

APPENDIX B

From the Pittsburgh Leader, June 19, 1904:

BOROUGH OF ELLIOTT HAS BEEN A MODERN DONNYBROOK

OWING TO CONSTANT QUARRELING, BICKERING OF FACTIONS AND A PUBLIC DISPOSITION TO OPPOSE EVERYTHING PROGRESSIVE, IT HAS NO IMPROVEMENTS WORTHY THE NAME

Elliott borough, covering a series of great green-clad slopes and valleys adjoining the populous West End, is the theater of constant friction and bickering among the 5,000 people living there. In no other borough of Allegheny County is such an edifying spectacle of popular stupidity, councilmanic jealousy and lethargy in general exhibited, and quite naturally scarcely any borough can show less improvements and less real progress.

Elliott, as stated in these columns two weeks ago, was recently allowed to join the Pittsburgh family, but it will not be admitted until January 1 next.

It is safe to say that no other borough, unless it be Hays, can show such lamentable deficiencies; but even comparison with Hays borough is scarcely fair, as it has been incorporated only a year or so, whereas Elliott has been a full-fledged borough for ten years.

Councilmen in Elliott say they are going to "get a spurt on" this summer and effect a few much-needed improvements but the people are doubtful. All the officials and councilmen and the people as well are at loggerheads, in fact have been from time immemorial, for the longest hindsight of the eldest inhabitant fails to detect a time when borough officials were harmonious. If there was not a grand squabble over sewers, there was one over streets, and if it was not streets it was the advisability of having a volunteer fire department or a jail. There was a squabble in the council chamber, the school board and the board of health, and not infrequently fisticuffs were resorted to and sulphurous words were uttered, much to the dismay of the good church-going people of Elliott.

If there was nothing to 'scrap' and jaw about, the factions squabbled over dogs. There are more dogs in Elliott per capita than in any other borough, so much so that a few years ago the place was called Dogtown. Even Elliott denizens were proud of the name, and the place continued to be called Dogtown until some leading citizens took umbrage at what they considered to be a slur on the fair name of their town and demanded the proper name be used. Thus it came about that few people save old-timers use the term Dogtown.

Elliott will undoubtedly profit by coming into the Pittsburgh fold. That the majority of people think so was clearly shown by the vote in favor of the annexation, which was 457 to 117. This large vote favorable to annexation was largely due to the feeling that the borough would never get any improvements as long as it was a borough. The constant policy of being 'forinst' and at loggerheads has stagnated all natural progress and expansion until, as one large property owner told the writer, 'the whole shootin' match is run like a country town.' He said that under the township rule the people were better off, for they got boardwalks where they now have mud to walk on.

'The trouble with this durned old town' said he, 'is that it's full of pesky, mean people, who can't see how you get \$2 back by spending \$1. They have stuck in the mud for centuries and can't see why they can't stick in for another century. Look at the way things is done. A spell ago they laid a sewer on Catherine (Crucible) Street, but some people wouldn't allow them to go through a strip of property, and they simply stopped the line short. Then the people along the street were red hot at having to pay for a sewer and being told they could not use it. They used it anyway and are now using it. All that infernal sewage seeps out through the ground. No wonder we had a big smallpox epidemic a few years ago. Most of the people here use well water, and it was polluted by that sewer. Now council has done another fool thing. There's a sewer on Lorenz avenue, our principal cross street, but it stops at a manhole right at the main corner of the town. In hot weather there's such a blasted smell coming out of that place that it's enough to make a mule faint. It's fierce. There ain't no business methods here. Everybody is forinst and you can't explain finances to pig-headed people. They wouldn't understand in a thousand years, and, what's more, they don't want to.'

Investigation showed that there are only two streets paved in the borough, and only three or four sewers. Steuben Street, near the West End boundary, is laid with block stone, and Catherine Street with fire brick. The main thoroughfare - Chartiers Avenue - is simply mud, save where the Pittsburgh railway company has a single track between the rails of which is a paved way. Lorenz avenue, which is the chief cross street, is simply paved with mud. At the intersection of these streets, the main business corner of the borough, the clay is three feet deep, and wagons frequently get stuck. To add to the fearful character of the place, the manhole in the center emits terrific odors and clouds of steam, so that citizens must tuck to windward or cover their noses, otherwise there is a serious danger of one collapsing and falling down in the mud.

Men were putting the finishing touches on a sewer in the middle of Lorenz Avenue -- that is, were filling in a trench by making a ridge of big clay clods. There is some prospect of Lorenz Avenue being paved this summer. Councilman John H. Bryant, leader of the Republicans, who are now in control of council, stated to the writer that the work will be pushed, despite the skeptical assertions of Elliottites.

'Yes, sir,' said he, as he crossed his legs and leaned against the fence and watched the street gang filling up chinks around the malodorous manhole alluded to, 'we are going to get a grand spurt on and do a lot of improving here before we go into the city. There's a small street up the hill (jerking his thumb toward the sky) here that we're going to pave, and then I guess we'll lay a sewer on Chartiers Avenue. Then there's that sewer over on Catherine Street that runs into the ground -- yes, it's a blasted outrage -- we've made arrangements to connect it with another one in the borough. Oh, things will hump (sic) here before we go into the city, I tell you.'

When asked how much all this would cost, Mr. Bryant said he had not the least idea, at least offhand.

'What advantages will you people obtain by going into the city?'

'Well, there's quite a few,' replied the councilmanic luminary, as he shifted his legs and recrossed them another way. 'You see, we haven't got any great shakes of a water system. There's only four inch pipes for our main streets, and all that kind of thing. You see this street here -- Lorenz Avenue -- runs up the hill for half a mile. There's houses all the way up, and only a four-inch pipe. There ain't enough water up there at a fire to swim a duck in, and the stream ain't bigger than a garden hose. There's no pressure at all on the hills here.'

...'What do you do in case of a fire?' the councilman was asked.

'Oh, just stand by and let the house burn," he replied.

'Doesn't the volunteer fire department do anything?'

'We ain't got anything of that sort. That's what makes our insurance so darned high. I pay 1-30. Of course, we form bucket brigades, but they ain't much use. This fire protection is one reason why we should get into the city. If a bad fire would start here, the whole town would burn, for it's mostly frame.'

The speaker then said it would cost the city something to lay water pipes all through the borough. The pipes are not at all up to the city standard. The water is furnished by the Monongahela Water Company. There are scarcely any fire plugs in the borough, because the company would not put any in under \$50 each. The taxpayers revolted at such extravagance.

Mr. Bryant said the police protection would be better, too, after annexation. The police force of the borough consists of one man, William Laffey, who is also ordinance officer, truant officer, and supervisor of dogs. When he is not chasing obstreperous school children or looking after the dogs he is patrolling the streets. The writer could not help but see the fatuity of one officer trying to protect a hilly district one and one-half miles square. The police force is dubbed, 'Disappearing Blue,' because it cannot be found when needed. It requires so much time to patrol the borough that no one ever knows where to look for the strong arm of the law. Several years ago council considered the expediency of building a jail and providing for a volunteer fire service. The proceedings almost ended in riot, and as usual nothing was done. In consequence the borough has no place to put its arrested men and no effective means of combatting fire.

The great obstacle to getting improvements is and has been the cry of high taxes. The millage is only 6½ for borough purposes, probably the lowest in the county, so it is difficult to see wherein this complaint is founded. The bonded debt of Elliott is \$53,000 for borough purposes, the school having its own debt. The assessment of property is a little over \$1,000,000. It is perfectly true that there are very few wealthy or well-to-do people in Elliott, the great majority of the people being plain Teutonic artisans, who make a living by working in factories, mills or on farms. There is little market gardening in the place, however. The people are frugal, and in some cases 'close,' yet notwithstanding their moderate financial circumstances, it is strange that there should be so much kicking about a 6-mill tax, when other boroughs are burdened with 20 or 21 mills. The school tax of Elliott is 8 mills for school maintenance and 1 for school building. Thus the total tax rate of the borough is 15½ mills.

In two respects the borough is well off -- as to light and school facilities. There are electric arc lamps all over town. For fuel natural gas is in abundance.

One of the chief advantages of coalescing with the city will be the extension of the sewer system. Every-

body in Elliott admits that the sewer system is wretched. There is no sewer at all on Chartiers avenue, all property owners there being compelled to use outside sanitary conveniences. The cost of keeping these in condition amounts to as much as the additional taxes will be under city administration. One leading professional man who lives on the street said it costs \$45 a year to keep his place in sanitary condition, all of which will be unnecessary with a sewer system.

One of the first things the city will undoubtedly do is pave Chartiers avenue. Several years ago there was a plan on foot set in motion by the borough council to do this, but the members got at loggerheads and adjourned calling each other names. It was intended to sewer the street also.

In winter this place is a slough of mud four feet deep. It is almost impossible for people to get on or off the street cars. People of the town develop considerable acrobatic ability in trying to leap on and off the cars, and at the same time avoid lakes of mud and water. The conductors and motormen have a provoking habit of letting people stand in the mud while they cast bland smiles at them when the cars whiz by. There is no question that Elliott gets the worst traction service in the two cities, not even excepting East Street, Allegheny, where cars pursue schedules of maddening irregularity. People of the Elliott line are packed in like sardines. All the old flat-wheeled cars are put on this line, in fact the manager of the trolley trust seems to think anything is good enough for the Teutons of the West End hill tops.

Owing to the narrowness of Steuben street summer cars cannot be used on the line, which, of course, adds to the woes of Elliott people. At Chartiers and Steuben street there is a steep grade at the foot of which is a sharp turn, which has been the scene of many frightful occurrences which through fortunate circumstances, did not terminate in great loss of life. The street railway authorities allowed their motormen to rush cars down this perilous place regardless of life until a car jumped the track and landed on top of the 60-foot stone wall holding up Steuben street. Then they woke to the necessity of taking preventive measures. At the time the car had 80 passengers on, so if it had leaped the wall and fallen 60 feet into the West End the loss of life would have been awful. Great iron posts are now installed above the curve and a switch laid above the same. Before a car proceeds the switch is open, so that in case of brakes not working and the car getting beyond the control of the motormen it will run into the switch and up against a hillside.

With Chartiers avenue sewerred and paved, Lorenz paved and sidewalks laid on each, the borough will be in tolerably good condition. The northern end of the town is the part that lacks improvement. It has never been able to get any. On River Hill, which overlooks the Ohio and Pittsburg, Allegheny and Brunot's Island district, there are no improvements whatever, except some doubtful, rickety boardwalks. South of Chartiers avenue, which runs almost east and west, Catherine street is paved. This is one square south of the first named and parallel to it. Bitter feeling was engendered at the time at the spectacle of paving a purely residence street and neglecting the main artery of traffic. It was alleged that councilmanic favoritism was shown as certain influential political wire pullers lived on the street. Chartiers avenue runs through the broad valley between River hill and the big, lofty eminence extending south toward the Chartiers township line. West of Lorenz avenue Chartiers avenue pursues a winding course through a deep ravine until it emerges in Sheraden borough at the railroad yards of the Panhandle. Elliott adjoins Sheraden and Chartiers township on the west, or to be precise the northwest. Below the west end of River hill is Corks run, a miserable district full of Italians and negroes where gambling flourishes. Corks run is partly in Sheraden, Esplen borough and Chartiers township.

.....Whatever may be said about the lack of progressiveness of the town, it is undeniable that it has a good school. The teachers, by the way, are in favor of annexation to Pittsburg because they will receive more salary.

The schoolhouse is a large red brick structure standing at the corner of Lorenz avenue and Catherine street. Together with the ground it represents an investment of about \$40,000. A couple of years ago an addition was built at a cost of \$20,000. The school now contains 12 rooms, there being that many teachers...

In the school is a High school. Courses in drawing and nature painting were recently added. The enrollment of pupils is now over 500...

One of the best known residents is Captain John A. Wood, of river fame, who has a comfortable big frame house overlooking the picturesque West End hollow and the Allegheny river between the great hills of Mount Washington and Elliott. Captain Wood was one of the strongest forces in favor of annexation and by his influence did much for the movement. From the hill back of the Wood home a good view of the Holiday park is to be had. Some magnificent views can be obtained from the hills of Elliott. The finest is that to be seen from the top of River hill. Directly

below lies the Ohio with its many craft, while Allegheny city forms a beautiful picture beyond. To the right is the downtown part of the city, the skyscrapers standing prominently. A part of the West End and Mt. Washington are visible also. To the left is Brunot's Island with the pretty Ft. Wayne boroughs beyond and to the southwest McKees Rocks and the big lagoon in the Ohio. On a clear day this prospect is superb, constituting one of the finest panoramas in the state. Fully five miles of the river are visible.

Elliott, unlike Sheraden, is not local option. There are two saloons, the proprietors of which being members of council fought the annexation. At present they pay \$300 a year license while in the city the cost of the same is \$1,100.

It is but fair to say that while the borough lacks paved streets and cannot boast of much architecture pretensions there are many scenes of rustic beauty. The love of Germans for flowers is strikingly shown in the wealth of old-fashioned floral beauties which adorn the simple gardens. Green-clad hills, little lanes hung with trees, paths, shrubbery and neat, pretty houses form pictures not to be seen in districts where paved streets and other evidences of civilization are to be found.