

A Walking Tour of Titusville, Pennsylvania (Look Up, America!)

Content

A Walking Tour of Titusville, Pennsylvania (Look Up, America!) by Doug Gelbert.

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There is no better way to see America than on foot. And there is no better way to appreciate what you are looking at than with a walking tour. Whether you are preparing for a road trip or just out to look at your own town in a new way, a downloadable walking tour from walkthetown.com is ready to explore when you are.

Each walking tour describes historical and architectural landmarks and provides pictures to help out when those pesky street addresses are missing. Every tour also includes a quick primer on identifying architectural styles seen on American streets.

There was never any first discovery of oil. Petroleum had been known for thousands of years, gurgling from oil springs or seeps bubbling to the surface. It was used as medicine and for light in its natural state despite a nasty odor. In the early 1850s a number of people began experimenting with refining crude oil to improve its burning properties and eradicate its foul smell. They were successful enough that the demand for kerosene to outstrip the supply of oil.

The Seneca Oil Company of New Have, Connecticut, leased land in western Pennsylvania and skimmed petroleum off oil springs in the region. In 1858 Edwin L. Drake was sent to Titusville, a town founded in 1800 by two former surveyors for the Hoeland Land Company, Jonathan Titus and Samuel Kerr who purchased land and established residences, to find a way to increase production. At first he tried digging but soon decided to drill a well, similar to the way saltwater was sometimes excavated. Progress at first was slow; the soft glacial till around Oil Creek kept caving into the hole. Drake finally hit on the idea of driving a pipe down to bedrock and drilling inside it.

It was not long before Drake's ingenuity paid off. On August 27, 1859, 69 feet inside the earth, he struck paydirt in the worlds first oil well. Drake was lucky. had he drilled a few yards in either direction along the creek he would have had to go down another 100 feet to tap his oil reservoir. a pump was attached to his well and soon Drake was producing about 20 barrels of oil a day, double the rate of production of all existing sources at the time. Speculators soon lined Oil Creek with derricks and pumps.

The world had never seen anything like it. Boomtowns burst into existence overnight. One town, Pithole City, went from a farm to a city of 15,000 people to a ghost town all in a span of 500 days. Titusville reigned as "Queen City" of the region for little more than a decade before the action drifted away. Drake himself made no fortune from oil. The glut of oil drove the price so low by 1862 that he and his partners went out of business. he processed leases for speculators and later lost money in oil speculation. He died 30 years after his historic strike, a poor and forgotten man.

The first great development period in Titusville was lumber related and the lumber industry did not end with the oil boom. The early oil boom years only served to increase the demand for wood used in the production of shipping barrels, the construction of derricks, workers home and other community

buildings.

Our walking tour will visit the Titusville Historic District, nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984, that is a compact representation of the town's development from the beginning of the oil industry through the turn of the 20th century...

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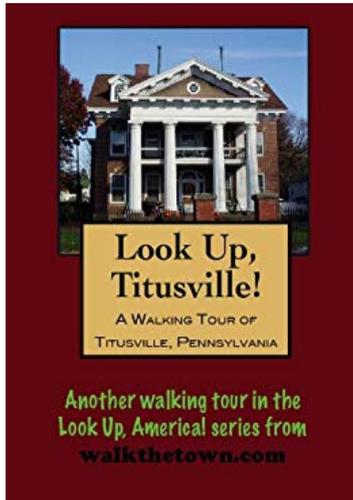
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