

# THE REFINING INDUSTRY ALONG THE DELAWARE RIVER

*A thriving riverfront industry  
for over a century*

Beginning in 1892 with the establishment of the Bear Creek Refining Company in Marcus Hook, the refining industry has long been a major influence on the Delaware River and the riverfront communities. The area's access to road, rail, and deep water port facilities, along with an extensive pipeline infrastructure, continue to draw this important industry to the area.

The refinery in Trainer began operation in 1900 when the Union Petroleum Company leased a 17-acre tract of land from the Reading Company railroad. The first refinery here, built primarily of wood, burned in 1912. It was quickly rebuilt, and four years later Union bought the land from the railroad as well as an additional 242 acres. Sinclair Oil Corporation, an oil company from the Midwest, purchased the Trainer refinery in 1925. Production at that time was 10,000 barrels per day. Sinclair operated the refinery for over 40 years. It has changed hands many times, including to British Petroleum in 1969, Tosco Corporation in 1995, and Phillips Petroleum Co. (later ConocoPhillips) in 2001. The refinery was purchased in 2012 by Monroe Energy, a subsidiary of Delta Airlines, and has continued to produce high-grade airline fuel and other petroleum products.

The Sun Oil Co. refinery in Marcus Hook (pictured) has been in operation since 1901. It began as an 82 acre site and grew steadily, not only in terms of acreage, but also the types of facilities found there, including laboratories and a research and development facility. Several major advancements in the field of petroleum production were developed at the Sun Oil refinery, including the Houdry Process of catalytic refining in 1937. This process produced high-grade aircraft fuel and increased the yield of each barrel of crude. The airline fuel produced there is credited with giving the U.S. an advantage in the air during World War II.



Industrial Heritage Parkway  
Delaware County, Pennsylvania

Large photo courtesy of the Delaware  
County Historical Society. Postcard  
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