

the Oil City. By CHARLES D. MARTENS. (Oil City, Pa.: First Seneca Bank and Trust Company, 1971. Pp. 182. Prologue, index of photographs, bibliography. \$13.00.)

Nothing could be more valuable or appropriate in celebrating the centennial of any community than to have its history written and permanently preserved. From it, present and future generations may learn of their heritage and develop an appreciation of it. Also, it is the history of hundreds of communities, like Oil City, that makes up the fabric of the history of the United States. Therefore, the First Seneca Bank and Trust Company of Oil City is to be congratulated — and highly commended — for having the history of *the Oil City* prepared by Mr. Martens and published for the centennial anniversary of Oil City.

This attractive volume is greatly enriched throughout by two features: one is the inclusion of an unusually large number of old and rare photographs of bygone days as illustrations; the second is the inclusion in the author's narrative of numerous contemporary descriptive accounts by journalists and other visitors to Oil City in the early days. Another virtue of the book is that its scope is broad. It touches upon many aspects of Oil City's development, not just a few.

The book opens with a discussion of the geology of Oil City and its vicinity which had an important bearing upon the city's history. In the eleven succeeding chapters the author discusses the Seneca Indians, the fur traders, the coming of the first white settlers, the early lumber industry, the discovery of oil, and the growth of the village into an incorporated city in 1871. Martens describes Oil City during the Civil War, the establishment of the fire department, gas and water works, use of ferries, the building of bridges, the history of banks, disastrous fires and floods, the coming of the railroads and streetcars, train wrecks, and the economic development of Oil City as a center for shipping oil and refining and servicing the oil industry — machine shops, barrel factories, oil well supply houses, wagon works, etc. Brief histories of the churches; schools, public and parochial; hospitals; recreational activities and facilities; and thumbnail sketches of the men who made Oil City are included. The final chapter, "Oil City in the Twentieth Century," takes a look at the past and peers into the future.

This is a handsome book that everyone interested in the history of oil in Western Pennsylvania will want to have and read.

Meadville, Pennsylvania

PAUL H. GIDDENS