

BOOKREVIEWS

Those interested in reviewing books should contact Nicholas Ciotola at npciotola@hswp.org. Publishers and authors can send review copies to the Editor, *Western Pennsylvania History*, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 1212 Smallman Street, Pittsburgh, PA, 15222.

After the Smoke Clears: Struggling to Get By in Rustbelt America

By Steve Mellon. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002). Illustrations, index, 136 pp., \$29 hardcover

This photographic essay chronicles the lives of people in various cities across Rustbelt America. Coupled with personal stories, the photographs tell the trials and tribulations of everyday life in cities like Matewan, W.V., and Homestead and Braddock, Pa.

Henry Hornbostel: An Architect's Master Touch

By Walter C. Kidney. (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation, 2002). Illustrations, index, xxi + 249 pp., \$49.95 hardcover

This comprehensive overview of the life and work of Henry Hornbostel argues that the architect brilliantly merged modern ideas with a careful appreciation of the past. Hornbostel taught at the Carnegie Technical Schools and designed numerous Pittsburgh structures including the City-County Building and Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall.

Beaver Falls: Gem of Beaver County

By Kenneth Britten. (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2002). Illustrations, bibliography, index, 160 pp., \$24.99 paper

This celebratory tribute to Beaver Falls relies on historical photographs to tell the story of the community known as a "Pittsburgh in miniature." The author discusses aspects of Beaver Falls social history, as well as an in-depth discussion of Beaver Falls native Joe Namath.

William Findley from West of the Mountains

By John Caldwell. (Rock Island, IL: The Five Rhinos Book Company, 2002). Index, 458 pp., \$15 paper

The second volume in a comprehensive biographical study of William Findley that addresses his tenure as a Western Pennsylvania congressman, 1791–1821. A weaver and farmer, Findley became a successful politician whose work for the common Western Pennsylvanian earned him the title "man of his people."

Malice Toward None: Remembering Pittsburgh Mayor Joe Barr

By Bob McCarthy. (Pittsburgh: Dorrance Publishing Co., 2002). Illustrations, vii + 95 pp., \$12 paper

Compelling biography of Pittsburgh Mayor Joe Barr that chronicles his many experiences and contributions, ranging from his handling of racial tensions following the death of Martin Luther King to his hand in building the structures that would become Pittsburgh landmarks like the Civic Arena and Three Rivers Stadium.

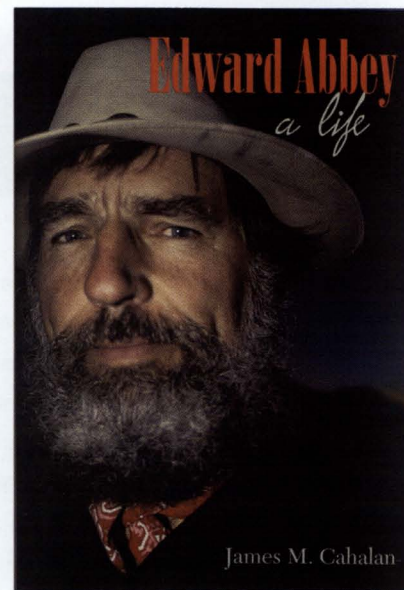
Old Economy Village

By Daniel B. Reibel. (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Press, 2002). Illustrations, maps, 48 pp., \$10 paper

Drake Well Museum and Park

By Jon Sherman. (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Press, 2002). Illustrations, maps, 48 pp., \$10 paper

These two recent additions to the Pennsylvania Trail of History guidebook series provide detailed information for persons planning to visit western Pennsylvania PHMC sites. Maps, color illustrations, and background historical information are included.



Edward Abbey: A Life

By James M. Cahalan. (University of Arizona Press, 2001). Introduction, notes, bibliography, index, 30 photographs, 360 pp., \$27.95 cloth, \$16.95 paper

As James Cahalan tells it, Ed Abbey was fond of using the lookout towers where he spent parts of 10 summers as a fire sentry for the U. S. Department of Interior as, well, literally, a love nest. One can readily imagine the outlandish Abbey, in delicious violation of numerous awkwardly worded federal regulations, escorting wide-eyed dates up the wooden stairs to his capsule in the sky ... then spending the afternoon thoroughly distracted from his job of alerting authorities to the first sign of wildfire in the wilderness.

Ever since reading Cahalan's biography, I cannot pass one of those official brown Smoky the Bear "Fire Danger Today – HIGH" signs along the highway without a little snicker.

Such reckless pursuit of pleasure before duty, coupled with a lifelong desire to tweak the nose of authority, was critical to the "Abbey Method," Cahalan shows. Abbey is best-known known for his 1968 non-fiction masterpiece

Desert Solitaire, but he was also a best-selling novelist (with his 1975 *The Monkey-Wrench Gang* being probably his most celebrated work of fiction), a highly successful freelance writer, and a revered university instructor. His outrageous, irreverent, confrontational mind-set, topped with obvious brilliance at turning a phrase, earned him perhaps as many enemies as friends during a literary career that spanned four decades.

As the close friend and celebrated "Western" writer Terry Tempest Williams remarked at his memorial service in 1989, Edward Abbey, born and reared in Indiana County, Pa., author of 21 original books during his lifetime and hundreds of articles and reviews, was "Coyote" – the "Trickster" – of Native American mythology, a creature sent to earth to keep everyone else unsettled, on our toes and striving to learn our possible niche in the cosmic order, while almost as importantly, providing us a few yuks along the way.

Cahalan's reconstruction of Abbey's journey has a range, a depth, and a gritty-coarse texture equal to the subject itself. Abbey inhabited both coasts of the country for years at a stretch in the 1950s and '60s, with cross-country Kerouac-style jaunts as manageable to him as a suburban commute, and through meticulous sifting of Abbey's papers and journals at the University of Arizona (where Abbey taught writing for a decade) and through more than 100 interviews with Abbey's friends, enemies, professional peers, and family members – in seemingly every corner of America – Cahalan's text conveys the forthright worldliness that any serious examination of Abbey's life and career would demand.

Begun as a two-part article in this magazine in 1996, Cahalan's book is easily the most com-

plete contribution to our understanding of Abbey's career, life, and times.

Cahalan, recipient of the Distinguished Faculty Award for Research and professor of English at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, invested considerable analytical energy on the literary commentary about Abbey's books, articles, and persona. Some of the biography's most interesting insights come from reading comments about Abbey's work by others. And all of these sources, taken together, along with his own apparent gift for communicating, ensures an incredible richness to Cahalan's storytelling stew. Abbey was a most quirky hybrid of outlaw Bohemian and influential, tenured, mass-market *literati* – definitely a Henry Thoreau for our Modern Age – and Cahalan rightly grasped that the devil was in the details in any Abbey life story.

This is not a biography for anyone unprepared to have his notions about political correctness forcefully challenged. Abbey grew up in an era and culture far removed from our own in the hard-scrabble coal country of rural Western Pennsylvania, then, through the course of his life and travels, developed what often seemed a stick-in-the-eye attitude about (to name but a few topics) sexual mores, marital fidelity, feminism, class consciousness, and environmental degradation. Cahalan tell us that one of Abbey's favorite rituals while driving cross-country was throwing beer cans out the car window, yet he pleaded for environmental reform, a reappraisal of America's general growth/pro-sprawl land development policies, and respect for the continent's vanishing wilderness, perhaps as intelligently and passionately as any modern American author.

For another example of the contradictions, which also demonstrates the amazing breadth

of Cahalan's research, see page 229:

In late 1999, one rancher who otherwise admired Abbey told me – speaking outside on his cell phone while he kept an eye of his cattle – that he felt Abbey had gone wrong in "The Cowboy and His Cow." Abbey had written him in 1986, "I'm glad to know we are still friends despite those mean things I wrote about the public-lands beef growers, and the harsh things I've written about Latino culture. I'd like to be a good liberal ... but the temptation to defy old American taboos often gets the best of me."

All this, and yet this fascinating portrait never goes more than a page or two without some sidesplitting humor – sometimes Abbey's, sometimes the biographer's. It's enjoyable, entertaining, and educational reading about a complex, erudite, and truly gifted wise apple who, barely known in his native range in the East, is considered one of western America's most influential and best-loved authors and commentators.

Upon Abbey's death at age 62, due most likely to complications associated with heavy drinking, the newspaper in his adoptive home of Tucson, Ariz., devoted an entire section of the Sunday paper to him.

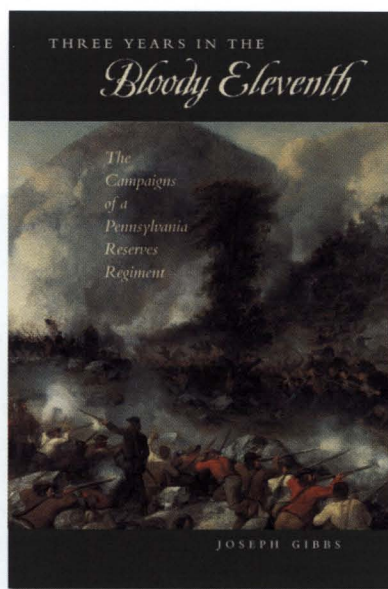
He got a short obit, however, in the *Indiana Gazette*.

Cahalan has managed to animate Abbey in a book sure to delight disciples and the uninitiated alike. *Abbey, A Life* seems certain to propel this important American author into a new century of appreciation.

Paul Roberts is the former editor of this magazine and is now a winemaker in the mountains of western Maryland.

Three Years in the Bloody Eleventh: The Campaigns of a Pennsylvania Reserve Regiment

By Joseph Gibbs (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2002). Illustrations, index, 375 pp., \$35.00 cloth



Civil War regimental histories first saw publication as early as 1864, although the majority appeared between the 1880s through the early 1900s, when over a thousand different histories came off the presses during this “Gilded Age.” They ranged from excellent leather bound monumental works to poorly written company level memoirs, usually penned by the regimental veterans themselves. Of more than 2,100 Union regiments raised by the Union and over 200 regiments from Pennsylvania serving during the four years of war, more than 100 Pennsylvania units have regimental or company level histories. Why the “Bloody Eleventh” – one of the most heavily engaged units in the Northern army – never warranted a history until now is unknown even to its author.

Joseph Gibbs, a reporter and editor on several Massachusetts newspapers and also the author of *Gorbachev's Glasnost: The Soviet Media in the First Phase of Perestroika*, is not a known Civil War historian but does an outstanding job of putting the reader “in the action” and providing us with stunning accounts of combat taken from primary sources. This book is not for the faint of heart, as Gibbs vividly describes what the citizen soldiers actually experienced in battle, and the gruesome “bone shattering” wounds many of them received.

Gibbs's history is not a reprint of an earlier regimental history, a trend which became quite

common in recent decades, but in fact a new and original volume. Where many of the original works written in the 19th century suffer profoundly from biased documentation, making interpretations for the historian difficult to say the least, Gibbs provides us with a fresh, objective, and unbiased piece of research.

The Bloody Eleventh was one of 15 reserve regiments recruited by Pennsylvania and authorized by Gov. Curtin originally to protect the state from invasion from Confederate forces. Pennsylvania bordered Maryland, which although a “border state,” provided a hotbed for southern sympathizers. To the west was the panhandle of Virginia: Confederate territory until summer 1863 when West Virginia came into the Union. Men from seven Western Pennsylvania counties (Armstrong, Butler, Cambria, Fayette, Indiana, Jefferson, and Westmoreland) served in the 11th Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Reserve Division formed in Spring 1861 consisted of 13 infantry regiments (the First Pennsylvania – 13th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, also designated as the 30th – 42nd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, in addition to the First Pennsylvania Cavalry (44th Pennsylvania Cavalry) and the First Pennsylvania artillery (43rd Pennsylvania artillery).

The 11th (40th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry) sustained the heaviest loss of any regiment in the Pennsylvania Reserves while its percentage of loss numbers 11th of more than

2,000 Union regiments in the war. Fighting at Mechanicsville, Gaine's Mill, Glendale, Second Manassas, South Mountain, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, Bristoe Station, the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Bethesda Church, the regiment lost 681 in killed and wounded alone in three years of bloody combat. In the chapter; “Butchered Like So Many Animals,” the Pennsylvania reserves heavily engaged the Rebel forces at the December 1862 Battle of Fredericksburg in the reserves' most terrible day of the war. Gibbs depicts the slaughter of 49 killed in action and 147 wounded in the Eleventh regiment alone on the cold, muddy slopes of Marye's Heights. Another 50 became Confederate prisoners of war.

As testimony to the heavy fighting endured by the Reserve Division as part of the Army of the Potomac, over 15,000 men mustered in 1861 when the Division formed, but less than 2,200 men answered the call when the division arrived back at Camp Curtin, Harrisburg, in June 1864. The “Bloody” Eleventh Regiment that numbered 1,179 men in June 1861 mustered out roughly 200 three year enlistees at its final destination of Camp Copeland, Braddock Station, Pa. Several men, however, were prisoners of war in crowded, disease-infested Confederate prison camps and never made it home.

Although the reserve division did not fight together as an entire, comprehensive unit throughout the war, the Eleventh fought at various times with other Pennsylvania reserve regiments in each campaign it served. Readers with a special interest in the Pennsylvania Reserves (my great-great grandfather served in the 12th Pennsylvania) will appreciate Gibbs' detailed description of battles and the maps designating the positions of the other reserve units.

By utilizing original diaries and correspon-

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Cutting-edge historians present recent scholarship on the American Civil War to complement the exhibit *Eye of the Storm: Unknown Stories of the Civil War*. The lecture series is made possible through the generous support of Dominion.

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Above: from self-portrait of Robert K. Sneden, 1863

**Inside the 'Storm':
Uncovering the Sneden Story**

Tuesday, April 15, 2003

Charles Bryan, Ph.D., President and CEO of the Virginia Historical Society

**African American Women
in the Post-Civil War South**

Tuesday, April 29, 2003

Tera Hunter, Ph.D., Carnegie Mellon University

**April 1865:
The Month That Saved America**

Tuesday, May 6, 2003

Jay Winik, University of Maryland

**Deserters and War Resisters: The Other
Side of the American Civil War**

Tuesday, June 3, 2003

William Blair, The Pennsylvania State University



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dence from the enlisted and officers themselves, we get to know many of the soldiers as Gibbs transports us from Camp Wright in present Verona, where the regiment formed in 1861, through three years of bloody war, ending with its leaving the line at Bethesda Church, Va., in June 1864.

Some readers may be disappointed in the lack of a regimental roster in the appendix common in most regimental histories, but Gibbs refers the reader to the standard reference source utilized for most of the early Pennsylvania regimental histories: Samuel Bates' 1869-70 five volume *History of Pennsylvania Volunteers*. Gibbs more than makes up for this one omission with a detailed, first-rate regimental history.

Arthur B. Fox, adjunct professor of U.S. history, geography, and Pittsburgh history at CCAC and Duquesne University, is the author of *Pittsburgh During the American Civil War, 1860-1865*.

READERSREPLY

Some of your readers may remember an article that detailed the WWII experiences of Charles R. Becker, a B-24 ball turret gunner who was shot down over Hungary. The article appeared in the Fall 1993 *Pittsburgh History* magazine.

Chuck died on October 2, 2002. A native of Pittsburgh's North Side, Chuck was born on March 25, 1924. During the war, he was assigned to the 15th Air Force, 460th Bomb Group, 760th Bomber Squadron stationed in Italy. He flew 37 missions and was shot down in June 1944. After the war, he returned home to Pittsburgh. In 1947, Chuck married Norma Rahe and they raised their family in Brentwood. Chuck is survived by his wife, their three children, and 10 grandchildren.

Although originally trained in the bakery business, Chuck worked as a plumber for most of his adult life and was employed at the old Greater Pittsburgh Airport before his retirement. Chuck was active in the VFW Post 1810.

I had the pleasure of meeting Chuck and Norma in 1988 when we worked together on an oral history project that chronicled his wartime experiences. The project eventually evolved into my 1993 article.

Chuck was a fine man, husband, father, and hero. He will be missed.

Sincerely,
Audrey Abbott Iacone
Manager, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
Beechview

The article is still well-remembered for Chuck's infamous quote: "I told them I was a baker's helper, so they decided I would make a good armorer gunner." A full transcript of the interview is available at the Historical Society's Library & Archives. —ed.