

# The Pipeline

Your Conduit for Information about Oil 150



Celebrating the Story—  
Progress from Petroleum

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## Featured Events

[April 7, 2009, Titusville Oil Festival 150-Day of Poetry.](#) A day of poetry with a Community Heritage Theme. UPT Student Union. Contact Penny Gustavson at (814) 827-2381 or [gustca@tbscc.com](mailto:gustca@tbscc.com).

[April 16, 2009, WQED TV Premiere of The Valley that Changed the World.](#) Program begins at 8 p.m. on WQED Pittsburgh-PBS Channel 13. The film explores historic events leading up to 1859 and the Drake oil well, the oil companies that sprang out of the boom, the developments of towns like Oil City, Franklin, and Titusville, and the people and families instrumental in the industry. Contact Will Wingo at (814) 677-3152 ext. 104.

[May 8-9, 2009, 10th Annual Preserving Victorian Collections & Architecture Conference.](#) Seminars and guided tours showcasing Titusville's diverse Victorian-era buildings and structures. Includes sessions on preserving artifacts, documents, collections as well as maintaining historic buildings. Saturday banquet features presentation of Historic Preservation Awards. Centered on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh in Titusville, PA. Contact Oil Region Alliance (814) 677-3152 ext. 110 or [tkresinski@oilregion.org](mailto:tkresinski@oilregion.org).

## Oil Region Alliance Hosts Premiere of New Documentary Celebrating 150 Years of Oil

by Will Wingo

The Oil Region Alliance and WQED Multimedia presented the premiere of "The Valley that Changed the World" in the Barrow-Civic Theater, Franklin, Pennsylvania on Saturday, March 14th.

This was the first public showing of the new film that chronicles the development of the petroleum industry with a focus on its roots in north-west Pennsylvania.

The film was conceived early in the discussions of what

should be included for the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the first commercial oil well in the world by what would become the Oil 150 Steering Committee. The planning for this production began nearly 3 years ago. A production contract was executed with WQED Multimedia in late 2008 to produce the full 56-minute version and a shorter 20-minute edition, which would be more suited to a classroom format.

The production features a wide range of local and regional historians and business leaders discussing the causes and effects of what happened in the Oil Creek valley in the late 1850's and early 1860's. The modern impact of petroleum is also shown and how it affects so many parts of our day-to-day lives.

The film has been submitted to American Public Television (APT) for review and consideration for addition to their list of films available to Public Television stations throughout the United States. A decision from APT is expected in May. When it is approved by APT, distribution will be made on a nationwide basis.

The premiere event also featured performances by "Church Street Blues," a bluegrass band from Hermitage, Pennsylvania. They performed "Black, Bubblin' Crude" which was written and performed for the 2nd Annual Oil Country Bluegrass Festival in February, 2009. The song took top honors in the festival's Oil 150 Songwriting Contest.

WQED will premiere the production on Thursday, April 16, 2009 at 8:00 p.m.

The production was produced in full High Definition and will be available as a DVD for purchase at the Oil Region Alliance office and via the online stores for [www.oil150.com](http://www.oil150.com) and [WQED.org](http://WQED.org), for \$19.95.



See Page 3 for more Premiere Photos!



## Steering Committee

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Lois McElwee, Senior Project Manager and Oil Historian  
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### Newsletter Editor-in-Chief

Mark Heim

## Editor's Column—Mark's Remarks A Conversation with Oil Historian Neil McElwee



**Mark Heim**

Neil McElwee is an historian of the Pennsylvania Oil Region. He is an authority on the history of the early years of oil production in the northwest corner of Pennsylvania, and he loves to share his research by way of presentation- the written word or over a cup of coffee or even a microphone at a local radio station. For Neil, the story of the Oil Region in Pennsylvania is a continuously unfolding saga drawing him in as an Agatha Christie novel might draw in a mystery fan.

McElwee will tell you his real passion in the Oil Region story is the history of the pipeline system. The pipelines are a part of the oil story in the Oil Patch not readily seen or easily understood by a lay-person. McElwee has made his mission in life to bring the pipeline story in a way that can be understood by all.

Neil has background in what he calls industrial historical writing. He worked for many years for Columbia Gas and LTV Steel, and was responsible for publications for mid-level management regarding industrial procedures and processes.

After his stints with heavy industry, McElwee and his wife Lois moved to Oil City into an old and beautiful home once occupied by an oil man. He brought his writing background and began to apply it first to the history of his house and its former occupants and then to the oil industry.

He says, "It became a mystery, like a good book." He began to gather answers to his queries. "What did the person do? Why was he or she important? What impact did the person have? It's intriguing for me. It's just plain interesting." But it is time intensive and he finds frequently the story itself takes on a life of its own.



In conveying the oil field story to people less familiar with the production, refining and transportation of oil and natural gas, McElwee says it's important to start at the beginning. Much of his published writing is the result of preparation for oral presentations which becomes more developed in writing.

Time lines are the touch stones for both the writer and reader of history according to McElwee. He says the Oil Region story will not make sense until and unless one becomes very familiar with the time line of events.

The historian says in addition to the time lines, one should see and touch the area in which events took place. McElwee says he spent hundreds of hours exploring the area from the mouth of Oil Creek north to Drake Well, and the tributary runs and valleys. "You don't get a sense of reality until you've done the exploring."

The early books, according to McElwee, are not always accurate. He says, "There are certainly inconsistencies, lots of them – contradictions."

Contemporary newspapers are particularly useful in learning of the Oil Region. "I have used the Titusville Morning Herald more than any other paper. The paper was very well-written and had big enough print. It reads like a "history book of the day."

*(Continued Page 5)*



is an educational non-partisan celebration administered by the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism (ORA). ORA is classified by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. ORA is registered with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Charitable Organizations. ORA also administers the Oil Region National Heritage Area, designated by Congress in 2004.

# Oil 150 Hosts Educational Event at Pennsylvania State Capitol

By Will Wingo

An interested group of nearly 70 guests attended the Oil 150 program "Pennsylvania's Early Oil Pioneer's," presented by Dr. William Brice, in the East Wing Rotunda of the Pennsylvania State Capitol on March 3, 2009.

The program by Dr. William Brice gave an interesting overview of the earliest of Pennsylvania's pioneers in the development of what would become the foundation of the world-wide petroleum industry. Among the early pioneers discussed were Samuel Keir, George Bissell and

Edwin Drake.

The event was sponsored by the Oil Region Alliance, Oil 150 and the Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Con-

trol and Conservation Committee.

The program was introduced by Randy Seitz, President of the Oil Region Alliance and by Representative Scott

Hutchinson of Pennsylvania 64th Legislative District.

Attendees included representatives from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Department of Environmental Protection, the Oil 150 Steering Committee, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and the general public.



# Oil 150 Documentary Premiere

Clockwise from right:

1. Oil Region Alliance President and COO Randy Seitz accepts a pin from Rosemary Martinelli, Executive Director of Marketing and Communications for WQED Multimedia.
2. Nearly 100 guests await the premiere screening of *The Valley that Changed the World* in Franklin's Barrow-Civic Theatre.
3. Church Street Blues, a local bluegrass band, entertains guests during the Premiere's opening reception.
4. Guests dressed in period costume peruse the evening's program while waiting for the film to start.



## Bradford Landmark Society Awarded March Window Display Honors

by Will Wingo

The Bradford Landmark Society of 45 East Croydon Street in Bradford, Pennsylvania is the historical society for the city of Bradford. The Society has developed a wonderful window display in conjunction with the celebration of the 150th anniversary of oil in 2009.

The centerpiece of the display is a working Jensen pump jack that is operated when traffic—both foot and vehicular—is heaviest. Many other items are on display in the exhibit including a nitroglycerin can, oil "thief" working barrels, wooden sucker rods and many interesting photos of early oil operations. Also prominently featured is the Oil 150 poster.

The historical items are from the personal collection of Mike Fuoco who is a local oil historian, collector and volunteer at the Landmark Society.

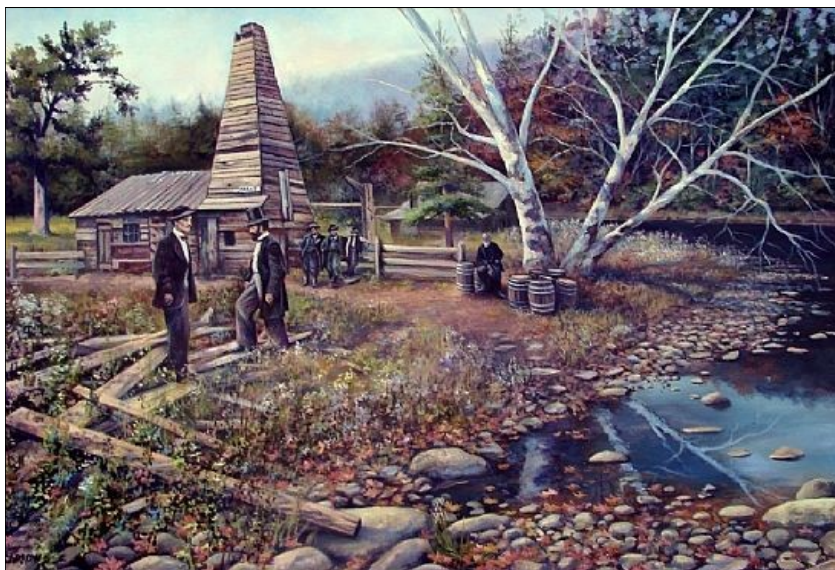
Sally Costik is the Curator of the Society. The window display will continue throughout the summer. Anyone with questions about the display or specific items in it can contact the Society at 814 362-3906.

The website for the Society is:  
[www.bradfordlandmark.org](http://www.bradfordlandmark.org).

The Society will receive a hand-hammered Oil 150 coaster in appreciation for the efforts in support of the regionwide celebration.



## Now Available From Oil 150!



Prints of Fred Carrow's *Drake's Well at Titusville Pennsylvania* are now available at [www.oil150.com](http://www.oil150.com).  
Only 150 signed and numbered 15" x 22" giclee prints on fine art paper are available

*Drake's Well at Titusville Pennsylvania* prints retail for \$100 and can be ordered from the Oil 150 online store at [www.oil150.com](http://www.oil150.com) or by visiting the Oil Region Alliance sales location at 206 Seneca Street, 4th Floor, Oil City, PA.

Visit [www.oil150.com](http://www.oil150.com) to find more fine oil history prints, commemorative products, apparel, oil history books and much more.

**(Continued from Page 2) Neil McElwee**

McElwee has high praise for correspondent P.C. Boyle. "He writes beautifully," says McElwee. "You at least get the idea of how he saw things."

The author's favorite topic is the oil pipelines. The early history of the pipelines is not well recorded, nor is it generally talked about. "Issues of power and wealth involving certain groups in the Oil Region really revolved around control of the transportation and storage of oil and the pipelines. I believe the ultimate answers to some of the things I am pursuing continue to be found in that pipeline story as it makes its way from the 19th century into the 20th century."

The most challenging research the historian has carried out involves writing about the United Pipelines/National Transit Company. McElwee says it has been very difficult to get solid material on that subject. "What did the pipeline people do? You had to work in the business to know what they did. You had to be out in the field around the pump stations."

McElwee agrees in order to gain an understanding of the present, and to formulate ideas for the future, one must know the past. McElwee says, "My love, my passion is this oil history."

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[www.oil150.com](http://www.oil150.com)



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