

THE BARKER

NEWSLETTER OF FRIENDS OF DRAKE WELL, INC.



*The train platform at Drake Well Museum and Park on a snowy day.
The platform is scheduled for rehabilitation in 2026-27.*

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LOOKING TOWARD THE NEW YEAR

As 2025 draws to a close, we at Drake Well Museum and Park and Friends of Drake Well are looking forward to the new year – a year that will be filled with great events and programs, projects that will enhance our site, and more. Although 2026 promises to be a great year, it will be bittersweet due to the retirement of Site Administrator Michael Knecht in April. Michael came to Drake Well Museum in the fall of 2021 as the interim site administrator following the departure of Melissa Mann, who became the Director of the Bureau of Historic Sites & Museums for the PHMC. Michael was already the permanent site administrator for another PHMC site, Old Economy Village in Ambridge. He worked hard to maintain both sites, driving the two-hours distance between Ambridge and Titusville for months. In late 2022 he was named permanent site administrator for Drake Well Museum and came to Titusville full time. Thank you, Michael, for everything you have done and continue to do for Drake Well – you are appreciated!

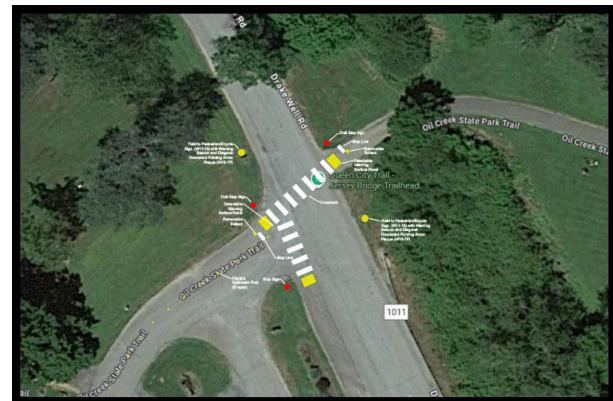
So what is new for the New Year? Take a look inside!

JERSEY BRIDGE TRAILHEAD IMPROVEMENTS

by Michael S. Knecht, Site Administrator

There are two projects being developed for the Jersey Bridge Trailhead area, located in the parking lot that sits adjacent to the Jersey Bridge. Not many people realize that this area sits within the boundaries of Drake Well Museum and Park! The parking lot provides vital access to the Gerard Hiking Trail of Oil Creek State Park, the recreational trail that is also within Oil Creek State Park, the Queen City Trail which serves to connect the recreational trail to Titusville, and the waterway trail of Oil Creek. Once these projects are completed, it will provide better safety and better access for those using these trails.

The first project goes back to the partnership that was created in 2022 between Friends of Drake Well and the Titusville Area Trails Association, which is administered under Titusville Renaissance, Inc. From 2022 through 2024, TATA/TRI and FDW worked together to promote the Oil Creek 5 and 13



Proposed Crosswalk Design for JB Parking Lot/Trail Crossing

Stacked Trail Races to raise funding for improvements to the Jersey Bridge trailhead area. Working with Oil Creek State Park and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, plans are being created to install a crosswalk on Drake Well Road to connect the Queen City Trail with the Oil Creek State Park Recreational Trail. In addition to the painted crosswalk, stop signs, crosswalk signs, and other appropriate safety signs are being planned to alert motorists, cyclists, and walkers of the trail crossing. An expansion of the edge of the entryway to the Jersey Bridge parking lot is also being considered to create a separate lane for cyclists and walkers.

Additional plan concepts being considered are the development of a mural for the Queen City Trail as well as additional informational signage for the Queen City Trail, Drake Well Museum, Oil Creek State Park, and the Gerard Hiking Trail. Additional fundraising may be required to implement all plan concepts.



Google Street View of Jersey Bridge Parking Lot

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The second project being explored is the creation of a primitive boat launch for canoes and kayaks in Oil Creek at the Jersey Bridge Trailhead. Drake Well Museum and Friends of Drake Well are looking to partner with the Oil Region Alliance and Oil Creek State Park on this exciting initiative. The concept was discussed with PHMC Executive Director Andrea Lowery and PA Fish and Boat Commission Executive Director Tim Schaeffer when they toured Drake Well in May 2024. Both thought the concept would be a great amenity for residents and visitors to enjoy. The plan is to continue working on the concepts in 2026 and develop an Access Grant application for submission to the PA Fish and Boat Commission for the December 2026 grant deadline. If successful, project implementation would take place in 2027/2028.

We look forward to both of these projects as they will serve to enhance the visitor experience here at Drake Well Museum and Park! 



Proposed area for canoe/kayak launch

CATCHING UP WITH COLLECTIONS

by Sarah Bell, Museum Curator

A lot has happened in the Curatorial Department since the last newsletter! Here are some updates on Collections:

- The Curator has been assisting in the preparation of the next issue of the *OilField Journal* with FDW Executive Director Emily Weaver and the rest of the Committee. The issue is shaping up beautifully and will be going to print before the new year. Watch for it in early 2026.
- Maintenance staff and volunteer Will Wingo moved the Reid Type DC Convertible Twin Two-Cycle engine from its pavilion behind the Transportation Building to the Maintenance Building for winter so that it can be worked on and made operational for future use.
- The Curator will be making a trip to Bradford in early December (weather dependent) to retrieve manuscript materials documenting the business operations of local McKean County oilman Philip M. Rose. Fun Fact: In 1933, Rose also purchased the Wright Monumental Works in Bradford. Initially founded in the historic Tuna Valley Milk Company building in 1915 by Charles Wright, Wright Monumental Works has been a part of the Bradford community for well over a century, family owned and operated with a legacy of four generations of the Rose family.

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Drake Well's Reid Type DC Convertible Twin Two-Cycle engine, seen here at the time of its arrival in 2002. The engine is scheduled to undergo maintenance to make it operational.

- In September, the R.D. Fletcher American Flag (DW79.7.17, see below) was loaned to the State Museum of Pennsylvania in Harrisburg to be included in their new "Revolutionary Things" exhibit, celebrating America 250. For more info on the exhibit, visit www.statemuseumpa.org or find them on Facebook under The State Museum of Pennsylvania!



- Maintenance staff and the Curator traveled to the Erie Maritime Museum in early October to assist in the moving of their Cowell King boat with twin 1964 Merc 65 HP engines from storage in the basement of the museum to the lobby for display. Check out EMM's website for more information about the museum, including operating days/hours, at www.eriemaritimemuseum.org.

- Finally, the Curator has put together ten Acquisition Recommendations for donations for the December PHMC Collections Committee meeting. Possible future artifacts to enter into Drake Well's collections include: a yellow dog lantern, an angel can from Otto-Cupler Torpedo Co., a porcelain Star Drilling Machine Co. sign, two homemade derrick pattern boards c. 1850-1880, Oil Centennial items from the Scheide family, items from the family of Axtell J. Byles of the American Petroleum Institute, and more!

If you have items you would like to donate to our Collections, please visit www.drakewell.org/view-collections for more information! 🎉



EDUCATION, EVENTS & MORE!

by Sarah Goodman, Museum Educator

Since September 2025, things have been "go, go, go" as usual here at Drake Well Museum. Our interns have gone back to school, and we have already posted applications for the 2026 Summer Museum Interns!

We saw quite a few adult group tours in the fall – one group brought great antique trucks with them! It was quite fun to see the trucks and speak with the gentlemen who restored them. The group had a great time during their visit. We also had several school groups including new schools who have heard from others about the wonderful experience we offer at Drake Well. I foresee our school numbers greatly increasing, so with more students coming, that means we need more tour guides! Please consider volunteering to become a tour guide; it is not as difficult as it might seem and is very rewarding.

But enough about the past, let's focus on the upcoming year! The United States of America will be 250 years young! The year will be filled with our usual line up of programs and events, but they will all tie in with the America 250 celebration. The events and programs in 2026 will all highlight how this spot right here in Venango County, Pennsylvania, changed and built America!!!

In January and February, we will have our annual Winter Academy Virtual Lunch Breaks!



Sarah Goodman and volunteer Ashley Deen portrayed Esther Tarbell and Ida Tarbell at the Oil Boom Historic Dinner on September 25th.

We have three scheduled. The first will be on Thursday, January 22nd, at Noon. Sarah Buffington, Curator at Old Economy Village in Ambridge, will present "The Harmony Society's Economy Oil Company in Tidioute." On Thursday, February 19th, at Noon, various attractions and museums of Venango County will come together to discuss what all they are doing for America 250. The last presentation of Winter Academy will be on Friday, February 27th, at Noon, with attractions and museums of Crawford County also discussing their plans for America 250. All three presentations are FREE but require registering to receive the Zoom link to attend online. This is a great way to enjoy your lunch break over the winter months!

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In March one of our favorite events will take place here at the Museum, our Wisdom & More lecture series. This event has been around for many years with various names and orientations, and each year it gets better. Wisdom & More 2026 will feature entertaining topics every Thursday evening in March accompanied by various beverages from local wineries, distilleries, and breweries. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. for a social hour in the Museum lobby where a local distillery, brewery or winery will be featured with samples of their products. The presentation will follow at 6:30 p.m. in the Museum's Multipurpose Room. Details including a final schedule are being confirmed as I type, but I can say there will be trains, oil dynasties, artifacts, and more.

We are always looking for volunteers to help out with tours, the front desk and so much more. If you are interested in volunteering or have a suggestion for a speaker to come to Drake Well, please give me a call or send an email. My desk phone is (814) 461-0005 or sargoodman@pa.gov. 



**JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL
HOLIDAY POTLUCK
LUNCHEON ON THURSDAY,
JANUARY 8, 2026!**

Noon @Drake Well Museum

**Bring a dish if you wish!
RSVP by Jan 2 to 814-827-2797
or ra-phdrakewell@pa.gov.**

AN OUTLOOK ON OUTREACH

by John Hetrick, Outreach Coordinator

It has been so exciting to finish up 2025 here at Drake Well Museum and Park! Since starting on May 5th as the Museum's new Outreach Coordinator, I have attended seven outreaches, appeared on Titusville Stream TV's The Morning Drill, put together marketing material for tour companies, and helped out with many of the events at the Museum.



The most impactful moments for me were the engine shows, the festivals, and the tourism expositions that I attended over the past year. One of the first outreach events was the Coolspring Power Museum's Spring Exposition in June, located in Coolspring, PA. I set up a table in front of Drake Well Museum's Evans 15 horse power engine that Coolspring has on loan and displayed. I was there for two days and met a lot of folks who were interested in visiting Drake Well Museum or had stories to share about the site and its history.

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I also attended the three-day 57th annual Pioneer Steam and Gas Engine Society Show at Saegertown, PA, in July. It was great meeting new people, some of which had volunteered at Drake Well in years past. It was also good to work with Pioneer Steam & Gas and get to know their group better as they sponsor Drake Well's annual Fall Gas Up event every year.

In addition to engine shows, I also set up informational tables at National Trails Day in June (my first event as the Outreach Coordinator), the Titusville Oil Festival in August, and the Crawford County Fair, also in August. During the Oil Festival this year, we had our usual spot at the Craft Fair in Scheide Park. We also participated in the parade, exhibiting our 1910 Oil City Boiler Works engine and taking first place in our class! For the Crawford County Fair we had a table set up inside the Crawford County Historical Society's permanent exhibit building for two days. Special thanks to Josh Sherretts of CCHS for welcoming us to join them at the fair! Between these two events, we interacted with over 1000 individuals.

Lastly, I began October by attending the Great Day! Tours Bus Marketplace, an event in Independence, Ohio, where destinations could present to bus companies to promote their site as a destination for bus tours.

During this event I interacted with 80 different group leaders, with each leader having the possibility of bringing an entire charter bus of people to the Museum. Coming up in March of 2026, I will be attending the Pennsylvania Bus Association Marketplace event, a convention-sized version of the Great Day! Tours event, that will take place in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, the last week of March.

All in all, I feel that 2025 was a fantastic inaugural year for the Drake Well Museum and Park Outreach Program, and I have quite a few plans to make 2026 even more successful. I would also like to whole-heartedly thank every volunteer for their help this past season! 



Scenes from Oil Festival 2025

A WALK DOWN HOLMDEN STREET: PITOLE UPDATES

Historic Pithole City had another successful Lantern Tours on October 4th with 429 tickets sold! The weather was perfect, too, with a night sky filled with stars. We always have a lot of returning attendees – those who love the Lantern Tours and come back year after year. This year we also had a lot of new folks, looking to experience one of the area's most popular fall attractions. The first two tours of the evening were filled with students from a humanities course at Allegheny College, which was exciting to see. Thank you to their professor, Dr. Brian Miller, for bringing a new generation to Pithole, providing them with a fun way to learn history!

Pithole has remained relatively quiet since October. We continue to work on completing the outdoor signage project. The remaining signs are ready for installation with their locations mapped out. We are now simply waiting for schedules to clear up so we can have an excavator come to the site to dig the holes for the signs. Everything should be in place by the time Pithole reopens for its regular season in June!

Don't forget to mark your calendars for Pithole's Cabin Fever Party, set for Saturday, February 7, 2026, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.! If you have never been to this event, it is actually quite delightful – a great way to spend what could be an otherwise boring afternoon in the dead of winter.



Lantern Tours Cast 2025

Admission is FREE, and we will have volunteers and staff on hand at the Visitor Center to provide more information on Pithole and its fascinating mark on history. In addition to having the Visitor Center open, we will also have different activities scheduled including crafts for children, storytelling by the legendary "Gib Morgan," and a small historic trade/skill demonstration. If there is snow, we encourage visitors to bring their sleds – Pithole has a FANTASTIC hill! All activities are subject to change, so be sure to check back on the Drake Well Museum Facebook page and website for final details closer to the event.

Pithole may be quiet during the winter months, but its outdoor grounds are always open to explore, from dawn to dusk. We ask visitors not to use ATVs or other outdoor recreational vehicles on the grounds; metal detecting is also prohibited. Otherwise, exploring the site and imagining what life was like there in 1865 is highly encouraged! 

FRIENDS OF DRAKE WELL: MEMBER UPDATES

Friends of Drake Well had an eventful fall season that concluded with the Annual Membership Meeting on October 29th. We voted in our two newest members to the Friends of Drake Well Board of Directors: **Charles Frantz** of CSR Services, LLC, and **Mark Miller** of Moody & Associates - welcome, Charlie and Mark!! We also said a fond farewell to longtime Board member, **Bob Felton**, who served three terms (total of 9 years!). Bob's service to Friends of Drake Well and Drake Well Museum and Park is greatly appreciated, and we are happy to have him continue on as an advisor. Thank you, Bob!!

FDW participated in **Giving Tuesday**, a nationwide day of giving for nonprofits, on December 2nd, the first time we had run such a campaign in years. FDW raised \$165 - obviously not the biggest fundraiser we have ever done - but we are excited to try it out again next year, and do some more build up! Thank you to those who gave, it is appreciated!

We are currently in the midst of our **Annual Fund Campaign**. The importance of this campaign cannot be understated - the gifts we receive through this campaign go toward annual operating expenses for Friends of Drake Well such as payroll and salaries, as well as the many services we provide for Drake Well Museum and Historic Pithole City - marketing and advertising, educational programming, exhibits and collections care, outreach initiatives, and [more](#).

IN MEMORIAM

We remember the following Friend who recently passed away:

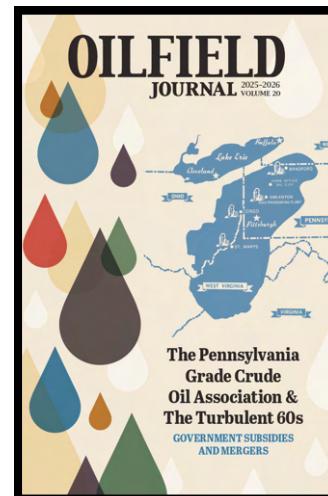
Kathleen A. Thurau
(9/12/2025)



We truly appreciate the support we receive from our members and donors, because without that support the mission of Drake Well Museum could not succeed!

Other Updates...

- The next issue of the ***OilField Journal***, Volume 20, is on track to be printed and mailed to members by mid to late January 2026. We are VERY excited for the new issue - a sneak peak at the cover is below!



- The **Museum Store** will be closed from December 21 to April 1, however, if there is something you need to purchase from the Store during that time, feel free to contact us (814) 827-2797 to arrange payment and pick-up/shipping! 

FRIENDS OF DRAKE WELL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Barry Cressman, President	Joe Carter	Jerry Knickerbocker
Emily Altomare, Vice President	Bob Felton, <i>outgoing</i>	Don Rog
Tamera Ochs Rothschild, Treasurer	Larry Fledderman	Jason Ruggiero
Kelly Anderson Gregg, Secretary	Charlie Frantz	Megan Sternagel
	Mark Miller, <i>incoming</i>	
Michael Knecht, <i>ex-officio</i>		Emily Weaver, <i>ex-officio</i>

FRIENDS OF DRAKE WELL STAFF

Emily Weaver, Executive Director (814) 461-0008 <i>direct line</i> c-emilywea@pa.gov	Vickie Ruppersberg, Museum Store Manager
John Hetrick, Outreach Coordinator	Frances "Corky" Fulton, Museum Store Clerk
Toni Brown, Visitor Services & Curatorial Assistant	Alyssa Shick, Seasonal Pithole Coordinator
Mark Southwick, Bookkeeper	Alex Huffman, Seasonal Replica Operator
	Dave Mock, Seasonal Replica Operator

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL & MUSEUM COMMISSION (PHMC) STAFF

Michael Knecht, Site Administrator (814) 827-2797 miknecht@pa.gov	Tom Lindsay, Maintenance Repairman 2
Sarah Bell, Museum Curator 2	Stewart McKinley, Facilities Operations Supervisor
Sarah Goodman, Museum Educator 2	

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR 2026*

*DATES & TIMES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

JAN/FEB 2026	WINTER ACADEMY: LUNCH BREAK VIRTUAL - THURSDAYS AT 12:30 PM!	APR 9 2026
FEB 7 2026	PITHOLE CABIN FEVER PARTY FREE ADMISSION, 11 AM TO 2 PM	MAY 3 2026
MAR 8 2026	PA CHARTER DAY! FREE ADMISSION TO DRAKE WELL MUSEUM	MAY 16 2026
MAR 2026	WISDOM & MORE EVERY THURSDAY AT 5:30 PM!	JULY 2026
	OIL CREEK 5 & 13 STACKED TRAIL RACES FUNDRAISER FOR FRIENDS OF DRAKE WELL	
	DISCOVERY DAYS CAMP CHILDREN 8-12	

DRAKE WELL MUSEUM AND PARK

2026 Summer Internship opportunities

This summer Drake Well Museum and Park is offering 2 museum internships and 1 research internship

MUSEUM INTERNSHIP:

- For students currently enrolled in a post-secondary program
- Pay starting at \$17.31/ hour
- Work a range of skills within a museum environment
- Internships take place between May and August 2026
- Applications are due February 9, 2026
- More info including how to apply available at www.drakewell.org/join-and-support-us/employment

DAVID WEBER RESEARCH INTERNSHIP:

- For students pursuing a graduate or PH.D degree
- Pay starting at \$17.31/ hour
- Work within collections with a focus on research
- Internship takes place between May and August 2026
- Applications are due February 9, 2026
- More info including how to apply available at www.drakewell.org/join-and-support-us/employment

Visit the
website or scan
the QR code





Friends of Drake Well, Inc.
205 Museum Lane
Titusville, PA 16354

THE BARKER

Newsletter of Friends of Drake Well, Inc.

DRAKE WELL MUSEUM AND PARK

BIRTHPLACE OF THE MODERN PETROLEUM INDUSTRY

Open Year Round!

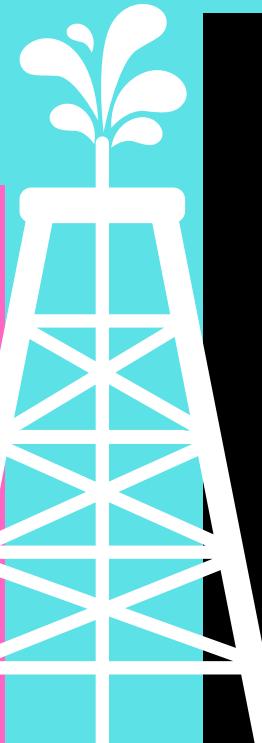
**November–March, Friday to Sunday,
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

**April–October, Wednesday to Sunday,
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

www.drakewell.org

(814) 827-2797 ra-phdrakewell@pa.gov

202 Museum Lane, Titusville, PA 16354



UPCOMING HOLIDAY MUSEUM CLOSURES

Christmas Eve,
Dec. 24

Christmas Day,
Dec. 25

New Years' Eve,
Dec. 31

New Years' Day,
Jan. 1

Martin Luther King Day
Jan. 19

Presidents' Day
Feb. 16

Easter
Apr. 5

**FRIENDS OF DRAKE WELL, INC., IS A NON-PROFIT, COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION THAT
PARTNERS WITH THE PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION**

IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF DRAKE WELL MUSEUM AND PARK.

**FRIENDS OF DRAKE WELL ACTIVELY SUPPORTS DRAKE WELL MUSEUM IN ITS MISSION TO
UNCOVER, SHARE, AND PRESERVE PENNSYLVANIA'S RICH PETROLEUM HISTORY.**



Pennsylvania
Historical & Museum Commission

