University of Pennsylvania, who prides his grievance chairmanship at the former Switch and Signal in Swisssvale as he does his academic achievements. A Rice-watcher for many years, McCollester brings the book alive with selections that were on final cut lists from literally thousands of columns and articles.

To many in labor and politics, and perhaps especially the church, Rice was that "troublesome priest." At a book event last November in the Senator John Heinz Pittsburgh Regional History Center's Great Hall, he was surrounded by political and community dignitaries, and seemed a solitary figure reflecting on the times of that era. Rice let others tell of his six decades in the trenches — in the formation of the CIO during the New Deal years, the postwar struggles in labor with domestic Stalinists, the civil rights revolution, the Vietnam war protests, and the new wave of job losses ("downsizing") which has dominated the 1990s.

"Never tire of protesting," he always said, and true to his injunction, he has made symbolic appearances in recent years with striking newspaper workers, dismissed nursing home employees, and the aid organization for political prisoners in Northern Ireland. He started picketing in 1932 with his own group, the Catholic Radical Alliance, a local imitation of Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker. The old monsignor, still combative at 87, later would smile when Catholic peace activist Molly Rush — who has jail time on her vita for invading cold war nuclear centers — related the discomfort of the mayor at the podium with the assemblage of Rice comrades-in-arms.

Cliff Caldwell told of being a clerk at an A & P in 1937 and going to the priest, who then had become identified with the CIO, and asking him, "Father, how do I make a union?" He listened to Rice's instructions, and the Meatcutters came to Pittsburgh and soon had 8,000 members. There were other labor allies of the priest at the event, including steel union rebels who had been victims of the demolition of their once-dominant industry in Pittsburgh and its mill town suburbs throughout the '80s. Steelworker President George Becker said, "Labor history is his history. Father Rice has been our conscience and his is an imprint that can never be erased."

The photos in McCollester's book recall the "labor priest" marching with Martin Luther King, Jr., Stokley Carmichael, H. Rapp Brown, Benjamin Spock, and others who gave direction to the rights and peace movement that forever changed American politics. He was there in the life and times of the nation's journey from FDR's New Deal to Reagan's counter-revolution and beyond. His priest colleague at the Bishops' conference, George Higgins, called him "a towering figure... there has never been anyone like him... and there won't be for a long time to come."

"Charlie Rice knew how to outrageous those in the church," offered a fellow cleric, "and he did it well." Writing for over 60 years, Rice is the acknowledged senior columnist in the Catholic press and the longest one on the Pittsburgh scene. His columns recall "the cold fury" of the top administrative nun at Pittsburgh's Mercy Hospital during a unionization drive as well as the disappointment of many in the church when he appeared with striking grave diggers: "Pray for the dead," he declared, quoting Mother Jones, "but fight like hell for the living!" Running for city council, befriending convicts, and being president of the local Americans for Democratic Action and ACLU did not endear him to many.

"God forgive me for saying that... I outlived them all," Rice says, and he has — friends and enemies, clerics and bishops, politicians good and bad, leftists and reactionaries — for better than half a century. "The Lord hears the cry of the poor," he wrote in a column last year, "and so should we... there is a class war raging in this country, but it is being waged not by the poor, but against them...." His comments were directed not only at Newt Gingrich, but also at Bill Clinton.

![Pittsburgh Mayor David Lawrence introduces President Harry Truman to Rice, right, during a Cold War campaign stop in October 1948.](image)


by Philip Scranton

These two volumes approach the coal, iron, and steel complex, which long animated Pittsburgh's regional economy, from radically different perspectives. In *American Iron*, Robert Gordon presents a comprehensive history of the region's iron and steel industry from its origins in the early 17th century through the first decades of the 20th century. The book chronicles the rise and fall of the industry, including the impact of labor strife, technological innovation, and market fluctuations. Gordon's analysis is aimed at a broad audience, providing a balanced account of the industry's complex social and economic history. The book also includes detailed case studies of specific companies, providing depth and context to the broader narrative.

*Triumphant Capitalism* by Kenneth Warren focuses on the life and career of Henry Clay Frick, an industrialist who played a pivotal role in the development of the steel industry. Warren's book examines Frick's contributions to the industry, as well as the controversies surrounding his business practices and the social and political implications of his success. Through detailed analysis of Frick's personal, professional, and political life, Warren offers a nuanced perspective on the role of business in American society.

Both books are richly illustrated and include extensive bibliographies, making them valuable resources for scholars and students interested in the history of industry, labor relations, and regional development. They provide a comprehensive look at the complex interplay between economic development, social change, and political power in the 19th and early 20th centuries.
can Iron, Robert Gordon, Yale professor of applied mechanics and a veteran contributor to the history of technology, works literally “up from underground” to provide a definitive portrait of ore and coal mining, charcoalizing, and ironmaking. Using research approaches developed by industrial archeologists, Gordon carefully documents the spatial distribution, shifting technical practices, and complex labor processes which yielded one of industrialization’s key raw materials. By contrast, in his “business biography” of Henry Clay Frick, Oxford’s Kenneth Warren focuses on the individuals and organizations that brought America’s iron age to an end and created, however awkwardly, both a new era of steel and its hallmark institution, the United States Steel corporation. Each volume brings years of study to bear on a range of critical issues in the history of the American metal trades, though I suspect that neither, for differing reasons, is likely to command a wide audience for its findings.

Industrial archeology in America has reached a robust middle age, for over the last generation, its practitioners have moved through celebratory and preservationist stages toward analytical and comparative studies which explore the material remains of mining, construction, and manufacturing. Several years back, Robert Gordon co-authored (with Patrick Malone) what I regard as the discipline’s manifesto of maturity, The Texture of Industry (Oxford, 1994, paper, 1997), a broad overview of sites and insights drawn from close contact with colonial copper mines, early water-powered mills, and numerous 19th century manufacturing enterprises. Now Gordon concentrates his gaze upon the iron trades, which commenced in Virginia and Massachusetts in the 1600s. Ironmaking’s geographical spread and increasing output reached such proportions that Parliament attempted to regulate colonial production in 1750, then watched helplessly as “American” metal makers effectively supplied our Revolution’s forces. In the new republic, iron smelting and refining gradually stretched from Maine to the Southern Appalachians and west to Pittsburgh and beyond. Railway and bridge construction, machinery and tool demand, and eventually, civil war, spurred the industry’s expansion, whereas relentless, if erratic, technical changes generated its eventual transformation and the advance of steel. This much is relatively well known. What Gordon adds to this conventional narrative is depth, diversity, and detail.

Through archeological inquiries and prodigious collateral research, Gordon creates the broadest-gauge analysis yet accomplished for any American industry. Along the way, he both deconstructs and reconstructs the past, thereby enlarging a reader’s vision. As for deconstruction (a term he does not use and may not welcome), Gordon shows conclusively that iron was never a simple commodity, never a standard input for casting or fabrication. Instead, there were many kinds of American iron and this variation was not just a consequence of diverse strategies for extracting it from ores (charcoal, coal, or coke firing, for example). In A Nation of Steel (Baltimore, 1995), Thomas Misa emphasized the multiplicity of steels in a later period; here Gordon explains that local conditions and ways of working generated a vast range of irons with differing compositions and capacities for use. Indeed, a single firm might send out metal having sharply different characteristics from year to year. Those companies that could create consistent iron held a competitive advantage, because buyers, who then lacked facilities for analyzing metal samples, relied on makers’ reputations.

How was such reliability possible in 1820 or 1870? At this juncture, skilled artisans, the narrative’s heroes, take center stage. “Good iron” depended fundamentally on their application of trade experience to the heavy, yet delicate, labor of making and refining metal. It is at the point of production that Gordon accomplishes the “heroic” task of reconstruction — walking us through the complexities that workers confronted when “reading” smoke, flame colors, and smells, or when using elementary tools to create a puddler’s “ball” of wrought iron or to pluck a crucible of fine steel from its fiery bed and pour its contents into ingots without a damaging splash. All readers, and especially labor historians, will find these passages stunning in their evocation of extraordinary skills routinely exercised.

Gordon does not restrict his view to the mechanics of production, however. He gives full attention to the transatlantic transfer of ironmaking techniques, emphasizing the ways in which an artisanal American network readily adopted/adapted European innovations in blast furnaces and metal refineries, often improving upon them. Yet Americans who effortlessly embraced mechanical novelty proved much less capable of appreciating advances in chemical and metallurgical analysis, as Gordon shows through a critical review of amateurish U.S. research efforts along those lines. The environmental impact of iron production is also concisely evaluated, with good marks given for charcoal processes and glasslike slag (which had few negative effects) and poor ones for coke reduction and bituminous fueling. Having mastered several centuries of the iron trade’s literature, Gordon occasionally offers correctives to misperceptions by earlier scholars, but this is not a work with an argumentative agenda. Instead, American Iron seems more a labor of love whose fresh interpretations are calmly delivered and precisely documented.

Yet, I fear, the signal accomplishment this study represents does contain a core problem — accessibility. The book opens with a daunting chapter on the metallurgy of iron, which will challenge those who weakly remember their college science courses. Moreover, the glossary is unfortunately too slim to cover the array of unexplained technical terms which dot the text (e.g., “viculated” (24); “beneficiated” (32); “splice band” (191); “skelps” (205)). Few readers will be able to work their way through this narrative without occasional spells of bafflement. This raises the question of audience. Though broadly framed, Gordon’s work is immensely demanding and sufficient “helps” for the inexpert reader are not provided, making this a book most useful to academic specialists (like me). It is regrettable that the wondrous story of American Iron will remain opaque to most outside this narrow realm.

Kenneth Warren’s Triumphant Capitalism occupies a much more familiar genre, biography, and undertakes to profile, if not rehabilitate, Henry Clay Frick, the most vilified of the entrepre-
neural and managerial giants who built the Pittsburgh region's steel juggernaut. Noting near the close of his study that some bus
tour members arriving at Frick's restored Clayton mansion in
Pittsburgh, upon learning who once resided there, "refused to go
in," Warren allows that, although it is hard to see Frick as
"admirable," he was nonetheless an "outstanding man" in a
tumultuous era (380). As the most far-seeing developer of the
Connellsville coal fields, whose high quality coke underwrote the
rise of Pittsburgh steel, Frick allied his interests with those of
Andrew Carnegie, rose rapidly to leadership roles within the
latter's burgeoning empire, and used his immense intellectual
capacities to shape almost two decades of ceaseless attention
to cost-cutting, technological advance, and timely investment in
resources and productive facilities. His hard-line role in the
epochal Homestead Strike, his near-assassination by anarchist
Alexander Berkman, and Carnegie's harsh break with him at the
turn of the century are the stuff of industrial myth-making.
Warren, to his credit, moves swiftly past these set pieces (though
the folkloristic image of an enraged Frick chasing Carnegie down
an office hall, after the Scot announced his plan to force Frick out
of their steel concern, has an enduring magnetism). Rather than
anchoring his biography on these "great events," Warren deftly
shows how Frick gained immense authority and provoked
antagonisms both violent and devious.
The key to this in-depth portrait rests in Warren's
unprecedented access to the Frick papers at the Frick Art &
Historical Center in Pittsburgh, supplemented by relevant
holdings in the USX archives and extensive research in the
Carnegie and Harrison files at the Library of Congress, in
government records, and at the Hagley Library in Delaware.
Collating these riches with his own deep expertise (his The
American Steel Industry, 1850-1970 (1973) is a classic), Warren
actually offers a triple biography, first of his protagonist's
complex business career, second of Frick's mentor/antagonist,
Carnegie, and third of the madly mutating steel trades, c. 1875-
1918. While the sectoral saga provides an essential institutional,
technological, and economic context for Frick's achievements, it
is Carnegie who hovers over this narrative like a devilish ghost.
For Warren, the sainted Andrew stands instead as an endlessly
unsatisfied and usually absentee master — goading his minions to
greater productivity and repeatedly seeking "the Man" who
would concretize his visions to secure the nation's steel trade, but
discarding each candidate, (Charles Schwab, later of Bethlehem,
succeeded Frick after the brake; others had preceded him.)
Warren, like other scholars, chops away at the Carnegie mythol-
ogy to good effect, stressing his frequent indecisiveness, his
grandiosity, and his evident capacity to mix condescension and
mentoring with a savage deviousness. Frick, once ensconced
within the sequence of Carnegie firms, showed real brilliance in
analyzing costs and opportunities as he augmented the
company's assets and returns. Warren, with equal brilliance, uses
e elaborate exchanges of letters to document Frick's extraordinary
talents, Carnegie's caution about new ventures, and the vibra-
tions that conflicts sent through the leadership network. Anyone
imagineing a "rational" model for the triumph of managerialism
in steel will find Warren's close reconstructions of decision-
making a valuable corrective, for personality and power had at
least as much to do with strategic action as did efficiency and
market analyses. The steel trades were too volatile and diverse
to sustain any depiction of the Carnegie-Frick group's maneuvers
as simply expressing "rational expectations," though had
Frick alone been master, that might possibly have been the case.
Warren's biography largely confirms the perception that
Frick was a brittle workaholic — resisting criticism, battling
toward his goals through the mastery of detail, managing his
workforces with a sharp attention to the bottom line. Yet this
work deeply enriches our appreciation for the contingencies that
accompanied the vast assets, revenue streams, conflicts, ven-
tures, and technological innovations he and his colleagues
initiated and struggled to control. Warren reminds us, properly,
that the outcomes of these multifaceted economic and organi-
zational engagements were hardly preordained.
Driven out of Carnegie Steel, Frick returned after the USS
merger to take a leading role in the nation's greatest metal
making corporation, yet he could not prevent its gradual market
slippage, for again he was a secondary figure, this time to Judge
Gary. Warren ably outlines Frick's widened interests, in railways,
insurance, banking, et al., at this late stage in his life, but
underscores as well his deep resentment at having been dis-
placed from steel industry leadership. Frick's long interest in fine
art, however, throws a wrench into the machinery of explica-
tion; as far back as 1880 he instructed Andrew Mellon on
purchasing paintings during a joint trip to Europe, and in time,
gathered a collection that proved deeply meaningful to him in
later life. Warren, in this business biography, eschews any deeper
analysis of Frick's commitment to beauty and artistic excellence.

Given the importance of Frick's fascinating career, why will
this volume likely not gain a wider audience? First, while
Warren contextualizes Frick's commitment to bottom-line
rationality over considerations of industry's human and eco-
logical impacts, his principal character never surfaces as a human
being anywhere nearly as complex as the companies he helped
build. Warren explicitly declines to press his analysis into areas
of psychology and character, avoiding both the risks and the
vitality that more aggressive interpretation has brought to other
biographies. Scholarly caution makes this work informative, but
prevents its being riveting. In this vein, hewing close to business
themes and his sources, Warren generates numbing pages of
statistical references about the steel trades and overlays the
narrative with extensive quotations that focus on intricate
details. It is also distracting that Warren often seeks in text to
revise others' judgments on the key players (rather than using
notes), for this mixes analyzing Frick's career with scholarly
debates that will intrigue few readers. Fruitful in the terrains
Warren plows, this study, regrettably, will not press more than a
small group of specialists to reconsider their impressions of
Henry Clay Frick.