

# BOOKREVIEWS

Those interested in reviewing books should contact Thomas White at [tewwhite@hswp.org](mailto:tewwhite@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.

## **A Century of Heroes**

Edited by Douglas R. Chambers

(Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004)

Photos, illustrations, 240 pp., \$29.95 softcover

Written to commemorate the centennial of the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission, this moving book recounts the stories of some of the thousands of men and women who have been recognized for risking their own lives to save others. From the first recipient of the Carnegie Medal, Louis Baumann, who saved his friend from drowning, to the heroes of September 11th, the book will enthrall readers with accounts of the best of human nature.

## **Death by Renaissance**

By Paola Corso

(Huron, Ohio: Bottom Dog Press, 2004)

Photos, 104 pp., \$12.95 softcover

Readers of this magazine will be familiar with Corso's moving poems of life in post-industrial Western Pennsylvania river towns. Includes three pages of family photos, four of archival photos, and 10 pages of photos by photo-journalist and fine arts photographer George Thomas Mendel.

## **Fort Pitt Museum**

By David Dixon

## **Somerset Historical Center**

By Lorette Treese

Pennsylvania Trail of History Guides series

(Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2004)

Color and b & w illustrations, maps, 48 pp., \$10 softcover

These concise guides to sites of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission summarize their historical importance and explain archi-

tectural and physical features. Both the Fort Pitt Museum and the Somerset Historical Center deal with the early settlement of Western Pennsylvania. The guides are heavily illustrated and contain maps to the sites.

## **Friends and Enemies in Penn's Woods: Indians, Colonists, and the Racial Construction of Pennsylvania**

Edited by William A. Pencak and Daniel K. Richter  
(University Park, Penn State University Press, 2004)

Illustrations, 336 pp. \$22.95 softcover

A collection of essays by various experts on Indians and the colonial era which analyze the impact of relations between Natives and the colonists in early Pennsylvania. By addressing the colonists' ideas about race, the authors trace the slow collapse of the peace established by William Penn and the emergence of violence by the late 1700s. Topics covered include early Swedish settlement, Quaker views, European women and Indians, missions and diplomacy, the Walking Purchase, justice and retribution, and warfare.

## **George Washington Remembers: Reflections on the French and Indian War**

Edited by Fred Anderson

(Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004)

Photos, illustrations, 176 pp., \$35 hardcover

This volume provides a unique look at the French and Indian war through the words of George Washington. The book transcribes and beautifully reproduces one of Washington's personal accounts of the conflict and his own involvement. It includes essays by modern experts that analyze Washington's opinions, the accuracy of his accounts, and the conservation of the document itself.

## **Hunky: The Immigrant Experience**

By Nicholas Stevensson Karas

(Bloomington, Ind.: 1st Books, 2004)

504 pp., \$26.50 softcover

*Hunky* provides a fictional account of Carpatho-Rusyn immigrants and their life in industrial America that mirrors the stories and sacrifices of many real life families. Though there are some liberties taken with history, the book is rich in detail and captures the physical, economic, and emotional struggles that faced those who came to America.

## **An Imperfect God: George Washington, His Slaves, and the Creation of America**

By Henry Weinck

(New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003)

Illustrations, photos, 404 pp., \$26 hardcover

A chronicle of George Washington's evolving opinion about slavery and the individual rights of all people. Washington was the only Founding Father to free his slaves (upon the death of his wife). Weinck traces the developments in his life as a plantation owner that led him to become an opponent of slavery by the time of his death.

## **Pennsylvania Caves & Other Rocky Roadside Wonders**

By Kevin Patrick

(Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2004)

Bibliography, appendix, index, 103 b & w illustrations, 21 maps, 256 pp., \$19.95 softcover

A detailed and informative look at the state's nine operating show caves and seven more from yesteryear, with stops at other geologic attractions such as coal mines, boulder fields, rock cities, ice mines, and profile rocks. Geology and



history are interwoven to provide a context for understanding both the prehistoric and auto-era stories. Visitor information is provided for caves still open to the public.

### Routes to Roots: A Driving Guide

By the staff of the Steel Industry Heritage Corporation

(Homestead: SIHC, 2004)

Color photos, maps, events calendars, index, 228 pp., \$20 softcover

The Steel Industry Heritage Corporation has produced a driving guide emphasizing southwestern Pennsylvania's cultural and industrial heritage. The volume is organized into five color-coded driving routes that take you to different industrial corridors, roughly corresponding to the region's rivers. Full of illustrations and maps, the book contains more information than is usually found in similar guides.

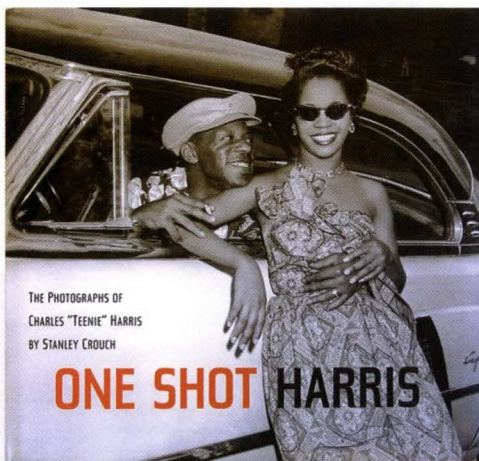
### One Shot Harris: The Photographs of Charles "Teenie" Harris

By Stanley Crouch

(New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002)

Illustrated, 168 pp., \$35 hardcover

It has been nearly six years since the death of Charles "Teenie" Harris, and much has happened during this period to certify the acclaim Harris' work clearly deserves. His photos have been exhibited; a documentary film has been made chronicling his life and art; the culmination of a legal battle has determined ownership of his work; and now the publication of this marvelous book, which contains 134 of Harris' images in duotone and one photo of the youthful Harris himself. It is difficult to imagine a com-



pany other than Abrams producing a book of such quality; if ever there was a perfect marriage between a visual artist and a publisher, this is it.

The photos presented here span more than 40 years of Harris' career, and range from shots of the famous (and infamous) to the anonymous. Literally, they record the history of African-American life from the late 1930s through the 1970s in Pittsburgh's Hill District; figuratively, they constitute a compilation of the rather complex social history of every city in America.

Stanley Crouch, the noted columnist for *The New York Daily News*, and longtime jazz critic for *The Village Voice*, wrote the introduction, "Steel City Swing." It reads as one might expect from a writer who did not know Harris and who does not know Pittsburgh, and is disappointing in this regard. He gives us a kind of bebop/hip-hop version of American history which concludes with verbal descriptions of several of the photographs – descriptions which the actual representations subsequently reveal they decidedly do not need. Crouch refers to Stephen Foster, for example, as "a Pittsburgh man who became the George Gershwin of the middle of the nineteenth century." If the analogy isn't dubious, certainly the chronology is.

From this point, however, the book positively sparkles; each photo magically drawing the viewer into the scene: Muhammad Ali (then Cassius Clay) sitting for a photographer in 1963; a coal miner in Library, 1947; Duke Ellington signing autographs in 1940; a crowd protesting in front of Isaly's in the '60s. Those

who are familiar with Harris' photographs might quibble a little with certain omissions, but with one whose body of work is so extensive, this is understandable. My own favorite of Teenie's shots is that of a campaigning Bobby Kennedy standing on a soapbox in Market Square just as the rain begins to fall. In the background, an ostensible Republican, clad in a business suit and Burberry raincoat, gripping his umbrella in one hand and a leather briefcase in the other, strides stoically away from the scene.

*One Shot Harris* concludes with a fascinating biographical essay by Deborah Willis, Professor of Photography at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. Willis, the author of three books of photographic history, is our leading authority on African-American photographers as evidenced by her seminal work, *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers, 1840 to the Present* (W.W. Norton, 2000). She relates that Harris got his nickname, Teenie, when a lady from Detroit called him "Teenie Little Lover" when he was a boy, and that when he grew older "the Little Lover part" was omitted. And she details Harris' career from the purchase of his first camera in 1931, to his becoming a freelance photographer and then chief photojournalist for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, to his opening his own studio on Center Avenue in the Hill.

The Teenie Harris story, toward the end of his life, took on some curious sidelights. I first met Mr. Harris on a Penn Avenue street corner in the Strip district in the late 1980s. He and his pal, Dennis Morgan, set up shop there on Saturday mornings, peddling prints of Teenie's work. Back then, Harris didn't think of himself as an "artist"; he told me he was a photographer



and I bought two of his photos. Dennis Morgan had purchased Harris' collection of negatives in 1986 and then lost them in what Morgan refers to as "the court drama" in 1994. By all accounts, Morgan and Harris, as part of their verbal agreement, split the proceeds from their Saturday sales. In Kenneth Love's documentary, "One Shot: The Life and Work of Teenie Harris," Morgan is shown, after making a sale, putting what appears to be a few dollars into his pocket. In this context he becomes the personification of *greed*. Willis describes a slightly different sequence of events in her essay, casting a similar tone not by naming Morgan, but rather by referring to him as "the man" three times in a single paragraph. And the publisher, on the final page of the book, thanks attorney Cynthia Kernick of Reed Smith L.L.P. for winning the court case. With the outcome decided, one has to wonder a little at the continuing and undeserved vilification of Mr. Morgan. In 2001, the Carnegie Museum of Art acquired the 80,000 prints and negatives that now make up the Charles "Teenie" Harris archive, and a million dollar project has been launched by the Museum and the History Department of the University of Pittsburgh, asking the public for help in identifying the people, places, and activities in Harris' photos.

Nothing in this strange sequence of events has been so positive as the publication of this book. Every photo, beyond its own brilliance, is a metaphor for a city and for the dignity of its people. Harris was a man lucky enough to have made a living at what he loved doing, and the fact is that he was a master of his craft. Let's hope that Abrams appoints Deborah Willis to bring us Volume 2.

**Gerald Costanzo, Professor of English and Director of Carnegie Mellon University Press. His most recent book is *American Poetry: The Next Generation*.**

## COLUMNS

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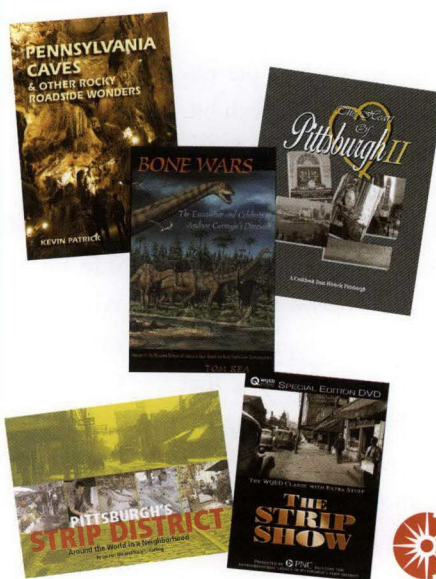
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# HISTORY BOOK FAIR

Saturday, December 4, 2004

11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Free with paid admission



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Titles available for the whole family

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