

FORGOTTEN FOOTHILLS

Little Chicago

Little Chicago was founded in 1936 with the discovery of crude oil by R. A. Brown and Associates at their well, Turner Valley Royalties. The community was dubbed ‘Little Chicago’ by the American drillers because of its proximity to a big slough which they nicknamed Lake Michigan. It was later renamed ‘Royalties’ to honour the first oil well. Royalties Post Office opened on July 1, 1937. Another explanation for the name ‘Little Chicago’ suggests that one of the general storekeepers named Rex Warman earned the nickname ‘Little Al Capone’ because of a scar on his lip. Al Capone was a gangster who operated in Chicago during the 1920s.

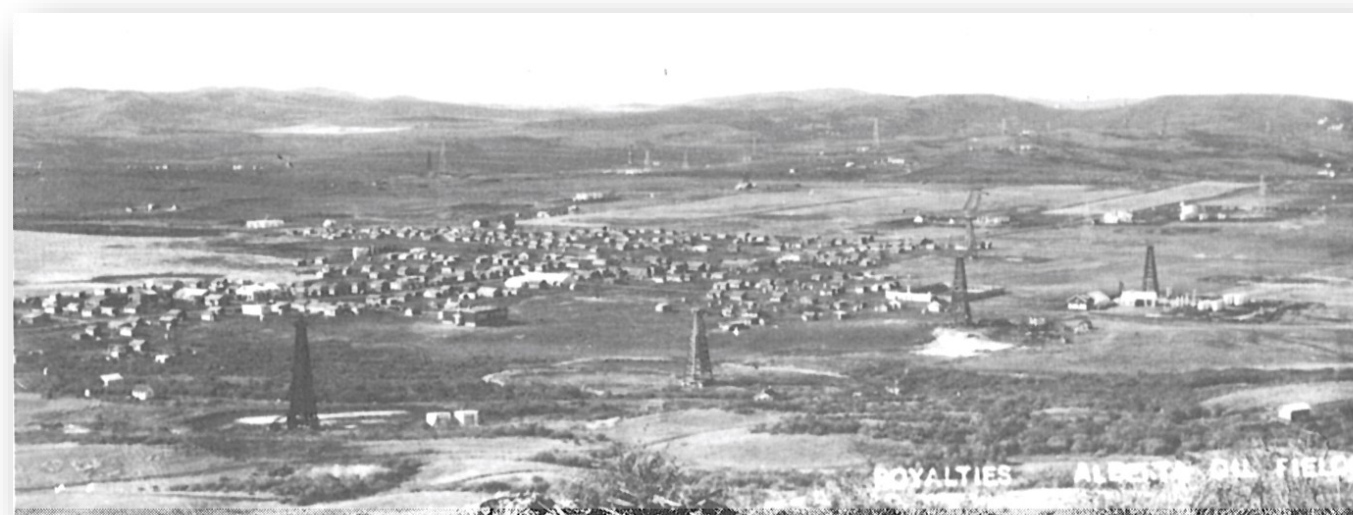
During its heyday, Little Chicago/Royalties (NE29-18-2-W5) had a population of 1,700 people, a Hudson Bay store, two oilwell supply depots, three trucking firms, a machine shop, three lumber mills, two garages, a furniture store, three grocery stores, several boarding houses, restaurants, a theatre/dance hall and numerous bootlegging establishments. In 1938 the South Turner Valley High School was built nearby.

Most of Little Chicago was built on farmland leased from local farmers: \$4 per month for a commercial lot, \$2 a month for a house and fuel was \$2 a month per house.

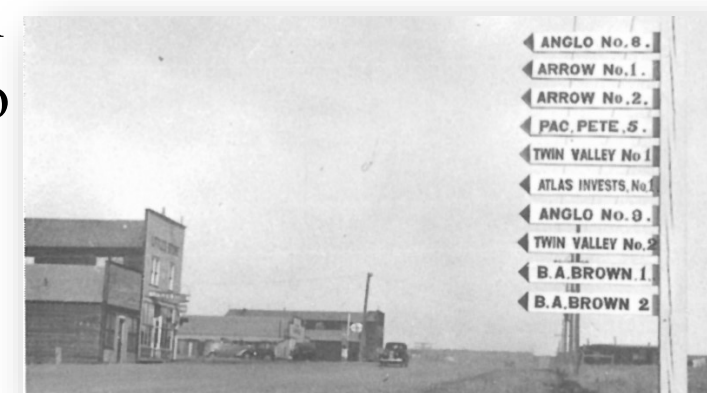
According to history books, high gas pressure in the area led to stoves exploding when they were hooked up to the gas line and some people died on their toilet because they sat down and lit a cigarette.

Once drilling was exhausted, residents immediately left and businesses closed out. The post office was the last remaining building in operation in Royalties and when it closed in 1970, the community ceased to exist. All that remains is a cairn erected in 2004.

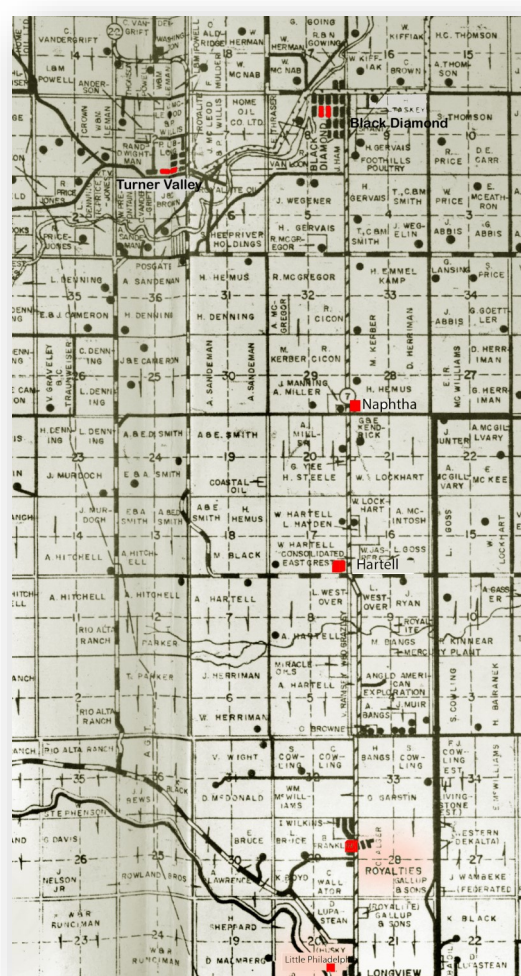
Source: “Royalties” by Mary Tovee, Tales and Trails — A History of Longview and Surrounding Area



A view of Little Chicago (Royalties), late 1930.



Main Street of Royalties, showing directions to wells in area, late 1930s.



Little Philadelphia

Little Philadelphia, also known as River Bend, was considered a small superb of Little New York, now the Village of Longview. This community was located east of Longview along the Highwood River on Bert Sheppard’s Ranch. In the early 1940s, there were approximately 22 homes located there as well as a mud plant and tank farm associated with the oilfield activity in the region.

Just like Little Chicago, when drilling activity ceased, residents moved out of Little Philadelphia.

Source: “Little Philadelphia” by Mrs. M Johnson, Tales and Trails — A History of Longview and Surrounding Area and In the Light of the Flares.