

Bowles Rice VIEWS & VISIONS

BOWLESRICE.COM

FALL/WINTER 2022



**W. Taylor
Frankovitch**
Bowles Rice LLP

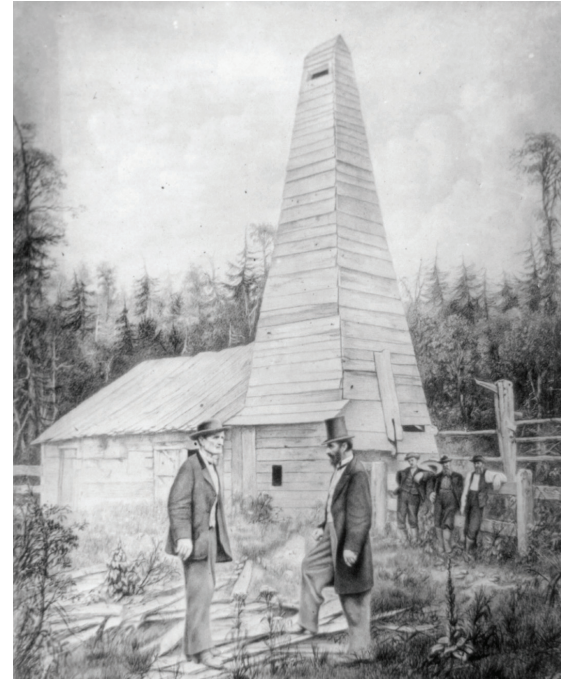
Attorney Taylor Frankovitch focuses his practice in the areas of commercial law, real estate, land use and development, and energy. He represents clients in planning, zoning, and other land use matters that involve compliance with state and federal sales registration requirements. Admitted to practice in Pennsylvania and West Virginia, Frankovitch also works on multiple land-related matters for clients, including land and building acquisition; negotiating purchase, sale and other land control agreements; property acquisition; land title; and land ownership issues. He serves on the Board of Trustees of the Washington County Community Foundation.

Energized Philanthropy: A Legacy of Giving in the Oil & Gas Industry

Although the American Gilded Age ended over 100 years ago, the philanthropic impact of some of the most prominent titans of industry in Western Pennsylvania remains. Names such as Carnegie, Frick and Mellon, which adorn libraries, universities, and public buildings throughout our area, come to the forefront of one's mind when we think about the charitable works that helped shape our region. These families originated their wealth in the steel and banking industries, arguably industries for which our area is most well-known. However, somewhat less known, are the contributions made by the pioneers of the oil and gas industry of Western Pennsylvania and the strong legacy of charitable giving that persists in the industry to this day.

The first commercial oil well in the United States, known as "Drake's Well," was drilled near Titusville, in Venango County, Pennsylvania in 1859 by Sir Edwin Drake. In the years that followed, the oil and gas industry created extraordinarily wealthy individuals.

One such individual was Joseph Newton Pew, a schoolteacher from Mercer County, Pennsylvania, who struck it rich after moving to Titusville amid Western Pennsylvania's first "oil boom." Pew was an initial founder of the Keystone Gas Company, People's Gas Company and Sun Oil Line Company (which would eventually become Sunoco), and was largely responsible for developing the system of pipelines that brought natural gas to the City of Pittsburgh. During his lifetime, Joseph Pew was extremely generous in his philanthropic endeavors and donated to numerous charities, including Grove City College, serving as President of the Board of Trustees and personally underwriting nearly every building project during his tenure.



Edwin L. Drake (right) and the Drake Well in the background, in Titusville, Pennsylvania, where the first commercial well was drilled in 1859 to find oil.

Upon his death in 1912, Pew's sons, J. Howard and Joseph, Jr., took control of his companies and continued the tradition of taking care of those in the community. Notably for their employees, they did not lay off a single person during the Great Depression and developed one of the first employee stock-sharing plans. Additionally, the brothers, with their two sisters, Mary Ethel and Mable, established the Pew Charitable Trusts, which is among the most well-known charitable and research organizations in the country. With assets in excess of \$6 billion, The Pew Trusts have had an immense impact on the nation and on Pennsylvania, in particular.

Another philanthropic pillar of the oil and gas industry was Michael Late Benedum. Originally born in Bridgeport, West Virginia in 1869, Benedum operated his world-wide oil and gas business from its headquarters

“This proud tradition of giving back to our communities in meaningful ways remains prevalent in the oil and gas industry today.”

in Pittsburgh. Benedum entered the oil and gas industry when he was 20 years old after a chance encounter with a superintendent of the South Penn Oil Company, and eventually became one of the wealthiest 100 Americans in his time. Known as “The Great Wildcatter,” Benedum is said to have found oil in more places than anyone in history. Along with his incredible business acumen, Benedum was also extremely generous throughout his life. Benedum founded the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation in 1944 in honor of his late son, and dedicated half of his estate to the Foundation upon his death in 1959. As of 2020, the Benedum Foundation held over \$400 million dollars in assets and has a stated mission “to encourage human development in West Virginia and Southwestern Pennsylvania through strategically placed charitable resources.”

This proud tradition of giving back to our communities in meaningful ways remains prevalent in the oil and gas industry today. One example of this is the CNX Foundation, which is detailed in this publication, in the article by Chad Griffith. However, there are countless others. On the company side, the vast majority of oil and gas companies operate a charitable arm, which has provided hundreds of millions of dollars directly to our communities and to local charities. Additionally, since the advent of horizontal drilling technologies in 2008, billions of dollars have been paid to local landowners in bonus and royalty payments. This large influx of money into our region has positively impacted charitable giving at the individual level as well. One example of this is the Washington County Community Foundation, which was initiated by community leaders in 1998 to encourage charitable giving and has amassed over \$50 million in assets.



Michael Late Benedum

Another is the 2018 establishment of the Center for Corporate Responsibility by Waynesburg University. This exceptional growth is in no small part attributable to the increase in oil and gas operations in our region.

In 2004, Bowles Rice established the Bowles Rice Foundation, which allows us to give back to the communities in which we live and work. I like to think that when we do, we are following in the footsteps of those giants who have walked before us, perhaps not in size, but certainly in spirit. As Michael Late Benedum wrote in his will:

We know not where seed may sprout. In the poorest and most unregarded child who seems to be abandoned to ignorance and evil, there may slumber virtue, intellect and genius. It is our duty to sow and to nurture, leaving it to others to harvest the fruits of our efforts. ▽