

Lawrenceville, Illinois

Marathon Oil Company has been a fixture in Lawrence County since the early days of the Southern Illinois Oil Boom. Oil was found in Illinois as early as 1865, and the first discovery in the Bridgeport Field was made in 1901. In 1906, Marathon's predecessor, The Ohio Oil Company, made its first foray into Illinois. By 1912, Illinois was The Ohio's chief producing ground, with tiny Bridgeport, Illinois as its center.

As with many boom towns, Bridgeport, a town of 600 in 1906, swelled to over 4,000 people in the space of a few days. When oil was struck in a well on the Cap Lewis farm five miles north of town in May of 1906, leases in that vicinity came into great demand. Overnight any contractor with a drilling machine rushed to Bridgeport to join the excitement.

The first discovery in the Bridgeport sand was a shallow field, but when oil was found three hundred feet deeper in the Buchanan sand, a second and more significant boom was on. Bridgeport was filled with a population of transient workers, often living in tents or whatever other temporary housing could be thrown together.

The early days of boom town oil production were sustained until the Bridgeport fire, which broke out on Friday, June 13th, in 1913. While the structures were quickly replaced, the early days of prosperity never fully returned to Bridgeport. Shortly after the fire, the contractors began the move to the oil fields of the west. The Ohio Oil Company, however, stayed in Bridgeport, and continues today as Marathon Oil Company, the largest oil producer in the Illinois Basin.

Production has declined over time as can be expected with a field that's been producing for almost 90 years. Marathon currently produces approximately 4,700 barrels of oil per day. The Company employs 125 people in its Illinois Basin operations, most of whom work in the two by twelve mile strip of oil leases scattered north and south of the main office building on Route 250.

While many companies were involved in establishing the oil industry in Lawrence County, Marathon Oil Company is proud to be one of the mainstays in the Illinois Basin. Even today, some 89 years after first coming to Bridgeport, Marathon continues to drill wells, develop reserves, and add vitality to the economy of Lawrence County.



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