

# The Tarbell House

## 324 East Main Street, Titusville, PA



Photograph 1895-1900

### History

- 1870 Having finally profited from the oil boom, Franklin S. Tarbell purchases the Bonta House, considered one of the most elegant hotels in Pithole, for \$600, only to tear it down and use the materials to build this Italianate House at 324 Main Street. The Bonta House was built at a cost of \$60,000-\$80,000. The Tarbell House was built at a cost of \$8,000.
- 1876 Ida Tarbell graduates at the top of her class from Titusville High School. During her high school years she spends many hours in the third floor tower studying all manner of biological specimens in her microscope. Her career path will lead to journalism and writing, involving careful research and record-keeping.
- 1874 Purchased by Esther Tarbell from William and Caroline Tarbell.
- 1918 Purchased by Lee and Inez Green from the heirs of Esther Tarbell (William, Ella, Sarah and Ida Tarbell, and Hattie Knowles).
- 1983 Purchased by Marvin and Barbara Gibson from Inez Green.

Several drastic changes to the house have occurred over the years. At some point during the Tarbell family ownership, additional space was added to the back, including an artist's studio room on the second floor. The east wing of the house, as shown in the photo above, was removed, as was the third floor cupola tower. Probably at the same time, the roofline was altered to its current configuration which includes three gabled dormers. All outbuildings have since been removed.

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## Future

The Tarbell House was purchased by the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism (ORA) on May 30, 2007. The immediate goal for the house is to preserve and restore it, including house tours during the OIL150 celebrations and by appointment to observe the rehabilitation of a Victorian-era home. Long-term uses of the house are currently being considered, involving educational/cultural uses.



June, 2007

### Building Stabilization Schedule

- Address all safety and security concerns, including sidewalk repairs (2007)
- Remove threatening vegetation (2007)
- Make necessary roof repairs (2007)
- Clean-up, including removal of rear deck, interior carpet, etc. (2007)
- Restore electricity, plumbing (2007-2008)
- Exterior repairs (2008)
- Interior Rehabilitation (2008-2009)

### Preservation Plan

Prepared by an expert preservation-minded architectural firm, the Preservation Plan will help guide ORA in the restoration/reconstruction of the building, as well as identifying and recommending future uses for the house. The consulting firm will be chosen in August, 2007, based on proposals to be submitted by July 25, 2007. The plan is expected to be prepared by early 2008.

### Research

Working closely with the Titusville Historical Society and others, ORA hopes to assemble an archive of photos, records, and memorabilia related to either the house or to Ida Tarbell and her family. First-person accounts relating to the house are also sought as valuable reference material.

### Fund-Raising

While grant sources for future funding are being identified and pursued, several local fund-raising efforts are being planned, including book sales and limited edition prints by Titusville artist Steve Rainey. Donations are most welcome. Financial support to date has included the following: partial subsidy for preservation plan and start-up costs, National Park Service via ORA as the Oil Region National Heritage Area; staff subsidy by ORA; and initial acquisition, combination grant/loan by Preservation Pennsylvania, Inc.

7/07

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Anyone interested in volunteering their time or expertise, making a contribution, or providing support of any kind to this project is encouraged to contact Project Manager Mike Henderson at: Oil Region Alliance, 206 Seneca Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, P.O. Box 128, Oil City, PA 16301; 814-677-3152, Ext. 121; mhenderson@oilregion.org

