

The Birth of North American Oil Industry

... in Petrolia, Ontario



1857

James M. Williams formed the J.M. Williams Company. After unsuccessful attempts at commercial production from the gum beds Williams hand-dug and cribbed a well 49 feet deep. It did not reach bedrock but produced as much as 150 gallons per hour by hand pump. The oil was refined for illuminating oil and lubricants.

1858

Stagnant algae-ridden water lay almost everywhere and, looking for better drinking water, Williams dug a well a few yards down an incline from his asphalt plant. At a depth of 20 metres, the well struck free oil instead of water.

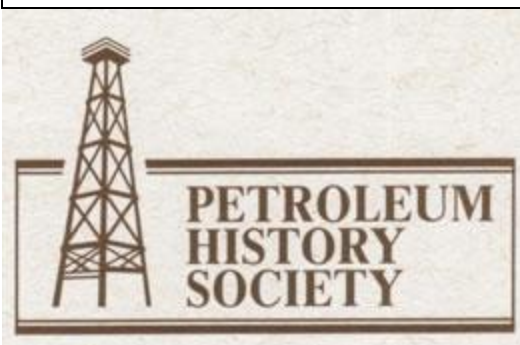
In 1858 it became the first oil well in North America, remembered as Williams No.1 at Oil Springs, Ontario. (This was a year before Edwin Drake drilled his famous wildcat in Pennsylvania in 1859.)

The Oil Museum of Canada was founded on the site of the first commercial oil well in North America, and a replica is on display at the museum.

1860

Williams eventually abandoned his Oil Springs refinery and transferred his operations to Hamilton, Ontario. In 1860, the local newspaper carried his ad: "Coal oil for sale, 16 cents per gallon for quantities from 4000 to 100 000 gallons." Williams reincorporated his firm as The Canadian Oil Company and operated facilities for petroleum production, refining and marketing - a mix that qualifies his company as the first integrated oil company in the world.

Text taken from website of :



1862

On February 19, 1862, Hugh Nixon Shaw of Cooksville, Ontario, struck oil at 48 metres at Oil Creek, Enniskillen County, Ontario. This was Canada's first gusher, estimated to be good for 3,000 barrels per day.

1870

By 1870 Canada was exporting oil to Europe and had about 100 refineries in operation.

