

The McClelland Civil War Letters: A Pittsburgh Family from 1861 to 1865

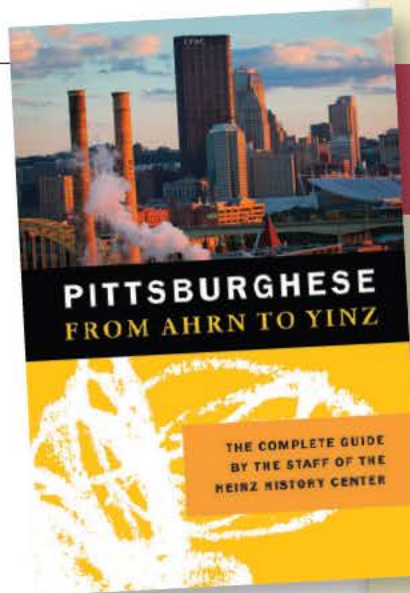
By Betty Bettencourt Dodds
 Dog Ear Publishing: Indianapolis, 2014
 348 pp., b&w photos
 Paperback, \$19.95

Reviewed by Carrie Hadley, Cataloger, Heinz History Center

Betty Bettencourt Dodds's *The McClelland Civil War Letters: A Pittsburgh Family from 1861 to 1865* is a fascinating account of the personal experiences of a Civil War-era family from our city. The two oldest sons in the McClelland family—22-year-old Tom, who traveled west to the future territory of Arizona with the Sonora Exploring and Mining Company in early 1861, and 19-year-old John, who enlisted in the Union Army as a private with the Hampton Battery F Independent Pennsylvania Light Artillery—are the two main letter-writers. Dodds includes a few letters written by their parents, James (an Irish immigrant and business owner) and Elizabeth Black McClelland. Most of the topics of discussion, however, have to be gleaned from

the young men's correspondence with their parents or younger siblings at their home in Pittsburgh's Lower Hill District.

Dodds has academic credentials, with a doctorate from Brigham Young University, but this text is a very accessible and interesting read for those of any background. Her interest and subsequent spotlight on this family is understandable. The letters of Tom and John McClelland offer a unique perspective on life in Civil War-era Pittsburgh, the West, and the country in general, and their accounts of these experiences are incredibly valuable. Dodds explains that she stumbled upon the letters while doing research in the Heinz History Center Detre Library & Archives, and initially took a keen interest in Tom McClelland's story. (Dodds even wrote an article, "I Do Not Believe I Was Born To Be Shot By An Indian," published in the Spring 2011 edition of *Western Pennsylvania History Magazine*, that focuses specifically on Tom McClelland's experience.)



Preview

Pittsburghese: From Ahrn to Yinz

By the Staff of the Heinz History Center
 Paperback, \$6.99

Available now in the History Center gift shop and online at:

<http://shop.heinzhistorycenter.org/products/pittsburghese-from-ahrn-to-yinz>

One of the most distinctive features of Western Pennsylvania is the widespread use of a dialect that we have come to call Pittsburghese. It is not just a peculiar local slang Pittsburghers use, but consists of a unique vocabulary and manner of speaking that has been studied by scholars. Linguists have noted that many of our fascinating words and phrases like "redd up" and "nebbly" came to the area with the Scots-Irish in the 1700s. Yet, over 200 years later, it continues to be the dialect that colors the way many of us speak in present-day Pittsburgh and its surrounding areas.

In this complete guide, readers will find history and humor in every word's definition and context sentence. For the more challenging words there is a handy pronunciation guide included as well. While reading this book you may laugh out loud, feel a sense of pride, or maybe a bit of guilt when you realize you or someone you know uses any of these words in their regular vocabulary. If you can relate to this dialect or are curious about where some of your favorite Pittsburghese words come from, you are probably from Pittsburgh and should own this book as a keepsake. It can even be shared with out-of-town guests so they can understand what you mean when you ask, "jeetjet?"

