

2012 INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE HISTORY OF THE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY  
HOUSTON, TEXAS, MARCH 8<sup>TH</sup> - MARCH 10<sup>TH</sup>, 2012

ABSTRACTS

**THE HISTORY OF CRUDE OIL EARTHEN STORAGE  
IN SOUTHEAST TEXAS, 1901-1930s.**

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Earthen oil storage was a common method of short-term lease and longer-term regional oil storage in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Most earthen storage use was for heavy oil storage and was common in areas of important heavy oil production—California, Arkansas, and the Gulf Coast of Texas and Louisiana. The best records and archival descriptions of U.S. earthen storage methods and procedures exist for southeast Texas. Here, earthen tanks or pits were used to store heavy crude oil (18° to 22° API) from 1901 until the mid-1930s. Most pits ranged in capacity from 25,000 to 350,000 barrels. Stored oil loss was from evaporation, pit seepage, and non-recoverable stable emulsion/tank bottoms. Typical losses by all means ranged from 8-10 % during the first year of storage, followed by longer-term losses of 3-5 %. Methods to reduce loss included trenches around pits to gather seepage oil, wooden roof construction over tanks, and improved emulsion treatment methods. By 1904, the Batson, Saratoga, Sour Lake and Spindletop field areas had about 18.8 million barrels of earthen storage capacity. The discovery of Humble Field in 1905 resulted in Humble becoming the largest earthen storage center with over 6 million barrels of oil stored here by early 1906. Some large oil field earthen storage facilities became longer-term tank farm storage for regional heavy crude production. Tank farm earthen storage gradually decreased during the 1920s and was abandoned by the mid-1930s. The post-1930s storage abandonment history varied from removing oil and wooden roofs only to various cleanup procedures and infilling of the pits. Regulatory cleanups, modern urban development and litigation have brought some of this history to the forefront.

**P. C. BOYLE (1846-1920) – *THE VOICE OF EARLY OIL***

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Patrick C. Boyle, usually known just as P. C. Boyle, an Irish immigrant from County Donegal, was born May 2, 1846. The year after his birth the Boyle family left their homeland and settled at Brady's Bend in Butler County, Pennsylvania. After attending the local schools, with the outbreak of war, at age 15 young Patrick enlisted in the cavalry and became a member of H Company, 54<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Volunteers. Following his successful service, Boyle returned to his home area and sought work in the now booming oil industry. Starting in 1868, he traveled the length and breadth of the region serving as day-laborer, roustabout, and pipeline worker. It was in this latter position that he built a reputation as an honest and skilled workman. From 1882-1885 he worked as an oil scout for the *Union Oil Company*. In this capacity Boyle's job was to essentially spy on any drilling operation not being run by his company and determine, often at great personal peril, the actual prospects, production, and general performance of the competitor wells. This was not the safest job in the oil fields. The knowledge gained by Boyle and his fellow scouts could protect his company from speculative trading at the local oil exchanges. And in addition to his spying activity, he also worked as a landsman purchasing leases and land for *Union Oil*.

However it was as a journalist, editor, and publisher that Boyle made his greatest contribution to the oil industry and for which he is remembered today. As early as 1875, Boyle was reporting on oil field activities for the Pittsburgh *Leader* and soon found that it was both lucrative and much safer to report on oil field activity than to work as a spy. Within a few years his byline was appearing in a number of papers, including the Millerstown *Herald*, the Petrolia *Free Press*, the Bradford *Era*, the Oil City *Derrick*, the Titusville *Herald*, and *Petroleum World*, all in Pennsylvania. And his byline also appeared in the Allegany Field of Western New York newspapers; the Olean *Herald* and Richburg *Echo*. By 1896 he was the owner of *The Derrick* and was president of *The Derrick*

*Publishing Company*. It was in his capacity as Editor/Owner of *The Derrick* that he began to gather and publish items such as production statistics, drilling activity and oil pricing from various oil exchanges. These statistics came not only from the Pennsylvania region, for he sent reporters to all new oil fields to gather such information. Thus *The Derrick* became known as the *Organ of Oil*. Such was the demand for these data, that he began to publish twice a week with *The Semi-Weekly Derrick* and had a circulation that covered nine states from Pennsylvania to Maine and in 1898 it was named the largest semi-weekly paper in those nine states. In the same year Boyle published *The Derrick's Hand-Book of Petroleum* which was a chronology of oil history, production records, oil exchange prices, pipeline shipments, and biographical information on prominent people in the oil industry. This was the first of several such volumes which gathered all these data in one location and proved to be a valuable source for oil commentary of the day and has provided the statistics needed for the study of oil industry economics.

As the oil industry shifted to the Gulf Coast in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, so did P. C. Boyle and in 1910 he purchased the publication *Oil Investors Journal* based in Beaumont, Texas. But again following the movement of oil exploration, he quickly moved the journal to Tulsa, Oklahoma, which was the new center of the oil boom. He renamed his publication *The Oil and Gas Journal* and formed a new publishing company, *Petroleum Publishing Company*. Boyle changed this twice-monthly publication into a weekly and gathered his most experienced reporters from Pennsylvania to run it. By the time of Boyle's death in 1920, *The Oil and Gas Journal* had a world-wide reputation for fairness and accuracy and was the bible of the industry. Truly Patrick C. Boyle was the true *Voice of Oil*, and in one sense he still is, for in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century *The Oil and Gas Journal*, and its sister publications, remain among the most widely read oil industry publications in the world.