

# 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. 6 – No. 1 – Summer 2020

## Former Museum Manager, Sam Slocum, Remembered

by Susan Gould, Museum Secretary

Now and then you meet someone who not only is good at what they do, but thoroughly enjoys doing it, and the pride they take in their work is at least as important as the paycheck. That was Sam Slocum.

Sam came to us in 2012 as a carpenter and was made museum manager in 2013. During that time, we had taken down the main museum building and had a new one built and there was much to do to get ready for our grand re-opening. Sam rose to the challenge.

Zippo had renovated their own sales and display area and donated their old cases to us, which Sam, with some help from me scrubbed, cleaned, and painted. Since the cabinets were too tall for the height of our ceiling, Sam took the tops off, turned them upside down, and made hinged covers for them, so they could be used for storage and double as tables in the James Kinley Library, a part of the new building.

Using his electrical expertise, Sam rewired the tractor barn and wired the Doghouse Theater, which he designed and constructed. He built ramps, sidewalks and walkways. He was

especially proud of the cement area at the main entrance to the new building, having done the cement himself. He built cabinets for the museum store and for displays of artifacts.

He took artifacts, store items, and brochures to local bazaars, The Lumber Museum and to the McKean County Fair. His displays at the fair in 2018 (the year the fair theme was Energy) earned the museum a blue ribbon.

Sam designed all of our brochures and ads, which Dick McDowell of UPB lauded as being of professional quality.



*Sam Slocum 4-9-1951 - 1-30-2020*

Sam arranged bus tours, motorcycle tours and school visits and always had a treat provided for the groups, including Milk Bones for

the "Travels with Fido" group. Keeping things clean and orderly was extremely important to Sam and he was a little leery about the dogs, but remarked afterward that there was "not one accident."

Derrick Day was Sam's brain-child. He wanted to do something to thank the community for their support and to also show all the things the museum has to offer. He was always amazed at the number of people who said they were there for the first time and he was so happy when they said they were coming back.

*\*\*\*Story continued on page 2*

## PENN BRAD OIL MUSEUM

901 South Avenue - Bradford, PA 16701

Email: pennbrad.oilmuseum@yahoo.com

Web: pennbradoilmuseum.org

Phone: 814-362-1955

Tuesday to Friday

9 AM to 4 PM

Saturday

9 AM to 2 PM

Admission Cost:

Adults - \$5.00

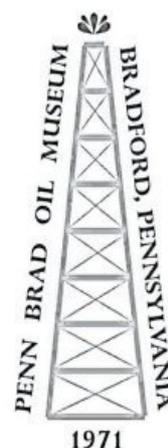
Seniors - \$4.50

Children (under 12) -

FREE

Active Military / Family -

FREE



## Sam Slocum continued

Sam was very safety-conscious. One day I arrived at the museum and found Sam not a little upset. He said "I came in here this morning and there were people sitting on the lazy bench! There's a wasp nest under there!"

Brother Michael Hicks, a good friend of Sam's, stressed how much Sam took pride in the museum and how happy he was with the friends he had made there. And Brother Mike told me something I did not know. Sam was an accomplished pianist, but his instrument of choice was the trumpet.

Bev Vinca, another good friend, also mentioned how happy he was working for the museum. She also said that in addition to his other talents, he was an excellent cook. I always enjoyed it when he put his culinary creations on Facebook.

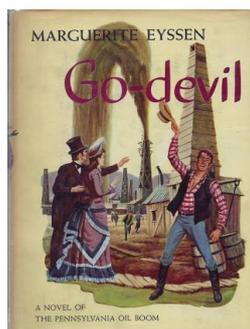
Sam was accomplished on the Apple computer system as well. Over the years I got into some awful messes trying to learn how to use one, so I would go to Sam, he would think for a minute and say "I know what to do."

His faith in God was strong, even during his illness. We talked a lot about God and faith and I learned a lot from him. When a person has a strong faith, a job that one loves, and good friends, of which he had many, how can you do better than that?

I am proud to have been his friend and feel that I am a better person because of having known him.



*Sam enjoying the Derrick Day festivities*



### Book Review

**Go-devil by Marguerite Eyssen**

**Doubleday 1947**

For a 73-year-old book, this one isn't bad! In the beginning, as a youngster, the protagonist Rand Bole is sopping up floating crude from Oil Creek to sell to a peddler for bottled medicine, and by the end of the book he is enormously wealthy, and defeating Rockefeller's Standard Oil pipeline.

There is a lot of history here, but it is confabulated, collapsed and stretched to fit the novel. For an oil history buff, it is pleasurable to read about Col. Drake, John Wilkes Booth, Pithole, Ben Hogan (the wickedest man in the world), the mansions on Bradford's Congress Street, the Music Mountain Strike, and many other historic events and personages. But it is a bit disconcerting to be reminded how volatile the price of oil has always been, and to also realize how vulnerable we are to devastating global pandemics (in this novel it is smallpox, not COVID-19).

The author, Marguerite Eyssen, wrote many short stories for magazines from 1925 through WWII. She died at the age of 86 in 1980 at her home on Hedgehog Lane in Bradford. A signed copy of her novel is available in our museum's Kinley Library.

## Museum Welcomes New Manager

Fran Bottone is a born and bred Bradford boy who has always been a big fan of all aspects of his hometown's history.

He was previously in a long-time managerial position in the motorcycle industry when he saw the Museum Manager position advertised. Coincidentally, a Museum board member stopped into Fran's place of business later that same day and somehow the topic came up. The conversation piqued Fran's interest. He had been to the Oil Museum several times, once recently for their "Derrick Days" summer open house event. He was very impressed with the operation.

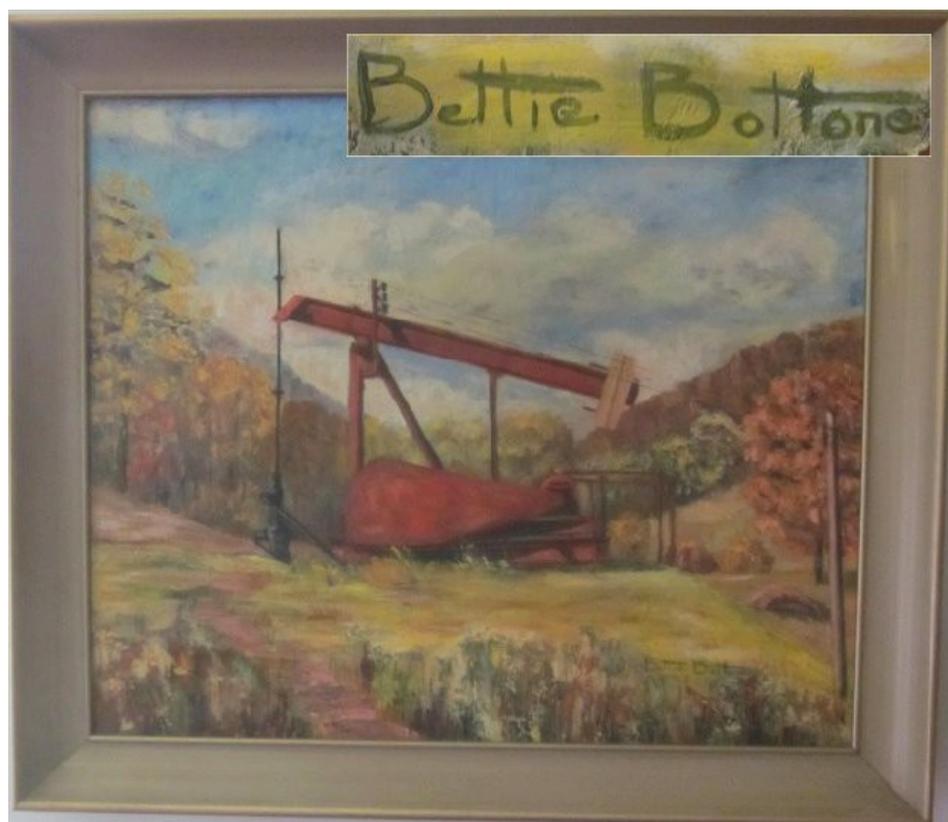
After speaking to several of the very nice board members, Fran was interested and, luckily, so were they. A highlight for Fran was being shown one of his mother's long-lost oil paintings, which hangs at the Museum. He took that as a good omen. The rest, as they say, is history.

Fran says, "Hopefully I can do my part to honor and preserve the memory and stories of all of these amazing Bradford area oil men (and women) and the industry that they built."

*\*See Page 6 for Fran's article about his family link to area oil history.*



*Fran, getting to know his way around the tool house*



*A long-lost painting done by Fran's mother, Bettie*

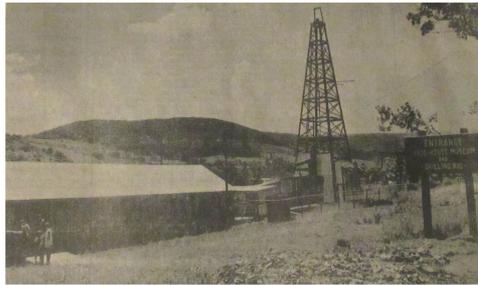
## Coming Events...

- Penn Brad Oil Museum opens for its forty-ninth year on Tuesday June 30, 2020. Tours and gift shop hours are Tuesday-Friday 9am-4pm, Saturday 9am-2pm. Closed on Sundays.
- Harvey Golubock Memorial Sporting Clay Shoot – Tentatively planned for September 12, 2020.

## Museum's Iconic Oil Derrick Succumbs to the Elements, Again

by Angela Nuzzo

Cresting the hill at the 900 block of Route 219 South Avenue near Custer City is a little less awe-inspiring without a 72-foot standard oil rig rising into your view. A sight that had greeted passers-by for 50 years and had become the iconic logo of the Penn Brad Oil Museum was no longer there. Years of weather-related deterioration and wind damage from a recent storm led to the oil derrick's emergency demolition on May 21, 2020. But this was not the first time the Penn Brad rig had come down.



*Museum at 1971 Opening*

The original wooden derrick was built in 1969 as a full-scale replica of a standard oil rig, the same type of drilling rig that had covered Bradford's hills less than a hundred years earlier. The rig and museum had their official opening ceremony during Bradford's Oil Centennial celebration in 1971. According to old Era newspaper articles, the rig was built by brothers Carl and Art Seagren, the last of the old time rig builders, who hand hewed all of the mud sills and timbers.



*The Original Rig - 1971*

That original replica stood tall until June 2, 1998, when a tornado plowed its way through the area, leaving the derrick and rig building a pile of twisted metal and splintered lumber. Jim Bryner, the museum's curator at that time, said he didn't know how long it would take to rebuild because they had no money. "It depends on how many friends help us."

*1998 Devestation*



Apparently, the museum had many friends. Within a year, enough funds were raised from state and private sources to have the museum building and drilling rig rebuilt and open to the public. The hardware and sturdier beams from the original rig were salvaged and reused, but answers to the questions who would build it and how would they do it were not as easy to come by. Anyone with first-hand knowledge of building a derrick was unavailable. So the museum worked with Bradford High School vo-tech students and generated a set of blue prints that could be followed by skilled carpenters. Building crews were trained and many volunteers helped in bringing the project to completion in June 1999.



*1999 Rebuild*

Twenty-one years of weathering has brought the Penn Brad rig down again and the museum is hoping that those friends of yester-year are still able to help with the next replacement. Thomas Miller, President of the museum, says it will be a very expensive undertaking. Making things tougher is the poor state of economics in the oil industry and the fact that the museum has been unable to hold any fundraisers because of the Coronavirus lockdown.

A separate fund has been set up for anyone who would like to donate especially for the rig replacement. At this time, checks can be sent to P.O. Box 163, Bradford, PA 16701. Make checks payable to "Rig Replacement Fund." Further opportunities to donate, including an online fundraiser, will be announced at a later date.



Thank you to Kessel Construction for bringing the derrick down safely.

Check out our Facebook page for more of Fran Bottone's photos of the demolition.

# Leon Scowden, Dedicated Oil Man

by Fran Bottone, Museum Manager

My maternal great grandfather, Leon D Scowden, was born during the Civil War, on February 23, 1862, at Geneva, Crawford County, PA.

He eventually settled in the lost town of Kinzua, PA, (now under the waters of the Kinzua Dam) just as the oil excitement started. It was here that he met and married Martha Evelyn Miller.

He found his calling, first as a tool dresser and later as a driller. By 1910 he had purchased a farm and moved his family to Farmers Valley, PA. He worked the farm, but continued to work in the oil fields.

As he grew older, he settled on a pumpers job in the neighboring oil settlement of Bordell. The lease was far enough away that walking was not practical, so Leon would ride his horse to the lease. The horse was smart enough to find his own way back to the farm. Leon would sleep in the powerhouse during the week, then walk home himself on the weekends. This decision was a fateful one which would later factor into his demise.



Leon D. Scowden

During the week of April 23, 1926, Leon had been under the weather, but the lease had to be pumped. Back then there were no sick days. A gauger noticed that the level in Leon's tanks had not changed, so he notified Leon's son Leslie (my maternal grandfather) that something must be wrong.

When Leslie got to the lease, he found Leon on death's door. While Leslie was able to get Leon home alive, sadly he was deep in the clutches of pneumonia and succumbed the following day. Leon was 64, only two years older than I am myself.



Leslie & Leon Scowden

J. E. Fogle & Phillips No. 3 on Marsh farm was rigged and drilled complete in the short space of 7 days time it being the best time made in this field when it is beaten Fogle says he will take down the broom. The drillers on this well were J. E. Fogle and Geo. Brant with Andrus Williams and Leon Scowden as tool dressers, same Co's No. 4 Harris farm rig up and driving pipe.

Aug. 30, 1885 Warren Sunday Mirror

Leon Scowden, alias "Shorty," keeps time with the walking beam by the use of the whistle on his boiler house.

Jan. 18, 1887 Warren Mirror

(Newspaper clippings courtesy of Dave Rathfon)

## Museum's Usual Activities Cancelled Due to Pandemic

As with most other businesses, the Coronavirus has put a damper on the normal workings of the Museum. The Ice Cream Social Opening Event was cancelled in April. The annual Yellow Dog Award Dinner and the popular Derrick Day have also been cancelled. The Fireside Pumpers' monthly breakfast meetings have been put on hold for now. Hopefully these will start up again in the fall.

## 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	Stanley Pecora
Meredith Fesenmyer	Paul Phillips
Jim Frick	Steve Pratt
Matt Kropf	Jordon Roeder
Chip McCracken	Sherri Schulze
Marsha McCracken	Dale Smith
William Pantuso	



### Memorial & Honoring Bricks

**In Memory Of:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Given By:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Francis Harry Fox.....  
 .....Richard Thomas Fox McCormack

**In Honor Of:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Given By:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ed Szewczyk.....  
 .....Penn Brad Oil Museum Board of Directors

### Memorial Gifts

<b>In Memory Of:</b>	<b>Given By:</b>
Erla K. Frick.....	Pat & Tom Miller
Dale Isenberg.....	Bradford Pipe & Supply, Inc
John J. Ryan.....	American Refining Group
Samuel B. Slocum.....	Dean Bauer
Samuel B. Slocum.....	James Belardia & Christine Belardia
Samuel B. Slocum.....	Bob & Marie Jarrett
Samuel B. Slocum.....	Minard Run Oil Co.
Samuel B. Slocum.....	Jerry & Harrijane Moore

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

Memorials received after June 12 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. A notice from the Museum 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

(PLEASE CHOOSE IN MEMORY OF OR IN HONOR OF)	<b>Memorial/Honoring Gifts</b>	(PLEASE PRINT)
IN MEMORY OF	IN HONOR OF	
SEND CARD TO	FROM	
STREET	STREET	
CITY/STATE/ZIP	CITY/STATE/ZIP	

## The Lazy Bench

by Angela Nuzzo

Have a seat on the lazy bench.  
You'll find it sturdy, but rough.  
You may be able to take a nap  
if the bench is long enough.  
Warm your hands at the old wood stove  
or cook your evening meal.  
Cop a squat with visitors  
amidst the drill line and bullwheel.  
Once the driller has entered his log  
and the crew has finished their chores,  
they'll all settle down on the lazy bench.  
There's an empty spot waiting that's yours.



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

P.O. Box 163  
Bradford, PA 16701