There have always been tales of sea monsters and the eerie, fog-shrouded Grand Banks region of the North Atlantic has generated its share of them. Leif Ericson probably laboured through these waters about 900 years ago, and Odin alone knows what terrors they inflicted on his men.

But the imaginations of ancient Vikings and modern storytellers combined would be hard-pressed to exaggerate the appearance of a particular monster that right this moment is braving quietly off the southeast coast of Newfoundland.

It's called Sedco I, and it's not really a monstrous - although it is monstrous. Officially it's a semi-submersible drilling platform - which is to say it's an oil derrick on a raft. But that's like saying Newfoundland is an island. There's a lot more to it than that.

It stands higher than a 28-storey building on three colossal columns, each 35 feet in diameter. On its deck are three - three - construction cranes; an 179-foot derrick capable of lowering pipe through as much as 600 feet of water, then drilling an oil well 25,000 feet beneath the ocean floor; living quarters for 65 men; a hospital, a dining room, a recreation lounge, a helicopter landing pad; and a storage room for everything from a house trailer-cum-geologist's lab to a decompression chamber for divers.

It has to be huge and complex because it was made to operate in one of the more inhospitable climates the world can offer - the Grand Banks, where sudden vicious gales are commonplace and massive icebergs have claimed many a vessel, including the Titanic in 1912. But the Banks can boast an extra fillip of meteorological nastiness - an almost perpetual fog. Sailors on the Grand Banks are happy to be able to see a few hundred feet; frequently, visibility is a disorienting gray zero.

Nobody would be in a place like that without a pretty good reason. The Sedco 1 is there to look for oil.

The rig is under a two-year lease to Imperial Oil and Amoco Canada Ltd., who jointly hold the drilling rights to about 40 million acres, most of it right in the middle of Newfoundland's famous Grand Banks fishing grounds.

Imperial and Amoco Canada aren't the only oil companies that are interested in Canada's offshore oil prospects. At last count there were more than 80 companies holding oil and gas permits on nearly 400 million acres off Canada's east coast - and not just on the Grand Banks, but off the coasts of Labrador, Nova Scotia and northern Newfoundland as well. Imperial is one of the biggest leaseholders with total holdings in excess of 60 million acres.

The thing that gets everyone excited is the eastern continental shelf - an underwater platform that runs from the Gulf of Maine all the way up to Baillie Bay in the Arctic islands. The Grand Banks are the widest part of that shelf, the total area of which is about 900,000 square miles.

When you get right down to it, it's not the continental shelf that the oil men are interested in, but the nearly five-mile-thick layer of sedimentary rock that underlies the shelf. Ninety per cent of the oil in the world has been found in sedimentary rock of the same type and age as the rocks in that layer. On that basis, this area comprises two-thirds of.
all of Canada's potential oil territory, which explains why the oil companies are interested.

Nobody knew how much oil is down there, but the potential is enormous. In 1967, a Canadian Petroleum Association report estimated the entire Canadian offshore reserves potential at 25 billion barrels of oil and nearly 150 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. The total remaining proved reserves of all offshore liquid hydrocarbons in all of Canada stand at just over 10 billion barrels. That makes the offshore potential very important indeed.

Imperial and Amoco acquired a joint interest in their acreage back in 1964. In the next four years the two companies spent more than $15 million into preparatory work on the area - seismic, sea magnetometer, and marine gravity surveys as well as analyses of sea water and the ocean floor. They also used specially outfitted drilling vessels to drill 21 shallow core holes and two test wells.

By 1968, investigating geologists had learned all they were going to learn about the oil and gas potential without sinking a deep well. Amoco and Imperial decided to drill.

Now if the prospective drilling zone had been located in, say, Alberta, the procedure would have been straightforward: work crews would arrive in and erect the derrick, a rookhouse and bunks. Storage areas would be set up, supply lines established and the drilling could start. But how do you do all that when the derrick is floating on the surface of an usually ocean, 200 feet above the well site?

Well, first you get yourself a drilling rig. Imperial and Amoco ordered theirs from Southeastern Commonwealth Drilling Ltd. in 1967. It was built in Halifax Shipyards and it took 500 men and $15 million to do it. It's called Sedco 4. 'Sedco' being an acronym of the company that built her; the 'S' (pronounced 'eye') indicates that it is the ninth rig of an alphabetical series. Imperial and Amoco didn't buy the rig; they took a two-year lease on it. Before the two years are up they hope to drill nine test wells. In 1971 they managed to drill three between April and the end of the year. Each well takes about 60 days to drill and costs between $1.5 million and $2.5 million.

A view of the first offshore drilling platform built on the new lease area of V.2.A, a site blueprinted by the National Energy Board in the offshore waters of the United States. The derrick is 267 feet high, the 282-foot-high rig itself stands 345 feet above sea level.
the 20-inch pipe to a depth of more than 2,000 feet. As well as ensuring that the drills are not washed out by the water pressure, this hollow tube acts as a guide for the drilling bit and pipe. The drill never actually touches the water.

Operating the rig is an expensive proposition. It's costing Imperial and Amoco $35,000 a day to run the entire offshore operation. That includes rent for the rig, three support vessels, a helicopter service as well as salaries, materials and equipment. When you add that kind of daily expense to the costly but necessary preparatory work, the cost of leases on the acreage and the sheer expense of maintaining and coordinating such a complex endeavor it's easy to see why offshore oil still remains an expensive business. Only 14 oil fields in all of Canada have ever been that large.

Sedco I spent a good slice of last summer anchored over one of the shallower drill sites in the Imperial-Amoco acreage, known on the project maps as 'Amoco-IOE-A-1 - Murte H-47.' One hundred and ninety miles southeast of St. John's and well out of the international shipping lanes, it was as lonely and forbidding a place as ever the Grand Banks could offer. There wasn't even the diversion of watching icebergs glide majestically by because the water was too shallow for them. On top of it all, the rig was almost permanently shrouded in a thick wet blanket of Grand Banks fog.

In short, there wasn't much to see out there, but that was all right because the 62 men who lived on Sedco I came to work, not to gaze at the ocean. The rig operated around the clock - the crews 12 hours on, 12 hours off, seven days a week. As compensation they got eight days off every two weeks.

There are only two ways to get to the rig when it's out on the Banks: by riding out on one of the three support tugs which take turns making the round trip to St. John's. "You could go that way, but it means 12 agonizing hours of pitching and rolling on the North Atlantic, even in 'good' weather," says Vegetti. The men on the rig consider a trip on the tugs to be just slightly superior to swimming out. The other way to make the trip is to ride in the 72-foot Sikorsky helicopter which flies out to the rig every day when the weather is clear. The trip takes only about two and a half hours if the weather holds, and that's a big if. Even if the weather is clear out at the rig when the helicopter leaves St. John's, it can be socked in before the helicopter arrives. So socked in that the helicopter can't find it, and has to return to the airport.

But the helicopter is Sedco I's only link with land apart from the painfully slow support boats, so it takes a really thick fog to keep it away from the rig. That means the helicopter frequently lands on the rig under visibility conditions that would have a mainland pilot gibbering in terror.

St. John's airport is usually clear at takeoff, but the fog clings in around the craft almost as soon as it hits the open sea. The windows reveal little more than a ever-changing blanket of gray with oc-
cational roofs that show a wrinkled gray and sullen sea below. When the instruments indicate that he’s getting close to the rig, the pilot drops down till the helicopter is mere yards above the water. The speed drops to a few miles per hour and the helicopter starts to tack back and forth looking for the huge red buoys that mark the rig location, or the gigantic sputtering that outlines its deck. Suddenly the rig is there, looming up before the helicopter on its three colossal legs. Through the fog its many lights glow dully like cigarettes. Stiff rigging and zipping, the helicopter sidles up to the deck, hovers for a moment over the landing platform, then gingerly lowers itself like a leaping hen.

Aboard the Sedco 1 you could almost convince yourself that you are standing around some Alberta oil well providing you don’t stand too close to the rail. There are a lot of the same people—roughnecks, roundabouts, toolpushers, cooks, kitchen help—but there are some strange ones, too, like the five-man crew of professional divers always ready to go down should trouble develop underwater.

Even working a 12-hour day leaves the men with a fair amount of time on their hands. After all, they don’t have rush-hour traffic jams, Saturday morning shopping trips or Home and School meetings to whittle away at their leisure hours. They spend a lot of their free time over endless cups of coffee in the rig’s dining room, trading rumors and trying to cook the cut out of extra pieces of pastry.

The crew on Sedco 1 is as cosmopolitan a group as you’ll find anywhere. There are several Albertrians aboard who learned about the oil business pulling pipe in the western oil fields. The others came from Oregon and Ontario, from Newfoundland and New Orleans. There is even one man from Ireland.

They have a large recreation room lounge with a stereo record player, a library of paperbacks and magazines and a large, round professional-looking poker table. There always seems to be a card game going but every evening at 7:30 it breaks up and the lounge becomes a movie hall. The men get three new movies every week—which means they usually see every movie at least twice. The movie is repeated when the second shift comes off work.

The operators of the rig go to great lengths to keep the ocean clean around them. Even the used lubricating and engine oils are collected in a special tank and taken ashore for disposal. The support boats that bring the rig’s heavy supplies never return to St. John’s empty. They carry back huge steel bins containing all of the rig’s non-burnable garbage for disposal ashore. All combustible garbage is suspended overhead in a large container from a crane boom and burned. Kitchen scraps are ground up in a disposal unit and then discharged into the sea.

What the operators want to avoid at all costs are oil blowouts. Underground oil and gas formations are often under intense pressure when the drill encounters them. If proper steps to control it are not taken, the well “blows out” like a bottle of warm beer—but with considerably more violence. The fluids roar up the drill hole spewing millions of dollars worth of oil and gas into the sea. Regaining control of a wild well is a costly, difficult and dangerous undertaking. Offshorists take extreme precautions to avoid a blowout.

To guard against a blowout, the rig has four huge safety valves attached directly to the casing around the drill pipe. These $50,000 “blowout preventers” are underwater but are controlled from the deck. They can stop the upward flow of gas or liquids. They can also be used to shut the well right down, should the rig have to move suddenly. If the well is abandoned, the blowout preventers are removed and the hole sealed.

The rig did have to move from Amoco-IEO-A-1 Murre H-67, and the reason was a familiar one to oil seekers: a dry hole. On September 9, after being drilled to a depth of 10,945 feet it was plugged and abandoned. The drillers had encountered “non-commercial indications of hydrocarbons.”

So what happens now—will the drilling plans be curtailed? Hardly. Amoco-IEO-A-1 Murre H-67 was only the second exploration test well ever drilled by the rig. Before Imperial found the Ledcor oil field in Alberta, back in 1947, the company had drilled 153 holes—all of them bore dry. Mind you, drilling wells in the North Atlantic is vastly more expensive than drilling them in Alberta was, 26 years ago. Still, nobody’s panicking. The drilling schedule on the Grand Banks will go on exactly as planned.
Winton Shatford comes as close as anybody to having oil in his blood. In 1885 his father started the company that became Imperial Oil in the Atlantic provinces, and Winton himself worked all his life for Imperial. He’s retired now, living in the village of Hubbars, in a house stuffed with mementos as any museum, and his memories are every bit as full.

When Winton Shatford was just 21, with a year in a business school behind him and a year’s experience in Imperial’s refinery across the harbor in Dartmouth, he became an order clerk in Imperial’s office in Halifax. The year was 1926, the era of Prohibition in the United States and run-running from Canada. Young Shatford was the only man available the day a sleek diesel run-runner struggled back into Halifax harbor and its engineer, a big, loud, angry Yankee stormed in and began cursing Imperial’s lubricating oil for ruining his engines and nearly delivering him into the hands of the American coast guard. Shatford was sent down to the dock to try to find the trouble. His arrival sent the engineer into a tirade on the perils of oil companies and the propriety of sending boys on men’s errands.

Shatford stood his ground and when the engineer stopped for breath the young man tried to suggest that if the two of them were ever to get anywhere, they needed a sample of the oil in the engine’s sump. The engineer continued his ranting, but together they lowered a bottle on a string and got a sample. While the engineer ranted, Shatford sniffed the sample and thought he smelled fuel oil. If he was right, it could only mean that fuel oil was getting into the crankcase, and the only way it could get there was through the injectors, the mechanisms that deliver fuel to the cylinders of diesel engines. Shatford lifted the bottle to his lips and sucked in a mouthful. The engineer stared in astonishment, then roared: ‘If you want a drink, why don’t you ask for a real one?’

Shatford ignored him as best he could, savored the concoction, spat it out, wiped his mouth, faced the furious engineer and said: ‘There’s nothing wrong with the oil we supplied. The trouble’s in your injectors.’

And it was. A laboratory analysis showed the lubricating oil diluted with fuel oil to the point where it was virtually useless, and convinced the Yankee engineer that Imperial Oil, even in the person of a 21-year-old order clerk, knew its business. He repaired the damaged engines, adjusted the injectors, and remained a customer of Imperial’s as long as his chancy business lasted.

Which wasn’t very long; Prohibition ended in the United States in 1933 with the repeal of the Volstead Act, and a colorful chapter in Atlantic history came to a close. Imperial was not much affected by the change. Imperial’s business was founded on the supply of fuels and lubricants to the fishermen of the Atlantic provinces, and they are still a very large market for the company’s products.

The first product they needed was kerosene, and the company that eventually became Imperial began bringing two grades of the oil into Halifax in 1885. The company was known as Shatford Brothers Limited and they faced considerable difficulties. The first was an import duty as high as 7½ cents a gallon; the second was fear of the flammable liquid. Eventually the duty was removed, and the Shat-
fords dealt with the fear by removing the kerosene and shipping it out to points around Nova Scotia as fast as they unloaded it from the schooners bringing it from New York.

That first shipment contained 1,000 barrels of kerosene, and the amount astounded Haligonians—-they were used to shipments of 100 barrels, and had never seen more than 200 barrels come off any one ship. The talk was of how the Shatford brothers would ever get rid of so much oil, but the shipment went out to Nova Scotia's villages and towns as fast as it was unloaded, and scarcely had the first ship left a second, with another cargo just as big, arrived at the wharf.

That kind of enterprise soon made Shatford Bros. the dominant oil company in Nova Scotia. By 1890 they had 60 per cent of the business, selling oil supplied by the Standard Oil Co. of New York. In 1890 Standard bought control of the Shatford business and merged it with the Bullock Oil Co. of Saint John to form the Eastern Oil Co. In 1896, Eastern became part of The Imperial Oil Co., Ltd., as the company was then known.

While all this corporate maneuvering was going on, the business itself was growing under the management of the Shatfords and Bullocks, reaching into the towns and villages of the Atlantic provinces with its oils and greases and with Mayflower and White Rose, its two grades of kerosene. What little gasoline was sold was used as a cleaning fluid or as fuel for naphtha lamps. It was the development and enormous popularity of the automobile that turned gasoline from a product nobody knew quite what to do with into the Cinderella of the oil industry.

Except in Prince Edward Island. The Garden Province did not take kindly to the car. In fact, it didn't take to the car at all; in 1909 the legislature passed a law banning automobiles from the island entirely. Three years later the garage door was opened slightly, and cars were permitted, with restrictions. You could not drive between 7 and 9 p.m. on Sundays, when all God-fearing people were expected to be in church, or outside any town or village on Tuesdays and Fridays, which were market days and the roads were reserved for farm wagons. Furthermore, before a road could be opened to cars, a majority of the people who lived along it had to be in favor. It wasn't until 1919 that all restrictions on cars were removed by Aubin Arseneault's Conservative government. It was defeated at the next election.

Cars were in the Atlantic provinces to stay after
that, although the first road paved with asphalt aggregate didn't appear in the region until 1928. It became known as Baillie's Road, after Edward L. Baillie, an Imperial Oil engineer who supervised a Nova Scotia department of highways' road gang in the paving of the nine miles from Graham Corner to the Truro highway. The road cost Imperial about $4,500 a mile.

The asphalt for Baillie's Road came from Imperial Oil's refinery at Imperoyal, a location 1½ miles across the harbor from Halifax and about 2½ miles south of Dartmouth. Imperial began buying land there in May of 1916 with the intention of building a depot for imported crude oil that could then be sent on to the new refinery at Montreal East. The company got 228 acres from Henrietta and Ellen McNabb and 151 acres from John F. Grant. The depot was finished in January of 1917 and received two cargoes of Mexican crude oil from the S. S. Sarmolite and the S. S. Somoneret. The oil went on to Montreal in solid trains of 20 cars each, perhaps the first oil unit trains in history. But the depot near Dartmouth wasn't even finished before Imperial recognized the need for a refinery in the region, and chose the property as the location.

In those days, the site was remote and isolated, part bushland and part forest, abrupt and lilly, with outcroppings of rock. But it had 3,500 feet of harbor frontage and with the addition of 100 acres bought from Hugh Grant it extended back to a good supply of fresh water in Morris Lake. Construction began in the fall of 1916 and the refinery was almost finished when work came to an abrupt halt on Dec. 6, 1917, when the munitions ship Mont Blanc blew up in Bedford Basin with such force that the north end of Halifax was flattened, killing 1,630 people, injuring 4,000, and leaving 20,000 more homeless. A square mile of Halifax was demolished, as well as part of Dartmouth. An enormous wave drowned people along the shore and ruined the waterfront. Every building in Halifax was damaged, including the Shawford's house, where every window but one was broken and the heavy front door was ripped from its hinges and blown up the stairs. Property damage was estimated at $30 million.

At first no one knew what happened. Some people fled; others cowered in basements, fearing more explosions; some wandered the streets, stunned out of mind. Gradually some sort of order arose and first-aid stations were set up, often in drugstores, to help the injured. The whole area responded to the dreadful emergency, and no one thought of costs.
The refinery site was three miles from the blast and no damage was done there, although several people were thrown to the ground. When the extent of the disaster became known, Imperial sent all its workmen and all movable construction materials into the city to provide protection and shelter. The construction camp at the refinery took in 146 refugees, half of them children, and nursed and cared for them. When Christmas came, the people at the refinery site took up a collection among themselves and bought gifts for everyone.

Slowly life returned to normal, and construction at the refinery was resumed. It was completed early in 1918 and began operating on Feb. 18 with a capacity of 2,200 barrels a day. A report in the Imperial Oil Review of July, 1918, said it had "a complete system of sewers that leads to a large modern separator, which extracts all oil escaping with the sewer water before the latter discharges into the harbor."

The refinery was so remote and inaccessible in those days that it was as much a place as a thing, and it had its own name—Imperoyal—bestowed on it in 1916 by C.O. Stillman, a vice president of Imperial then and later president of the company. During its construction, many of the people who were building it lived on the site with their families, and a community developed whose visible expression was a school where 96 pupils learned their lessons under the guidance of Miss V. E. Loundes. She didn't have to worry about all 96 of them at once, for the first year was raked with an epidemic of Spanish "flu that all but threatened to close the school.

In 1920 they got a real school, with three classrooms and a bright basement playroom. It was opened on May 4 with a parade of pupils from the old camp school led by Chief McKay of the refinery security force and a kilted piper in the uniform of the Seaforth Highlanders. A picture in the Imperial Oil Review for June, 1920, shows the weaving line of schoolchildren, each one clutching a Union Jack. 'Past the vehicle office they went,' reported the Review, 'through the heart of the plant, past the pump house, whose siren blowing its shrill note gave them its word of cheer.' They stopped outside the main office, all 130 of them, to salute the flag and sing O Canada.

It was a great day, and everybody from Imperoyal was there to watch. One of the spectators was a five-year-old boy named Billy O'Neil whose father worked in the refinery. Billy grew up in Imperoyal village, attended Imperoyal school (he
won medals for long-distance running there) and began working in the refinery himself in 1937. He’s still there, but he doesn’t live in Improvayal Village any more – nobody does. The village, which once counted 33 houses and had tennis courts, a bowling green, quoit beds, a skating rink, and a playground for children, is gone now. The last family moved out in July, 1961, and the houses were sold. Some of them were raised off their foundations and moved to new locations where they still provide pleasant homes for Nova Scotians.

But Nova Scotians are not the only people of the Atlantic region to have been affected by Imperial’s operations. Imperial delivered the first bulk cargo of oil and gasoline to be received in Newfoundland, landing it from an Imperial tanker in February of 1917. The cargo included 192,710 gallons of gasoline and 546,191 gallons of kerosene, in two grades.

Fifteen years later Imperial found itself in the uncomfortable position of operating as a virtual arm of the Newfoundland government. Facing bankruptcy, the Dominion (Newfoundland was a self-governing Dominion in 1932) made Imperial the only oil company permitted to operate on the island. This ‘exclusive rights agreement’ required the company to buy $1,750,000 worth of Newfoundland bonds and guarantee to pay an additional $500,000 annually in royalties into a ‘petroleum fund’. The first year’s sales produced royalties well below that amount, and Imperial had to make up the difference. But Newfoundland went broke anyway and in 1934, reverted to colonial status and became administered by a British commission. The commission agreed with Imperial that the ‘exclusive rights agreement’ was not the right way to finance the economy, and the agreement ended on June 30, 1934.

When Newfoundland undertook a multi-million dollar project in the 1960s to replace the centuries-old ‘finger’ pier with a new concrete wharf extending for half a mile along the St. John’s waterfront, Imperial gave the government the land it needed to extend the road to the harbor entrance at the south side. A few years earlier, when the Big Blow of 1959 blanketed St. John’s in 20 inches of snow and brought all traffic in the city to a halt, Imperial made deliveries of essential oil supplies by toboggan. The winds during that storm were said to have reached 135 miles an hour, and five people were killed, four of them in a snowslide at Chain Rock near the harbor entrance. An Imperial Oil employee was among the crew that dug the bodies out and brought them to the morgue.

It was probably natural for Newfoundland to turn to Imperial in 1932 – the company was the island’s principal supplier of petroleum products, with virtually 90 per cent of the business. But Imperial had pioneered in the distribution and sale of oil throughout the rest of the region, too, and had built storage facilities in many ports.

The first cargo of bulk oil and gasoline ever delivered to Prince Edward Island went into tanks built at Charlottetown by Imperial Oil in 1904. Not that the island was without petroleum products before that; the stuff came in barrels and cases and was delivered to ports all around the shoreline. Bernard Mosey, who runs J. F. Mosey and Sons general store at Bothwell, remembers hauling the barrels of kerosene up to the store with a team of horses when he was a boy. The store has been selling Imperial products since 1902.

Another long-time agent is Maurice C. Berelson of Grand Falls, N.B. Imperial has records showing that it has been supplying Berelson’s garage since 1907, but he says 1908, and he should know. He’s 85 and he has been running the garage all his life.

The record for agency longevity belongs to the McLean Bros. store at North Wilshire, P.E.I. The store has been in the McLean family since it was established in 1870 and it has been handling Imperial products since 1898.

The history of petroleum in the Atlantic region is not entirely a story of selling lamp oil and gasoline – the region is a producer of crude oil, although it only comes in very small amounts. Oil seepages were recorded on the west coast of Newfoundland as early as 1812, and a well was drilled 200 feet deep at Parson’s Pond, Nfld., in 1867. Early in this century the Newfoundland Oil Company was producing 900 barrels of oil a day from wells in Newfoundland, but the production declined and the wells were shut down. New Brunswick’s first well was drilled in 1859 by a man named H. C. Tweedel, who came from Pittsburgh to Dover, N.B., and drilled four wells that spring and summer. He discovered ‘shows’ of oil and gas, but when word arrived that Col. E. L. Drake had brought in a well in Pennsylvania producing 25 barrels a day, Tweedel gave up, believing the continent could not absorb so great an amount of oil.

In 1909 a Scottish geologist named Dr. J. A. L. Henderson brought in a number of small wells in the Dover area and produced oil from
them. The Stony Creek field, just west of the Petitcodiac River and about 10 miles south of Moncton, in the province of New Brunswick, has been active for more than 60 years producing oil and gas. The gas goes to Moncton and Hillsborough, and the oil - the wells produce around 225 barrels a week - is refined to extract the natural gasoline. The residue is sold to a plant in Hillsborough, and the natural gasoline - perhaps 600 barrels a year - is shipped to Imperial Oil's refinery at Dartmouth, just as it has been for the past 20 years or more.

Half a century after Henderson, Imperial drilled its first exploratory well in the region, on Prince Edward Island in 1958. That same year the company drilled a well in New Brunswick, following it up in 1959 with a well on Cape Breton Island, and in 1960 with two more, one in Nova Scotia and one in New Brunswick. They were all dry.

Petroleum in quantities large enough to make a significant impact on the economy of the Atlantic region seems to be part of its future, though. Surveys of the continental shelves show rock structures that are associated with oil deposits, and drillers are at work probing their secrets. Imperial is a participant in the great Atlantic oil hunt; it has been active in offshore oil exploration in the Atlantic region since 1964, participating in geophysical surveys and exploratory drilling that cost more than $16 million by the end of 1971.

Today Imperial is one of the largest permit holders in the region, with more than 60 million acres. In partnership with another company, Imperial hopes to have drilled 14 test wells before the end of this year from two floating drilling rigs. Each well takes about two months to drill and costs between $2 and $3 million.

All the money Imperial spends in the Atlantic region isn't being spent at sea, though. The Imperial refinery at Dartmouth is engaged in a construction project valued at $10 million that will employ 200 construction workers before it is finished later this year. A major part of the work - approximately $4 million worth - is aimed at reducing sulfur in petroleum products and controlling the amount in refinery emissions. The program is the biggest since the refinery was modernized in 1956 at a cost of $30 million - the biggest refinery construction project the country had ever seen. All told, Imperial has $108 million invested in gross plant and equipment in the Atlantic region.

Imperial's unhappiest experience in all of its years in the Atlantic provinces began at 9:35 a.m.
on Feb. 4, 1970, when the Liberian tanker Arrow ran aground on Cerberus Rock in Chedabucto Bay and began leaking her cargo of the heavy, black oil known as Bunker C. Imperial learned about the mishap that afternoon. Responsibility rested with the ship's owners and her captain, but the oil belonged to Imperial, and the company went into action at once. The owners acknowledged that Imperial was acting in their behalf. The salvage and clean-up operations were taken over by the Department of Transport on the evening of Feb. 7, but until that time, Imperial organized and carried on the work, and stayed on the scene until the sunken hulk was finally pumped out, 66 days after the wreck, on April 11. The grounding smeared many miles of Chedabucto Bay shoreline, constituting a massive eyesore that took seven months to clear away even to a tolerable extent. At Chedabucto Bay traces of the spill are still noticeable around the shore like the ring of a messy bathtub. Tides and waves will eventually wash those rocks clean.

The Arrow was the first major oil spill on the Atlantic coast, and it taught lessons in dealing with such mishaps that can be applied to reduce their consequences. Mainly, it's a matter of organization – knowing who should do what – and Imperial has set up an organization of experts who can respond quickly and effectively. It has also set up 12 depots in the region containing absorbents that can soak up spilled oil, and stockpiled equipment such as booms and skimmers. Imperial also participates in an organization of oil companies pledged to help in the event of an emergency. The hope, of course, is that improved navigation aids and stricter regulations will avoid spills, but the prudent course is to be prepared.

Prudence is not a particular trait of Maritimers – the people of the Atlantic provinces are too open-hearted for such a dour virtue – but pride is. The customs and traditions of the region are deeply cherished. To Imperial people it is important that the company's first office building in Halifax was built on the site of the 18th century Pontac Inn, where Gen. Wolfe dined the night before he sailed for Quebec. People at the Dartmouth refinery still remember the Shuttle Service of World War II when the refinery shipped 33 million barrels of petroleum products to the United Kingdom and fueled 10,000 ships with another 25 million barrels of oil. Among these ships were three Imperial tankers torpedoes and sunk during the war, another captured and later sunk and a fifth torpedoed but salvaged. Lost with them were 69 Imperial employees.

A plaque at the refinery marks the location of Fort Clarence, built in the 1750s to defend Halifax and sold to Imperial in 1727. When the fort had to be torn down in the winter of 1941-42 to make room for storage tanks for war-destined products, the ghost went with it.

Ghost? Yes indeed. About the time the refinery at Dartmouth was being built the skeleton of a woman was found in the earthworks of Fort Clarence, buried standing up. People linked the grisly find to a report of a ghost seen at the fort in 1906 by a man named Gregoire, and figured the apparition was connected with the depraved career of Samuel Herbert Dougal, a 'tall, clever quartermaster sergeant' who had been in Halifax in the 1880s and who was later hanged in England for murdering a well-to-do spinster and living high on cheques forged with her name. But Dougal couldn't have been all bad. He spent his last weeks awaiting execution by writing instructions for the care and upbringing of his children, and posting the letters off to all their mothers. For, according to R. D. Allieck's Victorian Studies In Scarlet, Dougal 're-populated a large portion of rural Essex.'

But the name of the woman in the earthworks was never discovered, and her ghost was never seen again.

And as for Winton Shatford, the boy whose tongue found the trouble in the rum-runner 46 years ago lives quietly now in Hubbards, 34 miles from Halifax, in a plain white clapboard house. Among his most treasured souvenirs is a set of silver spoons collected over the years by his father when the Atlantic oil business was young. When Sidney Shatford established a new sub-station for Imperial Oil, he bought a silver spoon and had it engraved with the name of the town where the station was located and the date it opened for business. The spoons sat in a holder on the dining table when Winton Shatford was a boy, until the collection grew too large. Some stayed in daily use, but 16 of them, made of sterling silver and dated from Sydney, October, 1900 to Malag, August, 1909, were put away. Shatford intends to give them to his son, David, the third generation of his family to work for Imperial Oil. Until then they're in a sideboard in the house at Hubbards, carefully wrapped in blue cloth bags.
The Great International Dory Race

It's the brawny sons of Lunenburg against the pride of Gloucester in a rivalry that dates from the days of sail.

by Arthur Black / photos by Ron Cole

It's a grand day for a boat race. A warm day in July with the sun high and the wind low. Less than a mile away the irascible North Atlantic is heaving its mighty gray breakers against the Nova Scotia coast as always, but here in Lunenburg's snug, hook-shaped harbor the water admits to only a gentle swell. And on that swell ride all manner of craft — launches, punts, sailboats, yachts, outboards, inboards, schooners and skiffs — all keeping a respectful distance from the two funny-looking, khaki-colored rowboats lined up at the starting line. The boats are larger than most rowboats and pointed at bow and stern. There are two men in each boat, each man grasping an unusually long pair of oars. The two funny-looking rowboats sit between the jumbled collection of vessels and Lunenburg's ancient wharves, on which are perched thousands of spectators. Gnawed fishermen stand cheek-by-jowl with camera-slung tourists and every eye, both on the boats and on
Before the International can be run, a race is held earlier in the week to determine the dory champions of Canada.

The shore, fixed on those two funny-looking rowboats. Between the eyes on the boats and the eyes on the wharves lies a narrow channel of open water that runs a half-mile down Lunenburg harbor to a marker buoy. Suddenly a shotgun crumples and the crowd cheers as eight oars stab simultaneously into the water. The rowboats barely shudder at first but gradually they gain momentum and start to lumber down the narrow open channel. Lunenburg's annual international dory race has begun. The winners will be the world champion dory racers.

Now the dory race is just one event in a week-long extravaganza known as the Nova Scotia Fisheries Exhibition and Fishermen's Reunion, called the Lunenburg fair by most, but is far and away the most popular event because... well... it is the only international dory race. It is thrilling for tourists and Maritime alike, but for the people of Lunenburg it is something special because in one of the dories sits Lunenburg's champion dorymen: the other dory is manned by the finest dorymen in the town of Gloucester, Massachusetts, can muster... and these two towns have been squaring off with one another for longer than anyone can remember.

Back in the old days, when the fishing fleets from both towns worked the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, the rival captains vied to see who could make the biggest catch, the fastest sailing time—anything that could be wagered on. They raced their fishing schooners so often that the International Fishermen's Schooner Races were established in the 1920s. Lunenburg's famous Bluenose won them so regularly that she was awarded permanent custody of the Trophy in 1938.

When the beautiful, tall-masted fishing schooners were eclipsed by diesel-powered ships, the schooner races died. But the old rivalry survived, transferred to a race between dories, which show no signs of succumbing to advancing marine technology. For years now, the dory races have been run twice each summer: once in Gloucester, and once in Lunenburg.

For those who've never seen a dory before, the first glimpse is something less than electrifying. A dory looks like the boats that children make from folded newspapers—crude and flimsy. It is neither.

Dories first appeared in the 1850s when they were used by 'dory schooners' to catch cod off the Grand Banks. Each schooner carried between eight and 15 dories, all of them were launched each day at dawn and rowed by their two-man crews to positions selected by the captain. From each dory a trawl line more than a mile long was paid out. Tied to this trawl line were thousands of shorter lines, each with a baited hook. Three times a day, the dorymen hauled their trawl lines in over one side of the dory, removed the fish, rebaited the hooks, and set the trawl lines over the other side. When the dory was up to her gunwales in fat, flopping cod, the dorymen rowed back to the schooner to fork the catch aboard. That done, they returned once more to their trawl line. It would be dark by the time the dories returned to the schooner with their last haul. This kind of fishing was rugged and dangerous and no other craft could stand up to it as the dories did. Their flat bottoms and flared sides meant they could be stacked like pie plates on a schooner's deck; also that they could be launched easily, even in heavy seas. Most important of all, the dory was durable: it could carry a ton of cod without foundering and it could take the harsh Grand Banks routine for six years on the average.

The dory wasn't pretty but it was remarkably seaworthy, weathering ferocious Atlantic gales that could demolish many a larger boat. In the most merciless seas, dorymen often rinsed their canvas sail over the full length of the dory, batten it down securely, and rode out the storm like a corked bottle. When the storm abated they had to drift until a passing ship picked them up. But the dory wasn't invincible and not all dorymen came home. Over the years, hundreds of them were lost at sea.

In addition to its dangers, dory fishing was uneconomical, requiring too much manpower. The sophisticated, diesel-engined trawlers, longliners and seiners that began to appear in the late 1830s brought home larger catches with smaller crews. The dory schooners began to disappear. Even the famous Bluenose wasn't beyond the threat of obsolescence. In the 1940s she was sold to a West Indian trading company and reduced to a mastless, motor-driven freighter, shuttling between ports in...
the Caribbean. She ended her days on a reef near Haiti in 1946. It's hard to say which is Lunenburg's most famous progeny: the magnifi-
cent Bluenose or the homely dory. Actually, no Lunenburger invented the dory—it's honor belongs to some long-forgotten craftsman of Gloucester. But some Lunenburg native did take a fancy to the American design when it appeared in the 1850s and modified it sufficiently to produce a recognizable hybrid—the world-
famous Lunenburg dory.

Lunenburg dories can be anywhere from 10 to 26 feet in length; the ones used in the dory races are 20 feet long. They are virtually indistinguishable from the first Lunenburg dories. The oars still work between two whittled pegs called thole pins, just as they did a century ago, when brass or iron for a proper oarlock was an unheard-
of luxury. The racing dories are just like the ones still used by inshore fishermen—those who stay in sight of land every day except that anchors, lines and fishing gear have been removed. Even so, the boats still weigh a good 400 pounds each. At full speed the dories can bucket along at better than seven knots but it takes consummate skill to keep the four oars moving in perfect time. One faulty, mistimed stroke can send a dory careening out of control—and out of the race.

The Lunenburg team is made up of two fishermen's sons named Gerry Mossman and Sonny Heisler. Neither of them fishes for a living, although they both want to see when they were younger. Heisler is 32, with a friendly, warm face and a relaxed manner. He looks like a retired boxer. Recently retired, Mossman is 28 and his shock of red hair and his blue eyes make him look like an amiable Viking. They are both built like full-
backs: lean with broad shoulders and arms like wharf pilings. Neither of them looks remotely keyed up, the way you'd expect the dory champions of the world to look on the day they're defending their title. They haven't lost one of these races, either here or in Gloucester, since they began racing as a team in 1967. But the two Gloucestermen in the other boat obviously know their way around a dory as well. As the boats approach the halfway buoy the Americans hold nearly a two-length lead over the champions. Both boats seem to slow around the marker in unison and start heading for home. In making the turn, however, the American boat lurches ever so slightly—but not so slightly that it escapes the keen eyes of the fisher-
men in the crowd, who give a collective grunt. That tiny lurch has cost the Americans the lead and the two dories are coming down the home stretch neck and neck.

The crowd sits in anticipation. For a good number of them, the dory race is the climax of the Lunenburg fair, and a close finish makes it all the more exciting.
The strain of hauling on the huge oars is immense and it’s quite common for oarsmen to faint at the end of the race. Heisler’s brother was a champion oarsman until one year in Gloucester he collapsed over the oars. The doctor ordered him never to race again. He was only 25. It is in the home stretch that the race really starts to tell and the Americans are the first to falter. The American dory has begun to waver, indicating the oars are slightly out of cadence. Heisler and Moshman begin to pull ahead.

The race is nearly over and clearly the American oarsmen aren’t going to catch Moshman and Heisler this year either. Slowly a cheer wells up from the crowd. It begins like a sigh and builds to a roar as the Lunenburg dory crosses the finish line, ahead by four lengths. The town erupts in a cacophony of ships’ whistles, car horns, clanging bells and cheers. The Lunenburg boys have done it again.

For those who don’t care for boat races there are plenty of alternative events to see at the Lunenburg fair. Lunenburg lies beside the North Atlantic and the pungent whiffs of sea-wrack that season the air also pervades the spirit of the fair. For what other festival could set aside a day for a fish-filleting contest, followed by a scallop-shucking contest and then cable-splicing and net mending contests — and fill the grandstand with spectators for all of them? The scallop-shucking contest is a popular event — and one that demands unblinking attention from the spectators. Nine shuckers, each representing a different dragger, line up at a large wooden bench facing the grandstand audience. No dilettantes here — these men shuck scallops for a living. The only question to be resolved is which man can do the fastest, neatest job of it. They all start evenly, with a rubber apron, a knife, a bucket to hold the meat — and 200 scallops. The first man to shuck all 200 of them is the winner, providing he doesn’t make too much of a mess doing it.

Now the scallop is a formidable mollusk indeed. It’s roughly the size and shape of two saucers stuck together, and about as easy to open as a sprung bear trap. A novice could chip and pry away at one for 10 minutes without so much as opening a crack — and that’s what makes the professional shuckers so fascinating to watch.

When the starter’s whistle blows, nine left hands become a single blur as they all reach out to their respective mound of scallops. Each scallop seems to leap into the shucker’s left hand, do a ragged dance around the knife held in the right hand, then explode into three pieces — two empty shells that arc out onto the ground and one small dab of meat neatly into the bucket. Before the two shells hit the ground, another scallop is being shucked.

Last summer’s winner was Wallace Skinner. He shucked all 200 scallops in just under nine minutes. It was the third year in a row that he’d won the contest, so he was allowed to keep the trophy as well as $100 first prize money.

The organizers of the Lunenburg fair have had a lot of years to learn what pleases the crowds most. The fair is an annual event that began back in 1916 as a kind of civic picnic for local fishermen and their families. Last year it attracted more than 50,000 visitors from all over the continent. The people of Lunenburg never intended the fair to become an international event, for heaven’s sake, but they wouldn’t dream of turning anyone away. Still, just to make sure that the original guests of honor don’t get squeezed out by the tourists, the organizers mail invitations to every fisherman in the province — about 12,000 in all — asking them to attend ‘with their lady’ any day, free of charge.

But many visitors find the town of Lunenburg alone is worth the visit — with or without the Nova Scotia Fishermen’s Exhibition and Fishermen’s Reunion. It was founded in 1763, primarily for immigrants from the old Prussian district of Lunenburg. One legacy of its origins is the lifting of the Teutonic dress that many of the townsfolk still carry. Another is the number of Germanic names still around. Lunenburg’s telephone book abounds with Zincks, Schwartzes, Zwickers and Heislers.

Lunenburg is laced with narrow, winding streets, some of them with evocative names: Kissing Bridge Road, Shipyard Hill, Sawpit Road. Tall frame buildings with spires and cupolas, towers and balconies, loom on both sides of the streets. Even on the main street, neon signs are mercifully scarce. Lunenburg has its own small weekly newspaper, one tavern and a rather large number of shipbuilding and ship’s outfitting firms — another legacy from the time when more ships were built and launched in Lunenburg than in any other port in Canada. The large frame houses of Lunenburg are painted in bright greens, yellows, reds and whites, all neatly trimmed with gingerbread frills and looking — there is no other word for it — shipshape. If another Great Flood came the entire town of Lunenburg would probably sail as a fleet with the tide.

It’s a quiet town, too. The few noises that do escape its winding streets are muffled by the huge elms and maples that fan protectively over the town.

Except for that one week of the fair, of course. At 12 noon on opening day the leafy silence is shattered by the eruption of every whistle, horn and bell the town can muster. That’s the traditional way of announcing the Nova Scotia Fishermen’s Exhibition and Fishermen’s Reunion, and the vibrations from the first deafening salutation don’t really subside for the five full days that the fair lasts.

That’s the best time to visit Lunenburg.