

A4: PIONEER OIL MUSEUM OF NEW YORK, INC.

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The Pioneer Oil Museum of New York, Inc., located in Bolivar, New York, was the creation of the New York State Oil Producers Association (NYSOPA) in the mid-1960's. The goal of the members of this organization was to "house in a readily available, central location, articles and information of historical value or interest pertaining to the New York State Oil Industry." A secondary goal was to accumulate and display artifacts related to the local petroleum industry. Also the promoters hoped to honor the men who had been pioneers in both the primary and secondary phases of oil recovery in the area.

Among the main organizers of the museum were Bill Hogan and Clarence (Mike) Schaffner, both of Bolivar. Schaffner, the mayor of the village of Bolivar, became the chairman of a NYSOPA museum committee. In 1964 at the annual NYSOPA clambake, Hogan told his fellow attendees, "If we don't do it [create a local museum], nobody will." Consequently the NYSOPA contributed \$1000 toward the creation of the museum. Hogan volunteered the use of a building he owned on Main Street in the village of Bolivar. On behalf of the committee the former Colegrove and Wood Hardware Store was purchased for \$2500 by the firm of Hahn and Schaffner. Previously this building had housed the McEwan Supply Store which sold oil field equipment. Other former uses of this building built in 1851 include a cigar factory, a cobbler's shop, a broom factory, a Chinese laundry, a grocery store, a dry goods store, an upstairs business in which magnetos were repaired, and a glove and mitten factory. In 1931 the large front plate glass windows were installed.

During 1965-66 further plans took place toward opening the museum. Letters were sent to potential contributors to send money and/or artifacts which would be suitable for placement in the museum. In 1965 the museum organizers petitioned the Village of Bolivar for permission to drill an oil well near the museum. The goal was to drill a real, working well which would serve as a tourist attraction as well as a possible source of revenue for the museum. Village ordinances at that time (and to this day) prevent anyone from drilling a gas or oil well in the village within 100 feet of any residence or village lot. Although no further research was found to determine the village's response, there is no exterior working well at the museum at the present time.

Also in 1966, NYSOPA agreed to increase the cost of an annual membership from \$5 to \$10. This increase was designed to cover the cost of the building purchase as well as other expenses the organization would incur in running the museum. During the early 1970's, the group funded two significant improvements: the addition of a vertical "board and batten" siding to restore the late-1800's original look and the installation of a large, colorful sign for the museum's front.

For the next few years artifacts, photographs, and other written documents were collected, but there was never an official grand opening of the museum. By 1973, plans were in the works for the Village of Bolivar's Sesquicentennial to be held two years later. Local residents Tom Manning, George Bradley, Art Burdick, and others decided to refurbish the museum with hopes of opening it up for visitors during the Sesquicentennial celebration. They improved the building's interior so that donated materials could be displayed. Many exhibits commemorating the area's oil story were organized, and a large number of old, irreplaceable photographs were displayed. Other aspects of local history were developed in order to tell the story of the town. The museum was a hit during the Sesquicentennial celebration, so plans were made to keep the building open on a limited full-time basis in the future.

For the rest of the decade the museum remained open on a restricted basis. Interest escalated when the original Pioneer Oil Days were held in the early 1980's. As oil prices increased, so did increased activity in the local industry. During the annual celebration numerous demonstrations and events took place. Among these were a working forge as well as bit-dressing demonstrations. A competition between "roustabout" teams entailed coupling of joints of "sucker rods" and then slinging them into the hooks of tripods.

During the 1980's, Tom Manning took over primary custodianship of the museum and helped organize staffing. Gordon (a retired oil field worker) and Ethyl Burdick were employed by the federally-sponsored Green Thumb program which utilized senior citizens in a variety of ways. They worked in the museum during the day, keeping it open for visitors. Another local resident and retired oil field worker, Max Richardson, worked with Gordon Burdick to retrieve and refurbish artifacts, as well as to maintain the property.

During the 1990's, age forced the retirement of the small staff of dedicated volunteers. To keep the museum up-and-running, each spring a new group of local retirees was assembled to help man the museum during the upcoming summer tourist season.

In the summer of 2000, Tom Manning asked several local residents if they would be interested in joining a newly-formed Board of Directors for the museum. Manning was leaving the area and wanted to place the museum in the hands of a small group of people who would perpetuate this valuable local institution. This new board, under the direction of NYSOPA President Paul Plants, included individuals with ties to area government, the local school district, and the local oil industry.

The Board of Directors attempted to stabilize the museum in terms of both its fiscal and structural viability. It made many improvements including new exhibits and displays, as well as new documentation for many of the photographs and artifacts on display. Both the interior and exterior of the building were painted. The Board conducted annual fund-drives beginning in 2001. Local citizenry, as well as members of the oil-producing industry, showed tremendous support for the museum through their support for the fund-drives. Each year NYSOPA donates to the museum one dollar from each of the approximately 1600 tickets it sells to its annual clambake and meeting.

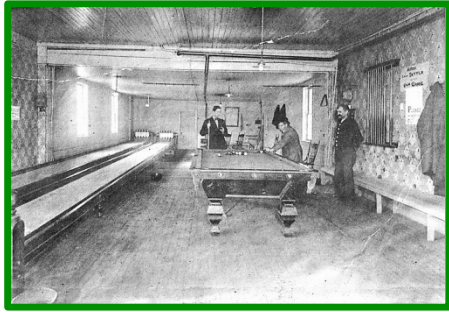
An adjacent addition, erected in 2004 with the help of a New York State grant, enabled the museum to increase exhibition space while providing protection for equipment displayed outside in the elements. In 2008, the New York State Oil Producers' Association provided a grant to the museum that allowed the purchase of a six-acre site formerly housing the Hahn & Schaffner Pipe Supply Company. Since that time three buildings have been demolished, and five buildings have been renovated. The main store building is now another museum venue that complements the original museum on Main Street. Among other displays, this new building houses the New York State Oil Producers' Association Wall of Fame, honoring many individuals who played significant roles in the local oil and gas industry. In 2016, a new steel building was constructed for display of working oil and gas field equipment.

Each June a celebration to commemorate the heritage of the local oil industry, known as "Pioneer Oil Days," brings in hundreds of people to the museum. Local school children enjoy the tours given by museum volunteers. The number of special tours for family groups as well as organizations has grown significantly the last few years. The Pioneer Oil Museum of New York, Inc. has become a focal point for many local citizens and is dedicated to serving the people of this area for many years to come.

MUSEUM VENUES

Main Street Site

This building was constructed in 1851. Over the years it was used for a cigar factory, a cobbler's shop, a broom factory, a Chinese laundry, a grocery store, a dry goods store, an upstairs business in which magnetos were repaired, and a glove and mitten factory. Eventually it housed the McEwan Supply Store which sold oil field equipment. Before its purchase to become the Pioneer Oil Museum, its last use was for the Colegrove and Wood Hardware Store.



One of the more interesting uses of this building was for George Butler's Box Ball Alleys. Box ball was a modified version of bowling, using smaller balls in knocking down five pins set horizontally across a wooden alley. Lanes were portable and available in three sizes, providing for quick and easy installation in amusements parks, bars and other entertainment venues both big and small.

Hahn & Schaffner Site

The Hahn & Schaffner (H/S) site was originally the home of a pipe supply business related to the oil and gas industry. Due to the generosity of the New York State Oil Producers' Association, the six-acre site was purchased with hopes of developing it to provide an additional site for the current museum. The main store building was totally gutted and refurbished. Exhibits are in the planning stages while much of this new site is being groomed for outdoor usage. Three old dilapidated buildings were demolished while others will be refurbished to house some of these new exhibits.



Actual end of a wooden power house along with an unusual chain-drive engine; most power houses were made out of metal. and most engines were driven

One large building that has been refurbished is the Shaner Exhibition Building. Several antique oilfield engines and other equipment are already on display in that building with more to follow. Two pipe-threading buildings were totally renovated from 2016-2017. These structures were covered with board and batten to provide a rustic appearance. A steel roof and glass block windows were also added for protection and to improve

the appearance. Local third-generation oil producer Joe Bucher underwrote the cost of this project which was meant to commemorate his family's legacy in the local fields.

In 2016 a new building, the "Charles H. Joyce Exhibition Building," named in honor of the president of Otis Eastern Service in Wellsville, is a 54 x 90 steel building that will be used to house

antique oilfield equipment, some of it (hopefully) in working condition.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BOLIVAR AREA

The early Native Americans used the Little Genesee Creek Valley over thousands of years. The creek was an important path for these people as they traversed the countryside looking for the deer which were such a staple of their diets. The Oswayo Creek joined with the Little Genesee eventually reaching

the Allegheny River, a major thoroughfare for the ancient people. These early people camped along the banks of the Oswayo in nearby Ceres, while other groups built settlements nearby.

In 1819, Timothy Cowles and his two young sons arrived on the scene from eastern New York State and became the first permanent white settlers of the Bolivar valley. Soon they cleared the land, built a log house, and carved a niche for themselves in the wilderness. Each year thereafter, more and more settlers arrived, as word of the fertile soil, vastness of forests, and abundance of game, spread back home.

By 1825, enough citizens lived near the confluence of the Root Hollow and Little Genesee Creeks that they decided to form a town in newly-formed Allegany County. In February of that year, they selected the name "Bolivar" to honor the then-living liberator of South America, General Simon Bolivar.

For the next 56 years, the population of Bolivar seldom exceeded 160 hard-working residents. These people made their livings as farmers, loggers, and tanners. They continued to carve fields for their farm animals out of the ample forests as the settlement expanded.

In April 1881, a big oil gusher was struck about two miles up the road in the town of Wirt. Within ten months after this oil strike, Bolivar had become a boom town of 4500 excited oil seekers, and combined with the population of nearby Wirt, the entire valley became home to some 10,000 -12,000 fortune seekers. Business thrived in both communities, and along with the good came the bad that was so representative of any "boom town." Oil fortunes were made or lost overnight due to gambling with the oil industry or gambling at the card tables.

Oil production slowed within a year, and the population of Bolivar dropped as suddenly. In 1920, the introduction of "flooding," the secondary recovery of oil, brought Bolivar into a newer and longer-lasting period of prosperity. This new method of recovery caused oil and gas production to soar to undreamed-of heights, and "black gold" flowed into the coffers of a rejuvenated Bolivar. Public and private improvements in Bolivar followed, and by 1940, Bolivar (and nearby Wellsville) was one of the wealthiest communities per capita in New York State.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF OIL AND NATURAL GAS IN SOUTHWESTERN NEW YORK

New York has a long history of oil and gas production. In fact, the first natural gas well was drilled in Fredonia in 1825. For many years, townspeople had noticed that flammable natural gas was seeping out of the black shale in stream beds. After the well was drilled, pipelines were built, first out of wood coated with tar soaked rags, and then later out of lead and tin. Gas from the well was eventually used to light the streets and many buildings in Fredonia. This new source of light was hailed around the world.

Oil seeps (places where oil slowly escapes to the earth's surface) were common in southwestern New York when the first European settlers arrived, and Native Americans were said to have used the oil for medicinal purposes. The first petroleum (oil) was "discovered" by the French at the oil spring near Cuba, New York in 1627. This was considered a sacred spot by the Seneca Indians who lived in the area. As the first settlers arrived in this area, crude oil was used to treat burns and sprains, rheumatism, and to cure horses' saddle sores. Oil was also drunk to help with a variety of ailments.

The first commercially successful oil well in the world was drilled just south of Jamestown, NY in Titusville, Pennsylvania in 1859. The drilling boom that followed soon moved north and east to Bradford where a boom struck from 1875-76. By the 1860's oil was known to exist in the Bolivar area. In 1879,

two failed wells in nearby Allentown led to “Triangle No. 1” which was drilled by O.P. Taylor. The boom town of Petrolia sprang up, and the southern portion of Allegany County came alive with oil fever.

On April 27, 1881, a group drilled a well in nearby Richburg. The well was shot and 70 barrels of oil soon began to flow. This was the “Richburg Discovery Well” which began oil boom which changed the Bolivar valley forever. By 1882, the Bolivar area combined with the nearby Bradford field to produce almost 23 million barrels out of a total of 27,661,000 barrels produced in the entire United States. This meant that this area produced 83% of the country’s entire output, as well as 77% of all the oil produced in the world for that year.

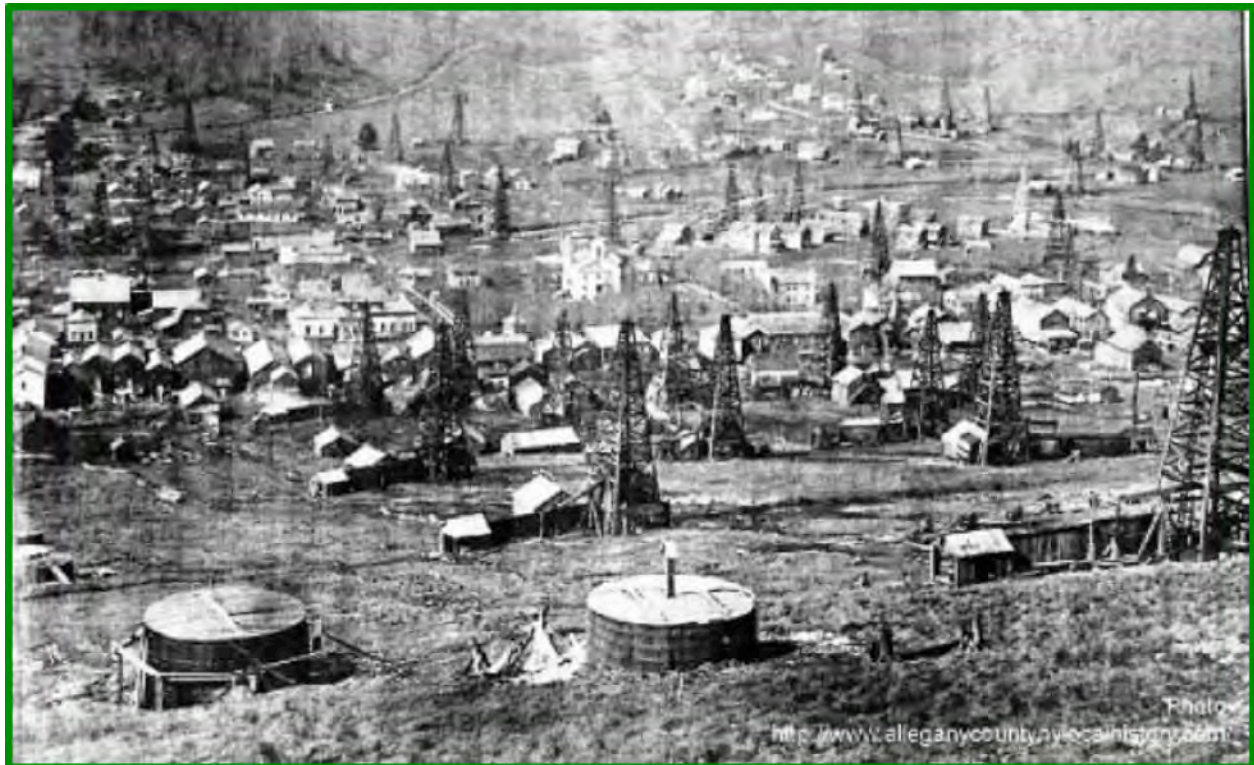


Figure 3. The heart of Richburg during the boom.

STOP DESCRIPTIONS

STOP 1. Pioneer Oil Museum Of New York, Inc.

Location Coordinates: 42.06517, -78.1681

STOP 2. Hahn & Schaffner Site -- LUNCH

Location Coordinates: 42.06658, -78.17156

STOP 3. Former site of Bolivar Refinery, now Klein Cutlery

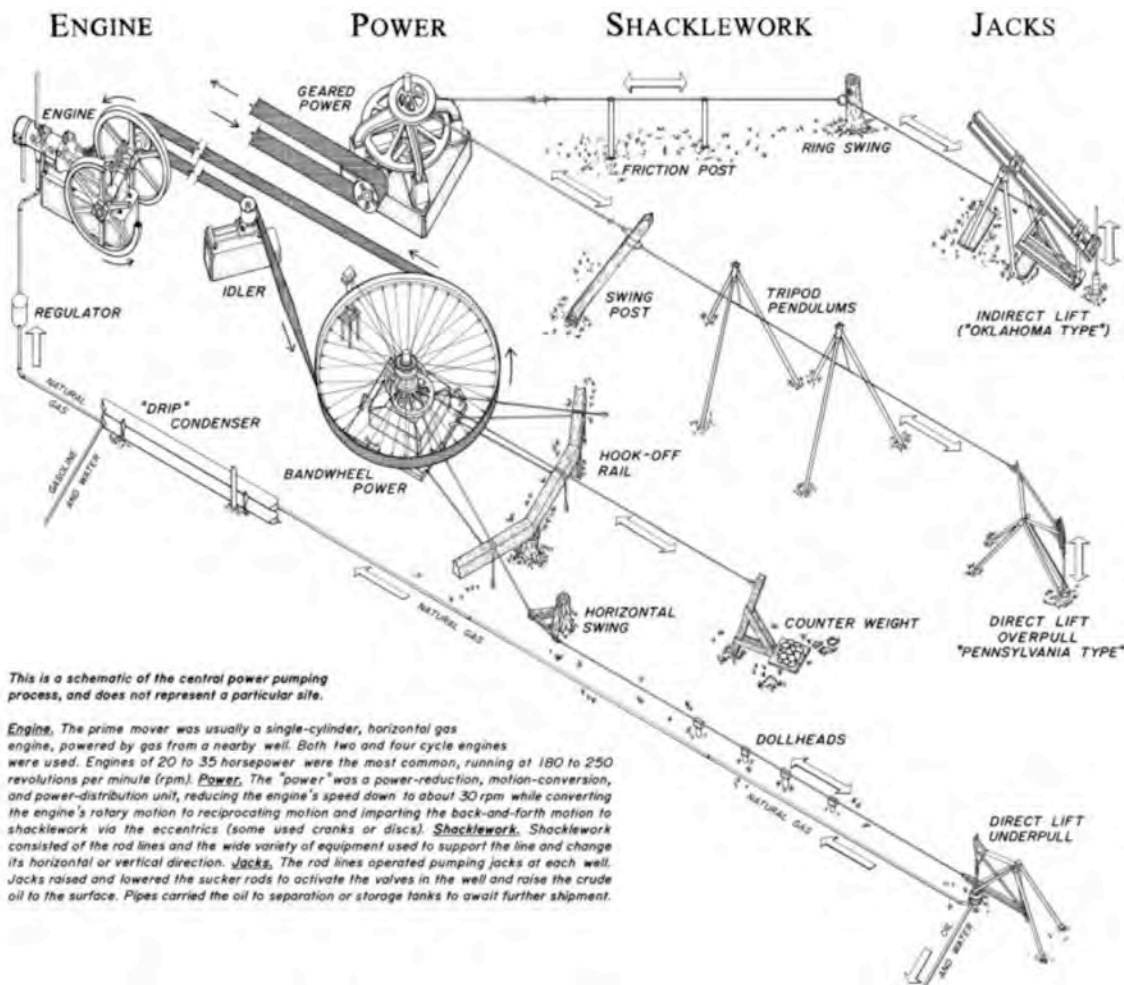
Location Coordinates: 42.04807, -78.18903

Allegany Refiners constructed a refinery here in 1933. It had 20 employees initially, and 52 when it closed in 1947. The site has been repurposed and currently houses Industrial Patterns, Inc., in the large building to the right, and Klein Tools in the smaller building along left edge of photo. Heritage Tools had started here in 1952, and was bought by Klein Tools in 2007. It currently employs 52 people making high quality scissors for industry.



STOP 4. Active lease with water flooding, using rod lines, etc.

Location Coordinates: 42.06379, -78.15521



This lease is pumping water down into the oil bearing unit, to push the oil toward the well. If we are lucky it may be working at the time of our visit. The oil is collected by a local oil service company.

STOP 5. Active lease, using rod lines, etc., but without water flooding

Location Coordinates: 41.99599, -78.20132



With some rod lines stretching through the woods over 1,100 feet, this eccentric wheel can drive 12 jacks at the same time. Typically pumped for a couple hours each day, the 28 wells on this lease produce three barrels of oil every two days. The operator, David Collins, has "oil in his blood" both because his father worked the same leases as David was growing up, and because he ingests a tablespoon of crude every day, for medicinal purposes.

The oil here has some water, which is not salty, as it freezes at 32° F. The operations cease each fall as the temperatures drop, to resume the next spring.