

VIEWPOINT

GUEST
VIEWPOINTDrilling has
long history in
Tompkins Co.

By John Young and Lawrence Cathles

While natural gas was discovered in New York in 1821, the story of gas drilling in Tompkins County starts in 1888 with the "Ithaca Deep Well," located in what's now the parking lot for Eastern Mountain Sports along Route 13 in the City of Ithaca. Drilled to a depth of 3,185 feet, it passed through the Marcellus Shale but found only a non-commercial show of gas. It was the first of almost 100 mostly gas but also brine and geothermal wells that have been drilled to date in Tompkins County — some in every town in the county but most in Lansing and Groton.

It wasn't until 1939 that the county got its first commercially productive gas field — the Danby Field. The discovery well, the Mary Taubman No. 1, had an initial production of 5 million cubic feet of gas per day from the Oriskany Sandstone, and it wasn't abandoned until almost 30 years later. This well was located near the intersection of Comfort and Gunderman roads in the Town of Danby. Then in 1942, the county's second commercial gas field was discovered — the Peruville Field, located along the Groton/Lansing town line. These wells also produced from the Oriskany Sandstone (just below the Marcellus). The best production reported in this field was 2.5 million



LONDON TORCH RELAY

Is there an op
in the race

In "Watershed," his brilliant book on the 1980 campaign for the presidency won by Ronald Reagan, author John Stacks reported on interviews lasting six hours of 250 individuals, probing the respondents' "personal and political values," conducted by the late Dr. Richard Wirthlin, who from 1968 forward was Reagan's trusted pollster,

polled every night, and Mondale had led Reagan on just two nights all year: the night of the day on which Mondale named Geraldine Ferraro as his running-mate and the following night.

By the third night, following unanswered questions about her husband's tax returns, she had become "Mrs. John Zaccaro," and the race

the Oriskany Sandstone (just below the Marcellus). The best production reported in this field was 2.5 million cubic feet of gas per day from a single well.

The county's deepest well to date is the 1959 Shepard No. 1, drilled by CNG Transmission Corp. just north of the original Danby Gas Field. This well went to a total depth of 10,438 feet, passing through both the Marcellus and Utica shales, and encountered non-commercial shows of gas in three different formations. Two years later, New York State Natural Gas tried a similar deep well west of Ithaca near Route 79, but this well reported only a small volume of gas in the shallow Oriskany Sandstone, despite being drilled to a depth of 8,903 feet.

Since then, numerous additional wells have been drilled in Tompkins County, including 17 directional and horizontal wells, two 1,500-foot geothermal wells and a variety of brine wells. One salt test near East Shore Circle in the Town of Lansing found more than 1 million cubic feet of gas per day in 1977, but that well was never produced commercially. The county's most recent productive well, the Duddleston No. 1, was completed by Chesapeake a few years ago in Ulysses near the intersection of Halseyville and Swamp College roads. That well was hydrofractured and flare-tested but has yet to be put into commercial production.

Whether any additional wells will ever be drilled in Tompkins County is a matter for state and possibly local government to determine, but the county already has a long history of drilling and production, and it has contributed several gas fields to the region's energy supply. Details can be found at www.dec.ny.gov/cfm/ex-tapps/GasOil/search/wells/index.cfm and in paper records at the state Department of Environmental Conservation, which we have posted at www.blogs.cornell.edu/naturalgaswarming.

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by the late Dr. Richard Wirthlin, who from 1968 forward was Reagan's trusted pollster, trusted advisor and personal admirer. In those exhaustive sessions with the 250, Wirthlin encountered the pessimism and crankiness so pervasive among voters in 1980. But he concluded that the nation's low morale was due to a loss of public confidence in the nation's leadership and did not indicate loss of confidence in the nation itself.

Emphasizing Reagan's innate personal optimism, that 1980 campaign had as its premise that Americans wanted to believe that the country — with its confidence restored by a leader they could believe in — could solve its nagging problems.

On a personal note, I always both liked and trusted Wirthlin, who while always fiercely loyal to the Gipper, could be generous with his findings. As an example, he revealed to me that, during the 1984 re-election campaign, when Reagan carried 49 of the 50 states against Democrat Walter Mondale, the Reagan campaign had



Mark Shields

Commentary

about her husband's tax returns, she had become "Mrs. John Zaccaro," and the race returned to form.

"If you are going to run for national office, you'd better understand that optimism is something that Americans expect," concluded Democrat Tom Kiley, who served as media adviser to Democratic presidential nominee Michael Dukakis.

The current 2012 campaign suffers from an acute shortage of optimism. Neither Barack Obama nor Mitt Romney could be mistaken for either of those carriers of contagious sunniness, Bill Clinton or Ronald Reagan.

The country now has the feel of that subway car which has come to a jolting, unscheduled stop somewhere in the dark tunnel between stations. The lights are out. The air is close. There is a palpable nervousness among the passengers. That stalled subway car and the nation today both desperately need that strong, confident voice that can convincingly explain what went wrong, what is now being done to repair the

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is July 31, 2012. On this date:

- » In 1777, the Marquis de Lafayette, a 19-year-old French nobleman, was made a major-general in the American Continental Army.
- » In 1919, Germany's Weimar Constitution was adopted by the republic's National Assembly.
- » In 1930, the radio character "The Shadow" made his

debut as narrator of the "Detective Story Hour" on CBS Radio.

» In 1942, Oxfam International had its beginnings as the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief was founded in England.

» In 1957, the Distant Early Warning Line, a system of radar stations designed to detect Soviet bombers approaching North America,

DOONESBURY

