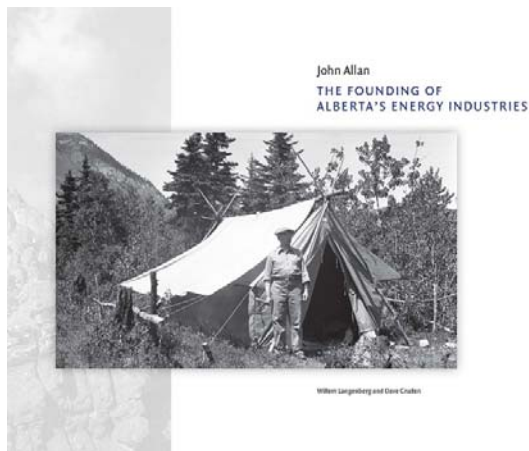


New book on oilsands pioneer John Allan offers fascinating glimpse of early Alberta

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Alberta's oilsands have become a giant wealth generator and job creator over the past dozen years, and are likely to power the province's economy for decades to come.

But the oilsands were still buried treasure a century ago, when a brilliant young geologist and newly minted Massachusetts Institute of Technology grad named John Andrew Allan was named the first professor of geology at the fledgling University of Alberta.

In addition to his decades of work as a professor at the U of A and chairman of the university's geology department, Allan was a founding member of the Scientific and Industrial Research Council of Alberta and director of the council's Alberta Geological Survey from 1921 until his retirement in 1949. Allan continued consulting and advising until his death in 1955.

Allan played a huge role in the development of Alberta's mineral resources, helping to lay the foundation for what was to come when oilsands pioneers like Suncor and Syncrude began mining bitumen north of Fort McMurray in the last decades of the 20th century. In a CKUA radio interview in 1927, Allan predicted the oil boom that began two decades later with the discovery of the Leduc oil field.

In their illuminating and visually fascinating new book, *The Founding of Alberta's Energy Industries*, authors Willem Langenberg and Dave Cruden of the U of A's Earth and Atmospheric Sciences Department tell the story of Allan's early field work throughout Alberta and British Columbia.

Through painstaking research, Langenberg and Cruden assembled a collection of 82 photographs that document Allan's survey trips and exploration of the untapped energy resources around Fort McMurray, Wainwright and Peace River, as well as the coal deposits and dinosaur fossils near Drumheller. The book also provides a rich visual record of Allan's work in other areas, from Nordegg and Turner Valley to Jasper, Banff and the Crowsnest Pass.

Many of Allan's students went on to play key foundational roles in the birth of Alberta's oil and gas industry. Some of the photos in this collection are almost whimsical portraits of early pioneer life in Alberta. Some capture Alberta's rugged, imposing physical landscape, while others bring to life the brutal and sometimes dangerous working conditions endured by workers who toiled in the early days of the province's energy industry.

The Founding of Alberta's Energy Industries, published by the Edmonton Geological Society, is more than a coffee table collection of pretty pictures. It's a visual history book that portrays just how far this province has come over the past hundred years, and just how big a role a Quebec-born geologist named John Allan played in helping to shape a province that has become the most prosperous in Canada.

Copies of the book are available at the U of A's Enterprise Square retail outlet or at Audreys Books on Jasper Ave.