

Before Renaissance: Planning in Pittsburgh, 1889–1943. By JOHN F. BAUMAN and EDWARD K. MULLER. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006. xiii, 331 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$27.95.)

This important history of urban planning in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, traces its workings from 1889, when the dominant political machine took steps to acquire Schenley Park in the eastern reaches of the city, to 1943, when a pro-growth coalition of Pittsburgh capitalists, political leaders, and urban technical experts took center stage in launching the massive reconstruction program now remembered as the “Pittsburgh Renaissance.” *Before Renaissance* is a detailed study and interpretation of two lesser-known periods of environmental change that preceded the Renaissance.

Up to 1910, “ring-led development and planning” prevailed (p. 15). Political kingpins, sometimes working with local capitalists, set in motion whatever public initiatives took place on a project-by-project basis, whether for streets, water mains, sewers, bridges, parks, or public buildings. This era and its talented public works engineer, Edward Bigelow, left their monuments: a park and boulevard system and a cluster of major cultural and educational institutions in Oakland, near Schenley Park. Middle- and upper-class critics ultimately renounced machine politics for its graft, its exorbitant costs, and its self-serving ethics.

From 1910 to 1940, the “seminal era of progressive-professional planning” (p. 13), Pittsburgh attempted a novel approach to environmental change: that promoted by the newborn “city planning” movement in the United States. “Comprehensive planning” was its ideal (chap. 3). In place of piecemeal, short-sighted change, impartial experts would utilize systematic data gathering and informed analysis to frame citywide, multipurpose, coordinated plans expressive of the public interest. Bauman and Muller’s book is chiefly a case study of this quest, especially notable for illuminating the Pittsburgh role of Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., the national leader of the American planning movement, and of Frederick Bigger, a local architect who gained national prominence in the 1920s as Pittsburgh’s most effective professional-planning advocate.

Most historians have argued that city planning failed in Pittsburgh and almost everywhere else, except in Daniel Burnham’s Chicago. For Pittsburgh, Bauman and Muller reach a far different conclusion, one that upholds the 1910–40 years as formative both to Pittsburgh history and to the planning movement nationally. By shifting the focus from concrete achievements, which indeed were meager, to the successful, if vexed and protracted struggle to promote and institutionalize the new approach, they document cumulative accomplishments. In effect, sufficient technical expertise, political seasoning, and insight into possible courses of action were acquired over a thirty-year period to build “a scaffolding” for future work (p. 270). Without it, they convincingly argue, the

Pittsburgh Renaissance would have been impossible—even though Renaissance activists had to downplay comprehensive planning to gain real power over their city's environment.

Historians of twentieth-century planning and of Pittsburgh will welcome this study. Bauman and Muller's deftly crafted opening and closing chapters effectively place local events within a national context, which they draw from the vast scholarship on American cities produced since the 1950s. Throughout their work, they seek to analyze, not celebrate. Thus readers will find not only a record of successes but of frustrations, setbacks, and political constraints. The net effect is to significantly amplify and fundamentally revise the still valuable, if acerbic, 1969 study of Pittsburgh planning by Roy Lubove.

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Green Republican: John Saylor and the Preservation of America's Wilderness.

By THOMAS G. SMITH. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006. x, 404 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$40.)

We live in politically divisive times: blue states, red states, and very little in between (or so it might seem). In many circles, wedge issues such as the environment provide easy categorization, which is most often attributed to Democratic perspectives and implicated as exclusively anti-business and development. Historian Thomas G. Smith's *Green Republican* provides readers with dramatic evidence that this categorization is a false one.

Hailing from Johnstown, John Saylor came of age during the early days of "modern environmentalism," the 1960s–70s era when the political landscape was altered to address the concerns of scientists and interested citizens. During this era, revolutionary legislation expressed a basic change in the public's expectations: the environment was important to everyone and only the federal government had the regulative authority to act on its behalf. In Smith's fine account, we learn that a surprising figure loomed behind most of these political achievements: Saylor, the Republican representative from rural Pennsylvania.

Inspired by Republican Theodore Roosevelt, Saylor maintained a commitment to the conservation of natural resources that was not afraid to favor wholesale preservation of specific areas. "Saylor believed that once national parks and monuments had been established, they became sacrosanct." His efforts on behalf of the environment also helped him to emphasize earth stewardship with a strong religious base. "Protecting natural splendors," Smith writes, Saylor believed, "would bring present and future generations closer to the Creator" (p. 2). Despite a national reputation as an activist on national environmental issues, though, he remained committed to his region's needs.