

# Propane Heritage Preservation

Summer, 2007

A Newsletter from  
The Ancient Gassers

## PRESERVING PROPANE'S HERITAGE

For the past several years, many of our pioneers in the propane industry have been concerned about preserving our fine heritage, which dates back to the early 1900's. A small, but dedicated, nucleus—comprised mainly of members of NPGA's Ancient Gassers Association—has been working diligently, moving forward in finding ways to preserve that history.

Today, that vision is known as "Propane Heritage Preservation" (PHP), and its group has grown to include visionaries from all areas of the propane industry—NPGA, PERC, State Propane Associations, and other interested individuals and groups.

The vision of PHP has been more definitively formulated into four important phases:

### Phase 1. Partnering with National Museum of Industrial History Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Some years ago, NPGA's Ancient Gassers Association showed concern about the demise of a number of our pioneers of the propane industry—and the possible loss of information, artifacts, and historic documents that would preserve our heritage.

Working toward preserving this heritage, they began conversations with the principals of the National Museum of Industrial History (NMIH) in Bethlehem Pennsylvania.

The Ancient Gassers began a financial campaign and raised funds to join with the project, and became Partners with NMIH, which is also working with Sands BethWorks in the development of this former Bethlehem Steel Plant property. Phase One of NMIH's development, of highest priority, is well under construction, and space has been allotted for our propane story in the building which will house Phase One. We are actively involved in the content and design of our propane exhibit.

### Phase 2. Preservation/Storage Valuable Propane Papers & Memorabilia

The Propane Heritage Preservation group is striving to document, catalog, and preserve the industry's valuable papers and memorabilia. It has become obvious that proper space, as well as a historian, are needed for this phase of preserving propane's heritage.

The Propane Education & Research Council (PERC) is currently considering a library of technology. PHP is requesting that PERC expand the library design to include space for the industry's valuable papers and memorabilia.

### Phase 3. Preservation/Storage Propane Industry's Historic Hardware

As the Propane Heritage Preservation group has sought historic items, it has become evident that there is an important need for an open storage facility, with the ability of display, for collecting historic hardware of our industry.

### Phase 4. Nationwide Promotion of Propane's Heritage

PHP's vision for the future includes promoting our propane heritage throughout the United States. To accomplish this, consideration is being given to creating a traveling display unit, which would be used as an educational tool by our State Associations and/or educational institutions.

#### Ancient Gassers Association

Chairman	Fred Thomas
Acting Chairman	Roland Penta
Treasurer	Harold Poland
Acting Secretary	Shirley Nicholson
Chair, Membership	Natalie Peal
Historian	Fred Thomas

#### Museum Committee:

Acting Chairperson	Robert B. Nicholson
Acting Project Director	Randy Doyle

#### New Members:

Rick Roldan	Kurt Ruhl	Roy Willis
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## OLD BETHLEHEM (PA) STEEL PLANT UNDERGOING CONVERSION TO \$600 MILLION ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT COMPLEX

(excerpts from a press release of The Morning Call)

Sands BethWorks is planning a \$600 million project, converting the old Bethlehem Steel Plant to an arts and entertainment complex.

The complex will include a casino with 3,000 slot machines, a 300-room hotel, a concert and events center capable of seating 3,700 people, a 200,000-square-foot upscale shopping complex and hundreds of condominiums and apartments.

ArtsQuest and PBS-39 are planning a \$49 million performing arts center and station headquarters on land donated by Sands BethWorks.

**The National Museum of Industrial History is also planned for the 124 acre arts & entertainment complex. Partnering with the Smithsonian Institution, NMIH will tell the story of the industries that built, transported, and defended America.**

Plans for Phase One of NMIH's \$26 million museum are well under way, and *propane professionals should be proud to know that our important Propane Heritage will be displayed in the building containing Phase One of NMIH.*

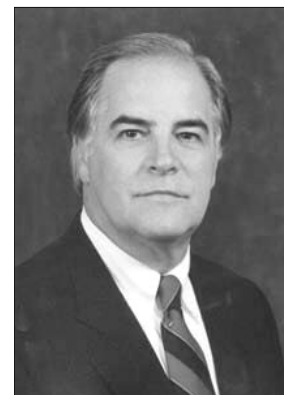
*Making his first visit to Sands BethWorks in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and speaking as guest of honor at a luncheon at Lehigh University in May, Sheldon Adelson, Chairman/CEO of the Las Vegas Sands Corp. and sixth richest man in the world, made a promise to the Valley. "We're going to convert the Bethlehem Steel Plant and turn it into one of the greatest local attractions anyone can have."*

### **NMIH STATUS REPORT...**

In a recent status report, Steve Donches, President/CEO of the National Museum of Industrial History, expressed, "NMIH is already at work with representatives of The Sands in trying to determine how the two of us can best present the significance of the site's heritage to visitors from near and far. We will work together to capture that spirit that built America."

Sands BethWorks is anticipating an annual attendance of about five million people, while NMIH's first-phase building is estimated to draw more than 100,000 visitors.

The Museum is working with the Sands BethWorks team to interpret and promote the industrial heritage of the site, and has signed option agreements with them for future museum expansion.



Steve Donches



Robert B.  
Nicholson

### **PROPANE ARTIFACTS/PAPERS ARE SOUGHT FOR PRESERVATION**

Bob Nicholson, Acting Chairman of the Propane Heritage Preservation group, is encouraging propane professionals to share, either by loan or donation, their historic papers and any artifacts from propane's early history.

H. Emerson Thomas' valuable papers, as well as a collection of regulators, have disappeared.

Paul Endicott, former President of Phillips and the originator of marketing propane throughout the U.S., before his death, had many historic papers, and perhaps artifacts. If a family is not involved in the industry, upon a person's death, valuable historic records are often discarded.

When Fred Thomas, our Ancient Gassers Historian, suffered a fire on his premises, many papers of value to our association were lost. Bob urged industry members to act quickly to preserve their documents, photographs and articles of historic significance, noting several key losses have already occurred.

Bob indicated he has many old advertisements and papers, including a 1932 copy of NFPA 58, as well as five boxes (from Bob Wellington) in regard to NPGA's Technology & Standards Committee, and other items that must be sorted and saved.

# GETTING INVOLVED IN PROPANE HERITAGE PRESERVATION

Although the beginnings of this project were the effort of some in the Ancient Gassers Association, a widening interest is developing throughout the propane industry.

Most recently, the Pennsylvania Propane Association, its Directors and Officers, have pledged their full support.

Charles Snelling, son of Walter O. Snelling, often referred to as the “father of propane,” has joined the Board of Directors of the National Museum of Industrial History. He has a 21,500 square foot, climate-controlled warehouse which stores Walter O. Snelling’s historic papers, patents, and artifacts. Roland Penta’s daughter Britt has spent approximately 70 hours cataloging some of the articles.

Charles has stated that the Railroad Commission and the Chemical Society have expressed an interest in his archives. However, he firmly pledged his dedication to the propane industry. If our industry will continue to catalog all the propane information—and to assure him that it will be prominently displayed, *all* of his father’s archives pertaining to propane will be retained for the use of the propane industry in preserving and promoting its heritage.

In addition to his support of Propane Heritage Preservation, Charles has also accepted an invitation to serve on the PERC Council.

Rick Roldan, President/CEO of NPGA, Roy Willis, President/CEO of PERC, and Kurt Ruhl, of the Young Gassers, were asked to join Propane Heritage Preservation’s Museum Project, and they have agreed.



Charles Snelling

## **RANDALL DOYLE SERVES AS ACTING PROJECT MANAGER FOR PROPANE HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

Randy Doyle, CFO for Blossman Gas, has over 25 years propane industry experience with MAPCO/Thermogas and as a widely recognized consultant.

He is active in the NPGA having served in key leadership roles. He is also a member of PERC's Consumer Education Advisory Committee. Randy is the acting project manager for the development of our partnership with NMIH.



Randall Doyle

## **WHAT SOME LEADERS ARE DOING ABOUT RECORDING/PRESERVING PROPANE’S HERITAGE**

It is great that many conscientious propane professionals have been doing their part to preserve our heritage.

We have videographed extensive reflective interviews of the late H. Emerson “Em” Thomas. He was a true pioneer in the industry, as so many of us who knew him will attest. His recorded reflections are priceless.

*If you want to do a project like this and aren’t sure how, contact the local high school or college English Department, and create an assignment for a couple of students—to interview you and to videograph (you supply the tape) the interview! It will be priceless—not only to the propane industry, but also to your family, friends, the students, and local historians.*

The Florida Propane Gas Association has created a book on the history of their Association. ***Other State Associations might consider getting a copy of FPG’s book and following their lead!***

Conoco Phillips, a merger of Conoco and Phillips Petroleum, maintains the Conoco Museum In Ponca City, OK, and the Phillips Museum in Bartlesville, OK. Both have published hard cover editions of their history.

*Although these are more extensive projects, with a sizable budget for hardcover printing, yours can be simpler. You might begin by mounting old photographs on a page with a short documentary about the subject, the date, place, people, and any personal comment you might wish to add.*

*These pages add up, and before you know it, you’re on your way to recorded history!*

# Propane Heritage Preservation ...

This group is very excited about the development of the propane exhibit at NMIH. We are currently in the process of developing the theme, content, and design of the exhibit. Your ideas and suggestions about the development of this exhibit are eagerly sought.

*To get involved, please use the form below.*



## **GETTING INVOLVED IN PROPANE HERITAGE PRESERVATION**

Yes, I'd like to get involved! I am checking below my areas of interest.

*(Kindly use separate sheet of paper for expanded notes)*

- I'd like to share some ideas for the propane exhibit at NMIH**
- I have some papers/artifacts (explain) to share
- I have some photos of historic propane hardware (explain)
- I'd like to serve on the PHP Committee
- Other (please explain)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Company \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please send to Bob Nicholson at one of the following addresses:

Summer months: One Morningstar Drive, Sparta, NJ 07871

Winter months: 8706 West Gulf Blvd., Treasure Island, FL 33706

or

Eastern Propane Corporation, 255 Oak Ridge Road, Oak Ridge, NJ 07438

{Or fax this form to 973-697-7876 ; or forward information via email: bobnicholson@nji.com }