December 23, 1934

Dear Mr. Scheide:

I am no little perplexed about my relation to the proposed story of Titusville. I have had, after many delays - this is a busy season for publishers you know - the interviews I suggested when we had our visit here in New York.

Macmillan would not consider a town history of the usual sort. They would consider favorably a study of a town made somewhat in the manner of a book published a few years ago called, “Middletown” - the development of a community economically and socially, under the peculiar circumstances which the discovery of a great natural product imposes. It is a serious literary job and the result might, or might not be, convincing to an editor and publisher.

The most serious thing about it from the Titusville point of view is that I doubt whether this is the kind of a piece of work you want. As I have seen it you are seeking a story of Titusville and the Valley of Oil Creek which is a straightforward and interesting presentation of the facts and of the people and not an effort to interpret them. Is not this the idea? Would those to whom you are looking for support in the enterprise be satisfied with anything else?

I am afraid not; and Macmillan seems to feel that would be the natural desire in those backing the enterprise that such a book would not be for the general public but for the country concerned.

As to serial publication. After talking it over carefully I am quite sure there would be no serial market for the chapters in such a book as Macmillan would accept. We all agreed on that. When I say no market, I mean no market where there would be substantial returns.
I come back where I was before then — Chapters which Dr. Giddens would prepare and I edit:

First - The Pre-Drake Period

Second - Financing a New Discovery in the '50's.

Third - Drake and the First Oil Well.

The chapters to be published in serious reviews. This sort of publication would be good for the enterprise; it would be a credit to your museum and it would undoubtedly draw fresh material to it and eventually it would make a book of interest to the Oil Regions.

The way then the matter shapes itself in my mind after my conferences with publishing people is — First, the kind of book for which I could get a contrast is not the kind of book which Titusville and vicinity would want. Therefore, it is not the kind of book which you could expect the community to finance.

Second, the kind of book which the publisher would take would have little chance of serial publication and so no hope of returns to backers.

Third, the plan on which so far we have been working still seems to me the most practical and in the long run the most advantageous to Titusville.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Dr. Tolley and Dr. Giddens so they may see how I feel about it. If you agree with me about the advisability of going ahead on the old plan and if you and Dr. Tolley can manage the financing of Dr. Giddens I will be, as I have been from the first, only too glad to do what I can in the way of suggestions. If you agree then I should say that if Dr. Giddens is not tied up for the Christmas holidays he finish up the material for that first chapter and get it into shape at once.
If you think I am wrong about the unwillingness of the oil community to back such a book as Macmillan would accept then I will see what arrangements I can make for deferring the contracts which now hold me. But just at this moment, as I said, I hardly see it. I shall be very glad, dear Mr. Scheide, if you will tell me what your reaction is to this letter. I am asking Dr. Tolley to do the same.

With all the best possible wishes to you and Mrs. Scheide for the coming holidays.

Faithfully yours

I M T

Mr. John H. Scheide
Titusville, Pa.