

## Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism

The Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation with headquarters in Oil City, Pennsylvania. This membership-based organization serves all of Venango County as well as the City of Titusville, Borough of Hydetown and Oil Creek Township in eastern Crawford County. The Alliance is the lead economic development agency and the official Tourist Promotion Agency for Venango County as well as the administrator of the Pennsylvania Oil Heritage Region and the federally designated Oil Region National Heritage Area.

### Mission Statement

The mission of the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism is to increase the prosperity and population of the Oil Region by enticing people to live, work, learn and play in "the valley that changed the world" through the preservation, promotion, development and support of historical, educational, natural, recreational, residential, commercial and industrial destinations.



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**Become a member today!**

## Historic Properties Series

# Tarbell House



324 East Main Street  
Titusville, PA 16354

41°37'42"N, 79°40'6"W



[www.oilregion.org](http://www.oilregion.org)

## Ida M. Tarbell and her Childhood Home

Ida M. Tarbell (b. 1857) is possibly the most famous female investigative journalist in U.S. history. A native of Erie County, Pennsylvania, Tarbell moved to Titusville with her family in 1870. She attended Titusville High School and went on to attend Allegheny College in Meadville, PA, graduating as the sole woman in the class of 1880. Following her graduation, Tarbell accepted a teaching post in Ohio, but resigned after two years. Upon returning to Pennsylvania, she accepted a position as a journalist at *The Chautauquan* and found her true calling.



Ida M. Tarbell, 1905

Tarbell honed her journalism skills at *The Chautauquan* for seven years before moving to *McClure's Magazine*, where she wrote *The History of the Standard Oil Company*. This serialized article was published over two years beginning in 1902, and then as a book in 1904. Tarbell's investigation into John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company led to antitrust lawsuits and congressional hearings. In 1911, the Supreme Court broke up the Standard Oil Company Trust, implementing our country's first antitrust laws.

Today, Tarbell remains most well-known for changing the faces of the oil industry and journalism. However, during her writing career, she also penned a number of important biographies, including works on Abraham Lincoln, Madame Roland and Napoleon Bonaparte. Tarbell also published an autobiography entitled *All in a Day's Work* in 1939. She died in 1944.

Ida M. Tarbell resided in her family's home at 324 East Main Street in Titusville, PA from 1870 through 1876.

Franklin S. Tarbell, Ida's father, built the house in 1870 with materials he salvaged from Pithole, an oil boomtown in decline. Mr. Tarbell purchased the Bonta House, one of Pithole's most elegant and expensive hotels, for a mere \$600. He razed the hotel and moved the usable materials ten miles to Titusville. Using timber, windows, doors, woodwork and iron brackets from the Bonta House, Mr. Tarbell built a beautiful Italianate home.

The original home included a living room, dining room, spare room and one-story kitchen on the first floor while the second floor contained three bedrooms. In addition, the 1870 structure featured a three-story tower over the front porch, a two-story east wing and a nearly flat tin roof.

Over the years, the home experienced drastic changes. By 1898, the Tarbell family had expanded the house twice, adding a second floor over the kitchen as well as a one-story addition behind the kitchen. They also added a second floor artist's studio at the back of the home prior to 1912. Lee and Inez Green purchased the home in 1918 and immediately remodeled it for two-family occupancy. Furthermore, in the late-1920s after a fire, the Greens removed the east wing as well as the third floor tower, added a hipped roof and three dormers and constructed a Neoclassical porch across the full width of the structure. They also updated and modernized many of the home's interior features during their 65 year ownership.

Today, Ida Tarbell's childhood home, known as the Tarbell House, is owned by the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism. Rehabilitated to its appearance during the 1870s, the house interprets Tarbell's early life as well as the early years and material culture of Pennsylvania's oil boom.



Tarbell Home, c. 1895

## Preservation Efforts



Tarbell House, 2007

The Tarbell House, constructed in 1870, is a two-story, Italianate home. In 2007, the Oil Region Alliance purchased the 2,702 square foot home from AMC Mortgage.

Gustafson General Contracting began the exterior rehabilitation in 2009. To start, workers replaced the 1920s-era dormered roof with a new, flatter roof, returning the home to its original roofline. The crew then reconstructed the home's original built-in box gutters, using modern stainless steel. All asphalt roofing on the rear section of the house was removed and replaced with a standing-seam steel roof and both bay windows were given new hand-soldered terne-coated steel roofs. As part of the exterior rehabilitation, the contractor also raked and repointed all of the home's masonry, from the brick chimneys to the stone foundation.

Workers also lifted and solidified the foundation under the west side bay window. The crew removed the 1920s-era front porch and using a combination of historic photos and structural clues, reconstructed the home's original Victorian porch and veranda.

In the fall of 2010, painters restored the home's exterior to its original color scheme. Students from the University of Pittsburgh, Titusville Campus made improvements to the home's landscaping, creating beds filled with lilies, daffodils, tulips, crocuses and hostas. In addition, the Titusville Shade Tree Commission planted two maple trees. In late-2011, workers constructed a Victorian-style ADA accessibility ramp on the west side of the house, completing the structure's exterior rehabilitation.

The Oil Region Alliance began the home's interior restoration in 2012. The Stirling Bridge Development Company has installed electrical service throughout the home, including period-appropriate replica light fixtures as well as porch lights and motion detectors. The house has also been fitted with complete fire/smoke/security systems. Also completed are plumbing and HVAC work, window restorations, plaster repair, millwork and historically accurate decoration, as well as new storm windows and storm doors.



Parlor, following interior rehabilitation, 2015

In 2016 the third floor cupola tower on the southwest corner of the building and decorative wooden trim and tall metal finial were reconstructed by Gustafson General Contracting. According to her autobiography, Ida Tarbell spent many childhood hours studying in the tower.

Today, the Oil Region Alliance operates the Tarbell House as a house museum and invites the public to learn best practices for continued maintenance of a Victorian-era home. The home is open for tours by appointment, for public teas, and is available for first floor rentals to host special events. Contact ORA office for event schedule. 7/2016



A workman adds decorative details to the home's reconstructed front porch in 2009.

## Oil Region National Heritage Area

The Oil Region National Heritage Area (ORNHA), also known as "The Valley that Changed the World," was designated by the United States



Congress in 2004. Administered by the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism, this national heritage area is located in northwest

Pennsylvania, encompassing all of Venango County as well as the City of Titusville, the Borough of Hydetown and Oil Creek Township in eastern Crawford County.

As the administrator of the ORNHA, the Oil Region Alliance works to preserve, interpret, enhance and promote the region's distinctive legacy as the birthplace of the modern petroleum industry.



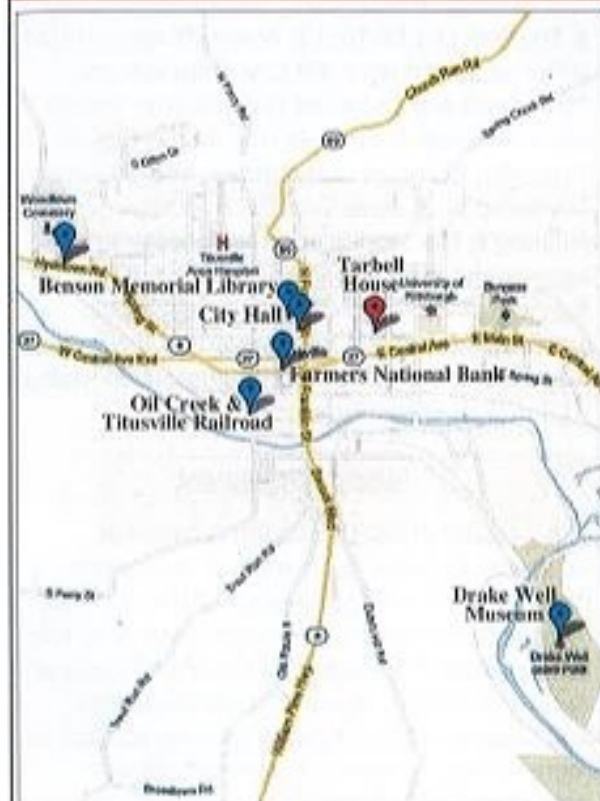
The ORNHA is 1 of 49 National Heritage Areas located throughout the U.S. National Heritage



Areas are regions where a combination of natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources shape nationally significant stories and landscapes. In partnership with the National Park Service, National Heritage Areas foster community stewardship of our nation's heritage.



## Explore More Historic Sites



### Drake Well Museum

202 Museum Lane; Titusville, PA 16354  
(814) 827-2797 [www.drakewell.org](http://www.drakewell.org)

### Benson Memorial Library

213 North Franklin Street; Titusville, PA 16354  
(814) 827-2913 <http://benison.ccfls.org>

### Titusville City Hall (Kingsland House)

107 North Franklin Street; Titusville, PA 16354  
(814) 827-5300 [www.titusvillepa.com](http://www.titusvillepa.com)

### Oil Creek & Titusville Railroad's Perry Street Station

409 South Perry Street; Titusville, PA 16354  
(814) 827-0228 [www.octr.org](http://www.octr.org)

### Oil Heritage Mural inside Farmers National Bank

127 West Spring Street; Titusville, PA 16354  
(814) 827-5910 [www.farmersnb.com](http://www.farmersnb.com)

### Woodlawn Cemetery (site of Drake Memorial)

892 West Spring Street; Titusville, PA 16354  
(814) 827-3422