

ON THE LAZY BENCH

Penn Brad Oil Museum strives to preserve the history of the Bradford Oil Field and the unique culture that developed along with it. The Museum also honors the people and their families whose lives contributed to making Bradford the "Highgrade Oil Metropolis of the World."

A Quarterly Newsletter

Vol. 10 – No. 4 – Autumn 2024

Blue Skies for 2nd Annual Dan Palmer Golf Scramble

What a beautiful September Sunday it was for our second annual 18-hole Dan Palmer Memorial Golf Scramble at Pine Acres Country Club! There were 13 teams signed up, with 52 golfers participating. The golfers also competed in a Casino Hole and Closest-to-the-Pin skills games. Lunch was served at the turn and Jim Ronan provided live music on the patio after the scramble.

The Event Sponsors were American Refining Group and Dallas Energy.

The Hole Sponsors were McCracken Energy Services, Derrick City Diner, E&M Engineers, Giardini Bros. Construction, Fred Fesenmyer, Dean Bauer, Howard Drilling, Worth W. Smith Co., and PureTech.

The Cart Sponsors were Dean Bauer, Fred Fesenmyer, and McCracken Energy Services.

Thank you to all of the participants, sponsors, and volunteers for making this a wonderful event.

And thank you to Patty Lehosky for the great photos!



~ The museum has closed for the season. We look forward to seeing you again in the Spring! ~



PENN BRAD OIL MUSEUM

901 South Avenue - Bradford, PA 16701
Email: pennbrad.oilmuseum@yahoo.com
Website: penn-bradoilmuseum.org

Phone: 814-362-1955

Open:

Thurs. & Friday
9 AM to 4 PM

Saturday
9 AM to 2 PM

Admission Cost

Adults - \$6.00

Seniors - \$5.00

Children (under 12) - Free

Active Military / Family - Free



Fireside Pumpers Talks in September & October

by Isabelle Champlin, with photos by Joyce Cline & Brenda Fish

Jamie Pierotti, the third generation owner of the Backus Factory in Smethport, related the story of inventor J. C. Backus who, in 1906, began to manufacture metal novelty items of his own invention. His hat, coat, and umbrella locks were used in automobiles, restaurants, and military barracks. He also invented an indoor 'home golf trainer' that showed the distance and direction of flight of a tethered golf ball; being entirely mechanical, it still works as designed.



Examples of these ingenious gadgets were shown, as well as a portable ash tray of polished steel designed to be attached to a car's upholstery or dashboard. Photos of the Backus factory buildings and of the employees of 1906 were also shown.



Locking Check System & key - for Coats, Hats and Umbrellas

In 1916, Mr. Backus patented an automatic pin-setting machine for bowling alleys, one of which is still in place at the Olmstead Manor in Ludlow, PA. He eventually won a patent infringement case against Brunswick pinsetters.

J. C. Backus died in 1931.

Beginning in the early 1930s, the Backus company began cooperating with Zippo to make parts for lighter cases, as well as stainless steel pocket knives and greenskeepers. During WWII, it worked with Sylvania to make insulators for radio tubes and small metal parts for Hughes Aircraft, and it provided small metal components for many companies such as Corning and Westclox. In the 1970s, it made the metal mechanisms for pepper mills for Chef Specialties, the largest American manufacturers of pepper mills, then bought the firm. Maple or beechwood pepper mills and sea salt grinders are now the bulk of their business.

Many questions from the audience, especially the large group of people at the display table afterwards, showed the popularity of these collectible items and a strong interest in the history and accomplishments of our small local industries. The Backus Factory is at 111 West Water Street in Smethport, one block below the McKean County courthouse.

Our supporting sponsor for this program was Worth W. Smith Company.



Jeff Brewer, vice president of operations at the American Refining Group in Bradford, PA, (and a board member of the museum) talked about "The ARG Refining Process."

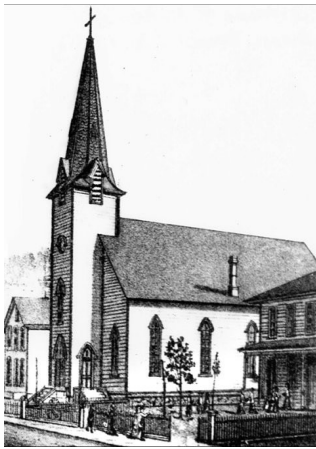
ARG uses 10,000 barrels of Pennsylvania field crude oil per day. The Pennsylvania field includes portions of Ohio, West Virginia, and New York state, and its crude is renowned for being low in sulfur and high in paraffin wax, and also for being

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Early Churches in the Bradford Oil Fields

by Francie Long, Museum Manager

We all know that when oil was discovered in Bradford, in 1865, it was a tiny village of around 400 people. At that time, the main industry was lumber. There were very few establishments besides saloons and “gentlemen’s entertainment” for the evenings. However, some of the Catholics who lived here were fortunate to have a priest who traveled once a month on horseback to celebrate Mass in David Hewitt’s home on Boylston Street. The situation was most likely the same for other faiths having “circuit preachers”.



As oil drilling increased, so did the population. Many immigrants that came to Bradford were Catholic and they eventually formed St. Bernard’s parish. The modest building was an old schoolhouse that had been dragged over from Main Street to the location of the current brick church.

In 1877, Fr. William Coonan was sent to Bradford to lead the congregation and build up the parish. Fr. Coonan was 32 years old and already his health was suffering due to what the doctors suspected to be “consumption” (TB in today’s language). He saw what a challenging pastorate was ahead. He needed to build up his health and the parish as well. He did so by taking up horseback riding. He rode through the oil fields, and with his friendly outgoing personality, won the hearts and friendship of not only the men in the fields but everyone in Bradford as well! It was said, according to the Bradford Era, that he knew the oil business and could talk oil with the men. They all loved and admired him for that. According to the late Russ Chisolm, Coonan had just as many non-Catholic friends as Catholic, which was unusual during those times. Most religions stayed within their own denominations.

As his health improved, Fr. Coonan was able to build the first church, a wooden structure, in 1878. The parish began to grow rapidly along with the population of Bradford (which eventually grew to 44,000 souls). The parishioners soon found they

could not all fit inside the church for Mass and so some had to stand outside.

In 1892, Fr. Coonan made plans for a larger and grander church, which is the current red brick edifice that stands today on East Corydon Street. According to news articles, the pastor shared his plans with the parishioners from the pulpit during Mass on Sundays. He did not set up a building fund or pressure the parishioners for money. Instead, he discussed the details of the new church and the rest, with God’s help, brought forth the funding. It was said that people just dropped money in the collection basket, while others approached him personally and made donations. But the most astonishing thing was donations made by non-Catholics. Protestant, Jewish, and people of no faith! Obviously, Fr. Coonan was loved and admired by everyone in the city. You could even say that wealth from the Bradford oil fields helped build the church that still stands today. St. Bernard’s is one of the oldest church buildings in Bradford.

Fr. Coonan died in 1915. He spent most of his life in Bradford and the Bradford oil fields. When his funeral was held in November of that year, the merchants on Main Street closed their shops to pay their last respects. There were so many people that many had to stand outside!

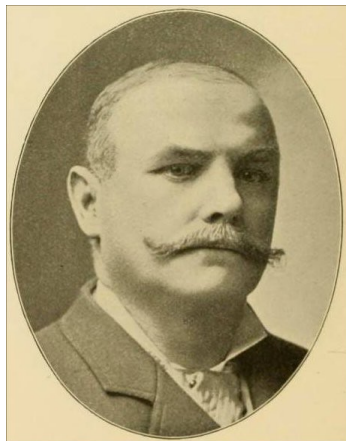
Today, St. Bernard’s is going through a major renovation to preserve what was built with oil money during a most prosperous time. When the church was completed in 1893, the cost was around \$40,000. Today’s renovations will be around two million dollars!



Samuel Gamble Bayne

by Susan Gould, Board Secretary

Now and then, even someone who has been learning about the oil industry for a long time comes across something or someone new. In this case it is an adventurer, man of many interests, oil man, and banker.



Samuel Gamble Bayne was born in 1844 in the town of Ramelton, County Donegal, Northern Ireland. As a youth, Samuel longed to sail the seas and taste great adventures. During his lifetime, due to his persistence and availability of funds, most of his dreams came true.

Samuel's father, Peter Bayne, was a successful merchant with a host of interests. He owned a tannery, several farms, and three stores which sold coal, iron, lumber, slate, building materials, and agricultural implements. He also owned a "Merchant Marine" steamboat which made regular trips to Londonderry. They were a prosperous family.

But Sam wanted to see the world. While he was still in school, he made a deal with a Londonderry firm which was preparing a ship to go to Africa carrying glass beads, silk hats, and linen collars, to trade for elephant tusks. The company offered to take young Sam along and he was on the ship ready to sail when he saw his mother coming up the gangplank: "No traveling until you finish your education!" Sam's adventure would have to wait.

After Sam finished regular school, he enrolled in Queens College in Belfast and for a time enjoyed studying the great English writers, but after a year Sam realized that he would be more suited to business than a profession, so he left college. All was not lost however, since during his time in college he met the love of his life, Miss Emily Elizabeth Kelsey,

daughter of a prominent stock-broker. His father apprenticed him to a ship-building company, but nothing appealed to him until he became partners in a linen business with a cousin, Samuel Gamble, for whom young Sam was named. Mr. Gamble promised to make Sam his heir but put off the writing and died before he completed the will. Sam left the linen business.

Sam proposed to Miss Kelsey. She said yes and then, in 1869, he boarded a steamship for New York. His time for adventure had arrived. On the ship, he became good friends with Colonel Amasa Mason, a man very well versed in the fledgling oil business in a town in Pennsylvania, named Titusville. As Sam put it, "the arch spenders of the time were the coal oil johnnies who bought drinks for everyone in the bar, occasionally lit a cigar with a dollar bill, and talked about the big bonanza of oil."

Colonel Mason owned land known as Ricketts's Farm near Titusville, which was "threatened with oil," and he told Sam, "Your real chance of gaining fortune in the United States is to get as close to Titusville as you can." He invited Sam to go with him to meet a Coal Oil Johnnie, Jonathan Watson, believed to be the richest man in the state. They met and became the partnership of Watson and Bayne. Over the next two years, Sam devoted himself to learning every phase of the oil industry and in the process succeeded in losing all the money he had brought with him from Ireland. Watson told Sam that "he had the makings of an oil man and put him in charge of drilling. Finding places to drill was complicated by the "divining-rod fakirs." These men walked around with a hazel rod which they claimed showed them drilling locations. Jonathan Watson passionately believed in this method of finding well sites, even after his belief earned him two dry holes.

After two years of learning and gaining experience, Sam struck out on his own. He bought a well called the "Sugar House" just yards from the first well Colonel Edwin Drake and Uncle Billy Smith drilled in 1859. Sam called it a "sacred" spot. In his book, Derricks of Destiny, he credits Drake with inventing the drive pipe, which helped the driller by keeping water from filling up the well.

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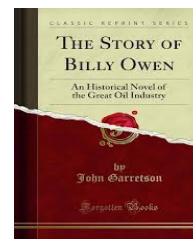
THE STORY OF BILLY OWEN:

An Historical Novel of the Great Oil Industry

By John Garretson. New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1918.

(Reproduced and redistributed by Forgotten Books, 2018.)

Review by Rick Lutz



Though most of *The Story of Billy Owen* occurs in the Indian lands of Oklahoma, the roots of the narrative are in Bradford, PA. Billy was 25 in 1904 when his oil driller father died near Bradford. Billy inherited a drilling rig, tools, and know-how to continue in his father's trade. Early success was promising, but he sank a succession of dry holes. Disappointed and desperate, at the urging of his sweetheart, Mary Dart, he journeyed west with his rig and tools to seek success. With her mother ailing, as the eldest sibling in a large family, Mary stayed in Bradford. Billy soon learned he was not the only oil speculator to make the journey to "Indian Country."

After decades of broken treaties and forced migrations, Indians had been pushed onto reservations in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and other western states. Their lands appeared bleak and barren, not fit for any use of white settlers or industry. Then, at the turn of the 20th Century, wildcat drillers found massive oil fields under Indian land. Waves of oil speculators surged to Indian Territory; however, they discovered that on the Indian reservations, the tribes owned not only the surface lands, but also the mineral rights. Oil speculators needed to acquire leases from the natives for drilling rights. In addition, the federal government added layers of bureaucratic management through the Department of Interior.

Billy based himself in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, formerly a quiet trading post for relocated Indian tribes. He found a bustling boomtown with too many people and not enough of anything else. Billy quickly learned from a Bartlesville banker, "It will take lots of money out here to make money." Lawyers were vital to painstakingly guide the oil men through the obstacle course of legalities as they acquired leases from the Indians. It took Billy years before he could legally drill a well, and he quickly realized he needed financial backing to pursue his dreams.

Much of the book is in the form of letters sent between Billy and Mary Dart, and exchanges between Billy and well-connected friends back in Bradford. As a result of the correspondence, a company was created, "The Pit Oil Company" (Pennsylvania, Indian, and Territory) with Billy as president. A group of well-heeled, successful Bradford investors provided the capital resources. Billy's experience was in the field. The Bradfordians knew how to maneuver through the morass of legalities, and they provided the upfront cash needed to acquire leases and begin drilling. Each lease application required a \$5,000 deposit with the Department of Interior. Incredible success stories of people and companies already striking it rich in Indian Country gave the Pit Oil people incentive to keep writing their checks.

Bureaucratic wheels turn slowly, and, while waiting to drill, Billy scouted for promising lease sites. "As he walked about and rode over the Territory, he became interested in the habits, customs, and pastimes of the Indians. He noted their laziness, and mentally wondered if any race could ever hope to become useful citizens without first forming a mental habit of industry." As part of negotiating leasing rights, Indians received upfront cash, then earned royalties from oil profits. Many whites resented the money flowing to the Indians. In Chapter 10, "Habits and Customs of the Indians," Garretson, the author, in the form of a letter from Billy to Mary, offers his version of Native American history. Chapter 10 is not flattering to Native Americans. "A genial people, created by God as creatures of forests and fields, and very hard to civilize and turn into the useful paths of the White Man." It is a lengthy, tediously detailed, biased, rationalized history about the status of Indians at the beginning of the 20th Century. Billy concludes his letter with, "Dear Mary, I have given you a rather long and perhaps tiresome history of the Indians in this country, but in the main . . . very valuable."

Years passed. Billy Owen, the Pit Oil Company, and many others successfully navigated through the legal and physical obstacles hindering oil production in

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Samuel Bayne Continued

Sam, as he put it was “undeterred by nitroglycerin accidents.” One day, as Sam was walking along the highway, Jim Barnum, a professional shooter, came by and offered him a ride home. On the wagon was one hundred quarts of nitroglycerin which he was delivering to a well. Sam refused the offer. Very soon he heard a tremendous explosion and thought to himself, “There goes poor Barnum.”

Nitroglycerin shooters were not always professional. One day Sam encountered an intoxicated man with a can of this dangerous liquid hanging on a cane, slung over his shoulder. He reached the railroad track, tripped, and the ensuing blast knocked Sam unconscious. The only thing left of the man was a heel, which Sam put in a cigar box and sent to the man’s wife. He received her profound thanks.

This is the end of Part I on Samuel Gamble Bayne. In the next issue, we will cover the changing of the industry and Sam’s trip to the Orient.

References:Derricks of Destiny

by Samuel Gamble Bayne, 1924
Sketches in Crude Oil
 by John McLaurin, 1896

Billy Owen continued

unraveling the governmental hindrances; challenges of capping gushers; constructing holding tanks for crude while pipelines and railroads were built to refineries; unpredictable roller coaster price per barrel; and many other

issues; fortunes were made. Profits from millions upon millions of barrels of oil transformed the country. “No story of fancy can ever be written to compare with this little word picture of the new State of Oklahoma.” Chapter 15, “The New State,” glowingly describes Oklahoma’s explosive growth. The 23rd and final chapter is “The Wedding.” Yes, a happy ending.

“The Story of Billy Owen” was reprinted by Scholar’s Select, a New York City publisher that preserves out of print books. Their works are selected because of “bibliographical rarity and scholarly importance as primary sources.” Even with its unsettling racist language towards Native Americans, Billy Owen belongs in the Penn Brad Oil Museum Library as a primary source for anyone researching the history of Indian Country oil speculation and impact. The “paternalistic racism” evident throughout the book, unfortunately, reflects prevalent attitudes of the time.

If you are interested, a companion book is David Grann’s “Killers of the Flower Moon” which begins in the 1920’s. It reveals an ugly tale of greedy crimes against the Osage tribe. Killers does not focus on oil speculation, but provides insightful background on how oil leases were granted. An award-winning movie based on the book was released in 2023.

Another source of interest is the 1940 film, “Boom Town,” starring Clark Gable and Spencer Tracy. The lighthearted plot focuses on the ups and downs of two wildcatters who spend time in Indian Territory. Some of the footage is genuine.

Pumpers Talks continued

very consistent in chemical composition, which makes it perfect for specialty oils and lubricants such as railroad engine oils.

Using a flow chart of the different distillation stages of the massive Crude Unit or “Tower”, and also utilizing sample jars of petroleum products, he began at the top of the tower. After a catalyst removes sulfur from the first and lightest fraction, which is naphtha, it can be made into gasoline, mineral spirits and Amish lantern fuel. Next are kerosene, drilling fluids, diesel fuels, home heating fuels, and more. Brenda Fish, ARG Sales Representative, pointed out that many companies use ARG base stock.

By the middle of the tower, different waxy fractions are encountered, which are the most valuable and unique commodities used for many products from car waxes to fiberboard. Petrolatum is used in medicines, cosmetics, and baby oil. Eventually, at the bottom of the tower, the heaviest fractions are extracted, which have the highest carbon resins used for asphalt shingles and paving materials.

In answer to many questions from the audience, ARG owns no branded gas stations, but does sell gasoline locally to United and Forest Oil, within 150 miles distance. It obtains its crude oil by train, not by pipelines, at a rate of 16 tanker cars per day, Monday through Friday. ARG can boast that it is one of the very few refineries that makes 100% American products.

This program was sponsored by ARG, who also provided a variety of promotional givaways.

Board Of Directors

The Penn Brad Oil Museum Board of Directors is as follows:

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**In Memory of
Charles Kautz**

Jay Rizzuti

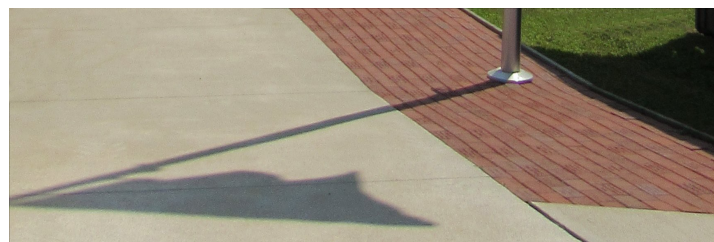
Memorial & Honoring Gifts

In Honor Of: _____ **Given By:** _____
 Dale Smith's 88th Birthday! Faith Boyce

Memorial & Honoring Bricks

In Memory Of: _____ **Placed By:** _____
 Charles Kautz Barbara Steinhauer
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Engraved personalized paving bricks can be purchased to surround the base of the flag pole. The bricks can honor people who have been involved in the oil industry or be used as a memorial to a deceased person. Bricks can also be purchased personally to show your support for the museum.



Remember or Honor a Loved One with a Gift to the Penn Brad Oil Museum

Memorials received after November 11 will appear in the next newsletter.

Memorials are available by calling 814-368-6824, or by mailing the coupon below to: Penn Brad Oil Museum, P.O. Box 163, Bradford, PA 16701. If ordering a brick, please call the number for more details or print out the order form available on our website. A notice will be sent to the recipient.

Penn Brad Oil Museum is a 501(c)(3) entity and all donations are tax deductible.

Clip and Mail Coupon

Memorial/Honoring Gifts	Check one: In Memory of _____	Name _____
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Amount Enclosed \$ _____	Send acknowledgment to:	
Donor's name _____	Name _____	
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New Community-Generated Mural at BAPL

by Isabelle Champlin, Corresponding Secretary

Janelle Nolan, marketing and adult programming coordinator of the Bradford Area Public Library (BAPL), originated the idea of a community mural and was aided by Rick Minard, art professor at the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford. The project was supported, in part, by a grant obtained from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

During eight art sessions held at BAPL in June, 88 community members, from high schoolers to senior citizens, painted different scenes in different styles on 120 small (6" x 6") canvases. Varying in artistic ability and experience, they were encouraged to be creative, but all used the same predetermined color palette.

These 120 paintings were then assembled into a coherent montage within a custom frame and installed in the BAPL Community Room on Sept. 26.

Amid depictions of flying birds, a bear, a wolf and a cat, at least one ghost, as well as other animals and humans, the mural features the Eric Benjamin Covered Bridge at Marilla Reservoir (built in 2004), St. Bernard's Church dedicated in 1893, the 4-sided Old City Hall Clock tower of 1898, the Art Deco Hooker-Fulton Building of 1831, and 3 images of the Penn Brad Oil Museum's standard wooden oil derrick. This is the old derrick, from our Facebook page. Gone but not forgotten!

The mural can be seen at the Bradford Area Public Library at 67 West Washington Street.

[Visit our Facebook page for more articles, photos, and updates. User name: Penn Brad Oil Museum.](#)

