Fogn 10-300a (July 1969) UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE

Oklahoma COUNTY

Washington

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DATE

(Continuation Sheet)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

APR 1 3 1972

(Number all entries)

No. 8 Significance

Nellie Johnstone No. 1

found in other Oklahoma fields. The well was "shot" between 1,303 and 1,320 feet on April 15. With a suitable crowd on hand, Mrs. Jennie O. Morton, stepdaughter of Keeler, dropped the "go devil" which set off the nitroglycerine shot, sending a plume of oil up and over the wooden derrick. Oklahoma's first commercial oil well had come in.

(Curiously, this was in Indian Territory, on the extreme western boundary of the Cherokee country. Across the 96th Meridian lay the Osage reservation and in October, only a few months after the Cudahy success, the Wilkey No. 1 came in, about two miles to the northwest. It was, thus, the first producing oil well in Oklahoma Territory.)

The well was named for Nellie, the daughter of William Johnstone, one of the three original partners in the Cudahy well. The well was the first of 13 drilled on the territorial land allotment assigned to her as a Cherokee citizen. By the time it was finally abandoned in the mid-1950s, the Nellie Johnstone No. 1 had produced approximately 100,000 barrels of oil.

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The original wooden rig had stood over a "dry hole" near Sapulpa. The chore of moving it 70 miles overland to Bartlesville in 1897 had required two weeks. The famed derrick was reconstructed at least once before its abandonment in the mid-1950s. In 1963, after abandonment and with growing awareness of its importance to the petroleum scene in Oklahoma, another pains-taking reconstruction was undertaken, this time with long-lasting redwood timbers.

The derrick, drilling floor and entire rig scene is a faithful reproduction of the original. Adding interest is a display of other early-day tools and equipment. Now in Johnstone Park, on landscaped grounds behind a protective fence, the Nellie Johnson No. 1 rig today stands as an altogether fitting monument to the tremendous contribution the petroleum industry has made to the growth and development of Oklahoma.

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The "first" well didn't happen over night. George B. Keeler, a pioneer merchant in the small settlement of Bartlesville, had noticed an oil seep along Caney River as early as 1875. He finally interested William Johnstone and Frank Overlees in the project. Work actually began when a contract was arranged with Cudahy, the large meat packing firm of Omaha, Nebraska, which had already drilled several wildcat wells in Indian Territory, all unsuccessful.

Cudahy hauled tools and derrick to Bartlesville and spudded in the well in late January 1897. In April oil was struck in the formation later known as the prolific "Bartlesville sand," subsequently

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Finney, Frank F., Sr., "The Indian Territory Illuminating Oil Company," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. 37 (1959), pp. 149-161. McDowell, Alene D., An Interview, Oct. 20, 1937, Indian-Pioneer History, Grant Foreman Collection, Vol. 35, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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NAME AND TITLE:			C. FITTE	

Kent Ruth, Deputy ORGANIZATION

12.

Oklahoma Historical Society STREET AND NUMBER: • - -1 0......

TTY OR TOWN:	STATE	CODE
Oklahoma City	Oklahoma	40
STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION	NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION	

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665). I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

DATE

Sept. 1971

Preservation Chief. Office of Archeology and Historic

Date

Date

ATTEST: Keeper of The National Regis APR 1 3 1972

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