

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. 1 – Winter 2024

Tales From the Four Mile

by Tom Miller, Board President

Approximately 14% of the originally defined area of the Bradford Oil Field lies in Cattaraugus County, New York. A significant part of that is in the Four Mile Valley in the town of Allegany.

In the very early days of oil development in that area (late 1870s and early 1880s), there was a tremendous amount of gas encountered in the Bradford Third Sand. That is because that area is within the Knapp Creek Dome, which is the highest part of the Bradford Third Sandstone. In the Knapp Creek Dome there is a gas cap of about 20 to 25 feet in thickness at the top of the formation. The top of the Bradford Third within the dome is about 500 feet above sea level. The lighter gas migrated to the upper level of the formation as opposed to the southern area of the pool where the top of the sand is at about sea level and sea water is encountered at the bottom of the formation.

There was a well drilled by McMullen and Hallock in the north branch of Indian Creek in 1877 that produced 25 million cubic feet of gas per day from the Knapp Creek Dome gas cap. A pipeline was laid to Olean, NY, to supply gas to the city. In those early days a large share of the gas was wasted. Prior to the advent of the automobile the market for oil was

mainly for illumination. Some was used locally for fuel, but in addition to market influences, there was not sufficient understanding of the importance of conserving gas in the formation as the energy for propelling the oil into the well bore. This depletion of the gas caused the primary oil production of the field to rapidly decline. It is the reason that there was more oil recovered from the Bradford Field by secondary recovery than by primary means.

There was a plant in existence at that time that used natural gas to produce carbon black. It was located at Four Mile Station on the OB&W RR (Olean, Bradford and Warren Railroad) at about the location of the intersection of the present Lippert Hollow Road and NYS Rt. 16 South.

In my younger days I had a close friend and neighbor, R. James Brandel, who passed away in the late 1970s. Jim grew up in the Four Mile Valley. I spent many hours with Jim and learned a lot of local history from him. He told me that on his uncle's farm that was at the head of the Four Mile Valley, wells were drilled using steam engines without a boiler. Instead of steam, gas of sufficient pressure and volume from previously drilled wells powered the engines without any steam

involved. The gas would have been vented.

A little farther down the valley was the town of Rockview. The Rockview schoolhouse still exists as a private camp. Years ago it was owned by Millie Bucher who would rent it out for events. I have memories of parties at the Rockview schoolhouse. I have a newspaper article from back in those early days that states something to the effect that oil from some of the wells was running down the main street of Rockview and that someone should be hired to dig a ditch to divert the oil to the creek. However, it was decided that no money was available to hire someone, so the matter was dropped.

****story continued on pg 2*

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 - \$5.00

Seniors - \$4.50

Children (under 12) - Free
Active Military / Family - Free



Four Mile continued

Continuing down the valley, the town of Stephansburg was located along the present Geiger Hollow Road. On the other side of the valley, near the lower end of the present Lippert Hollow Rd where it intersects with Four Mile Rd, was the town of North Pole.

Four large oil storage tanks were located at Stephansburg. I do not know the capacity of these tanks, but at that time I believe there were commonly tanks of 25,000 to 35,000 barrel capacity in the field. My friend Philip Stephan, who lives in the original Stephan homestead that was built during the Civil War, actually has some oil-soaked timbers stored in his barn that were supports for the roofs of the tanks.

One of the Stephansburg tanks caught fire at one point, probably as a result of a lightning strike. The practice at the time was to shoot a hole in the tank with a cannon in order to drain the oil into the surrounding dike. The oil could then be pumped out of the dike and the tank repaired, thus saving the tank from complete destruction.

According to Jim Brandel, while the crew was getting things ready and the cannon in place, the cannoner went over to North Pole where there was a saloon. He returned in a somewhat inebriated state. When he fired, the cannonball went right over the tank, across the valley, and hit a boiler stack on I believe the Bucher farm in Bucher Hollow. Jim told me that boiler stack with the cannonball hole in it laid there on the ground for many years after.

Jim also told me about an incident from when he was young, that he or someone with him shot at some

empty nitroglycerine cans that were in an old tree stump. The resulting explosion from the residual in the cans blew windows out of their house.

These are just a few pieces of history from the northern part of the Bradford Oilfield.

Bradford Oil Fields Map Added to Collection

by Fran Bottone, Museum Manager

About two years ago, a couple of us from the museum were at Pitt University's overflow warehouse looking for possible storage options for the museum. I was moving some things out of the way to get a better look at some items and happened to look down at the large board that was in my hands. Lo and behold, it was a very large nicely framed map of the Bradford Oil Fields.

Of course the gears started turning and I mentioned to the man in charge that it would be nice to have this for the museum. Well that was as far as it went at the time. Move forward to late summer of 2023. I brought it up at a board meeting (since we have two Pitt professors on our board), could an inquiry be made to see if they still had that map and might there be a way for us to get it?

Isabelle Champlin and Matt Kropf shook some trees and we were able to acquire the map. We would like to thank John McGriff and Pitt University at Bradford for this nice donation.

This detailed map will be up on display here at Penn Brad once we reopen for next season. This map is about 4 x 6 feet, dates from the 1940s and represents the incredibly productive water flood era, a technology that was pioneered here in the Bradford Fields and may be our biggest claim to fame. Be sure to stop in and check it out to get a true idea of the scope of this field, along with our many other great displays.



Job Moses 1871 Well – Success or Failure?

by Susan Gould, Board Secretary

It is an old saying that beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder; that people judge things based on their own backgrounds, experiences, and preferences. Can the same be true of success? What constitutes success? Is it money, fame, proving a point, or something else?

Job Moses, driller of the 1871 well on the Hinchey farm located between Bradford and Limestone, NY, was a scholar and a lover of learning. His first career was as a schoolteacher, but in 1829, thirty years before the Drake well, drillers in Kentucky seeking brine brought in a well that produced, not brine, but crude oil, a substance which they neither wanted nor knew how to use. Job was intrigued by this discovery, so he eventually went to Kentucky, purchased the well, and deepened it from 100 to 400 ft. He then used the crude oil to make patent medicine back in New York State.

Finding oil in Kentucky got Job thinking. If Kentucky, being in the Appalachian Basin, had oil, wouldn't it seem likely that oil might occur in other parts of the Basin as well, possibly New York State where Job lived? So, in 1865 Job came to Limestone, in Cattaraugus County, NY. The 1870 U.S. census described his occupation as "prospecting for oil". He built a large house, drilled three wells near Limestone, and then in 1871 drilled a well just across the border into Pennsylvania on the Patrick Hinchey farm. Success number one: He proved a point – there is petroleum in this part of the Appalachian Basin. Success number two: Job's drilling in New York started the oil industry in that state.

In addition, since the Titusville well of 1859 came in at 69 ½ feet, the would-be oil producers around Bradford were drilling down 400 to 600 feet and wondering why they were not successful. What they did not know was that because Bradford had a higher elevation than Titusville, they would need to drill deeper into the ground to reach the oil vein. Job's 1871 well proved that was true; his well came in at 1,110 ft. When the drillers around Bradford learned that fact, the Bradford Oil Boom began. Success number three.

That is enough reason to label Job's well a success; don't you agree?



Plaque marking location of Job Moses well on Seaward Ave

Oddities at the Museum

by Fran Bottone, Manager

Local pumpers were a resourceful lot back in the day and figured out many creative ways to route their rod lines and sometimes even pump multiple wells with one rod. With the use of a bull ring, they could attach as many as three wells to a single rod line. It was not unheard of for them to use a handy tree for a rod line guide on occasion. Of course these methods were engineered 50-100 years ago, so sometimes the growth of trees over time create very interesting artifacts. When the tree pictured below was cut, it turned out that it did not have a rod line growing through it, but it is still a good example of how this can happen, and a nice look at a bull ring with multiple rod line attachments. Be careful with those chain saws! This artifact was recently donated by Mel from the Bradford Mennonite Church. It came in with a load of his firewood.



Black Gold

by Angela Nuzzo, Editor

The smell of it is in my lungs,
 in my veins, in my memories.
 I have breathed it in deeply
 since I was a child
 and over the decades it has
 soaked into my being.
 Back then, the odor was heavy,
 hanging in the air like a perfume
 only the earth could procure.
 It surrounded our house
 as the goldenrod did,
 mingling its scent
 with the flowering fields.
 Our walks up Glycerin Road
 revealed open pools of brown goo,
 autumn leaves stuck to the surface,
 bugs landing with no hope of escape.
 The pipes crisscrossing our hill
 were still in use back then,
 chugging back and forth, barking
 out the language familiar
 only in oil country.
 Visitors experienced the unique flavor
 of the water from our well,
 but only in the driest of summers
 could we taste the deep and murky dregs
 being pulled up from the rock pool.
 For years now the hills have been silent
 and that certain smell has faded.
 The rusting tanks
 stand abandoned in the fields
 and the jacks wait quiet.
 There are laws now forcing landowners
 to pull pipes and plug old oil wells.
 And so, acre by acre,
 my thoughts are displaced
 and the landscape
 of that pungent odor is changed forever.
 But I can still sense it lingering,
 having been breathed into my heart.

 I wrote this poem in the Spring of 2006 after reading stories about the new laws being passed and then seeing, first-hand, the capping of old oil wells on property around our house.

No one in my family had really worked in the oil business, except for a short stint on my dad's part when he had been unemployed in the 1970s. The oil man who worked the lease on our hill gave my dad a job. I don't think he lasted long at it. My mom said it was hard and dirty work. When my dad came home at the end of the day, they would just throw out the clothes he had worn.

Even though our family was never "in oil", we were surrounded by it, as all Bradfordians were. That certain scent in the air, the taste of it in well water, the rainbow slick after a rainstorm, the sound of the pump houses, and the motion of the jacks.

I don't remember when it all started to end, but for years the jack sat motionless next to our house. And the path the yellow Caterpillar took gradually grew over.

In 2011, I heard a sound that I never thought I'd hear again. I was in my house and stopped dead in my tracks. Was that...?! It couldn't be! I ran outside and closed my eyes... and there it was. The stuttering heartbeat was back on the hill, echoing down the valley.



Help Wanted

PBOM Looking for Assistant Manager

The Penn Brad Oil Museum is looking for an assistant manager (or manager) to assist our manager, Fran. The major qualifications are an interest in local history, basic computer skills, and an ability to deal with the public. Fran would like to back off on the amount of time he spends at the museum and eventually hand over the main manager position to someone else once they are comfortable with the duties involved.

If you know of anyone who would possibly have an interest in this position, please let us know or have them contact us.

Board Member Dennis Stromberg Passes

The Bradford Era

It is with great sadness that we announce the unexpected passing of the much-loved Dennis Craig Stromberg, 78, of Bradford. Dennis was born in Bradford on July 22, 1945.

He attended Bradford schools, graduating with the Bradford Area High School class of 1964. From there, he attended Macalester College, Minneapolis, and the American Management Association, Saranac Lake, N.Y., receiving a master's certificate in business management.

Dennis began a wonderful career in executive sales and marketing as a trainee for the Caterpillar Inc., Peoria, Ill. With his work there and with other construction equipment companies, he lived in various countries in Europe for 20 years with business territories covering Europe and the Middle East.

Dennis was adventurous in spirit and in action. He loved travel, was a car enthusiast, skier, passionate sailor and reader with an extraordinary ability to recall detail. Most recently he served as president of the Kiwanis Club of Bradford and was an avid supporter of its important mission to serve children of our community. Naturally outgoing, he easily formed and retained many long-term friendships throughout his life.

Change in delivery of *On the Lazy Bench*

Members have asked about receiving the museum newsletter, *On the Lazy Bench*, via email, instead of receiving a paper copy. Therefore, when you receive your dues notice for 2024 (notices will be mailed out in March), you will find a place to indicate your preference—mail or email.

This is also an effort on the part of the board to reduce costs wherever possible. If you still want the paper copy, just check that box on your dues notice. We will gladly mail one to you. But, otherwise, your next newsletter will be sent as an email attachment. (Note that newsletters are available on the museum website, penn-bradoilmuseum.org.)

With the emailed newsletter, there will also be a membership form included as a separate attachment so you can share your newsletter with friends who may also be interested in supporting Penn Brad Oil Museum.

Upcoming Events:

- Ice Cream Social / Season Opens – April 20
- Derrick Day – July 29
- 2nd Annual Dan Palmer Memorial Golf Scramble – Aug 4 – Pine Acres Golf Course, Sponsored by American Refining Group
- Purse Bingo Fundraiser, Yellow Dog Dinner – details to come

Fireside Pumper's Breakfast

The Fireside Pumpers of the Penn Brad Oil Museum is a monthly breakfast buffet meeting at Togi's Banquet Room, 412-422 E. Main Street, Bradford, PA. The all-you-can-eat meal begins at 8 am, with a speaker presentation starting at 8:30. These Wednesday meetings are open to the public as an educational outreach and fundraising effort, and are advertised in local newspapers, on the museum website and Facebook page, and in our newsletters. Sponsorships are available for each meeting. See pg 6.

April 10, 2024

Todd Witchen
Wreaths Across America

May 8, 2024

Carolyn Stroup
Mt. Jewett to Kinzua Bridge Trail

June 12, 2024

Jamie Pierotti
Backus Factory in Smethport

July 10, 2024

Marc South
History of Dresser

August 14, 2024

Tom Riel
Bottle Collecting

September 11, 2024

Taylor McConnell
The Wilds Sonshine Factory

October 9, 2024

Jeff Brewer
Refining Processes & Products

November 13, 2024

Fran Bottone
PBOM - The Year in Review

Penn Brad Oil Museum



Support Penn Brad Oil Museum by sponsoring a Fireside Pumpers breakfast meeting.

Each sponsor would receive:

- ◆ a sign at the breakfast acknowledging your generosity
- ◆ your name in the breakfast notice placed in the Bradford Era and Olean Times Herald
 - ◆ your name in the Museum's newsletter
 - ◆ one complimentary breakfast
- ◆ For businesses, 5 to 10 minutes at breakfast to talk about your business

These breakfasts are one of the museum's major educational outreach efforts to the community.

The cost of each sponsorship is a minimum of \$100.

If you are willing to sponsor a breakfast, complete the following information and mail to

Penn Brad Oil Museum, PO Box 163, Bradford, PA 16701-0163



Name of sponsor _____

_____ Enclosed is a check for \$ _____

_____ Please bill me for \$ _____

_____ I prefer to pay by credit card. (Call the treasurer at 814-368-6824)

Do you have a preference for the month you wish to sponsor? (Yes or No) _____.

If yes, what month do you prefer? _____

Board Of Directors

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

- Thomas Miller, President
- Fred Fesenmyer, Vice President
- Susan Gould, Secretary
- Joyce Cline, Treasurer
- Isabelle Champlin, Corresponding Secretary
- Jeff Brewer
- Marsha McCracken
- Meredith Fesenmyer
- Stanley Pecora
- Brenda Fish
- William Pantuso
- Matt Kropf
- Sherri Schulze
- Chip McCracken
- Dale Smith

**Carol W LaGrasse
Defender of
Property Rights**

**Harry Boylan
Tidewater Oil Co.**

**John R Hannon
Quaker State**

Max B Moore

Memorial & Honoring Gifts

In Memory Of: _____ **Given By:** _____
 Dennis Stromberg Richard & Laurie Anderson
 Dennis Stromberg Dean Bauer
 Dennis Stromberg Karen Buchheit
 Dennis Stromberg Joyce Cline
 Dennis Stromberg Terri & Bill Leven
 Dennis Stromberg Emily & Dan Zinsner

Donation to **Building Fund** given by Bruce Galati



Memorial & Honoring Bricks

In Memory Of: _____ **Placed By:** _____
 Carol W Lagrasse Tom & Pat Miller
 Harry Boylan Harrijane Hannon Moore
 John R Hannon Harrijane Hannon Moore
 Max B Moore Harrijane Hannon Moore

Engraved personalized paving bricks can be purchased to surround the base of the new 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 February 24 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 _____ To Honor _____
Amount Enclosed \$ _____	Send acknowledgment to:
Donor's name _____	Name _____
Donor's address _____	Address _____
_____	_____

Improvements to Museum Entrance

by Thomas Miller, Board President

Grounds maintenance will be easier going forward due to some major improvements to the museum's entrance. Museum Treasurer Joyce Cline has financed an attractive retaining wall for the bank below the new concrete entrance walk. The wall will help protect the foundation of the toolhouse and improve drainage while also preserving the integrity of the new ramp. Thank you, Mrs. Cline!



To add to the attractiveness of the museum as guests approach our establishment, we had low-maintenance ground cover installed on the bank above the new walk. This will also eliminate the difficult continuous chore of mowing the steep bank.



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

PO Box 163
Bradford, PA 16701