in the foreseeable future. If you are interested in Pittsburgh, its history and its culture, then this book belongs in your library.

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_Pittsburgh: An Urban Portrait._
By Franklin Toker.


The urban historian Sam Bass Warner regards the contemporary city as an artifact. To Warner, the urban built environment of streets, alleys, buildings, railroad tracks, sewers, and subdivisions mirrors an historical process called urbanization. The cityscape represents the culmination, that is, of the thousands of often tiny decisions that city builders have made about the purpose and goals of urban life.

In _Pittsburgh_, Franklin Toker ignores the process of urbanization, while clearly illuminating the outcome of those thousands of decisions about how to best use urban space. But, the author is not exploring the city-building process. Instead, as the title indicates, this is a "portrait" of contemporary Pittsburgh. Here Toker uses his abundant knowledge of city history to add greater meaning to his interpretation of the urban landscape as a work of art. Consequently, while Warner decries the unplanned mottle bequeathed by the city builders of Boston and Philadelphia, Toker revels at what Pittsburgh builders wrought. Therefore, much of Toker's book amounts to a paean to the Pittsburgh city-building process. Indeed, if there is a thesis informing this book it is that man and nature orchestrated a masterpiece at the confluence of the Monongahela, Allegheny and Ohio rivers. This is by no means meant as a criticism of Toker's book for it is extremely informative, well written, and entertaining.

In terms of scope, _Pittsburgh_ ranges far and wide across and through time. Toker even explores the antediluvian roots of the cityscape by examining the glacial origins of the Monongahela plateau. Yet, Toker spurns the conventional chronological delivery of urban history. After a terse overview of two centuries of Pittsburgh history
(pp. 7-17), he quickly exchanges his academic hood for the tour guide's hat, and starting logically at the Golden Triangle, escorts the reader on an extensive neighborhood journey through the city and its environs.

On one excursion along Sixth and Oliver and into the Penn-Liberty district, Toker, for example, underscores the historical significance of the Pennsylvania Canal in shaping the downtown area. (The canal turning basin was situated between Penn and Liberty Avenue and ran from Eleventh to Tenth Street.) And here, in the first of many cameos, Toker captures exquisitely the crucial wealthy patron/architect client relationship — in this case Henry C. Frick and Daniel Burnham — which yielded such distinctive architectural landmarks as the Oliver Building.

But, Toker does not discount the heritage of public architecture gracing the Golden Triangle. In fact, he is ecstatic — and rightfully so — about Henry H. Richardson's Allegheny County Courthouse, which he refers to as "a near perfect building." Toker considers Richardson's courthouse beautifully adapted to the mood of the industrial city, and in "perfect compliance with the allocated budget" (pp. 73-75).

From the Point, Toker whisks the reader to Oakland, where in the early twentieth century the Pittsburgh elite regaled the city with its first renaissance. So rich and so important was the architectural expression of the City Beautiful extravaganza in Oakland that Toker regards it as Pittsburgh's "second founding." He sees it also as a classic example of "cosmetic urbanism" (p. 80).

While not ignoring Henry Hornbostel's Carnegie Mellon University, or the importance of Mary Croghan Schenley's donation of Schenley Park, Toker lavishes most praise and eloquence on Charles Klauder's Cathedral of Learning. However, his hyperbolic musing about Klauder's Common's Room transporting "Pittsburgher's back to their bituminous or anthracitic origins" (p. 85), seems excessive. Toker is less effusive, but more profound in his insightful discussion of Franklin Nicola's development of Oakland, and in his examination of the importance of the apartment building in the area.

After an extensive discussion of the "Second Founding of Pittsburgh," Toker shifts the tour first south to Old Birmingham and Mount Washington, and then north into Manchester and Deutchtown. Toker begins each of his neighborhood excursions with a brief historical overview highlighting prominent personalities, ethnic groups, businesses or industries identified with the community. His sojourn
around Mount Washington includes one stop at Chatham Village, which he questionably characterizes as "an unqualified success in low-cost housing," and "a model for all federally assisted housing in the country" (p. 138).

Likewise in Manchester, Deutchtown and Troy Hill, Toker highlights particular architectural treasures, for example the High Victorian Gustav Langenheim House and Brashear's Allegheny Observatory in Manchester, and the Heinz factory complex and the John Ober house in the Deutchtown-Troy Hill neighborhood.

Toker describes the many communities strung out east of the city along Penn Avenue as Pittsburgh's railroad suburbs. Located on the Monongahela Plain, the "strip" experienced industrial development in the early 1800s. By the 1890s as the site of Armstrong Cork and the Crucible and Cyclops Steel Corporations, the Strip had become the center of what Toker calls "Victorian High Tech." Moving eastward to Polish Hill, the author sentimentalizes about the tiny houses nestled there in the shadow of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church as seemingly "blessed by inner peace" (p. 197). Toker evinces the same emotional intensity when discussing the ethnic enclaves of Bloomfield, Lawrenceville, and East Liberty. Here he also includes a fascinating discussion of Casper Winebiddle's Friendship development, and Mellon's East Liberty where Ralph Cram's magnificent East Liberty Presbyterian Church is known as "Mellon's Fire Escape."

Just as Richardson and Osterling are identified with the Golden Triangle, and Hornbostel and Klauder with Oakland, so the modest architecture of Frederick Scheibler imprints suburbs such as Highland Park and Shadyside. Toker's lengthy treatment of Scheibler rightfully acknowledges the architect's importance in Pittsburgh.

Toker is less effusive about Pittsburgh's streetcar suburbs of the Hill, the Uptown, and the Bluff. Nevertheless, the tenor of his discourse remains consistently positive. He observes that the roots of the Hill as a black neighborhood can be traced to 1758; but, he ignores the devastating impact of urban redevelopment upon the Hill's black community, and he treats William Zeckendorf's Lower Hill exploits dispassionately. Significantly, Toker's discussion of the Hill includes his only mention of public housing, which in keeping with his general and genuine enthusiasm for most Pittsburgh architecture, he finds commendatory.

From the Hill and the Bluff, Toker follows the trolley line to Shadyside and Squirrel Hill, the site of some of Pittsburgh's best modern architecture, including the works of Walter Gropius, Richard
Meier, and Robert Venturi. Toker's architectural odyssey concludes with forays into the Monongahela Valley, the South Hills, Ohio Valley and Allegheny Valley; his coverage here is superficial.

From one perspective Toker's portrait of Pittsburgh seems flawed. It smacks frequently of boosterism. It is often uneven and unbalanced in its treatment of topics. For example, while pages are allotted to the Cathedral of Learning, and other cathedrals, both commercial and religious, hospitals and public schools get little if any attention. It is as uncritical of urban growth as it is of urban architecture and urban society. Therefore, Toker's book unveils a purified Pittsburgh, where horrors such as Painters Row or epidemic rates of typhoid never dim the radiance of Osterling's architecture or the Godliness of the worker's housing on Herron Hill.

Looked at from the most important perspective, Toker's book must be judged much more positively for what it is: a testament to the aesthetic heritage of Pittsburgh. It attempts to initiate the reader into an appreciation of that heritage and it superbly achieves its purpose. Page by page, the reader internalizes a deep understanding of the patterns and forms of the Pittsburgh cityscape. And if the city as artifact mirrors the spirit and cultural achievements of its past, what the Germans called weltanshuang, then to rephrase Jacob Burckhart, Toker has given us a revealing glimpse into the Civilization of Industrial Pittsburgh. It is my strong conviction that Toker not only fully achieves this purpose, but does it masterfully. Therefore, Pittsburgh is a welcome and valuable addition to the library of books which tell Pittsburgh's story.

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By Russell Lynes.


In their introduction to The Lively Audience — a recent contribution to the New American Nation Series — the editors tell us that the