

INTERNATIONAL OIL HERITAGE CONFERENCE & TOUR REPORT



THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
CONSERVATION OF INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

Edited by James Douet



1861
FAIRBANK OIL

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FAIRBANK OIL FIELDS & THE COUNTY OF LAMBTON

SARNIA / OIL SPRINGS, ONTARIO CANADA
August 25-27, 2022

CONFERENCE PARTNERS



BACKGROUND

The Oil Springs National Historic Site encompasses both the Charles Fairbank Oil Properties Ltd. (Fairbank Oil) and the Oil Museum of Canada (OMC), which is owned and operated by The County of Lambton. Designated as a Canadian National Historic Site in 1925, it is an evolving industrial landscape that offers one of the earliest and most comprehensive illustrations of nineteenth century oil technology in the world. Poland and Romania established oil industries slightly before Oil Springs.

The Fairbank Oil property, founded in 1861, continues to produce oil from the majority of its 350 wells with original extraction systems and technologies. These systems have been in use for more than 150 years. The Oil Museum of Canada property includes the 1858 site of the first commercial oil well in North America. The museum is dedicated to interpreting the discovery and extraction of oil. It also shows the region's influence on the oil industry that emerged during the second half of the 1800s and spread through the world as a transformative new source of energy.



PHOTO: View of Canada's First Gusher, 1862, The Shaw Well. Fairbank Oil Fields.

Over the last several years, The County of Lambton has worked in collaboration with Fairbank Oil to advocate for the inclusion of the Fairbank oil field and OMC properties on Canada's Tentative List for World Heritage Sites, with the long-term goal of inscription on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) World Heritage List.

A joint submission was made to Parks Canada in 2017, but the nomination was not accepted on the basis that the site did not adequately demonstrate international reach and influence.

Though unsuccessful in 2017, the partners plan to apply again when the Tentative List reopens in several years.

THEMATIC STUDY & INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

To respond to this feedback from Parks Canada, the partners requested that The International Committee for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage (TICCIH) produce a thematic study. Fairbank Oil contributed funds for the writing of the study. TICCIH, along with the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), provide technical advice to World Heritage.

In 2019, TICCIH published *The Heritage of the Oil Industry* with 16 countries contributing to the study. Within the publication are 11 case studies from around the globe. These include Oil Springs, Alberta's Turner Valley Gas Plant, Tapline in Saudia Arabia, and Baku in Azerbaijan, to name a few.

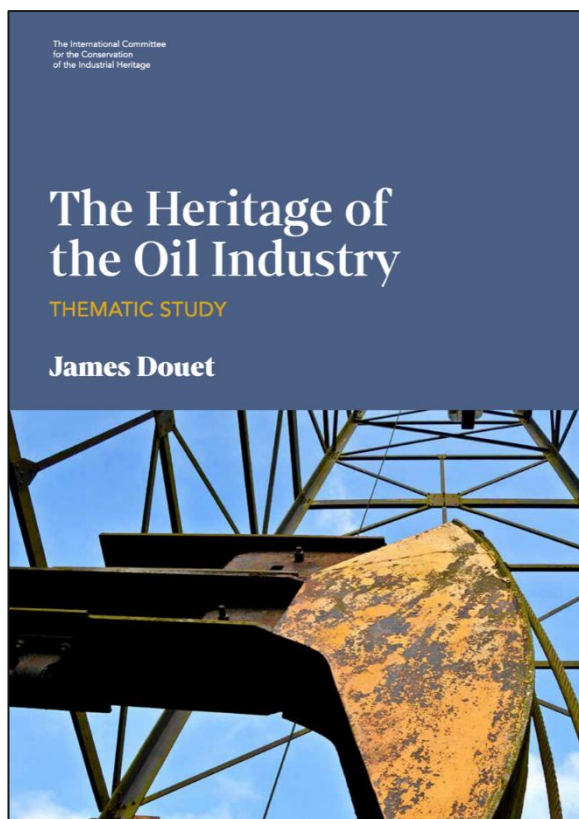


PHOTO: Cover, *The Heritage of the Oil Industry*.

As a follow-up to the study, TICCIH partnered with Fairbank Oil Fields and The County of Lambton to host a three-day conference in Sarnia and Oil Springs in August of 2022.

The first two days were held in Sarnia with papers presented on August 26, followed by an in-depth tour on August 27 that included the Oil Museum of Canada and Fairbank Oil with brief stops in nearby Petrolia.

Fairbank Oil Fields and The County of Lambton worked closely with TICCIH organizers overseas in coordinating the conference.

The conference was made intentionally small, limited to roughly 30 people who were chosen for their expertise. Six delegates participated from Europe, four from United States, and several Canadian experts attended from three provinces.

The tour featured Fairbank Oil Fields and its complete system of authentic technology from the 1860s, as well as the museum and 1858 site at OMC, where oil was first commercially developed in North America. Few global experts are aware of the importance of Oil Springs.

This conference brought together international heritage and oil experts, historians, preservationists and representatives of conservation agencies, to discuss the most significant

infrastructure, built heritage and landscapes related to worldwide petroleum production, and to consider the best ways to recognize and safeguard it.

The objectives of the meeting were to present the TICCIH thematic study on the oil industry (which can be downloaded from the Thematic Studies and Published Reports page at ticcih.org), and to discuss the nomination of sites to the UNESCO World Heritage List, including a possible serial nomination to involve multiple sites.



PHOTO: Conference participants begin their tour of Fairbank Oil Fields.

PARTICIPANTS

The list of international participants in attendance for the conference and tour included the following heritage and oil experts, historians, preservationists and representatives of conservation agencies:

- **Dr. Miles Oglethorpe** - TICCIH President (SCOTLAND)
- **James Douet** - Industrial archaeologist, The Heritage of the Oil Industry thematic study author (SPAIN)
- **Dr. Bogusław Szmygin** - Lublin University of Technology, Bobkra (POLAND)
- **Susan Beates** - Drake Museum curator, Pennsylvania (USA)
- **Wendy Shearer** - Cultural Heritage Specialist, author Lambton County Oil Heritage District Conservation Study & Plan (CANADA)
- **Gary May** - Historian, author of *Crude Genius*, also *Hard Oiler!* (CANADA)

- **Dr. Christophe Rivet** - ICOMOS Canada president, leading consultant in Canada's world heritage program
- **Dinu Bumbaru** - Policy Director of Heritage Montreal, (CANADA)
- **Dr. Bode Morin** - TICCIH board member, administrator Anthracite Heritage Museum & Eckley's Miners' Village, Pennsylvania (USA)
- **Michał Górecki** - Ignacy Łukasiewicz Oil and Gas Industry Museum, (POLAND)
- **Charles Fairbank** - Fairbank Oil Fields president, Oil Springs (CANADA)
- **Patricia McGee** - Conference steering committee, Fairbank Oil Fields, (CANADA)
- **Ian McGillivray** - ICOMOS International Wood Committee, TICCIH, ICOMOS Canada (CANADA)
- **Mary Glendinning** - TICCIH, IWC, ICOMOS Canada (CANADA)
- **Beth Hanna** - Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Heritage Trust (CANADA)
- **Ron Van Horne** - CAO, County of Lambton (CANADA)
- **Andrew Meyer** - General Manager, Cultural Services Division, County of Lambton (CANADA)
- **Laurie Webb** - Manager Museums, Gallery and Archives, County of Lambton (CANADA)
- **Erin Dee-Richard** - Curator/Supervisor, Oil Museum of Canada (CANADA)
- **Colleen Inglis** - former Archivist for Fairbank Oil Fields (CANADA)
- **Kiersten Vuorimaki** - National Trust, Regeneration project manager (CANADA)
- **Jeffrey Spencer** - Petroleum History Institute, Vice President. Texas (USA)
- **Linda Spencer** - Guest, bio-scientist (USA)
- **Prof. Michelle Hamilton**, Western University MA history professor, London (CANADA)
- **Barbara Olejarz** - Museum Oil and Gas Industry director (POLAND)
- **Ryszard Rabski** - Bobkra Foundation president, (POLAND)
- **Michael Knecht** - Drake Museum site administrator, Pennsylvania (USA)
- **Rick Green** - Petroleum History Institute, owner of Canadian Rockies Earth Science Resource Centre, Canmore (CANADA)
- **Dr. Rosa Gasol Fargas** - Guest (SPAIN)

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

After a welcoming reception and dinner on August 25, the conference opened on August 26 with a welcome from TICCIH President Dr. Miles Oglethorpe, who spoke of the historical significance of oil and the challenges in celebrating its influence in the context of climate change. Dr. Oglethorpe addressed the goal of the conference in defining a path for the pursuit of world heritage designation, while also recognizing that the partnerships generated through the conference have the potential to be as impactful as inscription itself.



PHOTO: James Douet welcomes conference participants.

JAMES DOUET EVALUATING THE GLOBAL HERITAGE OF OIL PRODUCTION; THE TICCIH THEMATIC STUDY

James Douet opened the conference as its first keynote presenter, providing an overview of the TICCIH thematic study on oil heritage he authored. It examined global narratives in oil heritage and the history of the industry (including the stages of oil industry development), its main advances and impacts, and the prioritization of what surviving industrial material should be preserved.

Douet noted the great disjuncture between the historical importance of the industry and its surviving preserved heritage. He cited the rapid evolution of the industry, inherent issues with early industrial materials, and the limited capacity or need to preserve them as factors that have limited preservation efforts. The importance of surviving materials from the early period

of settlements associated with oil production was identified, citing the authenticity and integrity of Fairbank Oil Fields at Oil Springs as an example that must be preserved.

DR. BOGUSŁAW SZMYGIN

PROPOSAL FOR WORLD HERITAGE DESIGNATION OF EARLY OIL SITES

The presentation delivered by Dr. Szmygin of the Lublin University of Technology and ICOMOS Poland introduced a proposal for a serial nomination of early oil sites. Dr. Szmygin began by providing a general background on the concept of inscription of oil sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the conditions and benefits of inscription, and the history of oil sites as the subject of inscription. Dr. Szmygin outlined the characteristics of Bóbrka, Poland and its Museum of Oil and Gas Industry as a candidate for inclusion on the World Heritage List. He believes it has the potential to meet World Heritage's criteria for Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

Dr. Szmygin noted that industrial oil extraction and processing began at Bóbrka in 1854, and has continued for more than 160 years with elements of the first equipment of the mine preserved such as shaft equipment, towers and production equipment. Dr. Szmygin contends that the site also meets four of the six criteria identified by UNESCO for cultural sites by exhibiting an important interchange of human values (ii), bearing a unique and exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition (iii), illustrating a significant stage in human history (iv) and is directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions (vi). Further, Dr. Szmygin argues that the site meets the requirements of authenticity and integrity, and that it is properly defined, protected and managed.

Referencing the stages of oil industry development identified by James Douet, Dr. Szmygin noted that the current Tentative List of UNESCO World Heritage Sites does not include any sites relevant to the period of pre-industrial production (1840s-1860s). It only includes one proposal that is related to oil heritage - an oil field complex in Bahrain with a complex of buildings where oil production began in the 1930s. Dr. Szmygin stressed that the gap between recognition for the period of pre-industrial production and global petroleum production must be filled. He proposed a serial nomination that will represent several sites related to oil extraction and processing from 1850-1870, the period where industrial oil extraction began. This serial nomination could include the Oil Springs and Bóbrka sites, and potentially others. He concluded by stating that a commitment to such a joint process and collaboration between partners is necessary to investigate the merits of a serial nomination further.



PHOTO: (Left to Right) Dr. Miles Oglethorpe, Dr. Christophe Rivet, Dr. Bogusław Szmygin and Dinu Bumbaru participate in the panel discussion on World Heritage.

SUSAN BEATES
***CONSERVATION AT THE DRAKE WELL MUSEUM IN TITUSVILLE,
PENNSYLVANIA***

For her conference presentation, Susan Beates' historic images and artifacts provided a fascinating history of the Drake Well site in Titusville, Pennsylvania. Edwin L. Drake traveled to Titusville, Pennsylvania, in 1857 as an agent of the Seneca Oil Company of Connecticut. His mission was to find and produce crude oil in quantities that would make it commercially successful for refining into kerosene. With the help of salt well driller and blacksmith William (Uncle Billy) Smith, Drake adapted and used salt well technology to drill for oil. On August 27, 1859, the Drake Well struck oil at 69.5 feet, contributing to the emergence of an international industry that has forever shaped our modern world. Drake Well Museum and Park preserves and interprets the site of the Drake Well, educating the public about the oil and natural gas industries in Pennsylvania, their founding, development, and growth into global enterprises.

WENDY SHEARER
***LAMBTON COUNTY'S OIL HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT STUDY
AND PLAN***

Wendy Shearer, author of Lambton County's Oil Heritage District Study and Plan, presented on the historic oil fields of Lambton County and the process related to the designation of the oil fields as a Provincial Heritage Conservation District. Shearer outlined the Ontario Heritage

Act, the planning process and the characteristics of a Heritage Conservation District. She also noted the issues and challenges encountered with the Oil Springs site. She gave a historical chronology of the site and discussed the heritage value of the oil fields as an evolved continuing cultural heritage landscape area that is valued by the community. Heritage attributes and character defining elements were reviewed, as well as the objectives of the Heritage Conservation District.

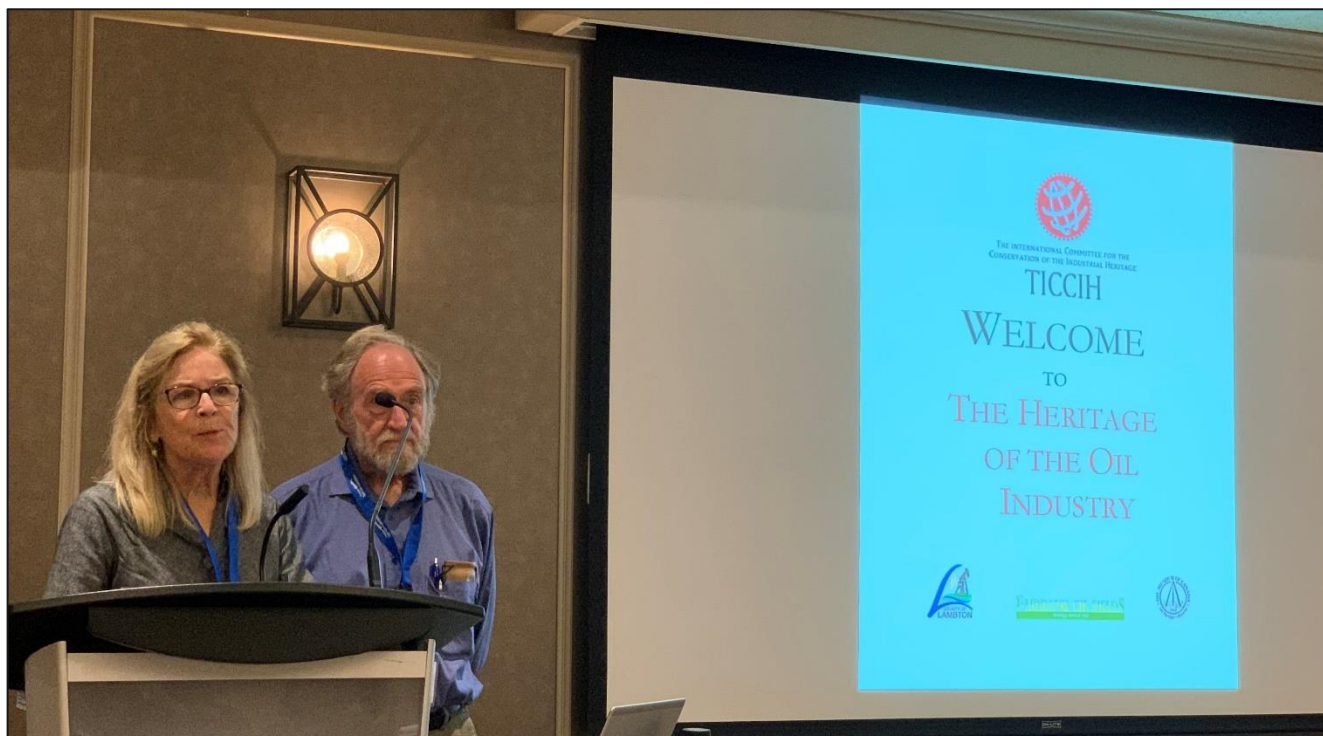


PHOTO: Pat McGee and Charlie Fairbank of Fairbank Oil Fields welcome delegates to the TICCIH Conference on The Heritage of the Oil Industry.

GARY MAY

THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSFER OF CANADIAN OIL TECHNOLOGY

Author and historian Gary May provided a presentation on the international transfer of Canadian oil technology, and discussed the parallels between the early oil extraction technology used at the sites found in Oil Springs, Canada and Bóbrka, Poland. May described his extensive research into the international reach and influence of Lambton County's International Drillers who transferred oil extraction technology and industrial innovations around the world. In particular, May focused on the exploits of William Henry McGarvey (1843-1914), one of the most successful "foreign drillers" from Petrolia, 12km north of Oil Springs. McGarvey built a highly successful petroleum company in Galicia (now southeastern Poland and western Ukraine), and is the subject of May's latest book, *Crude Genius: The Making of an International Oil Baron*, published in August of 2022.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS: CONSERVATION & WORLD HERITAGE

The afternoon of the conference was dedicated to two panel discussions. The first focused on conservation, chaired by James Douet, with panelists Dr. Bode Morin, Wendy Shearer, and Michał Górecki. Dr. Miles Oglethorpe led the second discussion on World Heritage, and included Dr. Christophe Rivet, Dr. Bogusław Szmygin and Dinu Bumbaru.

The panel discussions were introduced by Dr. Rivet and Dinu Bumbaru, who provided context to the concept of a serial or “trans-national” nomination and the opportunities and challenges associated with this approach. They also discussed the contemporary moral judgement that is placed on the oil industry, often without consideration of its tremendous impact on the human experience. Further, it was recognized that ICOMOS needs to develop tools to recognize the cultural value of natural resource extraction, as such activity is not permitted for World Heritage Sites.

Rivet suggested that the debate surrounding natural resource extraction is ongoing, and that sites tied to the industry such as Oil Springs must focus on the period of early extraction and experimentation and the integrity of these systems in pursuing world heritage status. He emphasized that the original spirit of endeavor, invention and human ingenuity is still very much present at the site, referencing the remarkable preservation of the jerker-line system and its “proximity to the human hand”.



PHOTO: Dinu Bumbaru and Dr. Christophe Rivet introduce the panel discussions.

While it was made clear that active natural resource extraction is currently a “no-go policy” in the context of World Heritage, conference participants contend that a compelling argument can be made for the advantages of responsible oil extraction at such sites. The continued operation of Fairbank Oil Fields, for example, contributes to the preservation of authentic early industrial technology, provides demonstrative and educational value, and provides essential financial support to ensure the ongoing management and sustainability of the site.

The panel discussion concluded with participants adding their thoughts on the concept of a trans-national serial nomination. Bumbaru noted that the World Heritage list describes the human endeavour, and that this must include oil. However, to effectively communicate the importance of oil in the context of contemporary moral judgement placed on the oil industry, the narrative must focus on the artisanal skill of oil extraction and how this innovation was ultimately transformative to human nature.

It was noted that Canada’s Tentative List will not reopen for nominations until at least 2027, providing an opportunity for the potential partners of a serial nomination to collaborate and align management plans with common actions and activities to ensure a strong application. Dr. Oglethorpe concluded with a summary of the conference proceedings, underscoring the links between the Polish and Canadian early oil sites and the importance of ensuring the protection of these industrial heritage landscapes.



PHOTO: Conference participants attend a dinner following the presentations and panel discussions.

CONFERENCE TOUR

On the morning of August 27, conference participants boarded a coach bus to tour the City of Sarnia, starting at the Bluewater Bridge (twin-span international bridge across the St. Clair River that links Port Huron, Michigan, United States, and Point Edward, Ontario, Canada), and proceeding to a driving tour of some of the local petro-chemical industries, including refineries and chemical plants that produce gasoline, synthetic rubbers, and other materials.

The tour proceeded to the Village of Oil Springs, stopping at Fairbank Oil Fields and the Oil Museum of Canada, concluding with a visit to Petrolia to visit the Baines Machine Shop & Repair Works and Black Gold Brewery.

FAIRBANK OIL FIELDS, OIL SPRINGS, *founded 1861*

Fairbank Oil's 650 acres have a preserved, authentic and comprehensive oil production system of several different eras. Founded by Charlie Fairbank's great-grandfather, Fairbank Oil is fully functioning, producing roughly 24,000 barrels of oil annually from its 350 wells, the majority of them using historic technology. This technology includes drilling, extracting oil and supplying power with six rigs and transferring the power through the jerker line system. Storage, brine separation and collection are part of the production system. Fairbank Oil is also the site of Canada's first gusher; the Shaw Well of 1862.



PHOTO: Charlie Fairbank (far right) and Pat McGee (centre) provide an explanation of the oil tools and technology used for generations at Fairbank Oil Fields.

The Three-Pole Derricks - Keeping the Wells in Good Condition

Oil wells require regular maintenance. From the 1860s to the 1950s, this was done in Oil Springs by constructing three-pole wooden derricks over each well. Cables and pulleys linked a team of horses to the three-pole derricks and as the horses pulled forward as they walked around the derrick, they lifted pipes and rods out of the well so the oil men could be repair or replace them. These inexpensive derricks were made from ash trees, which grew abundantly. The hundreds of derricks filled the landscape and in the 1950s were replaced with portable pulling machines, usually pulled by a tractor. To mark the site of the Shaw gusher and the nearby Bradley gusher of 1862, Fairbank Oil built replicas. Fairbank Oil also has the last remaining original three-pole derrick but it is not easily accessed.



PHOTO: Participants tour the James Rig.

The Rig - Giving Power to the Wells

In the early days, each well required a portable steam engine and in 1863 John Henry Fairbank devised the jerker system of linking multiple wells to one steam engine. Later, the powerhouses, known here as rigs, were built using large steam boilers to power the wells. Electricity arrived in Oil Springs in 1918 and a 5-horsepower motor came into use.

At Fairbank Oil, the six rigs provide power to roughly 200 of the 350 wells. They operate continuously 24 hours a day. Belts, pulleys, gears and cranks the power reduce the power to 11 strokes per minute. The power then transfers outside to the jerker rod system that transports the power to the wells.

The James rig, shown on the tour, is about 90 years old, replacing an earlier one. Its bullwheel measures 1.8 meters and babbit metal is used on the main shafts. The leather transmission belt of early days was replaced with a synthetic belt, which does not stretch or slide off.



PHOTO: Participants view the field wheel and jerker rod system up-close.

The Jerker Rod System- Delivering Power to the Wells

Although people tend to think of oil production as lucrative, it has a wild history of booms, busts and bankruptcies. During the 1860s, prices paid for oil were volatile and producers had to keep their costs down.

In 1863, John Henry Fairbank, the founder of Fairbank Oil, devised a highly economical multiple pumping system to link several wells to one steam engine. It was so economical that it became the standard practice in Lambton County's Enniskillen Township. This technology works here because the wells are about only 122 meters deep, but elsewhere oil is found only at deeper depths.

The jerker line system transfers the power from the rig to the pumpjacks at each well by using long wooden rods measuring 4.8 meters and cut into two by twos, then joined with metal plates. These rods are parallel to the ground and hang from iron hangers. It jerks or "sings" as it moves forwards and back. This sound that varies with weather conditions, is an intangible source of preserved heritage.

Being made of wood, it blends into the landscape. In the 1860s, wood was inexpensive, easy to obtain, did not expand or contract with the weather and wood was also light.

In total, Fairbank Oil has approximately 10 km. of jerker line.



PHOTO: Field wheel located outside of the James Rig.

The Field Wheel – Sending Power in New Directions

Oil wells are not lined up in a linear fashion, but the jerker lines are straight lines. To accommodate the wells, a cast-iron field wheel is used like a hub on a wheel, allowing the jerker line to be like a wheel spokes. This allows the jerker line to extend in different directions.

The field wheel is made of heavy cast iron and built to last. They are about 100 years old or older. Fairbank Oil uses 12 field wheels, though they are now rare in the area.



PHOTO: A pumpjack in operation at Fairbank Oil Fields.

The Pumpjack- Bringing Up the Oil

There are 200 wooden pumpjacks at Fairbank Oil and they are unchanged by the passage of time.

The wood makes them easy and inexpensive to construct and like the jerker line, they blend into the landscape. It's the extensive amount of wood used at Fairbank Oil that gives it the "quaint" or "archaic" look and set it apart from the modern era.

The 3-meter walking beam of the pumpjack slowly rises and falls like a see-saw. The one end is pulled downwards by the jerker and the other end rises is connected by chain to raise the rod string and valves within the well. The oil and brine mixture is forced to surface and is piped into a separating tank.

Inside the well, are a pump, a strainer, a working barrel with two valves inside, metal rods, a conductor pipe and casings to keep out debris.

On site, two other types of pumpjacks are also used. Metal Jones and Hammond pumpjacks powered by gearboxes are used on 50 wells. Each gearbox can power two to six pumpjacks. The other type is conventional metal pumpjack each with an individual motor. This type is temporarily used until three or four can be replaced using one power source.



PHOTO: Charlie Fairbank explains the separating tanks.

The Separating Tanks - Isolating the Oil and the Brine

Today, each barrel of oil obtained here also come with 99 barrels of salt water and suspended clay. When the gushers came in 1862, they produced almost pure oil at first. A barrel equals 159 litres, or 42 American gallons, or 35 Imperial gallons.

The oil, being lighter than the salt water floats to the top of the separating tank and flows into a tank. There are 13 separating tanks here. Each has a lidded box so that the oil producer can lift the lid and see the pipe from individual wells and assess their production.

The Disposal Well System - Purifying the Brine

The brine produced with the oil is siphoned off in the separating tank and sent through three filtering ponds into a disposal well. Gravity sends it flowing into a tank where it is siphoned into tubing and delivered 137 meters underground the Detroit formation in the rock.

Storage Tanks and Oil Delivery - Trucking Oil to Imperial Oil Refinery

After leaving the separating tank, the oil moves into storage tanks and when the tank reaches 213 barrels, Harold Marcus Ltd. is notified and it trucks the crude to the Imperial Oil refinery in Sarnia, 48 km northwest of Oil Springs.

In the late 1860s, John. D. Noble of Petrolia invented a brilliant storage idea. The idea came to him after he lost his oil field in a horrific 1867 fire where the fire raged at such heat it melted tanks. The clay soil in Petrolia and Oil Springs is so thick, it is impervious. Noble stored his oil directly in the clay and built cylindrical wooden cribbing around it, professing to have never lost a drop in a decade.

These were unique Petrolia and Oil Springs, and widely used in the area. In 2021, Fairbank Oil decommissioned one after decades of disuse and when emptied of rainwater it showed the intricate craftsmanship of the one-inch timbers that formed the cribbing. Others on the property are in excellent shape and continue to be used.



PHOTO: Charlie Fairbank provides a tour of the blacksmith shop.

The Blacksmith Shop - Preserving the Past

The blacksmith shop was created in the 1960s in a section of a former rig, known as The Big Rig. Built in 1905 and initially powered by steam, the rig powered an impressive 218 wells but burned in 1961. In the 1970s, Charlie Fairbank trained as a blacksmith and would make looped hangers at the forge for the jerker line.

The blacksmith shop now has a traditional Hossfeld Bender for making the loops. It was brought to the blacksmith shop after VanTuyl and Fairbank Hardware in Petrolia closed in 2019. Today the blacksmith shop is used primarily for demonstrations. Anthracite coal is used for its ability to reach high temperatures. Outside the blacksmith shop are two cylindrical steam boilers with diameters of two meters are displayed that are very much like the ones that had powered the Big Rig.



PHOTO: View into the restored cribbed well at Fairbank Oil.

The Cribbed Well - Viewing the Work of the 1860s

A hand-dug well of the 1860s with plank cribbing has been preserved at Fairbank Oil. It was discovered when a depression in the ground, a short distance from the barn, was excavated. The original cribbing that kept out debris could be seen 15 meters down the well and it was decided to make it visible to visitors as well. New cribbing was added above and an iron railing erected to keep visitors safe.

The Imperial Oil Receiving Station - Pooling Oil for Rail Transport

Though it seems long ago, Oil Springs had rail service for 74 years and it was a boon to local oil producers.

For producers, the rail was a quick and easy way to get their crude transported to the Imperial Oil Refinery in Sarnia.

The Imperial Oil Receiving Station was built on a one-acre at the intersection of Gum Bed Line and Kelly Road. The land site was leased from Fairbank Oil. The spur line of Southern

Rail reached Oil Springs in 1886, later became Michigan Rail, and the line was closed in 1960.

At the receiving station, the oil men would have their oil measured and pooled at the central tank. Records were kept in the office on site and the pumphouse had a five-horsepower motor pump to transfer the crude to the train. The train ran to what is now Lasalle Line, north of Petrolia, then west to Sarnia.

Imperial Oil closed the station in 1950, but it was revived through another arrangement. The rail ended in 1960 but the receiving station was still used to pool oil. It finally closed in 1974, the very last of all the Imperial Oil Receiving Stations.

Rail transport for oil gave way to trucking and the crude from all of Ontario is trucked by Harold Marcus Ltd., out of Bothwell.



PHOTO: Conference participants tour Fairbank Oil Fields, while one of the iconic metal sculptures interpreting the site watches over the operation.

THE OIL MUSEUM OF CANADA, OIL SPRINGS, *established 1960*

Following the tour of Fairbank Oil Fields, the group toured the Oil Museum of Canada on the adjacent property.

The newly refurbished Oil Museum is operated by the County of Lambton and opened in 1960. It has a number of interactive displays covering the history of the local oil fields and development of early oil technology.



PHOTO: The Oil Museum of Canada National Historic Site, main exhibition building.

The tour began with the short film "The Spark that Ignited the World" which covers the early struggles and triumphs of the oil pioneers in Lambton County. This was followed by a discussion on the geology, environment and settlement patterns of the region.

As the group individually explored the rest of the museum, two interactive exhibits proved very popular. One was the touch screens that brought to life the tales of Lambton's international drillers who took their tools and expertise to 86 countries beginning in 1873. This information on the International Drillers can be found on a dedicated [website](#) the museum has created. The other was the virtual reality exhibit that makes you feel you are diving down into an oil well. Many lingered at the displays of early tools and technology as well.

On the museum grounds, the group saw the genuine gum bed and the first commercial oil well of North America dug by James Miller Williams in 1858. Also on view were reconstructed displays of the refining technology by the Tripp brothers, who founded the first oil company on the continent in 1854.



PHOTO: Participants view the film "The Spark that Ignited the World" on the history of the oil industry in Lambton County.



PHOTO: Participants view the newly renovated exhibition gallery at Oil Museum of Canada.

BAINES MACHINE AND REPAIR WORKS, PETROLIA, *established 1914*

After the lunch and tour at Oil Museum of Canada, the group took a 15-minute bus ride north to Petrolia to tour the Baines Machine and Repair Works. For the past 108 years, machinist Albert Baines and his father before him, have been providing oil technology parts and repairs for oil producers using methods and machinery of the early 1900s.

The original overhead line shaft still powers many lathes and milling machines. The shop produces leather oil well cups, brass packer stuffing boxes and brass oil well valves.



PHOTO: Participants tour the interior of the Baines Machine & Repair Works, Petrolia.

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