

ws
Dec 3, 1903

The Brea Canyon Oil Company in accordance with their established custom, presented every head of a family in their employ with a big turkey Thanksgiving day.



Bruce Chambers/The Orange County Register
 Ernie Johnson, 92, who retired Wednesday after 69 years with the Brea Canon Oil Co., enjoys the outdoors at his home, on company land.

THE LONG GOODBYE

After 69 years, Brea Canon Oil manager calls it a career at age 92

By Jeff Rowe
 The Orange County Register

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Louis Lae, 68, is the new Brea Canon Oil general manager.

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Friends and colleagues at the company will honor Johnson with a dinner tonight at Knott's Berry Farm in Buena Park, after which Johnson will get up and ruminate on the oil industry's past and present. Awash in imports and chained by drilling restrictions domestically, the US oil industry isn't in good shape today, Johnson observes. But motioning down the canyon to the company oil fields, he said, "These people have been very good to me."

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From the veranda of Brea Canon Oil Co.'s crumbling, 71-year-old office, a visitor can survey the piles of pipe, machinery, weathered toolsheds and hills dotted with company derricks. It is as much a

museum to the county's past as it is a working company.

Once, there were so many oil derricks and so few people to buy oil that Johnson recalls that a rival oil company in Santa Fe Springs closed its wells in the 1920s.

Things are different today.

Striding among the pumps and derricks at the 119-acre Brea Canyon site, Brea Canon's new general manager, Louis Lae, wonders how much longer it will be before houses invade the canyons and push out the oil pumps.

"The land is getting more valuable than the oil," he said. Brea crude currently fetches about \$13 a barrel.

And from the back yard of Johnson's house, the crush of houses, condominiums, stores and offices seems to be advancing on the canyon.

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PROGRESS



BREA OIL PIONEER — Roy Abshier studies 48-year-old picture that appeared in the News Tribune recently. He identified eight oil pioneers from Brea Canyon Oil Company, along with a team of horses that "could pull that hill with a 6,600-pound load." (News Tribune Photo)

BY OLD PHOTO:

Memories Revived For Brea Resident

BREA — After a story about Brea Canyon Oil Company appeared in the News Tribune

(March 6) with a picture taken in 1914, Roy Abshier of 200 S. Brea Blvd. reported that he was in the picture and could identify most of the other men.

The picture was loaned by Brea Canyon Oil Co., but no one there could identify the local oil pioneers.

Abshier, 78, said he was the only one in the picture now living, even though he was probably the oldest worker shown.

He identified eight men and two horses including, Abe Yost, Herb Ruggles, Guy Thompson, Marvin Wheeler, Burt Shaffer, Erve Slaydale, Ed Park and Si Yost. He said he was standing on a wagon pulled by "the finest team in the oil fields," Nig and Si.

"Si was named after Si Yost,"

he explained, "because they both were strong as mules."

Abshier came to Brea from Arkansas in 1912 to work as a teamster at Brea Canyon Oil Co. He stayed with the company until he retired in 1944.

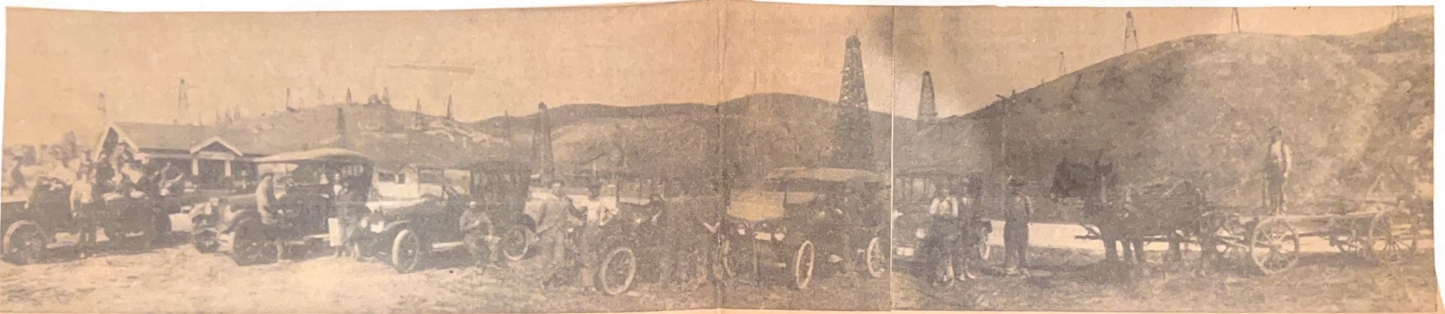
"That was the best team in the field," he declared. "They could pull a wagon with 6,600 pounds of wire line up that hill with no trouble."

When he went to work as a teamster here, he received \$2.50 per day. Later he worked as a gas plant operator after horses were no longer needed in the field.

"I am not sure about all the men in the picture, but I believe they are all gone now," he said. "A few of them were with a transient crew and I didn't know them."

ABSHIER

II



BREA FOUNDERS — After the above picture, taken in 1914, appeared in the News Tribune March 6, Roy Abshier reported that he was in the picture and could identify many of the men employed by the Brea Canyon Oil Co. Several of those shown were not clear

enough for identification. According to Abshier, third from left standing is Abe Yost, superintendent of the lease; leaning against the auto fender is Charles Swan, with Miss Keen, the company bookkeeper. Seated is Herb Ruggles. The next three are Guy Thompson, Marvin

Wheeler and Bert Shaffer. Next identifiable is Erv Stogdale with arms folded. Standing in front of the horses is Fred Clark with Abshier standing in the wagon. Others in the picture but not identifiable are Jerry Penelton, Andy Reed, Carl Stogdale and Charles Reed.

BREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

(1973)

(Leased by Perry Wood-600 W Date-529-3262)

BIRCH OIL WELL #5

Brought in March 28, 1911 producing 2600 Bbl
a day. Flowed until 1916 & produced over
3 Million Barrels to that date. In 1928
produced 25 B.P.D. & in 1950 produced 5 BPD

A. OTIS BIRCH Pres. BIRCH OIL CO

Last of the oil men

Progress 5-14-92

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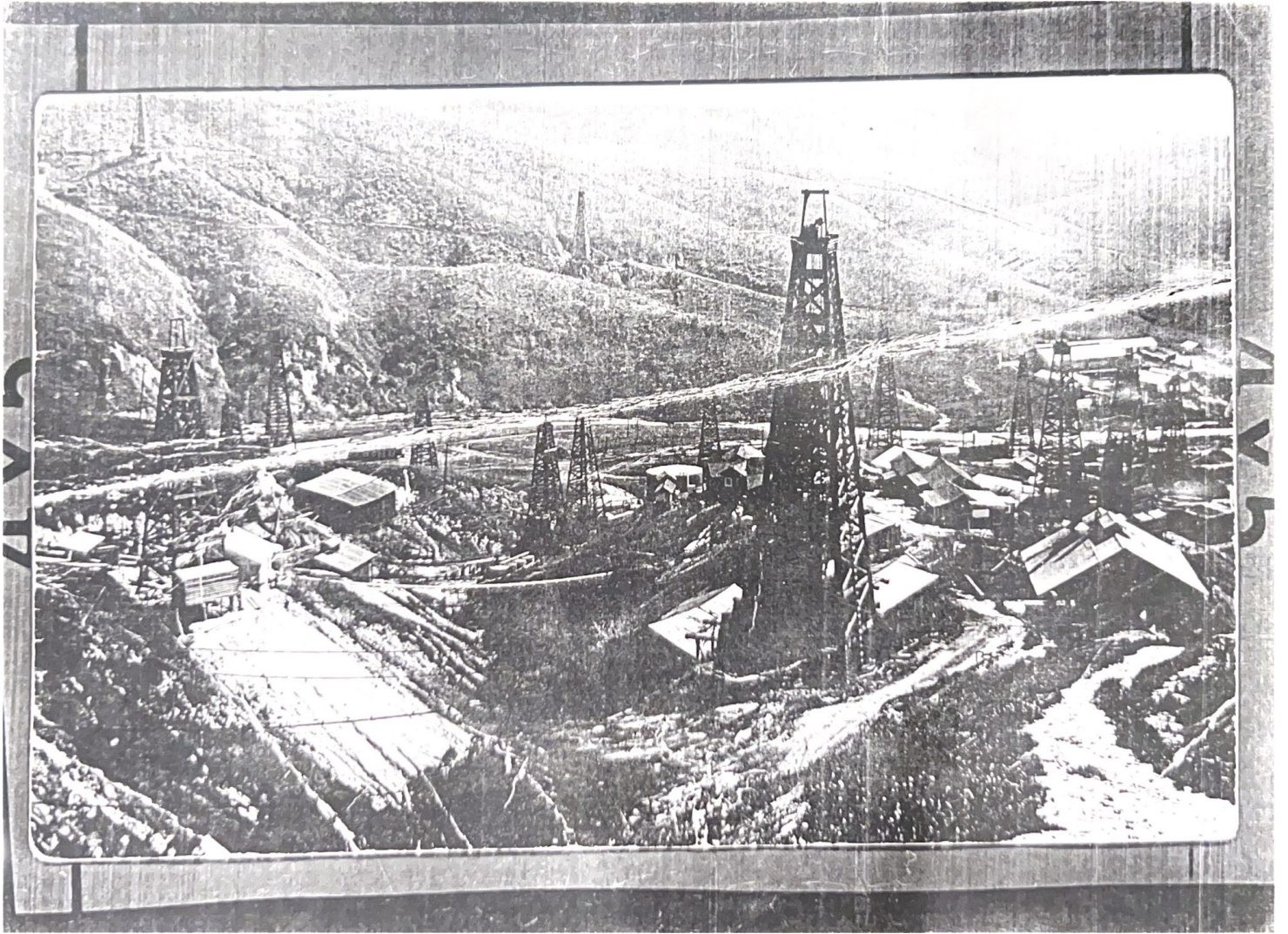
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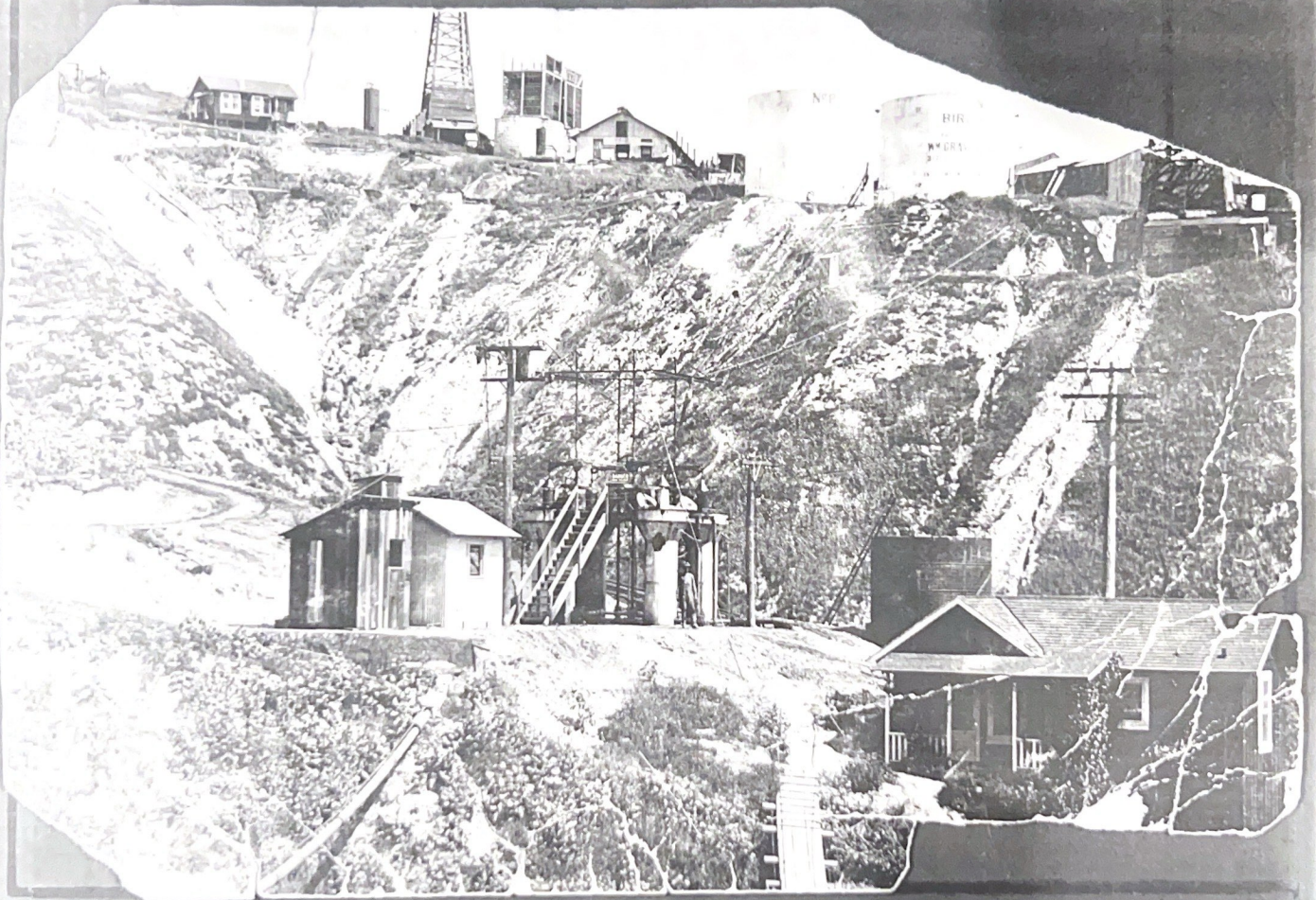
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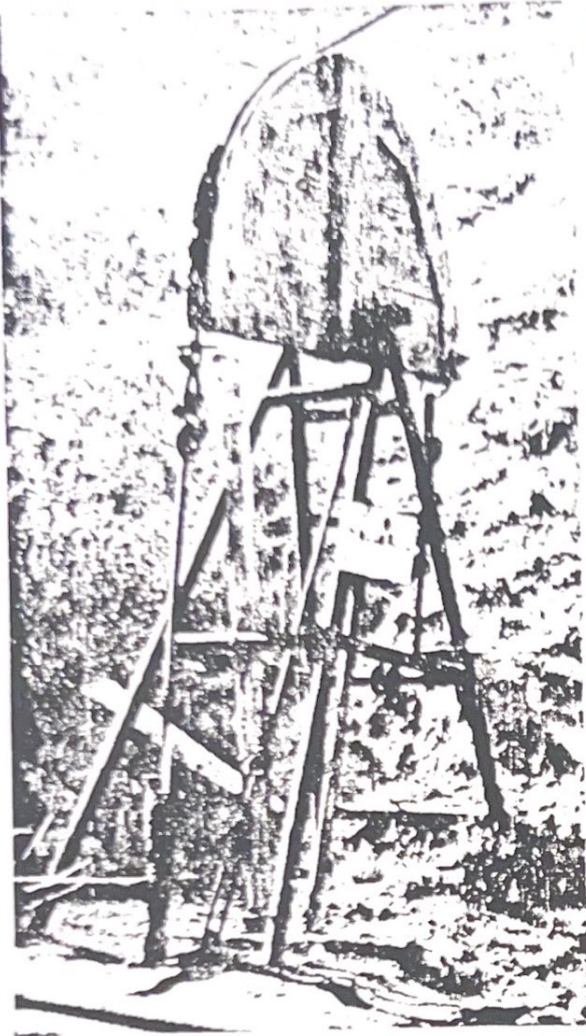
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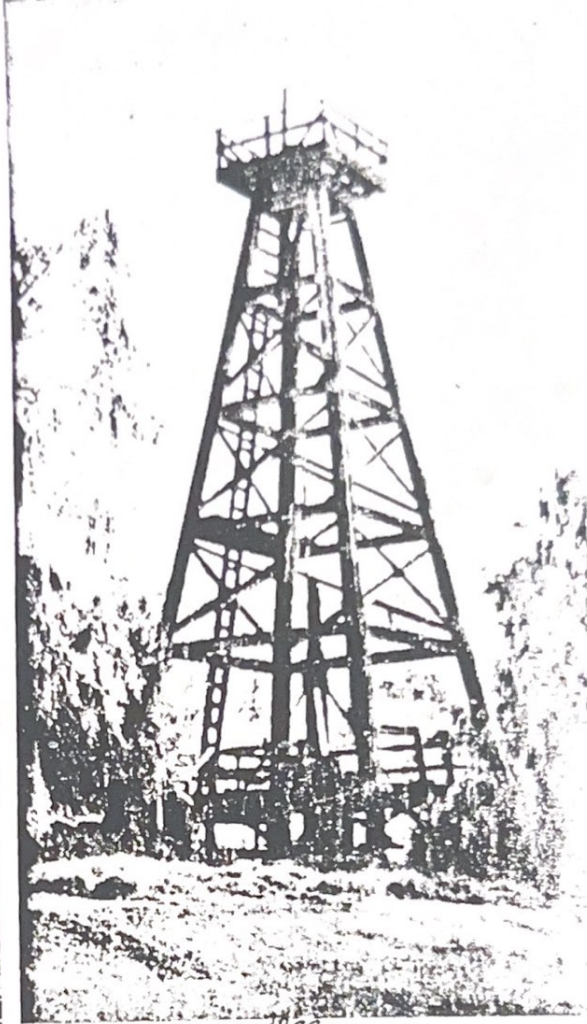
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Don.



BREA CANYON NO. 1 — Still in production, Brea Canyon Oil Company's first well was drilled in 1899. The old derrick has long since been removed, but the well still faithfully produces about a barrel a day after 64 years. Also produced with a jack line, the old fashioned method can still be observed at the location east of the highway in a small box canyon.

(News Tribune Photos)



FIRST WELL — The oldest oil well in Orange County was drilled in 1896 on the old CCMO lease in Olinda. Shown above, it is still producing about a barrel of oil a day and has produced a total of 96,053 barrels since it was drilled. The derrick shown as it is today is the original and one of the few remaining wooden derricks in this area. It housed the old primitive cable tool drilling equipment. Note the jack line which pumps the well from a central pumping plan.