

CHAPTER 3

A Hard Working Town

Pittsburgh's legacy of iron, glass, and steel bestowed on this place an enduring reputation as a hard-working town. Sprawling mills shaped neighborhoods and dominated the regional landscape, served by a network of rails and barges. Though the steel industry largely vanished a generation ago, this is still the image many have of Pittsburgh: a place of heat, smoke, long hours, dangerous jobs, mill towns full of bars and churches, and a never-quit work ethic.

Photographs at the History Center from U. S. Steel, Mesta, and J&L supply ample evidence of the city's resilient people, though not everyone labored in the mills. Pittsburgh required brick makers, welders, tailors, and butchers; the city attracted innovators, entrepreneurs, and financiers. Nor was the workforce exclusively male—many young women worked in Pittsburgh's banks, schools, and offices. They did much of the work in the winding department at Westinghouse, ran the switchboards at Kaufmann's department store, or learned to drive a bus or fly a plane. All these

occupations and many more are reflected in the photo collections at the History Center.



Workers at Harbison Walker making refractory brick, Hays Works, 1920s.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Edward T. Hite, MSP 0007.



Interior of a South Side saloon, c. 1900.

A small group of patrons pose for the camera along with two bartenders in this image documenting the interior of a South Side saloon around the turn of the century. Seeing a child among them was not surprising. Many saloons were also family-run businesses, with relatives sometimes living in the upper floors of the same building. Saloons outside downtown also catered to the preferences of specific ethnic groups. For some of these groups, a family trip to a public space such as a saloon would naturally involve children.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Bob Cranmer, 1999.0080.



Pittsburgh Public School Escort Madeline Bernard walks with Mark Johnson and Anita Bivans, 1967.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Pittsburgh Public Schools, MSP 117.B18.F6.



Saul Kronzek holds a butchered chicken outside his shop in Highland Park, 1987.

Saul and his family fled anti-Semitism in Poland and came to Pittsburgh in 1927. Though he had studied to be a rabbi, Saul took a job as an apprentice butcher to help support the family.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Allan Zola Kronzek, 2005.0269.



The D.L. Clark Candy Company display at the Allegheny County Fair, South Park, 1957.

With airplanes made of chewing gum boxes and children from many nations parading with candy bars, the D.L. Clark Candy Company got into the spirit of the event with this whimsical sales booth at the 1957 Allegheny County Fair. The booth's theme of global travel epitomized the Clark bar's slogan as the "World's greatest five-cent candy bar."

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Frank Jansen and Robert Novakovic, MSS 0640.

A driver greets passengers boarding a Port Authority Transit (PAT) bus, 1970s.

By the 1970s, busses were the primary means of public transit for most of Pittsburgh, which had seen automobiles gradually replace trolleys during the 1950s and '60s. Women first became part of the city's transit system during World War II, when labor shortages caused by the war led to a recruitment drive for female trolley operators.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Elenore Seidenberg, MSP 566.B5.





Men at Dravo construct an LST, Neville Island, c. 1943.

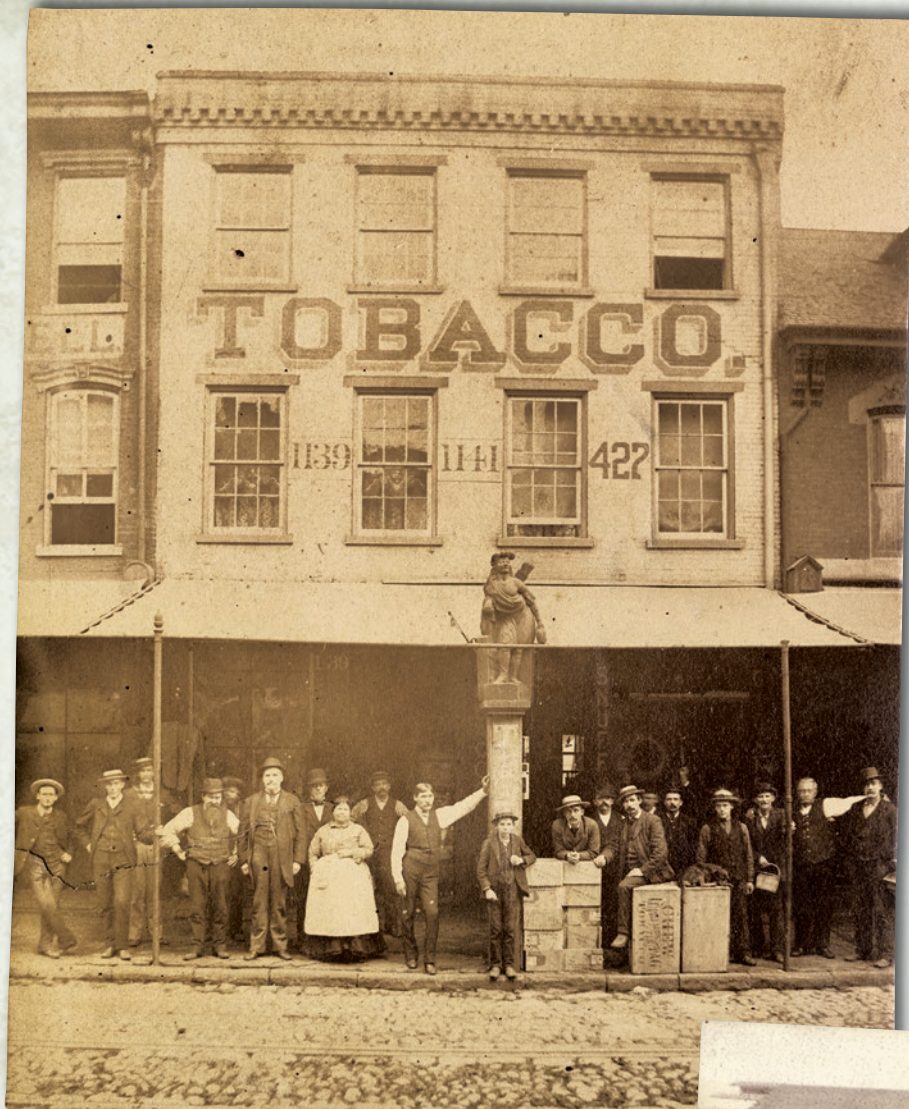
Workers take a break to look up from inside an LST (Landing Ship, Tank) under construction at the Dravo boatbuilding yard on Neville Island during World War II. These men were just three of more than 14,000 people who worked at the Neville Island facility during the height of wartime production, when the yard operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Dravo built more than 650 LSTs for the war effort, as well as sub-chasers, minesweepers and destroyer escorts. Another 119 LSTs were launched just a few miles away at the American Bridge yard in Ambridge, Pa.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of the Dravo Corporation, MSP 288.



Union Switch and Signal, 1918.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Camilla Workman, 1995.0026.



John W. Taylor's tobacco shop on Penn Avenue, Strip District, c. 1885.

A crowd gathers on the sidewalk in front of John Taylor's tobacco shop. The woman in the white apron is his daughter, Ann Taylor Whitlinger, and the man leaning on the pole is George W. Richard, a clerk in the store. Taylor's shop served as the unofficial headquarters for the Republican Party in its early days.

HHC Detre L&A, GPC B3.

Homewood Board of Trade Fair, 1902.

The Homewood Board of Trade held a successful week-long Mardi Gras carnival and fair to help raise funds for their new building.

HHC Detre L&A, GPC B13.



A typical Pittsburgh saloon interior, c. 1900.

A line of men wait their turn at the bar in this image of an unidentified Pittsburgh saloon around the turn of the century. Beer saloons were common in Pittsburgh's industrial ethnic neighborhoods, where men often gathered for a drink before or after their shift.

HHC Detre L&A, GPC B14.



The advertising department at Heinz, c. 1910.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of H.J. Heinz Company, MSP 57.



J&L open hearth crew, South Side, c. 1900.

Gift of LTV Corporation, MSP 33.B5.F19.

Construction workers stand artfully on a wood retaining wall, 1904.

This striking image reminds us of the importance of preserving the historic information with photographs. Familiar details are highly reminiscent of Pittsburgh—the rocky soil of the bluff, the sight of a wooden stairway climbing the side of the hill at right—but alas, the identification of the photo is unknown. A few tantalizing details offer clues. Posters on the wood scaffolding announce the first annual Swissvale Athletic Club Carnival, which ran from June 27 through July 2, 1904. Perhaps the image was taken somewhere in Pittsburgh's East End, where such advertisements would reach the intended audience. The building looming over the men features a bell, and a partially visible sign for an auditorium. Is it some sort of school? Most of the workmen hold shovels; a few have other tools. Five men standing at the base of the wall hold nothing—are they supervisors, engineers, or business owners? Did the men simply pose here? Much of the image remains a mystery but it still speaks of the hard work and effort it took to build the communities of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Phyllis Metz, PFF 63.



Investigative reporter Ray Sprigle surrounded by black market meat in Pittsburgh during WWII, 1945.

Surrounded by the evidence of his undercover investigation, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reporter Ray Sprigle poses with the haul of black market meat he gathered around Pittsburgh in March and April 1945. Disguising himself as “Alois Vondich from Ohio,” Sprigle set out to find just how difficult it was to acquire black market beef and pork in the Steel Valley during the ration years of World War II. He eventually hauled in more than a ton of black market meat, all of it purchased without the federally mandated points. In his serialized expose of the investigation, Sprigle estimated that as much as 80 percent of the meat on Western Pennsylvania tables was coming from the black market. Yet it wasn’t organized crime behind the law-breaking but rather long-time meat industry men and customers who simply wanted goods that were in short supply.

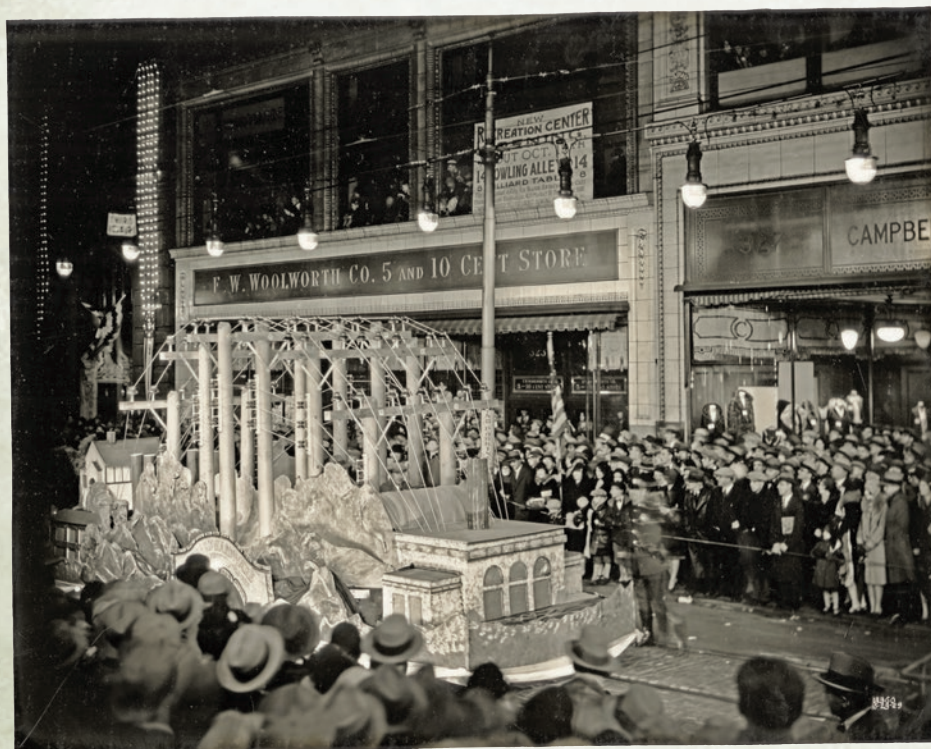
HHC Detre L&A, gift of Rae Jean Kurland, MSS 0779.



Substation parade float for Light's Golden Jubilee, downtown, 1929.

A truckload of electrical utility poles symbolizes technological progress in this parade float appearing as part of the Light's Golden Jubilee celebration on October 22, 1929. Marked by nearly a week of festivities, Pittsburgh joined the rest of the country celebrating the 50th anniversary of Edison's invention of the light bulb. A grand parade ran from Oakland to downtown and the city lit up buildings and bridges.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Robert Garland, PSS 0009.





“Labor priest” Father Rice attends the 50th anniversary celebration of the United Steel Workers Organizing Committee at the City-County Building, downtown, 1986.

United Steel Workers President Lynn Williams (at podium) addresses the attendees as Mayor Richard Caliguiri (left of podium, gray suit) and others look on at a ceremony to dedicate a historical marker near where the United Steel Workers union was founded in 1936. Monsignor Charles Owen Rice (seated at left, in black), known as “the labor priest,” delivered the invocation. Rice became a labor activist after his experiences in Pittsburgh during the Great Depression. Part of a duo of legendary Pittsburgh labor activist priests, Rice had been mentored by Father James Cox and was renowned for walking picket lines with strikers. He was also a personal friend of Phillip Murray, the Scottish-born founder of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, the precursor of the United Steel Workers.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Katherine Ruttenberg, MSQ 0298.

Portrait of Vickie at a hair salon, 1972.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Marjorie Spector, MSP 431.





Kaufmann's switchboard operators work the phones, downtown, 1950s.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Kaufmann's Department Store, MSP 371.B4.F11.

Women pilots gather for a portrait at Bettis Field, West Mifflin, 1933.

These "girl fliers" are likely gathered at Bettis Field for a competition known as the "Debutantes Beer Derby." In 1933, with Prohibition recently repealed and beer back on the menu, the Hofbrau Restaurant sponsored an all-women race from Bettis Field in West Mifflin to downtown Pittsburgh and back. Local pilot Helen Ball (center) won the \$500 prize.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Helen Stinner Ball and Barbara Ball Ewing, MSQ 12.



Customers stream into the Phoenix Hotel Bar for a workingman's lunch, Strip District, 1901.

Located between Liberty and Penn Avenues on Eleventh Street, James Mulvihill's Phoenix Hotel and Bar was one of many spots that catered to the needs of the working man's lunch. Visible to the left of the swinging doors, the hotel's menu board announces the selections of the day. Offerings such as sour meat, lamb stew, and tripe speak to the diversity of Pittsburgh's working class population during the early 1900s. Most of these five cent meals—as opposed to the “regular” twenty-five cent meals—were very likely a combination of food and a beer. Advertising the food at five cents allowed the hotel to avoid the much-debated issue of the saloon's “free lunch.”

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Harry W. Lawson, Jr., MSS 916.B1.F3.



Office staff at Duquesne Brewery, 1920s.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Ralph Friday, MSQ 245.

History Lost, History Saved—Pittsburgh's Story



Workplace safety was always emphasized, as seen in this U. S. Steel wall sign.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of LTV Corporation, MSP 33.

In the 1980s, Western Pennsylvania experienced a severe economic downturn as steel mills closed, corporate headquarters shut down, and the unemployed left to seek jobs in the Sun Belt. The local history community realized that an enormous amount of Pittsburgh's past was leaving the region, packed in the moving vans of the Pittsburgh diaspora or tossed in dumpsters by beleaguered corporations. Concerned historians, led by Jim Richardson of the Carnegie Museum, formed the Committee on Pittsburgh Archaeology and History (CPAH), and in November 1985 held a public conference to discuss the possibility of a city history museum to preserve and exhibit this material.

The response to the proposal was positive and community leaders slowly rallied behind the tiny Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania as the institution best suited to gather and archive these vulnerable collections. Over a period of nearly a decade, a coalition of corporate, foundation, and government leaders helped shepherd the

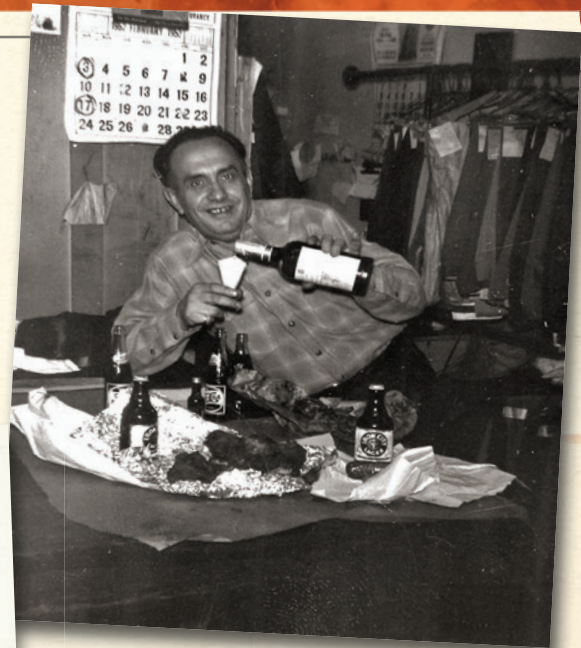
growth of the Historical Society from a modest building in the Oakland neighborhood into the seven-story, block-long Heinz History Center in the Strip District. Its goal was to celebrate what honorary capital campaign chair David McCullough called "the unprecedented character of the Pittsburgh story."

In the mid-1990s, as the History Center building became a reality and the professional staff grew, corporations began stepping forward to donate their collections. Although the initial concern was with the loss of industrial records, the History Center's mission quickly broadened to include many organizations and groups. Among the early donors were H.J. Heinz, U. S. Steel, Gulf Oil, Mellon Bank, and Alcoa. Over the years, many more collections have been offered, helping document the full range of work in the region—retail stores, family-owned businesses, white collar professions, education, and more.

Break time at Gerson Brothers Tailors, South Side, 1952.

Harry Gerson emigrated from Biala, Poland, in 1913 and set up a tailor shop on the South Side. The first in his family to settle in Pittsburgh, Harry was soon joined by his widowed mother, six siblings, and other relatives. He and his brother Sam opened Gerson Brothers doing alterations and dry cleaning on East Carson Street. The store remained in the family until 1996. Here Sam takes a break from dry cleaning to feast on a well-balanced meal of chicken, a large pickle, Coke, and Iron City.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Betsy Gerson, 2004.0015.



MESTA MACHINE COMPANY PITTSBURGH, PA., U.S.A.

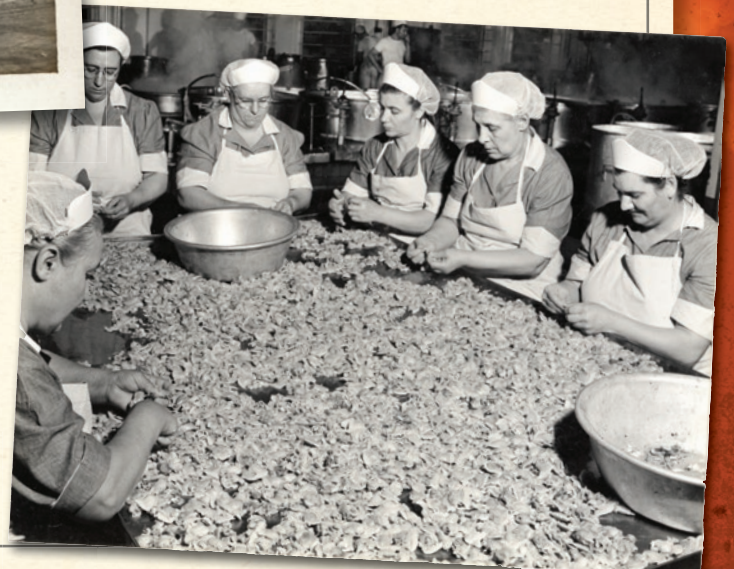
Mesta workers dwarfed by machinery, West Homestead, 1940s.

Mesta Machine was founded in 1898 when George Mesta merged two smaller companies to create what became the world's largest steel equipment manufacturing company housed under one roof. The company worked on a huge scale, producing crushers, engines for blast furnaces, molded gears, and massive forging presses that towered over the workers who created and operated them. Spread over thirty acres and employing more than 3,800 people, Mesta helped win two World Wars but could not survive the collapse of the steel industry in the 1970s. The company filed for bankruptcy in 1983.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Mildred Milfeit, 2000.0005.

Women at Heinz shucking clams, 1950s.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of H.J. Heinz Company, MSP 57.





The glove department at Crandall McKenzie Henderson dry cleaners, 1920s.

Crandall McKenzie opened in 1905 on Chaucer Street in Homewood. The company provided dry cleaning, pressing, sewing, and dyeing, specializing in hard to clean items such as rugs, hats, and the gloves seen here.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Emily Crandall, MSQ 439.

Westinghouse winding department.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of George Westinghouse Museum, MSS 920.B4.F60.

Police officers and their K-9 partners line up for inspection, c. 1960.

Police dogs and their handlers stand in review in an image that probably dates to 1959 or the early 1960s. The Pittsburgh Police started the K-9 Division in 1959 to help supplement the work of beat patrolmen working in many of the city's higher crime communities.

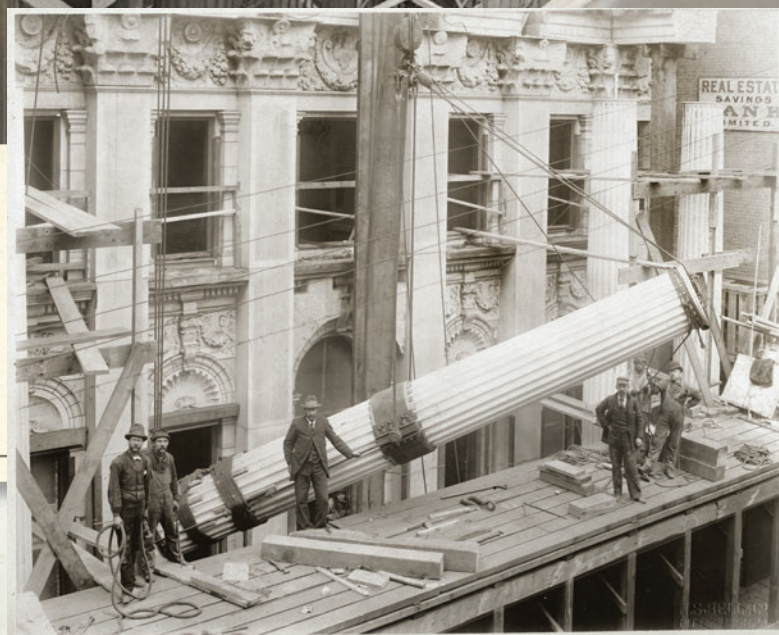
HHC Detre L&A, gift of Pittsburgh Police Historical Association, MSS 858.





**Construction (right) and
demolition of (above) the Bank
of Pittsburgh, downtown, 1896
and 1957.**

HHC Detre L&A, GPC B1 and gift of Elenore Seidenberg, MSP 566.





Towboat and dredger on the Allegheny River near Horne's Department Store, 1957.

A lone towboat makes its way up the Allegheny River as a dredger can be seen in the background during the winter or early spring of 1957. The stillness of the image belies the very real hazards of life on Pittsburgh's rivers. The photographer, Melvin Seidenberg, worked for many years at the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and 1957 was a busy year for newspaper headlines about river traffic. In December, a dredge boat sank in the Monongahela near Point Marion and in June, one crewman drowned when a towboat sank near 51st Street in Lawrenceville.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Elenore Seidenberg, MSP 566.