

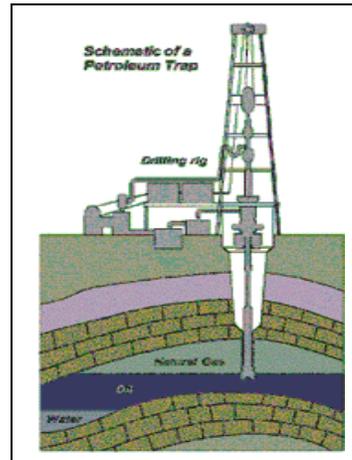
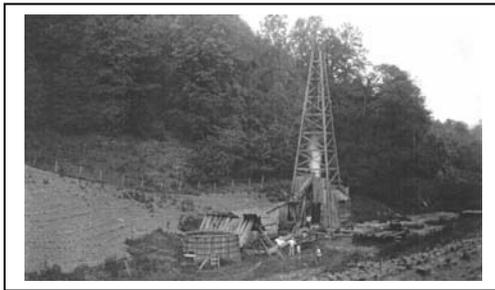
DMME Fact Sheet

Natural Gas and Oil in Virginia

Natural Gas, also known as *methane*, is a colorless, odorless, clean-burning *fossil fuel*.

Fossil Fuels formed millions of years ago when plants and animals died and their decomposed remains were deposited in mud on the seafloor. Over time, these remains were covered by more sediment and buried deep in the earth. As a result of high heat and pressure, the organic materials transformed into natural gas and oil (*hydrocarbons*). Fossil Fuels are **non-renewable resources**.

In **Virginia**, wells are drilled thousands of feet deep to extract the gas and oil. Once the well is drilled, the gas is sent through pipelines to homes, offices, and factories to be used for heating, appliances and electricity production.



The first commercial gas well in Virginia was drilled in 1931 near Bristol. Over 6,900 wells have been drilled throughout the state, mainly in Southwest Virginia.

Virginia produced **102.8 billion cubic feet** of gas in 2006. For perspective, it takes approximately 89 thousand cubic feet of gas to heat an average home for one year. That means Virginia produced enough natural gas to heat over *one million homes*.

The majority (about 79%) of the gas produced in Virginia is associated with coal seams (*Coalbed methane*). The remaining 21% is **Conventional gas**, which migrates from the organic source and accumulates in a porous rock (see above diagram). Virginia's active **Oil wells** are located in Lee County and produced around 17,000 barrels of oil in 2006.

