THE BEGINNING OF THE INTERNATIONAL PETROLEUM EXPOSITION AND CONGRESS

By Fred S. Clinton, M.D., F.A. S.C.

The sponsors and supporters of the International Petroleum Exposition and Congress sought and secured a useful, self-supporting commercial commodity—petroleum,—older than civilization and wide as the world, as the object of civic consideration. Petroleum, or earth oil, the magic fluid known from time immemorial, has been transformed into myriad uses by the ingenuity of modern man. Practically every human activity of today is dependent upon earth oil.¹

The famous Drake well in Pennsylvania drilled to a depth of sixty-nine feet struck oil in 1859 which marked the beginning of the great petroleum industry of today. The oil seeps and springs in the Indian Territory, discovered by the Indians in very early days, were first reported in the published records in the 1840's. Lewis Ross, a brother of Chief John Ross of the Cherokee Nation, found oil in drilling a well for salt, near Salina, Oklahoma, before the War between the States. It was said that this well flowed ten barrels a day for about a year. The first oil well in Oklahoma was drilled in 1888, about twelve miles west of Atoka near Clear Boggy, under the auspices of the Choctaw Oil and Refining Company which had been organized by a group of Choctaws under a law of the General Council of the Choctaw Nation in 1884.²

J. C. W. Bland, M.D., and Fred S. Clinton, M.D., drilled the first oil and gas well on the Sue A. Bland homestead (NW SE Sec. 22, T. 19 N., R. 12 E.) adjoining Red Fork, Indian Territory, on June 25, 1901, and it is still producing.³ Our decision to drill here was based upon our faith in the development of resources of the Indian Territory, the industrial activity and oil interests in Kansas and Texas, the allotment of Indian lands, and the establishing of the legal right of ownership of property which presented a golden opportunity for immediate progress if we could strike oil and secure national publicity without delay. We had no lease or leases when we decided to make a try by leaps and bounds for instant national publicity. This was the first oil and gas discovery well in the Indian Territory,

¹References used in the compilation of this article include: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 175th Anniversary Printing (1943), Vol. 22, pp. 540-41; Oklahoma and Mid-Continent Oil Field, James O. Jones Co. (1930), pp. 7, 9, 220; Gustav Egloff, Earth Oil (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins Co., 1933), pp. 16, 23, 25.
³Oklahoma and Mid-Continent Oil Field, loc. cit.
now Oklahoma, which was nationally publicized, resulting in the rapid industrial development of Tulsa and Oklahoma, and finally to establishing Tulsa as the Oil Capital of the World with the great International Petroleum Exposition and Congress in this City.

God supplies resources. Man develops them. Men build cities. The population of Tulsa in 1900 was 1390, and in 1948 the city had grown to 193,284.

The Editorial in the issue of the American Saturday Night, Tulsa, March 3, 1923, says, "Earl Sneed, local attorney, is of the opinion that Tulsa ought to have an International Petroleum Congress here each year, and why not?"

Earl Sneed, who was the first of record to suggest and outline at some length a comprehensive and workable program for the organization of a great International Petroleum Exposition and Tulsa, said that, "An International Petroleum Exposition and Congress with all its side show features would give thrills to the young people, knowledge to the oil fraternity, opportunity to make world-wide acquaintance, renew friendships, and firmly establish Tulsa for all time to come as the oil center of the entire world." He further insisted that all manufacturers of oil field equipment and refinery supplies, and all those interested in production and distribution form such an organization.

Who's Who in the International Petroleum Exposition For 1923

Work on Tulsa's first annual International Petroleum Exposition started with an enthusiasm which was bound to sweep the project on to brilliant success. Headquarters were established at 212 So. Boston, in charge of Edward F. McIntyre, who was engaged by the Executive Committee as General Manager.

A general committee of over seventy-five Tulsans was sub-divided into 12 working committees in charge of the following departments: Finance, Attractions, Exposition, Convention, Parades and Pageants, Transportation, Scientific and Technical Exhibits, Public Safety, Auditing, Entertainment, Decorations, and Buildings and Grounds. These departments were under the general supervision of the Executive Committee and the General Manager. L. B. Jackson was selected

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Incorporation of the International Petroleum Exposition and Congress followed a favorable report of the conventions committee of the Chamber of Commerce. Earl Sneed had advocated the Oil Exposition, and President H. O. McClure, and General Secretary, Wm. Holden started the preliminary organization which developed the General Committee of about 90 representing all organizations connected with oil industry, local business and civic associations. The organization was incorporated and elected the following officers: L. B. Jackson, President; J. M. Hayner, Vice President; W. A. Vanderver, Vice President; J. J. McGraw, Treasurer; and Wm. Holden, Secretary. These officers and the following: H. O. McClure, A. V. Bourque, Alf. G. Haggem, W. A. Melton, J. H. Gardner, and T. J. Hartman made up the Board of Directors.

The Board promptly engaged E. F. McIntyre as General Manager, who with a competent staff and constant assistance of the Officers, Board and Committees, cooperating resulted in success.\footnote{The Tulsa Spirit, Chamber of Commerce, Vol. IX, No. 12 (October, 1923), pp. 1-4, 8, 10-12, 15.} The minutes or official records of the I.P.E.C. are reported missing or lost. However, since some of us believe in proper publicity, there is enough recorded of what we did to make history.

Alva J. Niles, J. E. Crawford and I. E. Cornelius, were designated by President Jackson as a Committee to draft plans for a permanent organization of the International Petroleum Exposition and Congress, and after a short deliberation they reported, designating E. R. Perry, Vice President of Cosden & Company, as Chairman for Tuesday, and W. H. Gray, President of the National Association of Independent Oil Producers, as Chairman for Wednesday. A. V. Bourque, Secretary of the Association of Natural Gasoline Manufacturers, was made permanent Secretary. This appointment aroused general good feeling among the oil men, because Bourque had worked...
tirelessly in perfecting the Knights of the Derrick, an organization that strives to provide a home for the superannuated.

About October 1, 1923, President L. B. Jackson appointed a committee to investigate rain insurance, with full authority to decide and act. The Committee, Dr. Fred S. Clinton, Chairman, R. F. MacArthur and E. B. Lawson, decided on insurance. On the last day for placing the insurance the Chairman was unable to locate the other members of the Committee, so visited Edward F. McIntyre, General Manager of the Exposition and found an extra amount of $1800 in the Treasury. He gave a schedule of the dates and hours and ordered the rain insurance. The General Manager demanded, and the Chairman gave, a written order. "Why?" he asked. The General Manager answered, "If it is a success, I take the credit, if it is a failure, you take the blame, and catch 'Hullabaloo!'"

The rains came in torrents. More than $10,000 dollars insurance was collected. All bills were paid, which saved the Exposition and established the courage, confidence, and conviction that with cooperation and work, succeeding self-supporting I.P.E.'s were assured in Tulsa.

**KING PETROLEUM OPENS OIL SHOW**

"'In actual life every great enterprise begins with and takes its first forward step in faith.'—Schlegel.

Tulsa, long heralded as the Oil Capital of the World, on Monday, October 8th, 1923, took positive ways of proving to the oil men of this country and visiting oil men from other lands that her claim was justified.

The International Petroleum Exposition and Congress, the dream of a Tulsan, organized and constructed by Tulsa citizens, and supported by oil men from all over the country, was formally opened under the most auspicious circumstances surrounding any previous convention ever staged in Tulsa. It was held in Convention Hall with the adjacent streets used for the exhibits.

The friendly and cooperative attitude of the officials, and employees of Frisco Lines made the entire journey of the King and his attendants from the west to the International Petroleum Exposition and Congress safe and comfortable, arriving at Tulsa on time. King Petroleum and his retinue had received much advance information about the wonderful work in finishing the Exposition in six months. Colorful, gracious, dignified and distinguished, the king was an inspiration to all and a great thrill to the vast welcoming and expectant throng meeting the Royal Train.

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As Mayor Herman F. Newblock stepped upon the private car of King Petroleum, Dr. Fred S. Clinton introduced the visiting monarch as follows:

I would that I could speak with brevity as becomes such an occasion as this of the Kingdom of Tulsa, my native home. This magic and matchless city has accepted the challenge of destiny and decided to build the most magnificent metropolis of the oil world. It is now my honor and pleasure to present to his Royal Majesty, King Petroleum, Mr. L. B. Jackson, President of the International Petroleum Exposition and Congress.

Mr. Jackson introduced the Mayor to the King and then the monarch was escorted to his Royal Float and driven to the Exposition grounds with the Exposition band playing, "Yes we have no bananas."

President Jackson's talk was brief, following the impressive prayer by Rev. C. W. Kerr, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, who has seen Tulsa grow from a little village to a thriving metropolis during his twenty-one years residence here. Upon the special train and at Convention Hall, King Petroleum was attended by two handsome pages, Roger, son of H. W. Randolph, of 218 East Twenty-fourth Street, and Richard, son of C. W. Simmons, of 1537 South Owasso Avenue.

VISITORS PRAISE SHOW

Thousands of oil men were in Tulsa, enjoying the Exposition, and thousands were expected on the succeeding days, of what oil men present unreservedly declared the most magnificent oil exposition ever attempted.

King Petroleum in the person of Judge S. H. King of Tulsa, who made a distinguished looking monarch, formally opened the Exposition shortly before eleven o'clock Monday morning, was royally greeted by Tulsans and visitors when he arrived by special train at nine-forty-five a.m., and was given an ovation befitting a King, at the conclusion of his short, but appropriate talk at Convention Hall. King Petroleum said in part:

I have long known that Tulsa was the Oil Capital but as my royal train approached your city I was amazed and pleased to note the great progress that has been made in recent years. The towering office buildings, housing Tulsa's leading oil concerns, and wide and well kept streets and thoroughfares, and the air of hospitality so openly displayed upon every face, made me feel happy that I was permitted to pay the Capital a visit.

I want to thank the officers of the International Petroleum Exposition and Congress for this beautiful scepter, assuring me that my reign over Tulsa will be a happy and pleasant one. I want to commend the officers of the Exposition for the wonderful exhibition of the art and science of oil drilling to be seen at this Exposition.

After the conclusion of the formal program and King Petroleum had closed his reception, he left and soon afterward appeared on the grounds as a spectator.

The Tulsa Tribune, 92 pages in 7 sections, October 7, 1923, carries a streamer on top of its front page, “Come to the International Petroleum Exposition in Tulsa, October 8-14.” It also presents an excellent picture of King Petroleum, and the program for Sunday, the 7th, and Monday, the 8th. Over a third of the front page is devoted to the Exposition and page 15B is given over to the I.P.E. programs and excellent pictures of each of the 9 floats used in the oil parade. Each float typifies some part of the world history of oil since it was discovered by the Hindu fire worshipers and was designed by Herbert Barnard, Director of the pageant, and constructed under his supervision. The finest horses were secured by Ed Chastain for motive power. Four black horses for the King’s float, drivers and footmen all wore uniforms, white hats and badges.

Four white horses drew the Queen’s float and four gray horses were used for the float of the Duchesses. The floats in the Wednesday parade were manned by high school students under the direction of Miss Isabel Ronan, Tulsa High School Director of Dramatics. They portrayed the parts of slaves and other characters in the Burmese floats, and the transportation and early drilling floats.

RECEPTION

Embarking on world-wide mission by inviting distinguished persons from many civilized countries, the need for diplomacy was felt, and the woman power was called. The women have more natural tact, skill or shrewdness in conducting any affair, especially where social amenity and creature comfort might enter the problem.

Some Social Exposition Events

Mrs. Fred S. Clinton was named Chairman of the committee on arrangements, the formal reception to be held at the Country Club from 9 to 11 p.m., Tuesday, October 9, 1923. Final plans were made at the home of Mrs. Fred S. Clinton, October 2. The following heads of sub-committees were formed: Music, Mrs. F. B. Dillard; Mrs. H. C. Ashby; Refreshments, Mrs. Dan J. Davidson, Mrs. R. P. Brewer, Mrs. Grant Case Stebbins; Decorations, Mrs. J. M. Gillette, Mrs. H. C. Ashby, Mrs. Clinton Moore.

The Queen’s Ball was held at the Country Club, Saturday, October 13, 1923. The guests were greeted in the front drawing-room by Mrs. J. R. Cole, J. M. Gillette, A. T. Allison and Miss Sara.

11 Mrs. Fred M. (Jane Heard) Clinton held the honor and responsibility of Chairman of the Committee on Arrangements, International Petroleum Exposition and Congress, for the years 1923, 1924, 1925.
Davidson who presented them to the receiving line just inside the south drawing-room where Mrs. Fred S. Clinton, Chairman of the Reception Committee, stood at the head of the line. Those in the line were Mr. and Mrs. L. B. Jackson, Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Hayner, Dr. Fred Severs Clinton, King Petroleum (in real life Judge S. H. King) Miss McDonald, Jennie Yerger King. Distinguished visitors in the line were Senor Don Francisco Sanchez Latour, Minister from Guatemala; Dr. Santiago F. Bedoya, Secretary of the Peruvian Embassy at Washington, D. C., Dr. Anagastasia, representing Rumania; Rear Admiral J. K. Robison, of United States Navy; Doctor and Mrs. Lasso from the Mexican Government; T. C. Chu, of the National Geological Survey of China; Lucio Baldo, representing Venezuela; C. E. Steel, President of National Gas and Petroleum Association of Canada; and H. Hollesen of New York City, representing Hugo Stinnes of the German Government.

When the guests had passed the receiving line they were further welcomed and entertained by Mesdames George Williamson, Dan Davison, Harry C. Ashby, F. B. Dillard, R. P. Brewer, H. N. Cole, Grant Case Stebbins, Clinton Moore, Charles E. Bush and Frank H. Greer. In the ballroom they were received by Mesdames W. N. Sill, A. V. Bourque, E. P. Harwell, H. L. Farris, Pat Malloy, Frank Breene, Thomas Chestnut, C. B. Gump, W. L. Kistler, Waite Phillips, Lee Clinton, L. E. Cahill, L. P. Wallis, Leal F. Duncan and Miss Leola Kiser, who led the way to the derricks and tanks, from which flowed punch, presided over by Misses Naomi Brown, Irene Buell, Ann Kennedy, Jane Robinson, Dorothy Vensel, Alice Strouvelle, Nell Cook, Mary Sill Cartwright, Margaret Kerr, and Margaret Lamb.

The dining room was supervised by young society matrons, including Mesdames R. Otis McClintock, Valjean W. Biddison, John L. Shakely, S. C. Canary, and Lester Gillespie, who were assisted by Mesdames Charles I. Hannis, Mary Sill Pierce, John Rogers and Ralph Berry, and Mrs. Margaret Hagler, Leona Galbreath, Margaret Moran, Betty Brewer, Clephane Wertzberger, Fanny Land, Doreas McConnell, Louise Stebbins, Marian McClintock, Dorothy McBinney, Thelma Kennedy, TooKa Campbell, Mary Clay Williams and Norma Campbell.

Queen Petrolia set up her reign early in the week of the Congress. The six Duchesses chosen for the Queen were Misses May Resiling, Rosalind Hollow, Katherine Gavin, Lillian Randall, Cordelia Ann Kennedy, Nellie Cook. Two little pages were selected: Misses Helen Louise Avery and Arline Wyatt. Miss Dorothy Vensel, daughter of Verne Vensel, a Tulsa oil operator, was Queen of the International Petroleum Exposition and Congress, October, 1923.

Editor James McIntyre, still living in Tulsa, wrote in The Oil and Gas Journal, describing the 1923 International Petroleum Exposition and Congress as "Greatest of its kind":

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At this writing, Wednesday, the exposition is on its third day. Over two hundred exhibitors are showing the most complete line of oil country goods ever assembled. The show is a success. There are men in Tulsa from every oil field in the United States and many others interested in the refining and marketing of oil from non-producing states. The opening day's crowd numbered over 5000. Tuesday's attendance greatly exceeded this and it is expected the daily attendance will steadily grow. Oil companies having their headquarters in Tulsa, when the magnitude of the show and the educational benefits to be derived from it were brought home to their officials, immediately made arrangements to have their superintendents and field operatives of lesser authority devote a part of the week in a study of the multitudinous things on exhibition as well as the scientific discoveries of the United States Bureau of Mines, The Geological Survey and Technical societies.

On the opening day the interest was so great it was nearly midnight before the last visitor left the grounds, and the same interest was shown by the larger crowd on Tuesday night.

The most surprised and enthusiastic of all were the exhibitors themselves. Many of these have said that this was the greatest exposition the oil and gas industry had ever known.

The Publicity Department of the International Petroleum Exposition in 1940, congratulating Earl Sneed on fortunate and valuable pioneer planning recommendation, said, "What Sneed's eyes saw were a few pieces of oil industry equipment, of which the manufacturers were most proud. What his imagination visioned can be seen today in the $750,000.00 plant of the I.P.E., covering 25 acres southeast of the city." Total value, 1948, three million dollars.

THE SILVER ANNIVERSARY

Advance publicity described the plans for the great Silver Anniversary celebration of the International Petroleum Exposition and Congress in 1948:

The International Petroleum Exposition and Congress will celebrate its Silver Anniversary in the recently enlarged 15-acre plant where almost 2000 exhibitors will display equipment costing more than one hundred million dollars. An anticipated attendance of over 225,000 visitors and delegates from thirty-three countries and the United States will see demonstrations of wartime and post-war progress in petroleum machinery methods, processes and equipment for exploration, drilling, production, transportation, refining and marketing divisions of the oil industry. The enlarged Hall of Science, with the world's most complete collection of technical and scientific exhibits, will tell the complete story of petroleum. Established in 1923, the I.P.E. will commemorate its 25th year of service to more than 34,000 individual concerns of all sizes, and to 1,250,000 people who make their living in the progressive petroleum industry.

The exposition occupies two blocks on Boulder avenue, and three blocks on Brady avenue and in addition large vacant lots were utilized for the display of very heavy machinery and for the derricks where drilling operations were under way. All the buildings are of steel construction. A separate structure of large dimensions houses the scientific, technical and historical displays. Convention Hall, with a seating capacity of 3000 people,

is used for meetings of the congress and other events, and for the hippodrome performances.

Enthusiasm and the best of feeling marks the exposition. It has been the meeting place of many old friends whose business or occupation ordinarily has kept them wide apart, and the renewal of old friendships has been one of the fine things in connection with the big show. It has brought manufacturer and purchaser together intimately and created personal friendships which heretofore had only been extended to the goods the one made and the other bought.

**The Next Oil Exposition**

Plans already are being made for a greater and probably longer International Petroleum Exposition and Congress, W. G. Skelly, IPE president, announced Saturday.

The record-breaking silver anniversary IPE [1948] which played host to more than 300,000 visitors was reviewed at a special executive committee meeting.

The keynote of our meeting was one of perfecting plans to render still greater service to almost 35,000 concerns of all sizes and the 1,500,000 or more people who make their living in the petroleum industry," said Skelly.

The IPE chief said exact dates of the next exposition will be announced soon.

**Some Favor 1950 Show**

Skelly said hundreds of exhibitors who helped make the 1948 exposition a success are eager for another oil show in 1950. But, he explained, "the oil company personnel who attended the exposition are the ones who make the show a profitable investment for exhibitors."

"We've just commemorated 25 years of useful and profitable service to the industry. The next exposition must be of greater service than any other that has gone before."

The Tulsa oil man and civic leader pointed out that newspaper editors and trade journal publishers have said the 1948 oil show was without question the world's finest and most complete exposition of equipment and services used in the industry.

Turning to the advisability of extending the next exposition beyond the eight days of the 1948 show, Skelly said: "The logic of affording oil companies additional days for staggering the attendance of executives and employees who must keep the wheels of industry turning while the show goes on was clear to many of our 1948 exhibitors."

In a recent mail survey of 1948 exposition exhibitors' sentiment on future expositions of 10, 12, and 15 days has indicated more than half of the firms exhibiting this year favored a longer show for future years. Out of 400 firms queried by mail, 268 replied with votes for a longer show.

One has a sense of deep regret to have to ration the history of so important an event as the beginning of the International Petroleum Exposition and Congress, the early records of which are reported

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lost. Yet for those who had a part in the beginning of this great organization, I want to express pride in that we had faith in our objective, confidence in ourselves, and the courage to do and dare in the first development of oil in Tulsa County.

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14 Hon. William Grove Skelly was elected President of the International Petroleum Exposition and Congress in 1924, and succeeding years to the present (1949). He has been a marvellous manager and president in the development of this greatest exposition in the progress of petroleum industry in the world.

The following Tulsa newspapers and periodicals published much valuable information about the International Petroleum Exposition and Congress in 1923: