

... from the very beginning



Ancient people were mystified by accidental discoveries of natural gas, seeping from the ground, or rising through clefts in rock. Word was passed from village to village, and many people came to witness this great discovery. Thinking they were in the presence of a supernatural agency, they appointed a priestess, built a temple. Thus was established the Oracle of Delphi, not a supernatural thing, but the discovery of natural gas on Mount Parnassus in Greece.

A thousand years ago, the Chinese obtained natural gas from wells, 2,000 feet deep, transmitted it through bamboo pipes and used it to evaporate brine in salt making, probably the first industrial use of natural gas. Following the discovery of burning springs in the United States, there was a period of "hunch" and "wobble-stick" exploration, similar to methods used to locate water.

It wasn't until 1859 that an American, Edwin L. Drake, after persistent drilling, struck oil at Titusville, Pennsylvania. The petroleum industry was born; a boom in rock oil rivalled the gold rush of the previous decade. Unfortunately, early oil men disregarded natural gas,

except as a miracle to push oil to the surface, so gas wells which did not produce oil were ignited and allowed to burn out over many years.

"Hunch" and "wobble-stick" techniques were succeeded by scientific methods of the geophysicist. The magnetometer measured abnormal magnetic forces, indicating the existence of geological formation favorable for oil and gas accumulations. The torsion balance, measuring variations in specific gravity at different points on the earth's surface, indicated the same conditions. The seismograph measured sound waves and earth shocks induced by dynamite charges, thus charting the location of a dense structure or rock salt dome where gas would exist.

Natural gas engineering advanced slowly during the early days. Although gas was piped short distances, attempts to transmit natural gas through a 25 mile pipeline failed in 1872.

After the Miracle of Discovery, almost a century passed before the Miracle of Transmission. Next week... the transmission line.



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A C T O N

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