

A Brief History of Oil and Gas Exploration in British Columbia

The history of oil and gas development in British Columbia extends back nearly 125 years. The following is a very brief chronological account of oil and gas exploration in the province up to 1947. It was in this year that the Leduc oil discovery was made in Alberta ushering in an oil boom in western Canada and setting in motion the beginnings of the current oil and gas industry. Between 1890 and 1947 about 60 wells were drilled and recorded in B.C.

- 1889 A railway company looking for coal drilled a hole at Haney on the Fraser River near Pitt Meadows and reported a violent gas blow at a depth of 60 feet.
- 1890's Port Haney No. 1 well was drilled adjacent to the railway well, above, and encounters "marsh gas" at a depth of 193 feet.
- 1891 The Geological Survey of Canada examines oil seeps in the Sage Creek – Flathead area of southeastern British Columbia.
- 1901 The British Columbia Mines Department examines oil seeps on the Queen Charlotte Islands.
- 1906 The first officially recorded well was drilled; the Steveston No. 1, in the Fraser River delta. This was abandoned at a depth of 1200 feet.
- 1908 Beaver Valley No. 1, Cariboo area.
- 1909 Akamina No. 1, Flathead area, southeastern British Columbia. This was drilled to a depth of 1256 feet.
- 1910 Muir Creek No. 1, Sooke area. The well was abandoned at a depth of 1560 feet. A second Sooke well was drilled before 1920 on Whiffin Spit, total depth was 2000 feet.
- 1913 Tian Bay No. 1, Graham Island, Queen Charlotte Islands. This well was drilled to a depth of 1606 feet and recorded a 5 foot flare flare during drilling.
- 1920 Queen Charlotte oil shales (Kunga and Maude formations) were evaluated suggesting a potential yield of 10 to 30 gallons oil/ton rock.
- 1920 Kamloops No. 1, with a total depth of 662 feet.
- 1920's The British Columbia government drills 5 or 6 test holes in the Peace River area, just west of the Townships. These were not intended for completion or production.
- 1941 The British Columbia government drills a test hole near Pine Pass.

- Early 1930's The British Columbia government places all lands in the Peace River area under a drilling reserve.
- 1936 to Two farm gas wells used for heating and cooking at Steveston on Lulu Island

1949 in the Fraser delta, producing gas from 17 feet.

Christmas eve, 1947 Spudding of the first successful gas well in British Columbia; The Peace River Natural Gas No. 1. This was a Cadotte gas well in 6-30-80-13 W6, and eventually flowed gas at 600 to 1200 mcf/day.

A more detailed description of the history of oil and gas exploration in British Columbia can be found in:

Janicki, E., (2008); Petroleum Exploration History of Northeastern British Columbia; in Geoscience Reports 2008, BC Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources, pages 41-57.

Legislation/Administration:

1924 "An Act Respecting Coal, Petroleum, and Natural-Gas Mines".

1936 "Coal and Petroleum Act".

1944 "An Act Respecting Petroleum and Natural Gas".

The **FIRST "Petroleum and Natural-gas Act"**, separate from Coal or Mines.

Royal Assent March 15, 1944.

Proclaimed into effect June 19, 1944.

April 3, 1947 **Royal Assent given to a NEW "Petroleum and Natural Gas Act, 1947".**
Administered by the **Coal, Petroleum and Natural Gas Branch** of the **Department of Lands and Forests**

November 5, 1947 First oil and gas tenure was issued; a Permit granting the right to conduct geological work.

April 1, 1953: Administration of oil and gas tenure and activities transferred to the **Department of Mines.**

April 1, 1956: The **Petroleum and Natural Gas Branch** was established.

1944, 1947, 1954, 1965 and 1982 Major revisions of the **Petroleum and Natural Gas Act** were undertaken.

1998 The British Columbia Oil and Gas Commission established. It took over all regulatory aspects of oil and gas activities in British Columbia, including exploration and development.

2010 Oil and Gas Activity Act implemented. This act consolidated and modernized regulations previously found within the Oil and Gas Commission Act, the Pipeline Act together with some aspects of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Act.