

# OIL REGION

## NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

### DRIVING TOUR

Venango  
and Crawford  
Counties  
Pennsylvania



## How to Use this Guide

### Directions and Quick facts


Although this Driving Tour was designed with the City of Franklin as its starting point due to its proximity to Interstate 80, the tour can commence from any of the municipalities designated on the tour.

### Maps & Histories

The shaded side panels provide a series of facts about the driving routes or featured communities. The main text of each two-page section provides more detailed interpretive information on the region and its communities and people. There are inset maps of each municipality included in the tour.

### Attractions

Points of interest along the route are noted across the bottom of the page, including parks, museums, trails, and scenic views.

Each attraction described in this section is highlighted with an oil drop  and is keyed to locations on the accompanying map.

Though every attempt has been made to assure the accuracy of the information, please call ahead before visiting sites and check routes for closures and detours.

## The Valley that Changed the World

The Pennsylvania oil fields gave birth to the technology of the modern petroleum industry. On August 27, 1859, Edwin Drake's wooden derrick and steam engine drilled the first commercially successful oil well in the world. Speculators quickly followed and forests of derricks filled the Oil Creek Valley all the way to the Allegheny River. Fortunes were made among lucky drillers as others saw time and efforts wasted

on dry wells. The vast amount of petroleum production shifted away from the Oil Creek Valley in the 1870s, but traces of the early boom can be found all along the roadways and trails of the ORNHA.



**Franklin**

**Pages 4 & 5**



**Franklin  
to Titusville**

**Pages 6 & 7**



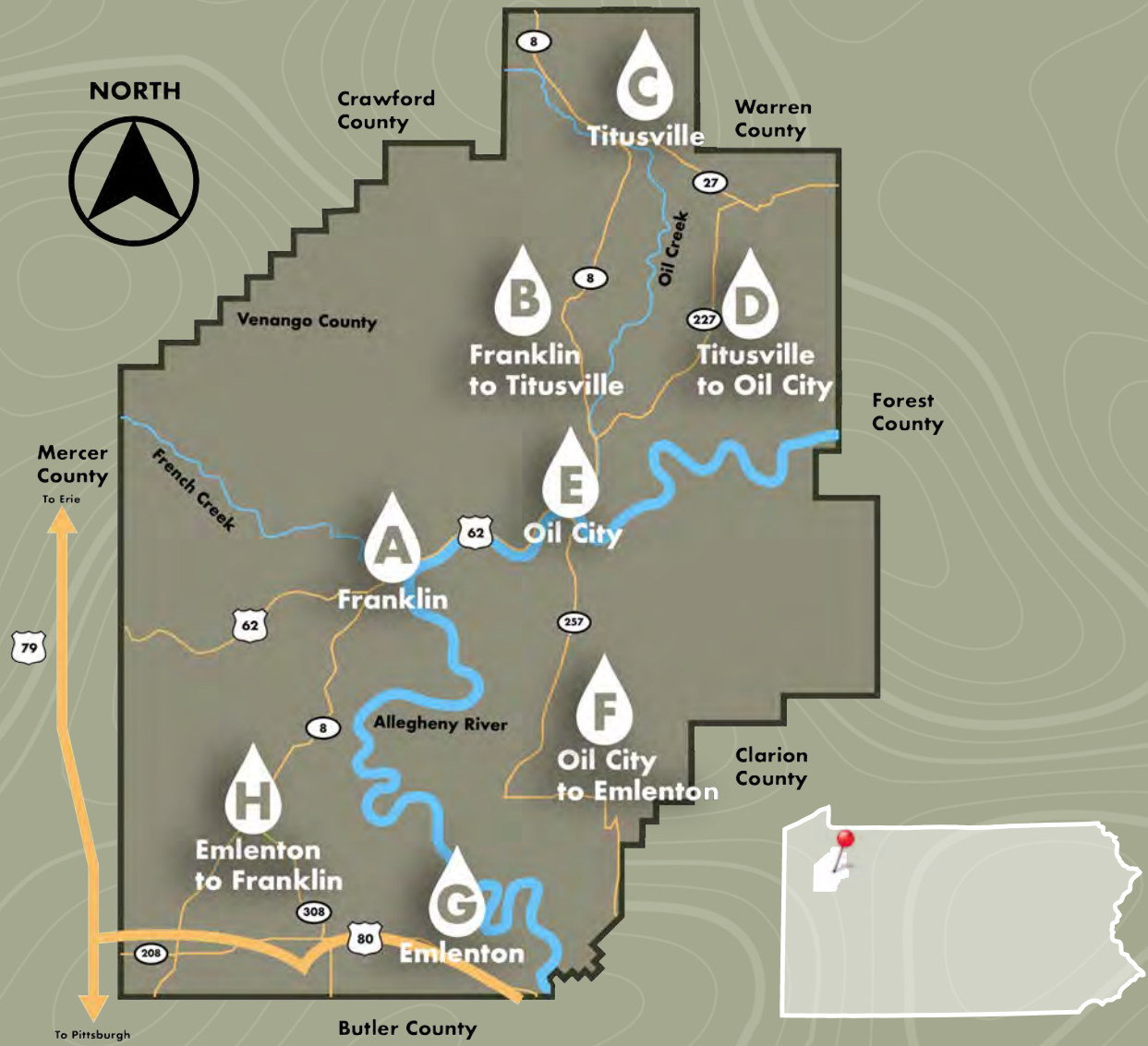
**Titusville**

**Pages 8 & 9**



**Titusville  
to Oil City**

**Pages 10 - 13**



**Oil City**

**Pages 14 & 15**



**Oil City  
to Emlenton**

**Pages 16 & 17**



**Emlenton**

**Pages 18 & 19**



**Emlenton  
to Franklin**

**Pages 20 & 21**

## Major Themes in this Guide

This guide shares the significance of the Oil Region National Heritage Area.



The land: its topography and geology shaped the history of the area.



Oil: its discovery created a rapid series of changes that altered the land, economy, and lives of people in this region.



Technological advances: the oil industry was born in this region and continues to have a dominant impact on the world.

## Timeline of the Oil Region National Heritage Area:

### The Lay of the Land

The land—its topography and geology—shaped the history of this region. Prior to the oil boom, the Allegheny River was an important route Native Americans used for trade. The confluence of the Allegheny and French Creek, present-day Franklin, became a strategic place for fort-building by the French and British. The land determined settlement patterns in

the early 1800s. Communities grew along the Allegheny River and its tributaries for trading endeavors, as well as for shipping lumber, the primary commodity of these heavily forested hills prior to the oil boom. In places where iron ore and limestone were abundant, small hamlets developed within Venango County forests to support blast furnace operations, where iron ore was



#### Prior to 1859 The Pennsylvania Frontier

- Many Native American tribes had a longstanding presence in the area, including the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) and Lenape (Delaware).
- The French traveled and laid claim to the region in 1749. They began building Fort Machault in present-day Franklin in 1753.
- George Washington arrived in the region to challenge French claims in 1753.
- The French left the area to the British in 1759.
- The British built Fort Venango in 1760.
- Emlenton, Franklin, and Titusville were surveyed.
- Chief Cornplanter was granted three tracts of land by the state, including one at present-day Oil City in 1796.



#### 1859 to 1872 Oil Fever

- Edwin Drake struck oil in 1859.
- The refining of petroleum led to the discovery of kerosene, which replaced expensive whale oil for lighting, making it affordable for most people.
- Pithole grew to 15,000 people in nine months in 1865.
- Oil success brought railroad and shipping businesses to the region.
- Refineries sprung up throughout the area.
- Van Syckle invented the first pipeline in 1865.



#### 1872 to 1892 Inventing an Industry

- The oil riots of 1872 broke out in the Pennsylvania Oil Regions.
- The National Transit Co., a subsidiary of Standard Oil, was organized in Oil City in 1881.
- J.D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Co. dominated the transportation and refining sectors of the petroleum industry.

smelted to create pig iron to ship down river to Pittsburgh.

But it was that ultimate geological anomaly, “Seneca oil,” named for the Native Americans who collected petroleum floating on the surface of Oil Creek and surrounding streams, that would result in the largest impact to the land and people of the region. Drake’s drilling of the first successful commercial oil well

August 27, 1859 led to rapid changes to the landscape, economy, population, and, ultimately, the way of life of people in this region. As the rush commenced, vast numbers of trees were cut, the streams and rivers were filled with boats teeming with oil, and refineries and other production facilities sprung up throughout the region. Yet, with careful conservation in Oil Creek State Park and beyond, the rolling, green hills and lush

valleys you see today have recovered their beauty in the years since Drake struck oil.



### **1892 to 1930 Creating a Market**

- On June 4 the Flood and Fire of 1892 occurred in Titusville and Oil City, destroying many homes and businesses.
- Rebuilding after the 1892 disaster stabilized the urban centers and residential areas of Titusville and Oil City.
- Oil money resulted in an impressive variety of residential and commercial architectural styles throughout the region.
- Pennzoil was incorporated in the 1920s.
- The oil industry’s next big field opened in Texas when Spindletop was drilled in 1901.
- The growth of the automobile industry and WWI resulted in an ever-growing demand for petroleum products.



### **1930 to Today The Modern Era**

- Quaker State was formed in 1931.
- WWII continued the worldwide demand for oil.
- “Pennsylvania crude” earned market niche for the high-grade lubricants derived from it.
- 1972 oil embargo led to downsizing and changing attitudes towards oil.
- Environmental concerns regarding pollution and climate change have reshaped the energy market presently, resulting in an ascendance of renewable energy options.

# Franklin

Incorporated in 1828  
Population: 6,077 (2020 census)



Franklin is the only city in Pennsylvania to have had four different forts within its borders. Pennsylvania state historical markers can be found near the sites of all four forts.



Franklin's downtown was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on March 21, 1979.

Built in 1868 by architects Samuel Sloane and Addison Hutton of Philadelphia, this impressive courthouse features two asymmetrical towers (the clock tower taller than the other). This departure from pure symmetry was a hallmark of Sloan and Hutton's courthouse style. The courthouse is flanked by parks forming an iconic and picturesque view. Franklin has been the county seat since 1800.



# It Began With The River

Due to its positioning along the waterways at the confluence of the Allegheny River and French Creek, the area of present-day Franklin is an historically significant site predating the oil boom era. Long before settlers came to the region, this area was settled by the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) and Lenape (Delaware), and later by various other tribes. By the 1740s, British and French trappers and explorers visited the area, with Scottish fur trader John Fraser establishing a trading post in the area until the territorial conflict escalated between the English and the French in the Ohio River Valley.

During a period of rapid fort building from Erie to

Pittsburgh by the French and the English, the French strategically claimed the area now known as Franklin, building Fort Machault where French Creek and the Allegheny River meet in 1753. That year George Washington made his early winter journey on behalf of the Crown in Virginia to deliver a diplomatic message to the French to evacuate the region, stopping for a time in Franklin on his way north to Fort Leboeuf. The French burnt the recently completed Fort Machault in 1759 as they abandoned it to protect the threatened Fort Niagara to the north. The English claimed the site for the Crown, building their Fort Venango in 1760. The fort lasted until 1763, when it was attacked by the Seneca



## Venango County Historical Society

307 South Park Street, 814-432-8260  
[VenangoCountyHistory.org](http://VenangoCountyHistory.org)

Visit the ca. 1859 Egbert-Mullins-Koos House to view exhibits derived from this repository for materials relating to the county's past. A genealogical library and an archival resource center are available for those interested in researching the history of the county.



## St. John's Episcopal Church Tiffany Windows

1145 Buffalo Street, 814-432-5161  
[StJohnsFranklin.org](http://StJohnsFranklin.org)

Thirty exceptional stained-glass windows were created and installed by Tiffany Studios of New York between 1901-1917 in the newly rebuilt stone church following a devastating fire in 1900. These magnificent, intricately detailed pieces of art were purchased with donations from congregants.

during Pontiac's Uprising. In 1787, the American Colonial Forces built Fort Franklin, named after Benjamin Franklin. In 1795, Franklin was laid out by Andrew Ellicott, the land surveyor who completed Pierre Charles L'Enfant's plan for Washington D.C. The last fortification, commonly known as Old Garrison, was built in 1796 for U.S. troops, later serving as a prison for the town.

The town became a locus for oil-derived wealth in Venango County during the oil boom with the steady production of high-grade petroleum in the area, known as "Franklin's Heavy Crude." This wealth enabled homes to be built on a much larger and more ornate scale than the modest Greek Revival and folk style houses built prior to the Civil War.

A prime example is Miller Park, laid out by General Charles Miller, one of the principles of the Galena-Signal Oil Co., as an idyllic Victorian planned development of mansions with narrow, winding streets and green spaces.



### Johnny Appleseed

John Chapman (1774-1845) briefly lived in the Franklin area. Before this region was known for its oil production, John planted over 1,200 acres of land with apple trees for future settlers to enjoy.



### 3 ORNHA Visitor Center, Franklin Chamber of Commerce

1255 Liberty Street, 814-432-5823  
FranklinAreaChamber.org

Learn about the many well-known historical figures who made their way to Franklin, including Gaiänt'wakê or Kaiiontwa'kon (Chief Cornplanter), George Washington, John Chapman (Johnny Appleseed), the notorious John Wilkes Booth, and more on the history of Franklin.

### 4 Debence Antique Music World

1261 Liberty Street, 814-432-8350  
DebenceMusicWorld.com

A collection of over 200 antique mechanical musical instruments dating from the mid-1800s to the 1950s. See and hear this wide-ranging collection of rare music machines featuring nickelodeons, band organs, orchestrions, music boxes, and more.

## Franklin To Titusville

### Directions

Travel along 13th Street across the bridge over French Creek. Keep right following signs to Rocky Grove Avenue (PA-417 N). As you continue on PA-417 out of Rocky Grove for about 6 miles, you will see a right turn off for Two Mile Run County Park at Baker Road. Follow PA-417 6 more miles until you reach the stop sign at PA-8. Turn left onto PA-8 and remain on this route until you see the sign for Drake Well as you enter Titusville. Turn right on Bloss Street at the first stop light in Titusville, and continue straight following signs to Drake Well Museum. This trip is approximately 20 miles.

### About the Drive

The road from Franklin to Titusville takes you through rambling farmlands and forests to Dempseytown, Cherrytree, and eventually across Oil Creek into Titusville. Oil Creek gained its moniker because oil would naturally float on top of the water. This waterway is where the story of the ORNHA begins.

## “Drake’s Folly” Makes History

Petroleum had been collected for years along Oil Creek by Native Americans and early settlers who used it for medicinal purposes and to lubricate farming equipment. The true power of oil was realized when Samuel Kier perfected his refining process, turning the oil he collected as a byproduct from his father’s salt wells in Tarentum, PA into a superior illuminate. Now there was a use and a need for oil—but there was not an efficient way to harvest a large supply of the product from the ground.

The Seneca Oil Co. of New Haven, Connecticut sent the unlikely “Colonel” Edwin Laurentine Drake, a former railroad conductor,

to Titusville to try his hand at drilling an oil well on the leased Brewer, Watson, and Co. farm, at Watson Flats in Venango County. Drake supervised the building of a house for the steam engine to power the percussion drilling tools, which hung from the attached derrick. A blacksmith and salt well driller from Tarentum named William “Uncle Billy” Smith assisted him in drilling the well. Initially, the bore hole kept filling with glacial till. Drake ingeniously solved this problem by directing his men to drive an iron pipe into the bedrock through which the drilling tools could continue boring, uninhibited by debris. On August 26, 1859 the drill bit dropped into a crevice at 69 ½ feet deep. Work stopped for the day. On



### Two Mile Run County Park

471 Beach Road Franklin, PA 16323  
814-676-6116 or 877-896-6453  
[Co.Venango.Pa.Us/152/Parks-Recreation](http://Co.Venango.Pa.Us/152/Parks-Recreation)

Consisting of 2,695 acres of forest and fields plus the 144-acre Justus Lake, Two Mile offers swimming at Crosby Beach, lake fishing (a variety of warm and cold species), boating, kayaking, hiking, and an extensive network of trails, and a variety of campsites.



August 27, Smith checked on the well to find it filled with oil. Drake had discovered a successful method to extract vast amounts of oil from deep underground.

Word of Drake's successful method spread quickly. Folks rushed in from all over to lease land and try their hands at drilling their own wells. By summer of 1860 many successful wells were drilled in the Oil Creek Valley, producing thousands of barrels a day and making many people very wealthy very quickly. The Valley was denuded of trees, as lumber was used to build the many derricks and housing for the thousands of workers who flooded the area.

As for Drake, the eventual abundance of oil due to the drilling boom caused prices to drop so low he and his partners went out of business. Drake spent the rest of his life ill and impoverished. While the original well was left defunct, the Pennsylvania Oil Region led the country into an ever-growing quest for oil and, ultimately, the development of a colossal industry.

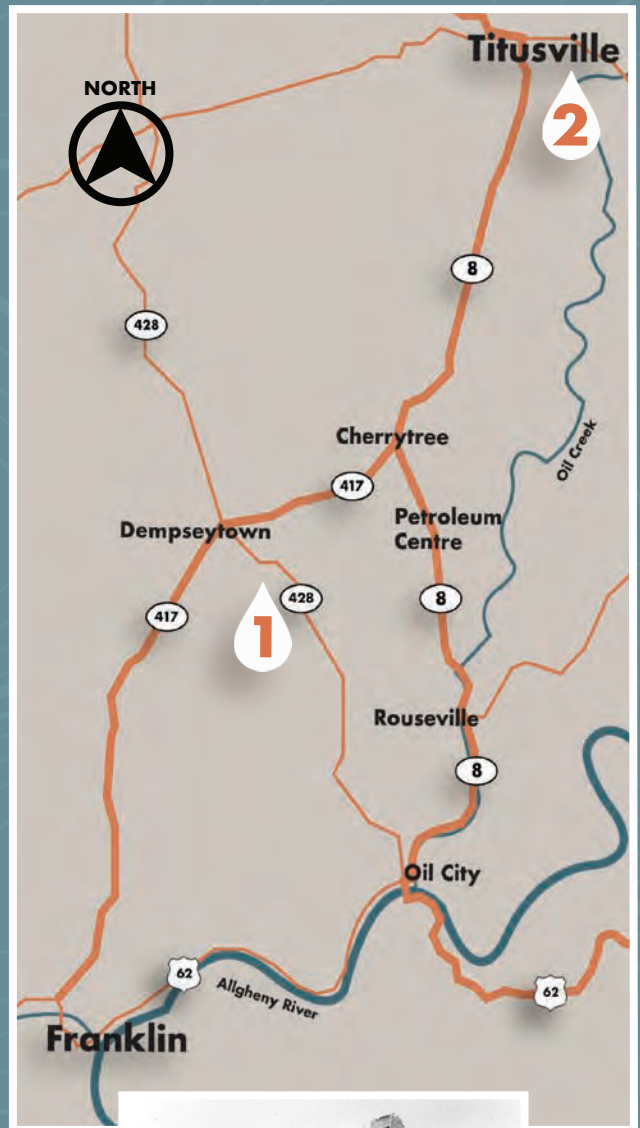


Photo courtesy of Drake Well Museum & Park, PHMC, Titusville, PA. DW 676.

## Drake Well Museum

202 Museum Lane, Titusville, PA 16354  
814-827-2797  
DrakeWell.org

The museum features indoor exhibits consisting of documents and artifacts that tell of events, people, places, and technological advancements related to the Pennsylvania oil industry from 1850-present. Outdoor exhibits of working oil field machinery include an impressive operating replica marking the actual site where Drake drilled his famous well.

## Titusville

Incorporated in 1847

Population: 5,262 (2020 Census)



The City of Titusville was named after Jonathan Titus, who founded the town with his uncle Samuel Kerr. Kerr and Titus, surveyors with the Holland Land Co., decided to put down claims in the Oil Creek Valley. Prior to Drake's successful well, the Titusville area's primary industry was lumber, due to the dense surrounding forests.



As a result of the wealth that flowed into town from the early oil industry and its ancillary businesses, Titusville's wide, walkable streets are a compendium of Victorian residential architectural styles.



Titusville's 38-block historic district was listed in 1985 on the National Register of Historic Places.

## Ida Tarbell 1857-1944

Ida Minerva Tarbell was the most famous female journalist of her time. Her *The History of the Standard Oil Company* became a landmark in investigative journalism (termed "muckraking," at the time), taking on John D. Rockefeller, the richest and most powerful man in America. Born in a log house in Erie County, Pennsylvania, Tarbell spent her early years in rough-and-tumble Rouseville, Venango County, where her father owned a wooden oil tank-building business. When Ida was 13, the Tarbells moved to Titusville. After graduating at the top of her high school class in Titusville,



Tarbell enrolled at Allegheny College in 1876, where she majored in biology and was the only woman in her class.

For several years, Tarbell cut her journalistic teeth as an editor and writer at *The Chautauquan*, which was then being published in Meadville. Ida moved to Paris for a few years to pursue freelance writing, having widely published in *Scribner's*, *McClure's*, and other American publications during her time abroad. After she published a widely celebrated serialized



### 1 Perry Street Station of Oil Creek & Titusville Railroad and ORNHA Visitor Center

409 South Perry Street, 814-676-1733

Octr.org

Depart from the historic 1890s Perry Street Station on a 3-hour round trip through "the Valley that Changed the World." Experience the setting of the oil boom and learn about those who made the Oil Creek Valley their home in that era. Spot a variety of wildlife as the train travels through Oil Creek State Park terminating and returning from Rynd Farm.



### 2 Woodlawn Cemetery

PA-8, west of Titusville

Designed by Rochester, New York landscape architect William Webster in the early 1870s, Woodlawn Cemetery is an assemblage of late nineteenth century mortuary architectural styles. Edwin Drake and Ida Tarbell are among the many notable figures from the oil boom era buried here. Drake is memorialized by an elaborate monument commissioned by oil executive H. H. Rogers of Standard Oil. The classical bronze sculpture, "The Driller," created by sculptor Charles Henry Neihaus, forms the centerpiece of the monument.

biography of Lincoln's life (eventually published as a book) in *McClure's*, she moved to New York City and became an editor for the magazine in 1899.

From 1902-1904 Tarbell published her "The History of the Standard Oil Company," nineteen serialized articles on the business practices of Standard Oil in *McClure's*. Tarbell's anti-monopolist "muckraker" perspective was forged as a young teen when she witnessed the Oil Riots of 1872. The riots occurred when news came to light regarding the South Improvement Co., a secret deal in which the railroads gave significant monetary rebates to the largest refiners (foremost J.D. Rockefeller) at the expense of smaller producers. It was during this explosive period in the Oil Region that Tarbell

witnessed the tumult and rage expressed by independent producers such as her father toward Rockefeller and his ilk. Shining light on the improper practices Rockefeller engaged in to form his monopoly, Tarbell's writings eventually led to President Theodore Roosevelt's Justice Department filing suit against Standard Oil in 1906. This suit, using the precedent of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act passed in the 1890s, barred the formation of monopolistic trusts and "restraints on trade." In 1911 the Supreme Court reached a decision that broke the behemoth Standard Oil Corp. into 33 separate companies. Her research and reporting on the subject were exhaustive, burnishing her reputation as one of the nation's premier investigative journalists. *The New York Times* called Tarbell the "Dean of Women Authors in this Country" in her January 7, 1944 obituary.



### 3 Oil Heritage Interior Ceiling Mural

Farmer's National Bank  
127 West Spring Street

Completed in 1919, the Titusville Trust Co. building (now owned by Farmer's National Bank of Emlenton) was designed by British architect Alfred Charles Bossom. The Classical-style building contains an ornate interior capped off by a series of vibrant murals depicting the oil industry, with the central panel featuring Edwin Drake, composed by renowned muralist Alfred Valiant. The firm Mack, Jenney, and Tyler composed the surrounding murals which feature various modes of transportation used to ship oil.

### 4 Heisman Monument and Historical Marker at Historic Carter Field

Titusville Middle School, 415 Water Street  
Carter Field, East Central Avenue

A monument dedicated to football legend John Heisman, the "Father of the Forward Pass," is on the corner of Water and Brown streets at the Titusville Middle School, near the field on which Heisman played a rugby-like variation of football. Widely credited for innovating the modern game of football, Heisman spent his formative years in Titusville, graduating as salutatorian of the class of 1887. The John William Heisman state historical marker is at the intersection of Central Avenue and Brown Street at Titusville High School's historic Carter Field.

### 5 Ida Tarbell House

324 East Main Street, 814-677-3152  
Facebook.com/TarbellHouse

Owned and managed by the Oil Region Alliance, Ida Tarbell's father Franklin built this home in 1870 from materials he salvaged from the Bonta House Hotel in Pithole. The ORA restored the home as closely as possible to the period of Ida Tarbell's residency, including a reconstruction of the cupola. Call ahead to the Oil Region Alliance to schedule a tour or to find out about upcoming events.



## Titusville to Oil City

### Directions

Follow PA-27 E out of Titusville. Continue straight towards Pleasantville. Turn right (south) at the junction of PA-227 for 0.9 miles, taking a left onto PA-227 at the stop sign to reach Pithole City Historic Site or Oil Creek State Park. If going to Pithole City, continue about 5.2 miles and turn left at Pithole Rd. (look for signs), continuing about 2 miles to the site.

To reach Oil Creek State Park, drive about 7 miles on PA-227 to the village of Plumer, turning right onto Petroleum Centre Road and continuing approximately 2.7 miles. Follow signs to Oil Creek State Park.

Retrace the route back to PA-227, continuing 3.8 miles to the stoplight in Rouseville where a right hand turn on PA-8 will lead to the Coal Oil Johnny House (1 mile).



Image of Red-Hot.  
From *Sketches In Crude-Oil* by John J. McLaurin, 1898, p. 170.

### About the Drive

The drive up Fieldmore Hill on PA-27 east of Oil Creek showcases the natural beauty of a hilly landscape that was once decimated by the oil boom. Heavy hemlocks surround the springs that once fed the spas at the site where the Fieldmore Hotel, an early twentieth century sanitarium, once stood.

If you continue straight on PA-27, you will reach the historic borough of Pleasantville.

As you turn right onto PA-227, the drive from Pleasantville to Oil City features verdant fields and forests that would have been filled with tall wooden derricks at the height of the oil boom.

### 1 Van Syckle Pipeline Historical Marker

PA-227 W, four miles south of Pleasantville

Teamsters using horse-drawn wagons were the only mode of transporting oil out of remote boomtowns to viable waterways. As a result, teamsters named their prices for shipping oil by the barrel. In 1865, Samuel Van Syckle constructed a pipeline to move oil using pumps, a much more efficient and cost-effective mode of transporting oil. Van Syckle's invention became the first successful pipeline, running five miles west from Pithole to the Miller Farm Railhead on the Oil Creek Railroad; oil could then be transported by train. This marker stands in proximity to where the pipeline traveled.

### 2 Pithole City Historic Site

814-827-2797

[DrakeWell.org](http://DrakeWell.org)

When the Frazier Well came in on January 7, 1865, the remote, hilly landscape surrounding Pithole Creek instantaneously became the site of an extravagant boomtown. Its population ballooned from seven families to 15,000 residents over the course of a year. Boasting theaters, opera houses, 54 hotels, and the third busiest Post Office in Pennsylvania for a short period, Pithole quickly flared into existence as a town then burned out, or burned down, just as fast as it appeared. Pithole's decline occurred due to low oil prices, the loss of workers frequenting the town's businesses, and several major fires. By 1867, Pithole fully busted—and this once bucolic hollow became a polluted, treeless, abandoned landscape. Today, the ecosystem at Pithole has recovered—and the land that was once the town is now mowed and maintained to reveal the layout of the streets that once were, with informational signs where notable buildings stood. The Visitor Center and site are owned and operated by Drake Well Museum and Park.

# Pleasantville

Incorporated in 1850

Population: 846 (2020 Census)

💧 The Borough of Pleasantville was founded by Aaron Benedict in 1821. Within this charming village you will find historic churches such as the notable Greek Revival style Free Methodist Church, formally known as Allegheny Baptist Church (420 West Main Street). Individually listed on the National Register, this church was built by Manley Colton Beebe in 1847-1849. You will also find Victorian residences in a variety of styles, such as those along Chestnut Street. Built by Manley Colton Beebe's architect grandson, of the same name, the Pleasantville Municipal Building (1935) is an excellent example of a Great Depression-era federal public works project (funded by either the WPA, the PWA, or the Federal Emergency Relief Administration). Constructed of timber with an exterior of rubble fieldstone veneer, the large arch doorways (now converted to windows and surrounds) indicate that this building once housed the Pleasantville Volunteer Fire Department.



*Pleasantville Borough Building  
Photo Courtesy  
of Venango County  
Historical Society*



## 3 Oil Creek State Park

814-676-5915

[Dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/FindAPark/OilCreekStatePark/Pages/default.aspx](https://Dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/FindAPark/OilCreekStatePark/Pages/default.aspx)

Oil Creek State Park offers a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities including hiking, biking, fishing, and cross-country skiing. As you follow Petroleum Centre Road to the park, the cross-country ski area is located 1.5 miles on your right. It features its own parking lot, warming hut, and several trails ranging in difficulty.

## Boom and Bust: Landscape of a Boom Town

This area was known for the rapid rise and fall of boomtowns in the 1870s. As you travel down PA-227, you will see Shamburg Church (dedicated in 1915) at the corner of Fleming Road. Shamburg was an early boomtown that sprung up around that extremely productive oil field in the 1870s. As with most boomtowns, Shamburg was comprised of quickly constructed wooden

frame structures that were eventually demolished once the rush ended in that field. Red Hot, another boomtown that also sprung up in the vicinity was built so quickly it was bereft of any sort of community buildings, consisting only of housing for workers who were to extract as much oil from the ground as they could as quickly as possible.



Pithole, c. 1865  
Photo courtesy of Drake Well Museum  
& Park, PHMC, Titusville, PA. DW 13.



Photo courtesy of Drake Well Museum  
& Park, PHMC, Titusville, PA. DW 25.

### 4 Petroleum Centre

Continue west 1.4 miles along Petroleum Centre Road to enter Petroleum Centre, another oil boom ghost town. Petroleum Centre's heyday was from 1863-1870. Once the Central Petroleum Company drilled several wells on the McClintock farm, it platted streets and leased building lots establishing a town with a population of 3,000 people. Lacking any form of government, law enforcement, sanitation or public works, Petroleum Centre quickly gained a reputation as the "wickedest town East of the Mississippi." Gone are the days of gambling houses and brothels, and now only the Cropp House, which had been the Egbert Oil Company Office, and the stone steps of the George H. Bissel & Company Bank remain. Follow the 45-minute walking tour of the history of Petroleum Centre, or explore the several hiking trails dotted with relics from the boom days. Petroleum Centre boasts excellent trout fishing, canoeing and kayaking, and a trailhead for the 9.7 mile paved bike trail that ends at Drake Well. Pavilions, picnic tables, and a large playground are within the Egbert Farm Day Use Area, which is also equipped with two charging stations for electric vehicles.



## Coal Oil Johnny

Coal Oil Johnny the multi-millionaire was born John Washington Steele, a humble farm boy. Once oil was found on his property he amassed a fortune of over \$8 million by modern reckoning, spending all of it in under a year as he earned his moniker and became a byword for the eccentricities of the wealthy.



## 5 Coal Oil Johnny House

814-677-3152

Main entry along PA-8

Relocated from across the creek, this home features interpretive panels detailing the travels of the man who spent his entire oil fortune in a year. To schedule a tour of the house, contact the Oil Region Alliance.

## 6 McClintock Well #1

Turn right off of PA-8 at the Pennsylvania Historical Marker just north of Oil City. The McClintock Well #1 interpretive site and trailhead are open year-round dawn to dusk. Drilled two years after the Drake Well in August of 1861 by Brewer, Watson and Company, who leased the land on the Hamilton McClintock Farm, the McClintock Well #1 is the oldest continuously producing oil well in the world. Producing oil for more than 150 years, this well is still pumped by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, who has owned it since 2000. The McClintock Well site also serves as a trailhead for the McClintock Trail.

## Oil City

Incorporated in 1871

Population: 9,613 (2020 census)



As the oil boom took hold, a large influx of immigrants of various nationalities arrived in Oil City to satisfy the high demand for workers. Many descendants from this wave of immigration remain in Oil City today.



Three separate communities combined to make Oil City: Laytonia, Siverleyville, and Cornplanter.



Oil City contains three historic districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Oil City Commercial District and the Oil City Southside District were added in 1997. The Oil City North Side Historic District was added in 1999.

In 1796, 303 acres was given to Seneca Chief Cornplanter (Gyantwachia) by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in return for his peacekeeping efforts among natives and colonists. The tract changed hands several times as white settlers arrived.

First known as Cornplanter and then Oilville, the unincorporated village at the confluence of Oil Creek and the Allegheny River found itself in a strategic location after the 1859 discovery of oil. The "Hub of Oildom," as Oil City was known, became the transportation and financial trading center of the early oil

industry. Flatboats and later steamboats, railroads, and pipelines transported the region's oil through Oil City to Pittsburgh and beyond.

Oil City's population grew from around 25 people in 1859 to more than 6,000 by 1865. The North Side, known as Cottage Hill, contained a large and diverse population of workers, including a substantial number of Polish immigrants, who settled what became known as "Palace Hill."

The North Side was incorporated as the Borough of Oil City in 1862. In 1871, the Borough merged with Venango City on the south side (a portion of which was formerly known as Laytonia) to form the current Oil City. Siverleyville was added in 1910, and the West End Borough completed geographical boundaries of Oil City in 1916. Around this time, Oil City grew to become a major manufacturing, refining, storage, and shipping center.

Two nationally known corporations, Quaker State and Pennzoil, emerged from oil production businesses founded in Oil City in the late 19th century. As leading producers of motor oils and lubricants, these two corporations would continue to provide jobs in the area for nearly a century. Quaker State was incorporated in 1931 and its headquarters remained in Oil City until 1995, when it relocated to Dallas. Pennzoil, originally formed as a marketing company following the dissolution of Standard Oil in 1911, had its corporate headquarters in Oil City until 1965. In 2000, Pennzoil closed its refinery in Rouseville, ending its nearly century-long presence in the Oil Region.



### Venango Museum of Art, Science and Industry and ORNHA Visitor Center

270 Seneca Street, 814-676-2007  
VenangoMuseum.org

This gem of a local museum is housed in an historic U.S. Post Office building built in 1905 in the Beaux Arts style and is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places due to its distinctive architectural style. The museum showcases transportation, oil history, and the history of Venango County, as well as a fabulous 1928 Wurlitzer Theater Organ.



### National Transit Building

206 Seneca Street, 814-678-3017  
OilCityArtsCouncil.org

The National Transit Building is home to numerous non-profit organizations, private artist studios, and galleries featuring work by local and regional artists and artisans.



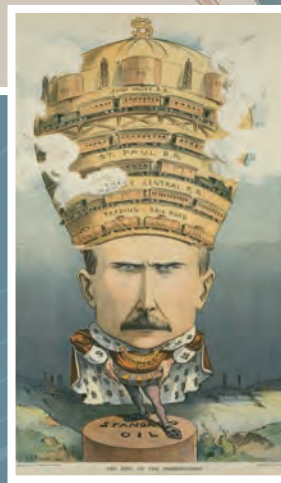
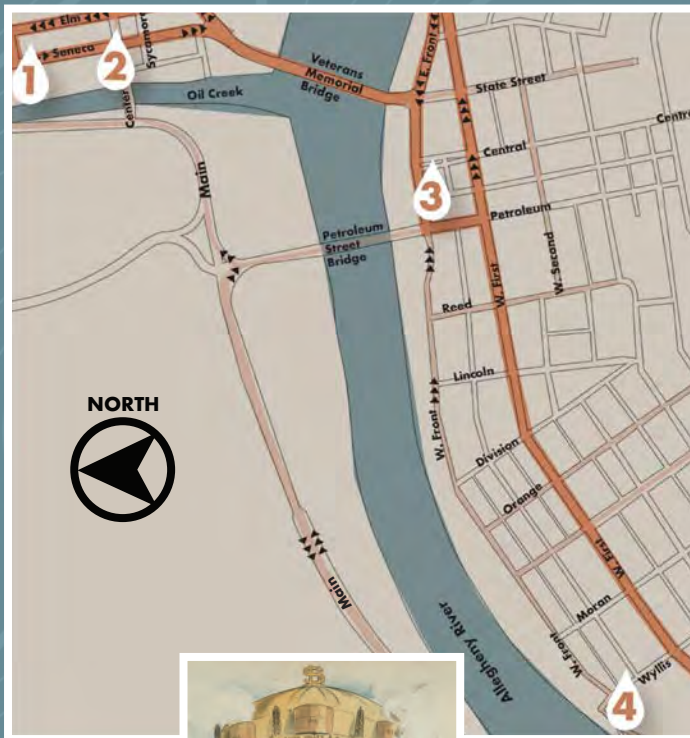
# One Building Symbolizing Total Control

The building on the corner of Seneca and Center streets symbolized the absolute power John D. Rockefeller amassed over the production and distribution of oil in the U.S. during the late 19th century. This building served as the headquarters for the National Transit Co., which managed the pipeline and storage systems Rockefeller had merged under his control. Rockefeller remained in control of a majority of the transportation and refining of U.S. oil until the Theodore Roosevelt Administration filed suit alleging that Standard Oil violated the Sherman Anti-Trust Laws, resulting in the breakup of the Standard Oil monopoly in 1911.

This building also housed the Joseph Seep Purchasing Agency, the exclusive purchaser of oil for Standard Oil Co. The National Transit Building stood directly across the street from the Oil City Oil Exchange at that time. Seep eventually thwarted the Oil Exchange prices, setting his own price

for oil, which soon led to the demise of all oil exchanges. As a result, Seep established the first pricing system for crude oil per barrel.

The primary building was designed in 1889 by Curtis and Archer, Architects, of Fredonia, NY and completed in 1890. The Annex was designed by local architect Joseph P. Brunot in 1896. Stylistically, the buildings are an interpretation of the "Chicago School," a vertical building style characterized by Romanesque and Classical ornamentation. In an interesting twist of fate, politician and environmentalist Ralph Nader purchased the building in the mid-1990s, saving it from demolition. He gave the building to the Oil City Civic Center to own and manage.



John D. Rockefeller as "The King of Combinations" by J.S. Pugh.

## 3 Oil City Library

2 Central Avenue, 814-678-3072  
OilRegionLibraries.org

Built with funds from Andrew Carnegie in coordination with the Oil City Belles Lettres Club, the Carnegie Library of Oil City opened July 6, 1904. Go inside this impressive eclectic Gothic Revival style building to learn more about the city's history and to see what events are happening for all ages.

## 4 Samuel Justus Recreation Trail

Oil City Marina near Wyllis Street and West Front Street. Trailhead marked.

Part of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail, the Justus Trail (named for oil baron Samuel Justus) is 6 miles of paved trail between Oil City and Franklin, overlooking the Allegheny River. Following the former corridor of the Allegheny Valley Railroad, which carried oil from the field to refineries, this trail captures the essence of petroleum history. Stately River Ridge, the 1913 mansion of Joseph C. Sibley, the well-known oil refiner and congressman, sits 4.5 miles down the trail.

## Oil City to Emlenton via Freedom Falls and the Rockland Furnace

### Directions

From Oil City, follow signs for US-62 N to PA-257 S for 6 miles. Continue straight on Cranberry Rockland Road to Pittsville Road/T522 in Rockland (8.8 miles). Continue to the gravel Rockland Station Road/T480 to the unpaved Freedom Falls parking area. Continue a bit further on Rockland Station Road to find the Rockland Furnace (14.8 miles total).

### Rockland Furnace to Emlenton via Nickleville Road

Head northwest on Rockland Station Road/T480. Turn left onto Pittsville Road. At the stop sign turn right onto Rockland Nickleville Road (5.5 miles). Turn right onto PA-38 S (8.5 miles).

### About the Drive

Along this drive you will approach two major transportation routes for oil—the railroad and the river. The railroad followed the river as the preferred method of collecting and distributing oil. The abandoned railroad was converted to a recreational bike trail that is part of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail. On this route you will pass many farms and through hardwood forests of cherry and oak, which remain crucial elements of the local economy today. The Allegheny River is the predominant natural feature of this region, defining the topography and vegetation of the area, connecting a network of waterways, hills, and valleys. Flowing south to Pittsburgh, the Allegheny was the historic transportation link before and during the oil era. Today the river serves as an excellent recreation site for fishing, boating, kayaking, and canoeing.

## The New Iron Age

Prior to 1825, most of the county's products came from farms and forests, but a new industry was born with the discovery of commercial grade iron ore. During the next two decades, at least two dozen stone blast furnaces were erected throughout Venango County, with a heavy concentration in Rockland and Cranberry townships. Furnaces were established in areas rich in iron



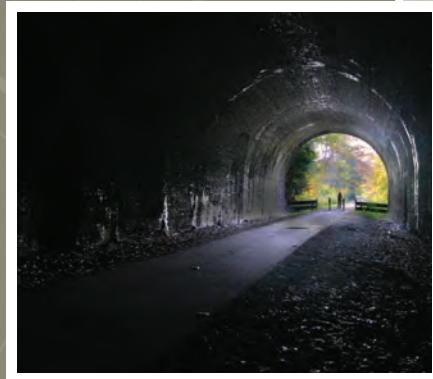
### Freedom Falls/Rockland Furnace

The 20' Freedom Falls waterfall and the 1832 Rockland Furnace (built by Emlenton settler Andrew McCaslin to produce pig iron) are accessible via a small parking area along Rockland Station Road (GPS coordinates 41.23703, -79.74797). This highly visited and photographed area is located on private property, but is open to the public.



ore, limestone, timber, and waterpower, for making the finished product known as pig iron. Due to the heavy reliance on natural resources, these furnaces were often located in remote areas. These bloomery-style furnaces were simple in construction—a massive stone pot-bellied chimney surrounded a hollow chamber lined with sandstone or firebrick. Workers fed ore and charcoal into the top of the furnace, while large double bellows, powered by a water wheel on a creek or river, forced air through an opening in the side of the stack to raise the temperature of the furnace up to 3,000 degrees for smelting the iron.

It took two tons of ore, one to two tons of charcoal, and a few shovelfuls of limestone to produce one ton of pig iron. Iron furnaces operated about nine months of the year, and each developed a small economic complex of its own, including: a company store, a blacksmith shop, homes for the various workers, stables for the horses and oxen that transported the pig iron, and other necessary shops.



## 2 Rockland Tunnel Allegheny River Trail

In 1913, the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) acquired the Allegheny Valley Railroad (built in 1867 to link Pittsburgh to Oil City). By 1916 the PRR built three tunnels to provide a straight run, avoiding the long curvatures of following the Allegheny River. The Rockland Tunnel, also formerly known as the Wood Hill Tunnel, was one of the three. This 2,868-foot-long tunnel, now located on the Allegheny River Trail, is a thrill to pedal through (bike light mandatory!)

## 3 Kahle Lake

Off PA-38 at Nickleville, continue two miles on T-359. [Fishandboat.com/Resource/Lakes/Pages/KahleLake.aspx](http://Fishandboat.com/Resource/Lakes/Pages/KahleLake.aspx)

This 251-acre lake is located on the border of Venango and Clarion counties. Known for its largemouth bass fishery and as an excellent spot to catch panfish, Kahle Lake is accessible by two launch ramps. Parking is available. Boats with electric motors are permitted.

## Emlenton

Incorporated in 1859

Population: 614 (2020 census)



The first Emlenton Bridge was constructed in 1856.



When the first well was drilled on Ritchey Run in 1867, the oil boom took hold in Emlenton.



The Emlenton Light and Fuel Co., which later became part of Columbia Gas, was the first organized gas company in Venango County and the third such in the U.S.



The Emlenton Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1997.



Photo courtesy of Venango County Historical Society

## Historic River Community

Nestled at a bend in the Allegheny River, Emlenton originally served as an important trading center for early settlers of the region due to its location on the waterway. Philadelphian Samuel Mickle Fox purchased land in the vicinity of Emlenton in 1796, which was eventually named for his daughter-in-law, Hannah Emlen, who married Joseph Mickle Fox in 1820. Joseph Fox went on to establish Foxburg down the river as a country estate. Prior to 1820, Andrew McCaslin poled up the Allegheny on a flatbed boat in search of

building stone (stone and lumber were sought after resources of the area at this time). He ultimately decided to purchase the rest of the land that would become the Borough of Emlenton.

No houses were built in the settlement until 1834, at which time Emlenton began to serve as a hub for the burgeoning regional lumber and iron industries. In 1856, Emlenton leaders, taking fiscal advantage of their position on the river, built the first Emlenton Bridge, a covered bridge which served as the only toll bridge at that time spanning the Allegheny. In 1867, eight years after Drake drilled his oil well near Titusville, Emlenton's first oil well was drilled at Ritchey Run. Not only were successful oil wells drilled in the area at this time, but a major supply of natural gas was also discovered in these hills.



### 1 Crawford Center and ORNHA Visitor Center

511 Hill Street, 724-867-8611

In 1928, Henry Jennings Crawford donated the school building that was used until the 1990s. This building now features several businesses, borough offices, and the Blue River and Black Gold Visitor's Center. Emlenton walking tour brochures are available in the literature rack.



### 2 Mineral Springs Park and Hughes Park

The Civic Improvement Society of the early 20th century, later the Emlenton Civic Club, has supported and sponsored the maintenance of Mineral Springs and Hughes Park. Mineral Springs Park is located along the picturesque Richey Run. Mineral Springs contains the Crawford Well #3, which was drilled in 1867 and is one of the oldest oil wells in the world still continuously producing from its original depth. This park has picnic groves, fishing, and trail access along the creek.

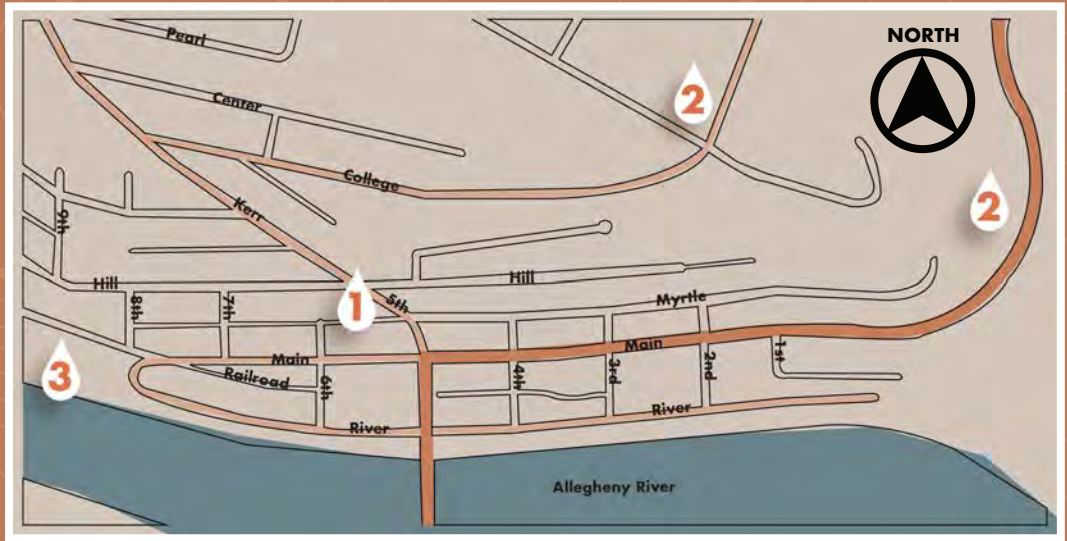
Originally known as Weller's Grove, an idyllic place for dances, parties, and other events, Hughes Park was donated in 1947 by G.I. Hughes to the Emlenton Borough. The entrance to this park is on College Street, below the Emlenton Borough Park's community baseball fields, basketball courts, and tennis courts.

The ample natural gas led to the establishment of the 1882 Emlenton Gas Light and Fuel Co. (later becoming a part of Columbia Gas), and in 1889, the Emlenton Refining Co. (a precursor to the Quaker State Oil Refining Corp).

The Borough's mills, foundries, and machine shops transformed the raw iron materials into the tools and equipment that sustained the region's oil and gas industry. The railroads were built to follow the river, and as a result Emlenton continued to be a major transportation center. Emlenton soon became home to many wealthy industrialists and entrepreneurs, including Henry Jennings "H.J." Crawford. Crawford founded the Emlenton Refining Co. in 1889, and eventually oversaw the merger of nineteen smaller regional refineries into the powerhouse entity of Quaker State Oil Refining Corp. in 1931. Crawford was co-founder,

president, and finally, chairman of the board at the time of his death in 1953. Quaker State remained the dominant business in Emlenton for sixty years, until it sold in 1990 and operations ceased in 2000.

Photo courtesy of Venango County Historical Society



### 3 The Allegheny River

Its Lenape name means "beautiful stream," and the description still holds true, particularly in the nationally designated Wild and Scenic River portion, whose southern tip is in Emlenton. Kayaks, canoes, and small boats can launch from the public access ramp under the Route 208 bridge, although parking is limited. The trailhead for the Allegheny River Trail is located off of 8th Street. The paved trail travels north to Franklin 28 miles.



Photo courtesy of Venango County Historical Society

## Emlenton To Franklin

### Directions

I-80 Option: Take I-80 West to Exit 35. Travel onto PA-308 through Clintonville for 6.5 miles. Turn right to merge onto PA-8 N toward Franklin (approximately 9.3 miles).

### Side Trip to Kennerdell Overlook

Backroads Option: Head west on PA-208 to Clintonville for 9.3 miles. Turn north on PA-308. From 308 N turn right on 3008, which becomes Kennerdell Road (3.8 miles). Follow this road for 6.4 miles over the Allegheny River and travel uphill until you meet the designated overlook.

### About the Drive

The winding nature of the Allegheny River makes this portion of the county popular with canoers and kayakers. The roads generally avoid following the river and instead take travelers over many hills and along a ridge before dropping into Franklin.

### Directions from Kennerdell to Franklin

Head northeast on Kennerdell Road for 4.3 miles. Turn left on Rockland Cranberry Road, traveling 5.6 miles. Turn left on US-322 W, arriving in Franklin in 6.9 miles.

## The Oil Region Looks to the Future

Initially, the crude oil discovered in the Pennsylvania fields was prized for its yield of kerosene, which provided a cheaper alternative to whale oil for lighting. With the discovery of natural gas and its uses for lighting and heating homes as well as the discovery of the processes to refine local crude oil into high grade lubricants for manufacturing equipment and machinery, the oil and gas industry cemented itself in Venango County for more than a century. Moreover, the invention of the automobile, running on gasoline refined from crude oil, ensured that there would be a continuous need for petroleum into the future. Modern refineries can turn more than half a barrel of crude oil into gasoline—the other half goes into making a host of products including

ammonia, bubble gum, crayons, guitar strings, heart valves, liquid detergent, mascara, paint, toothpaste, dentures, synthetic fibers, contact lenses, phones, life jackets, eyeglasses, movie film, bandages, yarn, and water pipes, to name a few. Drake's successful well near Titusville launched the first trillion-dollar industry—the colossal industry of the modern age.

While demand for oil remains a defining feature of our world, the Oil Region has moved forward into a new era in which our landscape has recovered and is celebrated. While oil and natural gas were stalwart industries that provided jobs and a stable, if occasionally booming, economy throughout the 20th century, today we know that the fossil fuel economy did not come without an environmental cost.

### 1 Foxburg

Cross the Emlenton low level bridge to follow PA-268 S to Foxburg (3.9 miles).  
GoFoxburg.com

Located just down the river from Emlenton is the quaint, historic railroad town of Foxburg. ARCA (Allegheny RiverStone Center for the Arts), housed in historic Lincoln Hall, organizes a variety of concerts, performances, and fine arts exhibits in the Borough. The Foxburg Country Club, famous for its nine hole public golf course, is the oldest golf course in continuous use in the U.S. Joseph Fox, who brought the game back from a trip to St. Andrews, Scotland, laid out what would become the current course in 1887. Visit the American Golf Hall of Fame and Museum in the club house to learn the history of golf in the U.S.

### 2 Emlenton Bridge on I-80 (between Exits 42 and 45)

A steel-deck truss bridge at a height of 270 feet above the river, the Emlenton Bridge is the highest road bridge in Pennsylvania, and the fifth highest bridge in the entire interstate system. Bridge enthusiasts will note it was the highest bridge in the interstate system when it was completed in 1968. Portions of this masterful span sit in three counties!

And yet, the very achievements in the evolution of technology, manufacturing, and commerce that Drake's discovery ushered in are celebrated throughout the Oil Region and the world. Drake and his contemporaries' inventiveness paved the way for the technological pioneers of today who seek green energy solutions for a changing world. Energy will always be a dynamic sector,

with each generation's inventors building on the discoveries of the last. Perhaps Edwin Drake did not realize that his discovery would pave the way to modern life—yet, everyone who drives through the Oil Region National Heritage Area recognizes his achievements, and the technological and commercial achievements of those who followed in his footsteps.



### 3 Kennerdell Overlook

Take in the view overlooking a bend in the Allegheny River. Well worth the drive, this overlook is often referred to as the best landscape view in the Oil Region.

### 4 Bullion, Nectarine, Pearl and More

Oil boomtowns popped up throughout this section of Venango County during the late 1870s. Their enticing names were intended to lure investors and workers alike to Bullion, Summit City, Nectarine, Pearl, Davis City, Dean City, Simcox, and Berringer City. Most of these sites are now small villages or farmland expanses, with a few pumping jacks still bobbing away.

### 5 Clear Creek State Park Kennerdell Tract

[Dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/stateforests/clearcreek/index.htm](http://Dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/stateforests/clearcreek/index.htm)

The Kennerdell Tract is an ideal spot for all manner of nature enthusiasts. With seven miles of shoreline along the Allegheny River, the Kennerdell Tract is also a designated wild plant sanctuary.

Take a hike down the Iron Furnace Trail to see the remnants of the Bullion Run Iron Furnace and Oil Pumping Station. To the north, you can hike, bike, or horseback ride to see the restored oil pumping station.

Bullion Run and Dennison Run contain naturally reproducing native brook trout. Primitive camping is permitted throughout the Kennerdell Tract. The Danner Primitive Camping Area along the Allegheny provides a scenic and comfortable primitive camping experience.



This brochure was developed by the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism. The mission of the Alliance is to manage the Oil Region National Heritage Area and to increase the prosperity of the Oil Region by enticing all people to live, work, learn, and play in “the Valley that Changed the World” through the preservation, promotion, development, and support of historical, education, natural, recreational, residential, commercial, and industrial destinations.

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