

THE ELMSLEY OIL FIELD

What Did Robert Jamieson Find?

On October 2, 1903, under the headline *“The Elmsley Oil Fields”*, the *Perth Courier*’s front page carried a letter to the editor announcing that oil had been discovered on the Town’s very doorstep. According to gentleman farmer Robert Jamieson, oil was seeping to the surface not only on his own land at North Elmsley Township C-10/L-26, but across an *“oil belt [running] north-east and south-west through the 9th and 10th concessions of the Township ... for at least five miles, and of considerable width”*.¹

“Your readers may smile,” Jamieson acknowledged, *“... and scout the idea of there being such a thing as petroleum at our very doors”*, but he went on to *“... risk the prediction that, in the near future, an oil field will be developed within sight of the Town of Perth”*.²

I know of many places in this belt where the drill could be started on the rock in a pool of blue oil. Archibald McLaren [C-10/L-25] and Thomas McLaren [C-10/L-24] as well as myself [C-10/L-26] have made openings and drilled about ten feet in the rock to prove where the oil comes from. Anyone who is sceptical about the existence of this oil belt should see those wells, especially that of Thomas McLaren on the east side of the Tay Canal. This is only one of fifty or sixty places located by me.

*The oil coming through a great depth of sandstone has lost the impurities usually found in the black crude oils of other fields, but the oil-sands brought up with this oil show that it is the same at its source.*³

Jamieson admitted that he was not an expert, and conceded that *“... an expert, on account of the color of this oil, might at first sight doubt the existence of petroleum here”*, but he reminded *Courier* readers that, *“experts are often mistaken”*.

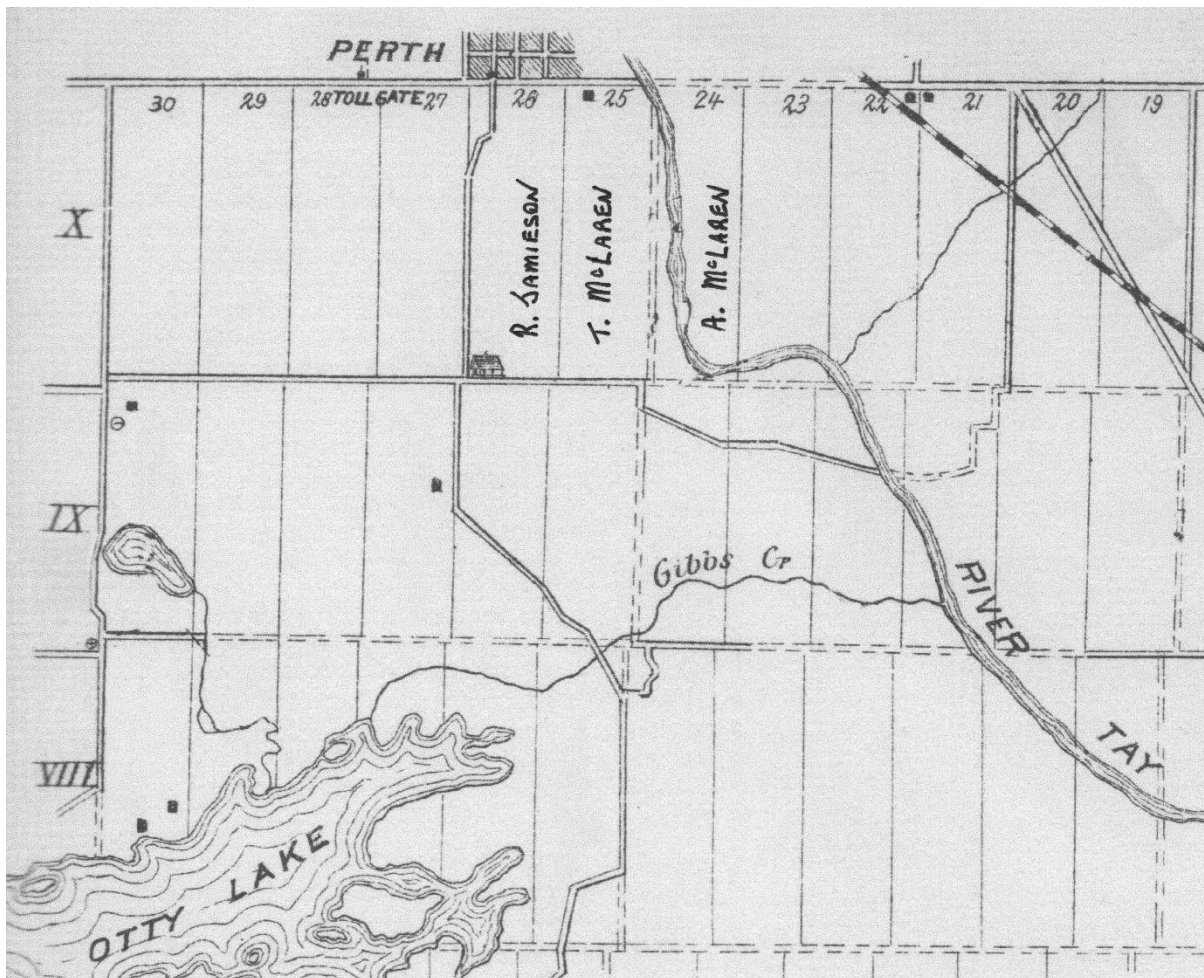
The ‘experts’ of 1903, and those of today, categorically state that the sedimentary rocks of North Elmsley Township concessions nine and ten, immediately south of the Town of Perth, could not yield oil (petroleum). They are much too old and are the wrong type of rock. They are late Cambrian to early Ordovician (Potsdam/Nepean formation to March formation sandstones and calcareous sandstones), about 500 million years old. Potsdam/Nepean sandstone contains very few fossils, and little evidence of life, in part because the bottom facies are terrestrial and were deposited before life existed on land. Only much, much, much younger rocks yield petroleum. It requires decomposing life to get oil. It would be neigh impossible to get oil from the sandstones, and there are no rocks under the (North Elmsley Township) sandstones that would produce oil that could rise to the surface.⁴

¹ *Perth Courier*, October 2, 1903.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Christopher Brett, author of the blog *Fossils & Geology of Lanark County*, email to Ron W. Shaw of February 22, 2018.



Yet, in 1903, Jamieson, and Archibald and Thomas McLaren, claimed to have found 50 or 60 small pools of “blue oil” on their Elmsley Township farms.

Robert Jamieson (1848-1932) was not a con artist, nor was he a flake or nut-case, and he was not an ignorant dreamer.

Born in 1848 at Kars, Rideau Township, Carleton County, he was the son of David Jamieson (1820-1914) and Mary Jane Gibson (1814-1889)⁵. In the mid-1860s he arrived at Perth to study at the Grammar School while, simultaneously, working in the Post Office. When he graduated he qualified as a school teacher and between 1866 and 1871 taught at Manotick, in Drummond Township and at Fallbrook. In 1871 he went to work in the Perth office of Archibald Cameron, Division Court Clerk, and, when Cameron died in 1873, he was appointed Division Court Clerk in his place, and held that post for 59 years. In the 1870s and 1880s Jamieson was also an agent for the Canada Permanent Building & Savings Society, the National Insurance Company of Montreal and a partner in Jamieson & Dennison Real Estate Agents.

⁵ Robert Jamieson had 12 siblings: Joseph (b.1846), Margaret (b.1845), William N. (b.1850), John (b.1853), David (b.1854), Sarah (b.1856), Elizabeth (b.1858), Mary A. (b.1859), Martha (b.1861), Thomas (b.1862), Samuel (b.1864) and Caroline (b.1866).

In 1892 he was elected as a Perth Board of Education Trustee, and then named Board Secretary in 1895, a position he held continuously for 37 years. Jamieson served a three-year term as Town Councillor and was later the municipality's Collector of Taxes for nearly 40 years. In addition, he was, for 20 years, Secretary and Librarian to the Mechanics Institute (precursor to the Public Library) and Secretary/Treasurer of the South Lanark Agricultural Association for more than 25 years. He was also frequently appointed a Returning Officer for Municipal and Provincial elections.

In 1874, at Perth, Robert Jamieson married Catherine Sinclair Holliday (1857-1938), a daughter of David Holliday.⁶ They had six children; Robert Laurence (b.1875), Gertrude Sinclair (b.1877), David Earnest (b.1878), Melville (b.1881), Edith (b.1883) and Inez (b.1892).

At various times and for varying periods of time Jamieson also served on the Board of Directors of the Perth Electric Light Company, the Bathurst & Mississippi Macadamized Road Company, the Perth Cemetery Company and Royal Arcanum #1441⁷. He sat for many years on the executive of the Perth Bible Society and was a member in long standing of True Britons' Lodge A.F.&A.M. in which he held various offices. In his personal life he was what the Perth *Courier* called an "*historian, poet, and litterateur*"⁸. In particular he was well known as a poet. "*His collection ... would comprise a volume of four hundred pages and all of them have been published, though not in book form*".⁹

Jamieson also owned a farm of about 50 acres, part of Elmsley Township C-10/L-26, on the southern outskirts of Perth where he bred high quality Jersey and Ayrshire dairy cattle, traded in imported dairy breeding stock and, in 1903, discovered small surface pools of "*blue oil*".

In 1903, at age 55 years, Robert Jamieson was one of the leading men of Perth. He was reasonably well educated, widely read and a well-respected church-going (Methodist) citizen of his community. The Perth *Courier* opined that, "*No more interesting character could have been found in this district than that of Mr. Jamieson*".¹⁰ Impossible as it may be for the rock formations of North Elmsley Township to yield petroleum, there is little doubt that Jamieson found something he honestly believed, and had reason to believe, to be oil. A month after his initial announcement, it was reported that;

*Mr. Robert Jamieson has received a most encouraging report from the provincial authorities to whom he forwarded samples of oil obtained near Perth, and we understand that there is a strong likelihood of a well being sunk at an early date to test the value of the property as an oil-producer. All good citizens will join heartily in wishing Mr. Jamieson and his fellow-promoters of the new enterprise the greatest possible success.*¹¹

⁶ Her mother's maiden surname was Sinclair.

⁷ A fraternal benefit society.

⁸ Perth *Courier*, April 29, 1932.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Perth *Courier*, October 30, 1903.

Just what “*provincial authorities*” provided Jamieson with such an “*encouraging report*” is unclear, but presumably this was a reference to the Mines Branch of the Ontario Department of Crown Lands¹².

Winter put further immediate exploration of the ‘Elmsley Oil Field’ on hold, but in the spring of 1904, Jamieson prepared to commence drilling. One of his first initiatives was to make application to the Municipal Councils of Perth and the Township of North Elmsley for funding assistance.

For some time past I have had reason to believe that there is an oil belt in the Township of Elmsley, and since the snow has melted I have visited some of the places where the oil appeared last summer, and what was to be seen has convinced my belief in this oil belt.

I am not financially able to undertake the work of testing this belt, as it will cost at least \$1,000 to do so and perhaps twice that sum, and I am making a proposition ... as follows:

If the Town of Perth and the Township of Elmsley will each give \$500 I will commence work in May or June. If I strike oil in paying quantities, or gas, then the five hundred to be a bonus to me. If I fail to strike oil or gas in paying quantities, I will give security to repay the \$500 in five annual payments of \$100 without interest.

*I am not the only one who has a prospect of oil, as a great portion of the Township of Elmsley indicates the presence of oil in the rock, even where the sandstone is covered with forty feet of limestone the oil and gas have found their way to the surface.*¹³

Jamieson also approached the County of Lanark for funding assistance, telling council that he had “*every prospect of striking oil*” and that drilling in North Elmsley “*should not be considered a local matter. The county has the right formation for oil, in the upper lime, the sandstone and lower or Trenton limestone*”¹⁴.

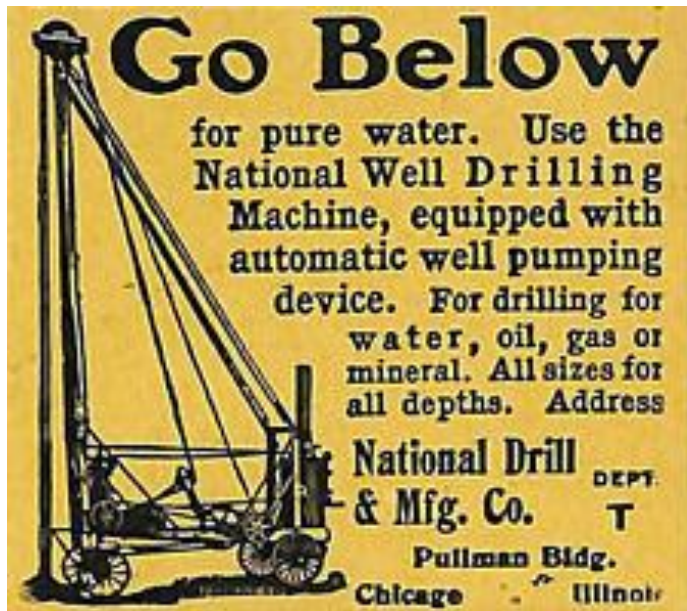
Nevertheless, he secured no financial participation from the Town, Township or County. It was determined that the Ontario Municipal Act “*did not give them power to act in the matter*”¹⁵. The Town of Perth, however, did award him the exclusive franchise to provide oil (when he had a supply available) for suppressing dust on the town streets. Despite this setback the Perth *Courier*, under the headline ‘*Pluck and Enterprise*’, continued to bang the drum for Jamieson.

¹² Reorganized as the Ontario Department of Lands and Mines in 1905.

¹³ Letter, Jamieson to Perth Town Council, printed in the Perth *Courier* edition of April 15, 1904.

¹⁴ Perth *Courier*, November 25, 1904.

¹⁵ Perth *Courier*, June 3, 1904.



As stated in last week's Courier, town Solons¹⁶ were unable to give Mr. Robert Jamieson the financial aid he asked toward testing this neighborhood for oil, but Mr. Jamieson's confidence is still unshaken, and he has shown his confidence in the project by investing heavily in machinery with the object of sinking wells in the immediate neighborhood of Perth.

He has some fine samples of surface oil and sees no reason why nature should not bide her liquid riches in this section as well as in the western parts of Ontario. At all events he is sparing little in the way of expense to make the test, and we are

sure that every citizen will applaud his efforts and wish him the greatest success in his venture.

Some weeks ago, he ordered a drilling machine from Chicago, and it arrived here on Monday. The machine is a ponderous affair weighing two-and-a-half tons. It is known as the 'Hercules Rock Drill', is manufactured by the American Well Works, and Mr. Jamieson intends drilling a six-inch hole to the depth of 300 feet, if he should fail to locate oil at a lesser depth.

Mr. John Dittrick is now engaged in setting up the massive machine on Mr. Jamieson's lot just outside of town, and when ready for business it will be operated by Mr. James Croskery and his nine horse-power gasoline engine.

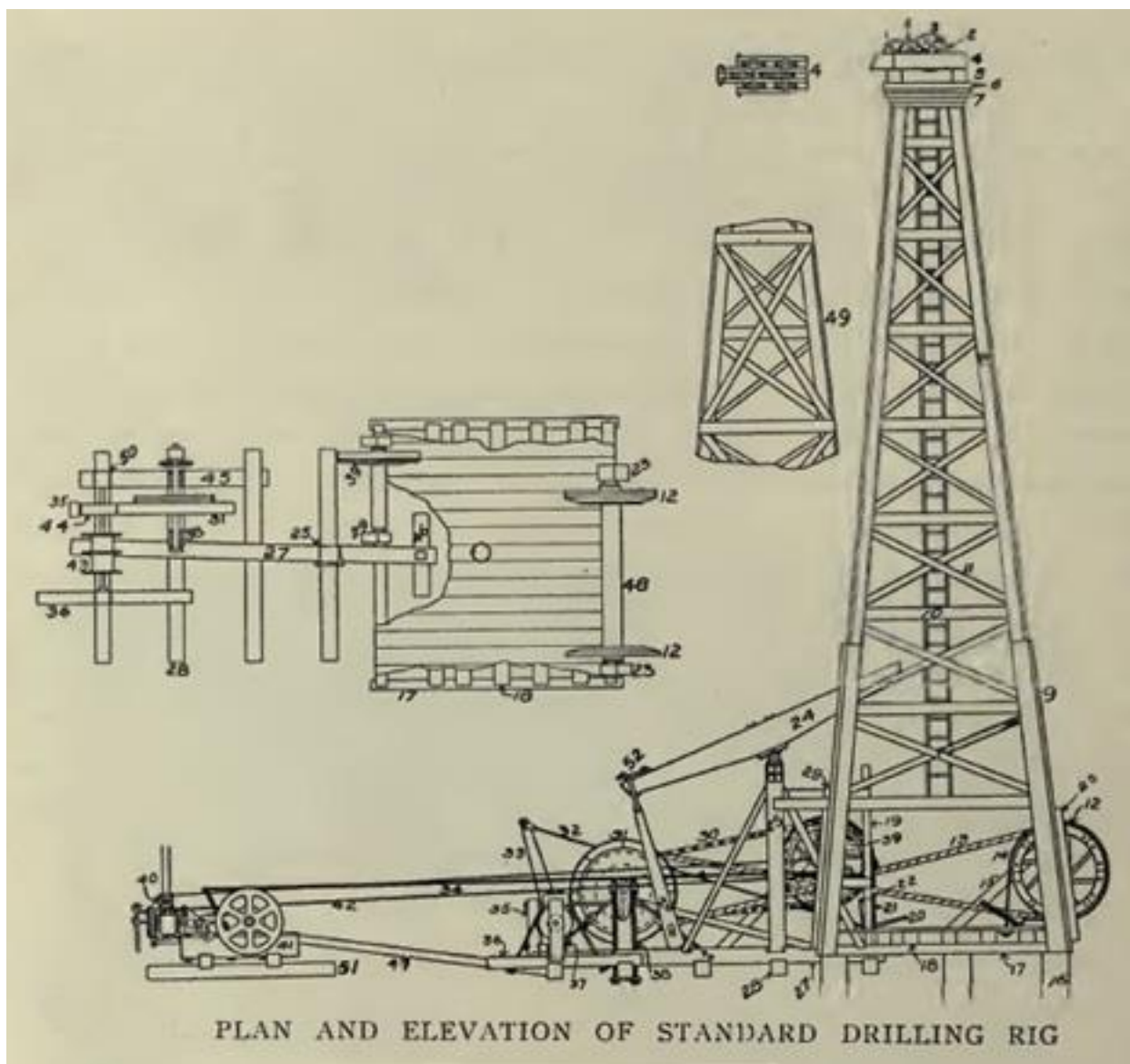
The work will be gone on with immediately, and we trust that within a reasonable time we may have the pleasure and the privilege of announcing that our enterprising citizen's undaunted efforts have been crowned with the success they so richly deserve. Mr. Jamieson is no pessimist, and who knows but that ere long we may have a few oil kings in and around our favored town as one result of his plucky action as above outlined.¹⁷

How Jamieson financed purchase of the 'Hercules Rock Drill', plus all the other equipment, material, supplies and labor expenses of sinking a well that eventually reached a depth of more than 1,200 feet, is unknown.

¹⁶ Defined by Merriam-Webster as "wise & skillful lawgivers".

¹⁷ Perth Courier, June 10, 1904.

Jamieson was financially secure, but he does not seem to have been a rich man. He had a civil servant's wage as Clerk of the Division Court, his part-time positions as Secretary to the Board of Education and Town Tax Collector were paying jobs, and he earned some additional income from selling insurance, brokering real estate and trading in purebred dairy cattle. In the 1911 census he reported an annual income of \$825 from his Court Clerk salary plus \$250 from other sources, for a total of \$1,075 per year. He told Town Council at the outset that he was "*not financially able to undertake the work ...*" of drilling an oil well. Although the *Courier* once referred to Jamieson's "*fellow-promoters*", it never named them, and there is no mention of a company being formed. One suspects that 'promoters' did not necessarily equate 'investors' but may have simply meant 'well-wishers'. Archibald and Thomas McLaren, and other neighboring farmers, may have had some financial stake in the enterprise, but beyond Jamieson's failed attempts to raise funds from the Town, Township and County, news reports offer few clues about possible partners or investors. Jamieson himself appears to have been the venture's primary source of funding.



As Jamieson had estimated that he needed between \$1,000 and \$2,000 to drill a 300-foot test hole, the eventual 1,200-foot well would have cost at least \$4,000, perhaps \$8,000 and, considering that work went on for more than eight years, the total investment was probably several times that figure. These were substantial sums of money in the first decade of the 20th century when a good house in Perth could be purchased for \$700, chicken sold for eight cents/lb., butter for 19 cents/lb. and potatoes for 50 cents/bushel.¹⁸

John Dittrick, whom Jamieson engaged to “set up the massive ... *Hercules Rock Drill*”, was a partner, with his brothers Norman, George and Fred, in ‘Dittrick Brothers’ at Perth¹⁹. That business sold farm machinery, tools and supplies, but the Dittrick men were also skilled mechanics and their workshops advertised “*machine jobbing, foundry casting, general blacksmithing, steam fitting*”²⁰ and repairs of all kinds. The identity of gasoline engine owner-operator James Croskery is uncertain; at the time there were several men of the same name farming in North Elmsley Township or living in the Perth area.

THE PERTH COURIER

HELLO!

SURELY this is Jubilee Year for good old Perth—the Old Boys' Reunion, the mammoth Boot and Shoe Industry, and all the good stuff I keep for the Farmers, combined, should make everyone, both in town and country look happy, and be happy. Farmers, if you want the best Binder, or Mower, or all-steel Horserake, or a drill or broadcast Seeder, or a Disc Harrow, get the Dsering. They are the world-beaters. My Windmill is so well known that they are all after it. And that Wire Fence I sell—the Government uses it, the railroads use it, and all good farmers use it. It costs no more than the poor, cheap kinds. The wonderful Post Hole Digger will pay for itself in one day. Just think of boring a hole 3 1-2 ft. in 2 minutes. You have to see it to believe it. Then this all-brass Spray Pump—the best on earth for spraying Orchards and Potatoes. Everybody should have one. A word about Clydesdale Stock Food. It's the strongest and best animal food made. Costs you no more than the cheaper kinds. It makes the pony's feet good, makes the rooster crow and the hens—well just try it for eggs. It will pay any farmer to get his Building Hardware from me. I can save you dollars. Wagons, Buggies, Sulky Plows, Steel Rollers, Stoneboats, Harrows (all kinds), and a host of other goods all at rock-bottom prices. Try my Cream Separator. **PLUMBING**—Yes, the Plumbing that I do is the kind you want. Cheap Plumbing is dear at any cost. The best goods, the best work and the lowest living price is my motto.

JOHN DITTRICK

DITTRICK BROS. are the boys to do your Machine Jobbing, Foundry Castings, Bike Repairing, General Blacksmithing and all kinds of Steam Fitting Work. Plows and all kinds of Plow Repairs. Give the boys a call.

DITTRICK BROS.

¹⁸ Perth Market Report, *Perth Courier*, January 13, 1905.

¹⁹ The sons of John Dittrick (b.1849), who was a machinist, and his wife Isabell McLean (b.1852) – W. Norman (b.1872), John L. (b.1875), George W. (b.1877) and Fred A. (b.1884). They had one sister, Eva B. (b.1884). the family was of German stock.

²⁰ *Perth Courier*, 1905.

The *Perth Courier* remained a steadfast booster of the 'Elmsley Oil Field' but as Dittrick, Croskery and a journeyman driller named Droope made ready to begin drilling, even the local press had to admit that Jamieson faced no small amount of scepticism, discouragement and occasional mockery from some quarters.

... good progress has been made by Mr. R. Jamieson and his staff in boring for oil on the former's property just outside of Perth. The drill has reached a depth of about 200 feet, and a Courier reporter was assured that the indications grow more favorable as the depth is increased. Everyone hopes fervently that the enterprise of the promoter in this connection will meet with the rich reward it deserves.

Mr. Jamieson has had many obstacles thrown in his way, not the least of which thus far has been the sceptical and pessimistic remarks of some of his townsmen, who have in several cases endeavored to dissuade him from continuing the work, quoting the opinions of eminent scientists who have stated that there is no possibility of oil being found in the rock formation of this district. Mr. Jamieson is keeping a 'log' of this well and is satisfied that the results will show the geologists to have been far out in their calculations when they issued a map of this part of Ontario.²¹

On September 19, 1904, three months after drilling got underway, the project came to a sudden halt, at a depth of about 200 feet.

... on Monday morning last the search for oil received an unexpected blow in another direction. Talk about being 'in a hole!' This beats the record hereabout.

While dressing a drill ... expert Driller Mr. Droope suddenly dropped his hammer and told his helper Mr. Croskery that there was something wrong in the well. The drilling was stopped, and the tools pulled up, when, to their amazement, it was found that the drill-bar was broken and that fifteen feet of steel, weighing about 600 pounds, was at the bottom of the well, about 200 feet down.

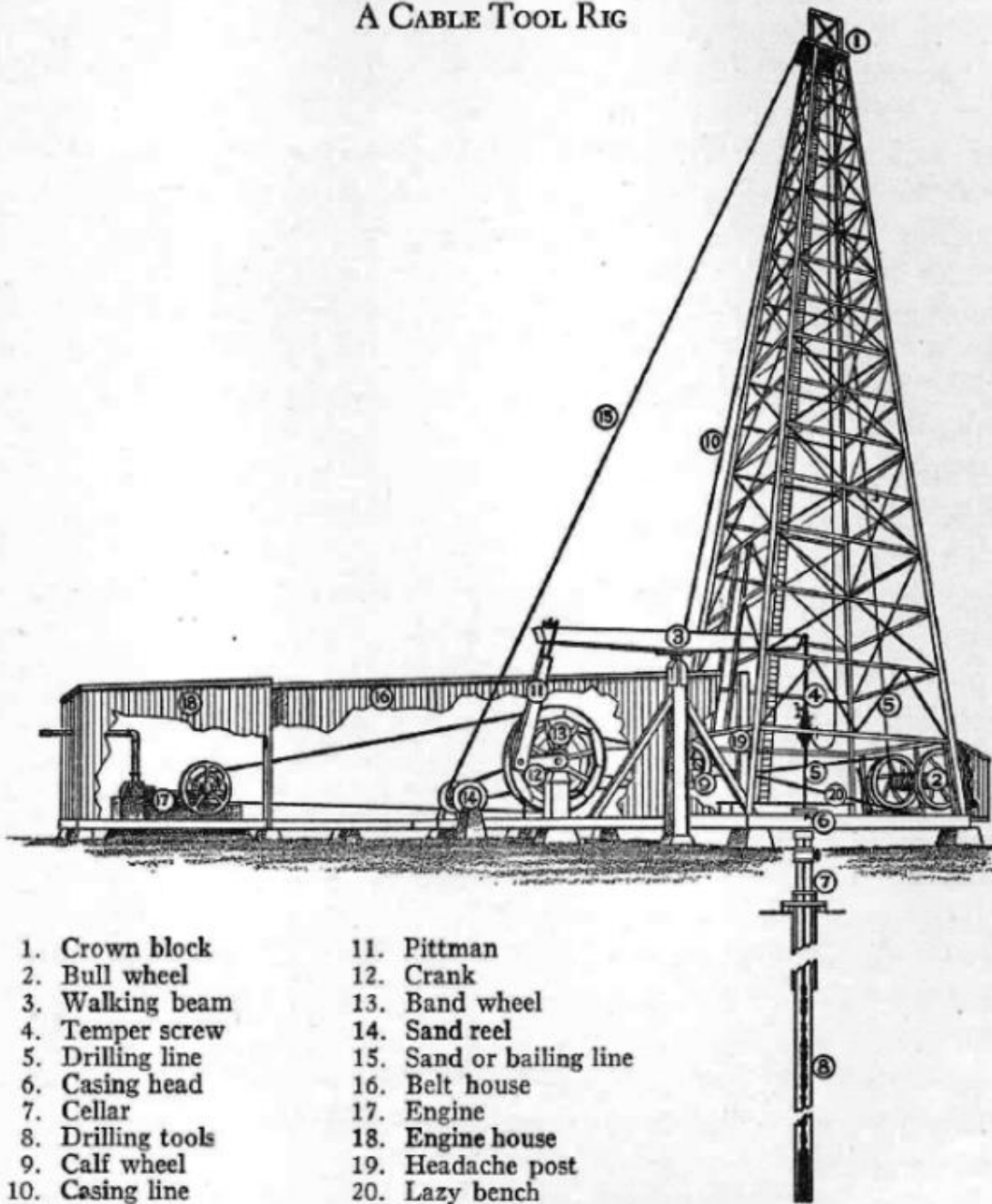
Not having any 'fishing' tools for use in such emergencies, the conundrum was how to get the ponderous piece of steel to the surface, there being 182 feet of water in the hole. But Br. Droope proved himself equal to the occasion, and, improvising a fishing outfit in the machine shop of James & Reid, he had it ready for business the same evening, and by noon on Tuesday he had the satisfaction of landing the missing drill, which was soon repaired and at work as usual.

Mr. Jamieson is to be congratulated on securing the services of a man whose skill and ingenuity are sufficient to meet and overcome such serious difficulties; and the Courier earnestly trusts that his hopeful expectations may be fully realized inspite of not a few of the local oil 'experts'.²²

²¹ *Perth Courier*, September 23, 1904.

²² *Ibid.*

A CABLE TOOL RIG



Cable-tool drilling is done by raising and dropping a string of tools on the end of a cable. The up and down motion is imparted by the walking beam. The tools are pulled from or lowered into the hole by winding or unwinding the drilling cable on the bull wheel. Casing is raised or lowered by the casing line and calf wheel. The cuttings are removed from the hole by the bailer, which is raised and lowered by the sand line and reel.

At the end of November 1904 Jamieson reported that his well in North Elmsley Township had reached a depth of 304 feet with 300 feet cased and the water shut off. *“He is in the Trenton lime”, the Courier reported, “and has every prospect of striking oil and would like to complete it this fall”*. Before he found oil, however, winter set in and work was suspended for the season.

Why Jamieson originally expressed the hope of finding oil at a depth of only 300 feet (91 meters) is puzzling. In 1858 the world’s first commercial oil well, in Enniskillen Township, Lambton County, Ontario²³, was dug (not drilled) to a depth of only 51 feet (15.5 metres)²⁴, and the first ‘gusher’ was drilled at the same place in 1862, coming in at only 158 feet (48 meters). Jamieson, however, would have known that from the 1880s onward the Lambton County wells averaged about 900 feet (275 meters) and wells in the Pennsylvania, USA, fields were coming in at about the same depth. His 300-foot estimate may have assumed that finding oil on the surface suggested that it had come from no great depth (as was the case with those first Lambton County wells), or it may have been a case of painting the most optimistic picture possible for potential investors.

As planned, Jamieson reached the anticipated 300-foot depth in the first season of drilling (1904), but the hole, while producing prodigious amounts of water, yielded no oil. Jamieson was no quitter, however, and, certain that at any moment he was within a foot or two of black gold, resumed drilling in the spring of 1905. He carried on, punching into the bedrock, a rate of two to three hundred feet per season, for another five years until, late in the season of 1909, on October 22nd, the effort came to an unplanned, sudden and definitive end.

Drilling at Mr. Robert Jamieson’s oil well perforce stopped last Wednesday, on account of an accident. The drill broke and is now fast and tight at the bottom of the well 1,200 feet deep. The drill is 36 feet long and weights 1,500 lbs.

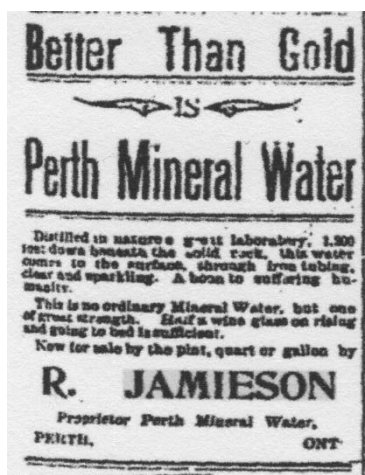
*The men were a day in making a tool to grapple with the lost drill, but by the time it was ready, the drill had cemented into the well, and although they were able to hook on to it, they could not lift it. Drilling has therefore been stopped. Mr. Jamieson has mighty good mineral water from his well and will likely make it a commercial enterprise.*²⁵

And, indeed, that is what Robert Jamieson did. In an effort, no doubt, to make the best of a bad situation, and recover some small part of the enormous amount of money, time and effort he had invested in drilling and casing a quarter mile (366 meter) hole to nowhere, he created the ‘Perth Mineral Water Company’. A few weeks after the loss of the drill bit and the resulting end to drilling, advertisements for ‘Perth Mineral Water’ began appearing in the *Perth Courier*.

²³ Near Oil Springs Ontario.

²⁴ Dug by James Miller Williams (1818-1890).

²⁵ *Perth Courier*, October 22, 1909



**Better Than Gold
is
Perth Mineral Water**

Distilled in nature's great laboratory, 1,200 feet down beneath the solid rock, this water comes to the surface through iron tubing, clear and sparkling.

This is no ordinary Mineral Water, but one of great strength. Half a wine glass on rising and going to bed is sufficient.

Now for sale by the pint, quart or gallon by,

R. JAMIESON

*Proprietor, Perth Mineral Water
Perth Ont.²⁶*

For the next two and one-half years, in addition to his several other occupations, Robert Jamieson was in the mineral water business. That venture does not, however, seem to have been a particular success and, in any case, at the end of August 1912, what might only be described as a miracle occurred; the Jamieson Elmsley Oil Field produced oil. Beneath an upper-case, bold face, front page headline, the *Courier* announced,

Robt. Jamieson's Well is Producing Oil – After Years of Difficulties, Mr. Jamieson Now Has His Reward in Getting Oil – Close to the Surface –

It will be good news to know that Mr. Robert Jamieson has been rewarded after several years with a flow of oil at his well in Elmsley, on the outskirts of the town.

This well was undertaken some years ago by Mr. Jamieson, in the face of the opinions of oil men. By keeping persistently at it, he drove a hole 1,206 feet deep into the ground. For the past two or three years, he has patiently pumped away at it by hand, drawing off the water, and he is rewarded with oil. The oil is within nine feet of the surface. Mr. Jamieson now has nearly three hundred gallons of it pumped into barrels.



²⁶ Perth *Courier*, twice monthly, November 26, 1909 to June 10, 1910.

This is the first well east of the Laurentian formation. The rock for 1,200 feet is sandstone and conglomerates; the lime known in geology as the platform of death is reached at that depth and from this lime flows the oil.

Mr. Jamieson will equip the well with an up-to-date pump, and commercialize his product. He deserves to succeed, for his well has a history of difficulties known only to himself.

*Men in the oil trade have visited the well this week.*²⁷

In addition to the 300 gallons (1,136 litres) Jamieson had pumped off, the remaining 1,195 feet of six inch well casing, if full of oil, would have contained another 5,485 gallons (26,588 litres) of product.

Unfortunately, with that August 30, 1912, *Perth Courier* report that Jamieson's well had begun producing oil, the documented account of the Elmsley Township Oil Field abruptly ends. If there was any further local news coverage, it must have appeared in one or more of the seven *Courier* editions of January and February 1913 that have not survived²⁸, and no other mention of the Jamieson project has been found anywhere. Nor is there a record of any other attempt to drill for oil in North Elmsley Township. Remarkably, when Jamieson died twenty years later, while his lengthy obituary reviewed the many public and private positions he had held and acknowledged the scope of his contributions to Perth and district in the fields of law, education, agriculture, business, politics and the arts, it made no mention whatever of the oil well to which he had dedicated a decade of his life.

It being an irrefutable scientific fact that petroleum does not and could not exist in the geological formations underlying the former Jamieson property at North Elmsley Township C-10/L-26, we may surmise that, in about late 1913, very possibly during the August visit of those "*men in the oil trade*", the futility of a decade's work was fully revealed. Whenever, exactly, the horrible truth was made clear, the fact that there is no oil under the homes and businesses now lining the Rideau Ferry Road is demonstrated by the total absence of nodding pump-jacks and gas-valve trees across what Jamieson had once predicted would be an "*oil field ... within sight of the Town of Perth*".

Whatever the Jamieson well had produced, it was not petroleum; but, certain as we can be that there was no 'oil' (petroleum) to be found on the Jamieson and McLaren farms, we can be equally certain that something was found and mistaken for 'oil'. What that something might have been, however, remains a mystery.

The men who found the 'oil', who saw it, touched it, smelled it, and perhaps tasted it, were honorable men and leading figures in their community. These included Jamieson, Court Clerk; James Walker, *Perth Courier* Editor, Thomas and Archibald McLaren, respected farmers; and John Dittrick, local businessman. There were also the unnamed "*provincial authorities*" who

²⁷ *Perth Courier*, August 30, 1912.

²⁸ The issues of January 3, 10, 24 & 31, and February 7, 14 and 21, 1913, are missing from among both the hard copies held by Archives Lanark and from the digital copies found on-line at <https://paperofrecord.hypernet.ca>.

provided an *“encouraging report”* on samples sent to them, as well as driller Doope and motor operator James Croskery.

In addition to those whose names we know, Jamieson must have also shown samples of the ‘oil’ to dozens, and probably hundreds, of others, such as members of Perth Town Council, North Elmsley Township Council, Lanark County Council, businessmen and others from whom he hoped to raise financing. Jamieson was not the only one ‘fooled’ by whatever liquid he had found, he had considerable of company.

Jamieson had owned his North Elmsley Township farm property since purchasing it in two blocks in 1885 and 1896, but the ‘oil’ apparently first appeared in the summer of 1903, with both *“oil and gas [finding] their way to the surface”*. Jamieson described discovering *“fifty to sixty”* pools of *“blue oil”*, acknowledging from the outset that the color was not the same as crude petroleum. He speculated that the ‘oil’ was of a lighter color because, in passing upward through *“a great depth of sandstone”*, it had *“lost the impurities usually found in the black crude oils”*. Jamieson drilled until equipment failure stopped the effort, without striking oil, at a depth of 1,206 feet; then, nearly three years later, the ‘oil’ reappeared, filling the well casing to *“within nine feet of the surface”* after he had already pumped off *“three hundred gallons into barrels”*.

North Elmsley Township is the source of some mineral resources. About four miles south of the Jamieson drilling site Plumbago/Graphite was mined at C-6/L-21&22, at various times between 1870 and 1983. In the same area and time-frame, but at a greater distance from the Jamieson property, North Burgess Township was also the site of mineral extraction. Plumbago/Graphite was mined at C-5/L-24&25, and Mica, Apatite and/or Phosphate were mined at C-5/L-13, C-6/L-11&13, C-7/L-10,11&12 and C-8/L-5. None of these minerals have, however, any association with petroleum deposits, there is no indication that mines and quarries where they were extracted showed seepages of any sort of oily substance and, in any case, there is no evidence that any of these minerals occur on the Jamieson property.

Robert Jamieson died at Perth on April 24, 1932, aged 84 years, and was buried in Elmwood Cemetery. What he found on his North Elmsley Township farm in 1903 remains a tantalizing and frustrating mystery.

- **Ron W. Shaw (2018)**

The author extends his appreciation to the following for their assistance in attempting to answer the Jamieson ‘oil well’ mystery: Christopher Brett, Barry Crampton, Professor George Dix, David Erwin, Kenneth Erwin, Lloyd Love, Professor Dariush Motazedian, Professor James Mungall, and the volunteers at Archives Lanark.