

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Drake Oil Well

AND/OR COMMON
Drake Oil Well

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
State Route 27, south of Titusville

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
23rd

CITY, TOWN
Titusville

VICINITY OF

STATE
Pennsylvania

CODE
42

COUNTY CODE
Venango 121

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

STREET & NUMBER
P. O. Box 1026

CITY, TOWN
Harrisburg

VICINITY OF

STATE
Pennsylvania

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

STREET & NUMBER
Box 1026

CITY, TOWN
Harrisburg

STATE
Pennsylvania

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Pennsylvania Register of Historic Sites and Landmarks

DATE
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
William Penn Memorial Museum

CITY, TOWN
Harrisburg

STATE
Pennsylvania

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has reconstructed the Drake Oil Well on its original site. The first well was built in early June 1857 and was 12 feet square at the base. A steam engine powered a white oak battering ram. The derrick was housed in a tall, steeple-like structure that is at one end of a one-story, gabled-roofed shed. Both the tower and shed were covered with rough, illfitting clapboard, as is the replica. Inside, machinery illustrates how the pioneer oil man drilled the world's first oil well.

In addition to the rebuilt well, the park includes a museum and library. Both of the preceding are housed in a modern one-story brick building. Exhibits in the museum illustrate not only the history of Drake's well, but also the general story of petroleum. The library contains an impressive manuscript and printed collection concerning the oil industry. These features do not contribute to the national significance of the landmark.

BOUNDARY INFORMATION AND JUSTIFICATION

Drake Oil Well is located in Drake Well State Park. Though the park contains in excess of 22 acres, the historic extent of the property as indicated in the deed of transfer, dated December 2, 1932, limits the extent of Drake oil well to less than one acre. The deed describes the property as follows:

FROM AMERICAN PETROLEUM INSTITUTE TO THE COMMONWEALTH.

Situated in Cherry Tree Township, Venango County, Pennsylvania.

Beginning at a point in the north line of the land conveyed by John C. Hibbard and wife to Ebenezer Brewer, et al. by deed recorded in Deed Book Vol. L at page 472, which point is north one degree and forty five minutes east from the original Drake Well;

Thence (1) north eighty eight and one half degrees west along said north line two hundred and thirty two feet to Oil Creek;

Thence (2) south one degree forty five minutes west one hundred and six feet to a point;

Thence (3) south eighty eight and one half degrees east four hundred and seven feet to an iron post;

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Thence (4) north one degree forty five minutes east one hundred and six feet to an iron post in said north line;

Thence (5) north eighty eight and one half degrees west along said north line one hundred and seventy five feet to place of beginning.

Containing nearly one acre.

DEED RECORDED - DEED BOOK 441, PAGE 454, VENANGO COUNTY.

The boundary is shown on accompanying map "a" entitled Drake Oil Well and dated June, 1935

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1859

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Edwin L. Drake drilled the world's first oil well in the summer of 1859. He struck oil on August 27. The petroleum boom that followed has only grown since that time.

The Pennsylvania Rock Oil Company sent Drake to inspect its property near Titusville, Pennsylvania, in December 1857. Drake's report on the possibility of producing oil resulted in the organization of a new company and his becoming its chief engineer in charge of oil production.

Drake returned to Titusville in May 1858. Having decided that only drilling would ensure quantity production, he employed a driller who had worked on salt wells. By early June, a derrick had been raised. It housed a steam engine that actuated a white oak battering ram. The ram drove a drill into the ground. As the drill went deeper, the presence of water caused the walls to collapse. In a brilliant move, Drake secured 50 feet of cast iron pipe and used it to prevent the collapse of the hole's sides. On Saturday afternoon, August 27, 1859, the derrick's drill reached its limit, 69.5 feet. On Sunday, the driller visited the well. He peered into the pipe and 5 inches from the top saw oil. He sped word to Drake, who waited until Monday to visit the well.

Unlike Drake, many men lost all restraint when the news of the discovery spread, and the world's first oil boom followed. The original Drake derrick burned on October 7, 1859, but Drake rebuilt it within a month. For the next quarter of a century, the Titusville region remained the oil center of the Nation.

BIOGRAPHY

Until chance tapped Drake, he had led an ordinary life. Born on March 29, 1819, in New York, he lived with his family until he was nineteen. He then travelled to the present state of Michigan, where he worked as a clerk in a hotel in Tecumseh. Upon his return to the east, he held various jobs, the last as a conductor on the New York and New Haven Railroad between 1850 and 1857. By the latter date, his first wife had died and he had remarried. Laura Dow became his second spouse in 1857. Newly married, the tall, bearded, thin-faced, black-eyed, and personable Drake found it necessary to retire because of poor health. He then invested all his savings, some \$200, in the Pennsylvania Rock Oil Company.

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Drake Oil Well

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In 1858 Drake ventured to Titusville, and the results of his trip were momentous. His optimistic report on the company's possibilities spurred its founders to organize the Seneca Oil Company. The former railroad conductor became its president, with an annual salary of \$1,000. Drake also became the new concern's chief engineer, in effect, for it was his responsibility to produce oil for the Seneca Oil Company.

Persistence in his new and greatest challenge caused Drake to succeed. He and his family, his wife and two children, arrived in Titusville in May 1858. Living at the American Hotel for \$6.50 a week, Drake soon became known as the "Colonel" because his promotion-minded colleagues sent his mail addressed to "Colonel E. L. Drake."

Drake quickly implemented his responsibility, having decided that only drilling would ensure quantity production. Drake sought to employ a driller who had worked on salt wells. Many disappointments in that endeavor delayed progress. It was only in May 1859, that he employed William Smith, a short and laconic individual, who was generally known as "Uncle Billy." For \$2.50 a day, the Colonel received the services of both Smith and his son.

Drake and his helpers made rapid progress. By early June, a derrick had been raised. It measured twelve feet square at the base and contained a steam engine that actuated a white oak battering ram. The ram drove Smith's drills, which he had made for \$76.50, into the ground. As the drill went deeper, the presence of water caused the walls of the hole below to collapse. In a brilliant move, Drake secured 50 feet of cast iron pipe and used it to prevent the collapse of the hole's sides. Then, at thirty-five feet, the drill struck rock. Meanwhile, the other officers of the company regretted the expenditure of \$2,500 without having gained even a thimble full of oil. They ordered Drake to stop. But he had already borrowed \$500 from a bank in Meadville, Pennsylvania, and he ignored the command. On Saturday, August 27, 1859, the derrick's drill had reached its limit, sixty-nine and one-half feet.

On Sunday, Smith visited the derrick. He peered into the pipe and five inches from the top saw oil. He sent for Drake, who did not come but waited until the next morning.

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Before Pennsylvania had lost its leadership as an oil producer, Drake had to be rescued from poverty. The Seneca Oil Company deposed him as president in March, 1860, and he then spent almost four years in Titusville as a justice of the peace and as an oil commission merchant. Ill health again interrupted his career, this time with cruel results. Drake went to New York in 1863 and invested his life's savings of \$16,000. By 1866, he had lost everything and poverty shackled him. Some Titusville acquaintances learned of his plight and in 1869 raised \$4,000 for him. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania also voted him a pension of \$1,500 a year. Drake then settled in Bethlehem, where he lived until his death in 1880.

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Stevens, Sylvester K., Pennsylvania, Birthplace of a Nation (New York, 1964).
Wallace, Paul A., Pennsylvania, Seed of A Nation, (New York, 1962).
"Drake Well Park", Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
(Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, nd.)

TITUSVILLE SOUTH QUADRANGLE
PENNSYLVANIA
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
SW 1/4 TITUSVILLE 15 QUADRANGLE

VANIA

GRAND

RVEY

IN CITY 2 1/2 MILES
FROM TOWN 5 1/2 MILES

11 40'

12

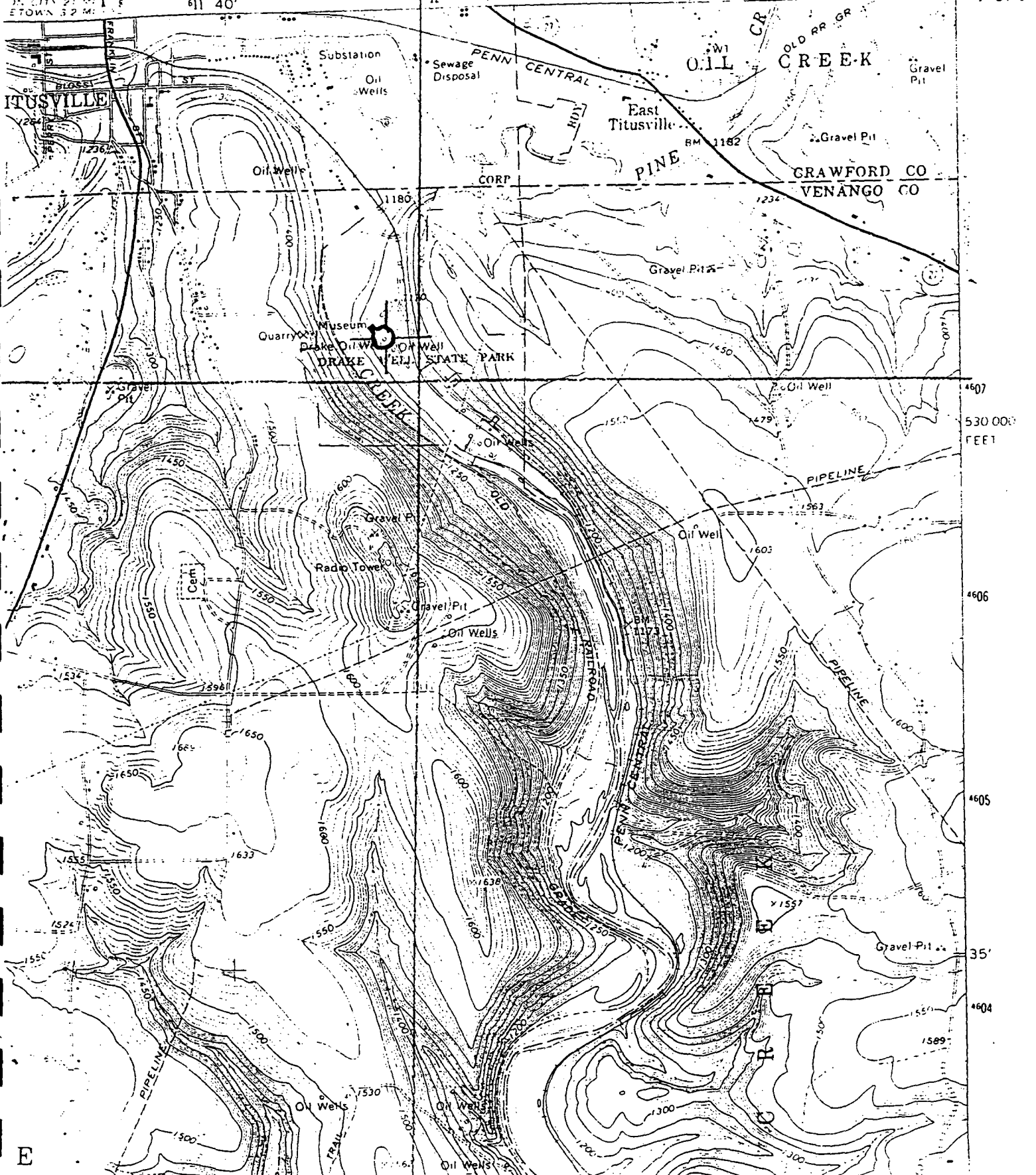
1489 000 FEET

13

14

79° 37' 30"

41° 37' 30"



530 000
FEET

4606

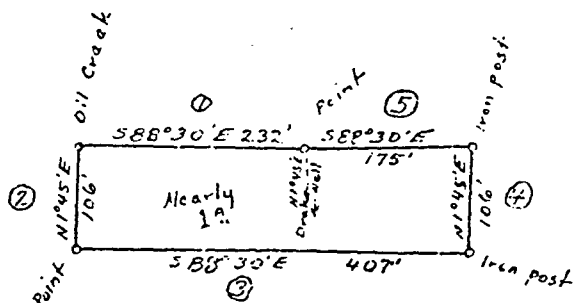
4605

35'

4604

E

DRAKE OIL WELL



Deed Book 441

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Deed Dated Dec 2, 1922

1
a
1

Pennsylvania
Dept of Forests & Waters
Harrisburg
VENANGO Co. CHERRY TREE TWP.
Deed from AMERICAN PETROLEUM INSTITUTE
to
COMMONWEALTH

Plotted & Traced by E.S. June, 1925
Scale 1" = 200'