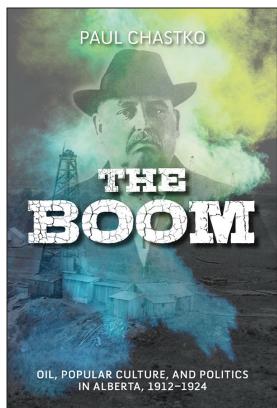




UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Press



THE BOOM: OIL, POPULAR CULTURE, AND POLITICS IN ALBERTA, 1912-1

by Paul Chastko

ISBN 978-1-77385-668-1

THIS BOOK IS AN OPEN ACCESS E-BOOK. It is an electronic version of a book that can be purchased in physical form through any bookseller or on-line retailer, or from our distributors. Please support this open access publication by requesting that your university purchase a print copy of this book, or by purchasing a copy yourself. If you have any questions, please contact us at ucpress@ucalgary.ca

Cover Art: The artwork on the cover of this book is not open access and falls under traditional copyright provisions; it cannot be reproduced in any way without written permission of the artists and their agents. The cover can be displayed as a complete cover image for the purposes of publicizing this work, but the artwork cannot be extracted from the context of the cover of this specific work without breaching the artist's copyright.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: This open-access work is published under a Creative Commons licence. This means that you are free to copy, distribute, display or perform the work as long as you clearly attribute the work to its authors and publisher, that you do not use this work for any commercial gain in any form, and that you in no way alter, transform, or build on the work outside of its use in normal academic scholarship without our express permission. If you want to reuse or distribute the work, you must inform its new audience of the licence terms of this work. For more information, see details of the Creative Commons licence at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU MAY:

- read and store this document free of charge;
- distribute it for personal use free of charge;
- print sections of the work for personal use;
- read or perform parts of the work in a context where no financial transactions take place.

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU MAY NOT:

- gain financially from the work in any way;
- sell the work or seek monies in relation to the distribution of the work;
- use the work in any commercial activity of any kind;
- profit a third party indirectly via use or distribution of the work;
- distribute in or through a commercial body (with the exception of academic usage within educational institutions such as schools and universities);
- reproduce, distribute, or store the cover image outside of its function as a cover of this work;
- alter or build on the work outside of normal academic scholarship.

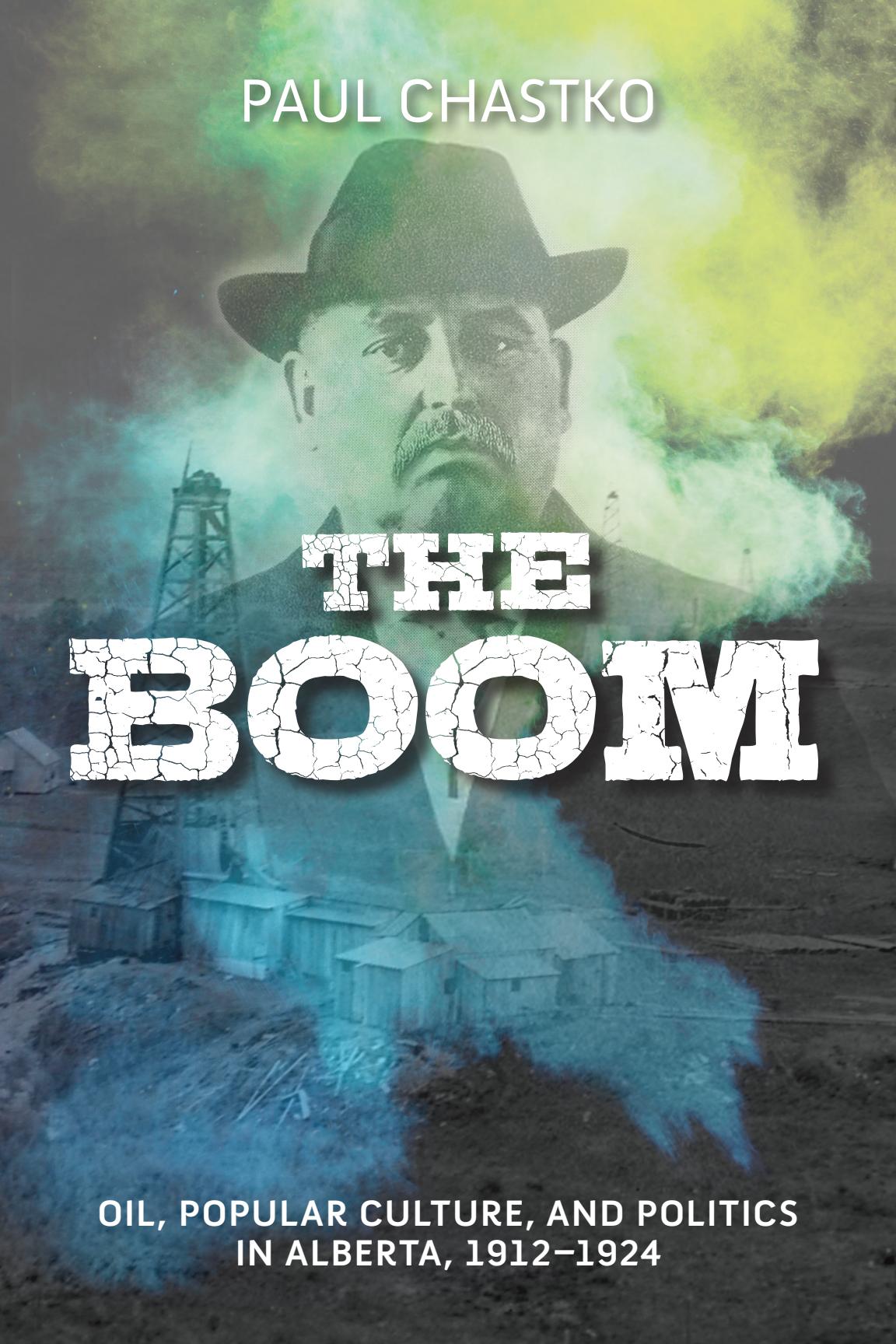


UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Press

press.ucalgary.ca

Acknowledgement: We acknowledge the wording around open access used by Australian publisher, **re.press**, and thank them for giving us permission to adapt their wording to our policy <http://www.re-press.org>



PAUL CHASTKO

THE BOOM

OIL, POPULAR CULTURE, AND POLITICS
IN ALBERTA, 1912–1924

THE
BOOM

ENERGY HISTORIES, CULTURES, AND POLITICS

SERIES EDITOR:

Petra Dolata, Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Calgary

ISSN 2562-3486 (Print) ISSN 2562-3494 (Online)

This series features original research at the intersection of energy and society. It welcomes works that contribute to international discussions on the history, culture, and politics of energy and speaks to the energy humanities and energy social sciences. The series has a strong interest in, but is not limited to, North American issues.

- No. 1 *Imperial Standard: Imperial Oil, Exxon, and the Canadian Oil Industry from 1880*
Graham D. Taylor
- No. 2 *Energy in the Americas: Critical Reflections on Energy and History*
Edited by Amelia M. Kiddle
- No. 3 *The Boom: Oil, Popular Culture, and Politics in Alberta, 1912–1924*
Paul Chastko



PAUL CHASTKO

THE
BOOM

OIL, POPULAR CULTURE, AND POLITICS
IN ALBERTA, 1912–1924

Energy Histories, Cultures, and Politics Series
ISSN 2562-3486 (Print) ISSN 2562-3494 (Online)

© 2025 Paul Chastko

University of Calgary Press
2500 University Drive NW
Calgary, Alberta
Canada T2N 1N4
press.ucalgary.ca

All rights reserved.

This book is available in an Open Access digital format published under a CC-BY-NCND 4.0 Creative Commons license. The publisher should be contacted for any commercial use which falls outside the terms of that license.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: The boom : oil, popular culture, and politics in Alberta, 1912-1924 / Paul Chastko.

Names: Chastko, Paul A. (Paul Anthony), author

Description: Series statement: Energy histories, cultures, and politics, 2562-3486 ; no. 3 | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20250237822 | Canadiana (ebook) 20250237873 | ISBN 9781773856667 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781773856674 (softcover) | ISBN 9781773856704 (EPUB) | ISBN 9781773856698 (PDF) | ISBN 9781773856681 (Open access PDF)

Subjects: LCSH: Petroleum industry and trade—Political aspects—Alberta—Turner Valley—History—20th century. | LCSH: Petroleum industry and trade—Corrupt practices—Alberta—Turner Valley—History—20th century. | LCSH: Petroleum industry and trade—Social aspects—Alberta—Turner Valley—History—20th century. | LCSH: Oil fields—Alberta—Turner Valley—History—20th century. | LCSH: Petroleum—Prospecting—Alberta—Turner Valley—History—20th century. | LCSH: Swindlers and swindling—Alberta—Turner Valley—History—20th century. | LCSH: Turner Valley (Alta.)—History—20th century. | LCSH: Alberta—Politics and government—20th century. | CSH: Alberta—Politics and government—1905-1921.

Classification: LCC HD9574.C23 A54 2025 | DDC 338.2/72820971234—dc23

The University of Calgary Press acknowledges the support of the Government of Alberta through the Alberta Media Fund for our publications. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada. We acknowledge the financial support of the Canada Council for the Arts for our publishing program.

This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Awards to Scholarly Publications Program, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts
du Canada



The manufacturer's authorized representative in the EU for product safety is Mare Nostrum Group B.V., Mauritskade 21D, 1091 GC Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Email: gpsr@mare-nostrum.co.uk

Copyediting by Peter Enman

Cover image credit: Edited photograph of George Edward Buck by Sarah Deschamps. Original photograph Provincial Archives of Alberta, GR1972.0026 Box 1 File 1C. Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Alberta. "View of Dingman #1 and Dingman #2, Turner Valley, Alberta." Summer 1914, (CU1558287) by Unknown. Glenbow Library and Archives Collection. Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collection, University of Calgary. Colourbox 20750164.

Cover design, page design, and typesetting by Melina Cusano

Contents

List of Figures and Tables	vii
Introduction: “The Wildest Boom That Ever Hit the West”	1
1 “Scientific Oil Finding:” Turner Valley’s Anticline	17
2 “The Formation of These Companies . . . Should be Stopped:” Speculation and the Newspaper Feud	53
3 “The Difference Between Poverty and Riches is Action!” Dreams and Reality of an Independent Oil Boom	93
4 “I’m Going to Go Through With It Even if it Leads to Jail:” George E. Buck of Black Diamond Oil Fields	123
5 “A City So Blessed Cannot be Checked:” Oil! . . . Sort of	145
6 Reign of the Charlatans	189
7 Boycotts, Consumer Protection, and Private Detectives: Responses to the Boom from Voluntary Associations to the Pinkertons	215
8 Reforming Self-Regulation: Taming the Brokers and the Calgary Stock Exchange	249
9 Public Interest Versus Private Rights: Judge Alexander A. Carpenter’s Commission and the Big Boom’s Big Hangover	269
10 “I am Not Going Back to Canada:” The Law Comes for Buck	295
11 “A Matter of Public Concern:” The Lees Commission and Monarch Oil	339
12 “The Most Important that has Ever Been Tried in the Province:” The Trial of George Buck	373
13 “It is to be Regretted that Such a Scoundrel Should Escape Punishment:” Buck’s Appeals	397
14 Conclusion: Buck and the Boom	419
Acknowledgements	427
Bibliography	431
Notes	445
Index	487

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 0-1	“A Square Deal in Oil,” <i>Calgary Morning Albertan</i> , February 2, 1914, 11, CU1709303. Early Alberta Newspapers Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	3
Figure 0-2	“Prosperity and Oil.” <i>Natural Gas and Oil Record</i> , June 13, 1914, 1.	8
Figure 0-3	“Today’s the Day.” <i>Edmonton Journal</i> , May 25, 1914, 1.	10
Figure 1-1	“William Stewart Herron, petroleum pioneer in Turner Valley, Alberta,” Hess, c. 1930, CU1125948. Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	24
Figure 1-2	“Gas and petroleum claim being staked by the City of Calgary,” June 12, 1911, CU189401. Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	27
Figure 1-3	“Archibald Wayne Dingman,” E.B. Curlette, c. 1930–1933, CU181710. Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	31
Figure 1-4	Canadian Western Natural Gas Company ad. <i>Calgary Herald</i> , June 14, 1956, 38.	33
Figure 1-5	“Calgary Petroleum Products #1 well [Dingman #1], Turner Valley, Alberta,” I.H. Sinclair, c. 1914, CU1217652. Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	37
Figure 1-6	“Drillers at Dingman #1 well (Calgary Petroleum Products #1), Turner Valley, Alberta,” c. 1914–1917 CU1134522, Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	38
Figure 1-7	“Group of men standing at well-head of Dingman #1 (Calgary Petroleum Products #1), Turner Valley, Alberta,” c. 1914–1917, CU1134205. Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	42
Figure 2-1	“New ‘Arms’ of Alberta,” <i>Calgary Morning Albertan</i> , December 11, 1913, 1, CU1701012. Early Alberta Newspapers Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	91

Figure 3-1	“Which is it to be?” R.C. Edwards, <i>Calgary Eye Opener</i> , July 3, 1915, 1. Early Alberta Newspapers Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	94
Figure 3-2	“The Greatest Gift,” <i>Natural Gas and Oil Record</i> , November 8, 1913, 1.	95
Figure 3-3	“The Men Behind the Gun,” <i>Natural Gas and Oil Record</i> , May 23, 1914, 13.	101
Figure 3-4	“Pessimists and Otherwise,” <i>Calgary Morning Albertan</i> , October 23, 1913, 8, CU1699923. Early Alberta Newspapers Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	103
Figure 3-5	Excerpt from “A Great Future,” <i>Natural Gas and Oil Record</i> , December 12, 1913, 6.	105
Figure 3-6	Piedmont Petroleum Products Company ad. <i>Calgary Morning Albertan</i> , May 12, 1914, 7, CU1300898. Early Alberta Newspapers Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	118
Figure 3-7	“The Difference Between Poverty and Riches is Action!” <i>Calgary Morning Albertan</i> , May 16, 1914, 9, CU1301220. Early Alberta Newspapers Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	121
Figure 4-1	“9th Avenue SW, Calgary, Alberta. Palliser Hotel and Canadian Pacific Railway Station are visible on left side,” c. 1920, Calgary Photo Supply Co. PC005483. Peel’s Prairie Provinces—Prairie Postcard Collection. Available at https://library.ualberta.ca/peel .	126
Figure 4-2	“Important Announcement,” <i>Calgary Morning Albertan</i> , February 3, 1914, 9CU1701489. Early Alberta Newspapers Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	134
Figure 4-3	“Heart-to-Heart,” <i>Calgary Morning Albertan</i> , March 23, 1914, 7, CU1701176. Early Alberta Newspapers Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	136
Figure 4-4	“Giant Gusher,” <i>Calgary Eye Opener</i> , May 23, 1914, 3, CU11428707. Early Alberta Newspapers Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	143

Figure 5-1	“Dingman #1 blowing in, Turner Valley, Alberta,” May 14, 1914, CU1554074. Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	148
Figure 5-2	“The Scarecrow,” <i>Natural Gas and Oil Record</i> , May 18, 1914, 1.	152
Figure 5-3	“The Greatest Magnet in the World—Oil!” <i>Natural Gas and Oil Record</i> , May 30, 1914, 1.	153
Figure 5-4	“Investors waiting to buy oil stocks in Calgary, Alberta,” Progress Photo Company, May 15, 1914, CU1149999. Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	156
Figure 5-5	“Investors waiting to buy oil stocks, Calgary, Alberta,” c. 1914, CU1554077. Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	157
Figure 5-6	“Investors waiting to buy oil and gas stocks outside Huron and Bruce Oil and Gas Company, Calgary, Alberta,” c. 1914, CU1145708. Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	160
Figure 5-7	“Calgary Restaurant,” <i>Calgary Morning Albertan</i> , June 1, 1914, 1, CU1302322. Early Alberta Newspapers Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	163
Figure 5-8	“The Small Investor gets best chance,” <i>Natural Gas and Oil Record</i> , July 11, 1914, 18.	164
Figure 5-9	“The Flame and the Moth,” <i>The Toronto Daily Star</i> , May 30, 1914, 30.	170
Figure 5-10	“Men in cars and on sidewalk waiting to invest in oil stocks, Calgary, Alberta,” Harry Pollard, c. June 1914, CU1137947. Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	179
Figure 6-1	“Birds of Prey,” <i>The Toronto Daily Star</i> , June 15, 1914, 14.	201
Figure 6-2	“Picnic group at site of Dingman #1 well (Calgary Petroleum Products #1), Turner Valley, Alberta,” c. 1914, CU1136172. Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	205
Figure 7-1	“J’Ever See Such Luck?” <i>Calgary Morning Albertan</i> , May 23, 1914, 1, CU1301447. Early Alberta Newspapers Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary	224

Figure 7-2	“Caravan of automobiles en route to Turner Valley, Alberta,” c. 1914, CU192892. Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	243
Figure 7-3	“Duke and Duchess of Connaught at Dingman number 1 well (Calgary Petroleum Products #1), Turner Valley, Alberta,” Progress Photo Company, July 28, 1914, CU192442. Courtesy of Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	244
Figure 8-1	“Calgary Oil Proclamation,” <i>Calgary Morning Albertan</i> , October 14, 1914, 9. CU1702268. Early Alberta Newspapers Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	250
Figure 10-1	“George E. Buck Wanted Circular,” c. 1916, GR1972.0026, box 1, file 1C. Provincial Archives of Alberta.	307
Figure 11-1	“Charles Stalnaker pouring nitroglycerine down torpedo tube inside oil rig, possibly Montana, United States,” c. 1935, CU1217942. Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	347
Figure 14-1	“Flare at Turner Valley oil field, Alberta,” Lane’s Studio, c. 1930s, CU1153082. Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.	425
Table 1-1	Geologic Time, Turner Valley.	18
Table 2-1	Value of Building Permits in Calgary, 1910–1915.	64
Table 5-1	Calgary Bank Clearings, Selected Months and Weeks, 1913 & 1914.	162
Table 5-2	Calgary Stock Exchange and Calgary Oil and Stock Exchange Values Compared, June 8, 1914.	176
Table 5-3	Average Professional & Tradeswomen’s Salaries in Calgary, 1913.	181
Table 6-1	Selected Alberta Stock Prices, May 15–June 6, 1914, Published by the <i>Natural Gas and Oil Record</i> .	202
Table 7-1	Distribution of Corporate Headquarters of 1914 Turner Valley Companies by Province.	233