**BOOK REVIEWS**

Those interested in reviewing books should contact Thomas White at tewhite@hswp.org or (412) 454-6362. Publishers and authors can send review copies to the Editor, *Western Pennsylvania History*, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 1212 Smallman Street, Pittsburgh, PA, 15222.

The Great Allegheny Passage Companion: Guide to History and Heritage Along the Trail
By Bill Metzger
(Pittsburgh: The Local History Company, 2003)
Illustrations, maps, xx + 203 pp., $19.95 paperback
Historical travel guide to the Allegheny Passage hiking and biking trail stretching between McKeesport and Meyersdale. The book has 22 sections that cover 5-mile increments with detailed maps, local history, and current highlights.

Pittsburgh: A Place in Time, 2nd edition
By Abby Mendelson
(Pittsburgh: The Local History Company, 2004)
Maps, x + 202 pp., $19.95 paperback
Revised and enlarged compilation of articles written for *Pittsburgh Magazine* beginning in the 1980s that chronicle different neighborhoods at different periods of time, from the West End and Bon Aire to Homestead and Swisshelm Park.

Capital’s Utopia: Vandergrift, Pennsylvania, 1855-1916
By Anne E. Mosher
(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004)
Illustrations, maps, index, xxvii + 249 pp., $45 hardcover
A study of the planning of Vandergrift, Westmoreland County, in the Gilded Age with attention to issues of industrial land use, community planning, economic class, and company paternalism.

Documenting Pennsylvania’s Past: The First Century of the Pennsylvania State Archives
Edited By Willis L. Shirk, Jr.
(Harrisburg: PHMC, 2003)
Illustrations, maps, 242 pp., $32.95 paperback
Published to commemorate the centennial of the Pennsylvania State Archives, the book chronicles the history of the archives from modest beginnings to its current collection of electronic resources.

TMI 25 Years Later: The Three Mile Island Nuclear Power Plant Accident and its Impact.
By Bonnie A. Osif, Anthony J. Baratta, and Thomas W. Conkling
(University Park: Penn State University Press, 2004)
Illustrations, maps, charts, index, xiv + 158 pp., $24.95 hardcover
A succinct overview of the cause and consequences of the March 1979 incident at Three Mile Island, the worst nuclear accident in U.S. history, detailing the initial events and following through the cleanup and legacy.

Fallingwater Rising: Frank Lloyd Wright, E.J. Kaufmann, and America’s Most Extraordinary House
By Franklin Toker
Illustrations, index, x + 479 pp., $35 paperback
Franklin Toker’s new book, *Fallingwater Rising*, is a beautiful addition to any library on architecture, Western Pennsylvania, or Frank Lloyd Wright. Those interested primarily in local history or “the rest of the story” on the region’s architecture may be tempted to think “Oh, one more book on the 20th century’s best known architect. So what?” It sometimes seems mystifying that so many architectural historians overlook so much of what we see every day in favor of heaping praise on a few elite designers who are already well known. *Fallingwater Rising* will not disappoint readers looking for more fresh insights into Western Pennsylvania than architectural hagiography.

To begin, the book is, as Toker puts it, “a biography of a house,” not of its designer. It focuses supremely on a building, in all its aspects, and tells much more about the worlds of two men (the other being Edgar Kaufmann) than it does about the cult of Taliesin. I was glad when Toker compared the endless “tweaking” of Wright’s design process to a taffy pull. Actually, by this point, Toker had already been engaged in a series of taffy pulls of his own, pulling and stretching a dozen different aspects of the house, until long-overlooked dimensions come to light.

For instance, Fallingwater is one of the most visited sites in Western Pennsylvania – a true
You've visited the Strip District for produce, lunch, and dancing. Now learn about the farms, factories, and people who once called the Strip home.

Pittsburgh's Strip District: Around the World in a Neighborhood
By Lauren Uhl and Tracy L. Coffing
Includes a fold-out walking tour map and a 16-page color section on the Strip today.

$19.95 paperback at the History Center Museum Shop and all bookstores.

FALLINGWATER RISING: FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, E. J. KAUFMANN, AND AMERICA'S MOST EXTRAORDINARY HOUSE
FRANKLIN TOKER

shrine for "pilgrims" from around the world. Yet it is hard to find, completely out of the way, and getting there entails driving through amazingly varied, if not confusing landscapes. Toker, going well beyond the standard Triptik, pulls the meaning and contradictions out of the journey and gives us a genuine feel for what people go through trying to get there. As an example, he cites a German youth who once took a bus to Uniontown and then walked the last 23 miles to Bear Run.

With the same decided passion for dragging hidden qualities out of what might otherwise seem obvious, he tackles Western Pennsylvania's topography, making the Allegheny Mountains come alive until they seem to breathe. He emphasizes that Fallingwater is at the far reaches of the stream system that made Pittsburgh a center of wealth - the very wealth that allowed for Edgar Kaufmann's meteoric rise into the elite class of one of the country's most stratified economic systems. He takes on the history of the Kaufmann commercial empire with the same zeal, pulling insights from the history of Pittsburgh's Jewish community, and explaining how that history lies behind this house. Without much fear, he tackles sensitive family dynamics, from Edgar Kaufmann, Sr.'s mistresses to Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.'s sexual identity.

The same unrelenting hunt for new details led Toker through piles of archived correspondence, which became the underpinnings of a blow-by-blow description of Fallingwater's construction and of the avalanche of publicity that brought the news of the house's completion to the world. By not focusing on Wright, Toker is able to reel in long-forgotten cartoons about the house, some of the prehistory of the site, bits and pieces about domestic staff and day-to-day operations, an indirect link to The Wizard of Oz, and some sense of how the Kaufmanns' mountain neighbors reacted to the insertion of an instantly famous design into their remote neighborhood.

Meanwhile, the book is marked by a relentless effort to dispel several of Fallingwater's most precious myths. Number one on the list: Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., was not in the right places at the right times to have played a major role in Fallingwater's synthesis, contrary to what the man who donated the house as a museum might have said about himself over the years. If you're looking for a book that is sympathetic to the role professor Kaufmann played, this is not the book for you.

For those who know the author, the text has plenty of "Tokerisms"; for instance, in explaining the concept of a "dividing ridge" between watersheds, he forgoes the usual references to buckets of water or urination and conjures up the largest bottle of Gatorade you will ever wish to contemplate. But along the way, you will develop a much deeper appreciation for Fallingwater's place in the broader story of Western Pennsylvania. If you're still looking for more information on the region's architecture, watch for the upcoming publication of the Western Pennsylvania volume in the "Buildings of America" series, which Franklin Toker and Lu Donnelly have been working on for quite some time.

The Burnt District
By Gary Link
(Baltimore: Publish America, 2003)
180 pp., $19.95
Reviewed by Steve Doell

Mrs. O'Leary's cow kicked over a lantern on a dry October day in 1871 starting the Great Chicago Fire. Although some people have trouble sorting out fact from legend in that event, it is a familiar story in American history. Not as widely known, Pittsburgh experienced its own destructive fire 26 years earlier. The "Great Conflagration" of April 10, 1845, destroyed 56 acres of downtown property, mostly on the north side of the Monongahela River. More than 900 buildings were destroyed and 12,000 Pittsburghers were left homeless. Using the fire and its aftermath as a backdrop, Gary Link has written an intriguing murder mystery in his first novel, The Burnt District. Through Link's meticulous research, the reader is transported back in time to an era of Pittsburgh's history that is often overlooked. The glass and iron industry was just beginning to assert itself. While the railroad was on the very near horizon, canal boats were the predominant mode of long-distance travel.

The story follows the investigation of the death of Grace Milligan, a young girl found among the ruins of a partially burned building. John Parker, assistant constable, believes her death was no accident. Despite High Constable Abraham Butler's insistence to let it go, Parker proceeds to look for clues and discovers that Grace may not have been the only victim.

While investigating a previous death with similar, dubious circumstances, Parker travels northeast via the Allegheny River to Freeport, Pa. The reader is shown with great detail the experience of a canal boat ride (eight hours from Pittsburgh to Freeport!) and specifics about the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal construction.

Most of the characters in Link's story are fictional, though many of the surnames are taken from the actual Pittsburgh and Allegheny City directories of 1844. However, the author does include some actual persons from the era, which gives the novel a true history feel. Readers are introduced to Jacob Shoop, a tailor from Freeport as well as the better-known John Roebling who built the canal viaduct and rebuilt the Monongahela Bridge that burned down in the fire.

Parker's persistence pays off in the end, but not before some harrowing experiences where his expertise with a night stick comes in handy. By choosing the Great Fire as his setting and a beat cop as the lead character, Link cleverly weaves in the descriptions of the working lives of firemen, police, and night watchmen throughout the story. These descriptions often include specific streets and neighborhoods of Pittsburgh in 1845. A map of the area from this time period would have helped orient the reader.

Written with the same attention to historical detail and Pittsburgh focus as Karen Rose Cercone's Detective Milo Kachigan mystery series (Steel Ashes, Coal Bones, Blood Tracks), The Burnt District is an engaging story that not only entertains but also educates the reader.

Steve Doell is the former director of Archives at the History Center.

READERSREPLY

On page 44 of the Winter 2003-04 issue, an advertisement for sale of a black woman is reproduced. I wonder if the subject is an indentured servant, rather than a slave. An indentured servant served for a fixed term, and then was freed. Such people were relatively common in early America. Many were immigrants working off their passage.

-Evelyn and David Purdy

From all indications the woman of question was enslaved. The status in the posting refers more to the gradual emancipation act of Pennsylvania of 1780. That's why there is a "six years to serve" notation. Very few Africans were indentured servants; that term was applied mostly to Europeans.

-HSWP Curator of African American Collections
Samuel Black
Pennsylvania
A History of the Commonwealth
EDITED BY
Randall M. Miller
and William Pencak
712 pages | 36 color/435 b&w illustrations/28 maps | $29.95 paper
Co-published with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
A Keystone Book
For sample chapters visit:
www.psupress.org/Justataste/samplechapters/pennsylvania/index.html

“Nearly a decade in the making, this weighty tome is one for which historians—avocational and professional—have been waiting! Essays by contributors representing various disciplines and fields make Pennsylvania: A History of the Commonwealth well worth the wait.”

—Pennsylvania Heritage

“The editors, authors and publishers are to be congratulated for producing such a challenging and handsome product. This volume should find a home in schools, colleges, universities and public libraries. It could be useful to the scholar and layperson alike. Miller and Pencak have performed a signal service to anyone who wants a starting place to learn about Pennsylvania.”

—Jack Susskind, PCSS Newsletter