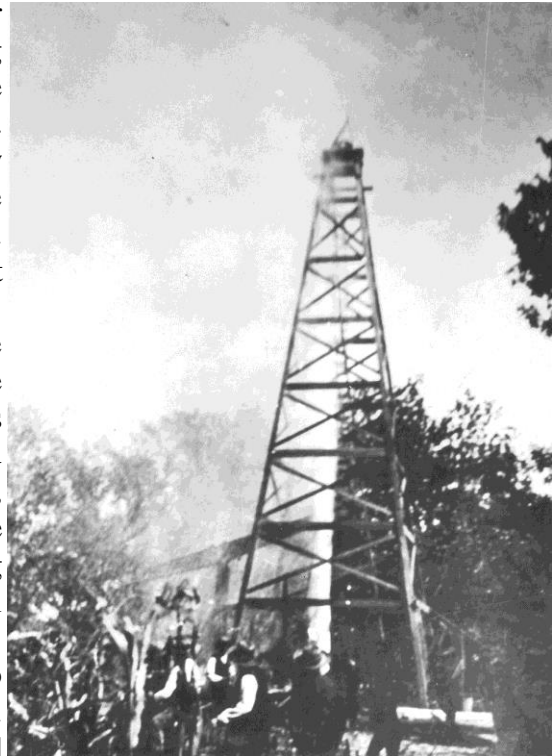


Welcome to Norman #1 Museum

First Commercial Oil Well in the Mid-Continent Oil Field

As Neodesha began to grow, the prominent citizens of town had hopes of providing gas to supply the city with lights. It was known that the early Indians held their councils around the glow of burning gas springs in the area and that many pharmacies of that day were stocked with medicines including “British Oil” and “Barbados Tar” made of oil. So this is what brought attention to Neodesha and the soon to be Norman No. 1 Oil Well.

As William Mills arrived in Neodesha in 1892 and after examining several sites in the area, selected a garden plot belonging to T. J. Norman, a local blacksmith. The site was located three blocks south of Main Street on the banks of the Verdigris River. Mills believed this site to be very promising and immediately commenced drilling. On November 28, 1892, at just 832 feet, the steel bit chopped its way to find oil and the Norman No. 1 Oil Well. Mills immediately plugged the well to take a sample back east. At the return of Mills from Pennsylvania, it proved that Neodesha had the riches of oil and gas in their back yard, making the area the richest bed of prehistoric decay. This discovery attracted the attention of men willing to risk large amounts of money on Kansas as a source of crude oil. The first of these were John W. Galey and James Guffey of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. These veteran oilmen, with their talent for developing petroleum resources on a large scale, put southeastern Kansas on the road to success in revealing its long hidden riches. On October 4, 1893, this oil producing well was shot with thirty quarts of nitroglycerine made by George Perry. The explosives were carted by Perry in a spring wagon from Webb City, Missouri to Neodesha. This was the beginning of Norman No. 1 oil Well, the first commercial oil well in the Mid-Continent Oil Field.



Neodesha business men promoted their oil industry. In 1897 the Oil Company of Kansas began a small refinery which grew to be known as the Standard Oil Refinery.

After Norman No. 1 came under control of the Forest Oil Company, it continued to produce 12 barrels of oil per day for just a few years. Then in 1919, because of a leaky casing, production dropped off to a half of a barrel per day. That same year the casing was pulled out, its rig dismantled, and most of the equipment was removed from the site. In 1961, reconstruction of the derrick and nearby structures were rebuilt. The wooden replica of the derrick was built to scale at 65 feet high with a 22-foot square base. Although the rig was originally constructed of local wood, California Redwood was used for the replica.

The well site was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1974 because it possessed national significance in commemorating the history of the United States and oil production. A bronze plaque was presented by the Heritage Conservation Recreation Service of the United States Department of the Interior is displayed at the original site. In 1989, due to multiply floods, the museum and replica were moved to the current location at 106 South First on Highway 75. The original site on Mill Street is still maintained with a beautiful, peaceful park. Many tourist still visits the location to reminisce the early days of oil production in Southeast Kansas.