(54) Title: UBIQUITOUS REAL-TIME FRACTURE MONITORING
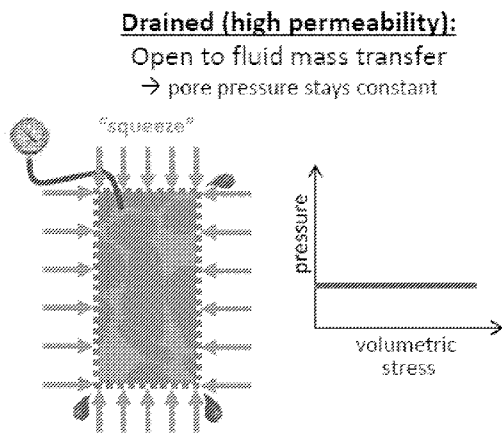
FIG. 1A
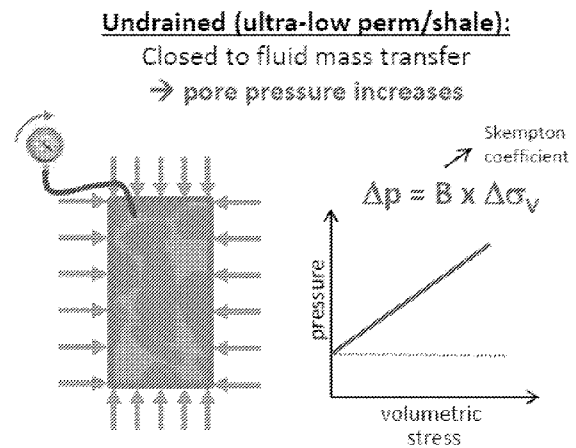
FIG. 1B

(57) Abstract: Method for characterizing subterranean formation is described. One method involves simulating a poroelastic pressure response of known fracture geometry utilizing a geomechanical model to generate a simulated poroelastic pressure response. Compiling a database of simulated poroelastic pressure responses. Measuring a poroelastic pressure response of the subterranean formation during a hydraulic fracturing operation to generate a measured poroelastic pressure response. Identifying a closest simulated poroelastic pressure response in the library of simulated poroelastic pressure response. Estimating a geometrical parameter of a fracture or fractures in the subterranean formation based on the closest simulated poroelastic pressure response.

WO 2019/217763 A1

UBIQUITOUS REAL-TIME FRACTURE MONITORING

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a non-provisional application which claims benefit under 35 USC §119(e) to U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 62/669,065 filed May 9, 2018, entitled "Ubiquitous Real-Time Fracture Monitoring," which is incorporated herein in its entirety.

[0002] The present invention is related to similar subject matter of co-pending and commonly assigned U.S. patent application entitled "Measurement of Poroelastic Pressure Response" filed on May 9, 2018, which is hereby incorporated by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The present invention relates generally to recovery of hydrocarbons from unconventional reservoirs. More particularly, but not by way of limitation, embodiments of the present invention include tools and methods for real-time monitoring of hydraulic fracture geometry by quickly interrogating and finding a match in a database of poroelastic pressure signatures.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0004] During hydraulic fracturing stimulation process, highly pressurized fluids are injected into a reservoir rock. Fractures are created when the pressurized fluids overcome breaking strength of the rock (i.e., fluid pressure exceeds in-situ stress). These induced fractures and fracture systems (network of fractures) can act as pathways through which oil and natural gas migrate en route to a borehole and eventually brought up to surface. Efficiently and accurately characterizing created fracture systems is important for optimizing hydraulic fracturing. Determination and evaluation of hydraulic fracture geometry can influence field development practices in a number of important ways such as, but not limited to, well spacing/placement design, infill well drilling and timing, and completion design.

[0005] More recently, fracturing of shale from horizontal wells to produce gas has become increasingly important. Horizontal wellbore may be formed to reach desired

regions of a formation not readily accessible. When hydraulically fracturing horizontal wells, multiple stages (in some cases dozens of stages) of fracturing can occur in a single well. These fracture stages are implemented in a single well bore to increase production levels and provide effective drainage. In many cases, there can also be multiple wells per location.

[0006]   There are several conventional techniques (e.g., microseismic imaging) for characterizing geometry, location, and complexity of hydraulic fractures. As an indirect method, microseismic imaging technique can suffer from a number of issues which limit its effectiveness. While microseismic imaging can capture shear failure of natural fractures activated during well stimulation, it is typically less effective at capturing tensile opening of hydraulic fractures itself. Moreover, there is considerable debate on interpretations of microseismic events as it relates to hydraulic fractures.

[0007]   While our understanding of what hydraulic fractures look like in shale reservoirs has improved, data acquisition for most wells tend to be limited with little to no information for characterizing stimulated reservoir volume (SRV). Hence, completion and reservoir engineers are often left to rely on production performance over several months/years to optimize field design and evaluate effectiveness of a completion design. Thus, one of the key challenges in hydraulic fracturing is accelerating this learning process to improve well performance and recovery.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0008]   The present invention relates generally to recovery of hydrocarbons from unconventional reservoirs. More particularly, but not by way of limitation, embodiments of the present invention include tools and methods for real-time monitoring of hydraulic fracture geometry by characterizing main characteristics of poroelastic responses measured during hydraulic stimulation and quickly interrogating and finding a match in database of poroelastic pressure signatures.

[0009]   The present invention can monitor evolution of reservoir stresses throughout lifetime of a field during hydraulic fracturing. Measuring and/or identifying favorable stress regimes can help maximize efficiency of multi-stage fracture treatments in shale plays.

[0010]   One example of a method for characterizing a subterranean formation includes: a) simulating a poroelastic pressure response of known fracture geometry utilizing a geomechanical model to generate a simulated poroelastic pressure response; b) repeating a) to compile a database of simulated poroelastic pressure responses; c) measuring a poroelastic pressure response of the subterranean formation during a hydraulic fracturing operation to generate a measured poroelastic pressure response; d) identifying a closest simulated poroelastic pressure response in the library of simulated poroelastic pressure response; and e) estimating a geometrical parameter of a fracture or fractures in the subterranean formation based on the closest simulated poroelastic pressure response.

[0011]   Another example of a method for characterizing a subterranean formation includes: a) compiling a database of simulated poroelastic pressure responses of stimulated fractures, wherein the library is stored in a non-transitory computer storage medium; b) obtaining a poroelastic pressure response of the subterranean formation during a hydraulic fracturing operation to generate a measured poroelastic pressure response; c) using a computer-processor to query the database of simulated poroelastic pressure responses to identify a closest simulated poroelastic pressure response; and d) estimating a geometrical parameter of a fracture or fractures in the subterranean formation based on the closest simulated poroelastic pressure response.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012]   A more complete understanding of the present invention and benefits thereof may be acquired by referring to the follow description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

[0013]   FIGS. 1A-1B illustrates poroelastic behavior in high permeability (FIG. 1A) and low permeability (FIG. 1B) systems.

[0014]   FIGS. 2A-2B illustrate a set simulated poroelastic pressure response curves of a known fracture geometry and observation points.

[0015]   FIG. 3 illustrates an example of multiple well configuration during hydraulic fracturing.

[0016]   FIGS. 4A-4D illustrates downhole monitor vertical well configurations suitable for measuring poroelastic pressure response according to one or more embodiments.

[0017]   FIG. 5 illustrates downhole well configuration suitable for measuring poroelastic pressure response in which the pressure gauge is installed outside of the casing according to one or more embodiments.

[0018]   FIGS. 6A-6C illustrate horizontal well configurations suitable for measuring poroelastic pressure response according to one or more embodiments.

[0019]   FIG. 7 illustrates a workflow for one or more embodiments of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0020]   Reference will now be made in detail to embodiments of the invention, one or more examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings. Each example is provided by way of explanation of the invention, not as a limitation of the invention. It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made in the present invention without departing from the scope or spirit of the invention. For instance, features illustrated or described as part of one embodiment can be used on another embodiment to yield a still further embodiment. Thus, it is intended that the present invention cover such modifications and variations that come within the scope of the invention.

[0021]   The present invention relates generally to recovery of hydrocarbons from unconventional reservoirs. More particularly, but not by way of limitation, embodiments of the present invention include tools and methods for real-time monitoring of hydraulic fracture geometry by quickly interrogating and finding a match in a database of poroelastic pressure signatures.

[0022]   One of the goals of this technology is to enable cost effective characterization of the induced fracture system on virtually every well with little to no impact on ongoing operations. It has the potential to be used universally during fracturing operations in shale wells.

[0023]   There are several advantages to the proposed invention. First is an ability to leverage knowledge from field pilots, instrumented wells and extend it to majority of wells for which there is limited data. Interpretations based on pressure data such as poroelastic response monitoring can be calibrated during pilot tests using number of methods including, but not limited to, distributed acoustic/temperature sensing (DAS/DTS),

microseismic or tiltmeter monitoring, tracers, and then be applied in non-instrumented wells.

[0024]   Another advantage capitalizes on the resulting quick speed of pressure data interpretation.   For example, by training a neural network using synthetic cases of numerically-generated pressure response (for which induced-fracture characteristics are known), the present invention can quickly relate the measured poroelastic pressure response to fracture geometries and generate a real-time map.   Other advantages will be apparent from the disclosure herein.

Poroelastic Pressure Response

[0025]   During hydraulic stimulation, pressure data at active and offset wells (in multi-well pads) is easily available.   However, this data is typically under-utilized.   When correctly understood, this data reflects many physical phenomena beyond just momentum diffusion and includes tremendous information about the created SRV.   At offset wells, many pressure changes can be seen during hydraulic fracturing operations.   It is now known that many of them are poroelastic pressure responses where no fluid communication is being established between the active and offset wells.   Instead, pressure changes are due to stresses imposed by dilated fractures ("squeezing" effect).   These tensile dilations can alter reservoir stresses up to thousands of feet away from the fractures thus "squeezing" the surrounding rock.   In high permeability systems, a fluid will be open to mass transfer so that pore pressure stays constant (FIG. 1A).

[0026]   In low permeability systems (such as shale), the rock is closed to fluid mass transfer which causes the pore pressure to increase (FIG. 1B).   One can measure the resulting poroelastic pressure response which can also be defined as a pressure change in the subsurface resulting from a change in volumetric stresses.   A change in volumetric stress can be related back to a geomechanical phenomena.   In other words, the poroelastic pressure response is a pressure signature that is not related to flow or hydraulic communication with the stimulated well but is a proxy for mechanical deformation and/or stress interference.   An in-depth description of poroelastic pressure response and its use to characterize fractures is described in U.S. Publication US20150176394, the contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

[0027]   FIG. 2B shows a set of numerically simulated poroelastic pressure response curves to fracture propagation and closure, at multiple locations in the reservoir. FIG. 2A illustrate the hydraulic fracture and observation points corresponding to the curves. The fracture dimensions at the end of propagation are 775 ft (half-length) by 160 ft (height). As the fracture tip approaches the observation point, a decrease in pressure is observed resulting from tensile stresses. As the fracture continues to propagate, we see that the squeezing effect will produce an increase in pressure along observation points (150 ft, 300 ft, 450 ft, 600 ft, 750 ft from where the fracture initiates). After the well is shut-in at the end of the fracturing stage, poroelastic pressure declines due to leak-off and closure of the hydraulic fracture.

Downhole Configurations for Measuring Poroelastic Pressure Response

[0028]   FIG. 3 illustrates a common hydraulic fracturing setup that includes an active/stimulated well, offset well, and monitor well. As shown, a pressure gauge can be installed at the surface in the offset well and/or monitor well (not shown). The downhole well configurations of FIGS. 4A-4D, FIG. 5, and FIG. 6 can be viewed within the context of FIG. 3.

[0029]   FIGS. 4A-4D illustrate different vertical well configurations that allow measurement of poroelastic pressure response through or in a monitor well. In these scenarios, the hydraulic fractures were generated in a nearby active well. FIG. 4A shows a single zone configuration of a perforated monitor well (unstimulated). As shown, a pressure gauge can be installed at the surface to measure poroelastic pressure response through the perforations. FIG. 4B shows a multi-zone configuration of a perforated monitor well (unstimulated). As shown, each zone has been sealed with a solid plug. This allows pressure gauges to be installed at various locations (e.g., surface, downhole within each zone, etc.) and locally measure poroelastic pressure response. FIG. 4C shows a single zone configuration of a stimulated monitor well. FIG. 4D shows a multi-zone configuration of a stimulated monitor well. In both of these configurations the poroelastic pressure response is measured through the monitor well's hydraulic fractures and perforations.

[0030] FIG. 5 illustrates another vertical well measurement configuration. Here the pressure gauge is installed outside of the casing and can measure poroelastic pressure response through the porous rock formation.

[0031] FIG. 6A-6C illustrate different horizontal well configurations. FIG. 6A shows pressure gauges installed outside of the casing at multiple reservoir locations. FIG. 6B shows poroelastic pressure measurements taken at the surface through the toe prep. FIG. 6C shows how pressure measurement can be taken at the surface through a fracture stage.

Utilizing Poroelastic Pressure Response in Real-Time

[0032] The present invention automates processing of active/offset well poroelastic pressure data by extracting its essential characteristics (e.g., time-lag, magnitude, slope) and accelerating its interpretation to provide a real-time interpreted map of each fracturing stage. The interpretations can include estimates of physical characteristics such as length, height, orientation, fracture asymmetry, residual width from proppant, and the like. These estimates can be based on a database or library of previously studied poroelastic pressure response ("pressure signatures"). In some embodiments, the database will include a searchable library of simulated or modeled pressure signatures (e.g., FIG. 2). In some embodiments, the database may include full or partial pressure signatures. In some embodiments, the database also includes pressure signatures obtained from field data (e.g, microseismic monitoring, distributed acoustic/temperature sensing, tiltmeter monitoring, fluid and proppant tracers, production logs, etc.). A user can query the database based on any one or combination of the essential characteristics (i.e., time-lag, magnitude, slope, etc.) to find a match. The process is analogous to finding a fingerprint match where several key features of the measured poroelastic pressure response is compared against a database of poroelastic pressure responses to find a match.

[0033] Combining the automated processing of acquired poroelastic pressure data with corresponding completion design characteristics allows optimization of completion design by means of machine learning techniques. Low-cost nature of the data and negligible impact on field operations means this technology may be applied on virtually all multi-pad wells. With the assistance of data analysis techniques, poroelastic pressure data may be processed in real time to provide an immediate assessment of the SRV, thus enabling

decisions "on the fly" and even testing of several completion designs on a single well or pad.

[0034]   Thus, the present invention provides a quick feedback mechanism for understanding geometry of induced fractures and its relationship to completion designs. This allows engineers to make changes to fracturing design (e.g., rate, proppant concentration, volume) on the fly and optimize completion in real time. Affordable, real-time, systematic fracture monitoring enabled by physics-informed data analytics and/or machine learning would considerably reduce learning time and allow faster convergence to optimum development scenarios.

[0035]   According to one or more embodiments, FIG. 7 illustrates a real-time workflow of fracture mapping and completion optimization based on interpretation of poroelastic pressure responses during hydraulic stimulation of a field. Referring to FIG. 7, the first step of the workflow involves extracting essential characteristics of the reservoir or field from the acquired poroelastic pressure responses (pressure versus time). These essential characteristics can be obtained by measuring the poroelastic pressure response after stimulation has begun. Some of these characteristics include elapsed time to reach maximum pressure (Δt_{max}), elapsed time to reach minimum pressure (Δt_{min}), maximum deviation in poroelastic pressure (Δp_{max}), minimum deviation in poroelastic pressure (Δp_{min}), and maximum slope (max $\Delta p/\Delta t$).

[0036]   The poroelastic response database can include results from numerical simulations of poroelastic response of known fracture dimension, interpretation of prior field poroelastic responses, and other field fracture diagnostic data. The database can be queried using any of the essential characteristics, fracture dimension or dimensions, or even the shape of the poroelastic response curve. Integration of the poroelastic response database with machine learning capabilities (e.g., neural networks) can improve accuracy of fracture dimension predictions.

[0037]   Once a match has been identified, dimensions (length, height, width, orientation, etc.) of the stimulated fractures can be estimated. Moreover, the database can be augmented or tagged with additional parameters such as best completion design parameters (injection rate, fluid type/volume, proppant type/volume, cluster/stage spacing,

etc.) and geological parameters (landing depth, mechanical properties, etc.) and well performance.

[0038] With this information in hand, a completion engineer can query the database to obtain not only fracture dimensions but suggested completion parameters while considering factors such as geological parameters and well performance. Thus, the completion design is improved in real-time.

[0039] Although the systems and processes described herein have been described in detail, it should be understood that various changes, substitutions, and alterations can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the following claims. Those skilled in the art may be able to study the preferred embodiments and identify other ways to practice the invention that are not exactly as described herein. It is the intent of the inventors that variations and equivalents of the invention are within the scope of the claims while the description, abstract and drawings are not to be used to limit the scope of the invention. The invention is specifically intended to be as broad as the claims below and their equivalents.

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CLAIMS

1.   A method for characterizing a subterranean formation comprising:

a) simulating a poroelastic pressure response of known fracture geometry utilizing a geomechanical model to generate a simulated poroelastic pressure response;

b) repeating a) to compile a database of simulated poroelastic pressure responses;

c) measuring a poroelastic pressure response of the subterranean formation during a hydraulic fracturing operation to generate a measured poroelastic pressure response;

d) identifying a closest simulated poroelastic pressure response in the library of simulated poroelastic pressure response; and

e) estimating a geometrical parameter of a fracture or fractures in the subterranean formation based on the closest simulated poroelastic pressure response.

2.   The method of claims 1, wherein the geometrical parameter is one or more of: height of fracture, length of fracture, width of fracture, fracture asymmetry, residual width from proppant, orientation of fracture, stimulated reservoir volume, and drained reservoir volume.

3.   The method of claim 1, wherein the database of simulated poroelastic pressure responses is searchable by one or more of: elapsed time to reach maximum pressure, elapsed time to reach minimum pressure, maximum deviation in poroelastic pressure, minimum deviation in poroelastic pressure, and maximum slope.

4.   The method of claim 1, wherein the estimating of dimension or dimensions of a fracture or fractures is completed in real-time as the hydraulic fracturing operation is performed.

5.   The method of claims 1, wherein the hydraulic fracturing operation is a multi-stage hydraulic fracturing operation.

6.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

f) selecting a completion design parameter of the subterranean formation in real-time.

7.   The method of claim 6, wherein the completion design parameter is one or more of: rate of subterranean fluid introduced, proppant concentration, proppant volume, and injection rate.

8.   The method of claim 1, wherein the poroelastic pressure response is measured at surface or in a well.

9.   The method of claim 1, wherein the database of simulated poroelastic pressure responses includes at least one suggested completion design parameter selected from: injection rate, fluid type, fluid volume, proppant type, proppant volume, cluster spacing, and stage spacing.

10.   The method of claim 1, wherein the database of simulated poroelastic pressure responses includes field data, completion design parameter, or well performance data.

11.   A method for characterizing a subterranean formation comprising:
        a) compiling a database of simulated poroelastic pressure responses of stimulated fractures, wherein the library is stored in a non-transitory computer storage medium;
        b) obtaining a poroelastic pressure response of the subterranean formation during a hydraulic fracturing operation to generate a measured poroelastic pressure response;
        c) using a computer-processor to query the database of simulated poroelastic pressure responses to identify a closest simulated poroelastic pressure response; and
        d) estimating a geometrical parameter of a fracture or fractures in the subterranean formation based on the closest simulated poroelastic pressure response.

12.   The method of claims 11, wherein the geometrical parameter is one or more of: height of fracture, length of fracture, width of fracture, fracture asymmetry, residual

width from proppant, orientation of fracture, stimulated reservoir volume, and drained reservoir volume.

13.   The method of claim 11, wherein the database of simulated poroelastic pressure responses is searchable by one or more of: elapsed time to reach maximum pressure, elapsed time to reach minimum pressure, maximum deviation in poroelastic pressure, minimum deviation in poroelastic pressure, and maximum slope.

14.   The method of claim 11, wherein the estimating of dimension or dimensions of a fracture or fractures is completed in real-time as the hydraulic fracturing operation is performed.

15.   The method of claims 11, wherein the hydraulic fracturing operation is a multi-stage hydraulic fracturing operation.

16.   The method of claim 11, further comprising:
e) selecting a completion design parameter of the subterranean formation in real-time.

17.   The method of claim 16, wherein the completion design parameter is one or more of: rate of subterranean fluid introduced, proppant concentration, proppant volume, and injection rate.

18.   The method of claim 11, wherein the poroelastic pressure response is measured at surface or in a well.

19.   The method of claim 11, wherein the database of simulated poroelastic pressure responses includes at least one suggested completion design parameter selected from: injection rate, fluid type, fluid volume, proppant type, proppant volume, cluster spacing, and stage spacing.

20.   The method of claim 11, wherein the database of simulated poroelastic pressure responses includes a field data, completion design parameter, or well performance data.
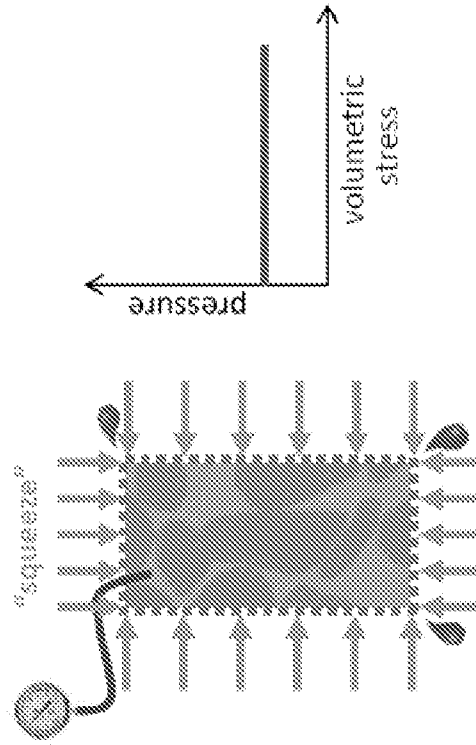
Undrained (ultra-low perm/shale):

Closed to fluid mass transfer
→ pore pressure increases

$$\Delta p = B \times \Delta \sigma_v$$

Skempton coefficient

pressure

volumetric stress

FIG. 1B

Drained (high permeability):

Open to fluid mass transfer
→ pore pressure stays constant

"squeeze"

pressure

volumetric stress

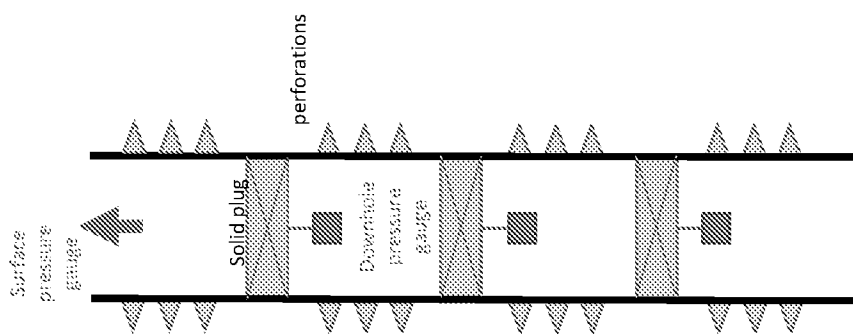**FIG. 1A**
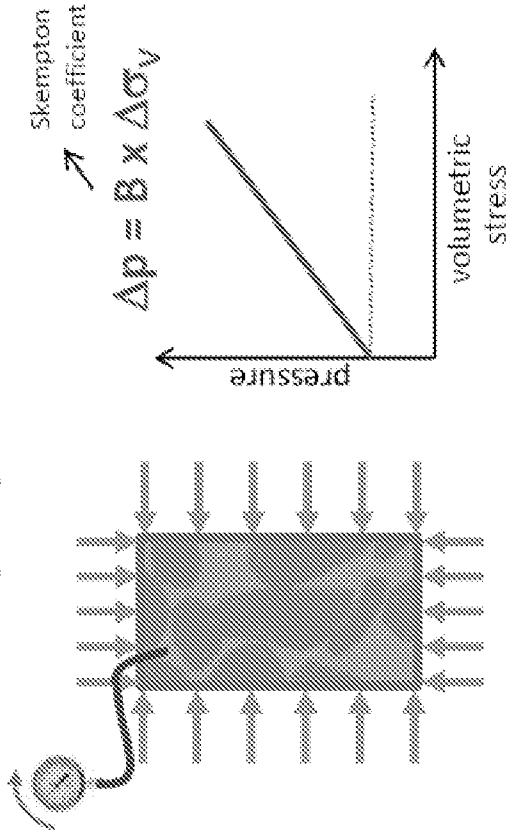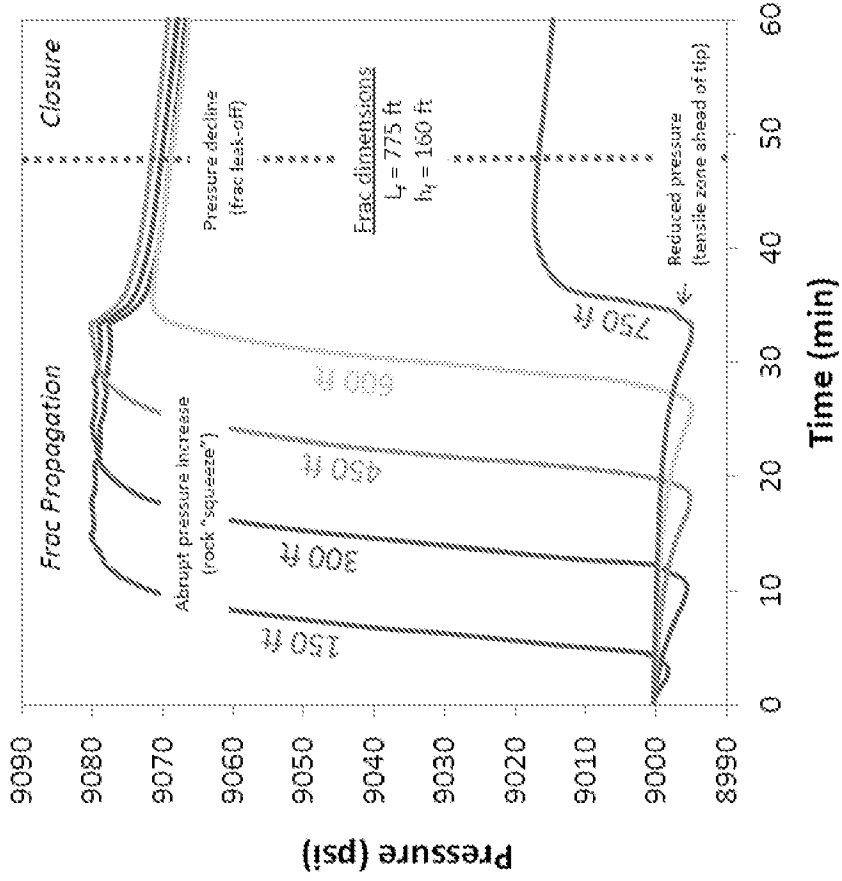
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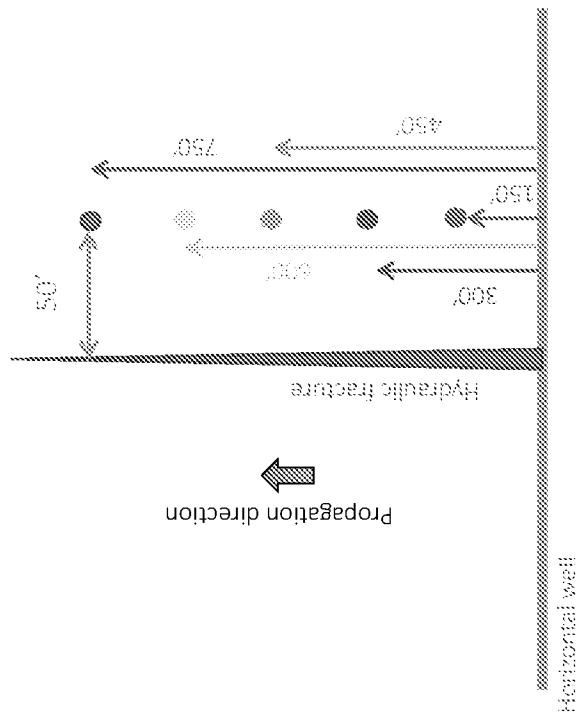
FIG. 2A
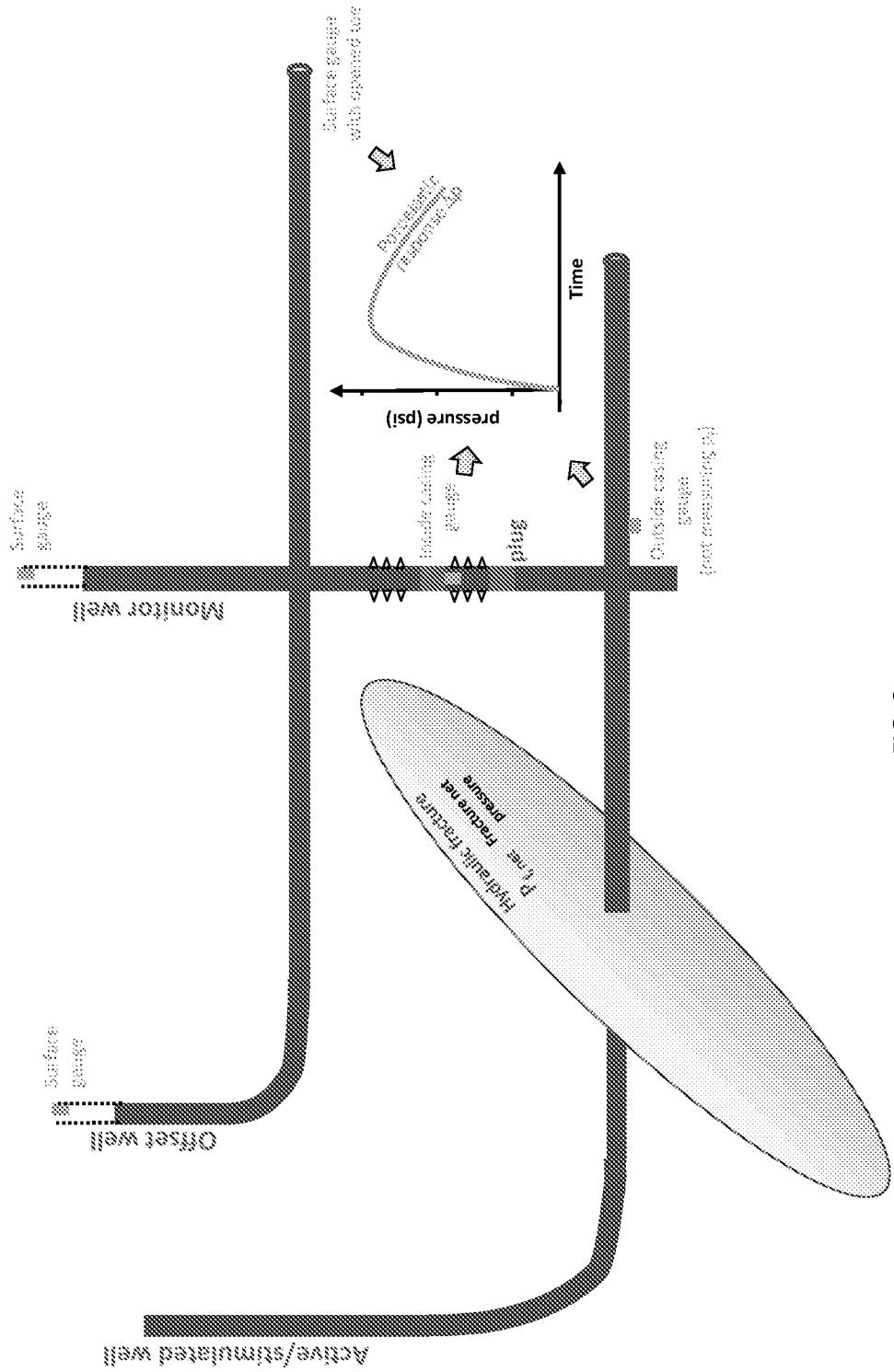
FIG. 3

Perforated monitor well
(single zone)

perforations

Surface
pressure
gauge

FIG. 4A

FIG. 4B

Hydraulic fracture
(mini-frac, full-stage)

Surface pressure gauge

FIG. 4C

Surface pressure gauge
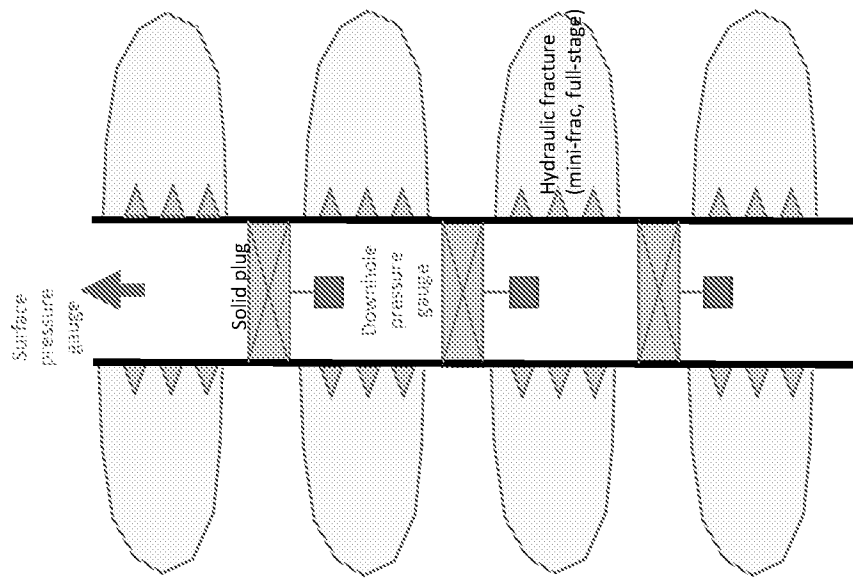
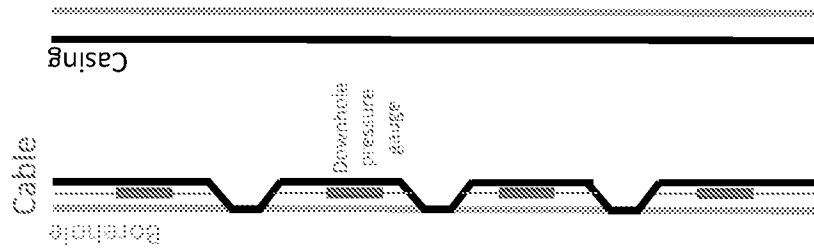Solid plug

Downhole pressure gauge

Hydraulic fracture (mini-frac, full-stage)
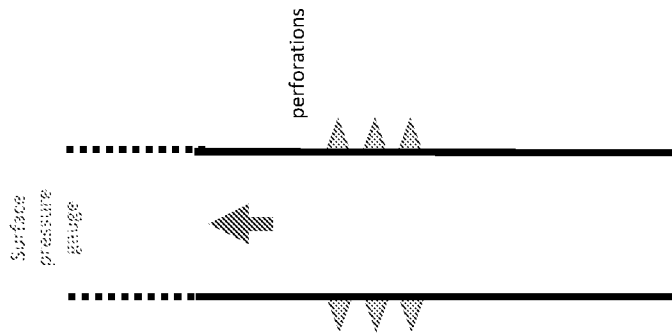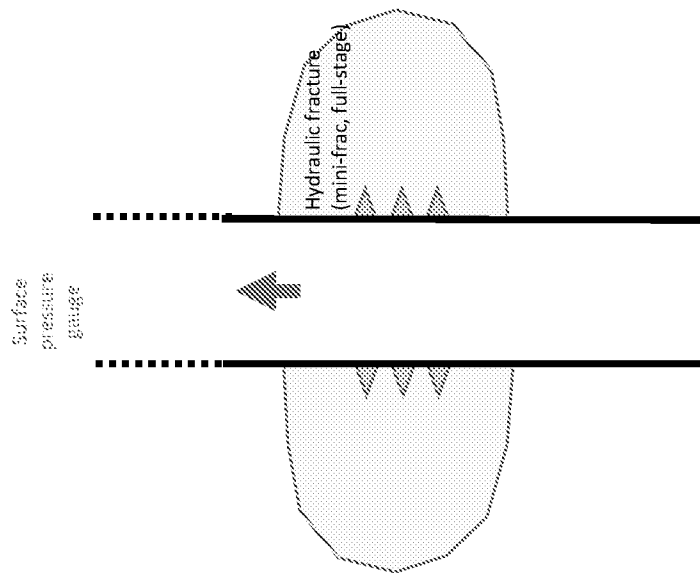
FIG. 4D

FIG. 5

FIG. 6A

FIG. 6B

FIG. 6C
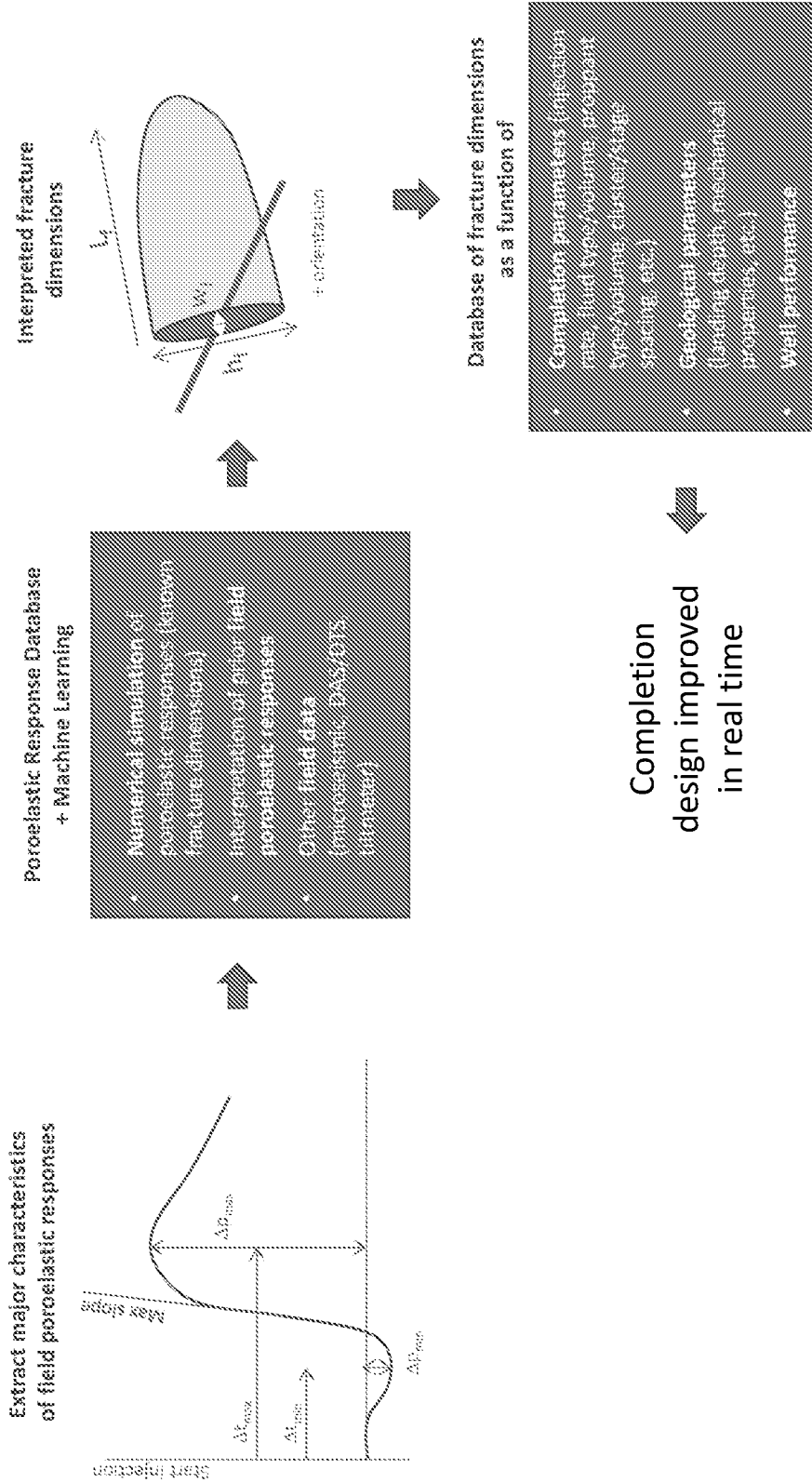
FIG. 7

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC(8) - E21B 47/06, E21B 33/124 (2019.01)
CPC - E21B 43/26, E21B 47/06, E21B 47/1015, E21B 47/044, G01V 5/101

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

See Search History Document

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

See Search History Document

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

See Search History Document

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 2009/0090505 A1 (McDaniel et al.), 09 April 2009 (09.04.2009), entire document, especially Abstract; para [0015], [0023], [0038]-[0041], [0050]-[0052]	1-20
Y	US 2015/0176394 A1 (CONOCOPHILLIPS COMPANY), 25 June 2015 (25.06.2015), entire document, especially Abstract; para [0023], [0038]-[0039]	1-20
A	US 2010/0250216 A1 (Narr et al.), 30 September 2010 (30.09.2010), entire document	1-20
A	US 2014/0083681 A1 (Taylor et al.), 27 March 2014 (27.03.2014), entire document	1-20

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.   ☐ See patent family annex.

*	Special categories of cited documents:	
"A"	document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"E"	earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date	"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"L"	document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"O"	document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	
"P"	document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report
11 July 2019	25 JUL 2019

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US	Authorized officer:
Mail Stop PCT, Attn: ISA/US, Commissioner for Patents P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450	Lee W. Young
Facsimile No. 571-273-8300	PCT Helpdesk: 571-272-4300 PCT OSP: 571-272-7774

Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet) (January 2015)