

## Edward Winnett in Borneo

**Title Text:** International Oil Drillers

Excerpt from the International Drillers Tent Exhibit at the Oil Museum of Canada



[A curtain opens. An actor stands in a jungle setting and swats at a mosquito while addressing the audience. A map of the Dutch East Indies appears, followed by photos taken by the International Drillers of buildings and the drillers with people from Borneo.]

**Actor:** [*Mosquitoes buzzing, drums beating*] Oooh, bother. Right, where were we then? Yes, the jungles of the Dutch East Indies. Borneo, Java, Sumatra, Brunei; these were just some of the many exotic places Lambton drillers travelled to. In fact, if you were to eavesdrop on any conversation in downtown Petrolia in the early 1900s, you're more likely than not going to hear discussions about Tuareg nomads or cannibals from Borneo. These Lambton boys were probably the best travelled Canadians of the time.



[A world map shows the route Winnett traveled. This is followed by photos of two rickshaws on a road as well as photos from Winnett's travels including children in front of a building, elephants pulling logs, and a floating house.]

**Actor:** Edward Winnett left Oil Springs in 1897 to work in the new oil fields of Sumatra. There, Edward experienced what most did: culture shock. For someone used to a simple life in Lambton's wide-open spaces, the severe crowding and poverty of the Dutch East Indies, the wildly different customs and dress, the sounds and the smells were all a bit overwhelming. Living in a fine home on the riverfront with abundant tropical fruit trees growing nearby, Winnett soon adapted to the new strange life. Most of the other Western oil drillers were from Oil Springs or Petrolia, so there was usually a familiar face nearby. The tropic heat and fierce sun taught him to adopt the unofficial uniform of the Canadian foreign driller: the white muslin suit.



[A video clip shows a field full of oil rigs, followed by photographs of a railroad, pipeline, and wild animals. Photographs of the International Drillers and a ship are displayed and then a curtain closes.]

**Actor:** Winnett helped to build oil tanks and a refinery. He was proud to say that he was the first to build a boiler in all of Sumatra. His industrial skills learned in Canada put him in good stead as he oversaw construction of a railroad, oil tanks, and a 200-kilometre pipeline to the coast. Winnett wrote home of elephants and tigers prowling in the jungle, of blood-sucking leeches, huge snakes, and fierce, wild boars. He was able to send 90 dollars a month back to his family but the price of being away from his loved ones was too much. A year after arriving, Edward returned home never to venture abroad again.

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Province of Ontario  
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Production and Post Production Facilities  
Avolution Multimedia  
519.337.0177  
production@avolution.com