



Forest Service Centennial

Snapshot

Pumping Black Gold in SE Ohio

Wayne National Forest US Forest Service

Nelsonville, OH: While digging a water well in Noble County in 1814, someone first tapped into one of Ohio's oil reservoirs. Oil and brine shot out of the hole 30 feet high.

The oil was used in lamps and for medicinal purposes. Another market for the product was "Seneca Oil," which was believed to be a remedy for rheumatism.

In 1859, oil was discovered in Washington County. That same year the first commercial oil well was drilled in western Pennsylvania. Within a few years, oil wells were being sunk throughout southeast Ohio.

In the 1860s, Ohio oil drillers discovered a heavier, paraffin-based oil which could be used as a lubricant. In 1896, Ohio reached its all-time record for oil production at 23 million barrels. Within a few years, that volume had declined to less than 10 million.

Ohio's natural gas, first tapped in 1884, powered the 19th Century industrialization of the state. Peak years for the southeastern Ohio gas fields were 1889 and 1890.

In the early 20th Century, oil production in Oklahoma and Texas surpassed the fields of Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. However Ohio still ranks fourth nationally in number of wells drilled and in the top half of states that produce oil and gas. As you travel through the Wayne National Forest you will still frequently see well heads throughout the region.

The images below show the same area near Rinard Mills in Washington County in the 1860s and today. Notice the number of oil derricks in the 1860s operating in the background.



Forest Fact

The 236,665 acre Wayne National Forest is one of 155 national forests celebrating the 100th anniversary of the agency.

Check out our Websites

www.fs.fed.us/r9/wayne
www.fs.fed.us/centennial

For more information

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