

First Indiana Gas Well
Delaware County
18.1981.1

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Marker Text

The first significant commercial gas well came in Sept. 15, 1886, near here south of the Mississinewa River and East of the railroad, ushering in the gas boom era. Almeron H. Crannell, a Civil War veteran and later resident of Hartford City, drilled the well.

Report

The only concern with this marker text is the “first” in the title. According to Clifton J. Phillips’ *Indiana in Transition* (1968) “The earliest recorded flows of natural gas in Indiana dated back as far as 1865 at Francesville, Pulaski County, Eaton in Delaware County and Terre Haute.” However, these discoveries were accidental, and it was not until the discovery of natural gas in Ohio in 1884-85 that anyone began paying attention to the applications of this fossil fuel.

Technically, the first gas well in Indiana was at Portland in the summer of 1886. However, State Geologist Maurice Thompson in his “Natural Gas,” *Fifteenth Annual Report*, described the gas flow as “so slight as to merely ignite with a feeble flash, and be immediately extinguished.” Portland’s gas well is hardly worth noting. In fact, the 1891 report from the Indiana Department of Geology and Natural Resources credited Eaton with “the first gas-well in Indiana.” While technically, the Eaton gas well was not the first, the subsequent sentence of the marker text, “The first significant commercial gas well,” should be enough to qualify the claim made in the marker title.

All the other claims on the marker are correct. E. T. J. Jordan’s “Supervisor of Natural Gas,” in Indiana Department of Geology and Natural Resources, *Seventeenth Annual Report*, 1891 and *Nineteenth Annual Report*, 1894 show that the well was significant and helped usher in the gas boom era. A *Muncie Morning Star* article from January 19, 1902 also helps to show the significance. An *Indianapolis News* article from September 16, 1886 corroborates the date. *An Atlas of Delaware County, Indiana* (1887)

was used to establish location. For more information on Almeron H. Crannel see:
National Park Service, *U.S. Civil War Soldiers, 1861-1865*, [http://www.itd.nps.gov/
cwss/soldiers.cfm](http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/soldiers.cfm) (accessed February 19, 2008) and the *Twelfth Census* (1900), Schedule
1, Hartford, Blackford County, Indiana.