Pennsylvania Colonization Society. Russo also fails to present evidence that local whites were hostile to blacks in Hinsonville, as she claims repeatedly throughout the book. She, in fact, offers examples that undermine her position. With the exceptions of the hardship Ashmum Institute founder Rev. Dickey faced from his congregation about starting the institute and a reference in the university’s alumni magazine about potential acts of arson, there are no other examples of local white hostility to the residents of Hinsonville. Furthermore, the selling of the land to blacks by local whites, the overwhelming support local whites gave to the recapturing of the Parker sisters and court testimonials attesting to the free status of the sisters, Hinsonville residents’ practice of naming their children after local and university-associated whites, and the naming of the railroad and post office suggest that area blacks did not live in a hostile local environment.

Russo, however, has made a valuable contribution. By utilizing court documents, newspapers, oral interviews, magazines, maps, and pictures, she shows why black community histories deserve a more prominent place in American history. Russo brings the now invisible village of Hinsonville back to life and shows how a community of African Americans in rural Chester County responded to the great events that reshaped the nation in the decades surrounding the Civil War as it left a legacy in southeastern Pennsylvania.

West Chester University

Tonya Thames Taylor


Industrial Genius, the latest book by Oxford University professor Kenneth Warren, is a comprehensive biography of one of the most influential and colorful of Pennsylvania’s steel tycoons, Charles M. Schwab. Schwab (1862–1939), a protégé of Andrew Carnegie, played pivotal roles in the creation of two of America’s greatest businesses, United States Steel and Bethlehem Steel. A visionary and a gambler, Schwab helped revitalize the steel industry when Bethlehem began manufacturing the wide flange or “Grey” structural steel beam. During the first half of the twentieth century, Bethlehem’s wide flange beam—lighter, stronger and cheaper to produce than the conventional I beam—formed the structural framework of most American skyscrapers and long-span bridges.

Under Schwab, Bethlehem Steel also became the single most important producer of ordnance, ammunition, and armor plate for the Allies during World War I. By the 1920s, Charles Schwab was the American steel industry’s de facto leader.
Warren focuses on Schwab’s business career, unlike earlier biographies, which placed greater emphasis on the failures and tragedies of his personal life. Drawing on many previously unknown documents, he examines Schwab’s great skills as a negotiator, organizer, and inspirational leader. An uncanny judge of talent, Schwab selected and mentored young men who guided Bethlehem Steel successfully for decades after his retirement.

Paradoxically, the very talents that made Schwab an industrial giant became liabilities in the final decade of his career. His focus on heavy industry blinded him to the growing importance of consumer products in the American economy by the 1920s and 1930s. His quest for mechanical excellence led to a bad investment in the Stutz Automobile Company, which made expensive, technically sophisticated sports cars that found few buyers after the stock market crash of 1929. Missed opportunities and poor investments depleted his personal resources to the point that he faced financial difficulties during his last years; after his death, his estate proved to be bankrupt.

Warren, one of the best historians of the American steel industry, has used these newly available papers to craft the fullest, most balanced account of Schwab’s professional life to date, while offering new details of how Bethlehem Steel became the great business enterprise it was for the first seventy-five years of the twentieth century. “The Steel” is gone, but Industrial Genius will help keep alive the memory of the man who made the company that made so much of the infrastructure we still live with.

National Canal Museum/Hugh Moore Historical Park LANCE E. METZ


Once condemned as “Hell with the Lid Off,” later hailed as the “Renaissance City” and “City of Champions,” Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has at last found a muse to celebrate its sublime beauty. Lodged ethereally as a spectator, Aurand views the city historically, capturing the city’s changing topography, built environment, meaning, and spirit. He finds sublime grandeur and beauty in it all.

Aurand presents a unique analysis of the morphology of Pittsburgh and its region, how it has changed over time thanks to human artifice, and how these changes have been perceived by the spectator. He begins with the prehistoric Native American spectators who, standing before the great hill at the confluence of three great rivers, beheld a “Sacred Mountain” (p. 38) and built a huge