

Lawrenceville, Illinois

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Updated February 2, 2009 by Jim Fehrenbacher, Rex Energy

Marathon Oil Company has been a fixture in Lawrence County since the early days of the Southern Illinois Oil Boom. Oil was found in Illinois as early as 1865, and the first discovery in the Bridgeport Field was made in 1901. In 1906, Marathon’s predecessor, The Ohio Oil Company, made its first foray into Illinois. By 1912, Illinois was The Ohio’s chief producing ground, with tiny Bridgeport, Illinois as its center.

As with many boom towns, Bridgeport, a town of 600 in 1906, swelled to over 4,000 people in the space of a few days. When oil was struck in a well on the Cap Lewis farm five miles north of town in May 1906, leases in that vicinity came into great demand. Overnight, any contractor with a drilling machine rushed to Bridgeport to join the excitement.

The first discovery in the Bridgeport sand was a shallow field, but when oil was found three hundred feet deeper in the Buchanan sand, a second and more significant boom was on. Bridgeport was filled with a population of transient workers, often living in tents or whatever other temporary housing that could be thrown together.

The early days of boom town oil production were sustained until the Bridgeport fire, which broke out on Friday, June 13th, in 1913. While the structures were quickly replaced, the early days of prosperity never fully returned to Bridgeport. Shortly after the fire, the contractors began the move to the oil fields to the west. The Ohio Oil Company, however, stayed in Bridgeport, and continued as Marathon Oil Company until the Lawrence Field was sold to Plains Illinois Inc. effective November 1, 1995. Plains Illinois Inc., a subsidiary of Plains Exploration and Production Company of Houston, Texas, operated the Lawrence Field from November 1, 1995, to March 17, 2004, when ERG Illinois, Inc., a subsidiary of ERG Operating Company, Inc. of Houston, Texas, took over operations. ERG Illinois, Inc. operated the Lawrence Field until February 4, 2005, when operations were conveyed to PennTex Resources Illinois, Inc., a subsidiary of Rex Energy Corporation of State College, PA.

PennTex currently produces approximately 1,750 barrels of oil per day from the Lawrence Field providing employment for 84 people. Rex Energy Corporation through its subsidiary PennTex Resources Illinois, Inc. is proud to continue operations of the Lawrence Field and is currently conducting two pilot studies testing enhanced oil recovery methods that if successful will extend the life of the Lawrence Field for years to come.