

EARLY HISTORY OF THE CADDO-PINE ISLAND FIELD, CADDO PARISH, LOUISIANA

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The Caddo-Pine Island Field, located principally in Caddo Parish, Louisiana, was the first of the very large oil and gas fields discovered in Louisiana. From its discovery in 1905 to the present it has had considerable influence both on the petroleum industry and the general economy of Northwest Louisiana.

The geologic feature responsible for this petroleum accumulation is a large, low relief, closed anticlinal structure which occupies the crest of the Sabine Uplift, the dominant feature between the East Texas Salt Dome Basin on the west and the North Louisiana Interior Salt Dome Basin on the east.

The majority of the production has been from reservoirs within the Upper Cretaceous together with those Lower Cretaceous zones which occur unconformably below the Upper and Lower Cretaceous contact. Other Lower Cretaceous zones have produced, but in relatively minor total quantities.

Through out the ninety-seven year history of the field total production has risen and declined only to be revived by deeper drilling, the development of new production techniques, and field extension drilling.

Now in its latter stages of depletion, most of this historic field's producing wells are being operated by local independents. Their future is tied to the price of crude oil as they await new techniques capable of unlocking the millions of barrels of oil still in place in the Upper Cretaceous Annona Chalk.

THE WELL AT WICHITA

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At the turn of the 20th century, municipalities in eastern Kansas were beginning to thrive because of large, recently discovered, natural gas reserves. Such discoveries and commensurate development attracted industries, capital and population from out of state. Understandably, those cities were envied by towns farther west. The *Wichita Daily Eagle* newspaper on March 7, 1896 noted that "If there is any one thing on earth that can prevent Wichita from becoming a great city, it is a lack of cheap fuel." Exhibiting foresight to avoid such failure, in 1894 the Wichita city council authorized a municipal bond issue of \$10,000.00 to drill an exploratory well on city property in search of economic deposits of coal, gas, salt or oil. Such well was spudded on October 19, 1895 in what now is downtown Wichita. From then until April 30, 1897, the city struggled with almost every imaginable problem before giving up the effort. There is a notable lack of information about this well, as being only published newspaper accounts of the day and a brief mention in an 1898 issue of *Transactions of the Kansas Academy of Science*.

Problems of urban hazards posed by unreported and forgotten old wells became apparent in nearby Hutchinson, Kansas early in 2001 when fires and brine geysers erupted within the city. Thus, a search in old newspapers may prove useful to environmental geologists in finding pollution sources, potential hazards, etc. in urban areas.

THE LOST HISTORY OF OHIO'S GRAND RESERVOIR OIL BOOM

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In 1984, citizens of Caddo Parish Louisiana proudly placed their new historical marker identifying the location of the “world’s first over water oil well”. The referenced well was the Ferry Lake #1, completed in 1911. Sources cited in making this claim included:

Franks, Kenny A. and Lambert, Paul F. Early Louisiana and Arkansas Oil: A Photographic History, 1901 – 1946. College Station, Texas: Texas A & M University Press, 1982; and Shreveport Times, September 19, 1960.

Once stated, the claim of “world’s first” was perpetuated in later articles and works. But, is it a valid claim? While certainly a significant achievement, with continuing commercial production to this day, Caddo Lake oil was not the first. Somewhere, lost in the archives, is the story of the oil boom in the Grand Reservoir located between Celina and St. Marys, Ohio. An article in the Celina Ohio Daily Standard of June 3, 1995 tells of the production from the 17,000 acre artificial lake that began in 1891. This allegation is substantiated by the 1903 volume of the Geological Survey of Ohio: “By 1890 the productive territory had been pushed to the eastern border of the Grand reservoir, and a year later wells were being drilled in that body of water.” By 1908 production had waned and many of the wells had already been abandoned, but in between, 200 – 300 wells were drilled in the lake. It is claimed that “hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil” were produced.

How did we lose this bit of history? Perhaps it was because the oil companies and operators were small businesses from the local area, and because the venture lasted only a short time. Possibly it was kept from the public eye because the experiment was viewed as a failure by locals. Also, oil was just a brief side-bar in the history of this man-made reservoir that was the “largest man-made lake in the world” at its completion in 1845. It had been constructed originally to provide water for the Miami – Erie Canal.