
In his introduction to this compendium of sixty-seven essays on the culture and physical environment of Pittsburgh, Arthur Ziegler remarks that James Van Trump has no equal among city historians. The remark is not totally fair to I. N. Phelps Stokes, who labored nearly a half century on his six-volume Iconography of Manhattan Island; nor to Walter Muir Whitehill, whose Boston: A Topographical History showed what an intellectual adventure the history of urban form can be; or to Richard Krautheimer, whose astonishing virtuosity at solving the urban puzzle of early Christian Rome continues unabated even as he approaches his ninetieth birthday. James Van Trump, a youngster at seventy-five, has not yet piled up for himself or for Pittsburgh a monument equivalent to those of the forenamed, although with his legendary vitality perhaps we can expect it from him still. Pittsburgh, moreover, while as rich as any city in the fascination of its physical environment, is poorer than most in its tradition of urban studies. When Van Trump began writing on Pittsburgh (his first essay on the Church of the Ascension, reprinted here, dates from 1956), he really had no direct predecessors. Charles Morse Stotz had assembled material on Western Pennsylvania architecture up to the Civil War; George T. Fleming had produced a series of chamber-of-commerce-type guidebooks and histories of Pittsburgh up to 1920; Solon J. Buck and Elizabeth Hawthorn Buck had created their exemplary The Planting of Civilization in Western Pennsylvania and Sarah H. Killikelly had chronicled the early stages of Pittsburgh’s urban growth in The History of Pittsburgh, Its Rise and Progress. But Van Trump’s special concern has been the late Victorian and Edwardian contributions to the cityscape, which had not been studied.

The volume at hand allows us for the first time to gauge the significance of what Van Trump has given his native city in the last quarter century. It represents a meticulous editorial project by Walter Kidney and Louise King Ferguson, is modestly priced, and is generously illustrated. The editors and the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation, which produced it as a gift for Van Trump’s seventy-fifth birthday, demonstrated their abiding loyalty to both author and subject by including a thirty-page bibliography of Van Trump’s articles, along with numerous radio scripts from his talks on
WQED-FM. These must have presented innumerable editing difficulties.

What is the result? The book is much of what one expects from Van Trump: the ease of description, the unfamiliar angle, the diverting juxtaposition of classical quotes and smoky bessemerers. The special flavor of Van Trump's archaizing approach to Pittsburgh is also everywhere evident — he writes so authoritatively about Andrew Carnegie and his Point Breeze cronies that it comes as a shock to realize that Van Trump was only eleven when the Great Man died. Van Trump has always portrayed himself as a *litterateur* and *raconteur* rather than as scholar and researcher. This selection of essays accords with that view, giving us the Edwardian gardens, the long-destroyed tearooms, the measured cadence, and the undiminished *bravadura* of a Pittsburgh that is no more. Van Trump's vanished Pittsburgh is a selective vision rather than a history. He barely mentions, and certainly does not dwell on the Homestead Strike, the awesome typhus rate, the soot-blackened streets that drove away from Pittsburgh its art collections and its more delicate souls. The visionary and nostalgic quality of these Proustian essays at first contrasts disturbingly with Van Trump's solid architectural history, represented in this volume by articles on the railroad stations, the Gothic Revival, Frederick Scheibler's protomodern apartment houses, and the impact of Art Deco. Halfway through the volume, however, most readers will agree with and even applaud the editors' rationale for this juxtaposition. The survival of these old buildings in the upscale Pittsburgh of the 1980s represents for Van Trump an affirmation of the values and mores of the old Pittsburgh that gave him birth. Van Trump is, after all, exactly the age of St. Paul's Cathedral, Temple Rodef Shalom, Calvary Church, and the Hall of Architecture at Carnegie Institute. His identification with these buildings transcends that of any common researcher and in part explains his emergence in the 1960s as Pittsburgh's first and most effective preservationist.

Given the self-identification of author, subject, and publisher in this book, it is not surprising that there are some questions of fundamental importance to Pittsburgh that are never asked. There is no substantive discussion of a steel mill and hardly any engagement in the theme of Pittsburgh's industrial output except on aesthetic terms; there is no serious evaluation of the role of land speculation in our urban development; and an almost total unconcern with the social and economic impact of transportation. These issues will have to form part of the agenda of some other urban historian. What we have instead are
well-crafted, well-researched investigations of about a hundred standing buildings in Pittsburgh and a roughly equal number of minor treasures and destroyed buildings which Van Trump brings to life for us. Each reader will have his or her favorites: Frank Furness's Baltimore and Ohio Station, the lyric Wrightian houses of Peter Berndtson, the Georgian tearoom at the Webster Hall. The essays amount to an extraordinary revelation of the buildings and neighborhoods of Pittsburgh, and seem to work best when taken as a series of daily meditations. That religious analogy is only fitting, for who better has played the role of Intercessor for Pittsburgh?

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Were it not for the relative insignificance of the product of his factories — matches — Ohio Columbus Barber might well rank with Carnegie and Rockefeller as one of the nineteenth century's great industrialists. In several respects, his life was the stuff of myth. From humble origins as a salesman for his father's tiny Middlebury, Ohio, match-making facility, Barber rose to create the Diamond Match Company in 1880, a near monopoly with 85 percent of the American market. A decade later, he had the resources (and the ego) to found a new town. He called it Barberton (today an Akron suburb). Soon after the turn of the century, he fulfilled yet another dream, as Diamond achieved dominance in world markets. Barber lived his last years in baronial splendor, supervising an enormous "scientific" farm from a forty-room mansion high above Barberton's working-class population.

Unfortunately, Barber had some unappealing qualities. Not the least of these was a profound niggardliness in matters large and small. Tradesmen had to sue to collect wages, waiters went untipped, and tax collectors in Akron, Chicago, the state of Illinois, New York City, and Washington, D.C., found the "Father of Trusts" (p. viii) slippery, indeed. Ambivalent as he must have been about parting with his savings, most of Barber's philanthropic efforts went awry. He planned to