THREE PETROLEUM PIONEERS AND PHILANTHROPISTS IN PITTSBURGH:
EBENEZER BREWER, CHARLES LOCKHART, AND MICHAEL BENEDUM

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Ebenezer Brewer (1789-1870) was one of the partners who originally owned the land in Titusville, PA on which Edwin Drake drilled the world’s first oil well. Along with his son Dr. Francis Brewer (1820-1872) and other partners, Ebenezer Brewer transacted the first oil lease in North America in 1853. For many years, the elder Brewer made his home in Pittsburgh, where he was active in St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church. He was a generous donor to the church and served on the Vestry for many years.

Charles Lockhart (1818-1905) built the nation’s first commercial scale oil refinery in Pittsburgh, in 1861. In 1868 he formed the Standard Oil Company in partnership with John D. Rockefeller. Lockhart served as president of Standard Oil from 1874 to 1892. Extensively involved in philanthropy, Lockhart was deeply committed to his church, endowing the Eastminster Presbyterian Church in the East Liberty section of Pittsburgh. His heirs endowed the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, also in East Liberty.

Michael Benedum (1869-1959) was the nation’s greatest wildcatter, successfully exploring for oil around the world. His company, Benedum-Trees, was headquartered in Pittsburgh. He gave generously from his wealth, endowing churches and hospitals. The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation is one of the major philanthropic institutions in Pittsburgh, having been responsible for supporting an engineering school at the University of Pittsburgh as well as a theater for the performing arts.