

story is important to any understanding of Los Angeles and its relationship with oil, and may serve as an important reference for other places balancing community needs with the development of local energy resources.

### TOOLIES AND ROPE CHOKERS

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*Toolies* is another term for tool dressers on a cable tool drilling rig. *Rope Chokers* is a derisive term used for cable tool drillers by rotary drillers in areas where the two forms of oil well drilling were in competition. Rotary drillers were called *swivel necks* by the cable tool drilling people. Ultimately, rotary drilling prevailed and is the most used form of drilling today. While a few wells are still being drilled by cable tools in the Appalachian area today, it is fast becoming a lost art.

The cable tool rigs were staffed by two two-man crews composed of a driller and tool dresser who worked alternating 12 hour tours (pronounced as *tower* in oilfield lingo). The driller ran the rig and was responsible for *making hole*. Tool dressers were driller's helpers who performed various tasks to assist the driller. Bits were dressed (sharpened) by heating in a coal or gas fired forge at the rig. When a dull bit was brought to the proper temperature and was sufficiently malleable, both the driller and toolie used sledge hammers to reshape the cutting edge.

Drillers had to be multi-talented. If something on the rig broke (usually a wooden part), they were expected to fix it and not call the tool pusher (superintendent) in the middle of the night. Some drillers also performed fishing jobs for drilling tools lost in the hole. After sufficient service as a tool dresser, a good hand could be promoted to driller position which was the highest paying job in the oil field.

The presentation is a two part program to educate people on the skills, methods, and equipment used in Appalachian oil fields. The first part consists of a number of historic photographs illustrating the men and equipment used in cable tool drilling. The second part is a 1930s film produced by Ohio Fuel Gas Company showing the drilling of one of their gas wells using a standard derrick drilling rig from start to finish. As the film moves along quite rapidly, the pictorial review of the equipment being used, as shown in historic photographs in Part One, is key to understanding the scenes shown in the film.

During my several years of oil field experience before college at Marietta, I performed the exalted position of *tool dresser* on a cable rig. I learned and practiced the joys of dressing a drilling bit using a 16 pound sledge hammer. Thus I have personal

experience and great familiarity with the equipment presented in these scenes.

### AMERICANS AND THE ALLURE OF THE ATHABASCA OIL SANDS

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*It is the considered opinion of our group that if the North American continent is to produce the oil to meet its requirements in the years ahead, oil from the Athabasca area must, of necessity, play an important role. No nation can be long secure in this atomic age unless it be amply supplied with petroleum.*

Little world attention was directed to Alberta's oil sands when J. Howard Pew, Chairman of Sun Oil, Philadelphia, spoke these words at the opening ceremonies of the Great Canadian Oil Sands' plant north of Fort McMurray in September 1967. Today, in contrast, Alberta's oil sands deposits are widely known. The history of their development spans a period of over 100 years, and from the first attempts to extract petroleum from these massive deposits Americans have played a significant role. This paper examines American involvement in the early years of development from 1905 to 1930. Great Canadian Oil Sands has historic ties to the Athabasca oil sands dating back to these twenty-five years of historic development.

Little has been written about the entrepreneurs who laid the foundation for today's major industry, and the challenges they faced. An examination and analysis of the primary sources surviving for this period reveal that Great Britain was eager to have the Dominion of Canada develop these deposits and attempted to influence their development; but it was American expertise, technology and financial resources that played a more significant role in their actual development.

Individuals from California, Texas, Oklahoma, Washington, Colorado and Montana traveled to Alberta's hinterland, bringing with them their knowledge of the petroleum industry gained in the petroleum fields in the United States. They attempted to win the petroleum first by using conventional drilling methods. Once the nature of the deposits was better understood, the developers then looked for unconventional means for extracting the petroleum from the sands. Samples of the deposits were sent to Pittsburgh, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Colorado, California, Spokane, Seattle and Texas for analysis. Experimental separation plants were built in New York, New Jersey and Colorado to treat the oil sands and to determine if the processes could economically separate the petroleum from the sands. S. C. Ells, who worked with the Dominion Government's Department of Mines, carefully