution of Technology in Europe: In the aftermath of the excellent tour through the "Museum of Making" in September, readers are referred to the website of the "European Route of Industrial Heritage" at www.erih.com. As described there, the site is built around the concept of "anchor points" – the milestones of European Industrial Heritage. *"The name says it all. There are lots of features anchored here. Anchor points illustrate the complete range of European industrial history. After that, they tell tourists what they can see at the local level. Visitors of all ages can relive their industrial heritage in the form of attractive guided tours, multi-media presentations and outstanding special events. Last but not least, anchor points are simultaneously starting points for a variety of regional routes."* Topics include iron and steel, mining, textiles, manufacturing, energy, transport and communications, water, service and leisure, landscapes and housing and architecture. If this appeals to you, you might also like to check out the Society for Industrial Archeology, a North American organization based in Michigan.

Reviews needed for Spark and Heritage Park: Given the renovations at Heritage Park, including the new Gasoline Alley, and the construction of the new Telus Spark Centre near the Calgary Zoo, we have been remiss in not having proper technical and historical reviews in place for them. If any of our readers are so inclined, we would be pleased to work with them in this regard. The result could be an illustrated article for Archives or even a luncheon talk. Focus would be on the depiction of the industry, historical accuracy and overall value.

In the news: Your trusty President was called upon for some comments by writer Suzy Thompson on behalf of Alberta Oil magazine for an article entitled Techno Oil in the October 2014 issue which celebrated the 10th anniversary of the publication. The article was about the changes that have occurred in our industry on the technology side over that period of time. Luckily (and it isn't always the case with journalists) the essence of the input was reflected well in the text which was (paraphrased): "... Tippett of the P.H.S. .. says fracturing techniques are constantly being refined to overcome the geological challenges in tight plays. Different rocks break differently. One of the variable is how much proppant to use – amount, size and timing."

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Libya and Tunisia – Then and Now

Luncheon presentation of November 26, 2014 by David Milner

This talk is about my involvement with Libya and Tunisia over a period of forty years, both as a professional geologist and geochemist and as an ordinary tourist.

I was sent by Imperial Oil to the Kingdom of Libya in January 1967 on a short term overseas assignment with Esso Libya. In June the Arab-Israeli Six Day War considerably disrupted the work routine and necessitated evacuating my family to Malta. We lived in Tripoli until June of 1968 when I chose to return to Canada. I will comment on the billion barrel Idris Field that was discovered by Occidental Petroleum during my stay in Libya. Photos of Phoenician, Greek and Roman antiquities in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica will be shown. Just before leaving Libya, rumours were rife about a possible coup by a group of middle-rank officers led by one Col. Muammar al-Gaddafi.

In 1990 I took a contract with Teknica Petroleum Services to spend a month in Houmt Souk, Djerba with a team assessing the petroleum potential of the Joint Oil Company's offshore 7th of November Concession located north of what is now the major Bouri Oil and Gas Field. I was the geochemist, a specialty I had acquired in my last years before retiring from Imperial in 1986.

In 1994 I was again the geochemist on a Teknica team studying the hydrocarbon potential of the Murzak Basin in western Libya. The study was conducted in Calgary and was joined by explorationists from the Libyan National Oil Company.

In the spring of 2008 I was part of a Worldwide Quest tourist group that toured Libya and Tunisia. The neighbourhood where I lived in Tripoli in 1967 and 1968 was completely unrecognizable, as was the harbour. The souk, the castle and the King's Palace had resisted change. Photos show some of the changes and highlight points of interest in places in Libya and Tunisia not previously visited.

Biography

David Milner was born in Toronto in 1927 and was raised there. From 1944 to 1946 he attended the Royal Canadian Naval College at Esquimalt, B.C. from which he graduated as a midshipman. He obtained his B.A.Sc. in Mining Geology from the University of Toronto in 1949. He then came west where he worked as a roughneck, a magnetometer operator for Texaco Exploration, an oil scout for Canadian Superior Oil and, for 35 years, a geologist and geochemist for Imperial Oil/Esso Resources Canada. During his industry career his assignments took him to Edmonton, Calgary, Regina and Libya (1967-1968). David took early retirement from Esso at the end of 1986 and opened a consulting practice in 1988. This led to contracts with Teknica Petroleum Services, Petro-Canada (PCIAC), Stoakes and Campbell Geoconsulting and Alconsult International, involving projects and training assignments in the Philippines, Thailand (PTTE & P), Jordan (NRA), Libya, Tunisia, Morocco (ONAREP), Vietnam, China (RIPED) and Indonesia. David has also been an active contributor to the community. He has been a Senator at the University of Calgary, President of the Calgary Drop-In Centre Society and a member of the Grants Committee of the Calgary Foundation.

THE PETROLEUM TALES OF HAMMOND INNES

Hammond Innes was a British novelist, born in 1913 and deceased in 1998 who wrote over 30 novels, the first of which appeared in 1937. He served in WWII and was made C.B.E. (Commander, Order of the British Empire) in 1978. His works featured men thrust into extreme situations by circumstances and often in hostile environments, such as the sea or the Arctic. They had to rely on their own wits, rather than gadgets, to survive and overcome these challenges. Innes was known for his attention to the finely detailed description of the places featured in his novels. He had a well-established work routine of spending 6 months travelling and doing research, followed by 6 months of writing and production of his next volume. Thanks to Wikipedia for this background. Innes is also said to have made “four long journeys to the wilds of Canada” but only the first book below seems to be explicitly set in our country.

Three of Innes’s novels involved the petroleum industry. They are:

Campbell’s Kingdom (1952). This is the one closest to us in Western Canada. It is about the quest to find more oil in the Rocky Mountains – a key industry aspiration in the aftermath of the Turner Valley oil discovery in 1936. As with many novels, the timeframe is a bit fuzzy but it is post-WWII and likely post-Leduc. Interestingly the action takes place not in the Foothills but far to the west in the Intermontane Belt near Williams Lake and Quesnel, B.C. The name of the book relates to the stomping grounds of the grandfather of the key character who was an exploration pioneer convinced of the presence of oil in that region. A facet of the plot has to do with rivals in the area who want to flood his target as part of a hydroelectric scheme – so there is an interesting sub-plot about surface and subsurface rights – and who owns them. Apparently this work was made into a movie in 1957 but I have yet to track that down.

The Doomed Oasis (1960). To quote the introduction: *“The Doomed Oasis is Buraimi as it was when Sheikh Zeyd was just a Bedouin chief. Hammond Innes was there with him: he was all over Arabia, the Hadhramaut, the Empty Quarter, Muscat, the embattled Yemen border, at a time when there were private armies and the first oil rig was spudded in on the Trucial Coast.”* The book has the flavor of a latter day Lawrence of Arabia crossed with geological and political adventures that our recently departed Terry Storey would have fitted into nicely. It is the complex story of a father and son, each with his own vision of the future, as seen by a solicitor from England, trying to act on behalf of both of them.

North Star (1974). This novel captures the sense of excitement that existed in the U.K. in the aftermath of the discovery of oil in the North Sea in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. To quote the dust jacket: *“Hammond Innes is at his best when writing about the sea. Here he takes us into Shetland waters, deep in North Sea oil. But though the semi-submersible drilling platform “North Star” dominates the book, the story is of a man torn by self-doubt and seeking inner strength to build a new life for himself. The book’s climax – a giant oil rig cut adrift and being swept into the deadliest tide rip in Shetland – though seen through Randall’s eyes [the main character] as a part of his personal dilemma and the means of resolving his inner conflict, also brings home to us most vividly the elements of risk and tension inherent in getting oil ashore when men are operating to the limits of technology in very dangerous waters.”* What is interesting about this book is that the rig is very similar to those used in that period on Canada’s West and East Coasts. Indeed in the “Author’s Note”, Innes thanks Shell for letting him travel on the “Staflo” rig during a tow from Brent to Auk and to Tricentrol for technical advice.

A Day in the Life of an Oil Rig Worker

A talk given to the Petroleum History Society by Anna Brooks, October 29, 2014

Anna presented her thoughts to us on this topic. Readers are referred to the October issue of Archives for additional background. Her conclusions concerning this important topic are based on her interactions with people working on the rigs ranging from pub observations and discussions through to a series of proactive interviews designed to provide insights into how people cope with this life style. Issues raised include alcohol and drug abuse, less than ideal working and living conditions (in particular with smaller operators), a lack of respect for safety regulations in some cases, the effects of long period of isolation interspersed with long breaks, the temptations that having large amounts of cash bring, the impact of this sort of environment on young and impressionable people and the macho role model that is endemic in some circles. To be honest, these are not new problems and they have existed in many isolated working settings like logging, military and mining for many years.

Anna attempted to depict this situation as a sort of human rights issue. Many in the audience took exception to that. Certainly working in these sorts of situations takes its toll on people and individuals have to figure out how to accommodate the stresses that are involved. Some people can do that easily, others with difficulty and others not at all.

Readers are also referred to the following for additional “windows” on the drilling experience:

Reality TV Series and DVD sets “**The Rig**”. Two seasons of 13 episodes each. First season is conventional exploration and production drilling. Second is in the oil sands. Produced by Anaid Productions Inc. of Edmonton. Appeared on the Outdoor Living Network (OLN) in 2005-2006. Your editor had to order his copies directly from them as they have never been retailed. Reality TV Series and DVD sets “**Licence to Drill**”. Four seasons now, each est. 13 episodes. All related to conventional E&P. Each episode alternates between 2 locations – for example season 1 involves drilling in the Mackenzie Delta and in N.E.B.C. Seasons 2 and 3 also in western Canada. Season 4 in Louisiana. Produced by Pixcom Productions in Montreal and appeared on Discovery Channel from 2009-2013 (some repeat episodes still seem to be on). Your editor had to get his copies (seasons 1 and 2 only so far) directly from them.

There are several other reality series about drilling that are far more off the wall. One is “**Backyard Drilling**” from Kentucky and another is “**Black Gold**” from Texas. Both of these are farfetched to the extreme, although maybe that is the way it is in those parts of the US.

Probably the best recent book on drilling experience in Western Canada is “**Drilling into Success – over a decade of drilling rig experiences**” by Robert Comben, 384 p. and self-published. A good mixture of the technical side of drilling and the people involved. It was available at Chapters. It is sort of a rambling treatment, as you can get away with being self-published. But at the same time, with the author originally being from Newfoundland, he weaves a good tale or two.

Finally there was some dispute over the existence of the term “rig pig” as a partly derogatory, partly humorous term for rig workers. Your editor has certainly heard the term before and, indeed, has had a few beers by that name brewed by a local Calgary company.

PETROLIFEROUS HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT (1)

As the holidays approach, one's thoughts turn to gifts and entertainment for loved ones (and a few for ourselves).

TOYS

It is a long-cherished hope of industry that the public can be and will be educated about what we in the industry do and how we do it, hence "Our Petroleum Challenge" from CCEI/CAPP, etc. So in that context, Chapters/Indigo have really come through this year. Although they still do not feature toy drilling rigs, they are getting closer to reality by offering up the Lego City "**Arctic Outpost**" (\$59.95, 374 pieces, Model 60035). They also carry the full line of "Sands Alive" that can be used to build castles and baked goods – but presumably could also be adapted to make river deltas, distributary mouth bars and clastic petroleum reservoirs in general. In a whole section headlined "Young Engineers" that have the classic toy microscopes, crystal growing kits and plastic dinosaur skeletons for excavation – but have also added key readings such as "Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site" (\$14.99, one of Heather's Kids Picks).

Minecraft has recently become all the rage – both as a computer game and as a line of tangible toys. Communities are constructed and tested against monsters and calamities. Seems like a good way for people to learn about what makes the world go round. However, there is one problem. Somehow they forgot that transportation requires fuel – and the only things in their bottles are potions. Somebody forgot the gasoline and diesel! Or maybe this is a make-believe Greenpeace world in which such substances have been conveniently abolished.

MOVIES AND VIDEOS

We have noticed a new movie that might be of interest. It is called "**The Overnighters**" and is a low budget film made about people working in North Dakota in the Bakken play. It was reviewed by Barry Hertz in the Nov. 7 National Post and by Manori Ravindran in the November 8 National Post. Seems odd to have 2 reviews in the same paper for the same film and that close together – but that's the way it was. To quote from Hertz's review that was entitled "To Hell and Frack", "*Desperation leads people to odd ends. For unemployed labourers like Keegan Edwards, overdue rent and missed chances back home take him to Williston, North Dakota, where a surging fracking industry promises high-paying jobs for anyone able-bodied enough. For Pastor Jay Reinke, the sudden surge of hungry souls and aimless ne'er-do-wells crowding his hometown promises a chance to do the Lord's good work. And for documentary filmmaker Jesse Moss, the opportunity to capture a boom town on the edge promises a ready-made, award-friendly tale about the perils of easy money and self-invention. Discussion of the film cannot exclude the director's own plight. Acting as a one man crew, Moss made a total of 18 trips to Williston, all self-financed, save a tiny grant. Despite rave reviews at Sundance ... the San Francisco-based filmmaker is still in a financial hole*". Calgary screenings unknown.

A recent episode of "**Highway thru Hell**" – a reality show on the History Channel about heavy haul tow trucks – featured an event on Highway 881, near Fort McMurray, about a rolled wireline logging truck and the efforts made to get it (and its radioactive logging source) back out of the ditch and in for repairs. The series switches back and forth between the Coquihalla Highway in B.C. and the Alberta oilpatch and is actually quite educational.

PETROLIFEROUS HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT (2)

BOOKS

Shelly Anderson has written a book entitled **“Falling off the Edge of the World”** in which she recounts the culture shock that she encountered after moving to Saudi Arabia and the challenges that existed in living there. She was born in Taber and was 33 when she decided to undertake this change of venue. The book review by Barb Livingstone included a comprehensive description of how the book came to be written and appeared in the September 29, 2014 issue of the Calgary Herald. Shelly now lives in Texas and is planning to write another book, this time a fictionalized account of life in the Middle East.

A new book of oil patch poetry is **“A Relationship with Truth - poem and verse born in the Canadian oil patch”** by Naden Parkin. Self-published (I think). A copy was bought in Chapters in the “Local Authors” section. 75 p. This must be an acquired taste.

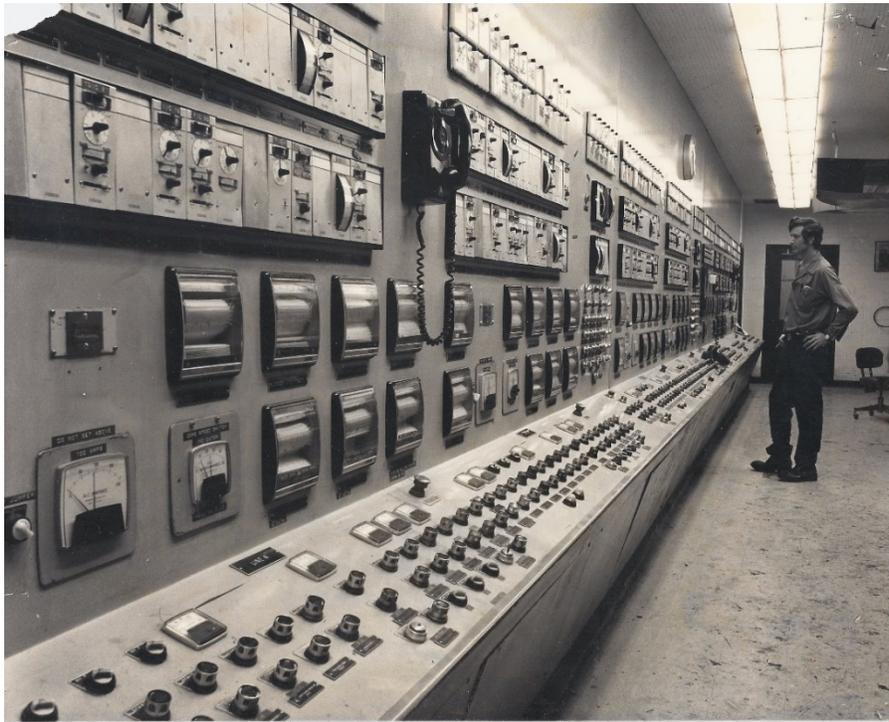
A children’s book with the title **“Sam and Dave Dig a Hole”** by Mac Barnett and illustrated by Jon Klassen, seems to prepare the way for toddlers to join the industry down the road. It is pitched as a “laugh-out-loud” book for \$19.00 but the message is obviously serious. The clue is on the dust jacket where it describes the plot as *“Sam and Dave are digging a hole and they will not stop until they find something spectacular”*. I won’t spoil it for you. A must read.

In last month’s Archives, we mentioned Fred Stenson’s new book **“Who by Fire – An Alberta Story”**, published by Doubleday Canada. This novel was reviewed by David Finch for the Calgary Herald with the result published in the September 27, 2014 paper. To quote a few passages from David’s comments: *“We all live downstream. Literally and figuratively, the oil patch affects our lives. Fred Stenson’s latest novel, “Who by Fire”, is intriguing, fast-paced and a delight. Living quietly on a mixed farm in southwestern Alberta, the Ryder family experiences unsettling change when a new neighbor arrives. It’s a sulphur plant, a few hundred metres away. Life changes forever. Alternating between the Foothills of southwestern Alberta in the 1960’s and the booming oil sands of today, the novel explores contemporary issues in the context of Alberta’s complicated past. ... “Who by Fire” is the biography of Alberta. The story we all live today.”* Readers with a long memory will recall the book that Fred wrote titled “The Last Stack” [awarded Book of the Year by our Society] about the evolution of technology related to gas plant emissions and the people involved. Fred’s roots to this go much deeper, of course, as he grew up outside Pincher Creek where the B.A./Gulf Canada sour gas plant was built in the late 1950’s. Hence the somewhat autobiographical nature of “Who by Fire”. One of our long-serving volunteers raved about the book and said that he couldn’t put it down once he started reading it. High praise – and worth spending some time with a copy over the holidays.

A slightly older book may be of interest, at least for background. **“The Oil Man and the Sea – Navigating the Northern Gateway”** [presumably with multiple apologies to Ernest Hemingway] was written by Arno Kopecky and published in 2013 by Douglas and McIntyre. It was reviewed by industry booster Andrew Nikiforuk who said that “The proposed Northern Gateway Project has sparked a political civil war in Canada. Kopecky’s elegant and engaging travelogue not only explains why but gives citizens and First Nations along the tanker route a passionate voice against a very bad and greedy enterprise led by some of the world’s most powerful corporations.” Another review bemoaned the “quest to burn the world’s last oil reserves”!



The transportation of crude oil by trains has been in the news a lot due to the boom in production in the Bakken play of the Williston Basin, amongst others. Large volumes have been moved and continue to grow but disasters like Lac Megantic have occurred for various reasons and remind us of the inherent risks. Trains do offer a quick and relatively economical means of evacuating production, in particular at the early stages of development, when pipeline infrastructure is either not available or has not been installed. This also mitigates investment risk where longer term production characteristics of the reservoir or field are not known. These two pictures are from the Shell Canada collection and illustrate the movement of crude soon after discovery from the Mississippian Midale Field in Saskatchewan during the mid-1950's.



A scene in the control room of the Great Canadian Oil Sands (now Suncor) plant at Fort McMurray, soon after its opening in 1967. Control technology has evolved a lot!



Peaceful coexistence – a Shell Canada drilling engineer converses with a local rancher in the Waterton area during the early 1960's. Drilling operations are framed against deformed Precambrian sedimentary strata on the skyline. Wells were drilled through those rocks into younger objectives of Mississippian and Devonian age.