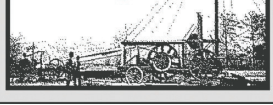


**AMERICAN  
OIL&GAS**

*Historical  
Society*



# REMEMBER WHEN

*A look back at the nation's oil & gas industry.*

**BIG CHIEF  
PLANT SERVICES**

The nation's, as well as Oklahoma's, oil and gas industry is rich in history. As part of a new partnership with the American Oil & Gas Historical Society (AOGHS), Exploring Energy will bring you energy stories from the past in each publication. Also catch "Remember When Wednesday" each fourth Wednesday of the month with AOGHS Executive Director Bruce Wells joining the discussion on KECO 96.5's Exploring Energy show from 8 to 9 a.m. and on 102.3 KWDQ, sponsored by Big Chief Plant Services. For more articles, photos and features, or to support AOGHS, visit [www.aoghs.org](http://www.aoghs.org).

## First Dry Hole

BY BRUCE WELLS  
American Oil and Gas  
Historical Society Director

Many of today's oilfield technologies and industry "firsts" began with the earliest discovery wells of the mid-19th century.

Just four days after America's first commercial oil well was drilled in Pennsylvania in 1859, a second attempt nearby resulted in the first dry hole for the young U.S. petroleum industry. The first well, drilled by Edwin L. Drake in Titusville on August 29, included his invention of a method to protect integrity of the wellbore.

When the former railroad conductor's discovery made headlines, John L. Grandin decided to use an ancient technology to drill the country's second well. His well would not find oil, but it resulted in many other firsts for the industry, including the first dry hole, the first well where a tool became stuck; and the first to use of down-hole explosive charges.

Grandin's exploration venture began after "Drake's Folly" along Titusville's Oil Creek surprised everybody by producing oil from a depth of 69.5 feet. The news quickly arrived at the Grandin general store in Tidioute, 20 miles away.

With each barrel of oil reportedly selling for 75 cents, 22-year-old Grandin, son of the store owner and an aspiring entrepreneur, recognized an opportunity. Pittsburgh refineries would want oil (instead of coal) for making kerosene to meet the growing demand for lamp fuel.

Grandin knew of oil seeps on Gordon Run

of the Campbell farm south of Tidioute and immediately rode there to buy the land. He purchased 30 acres surrounding the oil spring at \$10 per acre.

Within a day Grandin employed local blacksmith Henry Dennis, said to be "the handiest man in the region," to "kick down" a well by the spring-pole drilling method. Using this basic technology, Grandin's well would reach almost twice as deep as Drake's successful well.

The Drake well, which had the financial backing (and patience) of the Seneca Oil Company of Connecticut, used a cable-tool rig powered by a steam boiler and a six-horsepower horizontal steam engine. A "walking beam" raised and lowered drilling tools. When water from Oil Creek threatened his progress, Drake had come up with the idea of inserting a cast iron pipe to protect the wellbore – another petroleum industry first.

Grandin and Dennis constructed a wooden, 20-foot derrick above their spring pole and began drilling. Using a discarded tram axle, Dennis made a surprisingly workable reamer. It worked well enlarging the borehole – until it became stuck at 134 feet deep, "where it never saw daylight again!" as described in one contemporary account. Attempts to retrieve the axle reamer failed, and a drilling tool was lost down-hole for the first time.

In the early days of percussion drilling, heavy cable-tool assemblies often got jammed in the borehole and could no longer be repeatedly lifted

and dropped. They had to be "fished." Rotary drilling technology was yet decades away, but fishing in the oil patch was there to stay.

Still, all was not lost at the Grandin well as far as blacksmith Dennis was concerned. Dennis put together several makeshift "torpedoes" using blasting powder and experimented with timing fuses in hopes of breaking things loose.

"The explosion was sensibly felt upon the surface," notes a report of his third attempt, adding, "Mr. Dennis says, the ground trembled like an earthquake under his feet!" But the Grandin well was ruined in this first recorded "shooting" of an oil well.

Although John Grandin decided to leave the oil business, he would make his family a fortune in the lumber industry as wooden derricks multiplied in Pennsylvania's oil region.

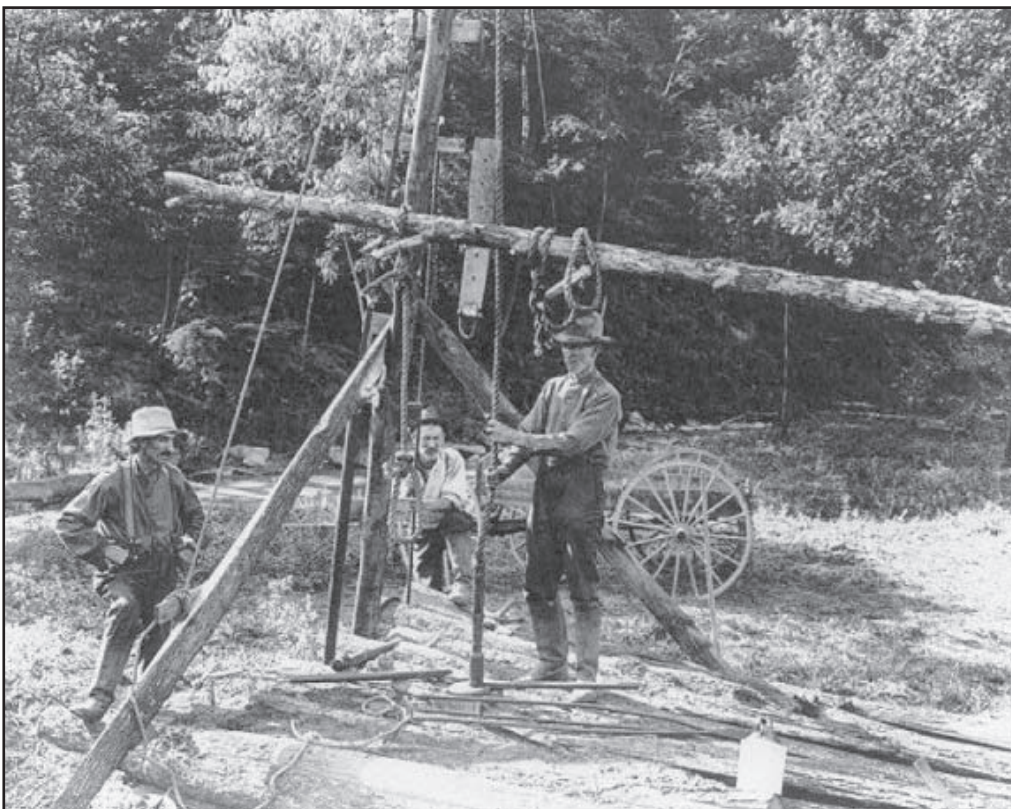
Learn more petroleum history at [AOGHS.ORG](http://AOGHS.ORG).



*A roadside marker notes oil history near Tidioute, Pa., in the Allegheny National Forest.*



*John Livingston Grandin*



*The spring pole was an ancient method for drilling water or brine wells. Photo from a 1924 Interior Department film.*

## CLASSIFIEDS

### Oil/Minerals

Minerals for sale or lease in south Woodward County, Call 580-571-4668 4/34

WE BUY MINERALS, H.R.B. MINERAL BUYERS, 405-315-9980. 4/33

WANT TO BUY MINERALS, have ave buyers looking to buy minerals in Western Oklahoma & Texas Panhandle Call Jeffrey Basler @ 405- 612-0734 4/30

### TexOk

#### Land Co.

Mineral Broker  
Oil & Gas Leases  
580-225-5129  
806-334-0370

### HARBOR ENERGY

Do you have mineral rights that you would like to lease or sell? Call us today!

405-217-2715

### CASH PAID FOR YOUR MINERAL RIGHTS

Walters Properties,  
Wayne Walters  
580-243-7746, day  
472-3320, after hours  
401 W. 3rd – Elk City

### Help Wanted



Now hiring vacuum truck owner operators and drivers for work in western Oklahoma, willing to train drivers how to haul water, Call 405-816-2670. 5/36

MPII of Elk City, Ok, looking to hire class A CDL drivers to haul frat tanks and drive pole truck, please contact, for application 580-799-5997. 4/37

Hiring vacuum truck owner operators and drivers. Most work within 60 mile radius of Elk City. Willing to train drivers. Call 405-816-2670. 4/35

A&H Incorporated is looking for an Oil Field Mechanic to repair natural gas compressors and pumping unit engines. Weatherford, OK area. 2 years experience preferred. Drug testing required. Must have own tools and valid driver's license. Home every night. Pay based on experience. Health insurance available. Please call or email for more info 580-772-5157 or [ap@aandhcompression.com](mailto:ap@aandhcompression.com). 4/35

A&H Incorporated is looking for an Entry level oil field mechanic to perform preventative maintenances on natural gas compressors and pumping unit engines. Weatherford, OK area. Training available. Drug testing required. Must have own tools and valid driver's license. Home every night. Pay based on experience. Health insurance available. Please call or email for more info (580) 772-5157 or [ap@aandhcompression.com](mailto:ap@aandhcompression.com). 4/35

**BIG CHIEF  
PLANT SERVICES**

Catch "Remember When" Wednesdays on Exploring Energy, sponsored by Big Chief Plant Services.