

Texas Historical Commission Staff (DKU), 9/24/86

18" x 28" Official Texas Historical Marker with post
Gregg County (Order #9124)

Location: City park, 600 block of E. North St.,
Kilgore

ALLIS-CHALMERS PUMPS*

THESE TWO EARLY PUMPING UNITS
SERVE AS HISTORIC REMINDERS OF
KILGORE'S DEVELOPMENT AS AN OIL
BOOM TOWN. THE BOOM ERA BEGAN
ON DEC. 28, 1930, WHEN THE WELL
KNOWN AS THE LOU DELLA CRIM
NO. 1 BLEW IN. WITH IT, KILGORE
BECAME PART OF THE GREAT EAST
TEXAS OIL FIELD. THESE RECIPROCAL
PUMPS, MANUFACTURED BY ALLIS-
CHALMERS AND FIRST USED IN WEST
TEXAS, WERE BROUGHT HERE IN 1931
BY THE SHELL PIPE LINE CORP. TO
MOVE CRUDE OIL TO HOUSTON AREA
REFINERIES. IN SERVICE UNTIL 1985,
IT IS ESTIMATED THEY PUMPED A
COMBINED TOTAL OF OVER ONE
BILLION BARRELS OF OIL. **

TEXAS SESQUICENTENNIAL 1836-1986***

*3/4 inch lettering

**1/2 inch lettering

***1/4 inch lettering

A HISTORY OF ALLIS-CHALMERS PUMPS
IN KILGORE CITY PARK
KILGORE, TEXAS

91421

The first white settlers came to the Kilgore area while Texas was still a republic. Here they found peaceful Caddo Indians planting corn, potatoes, and pumpkins and using a certain "oily mud and water" to cure rheumatism. The Indians were quite a show as they rubbed themselves in the blue-black mud and drank the black water. Most settlers found the custom amusing but questioned its medicinal value. The scene was noted and soon forgotten as the area was caught up in the succeeding historical events.¹

Texas became a state in 1845 only to follow her southern sister states in an attempt to secede from the Union in 1861. The bloody four-year war ended with the Union preserved and the United States on the threshold of industrialization. Factories needed raw materials and manufactured products required markets. The United States is and always has been its own best source of both, making a good transportation system of paramount importance. Consequently, railroad construction escalated at a fever pitch.

The major transcontinentals spread across the country like giant arteries, destroying old towns and creating new ones. East Texas witnessed both phenomena: beautiful, old Jefferson died; vigorous, new Kilgore was born.²

The town of Kilgore was established in 1872, one year before the formal organization of Gregg County, when a line of the International and Great Northern Railroad reached the area. It was named for local landowner Constantine Buckley "Buck" Kilgore (1835-1897), a Confederate veteran who later served as a state and federal solon and as a federal judge. As a center of commerce for the surrounding farms and plantations, the town of Kilgore soon outgrew the earlier settlement of Danville, four miles southeast. Danville had been a prosperous community with a

school, church, and Masonic Lodge, but when bypassed by the railroad, most of its residents moved their families and businesses to Kilgore.³

The future for Kilgore did not seem very promising on Sunday morning, December 28, 1930. There had been some oil activity in the southern part of Rusk County, but it was public knowledge that as recently as October, a seismicographic survey of Gregg County done for a major company reported "it is improbable that oil is present." Furthermore, not a single oil company had shown interest in the Kilgore area. There was little or no reason for Kilgorites to suspect that Columbus Marion "Dad" Joiner's earlier discoveries to the south were only the tip of the iceberg. But tip of the iceberg they were.⁴

While regular churchgoers attended their meetings, Ed Bateman's Lou Della Crim #1 blew in for more than 20,000 barrels of crude oil per day.⁵ What followed was the "most frenzied boom in United States history - the California gold rush, Klondike, and Oklahoma land rush all in one."⁶ It was as though a magician waved his wand and a new derrick appeared, the magician being anyone who could promote a lease on even the smallest plot of land and put together a rig and crew to drill.

Derricks sprang up in yards, where banks had been, behind stores, in cemeteries, everywhere. No place was immune. Within sixteen months there were 3,732 wells completed in the field, and refineries dotted the countryside.⁷

In 1927 Shell Pipe Line Corporation purchased 27 Allis-Chalmers pumps for a total of \$210,000.00. These 2 Allis-Chalmers 6 X 24 reciprocal pumps were first installed on the McCamey*-Houston 10-inch line in 1929 and delivered West Texas crude to Houston for almost 3 years. After the discovery of the great East Texas field, Shell Pipe Line Corporation moved these 2 pumps to their Kilgore Station in October, 1931. These pumps were used to pump East Texas crude on the Kilgore-Houston 10-inch

*McCamey was an oil boom town in West Texas' Upton County

Line until they were replaced in 1985. It took 40 men and 20 mules to install these pumps at the Kilgore Station. ⁸

Each unit pumped 750 barrels of crude per hour, 24 hours per day, which is approximately 30,000 barrels per day, except during the war years of 1942-1946, then each pumped approximately 46,000 barrels of crude per day. In the 54 years they were in service on the Kilgore-Houston 10-inch Line, each has pumped approximately 550,000,000 barrels of East Texas crude. ⁹

In 1956 Shell tried to get prints on these pumps, but Allis-Chalmers did not have any prints, in fact they did not know that this model pump was still in operation. Since there were no parts available from the factory from 1956 until they were replaced in 1985, all parts had to be machin made. ¹⁰

Complied by:

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Bibliography

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1972
- Easton, Al, Boom Town, Kilgore, Texas, Kilgore Chamber of Commerce, 1979
- Williams C. M., Personal Interview, Kilgore, Texas, May 1986

Footnotes

1. Easton, Al, Boom Town, Kilgore, Texas, Kilgore Chamber of Commerce, 1979
Page 9
2. Bolt, Doris B. and Durning, Bonnie M., A History of Kilgore College 1935-1981,
Kilgore College Press, 1981, Page 8
3. Bolt, Doris B. and Durning, Bonnie M., Page 8
4. Bolt, Doris B. and Durning, Bonnie M., Page 16
5. Easton, Al, Page 42
6. Clark, James A. and Halbouty, Michael T., The Last Boom, Random House, New
York, 1972 Page 123
7. Bolt, Doris B. and Durning, Bonnie M., Page 17
8. Williams, C. M., Personal Interview, May 1986
9. Williams, C. M., Personal Interview, May 1986
10. Williams, C. M., Personal Interview, May 1986