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ABSTRACTS

Edited by: William R. Brice  
116 Luna Lane, Johnstown, Pennsylvania 15904  
wbrice@pitt.edu

**LOUISIANA NATURAL GAS: A HISTORY OF  
PRODUCTION, USAGE, AND LOSSES**

Mary L. Barrett  
*Professor Emeriti of Geology  
Dept. of Geology & Geography  
Centenary College of Louisiana, Shreveport, LA 71104  
mbarrett@centenary.edu*

Major Louisiana gas discoveries, both as a *byproduct* of oil fields and as stand-alone natural gas deposits, began early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The geographic boundaries related to Louisiana petroleum production consists of onshore and coastal/offshore, both within state boundaries, and the federal offshore (OCS). During the State's early production history, inland gas production dominated. By the mid-1960s, the State's coastal/offshore area began to match and then dominate gas production volumes. By the mid-1970s, the federal OCS began to dominate gas production. Total gas production for all areas of Louisiana peaked in 1970.

Natural gas waste and losses in Louisiana history included gas blowouts, flaring of casinghead gas, and gas usage in carbon black plants. The first Louisiana state conservation regulation, Act 71 of 1906, was the beginning of regulations over gas waste. Early and famous field examples of gas waste related to this act and other gas conservation measures included the Caddo-Pine Island Field (1900s-1910s), the Monroe Gas Field (1920s), and the Rodessa Field (1930s). The 1930s+ discoveries of large petroleum fields in the remote areas of South Louisiana also increased gas flaring. But, the increasing use of gas recycling, growing post-World War II gas markets, associated pipeline construction, and increased regulatory enforcement over gas losses of the 1940s-early 1960s greatly reduced this flaring.

While the State's production has gradually declined, we are now entering a new historic phase of gas production with the development of the Haynesville and Bossier shales of north-west Louisiana.

**THE GREATEST OIL WELL IN HISTORY? THE  
STORY OF CERRO AZUL #4**

Jon Blickwede<sup>1</sup> and Josh Rosenfeld<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>*Statoil, 2103 CityWest Blvd, Suite 800, Houston, TX 77042;  
jobli@statoil.com*  
<sup>2</sup>*Yax Balam, Inc., 7302 Ravenswood Rd., Granbury, TX  
76049*

The record flow rate for an oil well in the Gulf Coast, and likely the entire world, is held by the Cerro Azul #4 well in the Golden Lane trend of the Tampico-Misantla Basin of Mexico. Drilled with a cable tool rig by Pan American in 1915-16, the well blew out at a depth of 1,752 feet in karstic limestones of the Middle Cretaceous El Abra Formation. By the time the well was brought under control, some ten days after the blow-out began, the gusher had reached a height of nearly 600 feet. Besides having ejected the drilling tools up to 120 ft from the well, the gusher is rumored to have carried with it stalagmites and stalactites from the cavernous pores of the reservoir.

In order to capture as much of the oil as possible, a series of trenches were dug radiating away from the wellsite into man-made ponds. The flow of oil steadily increased, and by the time the well was capped, the amount of oil flowing through the trenches was measured to be an incredible 260,858 barrels per day. This did not take into account the amount of oil that was blown up to two miles away from the wellsite by strong winds. After less than six years of controlled production, Cerro Azul #4 had yielded a cumulative 57 million barrels of oil... and though a shadow of its former self, the well continues to produce today, operated by the Mexican national oil company Pemex.