The title of an essay frames the intellectual domain in which its content can be expected to develop. In this case, "many cities, many hills" is at a minimum a play on one colonial voice which held up the potential of a theocratic English America as a gleaming exemplar for the world with "city on a hill" imagery that remains vivid over three centuries later. What gleams still, if we gaze about at American cities, is no longer so singular and has become profoundly secular. At another level, the title's lead phrase represents a bow to the multiple communities and defining spaces of Pittsburgh, which not incidentally was the hub of my experiences growing up in Western Pennsylvania's industrial valleys. Pittsburgh's real diversity amid an apparent, but simplistic notion of dependence on the steel industry is one of the hallmarks of its urban process.

The title reaches as well toward other matters. It gestures toward the once deeply-held belief that cities are the glory of nations, a stance still evident in much of Western Europe, but rejected decisively in most of post World War Two American and dubious for nearly all modern "Third World" urbanization. It is simultaneously an acknowledgment of insights gained through recent studies in urban history, chiefly that multiple cities coexist in uneasy, conflicting, or complementary relations amid dense networks of metropolitan activity. Last, taken as a whole, the title suggests a question: In what sense can a state, a fraction of a nation, have an urban history? Or rephrased, what do the varied histories of cities located within larger (and more or less arbitrary) political boundaries add up to? What cluster of concepts might allow us to imagine this (or any) state in the American union having an ordered, intelligible experience of urbanization?

Before responding to these last queries in my customary elliptical fashion, I think it worthwhile to reflect briefly on the state or urban history more generally. Last October I was privileged to attend (and later coerced into writing about) the Modes and Venues conferences on urban history held in Chicago under the sponsorship of the Chicago Historical Society. There I learned a good deal about city cultures, public administration, finance, urban infrastructure and attendant environmental issues, along with reform movements, the problematics of gender and public behavior, and the dilemmas of ethnicity. Much of this was fascinating; but by the end of the sessions, I noted a deafening silence on a dimension of city-building and city-restructuring dear to my heart: the industrial and commercial economies of cities. Economic determinism is a dead letter, to be sure, but to engage the history of urban places as though the business system, labor processes
and issues of exchange and consumption were peripheral seemed to me more than a tad peculiar. How had this come to pass?

An older, by now ancient, tradition in urban studies, by no means radical, had involved the close description of economic activity, along with an often uncritical chronicling of leading firms, entrepreneurs, labor formations, and related institutions. Entire theories of urban development, in sociology and geography, had privileged economic elements in the creation of Burgess rings or distance-friction gradients. Though these formulations have been rigorously critiqued, and their Marxist or neo-Marxist challengers battered in turn, did it not seem odd that the economic had become the epiphenomenal?

Three sources of this elision of urban mills and markets may be worth considering. First, perhaps the mathematicization of urban economics, in the form of neoclassically derived input-output models, sufficiently intimidated historians as to make the analysis of other aspects of cities far more congenial. Second, the demonizing of Marxist perspectives over the last few years may have closed off serious theoretical engagement by historians seeking explanatory alternatives to standard economic scenarios. Third, the notable shortcomings of large-scale data base construction projects, in which labor, business, and the economy were considered integral to the treatment of urban processes, may have indicated that generating reams of computer paper yielded largely banal or ambiguous findings. These speculations, taken together, would suggest that the economic dimension of urbanization has been eclipsed in part due to the supercession of interpretive (or idiographic) modes of historical discourse over forms of explanation based on quasi-scientific (or nomothetic) schemes. Put simply, many historians have returned to telling stories, abjuring the quest for divining "laws" of human, economic, or urban behavior.

Frankly, this evident defeat of scientizing history thrills me. It suggests a gradual resolution of H. Stuart Hughes question whether history is art or science on the side of art. Social behavior is, due to its reflexive character, not a matter open to the probes of those expecting time- and space-transcendent regularities. Reflexivity in this contest means that we, as agents, constantly change the premises of our actions on the basis of our interpretations of experience, modifying our goals, routines, and expectations in a crazy-quilt of learning. This notion, derived from (among other sources) Anthony Giddens' provocative series of excurses into social theory, fundamentally undermines any concept of history as science. Even so, the economy, however perplexing and infused with complex and contradictory intentionalities, will not go away. For those concerned with urban development and decay, economic actions matter, perhaps profoundly. The challenge is to craft stories that take seriously the perceptions of historical agents, and relate as clearly as possible their understandings of the options, constraints and cultural meanings that were fused with action. To do this in a Pike County town is demanding; to take on Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Erie, or Bethlehem is a more formidable task. Still,
if we are storytellers, the best stories we can offer must have this sense of fidelity to the lifeworlds of our forebears, including their pecuniary interests.

On this point, like my pulpit-pounding grandfather, I am a bit of a missionary, albeit a secular actor urging the reintegration of business and labor, production and exchange, into the means through which we conceptualize the urban process. Problem statements about urban change that fail to link culture and politics to profits and technology, are, for me, deficient. We all select, summarize, and display a "past," intervene in the lives of others mostly long dead, and interpret the residues that have survived to inform our views. As we think of Pennsylvania cities, I can only urge that we struggle to appreciate anew the implications of economic behavior, the institutions it spawned, and the collaborations and conflicts it engendered.

So much for missionary appeals. What of practicality and the ordinary tools of our trade? It is time to turn to concepts and approaches, some of which may be usable in researching Pennsylvania's urban development. Four conceptual domains seem to me worth pondering, given the preceding discussion. They are: 1) the relationship between diverse production formats and the articulation of cities; 2) the significance of varied forms of industrial districts for the urbanization process; 3) the elaboration of city regions in distinctively networked forms; and 4) the historically-conditioned restructuring of locale. Here these avenues can only be flagged, with signposts tentatively erected. Were I not so ill-informed about the trajectories of most of the Commonwealth's cities, I might have been able to provide a more empirically-thick and imaginatively-nuanced collection of guidelines. Even so, one element of scholarly perseverance is recognizing what you don't know, and going on nonetheless. This caveat stated, I beg your sufferance for the abstract nature of what follows.

As many Pennsylvania cities were structured around the intersection of transport and industry, thinking about differing relationships between ways of producing and the urban landscape can be profitable. There are two key points initially. First, it is critical to revise our usual view of space as a stage or container for human agency, and with Edward Soja, David Harvey, and other urban geographers, inquire into the social construction of space and its contingent, continual restructuring within the openings and constraints of a capitalist political economy. Spatiality is as central to the urban process as is temporality, and is operative at the microlevel of daily pathways, the mesolevel of institution formation, and the macrolevel of regional or national conflict and change. Second, our conceptions of industry must be more finely differentiated, in parallel with the reframing of categories already under way, for example, in ethnic and immigration studies. The contours of city-building vary decisively as one moves across the spectrum from craft and batch manufacturing (skill-intensive, market reactive, and in general, weakly concentrated in ownership terms) toward bulk processing and mass
production (capital-intensive, market managing, and oligopolistic). Are there a few elite decision-makers who appear to "govern" the urban economy (and manage its politics) or are there hundreds of players spawning dozens of local and rival institutions seeking to amass influence? In struggles over space and power, are the parties rooted and co-present, as in Philadelphia through the 1920s, or a mix of locals and absentees, as at Lowell and Altoona? How does the rising of great bulk and mass producers alter the spatiality of an urban network, and their departure reconfigure it?

As Soja has noted, "The geography and history of capitalism intersect in a complex social process which creates a constantly evolving historical sequence of spatialities." At the mesolevel of institutional and urban space, it is plausible that economic activity contributes most heavily to structuring, whereas culture and gender likely loom larger at the microlevel of household and worksite, and perhaps politics, war, and the demography of migration at the macro. Further, industrialization does not ubiquitously condition city-making, even in Pennsylvania. That there are administrative cities and cities of consumption (Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Santa Monica) simply suggests another layer of complexity beyond the reach of this commentary.

If we retain a focus on manufacturing, a contingent feature of its historical formulations may be the assembly of places, firms, and relations that constitute an "industrial district." As Marshall noted of Britain's Birmingham, the classic industrial district is a web of connectedness and propinquity among manufacturing companies of various scales that generates what economists term positive externalities, benefits that accrue to each firm because of its lodging among competing and complementary enterprises. Such a spatial complex is a magnet for workers, a stimulus to innovation in product and process, and an incubator of both new firms and collective institutions that foster growth and social reproduction (technical schools, industrial banks, insurance and credit services, labor exchanges). At present, the concept is undertheorized, having lain fallow for three quarters of a century while we focused on the single firm and its capacity to amass and integrate functions. However, studies over the last decade by Charles Sabel, Michael Best, Allen Scott and others have given it a new salience, as has the massive downsizing and spinning off of once-internal activities among corporate giants. As my work has argued, Philadelphia was a congeries of Marshallian districts in its industrial heyday, as were, it seems, Providence, Chicago, Grand Rapids, Newark, and a dozen more American manufacturing centers. By contrast, Lowell, Johnstown, and Bethlehem were different, for there one or more immense firms became a city's central axis of development, stifling the associational dynamic that vitalized industrial districts. This opposition, together with evidence for mixed cases and for transitions from one form to another (which may be relevant to Pittsburgh's patterns), open areas for incisive research on Pennsylvania cities.
If economists' and business historians' extended gazing at individual firms blinded them to much else that was happening among firms in industrial districts, so too might urban historians consider the hazards of taking a city boundary too literally when economic and industrial matters are being reviewed. Here I am not about to reiterate familiar lines on peripheries and the migration of residences and jobs, but instead would like to bring forward the notion of city regions, derived from Mumford, Jane Jacobs, and like-minded scholars. Once more variation is the key and its resonance with formats for production part of the problem set. Pennsylvania, one could say, exhibits three different conjugations of the city region. Philadelphia stands as the hub and spoke model, with a powerful center long exercising dominion over a cluster of satellite towns and secondary industrial cities—Chester, Trenton, Camden, Norristown—which either mirrored its flexible production system or generated bulk-processed materials to feed its needs. Pittsburgh, however, might be seen as centerless (not financially of course), for great plants rapidly located throughout the region, with the core more hollow than determining. Further the three trios—Reading, Lebanon, and Harrisburg; Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, and Hazelton; Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton—may describe an axial nodality within their surrounding regions, with the linkages and rivalries among them being fodder for inquiries structured similarly to those aimed at comparable clusters of mid-size cities in the Midlands, Alsace, or northern Italy.

Pennsylvania is a marvelous spot for provoking regional thinking about city-formation, given this diversity; and the state line should not bar the stretching of our imaginations. Analogous to Philadelphia, can Erie's development be better understood if it is placed in the context of the lake crescent from Buffalo to Cleveland? What were the relations of its producers with shoreside rivals or clients, and how did they change when General Electric came to town? Are there significant regional institutions created through private sector initiatives (or influence with local governments), and how do these vary both statewide, in terms of production formats and their shifts, and as industry's growth pole recedes? Outside grand categories (the South, Midwest, or New England) historians have had relatively little experience thinking and writing at the regional level, whereas social scientists who do this routinely have, for the most part, a stunningly reductionist sense of historical change. Urban history is a base from which evocative questions may be asked on a regional plane, questions that are the means to link city-making and breaking with regional restructuring and through this connection to build bridges to national and even global dynamics.

This last phrase leads into the fourth room of my concept shop, where we encounter the historical restructuring of locale. If we consider matters of information and communication, both as essential to social life as to the political economy, cities have a special doubled character. First, because of their dense packets of interaction, cities serve as powerful compilers, places in which staggering
volumes of knowledge are traded, stored, and discarded. Second, and less often noted, city people and institutions are richly connected with far distant agents and agencies, drawing in and sending forth masses of data that fuel commerce, administration, education, and, in the neighborhoods, the daily praxis of communities. In this fashion cities overcome time and distance far more readily than hinterlands, a process Allan Pred documented in his studies of nineteenth century inter-urban information flows.\textsuperscript{15}

In this sense the relevant contexts for urban decision making stretch from the immediacy of face-to-face contacts to the appropriation of knowledge remote in space and time. It is this capacity for stretching, overcoming these barriers to effective action (while potentially creating new ones), that Giddens calls distanciation,\textsuperscript{16} in a sense the inverse of interpersonal distancing, that erecting of obstacles which serves to guard individual security. Distanciation involves risk and the simultaneous need to establish trust in unseen and unknown sources, a complement to the risk and trust dimensions of urban co-presence in a universe of strangers. What counts as a working locale in cities cannot therefore be described by drawing lines on a map, for locale is at once local in a physical sense, stretched across great spaces, highly mutable, and significantly variable at the individual level by age, race, class, and gender. Taken at the microlevel, as Hagerstrand has indicated,\textsuperscript{17} the daily time-space paths charted by city folks are both to a degree routinized, differentiated along these parameters, and yet capable of being heaped into patterns of collective practice, patterns which themselves shift historically.

Certainly, technological changes powerfully affect the contours of locale and condition its restructuring. The web press, Fourdrinier paper-making machine and advances in using wood pulp to replace rags for paper made huge runs of penny daily newspapers possible in the latter half of the nineteenth century, deepening the currents of timely information, setting the stage for altered shopping and job-search patterns, and altering the register of political discourse. Electric traction, as Charles Cheape suggests, had comparable implications, as did telegraphy, the phone, autos and busses, central electrical stations, the radio, and their successors down to CNN, whose endless coverage of the Persian Gulf War was credited with wrecking the restaurant and move trade in Philadelphia for weeks, evidence of the short-term transformation both of our sense of locale and of our daily time-space paths.\textsuperscript{18}

How are these observations germane to doing urban history in Pennsylvania? Let me link them back to two issues raised earlier. Changes in information access and the related technologies have profound implications for surveillance and the exercise of power. Consider the dual cases of a large local firm nominally controlled by a distant headquarters and a similar large locally-headquartered company with both nearby and distant plants. When governance at a distance must be handled by letter and the compressed discourse of telegrams, executives' capacities from confident control are sharply bounded, and local superintendents
enjoy considerable latitude in the framing and solving of problems. With the typewriter, telephone, and mechanical calculator, the quantity of and speed with which information spirals to the center accelerate, imperatives of coordination are more readily perceived and implemented, with a consequent transformation of locale. In the case of the locally headquartered giant, distant regions may be mined for profits that are indirectly channeled into downtown office tower construction and support for institutions of education and high culture. Conversely, the tightening of distant controls can so narrow decision spaces in branch plant cities that the area's fate may seem to lie in the hands of absentee masters. These patterns were surely interlaced in the Pittsburgh region over the last several decades. However, Philadelphia was neither a headquarters nor a branch plant city to any marked degree, remaining locally independent, even insular, as critical dimensions of locale were reconfigured at the national or global plane, a condition that was doubtless implicated in its particular route into economic and urban decay.

Alternatively, consider the matter of interurban rail and trolley systems that once linked Pittsburgh with Youngstown and Cleveland, and perhaps also connected up the central and eastern clusters of Pennsylvania's smaller cities. Exploring the timing and mechanics of their origins, the activity of governments, businesses, power companies, and railroads against the context of industrial and residential development can tell us something about the stretching of locale that reaches beyond streetcar suburbs toward the constituting of a city region. What visions did interurbans' promoters have? Who used these lines and for what? What meanings were attached to their decline and abandonment? Answers to these and related queries would provide insight into the historical restructuring of locale from a different angle, one that connects economics, and the urban process. That government at several levels and issues of regulation are frequently involved with such transit is a bonus, for though it has not here been brought front and center, the increasing role of the state in the fates of cities (as John Mollenkopf has rightly stressed) has added further dimensions of power and institutional action to the dynamics of urban spatiality and history.

In concluding, I will revisit the Chicago conference mentioned near the outset. In halls, corridors, and occasional discussions following panels, the point was repeatedly made that a good deal of the most exciting urban history at present was being authored by scholars from more or less adjacent fields who bring the perspectives of gender studies, ethnicity, geography, political science, or business and labor history to bear on urban matters. This is undoubtedly true, and yielded a mild epistemological crisis over the elusiveness of defining and compartmentalizing the specificity of the urban. These pages are a belated and retargeted response to those exchanges and concerns. Overall, I hope here to have suggested that cities' very complexity and elusiveness, their immersion in process and contingency, is what makes them crucial for analyses of "modern" social, political, and economic relationships. At the same time, it seems to me that with-
out a supple sense of the intertwining of temporality and spatiality in urbanization, we must operate in a domain of impoverished discourse and blinkered vision. If we can fully enough engage Soja’s argument that “social relations are simultaneously and conflictually space-forming and space-contingent,” we will be in a position to reap far richer understandings of the interplay of space, knowledge, power, and institutions in urban history.\footnote{22}

Notes
1. The physical domination of Pittsburgh’s regional landscape by vast basic steel complexes has obscured the diversity of specialty and fabricating enterprises active in parallel, the presence of significant machinery builders (e.g., Mesta), and the elaborate network of plate, window, and pressed glass works that developed alongside Carnegie, National Tube or Jones and Laughlin complexes. Recent work has begun to provide a more inclusive vision, notably studies by John Ingham, Richard O’Connor and work-in-progress by historical geographer Edward Muller. See John Ingham, Making Iron and Steel: The Independent Mills of Pittsburgh, 1820-1920 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991). O’Connor’s dissertation on the glass trades is being completed at the University of Pittsburgh, and Muller is researching regional industrial questions. For an example of the latter’s earlier work in this vein, see Edward Muller and Paul Groves, “The Emergence of Industrial Districts in Mid-Nineteenth Century Baltimore,” Geographical Review, 69 (1979): 159-78.


8. Soja, Postmodern, 127.


14. See work cited above by Best and Sabel, along


19. Pittsburgh surely long profited from its headquarters status for U.S. Steel and Gulf, yet the region also suffered when firms centered elsewhere chose to shut down regional operations, whether at Crucible in Midland, Alcoa in New Kensington, or commercially, Gimbel's in the downtown triangle. For Philadelphia's relative insularity, see Scranton, “Production and Diversity.”

20. John Stilgoe's *Metropolitan Corridor* (New Haven: Yale, 1983) has a fascinating chapter on interurbans that evokes but does not explore these issues.
