

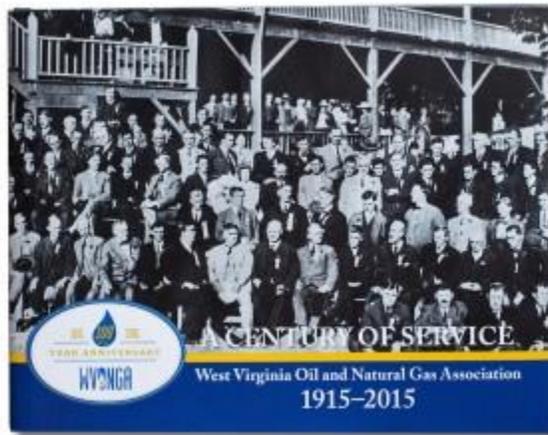
WVONGA celebrates 100th anniversary with book, social media campaign to gather residents' stories

By GEORGE HOHMANN

September 22, 2015

For the West Virginia Press Association

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — *“The history of the oil and natural gas industry worldwide is closely linked to the industry’s birth, growth and expansion in West Virginia. ... In fact, the world’s petroleum industry had its roots in West Virginia.” — “A Century of Service”*



“A Century of Service” — a 96-page, hard-back book chock full of stories and photos about the West Virginia oil and natural Gas industry’s first 100 years the 96-page book is available for \$69.95. For more information contact Rebekah Hogue at the association by email, rhogue@wvonga.com or by phone, 304-343-1609.

That statement, from the foreword of “A Century of Service,” a history of the West Virginia Oil and Natural Gas Association, starts the insight for readers of the new book dedicated to development of WVONGA and the state’s oil and natural gas industry.

A hard-back book chock full of stories and photos about the industry’s first 100 years in the Mountain State, “A Century of Service” will be released at the WVONGA’s 100th anniversary annual meeting and Hall of Fame celebration Sept. 28 to Oct. 1 at Oglebay Resort in Wheeling.

As part of the year-long celebration of its first 100 years, the trade association also will launch a social media campaign seeking stories and photos of West Virginians who worked in the industry down through the years.



This was the world's deepest well when it was completed in 1918. It was drilled 7,386 feet deep by the Hope Gas Co. on the Martha Goff farm, about eight miles northeast of Clarksburg, Harrison County. The title for deepest well moved to Marion County in 1919 when Hope drilled a 7,579-foot-deep well on the I.E. Lake farm near Fairmont. Photo courtesy of WVONGA

“The centennial is a year-long celebration,” Robert Orndorff of Dominion Resources, the immediate past president of the association, said. “We think there are a lot of human-interest stories about people who worked in the industry and maybe their grandfathers who worked in the industry. We think it’s important to try to capture that.”

WVONGA hopes to combine the records of the association and the industry with the stories of the workers and residents to get a more complete history. The book includes many personal accounts.

“George Washington and Thomas Jefferson both observed natural gas vents located along the Kanawha River. Jefferson’s account ... described the brilliant flame produced by thrusting a lit candle into the gas emanating from the mouth of a spring.” — “A Century of Service”

Benjamin Hardesty, a member of the association’s Board of Directors for 30 years, served as an editor and wrote several portions of the book, which was published by WVONGA.



A pipe-laying crew pauses for the camera in the 1915-1940 era. They got the job done with a bulldozer (far left), chains, cables and elbow grease. Photo courtesy of WVONGA

Hardesty wrote in the preface that it was decided to publish the book “to tell our members, friends, West Virginia citizens, elected officials, and regulators about where we have been and what we have done to make our state a better place in which to live, work and contribute to the economic and social well-being of all West Virginians.

“Further, we wanted to share stories and photos of our dynamic industry, which has contributed to our country’s industrial and manufacturing growth and energy security.”

“We had a lot of assistance from Dominion Resources, NiSource Inc., EQT and Cabot Oil & Gas Corp.,” said Hardesty. Those companies and their predecessors “have been involved in the history of the association since the beginning.”

The stories and photos are divided into quarter-century segments. There’s also a timeline that chronicles major developments in the United States and in West Virginia’s oil and gas industry from 1915 to 2015.

The book notes that West Virginia led the nation in oil production in 1900 and was the leader in natural gas production from 1906 to 1917.

It also highlights the fact that the world’s deepest wells were drilled in Harrison County in 1918 and in Marion County in 1919.

Hardesty said there was a theory at the time — since proved — that the Earth is warmer at its core. The deep West Virginia wells drew queries from Scientific American magazine and from researchers in Germany, Russia and China.

“They wanted to know what the temperature was down there,” Hardesty said. “West Virginia made a contribution to the body of science as well as having had the deepest wells in the world.”



Leonard Swing prepares to use a shovel to bury seismic recording devices known as pickups or jugs. Formally known as seismometers, the jugs were used with a time-recording instrument (a seismograph) to map the subsurface in the 1915-1940 era. Photo courtesy of WVONGA

The book contains separate stories about the West Virginia Geological Survey; David McKain, who co-wrote a history of the industry in West Virginia; the West Virginia University School of Engineering; and the West Virginia Manufacturers Association, which also is marking its 100th anniversary.

In addition, there are features about Michael Benedum, known as “The Great Wildcatter”; stories about the Cabot Oil & Gas Corp. and EQT; and the emergence of civil engineering design in the state’s shale gas industry.

The Hastings Extraction and Fractionation Plant, which traces its history to 1902, is the subject of a story and several photos.

Maps showing the location of major pipelines and shale formations are among the many illustrations in the book.

The association printed 1,000 copies of the 96-page book, which is available for \$69.95. For more information contact Rebekah Hogue at the association by email, rhogue@wvonga.com or by phone, 304-343-1609.

Orndorff said as extra copies become available the association will, upon request, provide books to city and county officials, citizen organizations and public libraries.

The social media campaign will launch at its annual meeting. WVONGA plans a year-long effort to encourage West Virginians to share the family and community histories of people who worked in the industry down through the years.

If a reader identifies a relative in a photo in the book, the association hopes the reader will supply that information. “If someone has a complementary picture, they could take a photo of it and make that available to us as well,” Orndorff said.

Following the annual meeting and celebration, material may be submitted via the association’s website (www.wvonga.com) and Facebook page. The idea is to make that history available on the webpage and on Facebook, he said.

The West Virginia Oil and Natural Gas Association has more than 200 members. The trade group represents a cross-section of the industry from the wellhead to the burner tip.