JOHN M. HENDERSON,
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CHICAGO.

I auto

June 27th, 1903.

Dear Miss Tarbell:-

I received your esteemed favor of November 14th answering my letter of November 11th 1902.

Referring to the matter then under discussion, viz:- As to who drilled the second oil well, Uncle Billy Barnsdall or my father, I have tried to locate some of the men interested but have been unsuccessful. My father's books, diaries, and papers have all been destroyed; so I can get nothing from that source.

I wrote my brother, who was 13 years old in 1859, and asked him, "When did father drill the well on the island below Tidioute? and how do you fix the date?" He answered, "Father drilled the well on the island below Tidioute in 1859. I know it was that year because he drilled the well and built our new house the same year."

I asked my uncle, Joseph C. Henderson of Titusville, the same questions. He answered, "Your father drilled that well in 1859. I just know it was that year because I went over to see the well before it was finished."

Concerning the well and why father drilled it I recall the following;- Dan Fletcher became a convert to Drake's ideas. Through Fletcher father came to know Drake and to believe there might be something in his schemes; so father conceived the idea of drilling a well of his own. He knew just where to drill it for Drake had located his well by the oil spring on the flats and father knew where there was another oil spring and consequently a place for a second well; that oil spring was on a little island in the Allegheny River below Tidioute.

I have heard father laugh at his primitive idea and say that at time he really thought it doubtful if any where on earth there was a place for a third oil well; that if Drake got oil and he (father) drilled his well they would probably have the only possible wells.

So father told his cousin, William T. Alcorn who lived at Tidioute, to get an option on that island in order that if Drake got oil they could immediately buy the island and drill a well.

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The next morning after Drake finally struck oil father went to Tidioute where he found that Alcorn had done nothing towards getting the option. That afternoon, however, the two men secured the island, but whether by purchase, lease, or partnership contract with the owner I do not know. I am inclined to think it was a partnership contract because there were three or more (I think five) men interested in the well.

My father and Alcorn were practical farmers and lumbermen and had seen water wells drilled deeper than Drake's well; so they rigged up a spring-pole and "kicked" the well down to the depth of 69 1/2 feet. Here they stopped the drill, and father would laugh again at this point in his story as he said, "And we were all agreed that there was no use going any deeper because that was the depth at which Drake struck oil."

Late in the day the well was finished with no sign of oil. The discouraged party started for the Tidioute side of the river in a boat, one boy being left behind as the boat was full. In order to amuse himself he got a long pole and began to "churn" the hole. Almost immediately the well commenced to flow oil. He yelled excitedly to the men who, not yet having reached the shore turned back, and, sure enough, they found the well was flowing oil.

My father, when living, cared nothing for the name of having drilled this well, but upon reading the first chapter of your History of the Standard Oil Company I felt impelled to write you in regard to the well, and now, having given you such facts as I know, my "mind is easy" and I remain, as ever,

Respectfully yours,

John M Henderson

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