**A True History of Oil and Gas Development**E. R. Crain, P.Eng.  
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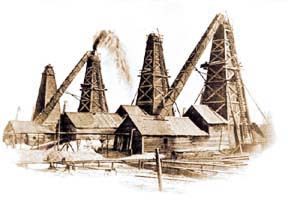
**INTRODUCTION**The traditional view of the oil industry is that it started in the USA in 1859. Not true, I'm afraid.  
  
The oil seeps at Baku (in present-day Azerbaijan) flowed freely centuries before year 1. They played a major role around 600 BC in the Zoroastrian religion of Persia and India. Uses of petroleum are mentioned in the Old Testament of the Bible. Chinese and Japanese writings that predate the first millennium by as much as 900 years describe the use of natural gas and oil from natural flows, seeps, and hand dug wells. Credit for the first drilled oil well goes to the Chinese in the year 347 BC.

Sumerians burned oil in pans for lighting as early as 4500 BC. Oil lamps appeared around 500 BC. A town near Grenoble France had natural gas street lamps in the year 1100. Oil streetlights appeared in Cordoba around 900, London in 1414, and Paris in 1524.

**EARLY DISCOVERIES AROUND THE WORLD**Sir Thomas Shirley presented a paper to the Royal Society in 1658 on natural gas flows in Britain. In 1739, V. I. Veitbrecht published an article "About Oil" in the Russian scientific magazine "Primechaniya na Vedomosti" where he described the Baku area oil wells and provided a plan of the oil and gas fields. This may be the first technical paper with a reservoir description.

Coal-gas (manufactured gas) dates back to 1726 in England. Oil was extracted from oil sands in Pechelbron France in 1735. Creation of coal-oil by distillation of coal and oil shales occurred between 1781 and 1820 in England, France, and Germany.

In 1626 Joseph de la Roche d'Allion, a Jesuit priest from France based at Trois Rivieres in Quebec, reported oil seeps in what is now New York state. Peter Pond was the first non-native to report the discovery of oil in Canada in 1778 at the Athabasca oil sands in northeast Alberta.   
  
A Canadian, Dr. Abraham Gesner, developed the distillation of kerosene from crude oil in 1846. Kerosene helped reduce the use of whale oil for illumination. Some claim the whale oil problem had already been overcome by manufactured gas and oil from coal, but the two events certainly helped the "Save the Whales" campaign. The Americans give Benjamin Sillian credit for the invention of kerosene in 1855, but he was at least third in line after Gesner and a Polish druggist named Ignacy Lukasiewicz (1853). Coal-oil and kerosene are the same product - just different sources.

Azerbaijan claims the first drilled well in the modern era at Bibi-Heybat, a suburb of Baku on the Caspian Sea, in 1846. The first drilled oil wells in Europe were located near Bucharest in Romania in 1857 but Poland makes the same claim for 1854 at Bobrka.

The completion of the first commercial oil well in North America occurred in 1858 at Oil Springs, Lambton County, Ontario and was quickly followed by more oil at Petrolia, Ontario. The man's name was James Miller Williams. This was a hand dug well and the first drilled wells came in 1862. Some of these flowed up to 7000 barrels per day, often before anyone thought to build a storage pit or tank. Some of the early oil flowed down creeks to be wasted in the Great Lakes, but it had been doing that for eons before, from natural seepage.

There was an Oil Springs and a Petrolia in Pennsylvania too, but these wells came a year later (Edwin Drake, Titusville, 1859).  There's a Petrolia in Texas, and another in California, not to mention the park in Baku set up by the Nobel brothers. It gets confusing.    
  
It would appear that Drake's well placed the USA sixth in line in the sweepstakes for who drilled the first oil well, after China, Azerbaijan, Poland, Romania, and Canada. Drake's well, drilled to a depth of 69.5 feet, pumped oil at the inconsequential rate of 8 to 10 gallons a day. Some historians claim this is the USA's first commercial oil well. Drake himself never drilled another well but his discovery started a drilling rush in the area. His derrick burned down a few months later, killing nine men. He became an oil buyer and then a stock broker on Wall Street specializing in, you guessed it, oil stocks.   
 

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See following pages.

