

Bicentennial Forum

J. A. HARBKE AND THE OIL & GAS WELLS DRILLED NEAR THE CARTY RESERVOIR SITE

A few weeks ago invited guests only witnessed the dedication of the Carty Reservoir Site near the Oregon Trail stopping place known as Wells Springs. This 5,000 acre, man-made reservoir is a significant beginning to the development of nuclear power, and its irrigation and cooling water may contribute a great deal to the future potential of Morrow County.

How many can recall the big excitement of just 45 years ago this spring when the Wells Springs Gas & Oil Company was drilling in that area and was selling company stock to interested investors? Any person who still has a stock certificate in that company is asked to contact Mrs. Harnett at the Morrow County Museum. She has gathered the information herewith presented about this 45-year-old energy boom from old newspapers.

In its March 19, 1931 issue, the Gazette-Times reports that John A. Harbke and L. H. Estes, officers of the Wells Springs Gas and Oil Company, visited in Heppner. Other company officers included Wilbur Henderson, the company's attorney, Mrs. Leding and J.L. Richardson of Portland.

"Fred Nicholson, a local man, is drilling the test hole on the Wells Springs Ranch is now down 225 feet. He has an outfit for drilling to a depth of 1200 to 2500 feet. The company plans to go to 4000 or 5000 feet if necessary, although deeper drilling will necessitate installing different equipment.

"The amount of gas coming from the well is increasing and a trace of oil shows. This is encouraging to Mr. Harbke who farmed in the desert land north of Ione for many years and for more than 25 years has been convinced that oil underlies the sand and sagebrush. The Wells Springs Gas and Oil Company, under a state permit, is selling stock in the company."

The April 2, 1931 issue adds more facts. "The Wells Springs Oil and Gas Company has leased 30,000 acres of land surrounding the eight-inch hole drilled into the historic Wells Springs out of which flows artesian water filled with gas bubbles. The first hole is to be abandoned and drilling operation will be moved to the top of an adjacent hill several hundred feet higher. A geologist says it is more proper to drill as the strata there is convex instead of concave as in the canyon where the present hole is located. Many examples have been cited which substantiate the geologist's theory, notably the famed Tea Pot Dome.

"Company President Harbke did not make a glowing promise of quick wealth in an interview Monday. He displayed lease forms being given farmers of the district and a block of lithographed share certificates for stock that are being offered at \$10 each. The company is now incorporated for \$100,000. He spoke of the cooperation the company is getting and told of their arrangement with Fred Nicholson, driller, and Louis Padberg, farmer whose farm is but a short distance from the well. Both men are taking stock in exchange for their services and supplies. Louis Padberg has deeded 2,320 acres of land to the corporation.

The April 16 report says, "At 320 feet the drill in the springs hole brought forth twice the amount of gas bubbles that before filled the artesian flow, giving company officers more hope and increasing public interest. Sunday saw the largest number of visitors yet at the test hole and Mrs. Louis Padberg was busy most all day keeping the coffee percolating on the flame at the gas jet to serve spectators."

By May 28 the paper had a long story about veteran oil and gas driller Sam Foster whose drilling experience has reached all the way from South America to Canada. He talked with officers giving instructions in procedures to separate the gas from the water. Foster said "I am satisfied that gas in paying quantity has already been struck, and that a ready market exists for all the gas that may be found—advising that gas would be more profitable than oil and would require less attention."

Foster declared the remoteness of the field from markets was no deterrent to the saleability of the gas, and he described gas lines that are now being laid over long distances. He said a network of lines is planned to touch every center of population in the country and that there is a virgin market for natural gas everywhere.

In the last report given in the Gazette-Times on June 11, 1931 tells that Sam Foster, engineer for the company, did not recommend going to the expense necessary to shut the water off in the first hole, advising rather the drilling of another hole higher up and shutting out the water from the start. "H.G. Harris, Osage, WY, a veteran driller who was in charge of production for Standard Oil Co. for 17 years and held a like position with the Union Oil Co. for 3 years, visited the well Friday evening with Foster. Harris also declared Wells Springs prospects to be as good as any he had seen in the northwest."

The published account seems to end here. People who remember a bit about the excitement say that lots of money was lost at that time.

Carty Reservoir is named in honor of James Carty an early partner of John Kilkenny and John Sheridan who was born in County Leitrim, Ireland in 1854 and emigrated to Morrow County in 1890. He owned and operated a substantial sheep and cattle ranch in the Tub Springs area most of his life. "Shamrocks and Shepherds" states: "At the commencement of World War II, the U.S. Army took over the Carty ranch, including Jim's home. On the occasion of serving the initial papers and on each succeeding occasion, although then in his seventies, he refused to move from his home and chased the members of the Air Corps from the ranch. Being in a quandary, the military sought the assistance of Federal Judge James Alger Fee, by scheduling of formal proceeding before him.

"At the commencement of the proceeding, the representatives of the military outlined, in considerable detail, the difficulties they were having and asked the court for an order of possession with a writ of assistance. After pondering the problem for a few moments, Judge Fee stated: 'If the military of the United States cannot dispossess Jim Carty, I won't even try.' Fortunately, patriotism and the persuasion of family friends overcame Carty's will to resist and saved the military from complete defeat. After 40 years he gave up his home, so full of memories of the singing, dancing and fighting Irish and moved to a new location on Willow Creek."

PUBLIC AUCTION
LAND SALE
May 4, 1976, 2 p.m.

The Oregon Transportation Commission will offer for sale at public auction the following parcel of land located on the south side of U.S. Highway 30 at the west end of Irrigon near the Main Street Junction. The sale will be held on the premises at 2 p.m. on May 4, 1976. The property is further described as follows:

A parcel of land lying in Section 24, Township 5 North, Range 26 East, W.M., Morrow County, Oregon. The parcel of land to which this description applies contains 7500 square feet, more or less.

TERMS OF SALE: The minimum price that will be accepted is \$1,875.00, payable at time of sale. The State reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids. Sale subject to special assessments, if any, restrictions, reservations and easements of record. The sale is subject to the following: (A) Subject to the Oregon Transportation Commission's use restrictions on signboards and all types of junkyards, (B) No access to the highway, and (C) subject to a permit to Pacific Northwest Bell.

INFORMATION: Regional Property Agent, 1182 "K" Avenue, LaGrande, Oregon, phone 963-8447 prior to date of sale. (File No. 32118, Sale No. 7)

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SPRAY NEWS

Mary Williams

All officers were present when a rodeo meeting was held at the Telephone building Monday evening. It was voted to improve the grounds with Powder River equipment, gates, chutes and corrals within a cost of \$1,000. One hundred dollars was voted for parade entry prizes.

Doug Hosken, Spray High principal was present in the interest of the high school students again having charge of The Hut and serving hamburgers through the rodeo.

The association states they are participating up to 200 participants for Spray's 10th annual half-marathon to be held in conjunction with the rodeo, Saturday, May 29.

Terry Shaw, trick rider, Oregon City, has been contacted for May 29-30.

Terry is an experienced performer, having made highly acclaimed appearances throughout the Northwest.

Officers of the Spray Rodeo Association are: Tuck Jackson, President, Don Griffith, vice president, Myrna Gervais, secretary-treasurer, Joanne Griffith, rodeo secretary, Effie Stirewalt, court chaperone and advisor. Directors are: DeWayne Simmons, Wilbur Alford, Jim Stirewalt, Bob Troxell, Frank Robison, Ed Kendall and Joe Pettit.

Plans are underway by the Ladies Auxiliary for the Flea Market to be held at the Legion Hall May 9. Pie and coffee will be served while you browse and make selections. The Auxiliary ladies sponsored a most successful bake sale at the General Store, April 16.

Hubert and Goldie Asher are combining business and vacationing while spending a week in San Jose, CA.

Mr. and Mrs. Claude Britt spent Sunday in Long Creek visiting their grandson, Willie Adams and his parents, Verna and Gary.

Judge Leckie and Gus Strecker were business visitors in Ione Thursday.

The Bobby Fishers, Kristi, Bobby J. and Denis Dennis were in Portland Friday for shopping and medical appointments and on Tuesday the Fisher family were in Prineville attending business.

When the Don Griffiths returned from a business trip to Pendleton Tuesday they stopped enroute for visiting and dinner at the Sid Britt and

Al Wiley homes at Echo.

Judge and Mrs. Andrew Leckie spent the Easter vacation in Corvallis at the home of their daughter, the David Goulds and daughter Jasmine. They were accompanied by Anne Coiner, Fossil.

Clara Strecker and Celia Reed were in Heppner early in the week, the latter for medical treatment due to injuries sustained in a recent fall at her home. Mrs. Reed will return to Heppner Monday for further observation.

Letha Harsh is here from Dayton, WA for a two weeks visit with her daughter and son-in-law, Ellen and Lee Brisbois. Another visitor at the Brisbois home is Larry Brisbois II. His parents, the Larry Brisbois and his sister Marcie are expected for the weekend from Boardman.

June Troxell was in Vale Thursday to meet her daughter-in-law and daughter Michele who are here from Germany and will visit her parents, the Marvin McNeils, Vale, the Don Troxells here and other relatives before her return overseas in June.

Walter Britt, formerly of Spray, now of Stanfield, who became critically ill while vacationing in San Francisco, remains hospitalized in that city but reportedly in somewhat improved condition.

Marvin and Louise Britt, Elvina and Carolyn and Armand Britt visited the men's father there through the weekend, stopping enroute overnight at the home of an aunt, Mrs. Helen Boone, Ukiah, CA, who accompanied them on the remainder of the trip.

Mr. and Mrs. Lee Brisbois have been in Boardman the past week where they were guests at the Larry Brisbois home. Lee kept a medical appointment while away.

Paul Shen, Rebecca and Margo Adams are here from Kennewick, WA, visiting at the Odell and Clifford Adams and Lee Brisbois homes and with their grandmother, Ruth Adams.

Don and Bob Troxell were in Portland Friday to meet Mrs. Doug Troxell and daughter Michelle, who arrived from Heilbronn, Germany that day. They are visiting the Don Troxells here and Mrs. Troxell's parents, Colleen and Marvin McNeil at Vale. They plan to return to Germany early in June.

The rodeo kick-off dance was held at the High School gym Saturday evening, April 10, with John Day's Midnight Specials furnishing the music.

The queen's saddle, a product of Leonard Oster's Saddlery, Baker, was on display.

The Spray Rodeo Court, with their chaperones, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Stirewalt, were in attendance and included Tina Cox, Mitchell; Colleen Milton, Monument; Cindy Dougherty, Heppner, and Zorrita Potter, Spray.

One of these girls will be chosen queen at the dance, May 28 prior to the rodeo May 29-30 and will be flown to Pendleton where she will be outfitted at the Round-Up city's New York Store.

The court's next appearance will be at Arlington's annual rodeo and parade May 1.

Plans are nearing completion for the second Spray reunion scheduled for June 19-20. The committees are extending invitations to all those people who may have attended the Spray schools or been a member of the local school system at any time, and all former residents to be here for the two days with friends, old and new.

Registration will start Saturday, June 19, 10 a.m.

A full program has been prepared, with varied daytime activities and a Western style dance on Saturday evening.

A baby sitting service will be provided at a nominal fee. A meal will be served Saturday evening and a Sunday morning breakfast, both for a small charge.

A non-denominational church service will be held Sunday morning at the High School gym.

Overnight accommodations must be personally arranged for, with excellent

camping facilities, camper space, etc. in the area.

Please send information on your acceptance by telephone or return mail to: Margaret Ashmead, Box 255, ph. 468-2345 or Clara Jenkins, Box 64, phone 468-2361, Spray, OR 97874.

State the number in your group, your name and address. Ladies will please include their maiden names. Pass the word along and plan to be in Spray, June 19-20.

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Due to the good response to my \$14 lube special where I furnish oil, filter, and give a complete lube job, I have decided to continue it indefinitely. The only change will be \$15 for 4-wheel drives. Also see me for new or used tires and recaps, exhaust system work, shocks, sport wheels, batteries, wheel packs, etc. Competitive prices.

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