

William McGarvey in Austria

Title Text: International Oil Drillers

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

[*Music, film rolling*]



[A curtain opens. A map of the world is displayed followed by a photo of a man working with a wrench in front of three-pole derricks. An illustration of a ship on the ocean appears and then a portrait of William McGarvey.]

Actor: 'Round about the 1870s, most of the easy oil had been removed from the ground in Oil Springs and Petrolia. So a highly skilled driller started travelling abroad, opening up oil fields all over the world. One of the first to go overseas was William McGarvey.



[A photo of International Driller William McGarvey is shown in front of a map of the world, followed by photos of oil rigs, buildings, and animated waving flags. A map of Germany and Austria-Hungary is shown, then a photo of oil wagons and a video of oil gushing from a well.]

Actor: William McGarvey ran a successful store in Petrolia and owned an oilfield with 18 producing wells. He served as the town's first reeve, and later mayor, and even dabbled in provincial politics. Nearly 40 years old, he'd already lived a full life but when John Bergheim, a petroleum engineer, invited McGarvey to Germany to explore some potential fields, he jumped at the chance. They didn't find much oil there so they looked further east, in Galicia, in what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Others had tried and failed to get oil out of the ground but McGarvey brought in some Lambton Hard Oilers and used the tried-and-true pole-drilling methods, and they struck oil.



[The photos of three children are placed over top of a photo of a building. They are pulled out of the frame by an animated vaudeville hook. An image of a castle is shown, followed by photos of large buildings with animated money bags bouncing up and down in the background. Photos of Mamie and Count Ebert von Zeppelin at their wedding appear and an animated zeppelin flies past. Photos of a silverware set and castle are shown.]

Actor: In 1881, McGarvey sent for his wife and children. The family lived comfortably in a castle near the Galician oil fields and had a residence in Vienna as well. The McGarveys became enormously wealthy and lived like royalty, becoming an important part of Austrian upper society. William's youngest daughter, Mamie, married a royal, Count Ebert von Zeppelin in one of the grandest wedding ceremonies ever seen in Vienna. For a wedding gift, McGarvey gave Mamie a silverware set and a castle on a 700-acre estate to keep the silverware safe.



[A video shows a man working inside an oil rig and then on a tractor. There are images from the First World War and a video of an oil rig falling over. A photo of McGarvey is shown then a curtain closes.]

Actor: McGarvey's company grew to encompass oil fields and refineries all over Europe and beyond, serving the world's ever-increasing thirst for oil. Ironically, the very oil he helped to bring out of the ground would fuel the first great mechanized conflict, World War I. Many of his Galician oil fields were set on fire in the ravages of war. His empire crumbled around him. Heartbroken, he died in 1914, never to see Canada again.

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