

LEO RANNEY PIONEER IN HORIZONTAL DRILLING

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Leo Ranney born in 1884 was a geologist and engineer who pioneered the idea of horizontal drilling. The poster is a reproduction of an article published in Fortune Magazine in September 1947. The concept was applied in the Province of Ontario in 1985 when a shaft was sunk into a small shallow oilfield near Sarnia, Ontario. Now horizontal drilling is a common practice in the oil industry.

EAST AND WEST: ONTARIO'S INFLUENCE ON THE WESTERN CANADIAN PETROLEUM INDUSTRY

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An enduring myth permeates the Canadian oil patch – eastern Canadians hate the West. Though this theme serves a purpose – like when Westerners want to blame the international economic downturn of the 1980s on Ottawa's infamous National Energy Program – the fact remains that numerous central Canadian petroleum industry pioneers, and some key Americans, migrated west to Alberta in the early 1900s and helped develop an industry that became pivotal to Canada's self-sufficiency in oil, natural gas and bitumen.

This paper reviews the careers of important individuals who helped find, develop and sustain the Western Canadian oil industry and explains how this relationship between the regions has contributed to the vitality of the Canadian oil patch.

ALL ABOARD FOR OIL COUNTRY!

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*"The Wildest Excitement Prevails
In This Field To-nite."
"Oil Men Excited."
"A Real Gusher."*

Although sandwiched between the fish market report and miscellaneous grocery news columns deep within the daily

newspapers, headlines such as these invited attention. Is it any wonder that excursions to the oil regions were popular? Daily summaries of oleaginous pursuits populated newspaper columns. Articles overflowing with urgency and enthusiasm alternated with articles brimming with the despair of dry holes and decreased oil production. Drilling activity in each new geographical area refreshed the phenomenon. Oilfield correspondents speculated about everything: the depth to pay sand, any up-hole indications of oil, reservoir quality, the time until the pay was reached, geological trends, plans and intentions of the well owners and operators, and even the chances of success for an offsetting well. Hourly production, drilling progress, shipments, fluctuations in oil output and other such parameters made up a regular portion of the oilfield news.

Oil fever invaded society from the poorest looking for work to the wealthiest seeking investment opportunities. Oil region visitors varied in their interests and motivations, but all wanted a first-hand look at the oil patch. Investors, future oil men, land-lease brokers, competitors, oil scouts, gentility, schemers, reporters, photographers, scientists, rig hands, roughnecks and the just plain curious found their way to the oil fields. Just plain curious myself, I tagged along on a few oilfield *excursions* through the archives. This article shares a few of those adventures.

GESNER, WILLIAMS AND THE BIRTH OF THE OIL INDUSTRY

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This paper will explore the links between the work of Abraham Gesner and James Miller Williams in the founding of the oil industry. Gesner, Nova Scotian physician, geologist and chemist, has been called *The father of the modern petroleum industry* (U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration: www.nasaexplores.com/show_58_teacher_st.php?id=030304125124). Gesner's development of kerosene in the 1840s led to the development of the U.S. coal oil refining industry. As a result, the oil industry was said to be *an industry waiting to happen*, i.e. waiting for a supply of crude oil. Williams was the first to provide that supply with the 1858 discovery of the Oil Springs field. He also established the first integrated oil company, with crude oil production, refining and marketing, no later than early 1859. This paper will discuss unconfirmed reports that Williams was guided by Gesner in establishing his refining operations. It will also examine the work of Gesner's Scottish coal oil refining rival, James Young, and how Young beat Gesner in obtaining a U.S.