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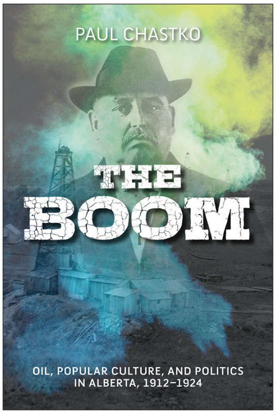

THE BOOM: OIL, POPULAR CULTURE, AND POLITICS IN ALBERTA, 1912–1

by Paul Chastko

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"A City So Blessed Cannot be Checked:" Oil! . . . Sort of

> *I want to say that never, in all the years that I have lived in Calgary, and always meeting with reasonable success, have I felt so great a sense of gratitude as I do over the discovery of this great natural resource. It gives us confidence in ourselves, in our city, and in our province at a time when we need it most sorely. You won't know Calgary in two weeks. It will be the livest place in Canada. People will flock into this city from all parts of the continent. Anyone who has not been in an oil boom cannot imagine what wide interest a real strike of oil creates. It brings thousands of people and millions of dollars to the town or city that is fortunate enough to be the centre of activity.*
>
> —Oscar G. Devenish
> *Calgary Morning Albertan*
> May 16, 1914

The sights up there are simply wonderful and like old days in the western boom camps . . . . They have turned hair dressing establishments, barber shops, cigar stores and everything else into shops selling oil stock. They have no exchange up there and they use any old place for their dealings. I saw one place where they were selling the stock so fast that they just threw the money and checks into a big basket and when it was full lugged it off to the bank and filled another one . . . . Those people up there didn't know what they had. They haven't all waked up to it yet. But it is certainly a big thing and beats any excitement we have seen for a long time.

—Duncan D. McGregor
The Montana Record-Herald
June 2, 1914

George Buck and Black Diamond Oil Fields would have been a simple failed venture if not for two things: the prevailing belief among investors that oil and natural gas existed in commercial quantities in Alberta; and the tendency for a rising tide to lift all boats. Initial public reaction to the "discovery" at Black Diamond remained muted, partially because Black Diamond stock remained off the market at Buck's behest. But Buck's instinctive belief that any discovery would stimulate public enthusiasm proved correct. Black Diamond's salvation owed itself to the success of others, namely Archibald Dingman and the Calgary Petroleum Products Company.

The winter of 1913/14 had witnessed significant changes to Calgary Petroleum Products. As early as December 1912, a controversy over the leaseholds Herron sold to the company erupted when Dingman alleged that Herron did not transfer mineral rights to another section of land held by the Canadian Pacific Railway as stipulated in the original deal creating the partnership. Herron claimed that since he never held those rights, they were not his to sell. But in the interest of holding the consortium together, Herron transferred the mineral rights to another section free of charge. Despite attempts to keep the peace, Herron's hard feelings over relegation to the margins of the company by Dingman became mutual when Herron poached William Elder in November 1913 so the two could form their own company, Herron-Elder. Elder's decision to leave CPP temporarily stopped work on Dingman #1 until Dingman brought in Martin Hovis, another driller from Pennsylvania, to replace Elder. While both sides remained relatively tight-lipped regarding the developments, by the spring of 1914 Dingman and the directors sued Herron and his daughter to recover the property or payment of $750,000. Fortunately, the two sides reached a settlement by early April, temporarily putting the matter to rest. When asked about the dispute, Herron referred *The Natural Gas and Oil Record* to Luke 6:2–30 to "find why certain things have come to pass."[1]

Despite the tensions that existed between Herron, Dingman, and the rest of the consortium members, drilling at Calgary Petroleum Products #1 made steady progress under Hovis's watchful eye. By early April, persistent reports of oil showings on drill bits, well cuttings, tools, and equipment appeared in local papers. Ever cautious, Dingman largely confined his remarks to the other directors and steadfastly refused to comment in the press, prompting the *Albertan* to resort to interpreting his body language or seeking comments from those with whom he spoke. Daily updates increased the tension and built public expectations of an imminent discovery. For months, Ira Segur, the managing director of the McDougall-Segur Exploration Company, drew on his considerable experience to remind reporters and investors alike that "the development of an oil field is not accomplished in a moment. It is really a matter of years." With public expectations growing with each passing day, Segur advised, "Possess your soul in patience. An oil well is not made in a day or in a year for that matter. It might be necessary to drill a number of wells before the oil-bearing sands are tapped."[2]

The California oil man knew what he was talking about. Finding oil in the complex formations beneath Turner Valley increasingly loomed as a more expensive proposition than many had first assumed. By March 1914, the *Herald* reported that during a planned trip east to Ontario and Quebec, Ira Segur and E.P. Howard, the company's fiscal agent, planned to negotiate with Standard Oil to sell all or part of its interests in Turner Valley. "Don't be surprised," said the *Herald's* source, "if Standard Oil appears as a competitor of the Canadian Western Natural Gas, Light, Heat & Power company in the Calgary market. Who else could supply the cheapest gas?" Segur remained tight-lipped about the meeting upon his return a few weeks later, but no deal emerged. Jersey Standard sent a representative to gather a sample of the oil for analysis at the company's Buffalo refinery as well as dispatching two geologists to Turner Valley to survey the field. Their reports were mostly negative, and Imperial Oil largely left Turner Valley alone for the next few years. In the meantime, on May 15, the directors struck a committee to "negotiate with any Company which wishes to secure drilling rights to any portion of the property" owned by McDougall-Segur Exploration. This was part of a

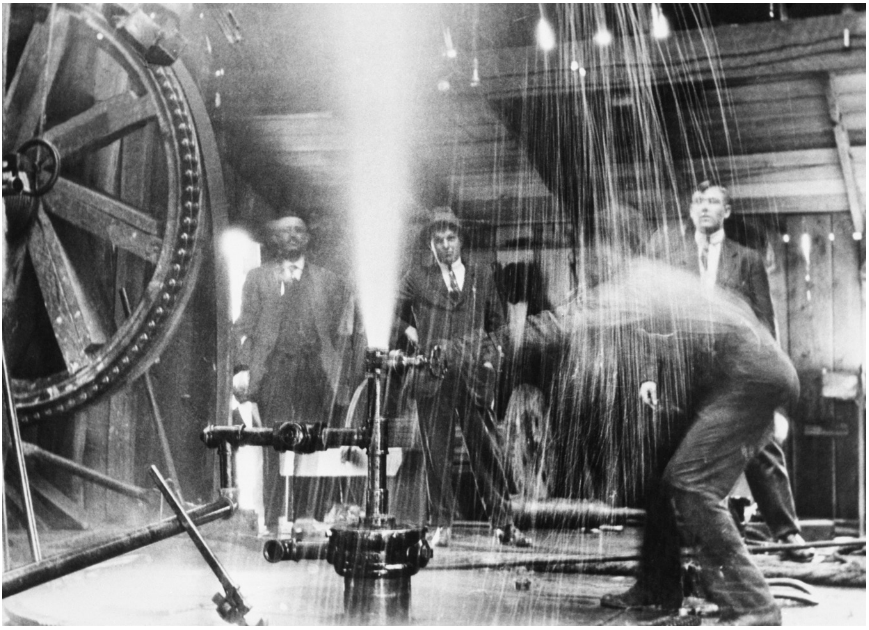


Figure 5-1 “Dingman #1 blowing in, Turner Valley, Alberta”
Technically, Dingman #1 produced a wet natural gas that contained naphtha, a kind of unrefined fuel so pure that it could run automobiles of the time unrefined. Dingman #1 continued producing wet gas until 1939 until it was abandoned. (Glenbow Archives CU1554074)

transition of McDougall-Segur Exploration into a holding company that created development subsidiaries when cash permitted. Directors easily raised $1 million from existing shareholders to fund a subsidiary, Segur Oils, to which it transferred the mineral rights of McDougall-Segur #1. Rumours of a buy-out or merger with a larger company with deeper pockets, like Standard Oil, the Canadian Pacific Railway, or the Hudson’s Bay Company, increasingly made sense given the depth of wells emerging in Turner Valley. The latter two were both large landholders in western Canada and retained the mineral rights on lands they sold to settlers. P.I. Naismith, the manager of the Resources Department for the Canadian Pacific Railway, explained that Calgary Petroleum Products “are drilling in the heart of a district which is very largely owned by the CPR and who would be materially benefited by any discovery in that field.”[3]

Finally, on May 14, 1914, at a depth of 2,718 feet, Dingman #1 struck a strong natural gas pocket flowing at a rate of a million cubic feet per day. A straw-coloured light oil accompanied the gas. Because of the extremely high gas pressure of the field, the well produced a "gusher," sending oil soaring fifteen to twenty feet into the air, making the strike seem much larger than it was. As Archibald Dingman's nephew, Charles, later recounted, the heavy gas pressure coming from the well made it difficult to calculate how much oil the well produced, so the public concocted their own exaggerated figures well above the actual total of ten barrels per day.[4] News of the strike at the Dingman well reached Calgary late Thursday evening and promptly stopped everything as a raucous celebration began. Friday morning, the front page of the *Albertan* bellowed that 1,000 feet of oil lay in the Dingman well by seven p.m. the night before. Bill Cheely's front page story declared the rate of production at 200 barrels per day but claimed the oil's high quality made it equal to a 3,000-barrel well in California.[5]

An emotional William Herron offered his thoughts to the *Herald*:

> I am not a sanctimonious man. I have been anything else but such. But this great strike has caused me to think more seriously than I have ever done before. The Lord has willed it to be so. He could have willed it to be a dry well or a duster. Coming at this critical time in the history of this great western country, I feel that it is given to us for the benefit of His people and the development of the west. I am happy to think that I am the one that was chosen to lead the people in this undertaking. If wealth should come to me out of it, I shall endeavor to deserve it, as I realize that it could be taken away from us just as easily. Think of the condition of Mexico today with her great oil reserves. We have all got something to be thankful for.[6]

In an interview with the *Vancouver Daily World,* Herron went further in his analysis of the significance of the strike, suggesting that his single greatest contribution lay in assisting the development of the province and the Dominion. Indeed, Herron expressed his greatest regret that "so many millions of pounds sterling" from Canada financed development projects in foreign lands when domestic projects in western Canada languished. Despite Alberta's tremendous agricultural possibilities, he predicted that oil would eventually assume pride of place in the province's revenue-producing industries, in part because British investment dollars would freely and unreservedly flow into Alberta. As an ardent imperialist, he hoped the discovery of oil would not only benefit the Dominion of Canada but the whole Empire.[7]

Herron was far from the only one thinking what the strike would mean for Calgary and its future. Oscar Devenish could barely conceal his excitement, declaring, "This looks to me like one of the biggest things in North America. Imagine an oil gusher of pure gasoline, shooting its precious shower up 60 feet into the air. Practically pure gasoline!" Devenish then juxtaposed the Dingman well with the copper deposits in Butte, Montana. To Devenish's mind, there was no comparison. Profits from the hourly output of the Dingman well greatly exceeded the expensive upfront costs and long investment horizons of copper mining. "Calgary has become the center of interest of an excited world," he told *The Calgary News Telegram*. "Be glad you're here." Then, in his capacity as president of the Calgary Industrial Board, Devenish issued a signed statement crediting the well with producing 150–200 barrels per day, generating $20,000 worth of oil per day—roughly equivalent to $600,000 today, adjusted for inflation. The *Herald's* headline writer enthusiastically declared the "oil discovery will mean that problem of unemployment is solved" over a story about poor relief in the city. A banker at the head of a delegation of Canadian and American financiers predicted the end of budget austerity in the province, while an investor from Wisconsin simply "marvelled at the seeming implausibility of it all."[8]

Meanwhile, the *Albertan* cast aside all pretenses of objectivity and launched itself squarely into the role of civic booster for the next few weeks. On May 16, the paper's banner headline declared, "AND THE BEST IS YET TO COME," a quotation culled from a quick statement to the *Albertan* by geologist Cunningham Craig. The paper gave far less prominence to the qualifications Cunningham Craig issued during his statement. While he believed that this proved "beyond a doubt" that there was an oilfield in Alberta, it did not "explain away all our difficulties yet, and this will not happen until a heavier oil has been struck." Observing that the Dingman well produced petroleum condensates, Cunningham Craig noted that it "is a very valuable oil, but it only shows that there is a great body of heavier oil somewhere near." That heavier oil is what he continued to search for, explaining that "a heavier oil refines into more products and has a much wider market." Underneath the statement sat a picture of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., driving horses. "Please note," read the caption, "that it is quite in fashion to drive horses oneself even although one may own a few oil wells and be the proud president of some distinguished branch of the 'I Should Worry association.'"[9] A few days later, the paper predicted that by the end of June "a forest of derricks" would surround the city. "There will be no excuse for any able-bodied man being unemployed, and the money will all flow into Calgary to be put into circulation in this city.

It seems almost too good to be true, but these are cold, hard facts which can be ascertained at the local telegraph offices."[10]

Images and popular depictions of the power of oil to transform the city, province, and region intensified after the Dingman discovery, and Superintendent Ken McNicholl of the Associated Charities likened the discovery to a deliverance. "If the oil strike proves to be what it appears, it will mean a big era of prosperity for Calgary. And we certainly need it." McNicholl revealed that the number of applications for assistance strained the resources of the association because donations to the charity could not keep pace with rising demand from the unemployed. A permanent oil find would bring with it "a general rise in prosperity and I hope a corresponding increase in the donations for the work of the charities." Meanwhile, *The Morning Albertan* asserted that Calgary loomed as one of the wealthiest cities in North America. "It is situated in the centre of a great agricultural and coal country. It is in the midst of the richest petroleum area. It has cheap power and fairly cheap natural gas. It has the best water and the best climate in the world. A city so blessed cannot be checked." *The Calgary News Telegram* celebrated the find as more profitable and permanent than the recent real estate boom. "A gold field at our doors could scarcely be more valuable than an oil field," wrote editor George Thompson. "It may be accepted that the value of oil will increase rather than decrease and that, therefore, if the Alberta field proves as rich as has been predicted, a flow of money will be directed to Calgary that will effectively banish hard times." *The Natural Gas and Oil Record,* on the other hand, noted that the beginning of the boom meant people were not afraid to meet their banker, butcher, or grocer in the street. Last week, they "wouldn't trust you for air" but now eagerly solicited business. The city was now infinitely more confident. "Where there was doubt, there is belief and that is what makes and accomplishes great things."[11]

Themes of returning prosperity and a new dawn brought by the discovery of oil and gas are reflected in the cartoon "The Scarecrow," printed by *The Natural Gas and Oil Record* on May 18, 1914. As the sun rises in a field dotted with oil derricks behind a scarecrow labelled "Calamity Howler," hundreds of birds named "Oil" and "Gas" arrive to feast and pick apart the straw stuffing of the scarecrow.

The Western Standard proved far more pragmatic in its analysis, emphasizing the commercial benefits of increased capital into the city. People could expect rapid growth in the area around the wells. Railroads to and from the oil region would expand to support drilling operations and the transportation of product by building branch lines. A townsite would be constructed in the oil

Figure 5-2 “The Scarecrow”

The arrival of oil and gas in Alberta makes short work of the “Calamity Howler.” *The Natural Gas and Oil Record* played a pivotal role in shaping perceptions about what the petroleum industry meant for Alberta’s economic future.

district to provide housing for workers and services for the community. “The production of oil must now be regarded as a local industry, as far as Calgary is concerned,” declared the *Standard,* destined “to take its place among the ordinary commercial enterprises of this part of the Dominion.” Building refineries and training oil workers would virtually banish unemployment in the process. In the meantime, entrepreneurs should rest assured that they enjoyed several layers of protection. *The Western Standard* noted approvingly that the Dominion’s Oil and Gas Regulations stipulated that “machinery must be on the ground and drilling started within a year, or the oil lease will be cancelled,” and suggested this meant small leaseholders did not need to protect their holdings with a rifle. Institutions and organizations associated with the province, the city police, and “the best business men, who by organizing exchanges which admit the listing of no stock except producing concerns and companies in a bona-fide state of development,” protected the interests of the people. Within the next two or three months, the *Standard* predicted that one hundred wells would be working full time. “While there has not yet been such a rush as there was to Bakersfield, in California, where men and women fought their way through the streets, nevertheless the citizens of

Figure 5-3 "The Greatest Magnet in the World—Oil!"

Much as predicted in the above cartoon, the discovery at Turner Valley brought thousands to Calgary hoping to strike it rich.

Calgary have had a wonderful opportunity to study human nature during the excitement."[12]

In an echo of future concerns about the province's petroleum wealth altering the national economy, the financial editor of *The Toronto Daily Star* predicted a transfer of people from Toronto to Calgary. "Unless something breaks pretty soon there'll be an exodus from this town of a lot of people who like to be at the red-hot centre of gamble, no matter what it is." Meanwhile, *The Ottawa Citizen* reported that two former Ottawa residents, George and William Mackie, had struck it rich in Calgary, each earning $1,000. With combined holdings in oil leases valued at $200,000, both men fully expected to earn a million dollars each. *The Natural Gas and Oil Record* reported that so many people were visiting Calgary in the preliminary stages of the boom that all hotels were at capacity. It was difficult to argue with illustrations of "the New Calgary" with vast amounts of money blown in from Turner Valley fields, or depictions of oil as a huge magnet drawing people and investment capital into Calgary.[13]

The Dingman strike unleashed a second, and much larger, wave of investment and speculation. Suddenly, on the morning of May 15, Albertans everywhere were on the move. In Calgary, seemingly every available automobile drove to Turner Valley filled with people determined to see the well for themselves. In Edmonton, over one hundred people bought tickets for the eight a.m. CPR train to Calgary so they could buy oil stock, including

Edmonton's mayor, William McNamara. Nothing trumped the importance of getting in on the boom and buying oil stock. As an intemperate feud escalated between several members of Edmonton's city council and the mayor, McNamara skipped out of the previously scheduled city council meeting to travel to Calgary with his brother to buy oil stocks. The *Edmonton Journal* attributed McNamara's absence to a case of "Oilitiritis," a fever characterized "as a rush of oil to the brain, resulting in an intense disregard for one's regular business, total absent mindedness for the immediate needs of citizens, and a sudden desire to look after one's self." Several outraged city councillors backed a motion to adjourn the meeting until the mayor returned.[14]

Banks estimated that Calgarians and Edmontonians withdrew approximately $2 million (roughly $1 million in each city—$62.6 million combined, adjusted for inflation) from savings accounts in a little over three months to invest in oil stocks. Since Calgary's population totalled about 55,000 in 1914, that meant every man, woman, and child invested an average of $18.20 ($570, adjusted for inflation) in the Turner Valley boom—just less than half the $40.26 average monthly salary of a male Alberta farm labourer and 77 percent of a female farm labourer's average monthly salary of $23.63. Edmonton's population—72,516 in 1914—invested an average of $13.79 per person. Little wonder *Herald* reporter Torchy Anderson concluded that "Calgary took to oil like a wino to the bottle."[15]

Chance played a part in the frenzy. The Dingman well came in on May 14—exactly one day before the 5,800 or so Alberta-based employees of the Canadian Pacific Railway received their monthly paycheques on May 15, injecting approximately $290,700 into the local economy at exactly the moment for speculators to pounce.[16] It is not difficult to imagine a railway worker or two, feeling flush with cash just after payday, being tempted by the promises of easy money and fortune presented by investing in oil. Calgary Petroleum Products stock on the curb went from $12.50 to $200 a share, causing *The Victoria Daily Times* to note that no one was willing to part with CPP stock. "Everybody wants to buy, and the newer companies are the only people who are willing to sell."[17] New companies immediately formed to take advantage as a previously skeptical public lost all inhibitions. Savings accounts emptied as money flooded the city and province from all over Canada and the United States. At the Bank of Montreal on the corner of 8th Avenue and 1st Street SW, a line of people nearly a block long formed waiting to close out their savings accounts. "The teller," recalled Torchy Anderson, "had a waist-high pile of torn up bank-books." In the offices of oil companies, money arrived so fast they had no time to sort it. At least one business crammed bills into wastebaskets and issued grocery-store receipts. Scenes from the frenzy shocked a visitor from Vancouver. "People are literally standing in the streets and throwing their money into the brokers' offices for oil shares. They cannot get them rapidly enough." Stock vendors sold shares on the street stands while other brokers, overwhelmed by orders, locked the doors to their offices. "Determined investors," recounted an unofficial history of the Calgary Stock Exchange, "shouted instructions through keyholes and threw cash over the door transoms."[18]

Claude Dingman recounted the scene years later:

> Daily the city soon filled with an excited throng, some having legitimate intentions, others ready to "fly-by-night." Printers came in for a rush of business, with an hourly demand for prospectuses, detailing beautiful pictures of "Black Gold" for the asking. Thousands of stock certificates were madly written out, even into the far hours of the night. The land office almost became the scene of a "stampede." Outside and inside excited ones jostled for first position in the line up of buyers of prospective oil lands. But in the main offices of the new oil companies the action was at once wonderful and absurd. The buyers of stock, almost frantic, threw their money over the counter, into any handy box or desk, and even the sight of large bills overflowing into the waste-baskets did not halt the scramble. Some frenzied ones hadn't time to wait on receipts, but ran off rejoicing, and into the melee next door for another chance at wealth. In the blocks with one, two and three stories, elevators were scorned as too slow. Stairways became a seething mass of rushing humanity, with the best speed artists the first served.[19]

In short order, outside capital made its presence felt. Communication and transportation technology—railroads, telegraph, wireless, and telephone—spread the word of the strike and rapidly extended the pool of investors to the rest of Canada and the United States. *The Globe* in Toronto ran a front-page story on May 16 about the Discovery Well (the renamed Dingman #1) and noted the crush of investors seeking oil company stock. The Boston-based *Christian Science Monitor* ran its first story on Dingman's well on May 18 and two days later *The Manchester Guardian* followed suit. Within a week, the *Herald* remarked that every train arriving in the city brought "crowds of people" eager to invest before noting that "money is pouring in from all parts of Canada, the United States and Great Britain like water." Less than a

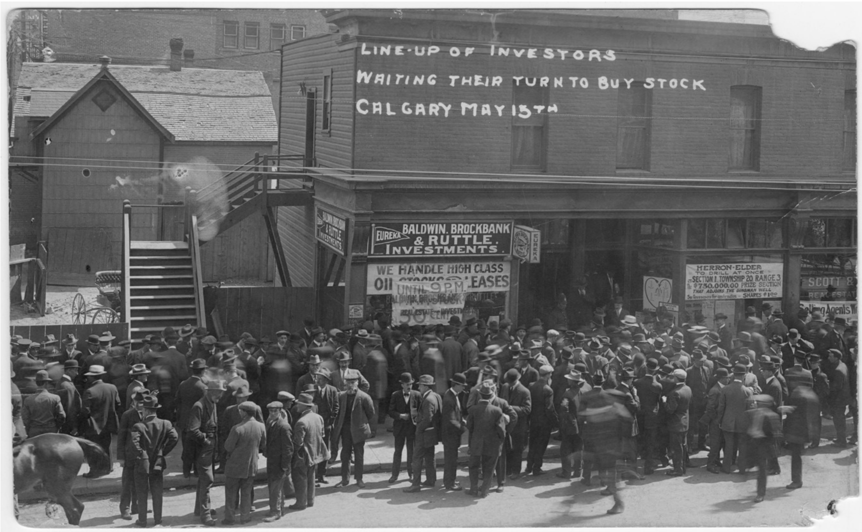


Figure 5-4 "Investors waiting to buy oil stocks in Calgary, Alberta"

May 15, 1914, one day after Calgary Petroleum Products came in, was the payday for Canadian Pacific Railway's employees and injected approximately $290,700 into the local economy. In less than a two-minute walk from the train station crowds gather outside 801 1st Street SW to buy oil stock while a lone police constable stands in the doorway to control the crowd. (Glenbow Archive CU1149999)

week later, *The Morning Albertan* reported that moneyed elites from Spokane, Washington, made the trip north and claimed "at least fifty men of wealth have floated into the city for the purpose of getting in on the oil game when the getting is good and easy."[20] One man from Tacoma, A.J. La Mar, glumly told the *Tacoma News-Tribune* that Americans were already too late to capitalize on the boom. "When I left Calgary oil claims were taken for 100 miles in all directions. Filing began a year ago," said La Mar a few days after the Dingman strike. "Those who expect to make money in the Calgary oil fields will have to take plenty of it with them."[21]

As the first week of the boom ended, arguably the most influential Calgarian had yet to weigh in on the Dingman strike. Thus, it was no trivial matter that Bob Edwards set aside his caustic humour to deliver an unequivocal statement on May 23 proclaiming the discovery of "the greatest oil field in the world." Edwards raved that the well produced nearly pure gasoline and 2 million cubic feet per day of natural gas. Only two other wells in existence, wrote Edwards, could boast such production. "One is a restricted district in

Figure 5-5 "Investors waiting to buy oil stocks, Calgary, Alberta"
Investors gather outside Acme Oil's head office—216 8th Avenue SW – less than a three-minute walk from the CPR station on 9th Avenue SW. (Glenbow Archive CU1554077)

West Virginia. The other is on the steppes of Russia." Edwards also provided his personal assurance that

> there is nothing fakey, bogus or speculative about this sensational oil discovery. Thousands of visitors have been out to the Dingman to see for themselves. Last Sunday they were treated to the sight of two gushers which each gushed in a most obliging manner for a few minutes for the benefit of the onlookers, one of our genial alderman being drenched with the stuff because he failed to get out of range in time . . . . This oil search which has been so earnestly pursued for the past five years on the advice of world-renowned experts like Cunningham Craig, has passed the speculative stage and is now right here gushing up out of the ground.[22]

New oil companies, brokerage firms, and stock exchanges sprouted like mushrooms as investors scrambled to make their fortune. Depending on the criteria used, an estimated 500 oil companies formed, thirteen stock exchanges were chartered, and easily over 1,000 brokers appeared to buy and sell oil and gas stocks. Most of the brokers were former real estate agents who fell on hard times when the Calgary housing boom collapsed in 1913. Other companies and agents branched into oil after providing other services, financial or otherwise, to customers. Future *Albertan* reporter Fred Kennedy, a teenager whose family arrived in Calgary two years earlier, sold stocks out of his newspaper bag in the lobby of the Palliser hotel.[23]

The boom quickly transformed the city's skyline. As the *Vancouver Daily World* noted, "the buildings were not higher, but brilliantly colored signs of all sizes, shapes and cuts appeared on the tops of the stores and hotels announcing to the passing public below the quantities and the merits of respective oil concerns and companies who had their offices on the streets beneath," causing people to mill about "like cattle in a roundup." A reporter from Spokane wrote that downtown Calgary "is literally covered with 'Oil Stock for Sale' signs as far out as I have been able to walk, every hole in the wall being occupied by a broker or a promoter." Even the smallest location came at exorbitant cost. "Brokers are asked $200 per month for offices about 10x12 feet, and I understand they are paying $20 to $40 per day for little stands in some hotel lobbies." Meanwhile, *The Toronto Daily Star* reported the Redcliff brokers jumped at the opportunity to secure a small brick-and-tile office not yet constructed out of the back of the Alberta Hotel and began working out of the space for rent at $40 a day.[24]

The Morning Albertan predicted that by August, Turner Valley would have one hundred drilling plants operating in the Calgary district. "One hundred rigs means more than 100 wells," gushed the paper. "It means several hundred and several hundred wells in this particular district may astound the world and make of Calgary the great oil metropolis of the British nation."[25] Meanwhile, *The Financial Post* quoted at length a private letter to the president of the Imperial Bank in Toronto dated May 20, 1914, noting that "small depositors of every kind are drawing their money out of the savings bank and buying scrip. I am informed that yesterday there were 350 such withdrawals from one leading bank alone. There is also a lot of money coming in by telegraph, etc., for investment in the oil stock." The paper advised "investors to keep their money in their pockets. As yet the whole thing is a gamble and there is as great a probability of as much money being spent in searching for oil as will be obtained from the sale of oil discovered."[26]

Orders for stock certificates flooded every printing establishment in the city, resulting in a shortage of printer's stock. *The Western Oil Examiner* concluded decades later that no one really understood what they were doing; they simply joined in the excitement. "Few of the hundreds of promotions that followed the Dingman well had a dog's chance of success. Fewer promotions would have passed an examination of even the village half-wits." Investors simply believed "somehow things would work out and everybody would wind up rich." Behind the psychology of the boom lay a belief that Alberta now possessed global significance. On May 23, the banner headline in the *Vancouver Daily World* declared Turner Valley the "largest oil area in the world" and presented the statements of Malcolm E. Davis of the Alliance Investment Company at face value when he proclaimed, "There is not the slightest doubt that we have tapped one of the largest areas of oil yet discovered." Davis's enthusiasm minimized the risks of investment, practically guaranteeing that everyone who invested would profit. While Davis conceded some wells would be better situated, he crowed, "Every well driven will be a revenue producer and a dividend payer if handled properly by promoters."[27]

Interviews like the one given by Davis exerted tremendous influence on potential investors in Calgary and beyond, as one Chicago newspaper reported that twenty-one Calgarians became millionaires in less than twenty-one days.[28] Few escaped the omnipresent boom. Out-of-town visitors saw men on the sidewalks adorned with signs and advertisements selling shares in oil companies while autos, drays, wagons, taxicabs, and bicycles streaming with banners, placards, and advertisements clogged the roads.[29] The front page of *the Albertan* told the story of a seven-year-old boy who, having sold a copy of the newspaper, went to invest the nickel he earned in oil stocks only to be told that shares only sold in blocks of one hundred. "Tears and sobs rent the small frame as [the nickel] was disconsolately withdrawn." But the boy's tears caught the attention of an older man, Member of the Legislative Assembly R.E. Campbell, who asked the lad what was wrong. "A little sympathy soon drew the cause of woe from the quivering lips of the youthful investor, a brive [sic] five-dollar bill from Mr. Campbell's pocket restored hope, sparkles, and beaming joy." The punchline came with a wallop—"before night those shares had doubled and the youth was wealthy."[30]

Everywhere, people dreamed of striking it rich. "Men went here and men went there," noted one reporter. "Buying, selling, millionaires, masons, street sweepers and society women mingled in one vast throne, buying oil, selling oil, rebuying and reselling their shares."[31] Every train that arrived brought new investors and the city positively hummed. "Business went on with never a stop," concluded one reporter. "Everybody was making fortunes or had made them or was about to make them."[32] A story circulated that one woman

Figure 5-6 “Investors waiting to buy oil and gas stocks outside Huron and Bruce Oil and Gas Company, Calgary, Alberta”

Huron and Bruce was one of many companies formed in late 1913 that waited until May 1914 to begin operations. At the corner of 7th Avenue and Centre Street, investors and a dog wait for their opportunity to buy stock at $10 a share. (Glenbow Archive CU1145708)

arrived in Calgary by train and entered the station where some were selling stocks. She pressed money into the hands of a man she presumably thought was a broker and said she wanted to buy oil stock. When the “broker,” who was a visiting railroad inspector from Winnipeg, asked which one, the lady replied that she did not care, she just wanted to buy some stock. Less than a week after the Dingman strike, British-Canadian Oils hired twenty staff members to take money and issue receipts for its initial offering of stock at five cents per share. The company collected three baskets of bank notes and checks based solely on possessing mineral rights around the anticline. One brokerage firm operating out of the lobby of a Calgary hotel averaged sales of $3,000–5,000 per day ($90,550–$130,000, adjusted for inflation).[33] *The Vancouver Sun* reported that Calgary streetcar employees “assigned their salaries for July, August, and September to enable them to purchase more stock.”[34]

Calgary bank clearings offer one way of measuring the impact of the boom on the local economy. They provide a snapshot of economic activity, including the volume and frequency of transactions; they suggest how well banks and businesses manage their cash flow; and they provide an indication of overall business confidence. In the first four months of 1914, Calgary's monthly bank clearings reflected the grim reality of the ongoing depression, sitting at an average 23 percent per month lower than over the same period in 1913. Modest improvement took place in the first two weeks of May before the Dingman strike on May 14, but bank clearings were down approximately 14.9 percent over the year before. After the Dingman strike, the sudden crush of investments abruptly reversed the downward trend as clearings matched and soon exceeded reported clearings, pulling even with 1913 totals and, in certain instances, surpassing them. The difference between Calgary and other western cities was so striking it prompted *The National Post* to remark on July 4 when clearings increased by nearly 38 percent that, to a certain extent, "the experience of Calgary has saved the West during the last week of the half year from a somewhat phenomenal contraction in the returns of clearing houses."[35]

Newfound prosperity looked different for different sectors. Newspapers did brisk business, generating advertising revenue and selling papers swollen by advertisements. One issue of the *Herald* held 170 columns of oil ads, prompting *The Toronto Daily Star's* declaration that "the boom is making the newspaper proprietors rich, anyway."[36] The *Albertan* grew from an average of twelve pages to a peak of twenty-six. The *News Telegram* ballooned from an average twenty pages to forty-two. On May 23, *The Morning Albertan* announced a steep rate increase to one dollar per inch of space to advertisers without a contract. "That is a considerable increase over present rates," conceded the paper, "but the unprecedented demand and additional expenses makes it necessary." All of it traced back to the demand created by the oil boom. Oil companies insisted on taking exceptionally large space to make announcements, placing inflationary pressure on newsprint and ink. Meanwhile, the number of printers in the city remained limited, and many of those were now busy printing ornate stock certificates as well, forcing many to work overtime. As the crush of people arriving in the city increased, the city's hospitality sector began to boom as well. "Eating houses are crossing off the reduced prices on the menu cards—signs of the hard times that were, till very recently—and are not only boosting their wares to the original prices of a year or so ago, but in many instances are adding just a little bit more." Many were devoting all their time to oil and stopped going home for lunch or dinner, increasing foot traffic at local eateries. Hotels and rooming houses filled, and several had to turn guests away. Calgary's new Palliser Hotel opened earlier than expected to capitalize on the crush of business. Shops

Table 5-1 Calgary Bank Clearings, Selected Months and Weeks, 1913 & 1914

	1914	1913	% CHANGE OVER PREVIOUS YEAR
January	$16,293,215	$21,680,990	-24.9
February	$12,930,884	$18,680,004	-30.8
March	$14,431,284	$18,072,245	-20.1
April	$16,767,487	$20,116,753	-16.6
Week Ending			
May 8	$3,887,253	$4,566,868	-14.9
May 15	$3,481,008	$4,088,261	-14.9
May 22	$4,809,655	$4,837,229	-0.6
May 30	$4,768,434	$4,837,229	-1.4
June 5	$4,487,120	$4,500,326	-0.3
June 11	$5,648,026	$4,927,770	14.6
June 18	$4,572,030	$4,894,413	-6.6
June 26	$4,424,650	$5,755,055	-23.1
July 3	$5,441,428	$3,944,808	37.9
July 10	$5,711,343	$4,887,946	16.9
July 17	$4,872,429	$4,185,694	16.4
July 24	$4,758,625	$4,363,386	9.1
July 31	$3,783,325	$4,075,447	-7.4
August 7	$4,392,042	$5,063,137	-13.3
August 14	$4,214,989	$3,978,022	6.0
August 21	$3,363,926	$4,361,581	-22.9

Data adapted from *The Calgary Herald* and *The National Post*. Various dates.

reported increased demand for office furniture, and retailors were especially eager to serve budding entrepreneurs. An advertisement for the Calgary Furniture Shop on May 16 announced the store had received a shipment of "office equipment for oil barons and others," consisting of a variety of finished mahogany rolltop desks, arm and side chairs, and typewriter stands. "They have real money, these oil promoters," noted one salesman.[37]

Not surprisingly, themes of rugged individualism and the triumph of the "common people" over "the big interests" became common in the spring and

Figure 5-7 "Calgary Restaurant"
The sudden crush of investors and speculators generated local benefits but also created a bifurcated economy. The restaurant and hospitality sectors, for example, saw the opportunity to return prices to pre-1913 levels. However, the entertainment sector found itself resorting to gimmicks, like offering shares in oil companies with the purchase of a ticket to attract customers. (University of Calgary Libraries and Cultural Resources CU1302322)

early summer of 1914. Acme Oil billed itself as a small, plucky company with big ambitions that gave opportunity to small investors to enjoy life instead of toiling for someone else. The clear message is that investing in Calgary's oil boom was much more egalitarian in scope. The theme was repeated in the cartoon "The Small Investor Gets the Best Chance," published by *The Natural Gas and Oil Record* in May 1914. The cartoon's striking optimism projects the belief that Turner Valley was not quite an investment as much as it was a treasure hunt for untold riches.[38]

The discovery at Turner Valley was more than a local event. It quickly ignited a regional discussion about the potential for oil to transform the economy of western Canada and raised the question of whether Alberta oil should serve national or regional markets. This would prove a crucial debate given the future of the Canadian petroleum industry. *The Natural Gas and Oil Record* called for the construction of pipelines to the Pacific Ocean and the

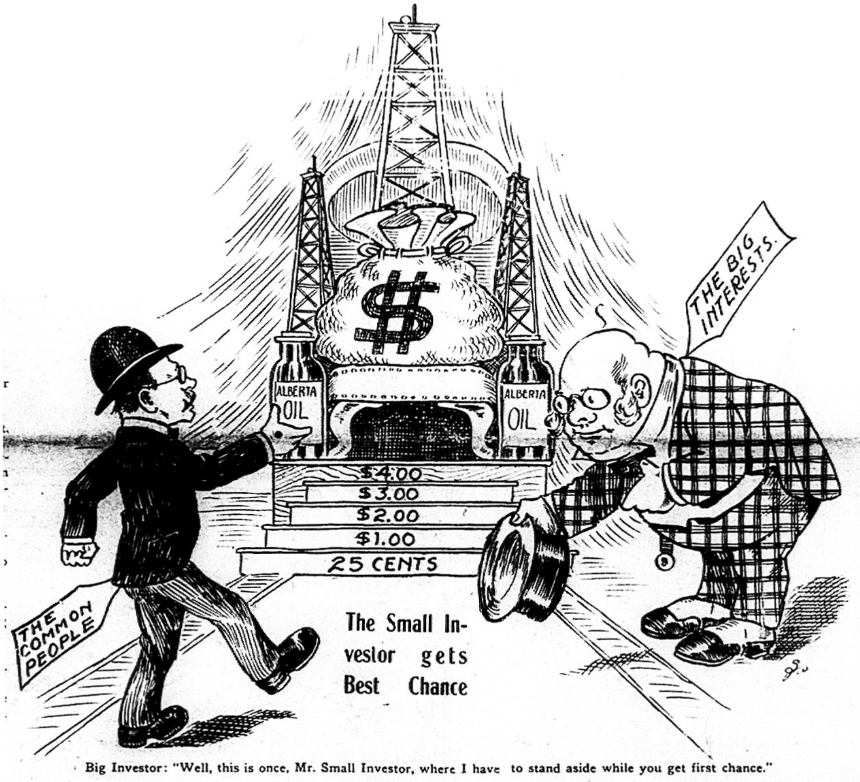


Figure 5-8 "The Small Investor gets Best Chance"

As many hoped in the winter of 1913/14, local and small investors provided the bulk of investment capital for the 1914 boom. Of the estimated $4 million invested in the Alberta oil fields in 1914, Calgarians and Edmontonians provided roughly half of the capital.

Great Lakes. The frenzied search for oil leases expanded well beyond Turner Valley to cover the entire province. A syndicate, rumoured to consist of capital from Winnipeg and New York, acquired oil leases on two whole townships southeast of Lethbridge and eighteen to thirty miles east of Coutts on the international boundary along the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. The town council of Macleod considered spending $30,000 to drill for oil before deciding to hold a public hearing on the issue. Meanwhile, in Red Deer in central Alberta, speculators acquired $35,000 worth of oil leases in a single week and incorporated the Red Deer Oil and Gas Company. In Edmonton, an ad for Nakamun Asphalt and Oil Company in the *Edmonton Journal* invoked the expertise of Cunningham Craig and promised readers its holdings contained similar prospects to those at the Dingman well, urging Edmontonians to invest in prospects around central Alberta. Speculators and prominent business leaders filed petroleum rights on 200,000 acres of land around Edmonton and dozens of new oil companies formed in under three days. Other companies, like the Athabasca Petroleum Company, emphasized their holdings in the Athabasca region and its immense oil sands deposits in northern Alberta and predicted that "unlimited capital will now flood Western Canada for oil development."[39]

While "oil fever" in the wake of Dingman extended north to Red Deer and the Olds region, where Monarch Oils drilled, the *Red Deer Advocate* sounded much more cautious regarding oil prospects than even the *Herald* dared. One participant, whom the paper labelled "an interested party," observed that "it costs about $40,000.00 to drill 3,000 feet and you have to get your drillers from the Pittsburgh region as the Western Ontario men have no equipment to go as deep as they would likely have to go here." Potential investors needed to exercise great patience to ensure investments remained in the province and did not go elsewhere. Another interviewee, described as "a citizen of wide travel and extensive experience," lamented the number of "fools" who "launch out their hard-earned savings to line the pockets of these easy money sharks." Observing that Canada's former Governor General, Earl Grey, had recently bought one of the largest companies in California for British investors, the *Advocate* compared the two investments and found Canadian prospects much bleaker. Investing in Dingman for $200 a share yielded a well producing wet gas and condensates. On the other hand, Grey bought so much more in California because included in the sale was all its "wells, equipment, and connections—a tried, going concern which has paid dividends for years." The point was that the nascent Alberta oil patch faced a long, daunting road ahead that the *Advocate* systematically began to detail.

> Where on earth is the market for these scores of wells projected? California oil will meet it at Vancouver from its pipelines to tidewater and the Standard Oil Company product will meet it at Winnipeg. Who owns the storage tanks, the oil cars, the whole transhipment equipment of oil and gasoline through the country? Not the railways, but the Standard Oil Company and its branches. These people who talk of big money in oil stocks either buy to unload on poor dupes or else they are absolutely ignorant of commercial conditions in oil. We have oil in Alberta, it is a good commercial proposition for a limited

> amount of capital and a limited number of people increasing as population grows, beyond that there is nothing to it.[40]

Elsewhere on the prairies, the oil boom in Alberta drew attention to the scarcity of oil supplies and the importance of diversifying energy sources. One independent oil company in Saskatoon, the Hartford Oil Corporation, urged investors to think of a future without oil to recognize the significance of developments in Alberta. The company took out a full-page ad focused on the sustainability of future oil supplies, anticipating future conversations about "peak oil," and the ability of Standard Oil to continue to supply refined crude products to consumers. In a cry that resonates to the start of the twenty-first century, the corporation bluntly stated that recent developments proved "It's A Case of Alberta to the Rescue."[41]

By July 1914, *The Vancouver Sun* estimated the aggregate capital of the independent oil companies operating in Alberta at half a billion dollars. Considering the sums of money involved, the west coast newspaper offered the most thorough analysis of how oil could transform the economy of western Canada and make Calgary the core of a hinterland region that extended to the west coast. In an extended essay the *Sun* compared the economic potential of Turner Valley to the California gold rush of 1849. That gold rush proved vital to launching the regional economy with spin-off industries in timber and agriculture. What made oil different from gold, argued the paper, was that it is not just a mineral but an energy source capable of producing immense wealth. With a wellhead price of seventy cents per barrel, the value of California crude produced over the past thirty years, argued the *Sun*, is worth more than the combined output of gold, silver, lead, copper, and citrus crops of the state over the same period. Readers could only dream about the possibilities created by Alberta oil worth several dollars per barrel, and there were plenty of customers waiting by. More than 5,000 factories operated in southern California alone, and while the area around San Francisco had fewer, they were not insignificant. Oil powered all these factories operating along the west coast, as well as fuelling the trains and merchant ships transporting passengers, raw materials, and finished products from San Diego to Vancouver Island. The fact that petroleum consumption vastly exceeded production in recent decades made the Turner Valley discovery even more significant, argued the *Sun*. So too did oil's strategic dimension as the fuel of choice for the ships of the Royal Navy. Britain's coal deposits had enabled the Royal Navy to control maritime trade routes and maintain its empire in the nineteenth century, and perhaps Canadian oil would do the same in the twentieth. Even if peace prevailed, modern petroleum refineries produced thousands of petroleum-based products, from dyes, soap, and candles to chewing gum, cough syrups, and cosmetics. High-grade oil, like the naphtha produced by the Dingman well, could fuel the booming automobile industry. California's oil fields had been flowing for thirty years; although it remained early days—the Dingman well had only begun producing five days earlier—how much oil was there and how long would it last? Based only on known seepages and surface showings, the best geological minds speculated that the Alberta oil fields extended along both sides of the Rockies into British Columbia. Perhaps western Canadian oilfields extended from Peace River in the north to Wyoming and Colorado in the south. Setting that matter aside for the moment, if British Columbia and Alberta developed an oil field a quarter the size of that in California, the article speculated the oil industry would mean more to Canada than it did to California. Thousands of well-paying jobs in related sectors, like transportation and refining, as well as jobs in spin-off industries and support industries—coal, steel, and manufacturing—would relocate to western Canada to support the petroleum industry. The vision of the future was transformative and breathtaking. "If Alberta and British Columbia can produce even a considerable portion of what many of the best mining engineers expect, there will be built up a business that will dwarf the lumber business and will nearly rival the production of wheat in the provinces further east. It will open up industry after industry that will call for the investment of capital from all over the world."[42]

Outside investors from Britain and portions of the United States, however, proved more cautious and skeptical than Calgarians about the implications of Dingman's find and the permanency of the boom. A story filed by the Canadian Associated Press on May 22 noted that London investors and financial advisers were "not yet aroused" by the Turner Valley strike. British investors were prepared to wait for further discoveries before committing their investment capital. More discouragingly for Alberta promoters, the only brokerage firm selling shares in Alberta oil found its offering "roundly condemned by every authority who thought it worth while to refer to it at all." Meanwhile, after describing the broad contours of the Calgary "boom," including a description of Calgary Petroleum Products stock reaching $200 per share, the Edinburgh *Scotsman* dumped a bucket of cold water on expectations with the blunt conclusion that "it is doubtful whether the discoveries justify the excitement, and it is probable that something like normal conditions will soon be restored." The London-based *Financial Times* delivered the cruellest cut of all on May 27 when it declared Throgmorton Street—home to the London Stock Exchange and the Bank of England—had already made up its mind to discourage attempts by Calgary-based oil companies to raise capital in Britain until its value could be "more convincingly established." The *Financial Times* strongly urged potential investors "to analyze with exceptional care any prospectus which may come into their hands hereafter in connection with the mineral deposits of Calgary."[43]

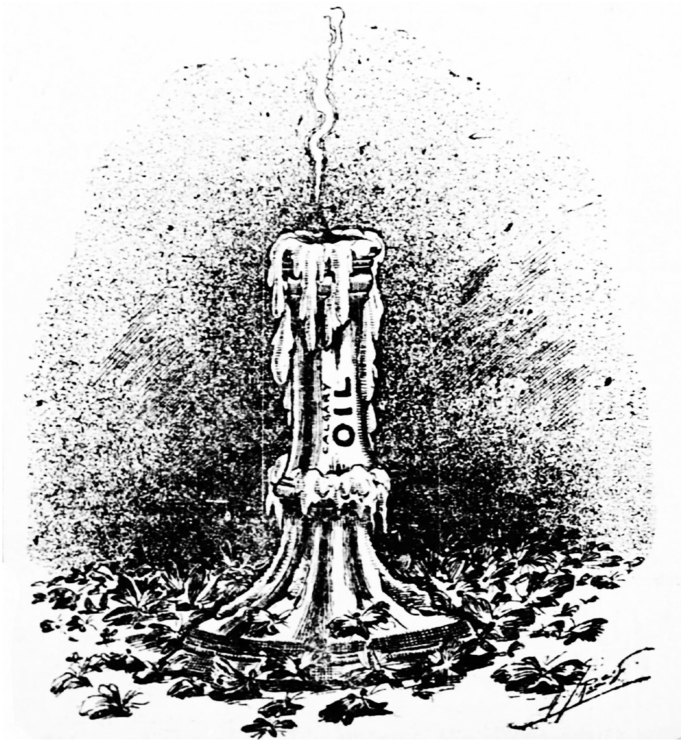
Eastern Canadian newspapers were no less sceptical. By far, *The Toronto Daily Star* proved the newspaper most critical of the boom, fearing rampant speculation would undermine the industry. On May 30, the *Star* published a haunting cartoon entitled "The Flame and the Moth" depicting a smouldering candle labelled "Calgary Oil" surrounded by hundreds of scorched moths. The accompanying caption read "An Old Story About to be Retold."[44] A few weeks later, on June 16, the *Star* ran a very critical piece about the Calgary boom based on the observations of Toronto-based stockbroker R.T. Kemerer. Kemerer visited Calgary immediately following the Dingman discovery with hopes of finding a good investment for his firm. Unlike most critics who still expressed caution because the field remained unproven, Kemerer called Turner Valley a "good oil field." Rather, Kemerer identified structural shortcomings in Alberta's regulatory framework and oversight that he believed precluded investors from realizing any return on their investment. According to Kemerer, problems began with the size of leases that enabled promoters to tie up large swaths of land at cheap prices. Furthermore, even if he found a good prospect to file a claim on, Kemerer noted that the long lineups of promoters and speculators outside the Dominion Land Office created opportunities for budding entrepreneurs—especially those who joined the queue with the intention of selling their place once it became clear that the Dominion Land Office typically served ten people per day. "Had I had anything to file and been content to await my turn," said Kemerer, "I would have had to wait months." People sold their spots in line for up to $1,000 in late May, but prices fell to $300 just before Kemerer left in early June. Other issues abounded. Despite the opening of the Calgary Stock Exchange, the bulk of the trading in oil shares took place outside the exchanges, either on the curb or in the numerous brokerage offices or uncharted exchanges. While the CSE projected the image of stability and propriety, the reality remained that it handled barely a fraction of the transactions; multiple exchanges operated in the city, but curb brokers and bucket shops handled most trades. Beyond that, the formation of hundreds of companies presented the image of a robust, competitive market that would quickly prove the field, but Kemerer believed scant few were worthwhile investments. The bulk of companies were ones “in which the shareholder has absolutely no chance at all” due to a lack of capital, experience, or will. Perhaps more explicitly than any analyst since the *Herald’s* Flotations series, Kemerer demolished the belief that an independent oil boom carried out by small, independent oil companies would strike oil let alone generate a profit for investors. Some prospectuses revealed companies reserving as little as 10 percent of their capital for treasury while promoters received 90 percent up front. According to Kemerer’s calculations, companies with less than $35,000 in their treasuries were doomed to failure. “Such amounts of money are useless,” argued Kemerer, “as it costs at least $35,000 to put a well down to where the oil is supposed to be.” Every indication suggested that the oil in Turner Valley lay below 2,000 feet, and with drilling companies charging an average price of fifteen dollars per foot, companies with less than $35,000 in the treasury ran extraordinary risks. Pointing squarely at the Dingman, where Calgary Petroleum Products had spent approximately $60,000 to date, and McDougall-Segur had spent $70,000 drilling the deepest hole in the field, Kemerer concluded western wildcatters held every advantage over eastern investors.[45]

The *Star* was only one eastern publication casting doubt on the Alberta boom. *The Financial Post* cautioned investors about the “insane orgy” taking place in Alberta. “The regrettable part of the oil boom is that the losers will be recruited very largely from the ranks of those who can least afford to lose their scant savings.” *The Canadian Mining Journal,* also based out of Toronto, added its voice to the growing criticism by pointing to the paucity of information about the oil field and the foolishness of investors throwing away their money by falling for cheap sales tricks used in real estate. “The very uncertainty is the salesman’s most valuable asset,” said the *Journal*. “And if one feature stands out more vividly than any other it is the Western salesman’s imagination concerning future possibilities.”[46] *The Montreal Gazette* cautioned readers to be skeptical of production reports coming from the province. While noting that some companies anticipated development of “pumping” wells, none were yet on stream. Investors had to remember that pumper wells “can produce much, but it comes slowly and gives a moderate profit. Those who will soon be asked to buy stocks issued on a gusher basis will do well to know the information now given.”[47]

Like many others in the oil patch, a well-known driller from Midway, California, H.H. Henshaw, made his way to Calgary in June 1914 and reached mixed conclusions. In a letter written to the *Coalinga Oil Record* on dated June 17, 1914, and published in full by *The Natural Gas and Oil Record* a month later, Henshaw offers a slightly different perspective on the Turner

Figure 5-9
"The Flame and the Moth"

Contrary to the optimism in Calgary, the *Toronto Star*, took a decidedly more pessimistic view of Calgary's oil boom. The caption accompanying this cartoon read, "An old story about to be retold." The original cartoon was published upside down in the paper making it harder to determine what was being pictured.



Valley boom. While he "found a very pretty city with lots of activity and prices for all commodities very high," he noted that the oil boom "is practically all over." Virtually all the development was going on with local money and "the Dingman well that caused all the excitement is not on the pump yet, so it is impossible to state what it will make." In stark contrast to local boosters who touted the Dingman as producing a high grade of crude, Henshaw dismissed it as "a poor grade of coal oil." Henshaw also noted that American oil field workers might encounter difficulties crossing the border to find work in Canada. "The American is handicapped about 50 percent here as the Canadian is afraid of him, and it seems as though they are going to force all operators to use their union men so the chances are not going to be so bright for the boys coming here from the states," noting that he saw "several fellows turned back" because customs officers "were cautious about having the country overrun with common laborers. Several of the boys here told us that they had some little trouble getting through, but we experienced none whatever; the inspectors probably took us for capitalists." Regardless, Henshaw marvelled at the conditions, declaring "this is a fine place for the working man indeed; it is daylight at 3 am and don't get dark until 10:30 p.m. so he has a good chance to get in a full day." In closing his letter, Henshaw advised "the boys" to make sure "they have something in sight before they come, as the best they will get on the ground is second consideration from the Canadians."[48]

Despite Henshaw's pessimism about prospects for American roughnecks in the boom, William Cheely concluded almost the exact opposite in a piece published in the *Spokane Spokesman-Review* on May 31, 1914. After describing the investments made by Albertans, Cheely singled out the prominent role played by US capital investment from California and Washington, such that "one might well come to the conclusion that [Calgary] was a Pacific coast town in the states." Financiers from Spokane negotiated the merger of several companies that would control half a million acres of land. Drilling manufacturers from the both the eastern and western United States busily filled a flood of orders for oil well drilling equipment and machinery.[49] Washington-based Flathead Petroleum Company sold stock to Spokane investors after acquiring an interest in 10,580 acres of leases in the Sweetgrass district near the international boundary. After returning from a week-long inspection of the Alberta fields and securing mineral rights on 2,000 acres, A.G. Hanauer of the Hanauer-Graves Investment company declared to the *Spokesman-Review*, "I regard this as the opportunity of a lifetime for investors. There is an element of risk, of course, but the extent of the district, as outlined by a number of competent experts, materially reduces the chances of loss, so far as investing in legitimate companies is concerned."[50]

Indeed, Spokane newspapers reported on a constant stream of financiers and investors travelling to Calgary and reporting favourable conditions and investment opportunities. As it was the largest and closest US city to Calgary and counted an estimated twenty-six millionaires among its population of 105,000 citizens, mostly from mining investments in silver, lead, and zinc, attracting investment capital from Spokane was critical to the success of the oil boom. US investment capital only became more significant when the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914 removed European capital from world markets. An ad published in the Waterloo (Iowa) *Courier and Reporter* depicted Canada as a welcoming woman to American businesses and reminded readers that "Canada has always 'made good' with the US investor" and would do so again with Calgary oil. Referencing common values and institutions between the two countries, it suggested Calgary oil was a safe investment. The "rigorous" laws of Canada, and the Canadian government, ensure "that every man gets a square deal . . . investments are made by rich or poor with a double sense of security in the development of such legitimate enterprises as this great oil district."[51]

Perhaps because of frustration at the reluctance of British capital to commit, comments like those of the *Toronto Star* and the *Canadian Mining Journal,* and lingering resentment that the province's natural resources remained under federal control, an undercurrent of resentment, leavened by hubris, occasionally erupted in the West. While the Dingman discovery gave hope to those who believed in Alberta's natural resources, it also provided the occasion to revisit past slights, settle old scores, and advance the narrative of bootstrap individualism and entrepreneurialism that made Alberta, and the West, unique. A fair reading of the *Star's* coverage of the boom shows that the paper took its lead from Cunningham Craig—cautious optimism about the prospects but awaiting further proof before fully endorsing Turner Valley's oil-producing status, and concerned that rampant speculation would do more harm than good. This, however, opened the Toronto daily to criticism from *The Calgary News Telegram* for its lack of enthusiasm. In the *Star*'s reaction to the Dingman discovery, said the *News Telegram*, "the most auspicious announcement that has ever come out of Western Canada is passed over as if it were but an everyday occurrence." The *Star's* editorial page categorically rejected the characterization, replying that both the press and people of Ontario were hopefully expectant. "It is hoped that there will be plenty of oil," responded the *Star*, "because there is little doubt that there will be plenty of boom." On the contrary, argued the *Star*, the *News Telegram* mistook criticism for jealousy. Ontarians were not upset that Calgary might become an oil producer but did object mightily to the swindlers who were deceiving investors. "In matters of that kind people like to do a little careful discriminating."[52]

Newspapers were far from the only institutions taking note of eastern Canada's reaction. The Athabasca Petroleum Company used space in one of its ads to chastise the "detractors and doubters of Canada's potential oil wealth." It also claimed armchair critics and sceptics alike now sat silenced and discredited by developers with the "courage, enterprise and foresight to carry on their operations in the face of active antagonism." Prior to *The Regina Leader's* decision on June 1, 1914, to ban all advertisements for Calgary oil, Frank L. Runions, a broker in Regina selling stock in Alberta oils, took out a three-quarter-page ad in the paper boldly declaring, "We told you so!" in two-inch-tall letters and surrounded by excerpts from telegrams describing the Dingman discovery in vivid detail.[53]

It is fair to wonder why Albertans generally, and Calgarians in particular, seemed so thin-skinned on this issue. Pride—in the community, city, province, and industry—played a large part in the visceral reaction to outside critics. Equally important, however, was that for all the talk about creating a self-sustaining and independent oil boom, within a week of its beginning, local capital was already committed and Calgarians were already largely tapped out. On May 20, just shy of a week after the Dingman strike, the *Herald* reported that bankers in the city believed their clients' cash would soon run out if it had not already done so. The clear implication was that the boom could only be sustained by attracting outside capital. Attention therefore fixed on investors outside the province—from Toronto and Montreal—as well as from California and the Pacific northwest.[54]

In the meantime, the frenzy of investment convinced even the *Albertan* of the need to impose some kind of order on stock sales, including the need to establish transparency in prices. The *Albertan* noted that prices charged by brokers for the same stock could vary by as much as 30 percent between brokers operating within a block of one another. The paper was much relieved when the Calgary Stock Exchange held its first organizational meeting on May 25. Chartered the previous October, the CSE appointed lawyer Edmond Taylor as the chairman of the board of directors, with Oscar G. Devenish and A.P. Strong as vice chairs. The meeting also approved the CSE's bylaws and formalized the amalgamation of the CSE and the Calgary Oil Exchange, the largest of the independent exchanges in the city. It quickly became clear that Calgary's elites intended the CSE to rein in some of the worst excesses of the industry, especially attempts at price manipulation and wildcatting. They hoped the CSE would push brokers off the streets into the curated confines of the stock exchange, where rules and regulations guided the conduct of both companies and brokers. Perhaps not so coincidentally, enacting these rudimentary practices might also forestall government intervention to protect consumers. "This step," noted the *Albertan* approvingly, "is one of the utmost importance to all concerned in the oil business." Initially, the CSE fixed the number of seats at forty and charged a $500 fee for each, but demand required them to increase it to 100 seats by June 19. To keep the floor from being too chaotic, and to keep a close eye on the brokers, the board granted one seat to every firm or individual broker on the exchange. The CSE required brokers to post a $5,000 guaranteed bond in addition to a $200 annual fee and forbade brokers belonging to the CSE from trading on any other exchange. The exchange reserved the right to approve companies and required a $500 listing fee before listing a new company on the exchange. To eliminate outright flotations, and partially to offer some protection to consumers, the CSE forbade the listing of companies still organizing. Bylaws established a twenty-four-hour window to settle all local transactions, seven days outside the city, and London delivery was offered for sales in England. A schedule of fees adopted wholesale from the Vancouver Stock Exchange established a minimum commission of one dollar but also approved a variable commission schedule based on the sale price of the share. For example, stocks sold for up to five cents per share netted a commission of 1/8 of a cent per share while charging a 1 percent commission for shares over one hundred dollars.[55]

While the CSE trumpeted its provincial charter as evidence of the fundamental soundness of its venture, the lack of a provincial charter did not inhibit others from forming their own stock exchanges, reflecting the overall weakness of the regulatory structure and the province's infatuation with entrepreneurialism and self-regulation. From the province's point of view, the benefit of self-regulation was that it did not require any government expenditure or oversight. The exchange would regulate itself. While this sounded good in theory, as historian Chris Armstrong points out, in practice it presented several limitations. As a voluntary organization with a diverse membership, the CSE remained only as strong as its weakest link. In practical terms, oversight of member companies remained limited in reach and scope. The existence of outside competitors, not to mention the omnipresence of unregulated "curb" brokers, ensured that enforcement would never be too robust. The first local competitor to the CSE, the Calgary Oil and Stock Exchange, emerged shortly after the CSE began trading. Founded by local entrepreneur Marenus Janse, who also served as the president of Bonnie Brae Coal Company and the Janse Drilling Company, the Calgary Oil and Stock Exchange began operations in early June, launching with seventy members. By some counts, as many as thirteen stock exchanges of varying sophistication formed within the city at the height of the boom, including the People's Exchange, the Universal Exchange, the Consolidated Oil Exchange, the Investor's Oil Exchange, the Majestic Exchange (operated out of a converted movie theatre), and the Standard Oil Stock Exchange. Furthermore, several "open call" exchanges ran on Calgary streetcorners. Outside Calgary, the Vancouver Stock exchange attempted to capitalize on the boom. By May 19, *The Vancouver Daily Province* showed the VSE trading twenty-five "Calgary Oil Stocks" on its unlisted section shortly after the Dingman strike. By July, well-known Vancouver broker Harry Bettz opened the Calgary Oil Exchange at 39 Hastings Street East. Chartered by the province of British Columbia and linked to Calgary by telephone and private wire, the exchange limited its membership to fifty and offered amenities like a cigar and bootblack stand.[56] As historian Chris Armstrong notes, "Never in Canada would there be such fierce competition amongst exchanges as during the Calgary oil boom." Indeed, when W.J. Quinlan of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway arrived in Calgary and claimed it took twenty minutes before anyone tried to sell him stock, *The Natural Gas and Oil Record* published the story under the headline "Brokers asleep."[57]

Some observers hoped competing exchanges would lower transaction costs and broker's fees, and help spread the word of Alberta's emerging petroleum industry. However, what they did not anticipate, and perhaps should have, was that the operation of several exchanges provided conditions tailor-made for stock price manipulation. Prices were completely fictitious as few were based on possession of physical reserves or production; almost all depended on supply and demand to establish their prices. If a block of vendor's stock from a reputable company with good prospects and a drilling rig entered the market, the price would immediately drop and brokers battled either to force prices down or to drive them back up, making good commissions in the process. Furthermore, the value of stock varied between the exchanges, creating many opportunities for profit through arbitrage—the practice of purchasing stock at a lower price on one exchange and selling it at a higher price on another. In the less-regulated financial markets of boomtown Calgary, it was sometimes difficult to distinguish between those employing legitimate trading strategies and others attempting to manipulate the market. Broker R.C. Carlile reflected on this ambiguity decades later. "My partner was Jimmy Robertson," recalled Carlile. "We had Constable on one exchange and somebody else on the other. These two used to do quite a big business buying on one and selling on the other."[58] One striking example of price discrepancy took place on June 8, 1914, one week after the opening of the Calgary Oil and Stock Exchange. Price comparison reveals the potential for profit—as well as manipulation. Not surprisingly, the most glaring difference involved Black Diamond Oil Fields, whose shares traded at $3.25 on the COSE and $5.25 on the CSE, a spread of two dollars. Hypothetically, a broker buying shares at $3.25 on the COSE and selling 30 of them at $5.25 on the CSE would net a profit of $60—approximately $1,560 today—plus commissions, simply by exploiting the price gap between exchanges. Even smaller spreads could yield profit. For example, Western Pacific's bid of $2.10 on the CSE compared to a price of $2.15 on the COSE would result in a five-cent-per-share gain—roughly 2.4 percent—would be above the average 1 to 2 percent daily profit for a typical day trader today.[59]

Table 5-2 Calgary Stock Exchange and Calgary Oil and Stock Exchange Values Compared, June 8, 1914

Company	Calgary Stock Exchange			Calgary Oil and Stock Exchange		
	Bid	Ask	Volume	Bid	Ask	Volume
Alberta Petroleum	$0.13	0.15	1232	$0.13	0.14	944
Black Diamond #1		5.25	30	3.15	3.25	585
Calgary Petroleum Products	82.5	85	5	—	87.50	
Dome	—	0.62		—	0.6	
Federal	—	0.6		0.5	0.55	300
Fidelity	0.2	0.25	217	—	0.18	
Herron-Elder	—	0.8		—	0.7	
Monarch	19.00	20.00	15	—	18.00	
Okotoks	0.11	0.14	800	0.13	0.14	200
Piedmont Petroleum Products	0.27	0.3		0.25	0.27	775
Stokes-Stephens	0.35	0.38		0.37	0.39	550
Trenton	—	0.18		0.13	—	2500
United Oils	18.00	19.00	24	—	18.50	
Western Canada	4.75	5.00	105	5.10		90
Western Pacific	—	2.10	150	2.10	2.15	1822

Data adapted from *The Natural Gas and Oil Record* and *The Calgary Daily Herald*.

One immigrant writer, Basil Clarke, described how he rapidly climbed the ladder to become a curb broker in Calgary in May 1914, providing a striking example of the city's—and the province's—reputation as a land of opportunity with the discovery of oil. Clarke, a reporter for the London-based *Daily Mail*, filed stories about his travels through Canada as a "fortune-hunting" immigrant, and vividly recalled witnessing scenes of wild celebrations in the street as people hugged, danced, and sang about the discovery. Immediately, Clarke wondered how he might be able to turn all the "turmoil and oil interest" to his advantage, as a newly arrived immigrant "with no more than his muscles and his wits to help him, though an immigrant willing (as immigrants here must be) to do anything from pick-and-shovel upwards."[60]

Clarke spent the night wandering around Calgary streets wrestling with the problem, but no solution presented itself until the next day. "Oil share dealing seemed the one business of the City. Every broker's office, every land office, every commission agency and almost every other shop became an oil share exchange. Chemists, clothiers, confectioners, hotels and the rest ran their oil share department and competed with the brokers and real estate men. And there was work for all and more. Queues waited at doors in many cases." After changing into a white shirt and collar bought from the Hudson's Bay Company, Clarke found a real estate office promoting an oil company. "The work of the place was held up through sheer inability of the clerical staff to book orders fast enough." After identifying the person in charge, Clarke asked if he could use another clerk. The man replied affirmatively and waved him over without so much as even looking up at Clarke. "'There's a pen and things. Sit at the table and make out receipts.'"[61]

For the next nine hours, Clarke made out receipts, eating sandwiches from a paper bag at mealtime brought by another clerk. At the end of the day, Clarke received fourteen shillings in pay—roughly $186 adjusted for inflation—and a job offer, "as very often happens in Canada if a man 'makes good' on temporary work." But he clearly saw that he could earn more by selling shares, including a 5 percent commission, simply by bringing clients into the office. Clarke applied to two companies and received job offers from both, and again Clarke succeeded in his new vocation. Clarke learned that companies increased their share prices over time, sometimes doubling them either after a certain length of time or after selling a predetermined amount of stock. Investors holding the cheaper stock then eagerly sold it back to reap the 100 percent profit, undercutting sales at the office as buyers and sellers turned to the "curb" market.[62]

For the third time in three days, Clarke changed careers to become a curb broker. In the reporter's estimation, being a broker was the easiest of the four jobs in Calgary. "This is all one had to do," wrote Clarke. "A man came up to you. 'Have you any so and so at so much?' You said, 'No, but I'll see if I can get you some.' You hustled around the chemists and clothiers and other places, all of them alive with men selling and buying, and found a man willing to sell at the price your buyer wanted." Insofar as Clarke could tell, the greatest difficulty of being a curb broker was that, at any given moment, there was no consensus about the share price of a given stock. Once, Clarke filled a buy order for 50 percent lower cost than what the buyer offered. "The buyer was so pleased that he gave me five percent and half the money I had saved him. On Friday morning I made nearly £9 in commission, in the afternoon £3.12 and on Saturday £7.00." In those two days, Clarke's commissions reached an astonishing total of $2,546, adjusted for inflation.[63]

For Clarke, his experience in Calgary proved that Canada was a land of opportunity. "Without experience of Canada, or of oil, or of stocks and shares, a man just ordinarily wide-awake could have come into Calgary as I did and made money." In fact, argued Clarke, if not for the fact that he liked his job as a journalist, and the lack of friends or influence in the city, he might have established himself permanently in Calgary as a stockbroker. "I had an offer. An Englishman with whom I did considerable business wanted me to take out a license and begin. He said I could have all his work and he would recommend me." While Clarke acknowledged that oil booms were the exception, not the rule, he concluded that "it is the immigrant who will tackle the unexpected that makes good in Canada. I get further proof of this every day I spend here."[64]

Some enterprising women emerged, determined to make their fortunes in the oil patch in a variety of ways, either by direct employment as secretaries or clerks in newly created companies, by becoming brokers, or investing directly in stock. Since average salaries for professional and tradeswomen working in Calgary were the highest in Canada, it made sense to try to and capture that market (see Table 5-3). Included in the proliferation of stock exchanges were at least four women-only exchanges as well as at least a half-dozen women working as independent agents or brokers, including at least one in Edmonton, Miss Edith McLachlan. The list of exchanges includes the Calgary Women's Oil Exchange, launched by Mrs. Blanche Mason and her partner Mrs. Annie Wolley-Dod; the Eureka Women's Oil Exchange, managed by Mrs. W.H. Ranlett; the Women's Oil Brokerage Company; and Woollard & Company, operating out of the same address as Miss A.A. Woollard's Lady's Wear Shop—1009, 1st Street West—which soon became the mailing address of the Hole-Woollard Oil Company. "A ladies' tailoring shop was dismantled in a jiffy," wrote the correspondent for the *Monetary Times.* "Its fair proprietress for the time being sells oil shares to her lady customers exclusively, instead of dresses."[65]

But by far the Calgary Women's Oil Exchange received the lion's share of publicity and, in many ways, became the public face of women's investing during the oil boom. Perhaps its notoriety is attributable to the fact that both Blanche Mason and Annie Wolley-Dod were prominent members of Calgary

Figure 5-10 "Men in cars and on sidewalk waiting to invest in oil stocks, Calgary, Alberta"
Driller Joseph Brown (seated in the front passenger seat in car on the left) helped bring in the Dingman Well. By June 1914, Brown had left Calgary Petroleum Products to become a founding partner in Fidelity Oil and Gas. Brown poses with a large gathering outside Fidelity's head offices before visiting the company's first well site. (Glenbow Archives CU1137947)

society. Both were active members of several women's organizations in the city. However, the same could be said of the proprietor of the Eureka Women's Oil Exchange, Mrs. W.H. Ranlett, whose firm launched at approximately the same time as that of Mason and Wolley-Dod's. Active in the Local Council of Women, and two-term president of the American Woman's Club, Mrs. Ranlett travelled in the same circles and attended many of the same events as Mason and Wolley-Dod. However, as she was an American expatriate temporarily living in Calgary because of her husband's business concerns, it might be that the efforts of more permanent residents eclipsed Mrs. Ranlett's endeavours. After all, Annie and her husband, rancher Arthur G. Wolley-Dod, had settled in the area in the 1880s, cementing their stature as pillars of the community. Meanwhile, as the former society page writer for *The Western Standard*, Mrs. Mason had numerous contacts in the local press corps. The

Herald praised the two women's business sense and organizational abilities, proclaiming itself "proud that our women of Alberta are showing such foresight and shrewd business capabilities as there must be a great future for such an enterprise." The *Albertan* predicted that Mason and Wolley-Dod would "form a combination capable of producing results calculated to make the average male broker turn green with envy."[66]

Like most women-run businesses of the time, these brokerages generally served other women. Given the built-in networks created by the large number of women's organizations and social connections, opportunities abounded for Mrs. Ranlett and Mrs. Wolley-Dod to find new clients. An ad for the Women's Oil Brokerage Company demonstrated how women expanded their networks beyond their immediate social circles. The ad informed readers that the firm offered information and advice "to women who are desirous of investing in oil stocks." To reassure potential investors that they need not worry about the hypermasculine atmosphere of the curb brokers, their ad noted that only women worked at the firm, and that their agents were "thoroughly informed in regard to all oil companies formed in Calgary." To make investing more convenient, the company also offered to send representatives to call on customers by appointment. "Do not hesitate," the ad implored. "This is the time to buy oil stocks if you wish to make some money. One dollar judiciously invested today may double and treble over night for you."[67]

The participation of so many women in the oil boom as investors and brokers should not be surprising. Indeed, in 1913, *The Western Standard* noted that "self-supporting women of western Canada do not regard themselves as the unfortunate victims of unusual industrial conditions; they have come out here with the frank intention of making money, and finding happiness, and they assert, with considerable spirit those rights which should be the inalienable rights of womankind." Indeed, a quick examination of the 1920 shareholders list for Calgary Petroleum Products suggests that at least 20 percent of investors in the company were women. Out of 564 individual shareholder names on the register, 115 either used the prefix "Mrs." in front of the surname or had a distinctly female first name. This, however, likely undercounts the number of female investors in the company, as only initials identified most shareholders. Furthermore, in June 1914 at least one women's group, the Calgary Women's Press Club (CWPC), pooled funds to make a $50 investment in oil stocks. In another instance, a broker's wife not only brought her husband more business but brought in substantial commissions of her own by selling stock. It is likely that other groups made similar arrangements but received no press coverage. The *Herald's* story did not specify how many

Table 5-3 Average Professional & Tradeswomen's Salaries in Calgary, 1913

PROFESSION	SALARY RANGE	RATE
School Teacher	$750.00–$1,1000	Yearly
Nurses	$23.00–$35.00	Weekly
Milliners	$15.00–$40.00	Weekly
Stenographers	$15.00–$25.00	Weekly
Saleswomen	$7.00–$15.00	Weekly
Waitress	$7.00–$10.00	Weekly
Domestic	$4.00–$8.00	Weekly
Housekeepers	$30.00–$40.00	Monthly
Dressmakers	$2.00–$3.00	Daily
Reporters	$18.00–$30.00	Weekly
Clerks	$10.00–$18.00	Weekly
Cashiers	$12.00–$15.00	Weekly

Calgary's minimum cost of living estimated at seven to eight dollars per week in 1913. Two dozen eggs cost thirty-five cents while a package of breakfast cereal cost ten cents.

Table adapted from "How Calgary Pays its Women," *The Western Standard*, June 12, 1913, 19.

women participated in the venture, the stocks bought, or the name of the individual who issued the stock certificate. Still, not everyone supported these developments, and older stereotypes about the propriety and morals of women who bought stock persisted. On June 13, 1914, the *Herald* reported that a "prominent Edmonton paper" disapprovingly reported that the women of Calgary were selling their jewelry to finance their new pastime.[68]

Convincing evidence suggests that attempts to maintain more "traditional" standards of investing for women, such as the pursuit of "safe" investments like real estate, endured. During Calgary's real estate boom between 1910 and 1913, ads in local papers encouraged both women and men to invest in property, but pitches to female investors emphasized more "feminine qualities" that real estate represented: long-term investment horizon, mitigated risk, preservation of capital, and possession of a tangible asset. Speculating on the market, especially in newly formed oil companies with their short-term outlook, and high-risk, high-reward qualities, was tantamount to gambling.

What is particularly striking is that most of the newspaper stories celebrating women making fortunes during the boom did so because of their success at managing mineral leases rather than speculating in stocks. While both were speculative activities, mineral leases were depicted as having parallels with real estate. Moreover, the fortunes made were directed toward improving marriage prospects or improving the family. For example, the *Day Book* (Chicago) highlighted Jennie Fitzgerald, who worked at the notion counter of a department store for eight dollars a week. Fitzgerald managed to secure a prize lease from the Dominion Land Office. During the subsequent boom "two strangers came in one morning and placed on the counter a marked check for $11,000 [$333,700 adjusted for inflation] as an offer for her holdings." Now Jennie Fitzgerald found herself on "a honeymoon trip down in North Dakota in a touring car."[69]

Four waitresses at the Rathskeller Restaurant, three Americans and one Swedish immigrant, pooled their money to buy mineral leases and received an offer of $92,000 ($2.78 million adjusted for inflation) for the leases. "We cannot say anything yet to the newspapers," said the group's spokesperson, who remained anonymous. "Of course, if we sell for what we expect, we shall not be obliged to work any longer." About a month later, Florence M. Hudson, a clerk in the Department of Natural Resources for the Canadian Pacific Railway, sold a 480-acre oil lease on an anticline for $54,000 cash ($1.6 million, adjusted for inflation) and "a dress suitcase full of stock" in the Montreal-based company that bought the lease. Hudson attributed her newfound fortune to her knowledge and skills rather than luck. "It is not necessary for me to tell you how I happened to pick out a lease right on the anticline and just north of the McDougall-Segur holdings," she told the *Albertan* when questioned. "I know all about anticlines and it was not all chance."[70]

Of course, any discussion of women investors making their fortune during the oil boom must include Jennie Earl of Black Diamond Oil Fields and the Coalinga Syndicate. In 1912, Earl was simply the stenographer in George Buck's office who overheard several conversations taking place. "Her imagination was stirred as she tapped the keys by stories she heard of 'expected' gushes and riches," wrote the *Day Book*. After learning that some government leases were set to lapse in August 1912, she went to the Dominion Land Office with Ida Fenner after work to file on some mineral rights. As there was already a lineup down the stairs of the land office across the street from the CPR station, Earl and Fenner took their place in line. The two women were still outside when the land office closed for the night, sending a good many of the other men in line home. "Armed with cushions and making themselves as comfortable as possible," the two women, according to the *Herald*, "waved aside all formality and gave an exhibition of gameness that is rarely displayed among the fairer sex."[71] As the night grew darker and cooler, one by one the men in front of Earl left until she and Fenner were at the front of the line. They waited outside all night for the land office to open. When it did, Earl placed a deposit of $160 and acquired one of the most valued sections of land in Turner Valley. In turn, she used the mineral rights to secure a one-quarter share in the Coalinga Syndicate and an appointment as one of the directors of Black Diamond Oil Fields. "She owns a quarter interest in a $1,000,000.00 company and occupies the post of secretary-treasurer," wrote the *Day Book*. "Miss Earl's bank account, in addition to her holdings, runs high into the tens of thousands."[72]

The lack of formal barriers, combined with Alberta's entrepreneurial ethos, comparatively low overhead costs, and their innate business sense facilitated women's entry into the brokerage business. Unlike today, where becoming a broker is a lengthy process that usually requires, at a minimum, a bachelor's degree (in either accounting, business, finance, or economics), completing a Canadian Securities Course, gaining a minimum of twelve months' experience in the field before completing a two-part Canadian Securities Course exam with a minimum score of 60 percent, at the start of the first oil boom in 1914, *The Natural Gas and Oil Record* noted that "a blackboard is all that is necessary to put one in business as an oil broker." Proving the *Record's* point was Leif Huseby of the First Unitarian church, who gave up his role as minister to become a broker, claiming that "the lure of building an empire was too much for me to resist" given that he descended from a family of financiers. "I do not say that I have abandoned the ministry permanently, but there was a division in my church over some trivial matter, and just about that time oil was struck in the Dingman well. The thing appealed to me as something tremendous."[73]

As the police chased the bucket shops off the streets, brokers rented every vacant store in the city or sought rental space in hotels, barber shops, and other business places. "The real estate boom in Western Canada a few years ago was nothing compared with this for local excitement" concluded the *Record*. The regulation of brokerages and the buying and selling of stock consisted only of municipal bylaws and the Province of Alberta's Companies Act (1911). In early 1914, the province amended the Companies Act, requiring companies selling stock to first file a prospectus with the government in Edmonton. Despite the long drilling time of Dingman #1, and the campaign by *the Herald* to strengthen regulation and oversight of stock speculation, it is clear that no one in a position of authority had given any serious or sustained attention to the issue despite months of anticipation. Belatedly, stockbrokers considered a variety of measures, including forming their own professional association, to establish industry standards.[74]

The selling of stock became so ubiquitous that when president of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Sir Thomas Shaughnessy, visited the city and approached a wicket to check his departure time, the clerk asked what oil stock he wanted to buy. Belatedly, on May 18, the City of Calgary amended Bylaw 1684, implementing a $50 fee for brokers over and above their $75 licence fee to operate as an intelligence office, and stipulated that the licence "shall not authorize any broker or agent to solicit" business outside the brokerage's place of business. Other provisions gave discretion to the licence inspector to ensure an applicant's "good character." At the last minute, a clause added a fifteen-dollar licence fee for any brokerage that decided to augment their business by employing a curb broker, with an additional ten dollar fee for every sub-agent employed thereafter. Most agreed the changes were necessary to maintain the city's character and commercial integrity. On May 21, the first day the new licences appeared at city hall, 104 applicants overwhelmed the two clerks on duty. Given the frenetic environment after the Dingman well and the proliferation of exchanges and bucket brokerages, enforcement proved both necessary and problematic. Long lineups across city sidewalks and spilling into traffic prompted the police to begin issuing tickets for loitering and obstructing traffic, as police chief Alfred Cuddy waged an all-out campaign to eliminate the curb brokers. Competition for sales, however, made brokers more aggressive. In one case before Police Magistrate's Court, Colonel Sanders complained that the brokers approached customers in a manner akin to an assault. "I thought," said Sanders before rendering his verdict, "that he was going to rob me instead of sell me oil shares."[75]

A spate of hiring since 1910 had resulted in the Calgary Police Force (CPF) deploying 1.8 policemen for every 1,000 citizens in 1914, nearly double the optimal ratio of one policeman per 1,000 citizens. Yet in the spring of 1914, the officers of the overworked CPF did their best to deter wildcatters, maintain the peace, keep the streets safe, and the sidewalks uncluttered.[76] Nevertheless, opportunistic thieves made off with thousands of dollars' worth of bills left unattended by overwhelmed brokers. On the streets, pickpockets operated in a target-rich environment with lots of distracted marks carrying plenty of cash. "Pickpockets cut one man's pocket clean from his clothes and took $53.00 and another man was either relieved of $40.00 or else lost it," Chief Cuddy told the *Albertan*. Police issued fines for loitering and broke up fist fights when investors grew frustrated while waiting in a queue to buy shares or leases. One particularly serious incident took place at the land office on June 5, 1914, when 362 ticket holders lost the right to select oil leases when an arrangement designed to keep the sidewalks clear by scheduling appointments did not work as planned. To cope with the crush of speculators flooding the land office, officials there had adopted a ticket system whereby prospective buyers were issued tickets and allotted half an hour to select leases. The system seemed straightforward and gave the appearance of creating appointments: the person with the first ticket would enter the building and have until 9:30, when the second person would be allowed in. But at nine a.m. on June 5, the holder of ticket 154 did not show up and the clerk continued to call numbers until C.E. Buell, a confectionary seller at the Pantages Theatre and the holder of ticket 516, called out when he heard his number. Buell selected 1,920 acres of land whose value *The Saskatoon Daily Star* confided was "conservatively" worth $100,000, and immediately turned down an offer of fifty dollars an acre.[77]

Police also coped with a dramatic increase in prostitution as the sex trade flourished alongside the boom. By mid-June, the CPF carried out a vigorous campaign to rid the city of undesirables—a euphemism for prostitutes. "Since the recent oil strike, the city has become overrun with them," complained Chief Cuddy. The June 14 edition of the *Herald* reported that new arrivals accounted for most morality cases appearing before Magistrate Sanders in Police Court, including one case where "the woman began soliciting within an hour of her arrival." Having promised upon his appointment as police chief in 1912 to eliminate prostitution, Cuddy succeeded in closing the brothels in South Coulee only to have them reappear in downtown Calgary. Determined to keep the city clean, Chief Cuddy and Magistrate Sanders also focused on "those depraved men who live by the proceeds of prostitution and the keeping of disorderly houses," threatening one sex worker's husband with a five-year sentence if he "knew what you were doing and was making money from it.[78] Raids on well-known brothels over the next few weeks resulted in a number of arrests, fines, and imprisonments, for both prostitution and selling liquor without a licence. One case involved William Wilkinson, the night clerk at the Arlington Temperance hotel, who faced a choice between paying cumulative fines of $250 for selling liquor without a licence and keeping a disorderly house or a three-month prison sentence.[79]

Cuddy's police force also vigorously enforced Alberta's Lord's Day Act, particularly against unwary brokers looking to make a buck on the Sabbath. Originally passed in 1888 and renewed in 1906 with the support of the Protestant churches, the moral reform movement, and the trade unions, the Lord's Day Act prohibited all businesses from operating on Sundays. Curb brokers quickly learned to operate six days a week, nearly twenty-four hours a day—apart from Sunday, after they learned that Police Chief Cuddy went undercover to enforce the law on unsuspecting brokers. As the boom evolved, bucket shops and curb brokers became more of a nuisance, prompting urgent pleas from the chief of police that city council adopt a $1,000 licensing fee for all oil brokers, both as individuals and exchanges, to clear the streets and impose order.[80] The business-friendly city council never implemented the proposed $1,000 licence fee but still had to fend off complaints about the more modest licence from pre-existing businesses.[81] One such firm, Robertson & Carlisle Limited, applied for a rebate, claiming that their city charter already permitted them to deal in buying and selling of stocks and bonds, immunizing them from the new fee. The city's solicitor agreed with Robertson & Carlisle that their act of incorporation covered the activities and recommended that the city only apply the amended licence fee to unchartered brokers. After the ruling, the city clerk wrote to the chief of police asking, "Will you kindly govern yourself in accordance with the above recommendation of the committee, and oblige?"[82]

Speculating in stocks neared the status of an all-consuming sacred duty beyond mere civic obligation. Eleanor Luxton writes that her grandparents David and Annie McDougall trekked out to the oil field every day, despite the mud roads, to check on progress at McDougall-Segur. Meanwhile, back in Calgary, Eleanor remembered that "the brokers were so busy in their offices they could not keep ahead of their work: everyone was buying and selling."[83] The *Albertan* reported that on the Calgary police force only the jailer, George Miller, held the "undesirable distinction" of holding no oil stocks. "His companions gather around him in excited groups and talk in restrained tones," said the *Albertan*. "They wonder whether he is Daniel Webster the Second or a candidate for Ponoka [Hospital for the Insane]. At any rate he is unique." The paper further claimed that Officer Joe Carruthers only possessed one complete set of clothes because he had pawned the rest of his personal effects to invest in leases and stocks. The mania bordered on an addiction; Officer Carruthers even contemplated mortgaging his home to raise more investment capital. "Anybody who is not 'in,'" wrote *The Natural Gas and Oil Record,* "is looked on as almost an outcast, one with whom conversation is almost an impossibility." Amid preparations for the visit of the Governor General, the Duke of Connaught, in mid-July, the *Albertan* suggested that, if the Duke and Duchess wanted to fully understand Calgary's oil boom, they should visit the oil exchanges. "Of course," added the paper with tongue planted firmly in cheek, "to do the thing right he would have to see them all, and as there are nine now, and doubtless will be twelve or fifteen before he arrives, some arrangement would have to be made to have the sessions at different times in the day."[84]

To demonstrate their civic pride, and attract attention, some businesses began thinking of ways to use the oil boom to their advantage. The Apparel Service Company, a cleaner, placed a special "Ladies Only" ad in the *Herald* offering women three free shares in the Erie Oil Company (with a par value of one dollar each) provided they brought a suit or dress to be French dry cleaned between June 15 and June 21.[85] The oil boom hit the entertainment sector hard, as people were too busy buying and selling oil stock with their savings to go to the theatre or play-houses. When asked how his business fared during the early weeks of the boom, the manager of the Orpheum said, "To be frank with you, it is rotten. In other words, extremely mellow or punk." Some creative thinkers began improvising solutions. The Regent Theatre's manager, Meyer Cohen, acquired (it is not clear if they were bought or given) 1,000 shares in Sunbeam Oil to give away to patrons purchasing either a fifteen-cent or twenty-five-cent ticket to see D.W. Griffith's *Judith of Bethulia* on June 8. Those buying a fifteen-cent afternoon ticket would receive one share while the twenty-five-cent evening fare would reap two shares. "The idea is an original one," wrote the editor of the *Herald's* Music and Drama section, "and the success is being watched with great interest by Manager Cohen and his associates."[86] However, outside the city, local officials adopted measures to contain speculation. Winnipeg, the largest urban centre on the prairies, forbade the sale of Calgary-based oil stocks unless a judge could be satisfied through documentation that the company was legitimate. Small-town police arrested Calgary brokers when they ventured south of the city to sell stocks over the weekend. Some men were taken into custody "by a typical constable with a huge star and chin whiskers, and carted off to the village pound, where they were cooped up with sundry stray horses, pigs and other unclaimed animals." When asked why he arrested the men, the constable replied, "I reckon you'd call it unscrupulous dealing in oil stocks. And they're going to stay locked up, too."[87]

Implicitly acknowledging the proclivity of would-be oil barons for fabulism, *The Natural Gas and Oil Record* reported there was "much confusion and trouble resulting from the lack of satisfactory regulations governing the drilling of wells in the lobby" of the King George Hotel. After holding "many hearings and conferring with the leading pioneers in the field," the hotel manager, W.V. Moran, produced a list of ten regulations to govern "drilling operations in the King George pool." Included were provisions that forbade the drilling of more than one well while occupying a leather chair and that drilling could not take place between three and six a.m.. If drilling in the lobby, "it is permissible to fire the vocal boilers with cigars, stogies, pipes or cigarettes." All wells "must be" 1,000 barrels or better and must "represent an outlay of at least $10,000.00."[88]

For a few delirious weeks in May 1914, much of southern and central Alberta threw itself headlong into the excitement of the boom and expected that good times and prosperity were right around the corner. Everyone with the courage to invest would be fabulously wealthy—provided the companies they invested in struck the oil they fervently believed lay waiting just beneath the surface. After all, it was not as if oil promoters were actively deceiving their investors, right?