

# Oil fever was hot with 1894 discovery

---

## Oil fever, from page A1

---

it was found, having accumulated because the water hadn't been drawn for some time.

Oil had been found in another place. On Aug. 14, 1894, the *Telephone* informed its readers of a little drama involving Robert Campbell, foreman of a sawmill on North Madison Street "near Showers Factory."

Campbell had noticed the "boxing" of the saw was getting overheated. Running to a nearby well, he filled a bucket and dashed its contents on the hot equipment. According to the *Telephone*, Campbell was "astounded on seeing the liquid blaze up, very much like it had been all oil. He states that before they succeeded in putting it out, it came near burning up the

mill."

Unlike the coal-oil-type substance in the city well, the one Campbell found in the mill well was "a thick coating of pure crude oil, nearly one half of an inch deep . . ." Seeming to contradict himself, the *Telephone* reporter wrote, "If skimmed off it will burn like coal oil and smells strongly of coal oil, scenting the whole neighborhood."

Concluded the newspaper, "The chief mystery is, where did this oil come from? It will also interest our citizens to know whether it will be found to be sufficient in quantity to pay for the expense of getting at it. Already considerable interest is manifested, and a crowd has been around the well all day."

Next week: Experts consulted.