

# NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

## PITTSBURGH IN 1770

THE following letter, written from Fort Pitt, "now the city of Pittsburg," on July 14, 1770, is taken from *The Francis Letters* by Sir Philip Francis and Other Members of the Family, edited by Beata Francis and Eliza Keary, with a note on the Junius controversy by C. F. Keary, vol. 1, pp. 120-123 (London, Hutchinson and Company, Paternoster Row, [n.d.]). The writer of the letter, Alexander Mackrabie, was a brother-in-law and intimate friend of Sir Philip Francis, noted British statesman and pamphleteer, who is supposed by some authorities to have been the author of the celebrated *Letters of Junius*. Mackrabie is said to have spent about six years in the United States, beginning in 1767, as a clerk in "a house of business" in Philadelphia.

My dear Brother:

All this and much more have we seen in a few days. We have conversed with Indian Chiefs; and if our stomachs could have digested Brickdust and Bears'-grease might have been not unkindly received by their *Squaws*, by which names the ladies of the Copper Race are distinguished. We have seen them dancing, and we have seen them drunk; we have heard them talk and have heard them sing; and I believe I have already almost enough of the Shawanee language to tell you in good Indian the Names of all these different Ceremonies. I have persuaded a Warrior whom we met on the Allegany River to come down to the Fort, for me to draw his Picture; but an unlucky Accident which has just happened—namely, a W hite Man's having taken the liberty to shoot an Indian for offering certain Familiarities to his Wife, and attempting to steal his Horse—has put my Gentleman out of Humour, and disappointed me of my Copy. He was to have put on all his war Trinkets, and to have been new Painted on the Occasion. These Indians are the greatest coxcombs upon Earth! Their method of cutting and pulling their Ears, and boring their Noses, is beyond all conception ridiculous. I have seen a Woman with not less than six dozen Brooches of silver upon a Shift more dirty and ragged than was ever seen in St. Giles's; and a Warrior with his Ears slit into Strips and Chitterlings, and twisted about with more silver Clasps than a Dutch family Bible.

You can have no idea of the delightful situation of Fort Pitt. It is built upon a Point of land formed by the confluence of the two rivers, Allegany and Monongahelah, which immediately upon their Junction have the name of the Ohio. The Indian language, which is the most figurative in the Universe, is remarkably characteristic in the titles of these

two rivers. They are their Allegro and their Penseroso. The former clear and lively, flowing over a bright pebbled Bed, and transparent as Cristal; the Monongahelah dull, dark, and heavy, moving in a sluggish and almost imperceptible Course. The lofty Hills and endless Woods with which they are bordered make the whole scene delightfully romantic. I shall say little of the Fort, because I don't understand military Matters; and besides that, I had little time for Observation. I am told it will accommodate more than a Regiment, but it has not as present fifty men who do Duty. We have been most hospitably and genteely entertained by an officer whom we knew last winter in Philadelphia, and allowing for the *Politesse á la Militaire* which obliges us to compound for being *un peu enivré* at least once a day, we pass our time very agreeably. I am as well reconciled to the four o'clock Drum as if I had lived all my time in a Camp. But our week has just expired, and we must return to our former Engagements, and cross the Allegany Mountain once more. I tremble at the Thought of rocks and precipices; tho' these are gentle Sufferings compared to Loghouses with earthen floors and the intolerable Suffocation of Barks smoke, which we are obliged to endure every Night, to avoid being flead alive by Gnats and Fleas. In point of Provision, this Road in summer *beggars all description*. For a hundred Miles we are under the Necessity of carrying fodder for our Horses; and for our parts, I shall never while I live lose the Idea of dried Vension and Whiskey Toddy.

I think we cannot be absent from Philadelphia more than a month longer. One of my most pleasing Prospects is that upon my Return I may hear of your family so dear to me. Adieu, my dearest Philip. I am, most affectionately yours,

A. MACKRABIE

# EARLY MAPS OF THE PENNSYLVANIA OIL FIELDS

ERNEST C. MILLER<sup>1</sup>

**Y**EARs before the discovery of oil at Titusville by "Colonel" E. L. Drake late in the summer of 1859, the presence of petroleum in north-western Pennsylvania was well known.<sup>2</sup> The Indians knew and used it as a valuable medicament and it is believed by some that they also used it in their religious rites.<sup>3</sup> With the coming of the white men into the oil country, petroleum was soon adopted by them for general use in reducing swellings, for aches, sprains, rheumatism, and it was taken internally as a gentle purge.

Early explorers of the region carried back to their superiors or employers reports on the approximate location of the petroleum deposits and finally a few cartographers showed the sites on their maps. Enterprising men among the early settlers soon collected oil from the seepages and ancient pits, chiefly found along Oil Creek in Crawford and Venango counties. A daybook for 1797 shows that a Franklin merchant was purchasing "Seneca oil" from the settlers and was reselling it as a medicine.<sup>4</sup> Raw petroleum was called "Creek oil" by the first men in the region, and it was put into bottles and peddled under the name of "American Medicinal Oil," as "Kier's Petroleum or Rock Oil," and as "Mexican Mustang Liniment."<sup>5</sup> As such a remedy, a panacea for many ills, crude oil reached the public by traveling wagons whose energetic owners called at every farm, village, and drug store.

The first map of North America showing petroleum was one prepared by two French missionaries, Father Dollier and Father Galinee, in 1670. Near where Cuba, N. Y., is today, they indicated a "fontaine de bitume." The first map of Pennsylvania to show petroleum was Lewis Evans' famous

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Miller has been with the West Penn Oil Company at Warren, Pennsylvania, since 1940, except for about three years spent as a field director of the American Red Cross with the army. Born and brought up in the oil industry, and having learned much about it from his grandfather, father, and other relatives, he is the author of *Oil Mania* (1941), *The History of Pithole* (1946), and *John Wilkes Booth—Oilman* (1947).—Ed.

<sup>2</sup> James Dodd Henry, *History and Romance of the Petroleum Industry*, 43-53 (London and Tonbridge, 1914).

<sup>3</sup> S. J. M. Eaton, *Petroleum: A History of the Oil Region of Venango County, Pennsylvania*, 50-55 (Philadelphia, 1866).

<sup>4</sup> *History of Crawford County, Pennsylvania*, 255 (Chicago, Warner, Beers & Co., 1885).

<sup>5</sup> Paul H. Giddens, *The Beginnings of the Petroleum Industry*, 1 (Harrisburg, 1941); *Burkesville (Ky.) Courier*, October 11, 1876; Raymond F. Bacon and William A. Hamor, *The American Petroleum Industry*, 1:203 (New York, 1916); Henry Asbury, *The Golden Flood*, 27 (New York, 1942). The common names for packaged crude oil mentioned above should not be confused with the popular "Haarlem Oil" originally made by deKoning Tilly at Haarlem, Holland, over two hundred years ago. The latter is a diuretic and still much used.

1755 product titled "A General Map of the Middle British Colonies in America." This Welsh-born geographer spent most of his life in Pennsylvania and held top rank among the early colonial map-makers.<sup>6</sup> Evans showed oil at Winango, the present site of Franklin in Venango County, but in 1755 called Fort Machault and held by the French. Oil was shown near the junction of French Creek and the Allegheny River. Contrary to what one might expect, following Evans' death, the year after the publication of this map,<sup>7</sup> maps of Pennsylvania did not generally indicate the presence of oil for some time. For example, William Scull's 1770 map does not show petroleum nor does the excellent 1792 map of Adlum and Wallis.<sup>8</sup>

When the Pennsylvania Rock Oil Company, and its successor, the Seneca Oil Company, took up land near Titusville and along Oil Creek, to attempt the recovery of oil in commercial quantities, the firm had a map of their property prepared. This was, as far as is known, the first map of an actual oil lease ever made and it was well executed by Charles C. Smith of Painesville, Ohio.<sup>9</sup> The full title of this map was "Map of the Oil Lands in Venango County Leased by E. Brewer and Others," and it was dated 1855. It hung on the wall of the company office in New Haven and the firm plotted the well and other locations on it as "Colonel" Drake furnished the information.

From August, 1859, to 1860, no printed maps of the then known oil region were available and the maps used were rough hand-drawn products prepared by the oil men seeking likely looking lands for operations. Sometime during 1860 the first regularly prepared and printed map embracing the petroleum fields was issued by Charles C. Smith under the name, "Map of the Oil District of Venango, Crawford & Warren Counties, Pennsylvania." This was the beginning of real maps of the oil developments although up to 1870 the number of such maps was small when compared to the nation-wide interest in oil, the number of people engaged in the new industry, and the furore it had created.

In 1946 the writer made an investigation of oil maps from 1859 to 1870 in the libraries within the Pennsylvania grade crude oil area, commonly

<sup>6</sup> *Historie de la Colonie Francaise*, 3:305 (Paris, 1866); Lawrence Henry Gipson, *Lewis Evans*, 63 (Philadelphia, 1939).

<sup>7</sup> The *Pennsylvania Journal & Weekly Advertiser* (Philadelphia) for June 17, 1756, reports the death of Lewis Evans on June 11.

<sup>8</sup> For a description of Scull's map see Homer Rosenberger, "Early Maps of Pennsylvania," in *Pennsylvania History*, 11:110-111 (April, 1944). See also John Adlum and John Wallis, *Map, Exhibiting a General View of the Roads and Inland Navigation of Pennsylvania, and Part of the Adjacent State* (Philadelphia, 1792).

<sup>9</sup> All efforts to trace Charles C. Smith, a civil engineer, have failed: after 1860 his name does not appear on any maps or elsewhere in the early history of petroleum.

termed the "Pennsylvania oil fields." This area commences at Wellsville and Olean, New York, and runs south through Bradford, Warren, Oil City, Franklin, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, continuing to Cabin Creek in West Virginia. It has a western boundary at Cleveland and Marietta in Ohio, and an eastern boundary extending as far as Mt. Jewett, Pennsylvania. It includes three counties in western New York, eighteen in western Pennsylvania, twenty-six in West Virginia, and seventeen in southeastern Ohio, or a combined total of thirty-five thousand square miles.<sup>10</sup>

Within this section, twenty-seven public libraries were checked along with eight college libraries. One would naturally expect to find a wide variety of early oil maps in the region where they were extensively used and where oil has been the business of many families for several generations. Only four public libraries had any such maps and only two of these had more than a single such map. Not one of the college libraries yielded a single map of this type and date. The check revealed that for oil maps prior to 1870, the Drake Well Museum near Titusville has the only collection that comes close to being complete and there are gaps in it.<sup>11</sup>

Following is a list of thirteen oil maps drawn between 1855 and 1870, all but the first two having been prepared for general sales and distribution.

- 1855 Map of the Oil Lands in Venango County Leased by E. Brewer and Others. Surveyed and hand-drawn by Charles C. Smith.
- Late Map Showing Wells in Operation and Wells in Progress. Surveyed and hand-drawn by Charles C. Smith. No date on map, but approximate date is ascertained from wells shown.
- 1859
- 1860 Map of the Oil District of Venango, Crawford & Warren Counties, Pennsylvania. Charles C. Smith, C. E. Sage & Sons, Engravers & Lithographers, Buffalo, N. Y.
- 1864 Map of the Oil District of Venango, Crawford & Warren Counties, Pennsylvania. Published by R. C. Root, Anthony & Co.
- 1865 Colton's Map of the Oil District of Pennsylvania, comprising part of the Counties of Crawford, Venango, and Warren. H. S. Plumb, C. E., J. H. Colton, New York.
- Aug. French's Map of the Oil Lands, Leases, Etc., on Pithole Creek,
- 1865 Muskrat Run, Stewart's Run and Their Tributaries. Published by Andrew French, C. E., Rouseville, Pa. F. Bourquin, Lith., Phila.
- 1865 Henderson's Map of the Pennsylvania Oil Regions showing the best Oil Lands and Great Oil Basin in West Virginia and Crawford Counties. A. N. Henderson, Buffalo, N. Y.

<sup>10</sup> Brief Filed before the Office of Price Administration, 5. Prepared and published by the Pennsylvania Grade Crude Oil Association, Oil City, Pennsylvania, 1941.

<sup>11</sup> The check did not include reproductions of early maps in books, but was a check for original maps only, of the period 1850-1870, few if any of which have been reproduced in books.

- 1865 Hunt's Improved Map of the Venango County Oil Regions. John P. Hunt, Publisher. Otto Krebs, Pittsburgh, Lithographer.
- 1865 Map of the Oil Regions of Pennsylvania. Townsend & Dale, Publishers. Otto Krebs, Pittsburgh, Lithographer.
- 1866 Howe's Map of the Oil District of Pennsylvania. Henry G. Howe, C. E., Titusville, Pa.
- 1866 Map of the Oil Lands of Dennis Run and Vicinity. J. P. Gould, C. E., Tidioute, Pa. F. Mayer & Co., Lith., N. Y.
- 1868 Carl's Map of the Pleasantville Oil District, Venango Co., Pennsylvania. Major & Knapp, Eng. Mfg. & Lith., N. Y.
- 1869 The Pennsylvania Oil Region, showing each farm as well as developments up to the present time. Henry E. Wrigley, C. E. P. S. Duval & Son, Lithographers, Pittsburgh.

Though not strictly in the map category, one book was published in 1865 that was perhaps of more importance to the active oil men than this entire list of maps. This was the *Atlas of the Oil Region of Pennsylvania*, issued by F. W. Beers and others, of New York City. The maps in this book covered the extent of the Allegheny River and its tributaries along which oil had been found, gave the names of the great majority of lease owners, and provided so much geographical information in compact form that the book sold readily at its retail price of \$12.50. When copies of this item turn up to-day, practically without exception the cover is loose, the pages are worn and ragged, and often several of the maps are missing entirely, indicating heavy usage and much dependence upon the contents thereof. For those interested in the early history of Pennsylvania oil, no tool is of greater use than this atlas, and it is fortunate that copies of it are well distributed among the oil country libraries.

The fanciest oil map was the "Map of the Smith Farm on Cherry Run, Venango Co., Pa." which was surveyed by M. Rickey, Jr., and drawn by Andrew French during March of 1866. This map shows individual drilling rigs, tanks, lines, dwellings, roads, toll gates, longitude, latitude, and it even pictures clearly such items as the walking beams and bull-wheels on the individual wells. Its attractiveness is increased by the use of blue, brown, red, yellow, and black inks.<sup>12</sup>

Both libraries and oil concerns should make immediate efforts to locate and secure all early oil maps. Their importance to lawyers, oil producing companies, oil "wildcatters," historians, and such research organizations as the Bureau of Mines of the U. S. Department of the Interior is growing, and reference to them increases daily.

<sup>12</sup> A duplicate of the original map hangs on the wall in the Drake Well Museum at Titusville, Pennsylvania.