

The Flying Red Horse



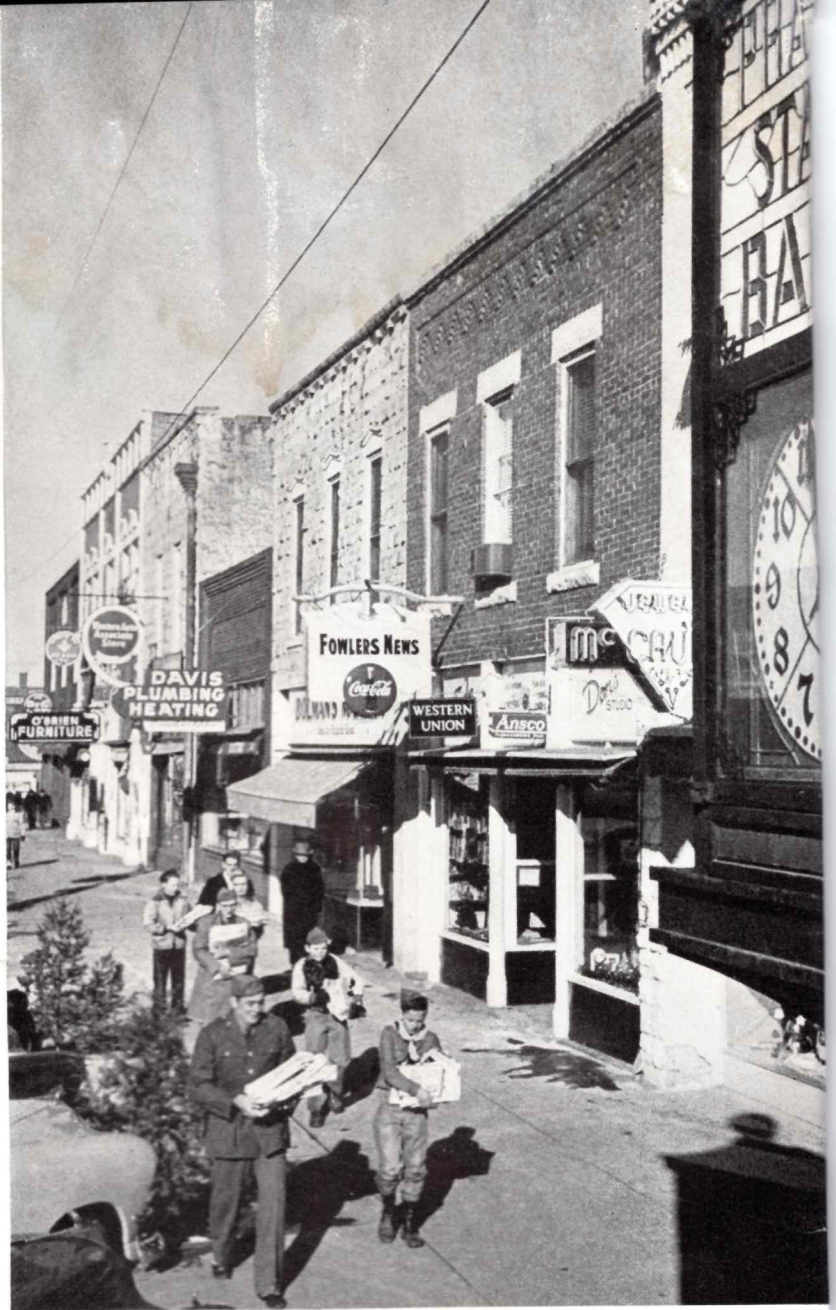
MARCH—APRIL 1952

Augusta Issue





Long-range view: Fine schools and many churches symbolize the growth of Augusta, surveyed by Ross Ingold, a foreman, from top of TCC. Over 65% of refinery employees own homes, almost everyone has livestock, raises crops, goes hunting.



PHOTOS BY MARTHA HOLMES EXCEPT WHERE OTHERWISE CREDIT

Donald Wentz, shown leading Boy Scout troop in paper collection along State Street business area, is one of 60 technical experts on refinery staff. About a third of local high school students proceed to college; many of them go to work in the refinery.

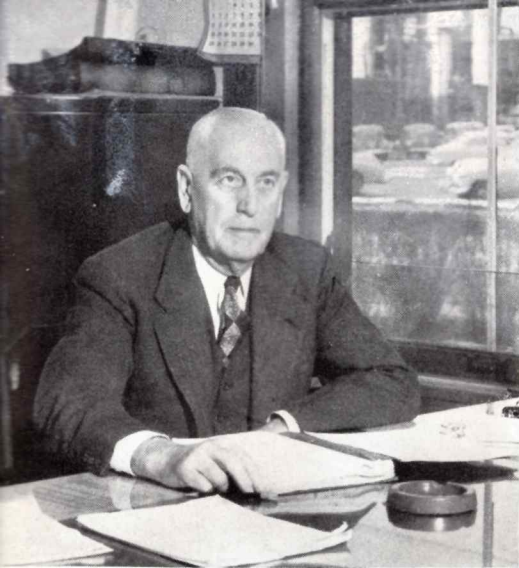
AUGUSTA REFINERY: calm after the storm

Peace and prosperity follow lusty era
kicked off by early oil boom in Kansas

AUGUSTA, KAN.—The “tankies” were drinking blanket whiskey the night they chased the law out of Augusta, knocked down the jailhouse with a telephone pole, and shot the bank’s windows out.

That whiskey was a staple in the diet of those hard-living, burly craftsmen who were building tanks to hold oil gushing from Butler County field back in 1916. They made the brew by holding a blanket over a steaming cauldron of sour mash and wringing the moisture into a jug.

Their riot was stimulated partly by the liquid spirits, partly by the boomtown atmosphere, but mostly by resentment against the town’s two law officers. This swaggering, gun-toting pair had



DON WHITLOCK

Bill Glass, refinery manager, joined Augusta staff first in 1920, shifted to Casper, Wyo., refinery five years later, returned in spring of 1939.



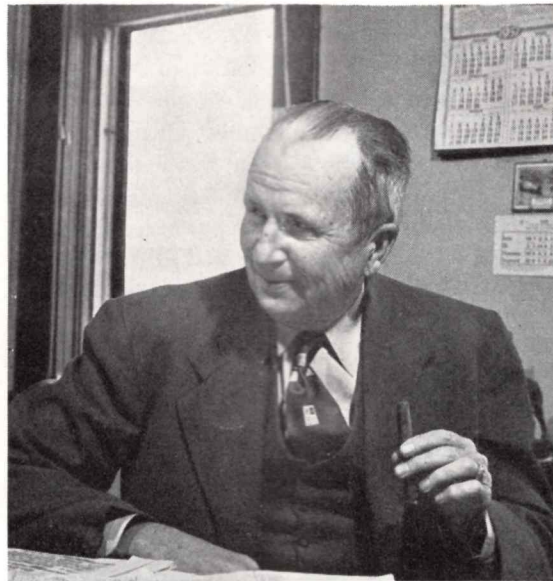
Airlift TCC is background for one of last pictures taken of the late Emory Skinner, left, shown here with Harold Bedell, distillation superintendent.



Stenographers Patricia Swaney, left, and Eugenia Nordman find that church work, literary and social clubs keep Augusta women "busiest in county."



Bertha Shore, with her newsboys, is nationally known editor of the Daily Gazette. "Socony-Vacuum is Augusta, and it's been a good thing for us."



Judge Roy Cox, city prosecutor for 30 years, remembers first discovery of oil was disappointment. Need then of city was natural gas for lighting.



Ralph B. Brandt, with timekeeper Mary Raines, is truck dock operator, official of active Credit Union, and a member of Augusta city council.

been arresting everybody whose Model-T tail light jiggled out over Augusta's deep-rutted roads.

William Peale, solid businessman with a Kansas sense of righteousness, decided that he in particular had had enough of that kind of law. So he tied a red lantern to the tail of his white horse and rode down the main street to the cheers and guffaws of hundreds.

Outraged, one of the officers fired a shot in the air. Every tankie in town pulled a gun out of his waistband and came on the run. The officers fled.

The tankies knocked down the jail to rescue a friend, grabbed some confiscated liquor there, and returned to the center of town. On the steps of the

bank they auctioned off the liquor, opened a mammoth dice game and, as a last gesture of defiance, shot the windows out of the bank.

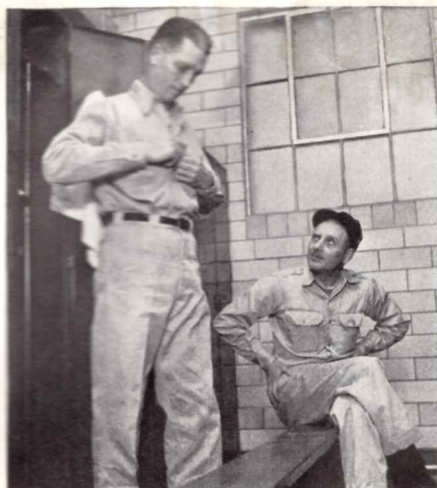
Even the more sedate citizens enjoyed every minute of it. "It was really more orderly than you might think," says Judge Roy Cox, prosecutor for 30 years. "None of us approves of violence, of course, but in a way the tankies just beat us to it. The town council was meeting to fire the law officers when the ruckus started, so we all went down to watch."

It was, residents agree, just part of the times that grew out of the oil gusher that came in on Edward Varner's property in 1916. It was the dying gasp of

frontier life in Kansas, one last flashback to the brawling days of the great cattle drives. And the torrent of oil that made Augusta a temporary boom town quickly subsided into a stabilizing influence.

Judge Cox, looking out his office window to the 270-foot Socony-Vacuum TCC unit, tallest structure in all Kansas and a quarter-mile away, says, "Thanks mostly to the refinery, we've never known a real depression."

The refinery manager, J. W. Glass, a big and broad-shouldered figure in a broad-brimmed Stetson and known to everybody as "Bill," is fully aware of the impact of a refinery which supports at least half the town's 5,000-plus population, and 85 per cent of whose 535



Bert Watson, left, and Clint January, union officials, in air-conditioned building complete with lockers, showers.

employees live within a 10-minute ride of their jobs.

"Our men have served on the city council, in the legislature, and as city commissioners," says Glass. "More than 100 hold office in organizations or the government of the city. These things give us a special responsibility in community affairs."

The nearly spotless refinery structures dominate the town physically. Including an airlift TCC, they're compactly grouped on 300 acres protected by levees from the White Water and Walnut Rivers.

"We're handling 27,000 barrels a day of light, sweet Kansas crude," Glass says, "and turning out three grades of aviation gasoline, three of motor gasoline, two of fuel for farm tractors, kerosine, and No. 1 and No. 2 Mobilheat. We make very little No. 6, as most of the residuals go into asphalt."

The refinery is turning out seven grades of asphalt and road oil. A specialty is "ribbon" asphalt, used by paper makers to laminate boxes. It's made by directing jets of asphalt into a stream of water that runs along a high, bridge-like structure. The ribbons of asphalt harden, the way candy hardens when a housewife lets it drip from a spoon into a cup of water. The ribbons move along to the end of the bridge, drop off into a tank, and shatter into small pieces which are easier to pack for shipping.

A new machine shop has just been completed. It's air-conditioned and lighted entirely by artificial means.

When it was dedicated at a dance in June of last year, the TCC unit that had gone on last year, the month before was put to an unusual use. Corky Edminister and His Corral Gang, the dance band, asked for and got permission to broadcast during the noon hour from the top of the TCC, over Station KANS.

Augusta is a town where a cyclone can whisk a man out of bed and deposit him unharmed on a porch a block away, as Dr. Harry Lutz recalls. It's a town where in 10 minutes starting at 6:30 a.m., June 3, 1951, hailstones chewed the shingles off the refinery office roof and closed down the TCC unit by whacking the emergency shut-off lever.

People brought up by a brawling Mother Nature are solid citizens who can look on the antics of other human beings with good-humored tolerance. Even on antics souped up by an exhilarating oil boom that was to see a million barrels of the crude flow without pumping from fields in the area. Kansas is a young state, admitted to the Union in 1861. The oil boom started in 1916, and that's almost current history to Augusta.

Men became rich overnight—and some went broke the next night. One sold 160 acres for a million—\$330,000 cash, the rest in oil. The field was dry. He got the land back and sold some of it years later to the refinery for \$2,500.

Another hired a special train and went to Hollywood to play polo with Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. Another was stunned when he made \$750,000. He



Policy that permits relatives on payroll really goes to work for twins Louie Melander, at left, and Mrs. Eloise Swaney.

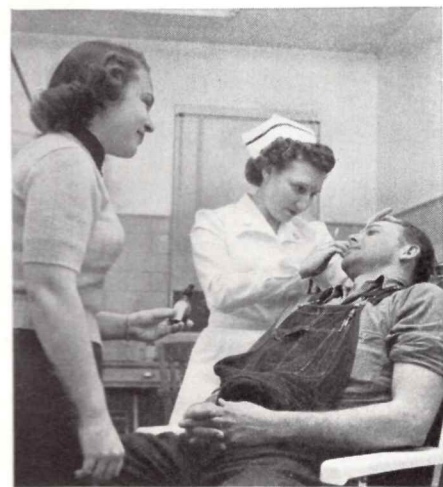
bought a drum for his wife and traps for himself and ended up slightly deafened but with the money intact.

Then came the riot, and George Smith became mayor. He hired 16 law enforcement officers under Chief George Murphy, plus a plainclothesman named John Overvy.

"How could we support a police force of that size?" ex-Mayor Smith asked the other day. "Why, we ended up with \$70 profit the first year. Hauled in a dozen bootleggers and about 100 camp-followers on a regular schedule and fined 'em \$100 each. You might say the wages of sin did a lot of good!"

Mrs. Harry Phipps, whose husband is now manager of the Company's pipe line office in Wichita, agrees that the system worked. She was the small daughter of County Sheriff Lark Snodgrass at the time.

In the oil fields, Magnolia Petro-



Sydney J. Lytton, electrician, is treated in refinery clinic by Mrs. Elnora Tinker as, left, Mrs. Shirley Adams stands by.

leum Company, now the Flying Red Horse affiliate in the Southwest, and other organized groups began bringing order out of chaos. They halted the wasteful practices that characterized individual exploitation of the fields.

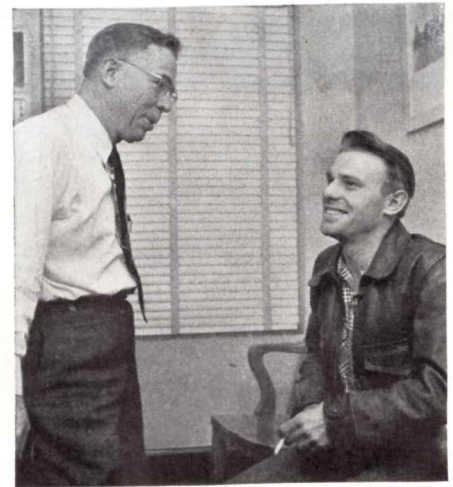
And into town came L. L. Marcell, financier, with J. H. Miller and his son, F. L. Miller. J. H., hulking, hard-bitten, tobacco-chewing figure who could make a stormy oath out of "gosh darn!" had sold his refinery at Chanute. He and Marcell formed the White Eagle Petroleum Company, and by April, 1917, had a new refinery in operation on the Frank



School board meets on grounds: Vernon Gustafson, Milan Hedrick, Virgil Simpson, Warren Proctor, all refinery men.



American Legion cited refinery for its help to disabled vets. Glenn Evans, left, is local commander; Paul Scafe, junior district commander. Right, Doc Mahannah, refinery industrial relations head, with Joe Kidwell, disabled vet who returned to refinery as still operator.



Layton land in Augusta, with a capacity of 5,000 barrels of crude a day. It was progressive. It installed one of the famous Burton pressure stills in 1922. And its progress has continued since it was acquired by Socony, in 1930.

Through the men of the refinery, that progressive attitude has had an impact on the town in many ways. Housing, for example, is in short supply today as in the days of the boom, when people bid high for an empty store on whose floor they could drop a mattress. Harold L. Bedell, distillation and asphalt superintendent, and 15 others in the refinery recently bought and developed 156 acres in the northern end of the city. Bedell built the first house and a dozen others have followed.

That's typical Kansas action. But Clint January, chairman of the Workmen's Committee, and Bert Watson, union president, would narrow it further. "It takes a good man to be a refinery man," they say. "And it takes a good man to get things done."

THEIR wives get things done, too. "Our women are clubbed to death," says *Gazette* editor Bertha Shore. "There are six or eight book or literary clubs. There's the P.T.A. There are the bridge clubs. There are organizations of eight churches. But society in Augusta? Not in my paper. I won't allow it."

The men of the refinery get things done in about every organization in Augusta—the American Legion, the

Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Elks, in particular. Of 600 Elks, some 250 are from the refinery—and the Elks are responsible for a tremendous amount of charitable work.

As a further sample of the way refinery men get around: Dusty McPherron, electrical foreman, is county March of Dimes chairman. Louie Mayfield, Jr., electrician, is president of the volunteer firemen; also on the roster are John Hime, laborer, secretary-treasurer; Willie Carlin, carpenter; Clint Hutter, truck dock loader; Neil Jones, machinist; Tom Johnson, welder; Ben Robb, machinist; Stanley Robinson, laborer.

LITERALLY dozens are Sunday School superintendents or teachers. Many hold offices in chapters of the American Chemical Society, American Society of Mechanical Engineers, and similar groups.

Leaders in Boy Scout work, in addition to lab tester Donald Wentz, include Dave Allison, chemist; Harold Arnold, machinist; Walt Cox, junior associate engineer; Kenneth Crain, chemist; George Engelland, engineer; Forrest Faulconer, conservation and combustion engineer; Floyd Hansen, leadman; Wayne Hatchett, corrosion engineer; James "Lightning" Mark, anti-knock tester; Lloyd Moore, lab tester; Bill Morris, lab tester; Weldon Reagor, engineer; Jay Reed, engineer; Nolan Reetz, junior engineer; Stanley Robinson; Robert Roby, Sr., mason; Wally Seaman, lab tester; Chris E. Smith, elec-

trician; and Andy Vancil, loading and blending foreman.

A five-ply job is done by Warren Proctor, chemist, as Community Chest chairman, Rotary Club secretary, Scout leader, school board member, and Sunday School superintendent. Jim Gillen, of industrial relations, is active in the Community Chest. Darrel Hatchett, treating foreman, is scribe for Kiwanis. Morris Hughes, chemist, is Lions Club district chairman.

COMMANDER Glenn R. Evans of the Legion post is an insulator at the refinery. Francis Colgan, master-at-arms, is a leadman. Paul Scafe, junior Legion commander of the 5th Kansas District, is a machinist. Legion committeemen include refinery manager Glass; Bill Moter, pipe fitter; Emmet "Dinty" Moore, engineer; Clyde Norton, pipe fitter, and Harold Bedell.

Lawrence E. Lockwood, carpenter, commands the V.F.W. post, with Spurgin Ward as senior vice-commander; Curtis Collins, utility operator, junior vice-commander; and Russel "Gabby" Garrett, operator, as chaplain.

The list of civic workers is impressive. The impact on the community is obvious. Miss Shore, *Gazette* editor who awards an "Orchid to the Living," says:

"Maybe someday I ought to take the elevator to the top of that TCC unit and hang an orchid up there. I think everybody in town would know what I meant."