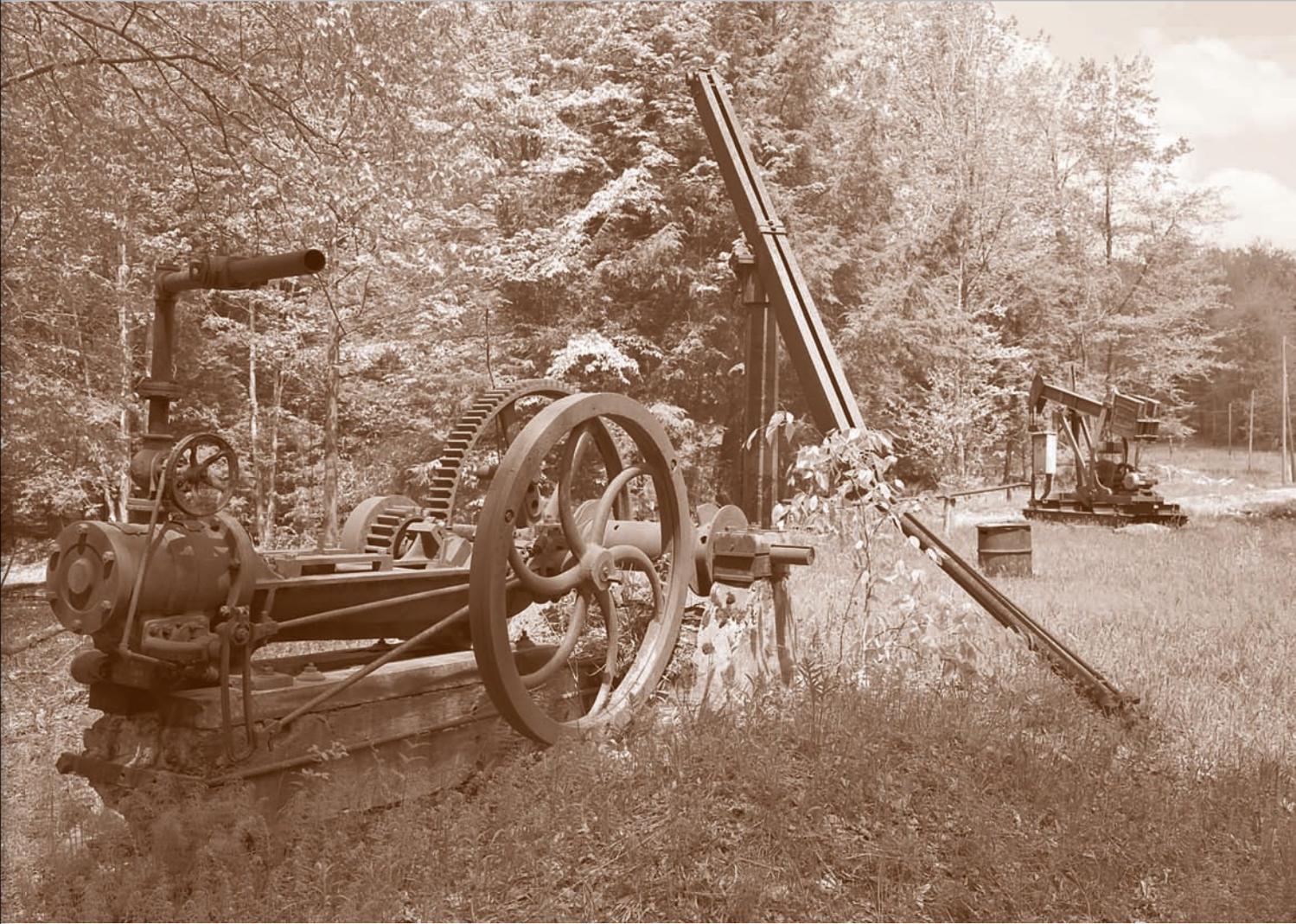


Boomtown Rush



WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA IS HOME TO “the valley that changed the world,” where in 1859 Colonel Edwin L. Drake, manager of the Seneca Oil Company, drilled the first commercially profitable well just south of Titusville. It took Drake almost a year and a half—the company gave up on him halfway through—but when his bit reached 69 feet, the bubbling crude became the Gold Rush all over again. Titusville’s population skyrocketed from 250 to 10,000 as boomtowns sprung up throughout the region. **TODAY, THE DRAKE WELL MUSEUM RESIDES ON THE SITE,** one of a host of oil-related national historic landmarks along with over 75 properties in the National Register of Historic Places. The Historic American Engineering Record has documented over a dozen sites, among them McKenna-Jojo Air Lease, above, in Allegheny National Forest. This device provided not only an economical way to get more oil out of depleted wells, but to pump several at a time. The crude around Titusville was of such high quality—an excellent lubricant for machines—that it was worth the extra effort, even in the days of plentiful oil when companies could just go punch a hole in the ground somewhere else. **THE HEART OF PENNSYLVANIA’S OIL-RICH HISTORY IS** the Oil Region National Heritage Area, a 708-mile swath of land near the foothills of the Appalachians, including McClintock Well #1, the world’s oldest well still producing at its original depth, and the ghost town of Pithole City, once the state’s biggest boomtown. **TODAY, ALTHOUGH THE MORE THAN 17,000 ACTIVE WELLS IN THE UNITED STATES ARE** “much more economical and less maintenance-intensive” than the old technology, says HAER architect Christopher Marston, the ones that remain “are a reminder of the significance of an era and the importance of documenting a vanishing element of our nation’s heritage.”