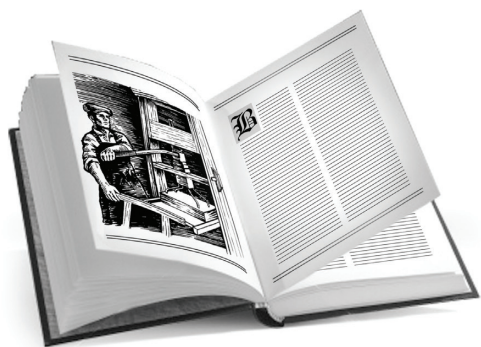


BOOK REVIEWS



Beyond Rust: Metropolitan Pittsburgh and the Fate of Industrial America

By Allen Dietrich-Ward

University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015

347 pp., 17 b&w photos, illustrations, maps

Hardcover, \$39.95

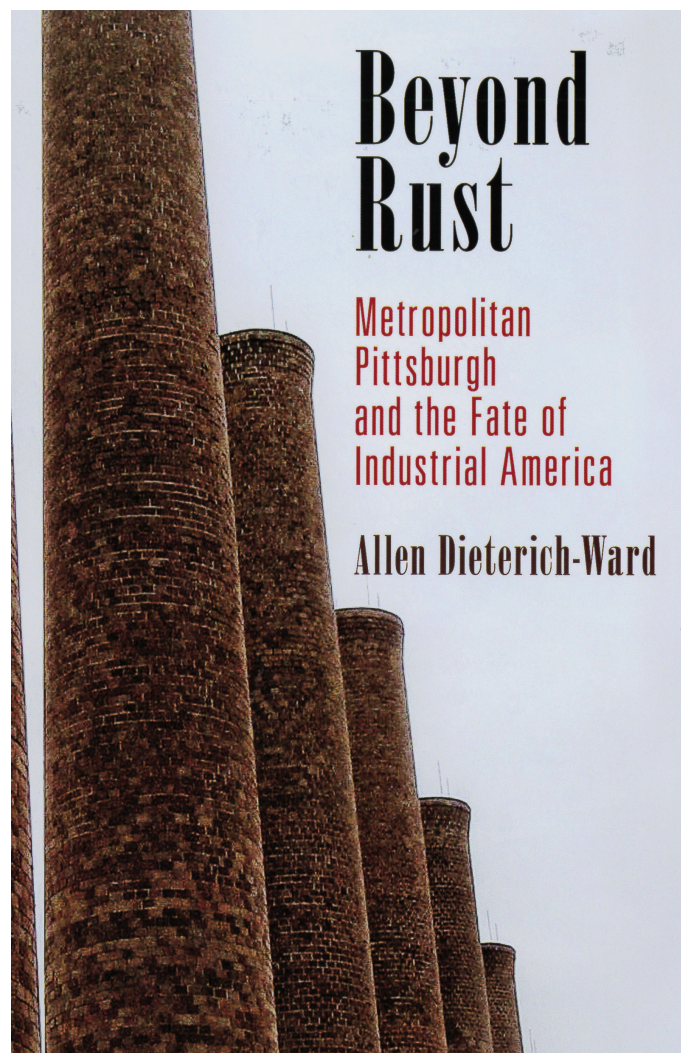
Reviewed by Dr. Richard P. Mulcahy, Professor of History and Political Science, University of Pittsburgh-Titusville

Pittsburgh has become *the* model of a successful transition from an industrial past to a post-industrial present and future. Once the Steel City, it is now a seat of technological and biomedical know-how and innovation. This new identity was given formal recognition on the world stage when the Obama administration selected it as the host site for the 2009 G-20 summit. How Pittsburgh accomplished this transition is the subject of Allen Dietrich-Ward's new book *Beyond Rust*.

In relating this story, Ward takes a regional approach, looking at Pittsburgh in the context of the "Steel Valley" that runs through West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, comparing Pittsburgh with other valley communities, including Steubenville, Wheeling, and Weirton. While he begins with the valley's industrial rise, he spends most of his time covering the region's post-industrial fall, looking at Pittsburgh's experience and that of the communities mentioned above. Ward's judgement is that Pittsburgh made the transition successfully, whereas the rest

of the valley fell short. The basis of this success was a private/public partnership created to make change, anchored with an alliance between the Allegheny Conference, originally headed by Pittsburgh financier Richard King Mellon, and the city's Democratic mayor, David L. Lawrence. Both men, and their respective associates, overcame tribal prejudices and worked together to serve the public good. Out of this partnership came the original Pittsburgh Renaissance. While this partnership changed over the years, the arrangement endured and enabled Pittsburgh to transform itself. Sadly, other valley communities were not able to follow Pittsburgh's example due primarily to a lack of resources and the political will to change.

Ward is to be commended for his efforts. He sifts through an immense collection of information and presents a coherent and compelling narrative that does not lose sight of the forest for the trees. What also becomes clear in this narrative is just how jarring and painful the process of transformation was for Pittsburgh in particular, and for the steel valley in general. This resulted not only in job losses, but depopulation. Pennsylvania lost more than 190,000 manufacturing jobs during the 1970s alone, as well as 440,000 residents.



On the down side, there are places where Ward's analysis becomes overly subtle, with the reader losing the thread of the book's argument. In addition, Ward's narrative, while asserting that some industry is still present in the valley, creates the impression that the transformative process is finished. However, that process appears to be ongoing, with the rust belt becoming rustier, and its people feeling abandoned. Regardless, *Beyond Rust* is an outstanding piece of scholarship and writing, and will be a standard text on the Pittsburgh Renaissance and the steel valley for years to come. 