

Wickedest Town in Oildom

Antwerp City was located on the west side of the ravine, "Antwerp Hollow," through which runs a small stream called Myers Run. The town was built over the rounded top of the hill, cleared by the axe of an early German settler. Thus sprung up in a night the magic town of Antwerp City. Antwerp City started with a cluster of pumping wells surrounded by dry holes. Farms and stony tracts of scrub timber sold at fabulous prices. John J. Ashbaugh leased the part of his farm where Antwerp City would grow and was paid well over \$80,000 with more monies promised. New streets were laid out with Main Street being the road which is now Route 58 east toward Richmond. Other streets were laid out up and down the rolling hill. The new main street with its busy throng and many stores, saloons, and hotels stood upon the ground which but a fortnight before was a field of pine stumps.

Men of every description, rich and poor, honest and dishonest, stupid and intelligent, invaded the new town. Antwerp City became a town of over 2,500 in population. A wooden boardwalk was built from St. Petersburg down the J. J. Ashbaugh Hill and out the flat to Antwerp City so people could move more easily without all the mud.

Antwerp City was built solidly on both sides of the hill and along the flat or "Pike." St. Petersburg newspapers of 1872 have advertisements of several hotels in Antwerp City, such as "The Mortimer House and "The Antwerp City Hotel." There are also ads for two large hardware stores and many drug stores, eateries, and groceries. (*St. Petersburg Centennial History Book, 1972*)

The *Derrick* reported that Antwerp City was the "wickedest town in oildom," where gambling dens flourished with open doors and packed houses. Drunken brawls were an every-day occurrence. There was too much oil excitement to think of discipline. Restaurants sprung up with earth floors, sky roofs and two boards laid side by side for tables. Businesses of all kinds flourished in groves by the roadside. The old "Pike," which for years had carried the family wagon on its way to church or the mill, now sustained two continuous lines of vehicles moving in opposite directions and bearing all manner of freight.

Along the roads were wooden troughs built to collect water for thirsty horses wherever there was a spring. Drillers and their families lived in small shanties which were nothing more than small wooden shacks that were located on the oil lease near a well. They were double-boarded with tarred burlap roofs, a small stove to cook on, and lit with kerosene lights. It is important to note that there were many accidents, burns and deaths due to the fact that the oil for the lights had not been refined properly. Too much gas left in the oil or kerosene caused lamps to explode. Strict measures were set in place and refiners paid strict attention to them.



Crime in Antwerp

In Antwerp, the first buildings were erected late in 1871 and in the spring of 1872, and in 60 days had the company of 4 groceries, 3 hotels, innumerable saloons,

telegraph office, schoolhouse and 200 dwellings. Its over-all style was summed up by a victim of a poker game in the expressive words: "If you want a smell of brimstone before supper, go to Antwerp!" The town of Antwerp was said by the *Derrick* to have "some of the meanest drinking and gambling dens to be discovered this side the domains of his Satanic Majesty." (*Sketches in Crude Oil*, John McLaurin)

This information explains the moral status of Antwerp City and was taken from a statement dated December 18, 1872: With the lack of law, a shortage of police officers and the overwhelming numbers of people flocking to the area for new opportunities and work, Antwerp City was a pretty rough place. Punishment was dealt with quite swiftly in certain cases, in others quite slowly and in others the culprits left town. The office of the Justice of the Peace was located on East Main Street and was always a busy place. Oil men, lawyers, and businessmen were lined up across the porch, down the stairs, and out on the wooden boardwalk that lined both sides of Antwerp City's Main Street, all waiting to get their business completed. The building held the office of the Justice, which was located in the front of the building. Living quarters for his family were located on the second floor. The temporary "lock up" was located in the rear of the building. If a prisoner needed special security or was sentenced to jail for more than a few days, he was sent to the "Iron Jail" in St. Petersburg.

The following list of criminal actions for the year 1872 shows us someone was busy breaking the law:

Malicious mischief	4	Public Drunkenness	18
Resisting an officer	6	Keeping gambling house	3
Selling liquor against the law	18	Nuisance	4
Assault and battery	64	Forcible entry	6
Robbery	6	Embezzlement	5
Desertion	1	False Pretenses	11
Larceny	12	Keeping house of ill-repute	9
Vagrancy	7	Assault and battery with intent to kill	4
Damaging property	6	Assault and battery with intent to Commit rape	1

Civil actions entered for the year 1872 in Antwerp City: 165 (*The Golden Flood, Sin Among The Derrick*, page 226)

An old saying states that "time marches on," which it certainly does. When it came to Antwerp City, "crime marched on." In the fall of 1873 the criminal element was reported to have started a fire in the office of the Justice. Antwerp City went "hellward" and crime marched on.

Antwerp City would have been more important but for its nearness to St. Petersburg. Even the disastrous fires in 1872-73 could not prevent ranking St. Petersburg with the best towns of Oildom. Stages from Foxburg were crowded until the narrow-gauge railroad furnished improved facilities for travel. Schools, churches, hotels, newspapers, one bank, and an opera house flourished. The Pickwick Club was a famous social organization. The Collner, Shoup, Ritts, Vensel, Neely, Fulmer and Ashbaugh farms and Grass Flats produced 3,000 barrels of oil day. Oil was 5 to 6 dollars and business strode ahead like the wearer of the Seven-League Boots. Now the erstwhile busy town is back

to its pristine quietude and the farms that produced oil have resumed the production of corn and grass. (*The Golden Flood, Sin Among The Derricks*, page 226)

The course of operations extended past Richland Furnace, up and beyond Turkey Run City, a dozen miles from the mouth of the Clarion River. Good wells on the Ritts and Neely farms originated Richmond, a small place that fizzled out in a year. The Irwin well, a mile further, flowed 300 barrels in September of 1872. The gas took fire and burned three men to death. The entire ravine and contiguous slopes proved desirable territory, although to the east of the famous Slicker farm, for months was second only to St. Petersburg as a frontier town. It had four stages to Foxburg, a post office, daily mail service and two passable hotels. George Washington, a newspaper reporter who took a hack at a cherry tree, might have preferred walking to the drive over the tough cut-up roads that led to and from Turkey Run City. The wells averaged eleven hundred feet, with excellent sand and loads of gas for fuel. Richard Owen and Alan Cochran, of Rouseville, opened a jackpot on the Johnson farm, above town. Wells lasted for years and his nook of the Clarion district could match pennies with any other in the business of producing oil. (*The Golden Flood, Sin Among The Derricks*, page 226)

Other "Boom Towns" that sprang up between Antwerp City and Edensburg were Richmond, Keating Furnace, Turkey Run City, Monroeville, Blairs Corners, Triangle, Jefferson City, Pickwick, Forest Home, Mongtown and Beaver City.



Life In and Around Antwerp

Today, when a person thinks of the northwestern Pennsylvania oil fields, a word that one might use is "primitive," but that is not entirely correct. The following are a few of the goods and services available in Antwerp City in 1872. What you read just might surprise you.

Wash House

First of all, there was the much-needed wash house. Wash houses were quite necessary due to the fact that clothes do get dirty. Oil work is greasy and certain business women seemed to have just the right touch to get things clean. Washing work clothes was hard work, but with the right tools, such as a wooden wash tub, scrub brush, lye soap, and a good wash board, the job was made easier. Most wash houses prided themselves on just how clean they could get the laundry and word got around as to who washed clothes the best. The money paid was usually much needed and this gave many women an income.

Barber Shop

Barber shops were another business that gave the oil men a sense of being civilized. Barber shops were usually located in or near boarding houses and hotels. One

particular barber shop in Antwerp City advertised "hair cutting done in the latest styles." A good shave, shampoo, and a hot bath made new men out of many. Most shops had the familiar red and white candy cane striped barber pole out front.

The barber shops in Antwerp City had a room in the rear which contained a tin or wooden tub. After a good shave and haircut, the oil pumper could get a hot bath for 15 cents. Add another dime to that and he could have the privilege of using water no one else had used.

Boarding House

There were numerous boarding houses in Antwerp City. Boarding houses rented rooms or only a sleeping space by the day or by the week. Some nights when beds were scarce, the boarders slept side by side on the floor. Fights broke out often over invasion of other men's space or someone snoring too loudly. Rooms were usually inexpensive and boarding houses were only for sleeping, no food was served, nor was there a bar or livery stable for horses. If the unlucky could not find a room for the night, the only alternative was to sleep under a building, inside someone's shed or barn, and if things got real tough, in someone's outhouse or beneath a boardwalk. Many unwanted boarders (or should they be called intruders), were marched from a shed or barn at the point of a loaded gun by its owner. Farmers in the Antwerp-St. Petersburg area were especially on the lookout for overnight guests in their barns. Fire was of great concern in those days and farmers were very careful not to have a careless transient smoking in a barn or shed full of hay. Henry Ashbaugh owned a farm about one mile from downtown Antwerp and many a night he chased away unwanted guests from his barn.

In much contrast were the hotels of Antwerp City to the "flop houses" or boarding houses scattered throughout the so-called city. The hotels of Antwerp City were located on main street, and were much more luxurious with restaurants, bars, and their own personal livery stables for its patrons.

Antwerp Hotel

The following is an advertisement from the July 10, 1872 edition of the St. Petersburg *The Progress* newspaper:

Antwerp City Hotel – Mrs. A. Mackey, Proprietress, Formerly of the Sheridan House, Scrubgrass. This house is now open for the reception of guests, having been refitted and enlarged. I can now accommodate the public with as good rooms fare as any house in the Oil Regions. My table is supplied with all the substantial and luxuries of the season. My rooms are well furnished and attentive. Good liquors and cigars are always found at the bar. Good stabling, livery, and barber shops connected. Hacks running to all trains on the A.V.R.R. at Foxburg. This house is centrally located one mile from the Turkey Run Oil Field, and three miles from Foxburg. The patronage of the public is respectfully solicited. Mrs. A. Mackey

A lease between Marcus Hulings and Mrs. A. Mackey, owner and proprietress of the Antwerp City Hotel on main street, is for lots No. 15 and No. 16 on which the hotel was built. Leases were sold for the building lots in Antwerp City and eventually all leases reverted back to J. J. Ashbaugh.

Undertaker

When an undertaker was needed in the area, funeral parlors were located in both St. Petersburg and Antwerp City. This advertisement dated July 10, 1872, comes from *The Progress*: "First Class furniture and bedding at popular prices wholesale and retail at Wilcox and Butts, St. Petersburg, Penna. Goods delivered free and undertaking promptly attended to." Another ad states: "Call on Giebner and Carter. Furniture and bedding of all kinds. Undertaking promptly attended to. Parlors in Parker City, St. Petersburg and Antwerp City. General agents for St. Johns Sewing Machines." Another undertaking firm was McLain and Gealy of St. Petersburg, "undertaking in all its branches."

Most burials were made in the St. Petersburg cemetery. Two things Antwerp City never had were a cemetery for the dead and a church for the living. Home lay-outs were the way funerals were held in the oil era days. The embalming was done in the home and the casket was kept at the deceased's home and friends visited there. After two days and before the body showed signs of deterioration, it was buried. Caskets were handmade of stained and varnished wood with a closed top, except where the face was. Here a piece of glass showed the face only. Silver plated thumb screws held the top on and usually a silver plated name plate was screwed to the top of the box at about the chest area. These read "Mother," "Father," "Daughter," "Son," or "Friend." The casket was placed in a wooden box and buried.

The grave was usually dug by family or friends, with a small marble marker marking the spot. With so many people coming to work in the oil fields, many people died with no known families. These people were buried in what is known as the "pauper's plot" in the St. Petersburg cemetery. These poor souls had no funeral, a very cheap wooden box donated by someone, and no marble marker. Today after 125 years, the number of people buried here and their names have long been forgotten and all that is left is an open area with no memorials in the center of the St. Petersburg Cemetery.

Grocery Stores

Back then, just as now, the grocery store was a very important place in any community. Note the many different types of goods at the New York Grocery and Provision Store, Antwerp City: "We have the largest and most complete stock of groceries and provisions in Clarion County and offer the greatest inducements to the public. We keep the best tea, dried, and canned fruit, cheapest sugar, and flour, eggs, lard, ham, potato, fresh dairy butter by the roll or tub. We also have a very large stock of Queensware, glassware, lamps, crockery, and tinware which we sell at the lowest market rates. Everyone who buys groceries or anything in our line, will find it to their advantage to call and buy from us. Thompson and Patterson, corner Third and Main Street, Antwerp City, Penna."

Competition is always good for business and this advertisement was in the July 10, 1872 edition of *The Progress* newspaper printed in St. Petersburg, which had a circulation of 1,500 papers a week: "Neither Grant or Greely buy at the Antwerp City Store, which has the most complete stock of goods in town consisting of groceries of all kinds, canned goods and fruits, produce, hardware, and tinware. Also a full line of

notions, clothing, and gents furnishing goods at the lowest cash prices. J. H. Bethune."

Grant and Greely both individually owned their own stores in Antwerp City and were competition to "poor old" J. H. Bethune and his Antwerp City Store.

With the ups and downs of business in the oil fields and oil boom towns, it was always advantageous to have a good, positive attitude and the following shows the good humor in these advertisements:

**Go to the Smith meat shop and buy your Christmas
poultry for 18 cents per pound,
and first class beef cheaper than any other market in Antwerp City.**

Don't Doubt. Cures guaranteed by using Vail's V. S. P. Bitters.

**The man was hanged because he failed to visit Thompson
and Patterson's immense Grocery establishment at Antwerp City**

**The "Driller's wife" is pleased with the fruit,
vegetables, crockery and groceries
of every kind at Thompson and Patterson's New
York Grocery, Antwerp City, Penna.**

**This is for a shoe shop in St. Petersburg:
Ladies and Gentlemen
Horses and Mules Get their Shoes at Charley Bruel's**

**A Great Riot was experienced, because Thompson and Patterson
failed to wait upon all their customers at once.
Antwerp City is the place where they do business.**

**The "Wildcatter" said he was pleased with the
fruit, nuts, and candy etc. which he bought at
Thompson and Patterson's, Antwerp City, Penna.**

**The Hungry Man goes to Thompson and Patterson's
to get ham, eggs, butter, flour, pork, beans, salt, fish, etc.
and be pleased, they are at Antwerp City.**

Machine Shops

**This ad is from the St. Petersburg *The Progress* newspaper dated
August 1, 1872. The Blakslee Brothers started their oil well supply and
machine shop in the upper fields and moved operations to St. Petersburg
and Antwerp City when the Petersburg fields opened in late 1871.**

Oil Supply and Hardware

**Blakslee Machine and Tool Headquarters for oil well supplies
Tubing, Casing, Steam and Gas Pipe,**

**Working Barrels and Valves, New Bedford Drilling and Plain Laid Lines
In fact, everything needed in drilling and equipping an oil well.**

**Monitor engines on hand and for sale by Blakslee Bros.
Corner of Machine Street and Main,
Petersburg**

Another Blakslee Brothers ad reads: "Hardware and house furnishing goods, heating stoves and cook stoves and ranges in endless variety. Horse shoes and horse nails. Wagon makers stock of all kinds, wheels, springs and axles. All materials necessary to build a wagon or buggy. We have a first class shop in connection with our establishment where all kinds of tin, sheet iron or copper work is manufactured and repaired. No trouble to show goods. Satisfaction guaranteed. Come and see us. Blakslee Bros., corner of West Main Street and Mill Street. Also at Antwerp City on Third Street in rear of Antwerp City Hotel."

Titusville Herald Sold Here

Crawford and Palm's News Room and Cigar Store was always a very busy place. Each day's edition of local papers showed yesterday's statistics on who, how much and where new oil strikes were found. Oil speculators were eager to lease new ground with the hopes of "hitting the Big One." Not only were local papers sold here, but magazines from places such as New York City, Boston, and Pittsburgh. The *Clarion Democrat*, *Clarion Republican*, *Titusville Herald*, and the *Oil City Derrick* were much sought after and studied.

Crawford and Palm kept a steady flow of news from the front, to be reported in the *Titusville Herald*. This newspaper provided a wealth of information to the author.

**Buy a new Mansard cook stove of Porter, Wickham
and Co. and bake good bread**

**Fresh oysters always to be found at Patterson Grocery, Antwerp City,
Across the street from Mrs. Mackey's Hotel. Choice XXX, 30 cents a can.**

All types of tobaccos were available, including sniffing tobacco, chewing tobacco, and smoking tobacco. One particular cigar store proudly proclaimed that it sold to its clientele, "the fine men of the oil region," the finest imported "Havana" cigars from Cuba and also the smooth smoking good tasting "Syracuse Prides."

The Westmoreland House of Antwerp City was managed and owned by proprietor Simon Hugus. This hotel was located about half way down main street, on the right-hand side, heading toward Turkey City. Its advertisements mention nothing about how nice the rooms were or how reasonable rates were; also nothing is said about the stabling or livery available, but "boy-oh-boy" could you get a rare seasonal scotch, London Porter, stout, genuine cognac, brandy, and "Old Tom Gin." Thank goodness they also had available ice cool soda water, always on hand and dispensed with particular reference to the taste of the customers.

Drug Store

On a little lighter side, the drug store owned by A. O. Bias provided for the buying public fancy goods and notions of all kinds with a good assortment of hair goods. Mr. Bias dispensed the purest drugs, medicines, and rare chemicals. He also carried a complete assortment of trusses, shoulder braces, canes, supporters, elastic stockings, bandages, and surgical instruments. And finally, last but not least, all types of toilet articles, soaps, cosmetics, combs, brushes, writing papers, blank books, and receipt and notebooks. Quite a line of products for a store to stock in the city of Antwerp. The finest wallpapers imported from England and France were also kept in stock. (Author's note, "Wow, this place was primitive.")

Livery Stables

A rather humorous practice most livery stables used to keep horses calm and soothed was to keep a "Billy" goat in the livery barn. The strong smell of "Mr. Billy" was believed to be soothing to the horses.

Hardware Stores

The hardware store was always an important part of any main street scene. An advertisement for a hardware business in Antwerp City reads: "Hardware, Hardware. Remember Robert Bryan has the only gas pipe cutter in this oil region running by steam that will cut thread on 5 5/8 and 6-inch casing. He is also prepared to manufacture sheet iron work such as smoke stacks. Breechan and Co. are dealers in Boston Tubing and Casing, Meadville Rig Irons and New Bedford Cables. Stores at East Foxburg and Antwerp City, Penna." Robert Bryan sold other items such as paints, oils and varnishes, nails, screws, hinges, and ropes. Some of the finer things for sale were colored and painted glass lamps, tinware, crockery, silver place settings, and to hold your food, dinnerware of every description, fishing tackle of all kinds, rifles, powder, caps, and shells.

Another business in town was Wolf Hardware Store. This store sold oil well supplies, nails, ropes, tubing, pails, tallow, etc. It is said that at a meeting of local oil men in the Wolf Oil Supply Store, Victor Gretter introduced his new invention, the oil saver, which was well received by the oil industry.

Jesse M. Smith of Edenburg reported in his journal that he came out of the Civil War broke and worked at Pithole. In 1872 he located at the new City of Antwerp and worked at Wolf Hardware Store on Main Street and was still broke.

Attorneys

Antwerp City rounded out its services available by having many attorneys at law who not only counseled their clients but also made collections throughout the oil region. Real estate agents sold properties both in town and out. Physicians, surgeons,

mechanical and surgical, dentists and veterinary surgeons were here to take care of both human and animal needs. First-class surveyors always on hand.

Blacksmiths

There were blacksmiths and machine shop services available. The machine shops either made or sold every type of tool or machine needed to produce oil. Drilling tools, fishing tools, tubing, well casing, gas pipes, working barrels, valves, brass and iron fittings, belts, steam engine packing, boilers and sand pumps were available. Blakslee Bros. Machine and Tool had shops in both St. Petersburg and Antwerp City. Chalfant and Graff, Watt and McElwaine, T. Griffin, boiler maker, and S. W. Carpenter sold oil hardware

More Places to Spend Your Money

Lumber yards and planing mills sold all kinds of dressed lumber, siding, flooring, roof shingles and even pickets for your fence. Large assortments of pre-made doors, window frames, sashes and glass helped building houses easier and at a lesser cost. C. A. McCafferty, dealer of lumber, bills sawed to order, Keating City.

Tintypes

Millinery shops carried ladies' clothes in the latest styles, beautiful hats, shoes and underclothing. After buying a new suit of clothes and before getting them dirty crossing a rutted, muddy street, you had better get your picture taken at one of many photograph galleries in Antwerp City. Many young gents sent pictures to their best girl and even home to show the folks just how well they were doing out here in the "petroleum patch." One particular gallery reported they did "copying of old pictures as a specialty, current photographs done, also water, oil, ink and charcoal portraits. Your satisfaction we promptly guarantee," E. G. Chappell, Studios at Antwerp City and Oil City, Penna.

Ice Cream

Who would ever believe that in a rough and tumble oil town back in the 1870s people could sit down and enjoy a nice cold bowl of ice cream? The Ice Cream Parlor or Ice Cream Saloon were actually a part of the Antwerp City main street scene. This is an advertisement that states the benefits of the ice cream saloon. "Our parlor is splendidly fitted up for gentlemen and ladies to spend an evening there, for they can obtain every kind of fruit, strawberries and ice cream of every flavor, also soda water, lemonades, and clean candies to our customers." Again, just how primitive can we get? *The Progress*, St. Petersburg

Telegraph Office

Feed mills produced the different feeds needed by horses, cows, dogs, and other farm animals. Carpenters, house painters, and paper hangers were in much demand with so much new construction. There was an express office that received and shipped packages and crates throughout the oil region with prompt delivery. The telegraph office sent messages throughout the oil region and stage coaches and delivery hacks left Antwerp City for all points in the oil region. Stage coaches left for Foxburg every hour on the hour.

Letter to the Editor

Finally, with the growth of the oil boom town came those establishments of ill repute mostly looked over unless they became a real nuisance. This letter to the editor of the July 10, 1872 issue of the St. Petersburg *The Progress* lets "Wild Cat" express his views:

"Antwerp July 1, 1872. Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Editor, in behalf of the citizens of this place for the noble stand you have taken in regard to the mysterious death and libel suit which occurred in your place a few days ago. Law abiding citizens can duly appreciate the worth of such a paper as *The Progress*. It is a public servant in bringing to justice the perpetrators of the crimes and misdeeds which will occur in such a center of excitement and travel as is St. Petersburg. Only too glad are we to know that 'adventurers' and 'black legs' who have hither to and in other places given the oil business an unenviable and false reputation by their foul deeds will in this district meet with full exposure. Our town is cursed with the presence of a large number of 'star boarders' and 'guzzling shops.' Whiskey will dwarf a dog. Has it 'dwarfed' Antwerp? I pause for a reply. Signed 'Wild Cat.'"

Roughest Town in Clarion County

No wonder the traveler told the old man to take another route if he expected to end up in Heaven!. Do not go through Antwerp!

This article was published in the *Oil City Derrick*, Wednesday morning, January 4, 1882:

Early Days of the Roughest Town in Clarion Co. Shootings and Cutting Affrays – Every Other House a Saloon Fire Casualties – Delirium Tremens The Thirty Day Shut Down – Swept by Fire

In the early days of the oil development in Clarion County, Antwerp, one of the most remarkable and short-lived of oil towns, rose and fell, shot athwart the sky of history, meteor-like, and disappeared amid a blaze of light never that reappear.

During the year 1870, the festive producer, then more cautious than now, gradually marched forward from Foxburg, up the banks of the classic Clarion River, and when Marcus Hulings, now of Oil City and known to everybody in the oil regions, in August 1871, went nearly a mile in advance of operations and located a well on Ashbaugh run, about half a mile east of St. Petersburg, then a thriving village just beginning to bloom under the stimulus of the oil excitement, he was considered a venturesome "wildcatter."

October 31st of that year found the well completed and flowing at a wonderful rate. There was no pipe line connection near, and five 250-barrel tanks were set in rapid succession to save the valuable fluid, for oil was then \$4.50 a barrel. One of the tanks was set at night, the men working by lantern light, one carrying a lantern round and round the tank, as the sledge and set-holder made their rounds, driving the iron bands tight.

The well continued for some time to put forth from 125 to 150 barrels of crude per day. Pipe line connections were made as soon as possible, and the income of the well the first month footed up \$10,000. Mr. Hulings having a 20-acre lease on the farm on which the well was located, immediately laid out lots for a town in the approved style, and named the place Antwerp City, though there were few buildings except a boarding house in the town. Producers crowded forward and rigs were put up rapidly during that winter. Houses began to spring up, mushroom like, in the embryo city. Wells were completed and proved good producers, and the spring of 1872 found Antwerp perhaps the most promising town in the Clarion field. St. Petersburg had grown wonderfully, but Antwerp was soon a good second, with everything in favor of its outgrowing its rival. Half the houses were saloons, or places where intoxicating liquors were sold. Money was plenty, wages high, oil a good price, and everything was booming until the memorable Thirty Day Shut Down of that year, which had the effect of stopping the growth of the town completely. After the shut down was over, the oil ranged at four dollars again, the town took another leap, but, the rapidly declining price of crude put a damper on it and it virtually ceased to grow, though it continued to be the wickedest town in oildom. St. Petersburg had been chartered as a borough and provided with a police force which tended to drive the most lawless portion of humanity to the town at the foot of the hill. In the fall of '72 a large maison do joie was built in the east end of town, by a Dutchman, by contract, for parties from Petroleum Center. When it was completed the persons who had it built refused to pay for the work, and the contractor barred the doors and refused them admittance. Several loads of furniture arrived and were piled up outside as the Dutchman would not let it be placed inside until he was paid.

One night, however, the doors were broken open and the work of piling in furniture commenced. The contractor and his two workers hastened to the scene bent on ejecting the invading parties. They entered the house, loud words followed, and presently two shots rang out on the still night air, followed by a terrible racket. Men ran from all directions and were hastened on by a cry of "My God, I'm shot. I'll die. I'll die," pronounced with a strong Teutonic accent. Three men were seen to leap from an upstairs window and run rapidly up the hill back of the house. They proved to be the contractor and his two men, the former of whom, upon examination was found to have his coat, vest, and shirt perforated with bullet holes and the skin on his side was cut so blood ran profusely, the wound was not serious.

No one liked to venture in the house in midnight darkness to seek a man possessed of a good revolver which probably still contained several cartridges, and in the

excitement the murderous villain slipped out and made off to a healthier latitude, as threats of lynching were freely made.

Soon after that the house changed hands, new proprietors came, the contractor was paid off, and a dozen demimonde of the worst type took up their abode there. Among others was one yeleft "Crazy Nell," who "made Rome howl" frequently. She had a penchant for committing suicide, and next to self murder, the dearest desire of her heart seemed to be to murder someone else, especially when she had partaken freely of the flowing bowl. She never succeeded, however, in murdering anything, except the sleep of good citizens. This she did frequently by getting on a tear and requiring half a dozen fellows to hold her to prevent self-destruction or the destruction of a fellow creature. She, meanwhile, affirmed her determination to do something terrible in the loudest tones her lungs were capable of.

Curly Green

"Curly Green" held forth here in all his glory, running a gambling hall and saloon, and a worse hole would be difficult to find anywhere. Nightly a drunken crowd was gathered about his gambling tables, passing coins and bills about, swearing, drinking, quarreling, and fighting. One night the games were more than usually interesting, stakes were larger, drinks were more frequent and animosities were more bitter. Two men played at a table eagerly. One was losing regularly. His breath came hard, his eyes were dilated, hectic spots burned on his feverish cheeks as he saw his despair, when his adversary dropped a card from his sleeve. Immediately he leaped to his feet, but the other gambler was up as quickly. They clinched and struggled out on the street, unnoticed by the other players. The cheating gambler attempted to draw his revolver, but the other seized his wrist, and together they rolled on the ground until the loser got his cheating adversary pinned tight under him, when he whipped out a gleaming knife, raised it aloft and would have plunged it in the heart of the man beneath him but that several gentlemen passing seized his arm and prevented him.

A night that passed without three or four fights, or the week that did not witness one or two attempts at murder, were rare exceptions, yet, strange to say, the life of man was not taken by his brother in the whole history of the town.

A fellow one night got a touch of the "jim jams" and went out in the street where he lay down in the mud. He imagined he was drowning and all assurances to the contrary, notwithstanding, he gasped and gurgled like a drowning person. He turned livid in the face, struggled violently, and would have died, but that a bystander seized him and made believe he was pulling him from the water he imagined he was in. When they reached land, the lunatic from rum was considerably relieved and improved rapidly.

When the great devastating fire broke out in St. Petersburg in February 1873, it was heroic men of Antwerp who checked the progress of the flames, working like heroes, and fighting fire until water had to be constantly thrown on them to keep their clothes from igniting.

Down Hill Side of Life

With the opening days of spring, in 1873, an exodus to newer fields set in, and the busy town of Antwerp City was on the down hill side of life, its feverish vitality gradually ebbing away. But, one night in July, or rather about three o'clock in the morning, the incendiary's torch did its fiendish work and the terrible cry of "Fire! Fire! Fire!" rang out on the still air. The devouring flames leaped from house to house with a gleeful energy, according well with the vigorous enterprise of the place, and with the dawn's early light the busy little hamlet perished, passing away with the night. Only a handful of houses were left, and for years two rows of blackened posts alone marked the spot where once stood the lively and wicked little town of Antwerp City.

The following article entitled "The Town of Antwerp" was written by Gary MCKinney and printed in *The Progress News*, Emlenton, Pennsylvania:

Not many people realize that a town of over 1,000 people existed near St. Petersburg in the 1870s. This town was called Antwerp and was located about one mile east of St. Petersburg, Penna. The town was formed in 1871 and in a short time it had grocery stores, hotels, saloons, a schoolhouse, a telegraph office, livery stables, the Antwerp Pipe Line Co., and about 200 houses.

It was a tough fighting, hard drinking oil town as indicated by a loser in a poker game. Antwerp had no paved streets and the sidewalks were wooden planks.

A story is told that a man in a buggy overtook an old man walking along the muddy road between Turkey Run City and Antwerp City. Before asking the old man to ride, he said to him, "Where are you going?" to which the old man replied, "I am going to heaven and I have been on my way for 18 years." The man in the buggy replied, "Goodbye old man, if you have been traveling towards heaven for 18 years and have gotten no closer than Antwerp City, I'll take another route."

