



Pioneer Oil Museum of New York, Inc.

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Pioneer Oil Museum of New York
Box 332
Bolivar, NY 14715

PIONEER OIL MUSEUM A HIT WITH VISITORS

The Pioneer Oil Museum of New York, Inc. opened its doors again last year to hundreds of visitors from many different states as far away as Alaska. An estimated 600 people visited the museum last year. This is an increase of nearly 50% from the previous year, (and attendance in 2001 doubled that of 2000). Needless to say, the Board of Directors has been very pleased.

The Board has been thrilled by the public's response to changes implemented in the past two years. Visitors from far and wide have complimented us on our attempts to save the legacy of the local petroleum industry. From members of the

current petroleum workforce to citizens of the local Bolivar community, reaction to the changes has been nothing but complimentary.

Many people stopped by last year to donate artifacts and photographs. While it would be impossible to list all these donations here, please understand that we appreciate all your efforts and thoughts. That being said, the museum is always looking for more donations of objects and photographs. One of our goals (listed elsewhere in this newsletter) is to scan all of our irreplaceable photographs and save them to computer disk. We would also like to have enough photos and documents to eventually have enough material to organize rotating exhibits (which we have already done to a lesser extent).

A TREASURE-TROVE FROM THE SHANER ESTATE

While in the process of selling the office building of Shaner Development Corporation (formerly of Bolivar and now of State College, Pennsylvania) on Wellsville Street, CEO Lance Shaner invited the Board to search through an immense quantity of old family records dating from early in this century through the 1970's.

Our search led us to old contracts, lease records, supply costs, etc. While none of these documents would be considered valuable to most people, to the Pioneer Oil Museum they are a gold mine. These items are more evidence how the oil industry affected the lives of everyone in this area. All local businesses were somehow affected by the "Black Gold" so readily available in this valley. Many thanks to the Shaners for allowing us to have these items.

Preserving the
Oil Heritage of
Southwestern
New York and
Northwestern
Pennsylvania

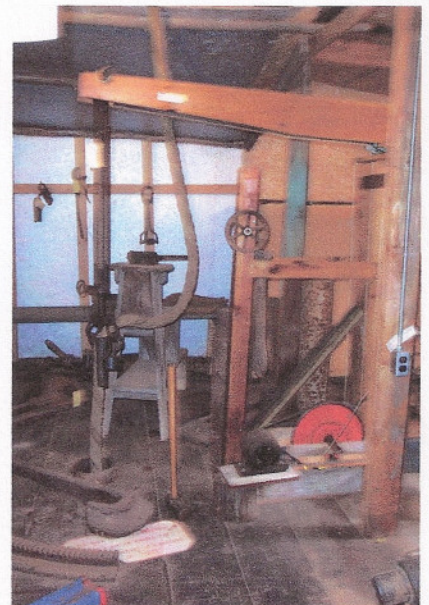
MUSEUM ACCOMPLISHMENTS: 2002

Listed below are a few of our accomplishments for the past year:

- Since space is so limited in our present setting, we cleaned out a storage closet (which in the process we found was an old bathroom) and converted it into a replica oil field lease office. Some of the items in the office are authentic records from the 1930's (such as a 1930 calendar) and more recent paperwork from the 1990's. We also have a pocket watch found last summer on the old Kingsbury lease near Richburg and several items from the Trio Oil Company lease outside Bolivar. Finally, we have gone to such extremes with our "realism" as to include cigar stubs in the memory of Frank Hungerford (thanks to Bob MacDonnell for this).
- With the help and enthusiasm of Jerry Hungerford Buffington Dunn, we began to spruce up outside the museum. We cleaned and painted some of the engines stored outside. Then we cleaned out a huge amount of junk that had accumulated over the years. (Thanks to the Bolivar village crew for hauling this away.)
- After cleaning, we were able to pull out an old dynamite wagon that had been donated to the museum some 20 years ago. The wagon is in desperate need of overhaul, but we were able to get a coat of wood preservative on it, as well as get some concrete pads under the wheels to prevent them from sinking into the ground.
- The annual Southwestern Firemen's Convention was held in Bolivar this past summer. The museum stayed open for extended hours to provide a respite for visitors. We also searched our records and found photos of firemen's conventions and parades from years past. We were able to exhibit these photos as well as a large number of firemen-related artifacts such as ribbons and "ancient" extinguishers.
- An old gasoline pump that had been donated to the museum years ago and that had sat outside rusting was refurbished by Dan Davison Sr. and Jr. They donated their time and did a beautiful job restoring this to its former luster. (We have more plans for them to restore another pump that was recently donated to us by Ted Schultz.)
- We received a "Rural Schools Grant" through New York State. This was done under the auspices of Bolivar-Richburg Central School. With this money we were able to buy a computer and peripherals. Eventually we hope to purchase a program called "Past Perfect" that museums use to catalog and inventory their artifacts and donations. This software is very expensive, but we feel it is very important, so that we can begin to account for all the items in the museum's possession.
- One of our board members, Steve Yehl, began to assemble many of the museum's photos of oil dignitaries which he organized into a display on one wall. Also included in this group are many photos of old oil producer's meetings and conventions. Eventually this wall may form part of our "Wall of Fame" that is mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter.



We are searching for information about the old dynamite wagon that was donated to the Pioneer Oil Museum many years ago by Sherm Lyons. We need to get information pertaining to the wagon's parts, how it worked, and materials needed to produce the dynamite. We are interested in literature, first-hand stories, photos, anything related to this one-of-a-kind piece of history. As soon as we get more information, we can begin to restore this relic and then get it properly covered outdoors to protect it from the elements. Please call Ray Payne at (585) 928-1344 if you can help us.



HOT DAYS AND NIGHTS IN OIL VALLEY

April 27, 1881 marked the end of quiet times in the Bolivar-Richburg valley. With the shooting of the Richburg discovery well, life was never to be the same again. Within days hundreds of people began to flood into this valley of some 400 industrious citizens. Strangers from as far away as Pittsburgh streamed in by every way imaginable - on foot, horseback, and in buckboards. Within ten months there were an estimated 4500 - 5000 fortune seekers in Bolivar with another 7000 hunkered down in Richburg. They were all here for one reason and one reason only - to get rich quickly! They had "Black Gold Fever" running through their veins!

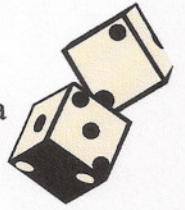
At times the valley population skyrocketed in just a few days, while at other times small streams of newcomers tickled in daily. Along with the honest, hard-working carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, and other assorted workers who were here to earn a living and provide services for the new arrivals, another breed of individual arrived. Many of these people were short on honesty and even shorter on moral behavior.

Many of the new arrivals hoped to make their money during daylight hours by successfully hitting oil, but many desired their profits (or pleasures) be earned during the darkest hours of the night. Gamblers, whiskey peddlers, card sharks, and other less-than-reputable characters appeared on the scene to make their mark.

Richburg displayed more of the "Wild West" flair than its neighbor to the south. That settlement

employed five policemen and three justices of the peace to keep order. But, by no means was Bolivar a garden of Eden. A "Red Light District" sprang up along Railroad Avenue with an occasional establishment found on Second and Third Streets. There one could enter gambling dens, bordellos, and bars. Three dozen saloons and one dozen billiard parlors could be found between the two communities.

It was declared that "decent citizenry dared not venture there after darkness for fear of life and limb." Violence was not uncommon from drunken bare-knuckle fights to switchblade attacks. A local newspaper, the *Oil Echo*, described a combatant (sporting a pair of black eyes) by noting, "His eyes were dressed in mourning."



The gambling dens also provided a form of entertainment. Dice, keno, and poker were some of the more popular games played in these establishments. Many an oil field worker lost the fortune he had made that day by playing games of chance at night. For anyone who became too distraught over losing his money, there was a ready supply of "ladies" who were ready, willing, and able to provide comfort and compassion (of course for a nominal fee).

Many of these establishments lasted until a number of years after the boom. Yet over the years until the present day on more than one occasion a visitor has noted that Bolivar still has that "outlaw" atmosphere.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Memorial Day - Labor Day
Monday - Friday 10:00 - 4:00 PM

Saturdays and Sundays by appointment only.
Call Ray Payne at 585-928-1344 to schedule a tour.

Pioneer Oil Days - June 20-22

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The museum is staffed by volunteers, which dictates the hours we are open. We had a wonderful group of volunteers last year, but we need more volunteers, so that we can keep the museum open longer hours. To be a volunteer you only need to give up a three-hour block one day a week.

Please call Ray Payne at 928-1344 if you would be willing to donate your time.

Reminiscing with Ray by Ray Payne

Every engine had a different sound, and after you lived long enough, and one of them wasn't running, you'd know it when you walked out in the morning because you could hear it. If there wasn't any pressure for an engine, it would run faster. Every one of them had a different sound.

You'd walk out in the morning and there'd be all sorts of sounds. You'd know whose leases they were. Reelands had a lease at the end of Belmont Street in Bolivar. You just can't imagine how many engines were running around here.

On the upper part of Olive Street there was a pressure plant sitting close to the road on the hill side of the street. The concrete block is still there from the pressure plant. There was a big water plant off to the side, usually running over. That was the pressure plant.

Clear over in back of my father's place on the top of Olive Street were all kinds of wells. Way back over the hill the lease went. In front toward the road the lease was Reynolds and Chipman. We used to get gas off that lease and have it pumped from my father's lease to where my wife and I lived down Olive Street.



Photo above - dynamite wagon located outside museum (see "help" on page two); right - gasoline pump refurbished by Dan Davison Sr. and Jr.



NY STATE OIL PRODUCERS' DONATIONS FUND "WALL OF FAME"

The New York State Oil Producers recently donated \$250 in the memory of Gordon Hahn and another \$250 in the name of William "Jack" Plants. The Pioneer Oil Museum will use these donations to initiate development of a "Wall of Fame" in the museum. Our hope is to include a framed photograph of each man along with biographical data.

The museum's board would like to incorporate these new donations along with our current data and photographs to expand this exhibit. Donations to the museum in the name of significant contributors in the local oil industry are appreciated.

MUSEUM GOALS & WISH LIST

1. Purchase fireproof safes and files to store irreplaceable photographs and documents.
2. Scan photos and documents to computer disk to preserve and protect.
3. Continue to improve Hungerford Room and Wall of Fame

THANKS TO:

Ray Payne and Dick Fitch - great job as always
Museum volunteers - we wouldn't be open without you
Ed Majot
Terry Collins
Village of Bolivar crew
Jerry Hungerford Dunn
Bolivar-Richburg Central School
NY State Oil Producers' Association
Dave Evans

YOUR HELP IS GREATLY NEEDED!

For the last two years we have asked for your assistance in reviving the museum. Your help in this renaissance has been greatly appreciated. One can certainly see the improvements that have taken place. Our only source of income is through donations and small voluntary admittance fees that are asked at the door of the museum.

We applied for a significant grant from New York State that we had expected to receive, but due to the economic situation in the state and the post 9-11 results, this funding source has dried up. This grant would have allowed us to make important structural and safety changes to the museum and to our artifact/photo collection.

For this reason we must again ask for your help. Please donate to this annual fund-drive and make us part of your yearly donations. Keeping your hard-earned money in the museum guarantees that it will be spent locally on projects that enhance our community treasure. Our goals are listed on the previous page, so please contribute to one of the categories of membership. Without your help, the museum will not be able to continue to make the upgrades we have done the last two years.

FUND DRIVE

Oil Baron	\$501 or more	___
Shooter	\$101-500	___
Wildcatter	\$51-100	___
Roustabout	\$26-50	___
Well Plugger	\$25 or less	___

Checks can be made payable to:

Pioneer Oil Museum of New York, Inc.
PO Box 332
Bolivar, NY 14715

All contributions are tax deductible.

