

# Our Towns and Legends

**EMLENTON** is a little town hidden away on the Allegheny River in western PA. My **ARTS STUDIO** is located on the left about 1/3 down from the top [see photo] hiding behind lots of trees.

Round a couple of bends in the river you'll be at **ARTS** in **FOXBURG** where our large authentic log home is situated.

**ARTS** spans both Emlenton in Venango County and Foxburg in Clarion County in PA, our two facilities just four miles apart. Drive along the Allegheny River from Emlenton to Foxburg... along the road on the right of the River in the photo. You'll pass through Butler and Allegheny Counties on the way, as well as under I-80. Drive along the River further south another two miles where the Clarion River joins up and view **PARKER**, the smallest city in the U.S.! Once a thriving metropolis of 25,000 people, today it's trickled down to only about 800.



Our area is especially blessed with the many wonders of these rivers, very deep valleys, Penn's woods, oil country and a wealth of interesting history which includes legends of the Indians, forts, Washington's adventures and many early pioneers. I-80 traverses the area in PA, cutting across the center of the state from east to west, connecting us nearby to I-79 which runs north and south near the OH border. For more information check out Emlenton's web site at

<http://www.the3ofus.com/emlenton/>

There you'll find Chamber Choice selections along with information on our towns, parks and other recreation areas, walking tours, sports, summer and holiday events, some local history including the story of oil and links to Venango and Clarion counties.

For a MAP of the area [click here](#).

Emlenton, once a prominent trading center, today is known for its antique shops. Built mostly of oil money, it once had the unusual reputation of housing more millionaires per capita than any other place in the world [10 to 10,000 residents]. Foxburg is home to the "*Foxburg Inn on the Allegheny*", an impressive new eatery with a view on the Allegheny River within sight of the Clarion River. Try canoeing and kayaking, river and woods sports. Foxburg is also home also to the "*American Golf Hall of Fame*" and the oldest golf course in the US in continuous existence! Come and play our historic 9-hole golf course, right across from **ARTS**.

## **SOME LOCAL HISTORY AND LEGENDS**

**FOXBURG AND EMLENTON** are nestled deep in the forested hills of the Allegheny River Valley, sparsely populated and designed a "*Wild and Scenic River*" area by Congress. During the Ice Age, glaciers molded our hills and carved out the shallows and deeps of the rivers. As the ice receded, a great forest grew to fill the land. Migrant aboriginal hunters were here 10,000 years ago. Indians came and loved this land, fiercely fighting over it for centuries. They called it "*Alleghewi Hanna*" which is "*Beautiful River*".

By the time of the first French explorations in the 17th century, the valley was home to Seneca Indians -- "keepers of the Western Portal" of the Iroquoian Confederacy -- and to the Delaware and Shawnee. The first European discovery of this valley was by the greatest of the French explorers, **LaSalle**, in 1669. Variably traversed by the French *voyageurs*, missionaries and military expeditions in the years thereafter, the Allegheny provided *the* vital link between French Canada and French settlements in the lower Mississippi Valley. In 1681 the territory was deeded to William Penn by King Charles II, henceforth being known as Penn's woods... that is, Pennsylvania.

A young Virginian named **George Washington** passed this way in 1753 with a message from his governor warning the French military commander here that he was "trespassing on English land" -- his first official public service. England and France went to war over the ownership of this valley, the primary cause of the *French and Indian War*. But the peace following the war was short-lived, the silence of the forest being once again rent by war cries and the massacre of the English garrison at nearby Fort Venango during Chief Pontiac's uprising.

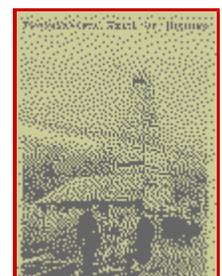


Later, as one legend goes, a Quaker physician in Philadelphia by the name of Fox was owed a debt by William Penn. The two ultimately agreed on payment -- a parcel of land along the Allegheny River "*as much as could be walked from sunup to sundown*". Fox hired an Indian to walk it for him on the longest day of the year! He likely walked *very fast* as Fox became the owner of 118,000 acres of forest along the river.

**FOXBURG GOLF:** Joseph Mickle Fox, an heir, was a wealthy man. On a trip to Scotland in 1884 he discovered the game of golf at St. Andrew's. In 1887 he laid out a golf course along our ridge, donated land and buildings to form the *Foxburg Country Club* and became its first President. And so can we claim the oldest golf course in the US in continuous existence! The *Golf Hall of Fame* resides in the CC. **ARTS** is just a few steps away.

**ARTS** is originally a log home constructed in 1867, one of the largest log homes in western PA. Hannah Emlen Fox ([for which Emlenton is named) was heir to Joseph Fox. In 1910 she had it dismantled, moved to its present location on the golf course ridge and, using Pittsburgh architect Benno Janssen, reconstructed it. We are honored to be only the fourth family to own this wonderful home. The family also constructed a lovely stone church and free library in Foxburg, both still in use today, as well as a few railroads.

**OIL LEGENDS** are part and parcel of life here in the *Oil Heritage Region*. In August 1859 Colonel Edwin Drake drilled the first commercially successful oil well in the world nearby in Titusville. Soon "black gold fever" permeated this whole region. Many a town appeared as if overnight and many a fortune was made (and lost) as quickly. Today old oil rigs still dot the countryside in many out-of-the-way places.



Parkers Landing, a crossroads with but a dozen shacks, with the discovery of oil in the small space of but a year turned into a city of 25 thousand! So many millionaires lived here, the story goes, it was not unusual to see a man light his Havana cigar with a \$10 bill. A steam-driven Incline carried folks up and down the steep cliffs... from luxurious mansions to the busy business district below by the river. The great scandal was a barge on the river, a gaming hall -- "The Floating Palace" painted on its sides! Here it is said a person could quickly lose his money, his virtue and even his life. Ben Hogan, its owner, was one of the most notorious characters in the land and Ben's woman, redhead "French Kate", is said to have a "variety show" reputed to make the most hardened teamster blush. Both had criminal records as long as your arm. Both had paired up before in shady enterprises. Ben prided on calling himself "the wickedest man in the world". He had been a prize fighter, pirate, bounty jumper, blockade runner and war spy but, in spite of being sentenced to death for crimes against the government, Lincoln pardoned him! Legends abound of brawls and pistol shots in the sin-palace called "Hogan's Castle" after Ben met Kate in Pithole, a nearby oil town. Kate shot a few customers herself but the court in Tidioute commended her on her "judicious shooting" of town thugs! Eventually even the two split up... amidst gun shots, one of which clipped Ben's ear. But, Halleluia, Ben got religion... some say after hearing Charles Sawyer read from the Bible in a stage play; he signed a pledge, learned to read and spent most of the rest of his life - - another 18 years -- as an evangelist to save those he had driven into sin! Kate, once "The toast of Pithole" at the Old Glory Dance Hall, didn't do as well as a Christian and ran off with another bloke.

**WOOLEN MILL:** It was oil money, too, that made it possible for the Flynn brothers to put up a mercantile and state-of-the-art woolen mill in Emlenton in 1888 right near **ARTS**. They produced woolen goods, the fleece carded and dyed and woven into blankets which sold coast-to-coast. No less than an Act of Congress declared it to be the finest fibers in the land. Unfortunately the mill burned in 1901. We have one such blanket at **ARTS** produced in the mill. And we have a photograph of the weavers at the mill which we treasure, a gift from an elderly granddaughter who has since died.



Stories? There's much more to tell... the romance of the rails, Christy in Hollywood, the Gosser-Piroch Drug Store from the 1870s, oil discovered at Drake's Well... When you come to visit we'll sit a spell in the porch swing above the river and tell you about it. It is not hard to imagine those early days. The bald eagle, bear and river otter have returned, and the scent of pine is heavy at dusk on a summer evening.

**PHOTOS TOP TO BOTTOM: The town of Emlenton PA on the Allegheny River, The Gossard-Piroch Drug Store 1878 in Emlenton, The world's first oil well -- Drake's Well, Letterhead of the Emlenton Woolen Mill 1899.**