

Petrotrin's Proud History of refining at Pointe-a-Pierre

Refining operations at Pointe-a-Pierre began in 1917 with part of the western facility - west of Southern Main Road – built between 1928 and 1938. The refinery was developed with state of the art technology of the day and was significant to the British war effort in 1914 – 1918 and 1939 – 1945. The eastern refinery was built in 1940-41 and extended by the addition of the Fluidized Catalytic Cracking Unit (FCCU) or Cat Cracker in 1952. When Texaco took over from Trinidad Leaseholds limited in 1956, the refinery consisted of the following major units: Crude Distillation; Vacuum Distillation; Visbreaking; Thermal Reformer; FCCU; Alkylation and Rerun.



The "Cat Cracker" was installed in 1952.

After 1956 Texaco expanded both the crude processing capability and complexity of the refinery and by 1973, at 355,000 barrels of oil a day, it was one of the world's largest refineries based on crude capacity.

OPEC price increases in 1973 and 1979 forced many refineries to close or trim back throughput due to shrinking demand. In response, some of the units at Pointe-a-Pierre were decommissioned, and by 1985 refinery capacity was down to 275,000bpd. The refinery was bought by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago that year when Texaco sold out most of its assets in T&T. The Government placed these assets under the management of TRINTOC, the state oil company that had been formed in 1974 when the assets of Shell Trinidad Limited were acquired.

As a result of nearly two decades of little capital expenditure and low margins, financial losses mounted and some units that were beyond economic repair were shut down. Operating costs were highly uncompetitive and the future of the refinery was a major concern to the shareholder.

Refinery gets new life

In 1989 a technical study led to the commencement in 1991 of the Refinery Upgrade Phase 1 project that was completed in 1997 at a cost of US \$ 360 million. The Refinery Upgrade consisted of the restoration of two idle processing units, a revamp of the Cat Cracker, the installation of four new processing units, instrumentation modernization and the upgrade of environmental facilities.

This Upgrade enabled the refinery to increase process flexibility, improve yields and product quality, improve air emissions and water effluent quality and to be more cost effective. The refinery once again became competitive in terms of major industry-wide comparative indicators.

But the refining industry does not stand still and by 2000 a study conducted by Arthur D. Little recommended that Petrotrin adopt a strategy focused on high-quality clean fuels through

investment in diesel hydro-treating facilities and gasoline quality upgrade.

It is against this background that the Petrotrin refinery has now embarked on the current Gasoline Optimization Program that will see four new units constructed over the next three years at a cost of US \$ 430 million in order to satisfy international market demands for cleaner diesels and gasoline.