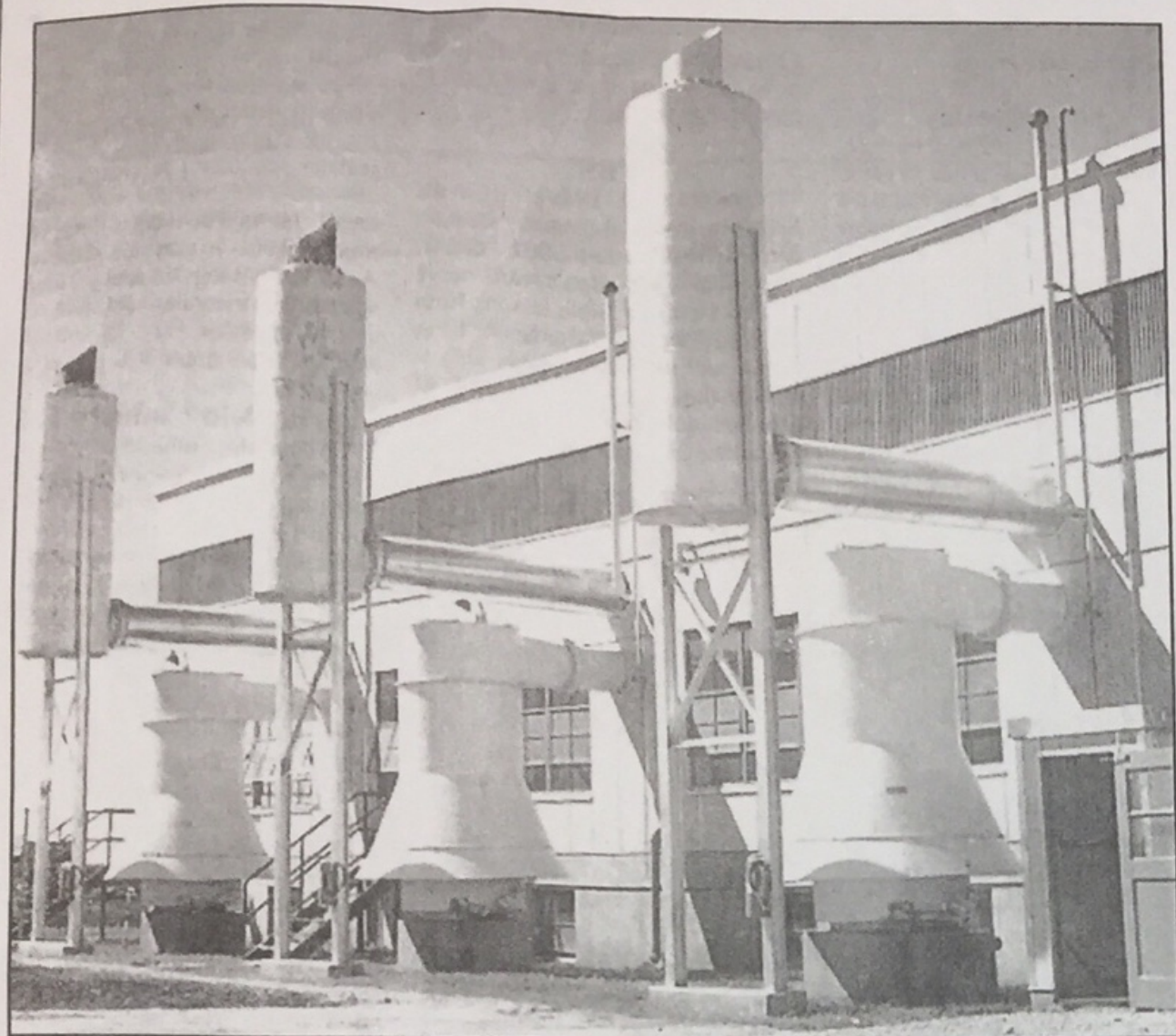


Carillon flashback *October 2, 1959*

It cost Trans-Canada Pipelines \$3.5 million to build this huge compressor station at Ile des Chenes. The three chimney-like objects in the foreground are huge mufflers for gigantic motors inside the building and the pipes below are air intakes for those engines.

Hand-picked crew operates IDC plant

by Wes Keating

A highly-trained crew of experts from all over the world are responsible for operation Trans-Canada Pipeline's multi-million dollar compression station at Ile des Chenes.

Looking for all the world like the gigantic work of some plumber run amok, the huge layout of buildings, pipes and engines is an indispensable link in the pipeline that feeds heat and fuel to countless homes and factories along its 2,200 mile route.

Employing 28 men full-time, the Ile des Chenes compressor station has its own little village growing up around it. Eight of the men, key to the operation of the station, live in company-owned houses built by C.T. Loewen in Steinbach and moved to the site.

Most interesting are the men themselves; a hand-picked crew, which includes experts in the oil and gas field from United States, Ireland, Scotland and Holland.

W.I. Wilson, the district superintendent who is in charge of not only the plant at Ile des Chenes, but a considerable section of the pipeline as well, is from Texas. Raised in the oil and gas country of northern Texas, Wilson has been around pipelines all his life. In a slow southern drawl that intrigues most Canadians, he explains his career path.

"Every once in a while I get some money saved up and go into business for myself. That lasts until I go broke and I'm back working on the pipeline again."

Wilson has been with Trans-Canada Pipelines for the past 21½ years, working on the construction end of it before this job opened up.

The compressor plant foreman, Jim Duff, hails from Belfast, Ireland, where he learned the trade of marine engineering at the shipyard of Harland and Wolfe in Belfast, the largest shipyard in the world at the time.

He is joined in operating the 7,500 horse-power

plant at Ile des Chenes by two other former marine engineers by trade, Ian Campbell of Glasgow, Scotland and Al Marsman, a Dutchman from Holland.

The three all occupy company houses right near the plant. The plant also has two Steinbachers on staff, Abe B. Giesbrecht and John P. Wiebe.

Of all the impressive sights at the compressor station, the most awe-inspiring are the three massive engines, which supply power to the compressor pumps. Each of the 2,500 horse-power engines rests on a concrete foundation, with piles buried 60 feet into the ground to ensure its stability.

Each motor, with its companion compressor pump, is 25 feet high, 14 feet long and 18 feet deep and carries a \$300,000 price tag.

Wilson explains that the abundant coatings of multi-colored paint which covers everything but the motors has more purpose than just "makin' the plyant purty." The various colors identify the contents of the various pipes for the guidance of maintenance and repair men. Green is for water, Blue is for air, Purple is for gas and Brown is for oil. Most of the pipes are painted white and only the valves are singled out for coded colors.

The compressor station at Ile des Chenes is only one of several across Canada, which help keep up the tremendous amount of pushing pressure required to drive natural gas from Alberta to Montreal.

The pipeline is routinely checked for leaks by airplane, which can spot dead vegetation along the line, indicating a leak. Men walk the line, as well, checking for leaks.

Whenever a leak is detected, the line must be blown clear from the compression station to the leak before repairs are initiated. Men at the plant say they sometimes "blow to the moon" enough gas to heat a town the size of Steinbach for a year.

Fortunately, they say, leaks in the pipeline are very, very rare.