Ilustrate the places and people referred to. The author has accomplished her purpose to bring back to many of her readers a host of memories of the past and to give others stories of the unfamiliar past of the "Center of Our Universe."

Granville Wells High School  Opal Humphreys Endicott Jamestown

*Enterprise in Oil: A History of Shell in the United States.*


American economic history has been greatly advanced in the last half dozen years by the willingness of certain oil companies to open their records and have their histories written. Notable among these are the first volume of the Standard Oil (New Jersey) history by the Hidys and the more recent history of Standard Oil (Indiana) by Paul H. Giddens. The volume of Kendall Beaton on the Shell Oil Company and its predecessors may not be quite of the same class, but it is well written, carefully done, and full of information, although it is sometimes bogged down with detail which, for the general reader, could be skipped without loss.

The Shell operations in the United States have certain elements of interest different from those of the domestic companies. Not only is Shell Oil the only foreign oil company operating extensively in the United States, but doubtless it is the largest foreign industrial interest in this country. By 1951 it was the sixth largest oil company in sales and by 1954 had assets of over a billion dollars. Always dominated by an unusually able group of Dutch-British financiers and oil men who headed the Royal Dutch Petroleum Company (Royal Dutch-Shell group companies), it nevertheless employed many American executives in its subsidiaries here, financed these companies in part with American money, and opened one-third of the stock of Shell Oil to purchase on the New York stock market.

The Royal Dutch Petroleum Company has one of the most complicated structures in business history. Both it and the Shell Transport and Trading Company (British) had for years attempted to exploit oil in the Far East. There the market had been dominated by Standard Oil, and to meet
this competition these two companies and the Rothschilds combined in 1902. Shell Transport and Trading Company began to buy American oil in 1901 and in 1912 the Royal Dutch-Shell group entered California as a competitor to the local companies.

Between 1912 and 1920 Shell moved from California into the Middle West and in the 1920’s into the eastern seaboard. During the twenties expansion was rapid and by the end of the decade it operated in every state of the union. The period of the thirties was a different story; it was one of retreat, consolidation, and retirement from marketing in most of the area between the Mississippi and the Rockies. As a result of the war, business was good in the forties and Shell did notable work in its technical and scientific research. In the fifties Shell enjoyed a new era of expansion and prosperity.

Entering a country already well supplied with numerous oil companies, always faced by bitter competition, and sometimes opposition because of its foreign background, the Shell group in forty-five years has risen to an important position. Mr. Beaton has told the story in great detail; the text runs to almost seven hundred pages. His account is a straight and apparently accurate record; it tells of failures and mistakes as well as successes, and is often enriched by the reminiscences of small as well as important executives. While he covers virtually all phases of Shell’s history in America, the reviewer was particularly impressed by the clear and detailed account of the technical and scientific contributions made by what is now called the Shell Oil Company.

Smith College

Harold U. Faulkner


This centennial volume on the National Education Association is largely a topical review of its part in the educational movements of the past century. The work is a stimulating commentary not only on the elevation of teaching to the status of a profession but also on the rise of the high schools; the development of normal schools, teachers’ colleges, and other elements of higher education; successive currents of thought on the purposes and methods of education in the