

The Rig and Reel Magazine



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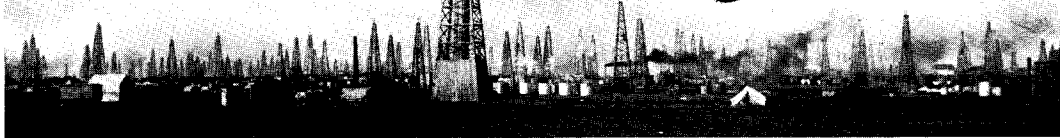
1927

PROPERTY OF
HAROLD W. C. PROMMEL
CONSULTING GEOLOGIST
DENVER, COLORADO



Parkersburg Twins at Seminole, Okla.

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SEPTEMBER

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Utah Gives Up Its Liquid Gold

By Tolbert R. Ingram

IF it wasn't for the spirit of Romance connected with drilling for oil, the industry would be just about as interesting as the daily rambles around his village of Tel-le, the Navajo Indian whose name means "dead." Tel-le lives, but nobody knows why and nobody cares. But, there is romance in the oil business. If you don't believe it, ask Prommel, Perrini, Aurand and the rest of the crowd that invaded the devil's hiding place in southeastern Utah in 1921 and—.

Well, if you want the story, let us begin at a good starting point. First, get a picture into your mind of the land south of Moab as it was in 1920. It carried no name upon the maps and was represented by a large white space. Meridian, township and range lines terminated to the east, west, north and south. There was no human habitation within its bounds. It was barren, desolate and mysterious.

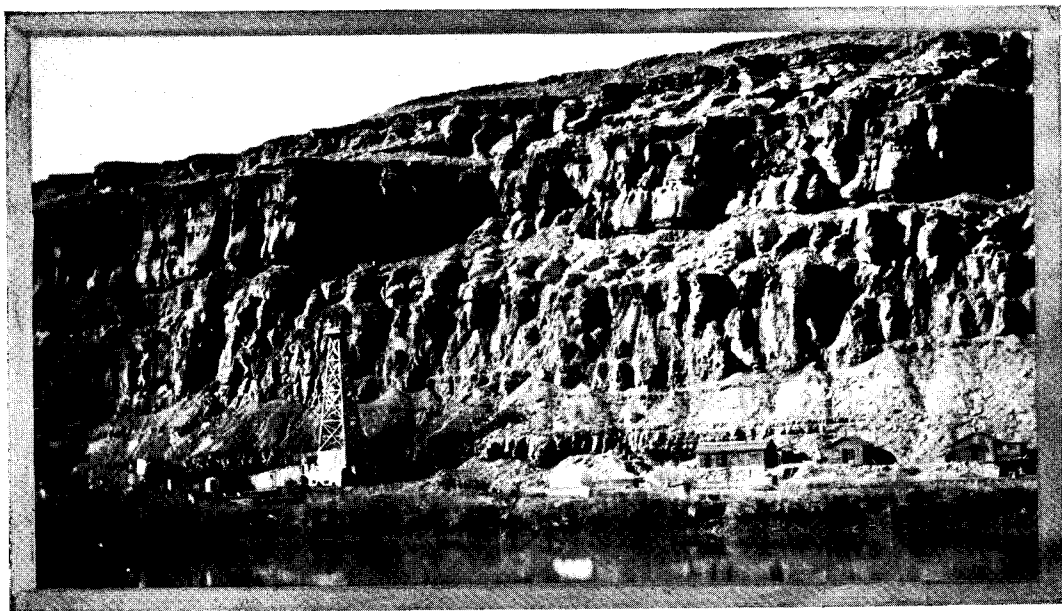
The Colorado River cuts through the land from the northeast towards the southwest and at the point where civilization



H. W. C. Prommel, discoverer of the Cane Creek structure upon which discovery well is located.

ends and the wilderness begins is the little town of Moab, named after a city of the bible and settled by the Mormons. A few miles to the southwest of Moab the muddy river cuts through a canon wall which marks the beginning of the Grand Canon of the Colorado. The stream winds in and out among jasper-hued sandstones and varicolored formations like a slow-moving, slimy, treacherous snake. From its banks on the east and west there arises a savage land, a desert land, a land of fabled valleys, petrified forests, mysterious wooded glens and weird formations, a land of cliff dwellers' ruins high up in the niches of the canons, and walls covered with hieroglyphics telling of the doings of races of people whose beginning reaches back into the ages of dimmest antiquity.

There were reasons for believing that within the boundaries of this no-man's land structures which might contain oil would be found. One of these will serve the purpose here. Early in 1920, H. W. C. Prommel, assisted by Kenneth B. Nowels and Roger F. White, went into the country south of Moab to look for a reported salt



Site of discovery well south of Moab, Utah, and derrick with which it was drilled. Cliff in the background is 300 feet high.

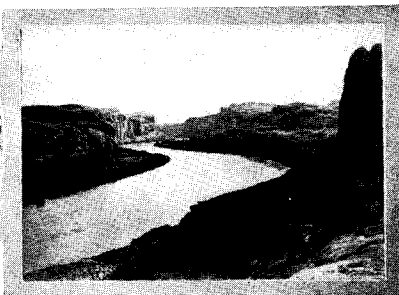
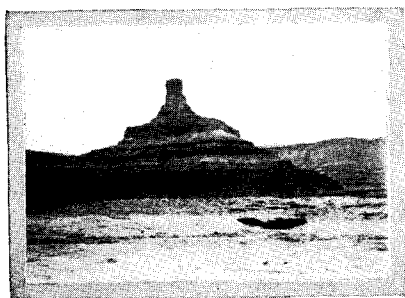
outcrop to explain the occurrence of massive salt bodies in a well drilling near Moab. On that occasion they noticed a structure so plainly marked that the dips, closures and formations could be studied like the contents of a mammoth testing tube. This structure afterwards became known as the Cane Creek dome.

Now let us shift the scene to show the interior of oil executives' offices in Denver in the following winter. Put into the picture a few young men of wealth filled with

the spirit of adventure and recollections of the opening of Salt Creek. Paint in the atmosphere of a threatened oil shortage and an appealing desire on the part of oil men to find new fields, no matter where located, how difficult to explore, or remote from the markets. Trail into the scene little ribbons of rumors of mammoth structures in a new land untouched by the drill and unknown to the world. Then let nature take its course.

Here is where the story begins. In the

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LEFT — Castle rock located between structures Nos. 1 and 2. Top is 1,800 feet above the river. View taken from the Shafer limestone bench which at this point is 400 feet above the river. Sand bank, not water, in front. The strata is varicolored, reddish brown, green and chocolate shales, and purple. Sunset upon the scene is remarkable for its beauty.

CENTER — H. E. Crum at Indian picture writings in King's Bottom syncline $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles below Moab, on the trail to the oil structures. Edge of a cliff dwelling on the side. Cliff dwellings are larger and more numerous farther south. Writings are supposed to point out the route taken by the cliff dwellers to reach their homes.

RIGHT — Gateway to the Grand Canon, four miles south of Moab. Looking up the river.

Utah Gives Up Its Liquid Gold

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spring of 1921, the inhabitants of the little town of Green River, Utah, were enthused upon learning that some eastern men with visions had decided to establish an airplane service from that point down the Colorado River, over the rim of the Grand Canon and into Arizona for the benefit of tourists who might desire to see one of the greatest wonders of the world from the skies. Visions of wealth filled the eyes of the little town. A few days later, an express car was set out on the siding. Mechanics, pilot, and promoter arrived with the car. An airplane was unloaded, set up, a landing field marked out, and trial flights undertaken. The people thrilled as they saw the dream coming true.

The plane made daily flights over and around Green River for almost a week and there was much talk on the part of the promoter and his pilot on what the establishment of the wonderful scenic route would mean to the little town. The people were bubbling over with enthusiasm. Then,

one fine morning, the airplane went up as usual, but with the crew dressed in rougher costumes than they had been wearing. It circled several times high in the air and then darted off towards the southeast and disappeared in the mists above the desert. It never came back. The mechanics took their departure on the next train without making any explanations, and Green River was left to its pondering.

Of course you have guessed by now that the scenic airplane route along the Grand Canon merely was a ruse so that oil men could get into no-man's land and file upon the oil structures ahead of anybody else without their real object being too apparent. You guessed right. The airplane carried V. C. Perrini, a geologist; Hal H. Bullen, the pilot; and J. H. Dubro, an expert mechanic. The project was financed by Paul T. Mayo and Christopher F. Cusack, two young men of Denver who ventured upon the hazardous undertaking partly for the thrill of the contest and partly for the fruits success might yield.

(To be continued)



Driller Bill Says:

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"Sposin" a feller wanted to be shot to Constantinople and they'd chuck him into a cat'ridge loaded for Paris. Wouldn't they have to reload him?"

"Nope," says Bill who has, apparently, given the subject considerable study. "You'd simply go to the gun depot ticket agent and call for a ticket to Constantinople via the cannon route.

"The Agent would take your measure, same as the tailors do and he'd get your weight, then he'd consult a chart same as we consults railroad time-tables. This chart gives him the size o' the cat'ridge needed; the amount o' nitro powder it takes; the number o' gun wads; the size o' the gun bore, whether it's full choke or smooth bore 'n everything. Yuh then takes your ticket down to the battery where there's a gateman to direct you to the gun you're billed for. Yuh crawls into your cat'ridge

and they hists yuh on a crane and drops yuh into the muzzle and pulls the trigger. In so many seconds,—it depends on the distance you're s'posed to travel, yuh lands at your destination in a big net like they use at circuses for the trapeze performers to fall into. There'll be a bozo at the landin' end to open your cat'ridge so yuh can get your shoppin' done in plenty time to get shot back home in time for lunch."

"That's all very plausible," says Bill, plainly interested. "But what if a feller'd want to take his wife along?"

Jim, uncoiling himself from the bench drags his coffee can from the pipe collar stove and blows lustily at the steaming liquid before he replies, then, between scalding gulps he says:

"Why, that's easy—they'll jist—simply use—a double-bar'l—gun."