

Through the case history of Everett Lee DeGolyer, this paper aims to foster a debate on the role of the oil companies in financing the search for oil-bearing land and the benefit this search brought to the scientific community concerning petroleum geology.

Accepted, but not presented

THE LITTLE REFINERY THAT COULD

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Established in 1881, the American Refining Group's Bradford, Pennsylvania refinery is the oldest continuously operated refinery in the United States and the oldest in the world still refining crude oil. It is a success story, a celebration of achievement that has developed over 133 years of uncompromising commitment to quality, devotion to details, and an unwavering entrepreneurial spirit. It is the story of generations of people whose ancestors started this refinery with the pioneering spirit that has made this such a great country. Today Bradford, Pennsylvania, may be known only on the Weather Channel as the coldest spot in the nation, but long before the Weather Channel even existed, Bradford was the energy capital of the United States. Oil was not discovered in Bradford until five years after the first commercial well was drilled in Titusville in 1859, seventy miles west of Bradford. The Bradford oil fields however proved to be among the most prolific of the early finds. In 1881 over 83% of the crude oil in the United States came from Bradford. Much has been written over the years about the Bradford fields and the explosive growth of the oil industry in the region around the turn of the 20th century. The presentation will touch on the highlights of the past 133 years of the Refinery operations; especially the early history illustrated with many rare photographs.

ROBBING PETER TO PAY PAUL: A TALE OF TWO FIELDS

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In July 1884, a group of oilmen from Bradford, PA, fronted by William Kelly completed what they had hoped would be a producing oil well on the John Zimmerly farm in Hopewell Township 1.5 miles west of the present-day town of Aliquippa, Beaver County, PA. The well came is as a roarer, a gas well under high pressure. This well opened the New Sheffield gas field, and soon more wells followed, some with open flows exceeding 15 million cubic feet per day (Mmcf/gpd). Throughout the late 1800s, New Sheffield field expanded to both the northeast and southwest into adjacent townships, eventually becoming about 11 miles long and 4 miles wide at its widest. This made it the largest and most important gas field in the county, supplying natural gas to both residential and industrial customers in the Ohio and Beaver River valleys as far away as Youngstown, OH, and New Cumberland, WV. The Hundred-Foot sand at the top of the Upper Devonian Venango Formation was the primary reservoir. Near the southeastern edge of the field the gas was reported to have been oily. Overproduction due to a spate of new pipelines and an increase in consumption led to the field's beginning to decline around 1886, and by 1905 it was basically abandoned.

Meanwhile, in 1885, Kelly and his associates drilled a well on the McNamee farm in Hopewell Township on the southeast flank of the gas field and discovered oil. This opened the Shannopin oil field (sometimes called the Gringo field), which quickly became the center of attention in Beaver County. In August 1886, a well on the Marks farm at the little village of Gringo flowed 400 barrels of oil per day (BOPD). This was followed by two wells on the A. P. Morrow farm in the same area that flowed 2,160 and 1,080 BOPD, respectively, putting the Shannopin field solidly on the map. Because of its location near the best production, Gringo became an instant boomtown; Shannopin (now called South Heights) also flourished as a result of its location as both an Ohio River landing and a station on the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad. Production from the main part of the field initially was strong, with wells producing as much as 400 or 500 BOPD from the Hundred Foot sand. Overproduction and the resulting lack of rock pressure, however, resulted in the field beginning to decline as early as 1889. Repressuring of the reservoir by injecting natural gas began in 1913, which tripled production in some wells, but