



One of the fastest-growing industrial areas in the Magic Valley of chemical plants in Nitro and its surrounding territory, and these pictures show three of the large chemical production centers.

At the left is the big "directory" of plants which stands at the entrance-roads to the plant area. In Nitro you turn left at the sign and take your choice of which plant you want to enter. The second picture shows a

general view of a section of the big American Viscose Corp. plant, whose towering smokestacks are a symbol of the increasing industrial tempo of the town. In the center is the main busi-

ness entrance to the big Ohio-Apex plant, manufacturers of plasticizers and other chemicals. And at the right is a view looking toward a portion of the sprawling Monsanto Chemical Co. plant.

At the extreme left-hand part of this picture, just over the hood of the last car on the left, is a large white sign which proclaimed when the picture was taken a few days ago that there had passed 1,142 working days

since a reportable accident had happened, with loss of time due to the accident. The record is "one for the books" of the company, the longest period any of the many Monsanto plants

throughout the country has worked without an accident." Space limitations deny the printing of pictures showing all the many industries of Nitro, but the Daily Mail is proud to salute all the industries as well

as the people of the city which was born during one World War, became almost a ghost-town a few years afterward, then flourished anew with the development of the Chemical Valley of the world. (Photos by Earl Benton).

Nitro Is 'Ghost Town' That Came Back To Life

Giant Plants Help To Build City Into Important Center

By CHARLES CONNOR
Of The Daily Mail Staff

Nitro, described variously as the "Oak Ridge of World War I" and the "Magic City of the Magic Valley," is all that and something more: a ghost town that came back to life, as the deserted streets and dilapidated buildings of many western boom towns plainly show. But Nitro is different.

Not only is it again a thriving city 14 miles below Charleston, it is a city with a booming future. It doesn't expect to slip into near obscurity as it did immediately after Armistice Day, 1918.

The story of Nitro is a story of powder. In the fall of 1917, Uncle Sam decided he needed a lot more smokeless powder to win the war. After looking over the whole United States, he picked out an 1800-acre cow pasture on the Kanawha river and then began to wave his magic wand.

Out of the mud, beginning Jan. 8, 1918, Nitro began to rise. In five short months, 1,724 houses had been built, were completely furnished and occupied by more than 21,000 people.

Speed was the watchword. Money, manpower and materials became expendable. Even though labor was recruited all over the United States and sent to Nitro on special trains, there never was the usual "manpower quota" was reached.

Workers came and went so fast that in one year's time, 86,000 men had worked on the job but each man had only stayed for an average of 40 days.

ONE OF the workers who came to Nitro during the mad scramble of its "boom days" was a laborer from Cadis, O. A young fellow known today throughout the world as Clark Gable.

Gable didn't stay long, but Gene Fowler did. Fowler, an employee of the American Viscose plant today, was the night foreman at the police stables and in charge of 98 riding horses. In all, the government had 3,000 horses and 72 head of oxen on the reservation.

"I remember one day," says Gene, "when a shipment of wild broncos came in from the West with an outfit of cowboys who were sent along to break them. It was unbelievable all that went on here."

So it was. Everything about Nitro was unbelievable during its riotous heyday. Five hundred Japanese laborers were shipped in from California to help erect the city. More than 500 interior guards, 516 soldiers and an untold number of secret service men patrolled the area day and night. And the 86,000 men who poured into the area represented 41 nationalities. It was a curious hodge-podge. Each day they had never seen anything like it before and hadn't since.

WHEN THE town's designers began fishing around for a name, two suggestions were offered: Nitro and Redwop. Nitro escaped being called "Redwop" only after much deliberation. "Redwop" derived from the word powder spelled backwards, lost out to "Nitro" from the word nitro-cellulose.

With \$75,000,000 poured into the building of Nitro during 10 frenzied months of activity, the government finally got around to the manufacture of powder. And the first shipment of powder to go out was also the last.

The Armistice, signed Nov. 11, 1918, signaled an end to production. Within one week, half of the population had streamed out of town. Within a few months, Nitro almost died. The chief work consisted of dismantling the pre-fabricated houses which had been erected so speedily. By 1921, only 2,000 people remained. Nitro took on all the aspects of a drab, ghost town.

The 2,000 who remained, however, refused to let die and quit. After holding on to the town and plant for a year, the government

SALUTE To Nitro

Police, Fire Departments Stay Up To Date In Nitro

By CHUCK MCGHEE
Of The Daily Mail Staff

The Nitro police and fire departments are as old as the World War I boomtown that was erected by the government for the express purpose of manufacturing explosives to annihilate the Imperial German army.

When the government moved in, it brought its own military police and, because of the very nature of the town's reason for being, it began the construction of what today is one of the most modern fire departments in the state, ranking fifth in the state and exceeded only by the much larger cities of Charleston, Huntington, Wheeling and Parkersburg.

Mayor W. W. Alexander said that in the last four years the municipality of 6,500—since the recent incorporation of East Nitro, Crawford City and Central City—has spent \$40,000 on fire fighting equipment and that two pieces bought in the last two years cost \$24,000.

The department is headed by Acting Chief Guy Sizemore, and there are four men on full time pay along with 20 trained volunteer members on constant call. They man three pumper trucks along with an emergency rescue truck with modern safety equipment and a rescue boat.

Highly extraordinary for a town its size is the fact that Nitro has 100 fire hydrants, and even more unusual is that it owns an automatic alarm system that is manned 24 hours daily and which is largely responsible for its high ranking in state departments. It is the state's smallest municipality with an alarm system.

MILITARY POLICE preserved law and order in Nitro from its beginning in 1917 until the mid-20's when the town was bought, lock, stock and barrel by the Charleston Industrial Corp. During that period of ownership until 1932 when it became a municipality, Nitro had a private police force headed by Chief John Britton, a former Charleston police chief.

The first police chief after incorporation was Harry Graves, who held the post for several years, and there have been a long succession of others, including W. T. Bird, John Rush, Phillip Arthur, Bill Bird, (not related to W. T.) E. S. Thompson, Hershel Ramsey, A. L. Gammon, Bert Castle, Mike Foley, Denver Arbaugh, Joe Johnson and Ed Guthrie, now a member of the state police.

N. B. WARNER, a former state trooper, is the present chief and has held the post for two years. Under him are a desk sergeant, radio dispatcher and two patrolmen who give the town round-the-clock police protection. The department has had two-way radio communication facilities for four years and operates one fully-equipped cruiser car.

Mayor Alexander said that law violations of a more serious nature are comparatively rare, as are bad fires, although there are exceptions, but that the police and fire

THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT

Nitro Feeling Boom, This Time In Athletics

By GEORGE HOLBROOK
Daily Mail Sports Writer

Nitro is undergoing another "boom." The original World War I boom resulted in the pleasant community that straddles the Kanawha-Putnam county line. The newest one—in athletics—has catapulted the Wildcats into the limelight in both football and basketball.

And the brightest thing about the entire picture, says Principal Walter F. Snyder of Nitro high school, is the prospects the future holds.

This optimism is the result of a recent act of the Kanawha County Board of Education. A tract of land, covering 6.34 acres was acquired at a cost of \$24,900 and will be used for the development of a new athletic field in connection with a new and badly-needed school building.

"Actually Nitro high has never had its own field," explained Mr. Snyder. "We have been using a grade school playground for all outdoor athletics. The new field" will be located on the Kanawha river bank, ad-

joining the Nitro City park. There is a remote possibility that it will be graded, fenced and ready to play on by the fall of 1953. Certainly, at the latest, it will be developed by the fall of 1954."

NITRO HAS done OK so far under its "orphan" setup. Its football team, under Coach Clyde C. Underwood, has won 27 games, lost 11 and tied one since 1948. Included are two outstanding seasons: 8-1 in '48 and 9-1 in 1952.

Records are available since 1932 when the Cats picked a nice 7-1 record under Coach Crickberger. In spite of three seasons when they did not win a single game, Nitro possesses an overall record

of 78 wins and 73 defeats with 12 tie games. So, they are more than holding their own.

One reason for their success, most folks feel, is the team's regular trip to training camp each fall. It's sort of a community project, spearheaded by a group of boosters who raise the necessary expenses from such special events as a motorcycle show and minstrel to just plain a king of the townspeople to contribute.

THEY SEND the team to the Roane county 4-H camp located about 10 miles south of Spencer. "It really gets us in good shape for the season," Underwood said. "The Cats hope to return this fall, too."

The camp is the only project tackled by the "boosters." There is no such thing as a Boosters club, but some of the more active workers are Ivan Hunter, the Elvin Coes, Fred Anderson, Pod Higginbotham, Howard G. Anderson and Clyde Willard.

JUST IN case the new Nitro field is not ready next fall, Coach Underwood said he tentatively had scheduled three "home" games at St. Albans, across the Kanawha river, and two at nearby Dunbar.

Nitro seems to be a good place to be head coach. They've had only three in the last 21 years. "Crick" was followed by Fred Huff who tutored the Wildcats from 1934 through 1946 when he left for Florida.

Underwood has been at the helm ever since. The same three coached basketball until John Stec, former Morris Harvey star, came along in 1949. The hoopers' best season in the Kanawha Valley conference was in 1949 when they won 11 and dropped 3, finishing third behind SJ and CHS.

JACK WEST of the '49 team gave Nitro its only KVC individual scoring champion when he averaged 18.5 over 13 games. The same season Gene Burdette averaged 18.2 and led the league with 255 points in 14 games. West tallied 241 and they gave Nitro a potent 1-2 punch.

Don Steele came along in 1952 to post a 22.2 average on 311 points, both third best in the big 14-school conference.

Basketball success was scarce until the post-war era, only five winning seasons appearing from 1932 through '45. But the last three campaigns have ended with fine 16-5, 14-6 and 15-7 marks being compiled.

Annexation Move Helps Nitro Growth

Services Extended To Area One Third As Big As City Itself

By ADRIAN GWIN
Of The Daily Mail Staff

Annexing a territory a third as big as the community itself isn't an easy job for any city, but Nitro recently accomplished that, bringing city benefits to about 3,000 persons living in the Nitro area.

Crawford City, Central City and East Nitro, three continuous adjoining residential areas which lie on the Charleston side of Nitro, petitioned three years ago for the city to call a vote and annex them. CITY COUNCIL went to work, checked the petitions and found them legal, set a date and called the vote.

To the dismay of a lot of residents of the area (80 per cent of which were in favor of the annexation) the vote was extremely light and a small bloc of voters in "the east end" defeated the project.

The following year, after dozens of new homes had been built in the areas, and more lots were being marked off for construction, residents again approached the city council pleading for annexation.

"We need streets and streetlights. Our streets should be marked with street signs, and above all, we need fire protection, fire hydrants near our homes, and sidewalks so our children can get off the streets and out of the mud," was the general plea of the mushrooming-area residents.

IT WAS explained by the city councilmen that the area could certainly benefit, but that streets are paved by the residents, the facilities only being made available by the city through incorporation.

"Fire plugs and street lights, yes, the city would provide those," immediately, or as soon as possible" after annexation.

"Call for another vote, and the thing will pass this time," exclaimed the delegation members from the three communities.

Before the election on Oct. 19, 1950, which made the area part of Nitro proper, the residents elected from among themselves three men to sit with the city council in an advisory capacity, to be "unofficial councilmen" from the area.

THOSE MEN were Cecil Walker, representing East Nitro; Charles Newbauer, for Central City and Charlie Bailey, for Crawford City, city councilmen and Mayor W. W. Alexander made a solemn promise that if the large area were annexed, the committee members would sit as far as legally possible on the council as representatives of the area.

When the vote was held, a large percentage of the residents turned out and the annexation passed by an overwhelming majority.

AFTER THE election the city council and the mayor made good their promises. The newly annexed representatives attended council meetings, discussed improvements, made known complaints, and indicated public opinion in their portion of the city, but until July 1 when councilmen were elected for the area, the representatives had no real vote.

However, the council judiciously acted in their behalf on all questions.

Street lights throughout the area were installed, the water company was petitioned immediately by council for fire hydrants, which were installed after only normal delay.

Two New Churches Enjoyed In Nitro

Two Nitro congregations recently completed construction of new churches. St. Paul's Methodist, above, had its first services conducted in it last Easter. The

First Baptist church has a seating capacity of 420. It was completed in February of last year. The men of the church contributed over 1,000 hours of labor, the Rev. Warren R. Moyer, pastor, said.

did the preaching and I did the playing and singing." The Pilgrim Holiness congregation meets now in a room on the corner of Cedar and Main streets. But the members, mostly young people, are planning to build a church.

Three other churches are also working on building plans — the First Presbyterian church, Church of God, and Evangelical United Brethren. The first church is planning a new building, the second, a Sunday school addition, and the third, a new parsonage.

OTHER NITRO churches, their pastors, and average Sunday morning attendances are the Church of Christ, Donald Jarrett, 100; Holy Trinity Catholic church, the Rev. Fr. Patrick J. Keating, 200; W. Va. Home Mission, the Rev. Carl Pickens, 45; United Baptist, the Rev. Paul Alexander, 125; Church of God, the Rev. William S. Jenkins, 300; Evangelical United Brethren, the Rev. C. J. Allen, 35; and the First Presbyterian, the Rev. Paul E. Crane, 90.

Nitro Church-Going City With 1,370 Attending Each Sunday

By NANCY KANE
Of The Daily Mail Staff

About 1,370 persons go to church every Sunday morning in Nitro. And seven of the town's nine ministers refer to the community as a "church-going town." Only one reported that church attendance was not gaining — the rest said there

were substantial increases in their congregations.

The oldest church in Nitro is the First Baptist. Its history dates back before the founding of the town itself. Pastor Warren R. Moyer said it used to be the Lock Seven Baptist church. In April of last year, the congrega-

tion moved into their new brick building which has a seating capacity of 420. The men of the church donated over 1,000 hours of labor, Mr. Moyer said. Average Sunday morning attendance is about 175.

Another church that recently moved into new quarters is St. Paul's Methodist. The Rev. James L. Fisher, pastor, said that the first services were held there on Easter of last year.

Like all the other ministers in Nitro, Mr. Fisher reported that members of his congregation did much of the construction themselves. They recently finished a church nursery. Normal church attendance is about 250.

The Pilgrim Holiness congregation meets now in a room on the corner of Cedar and Main streets. But the members, mostly young people, are planning to build a church.