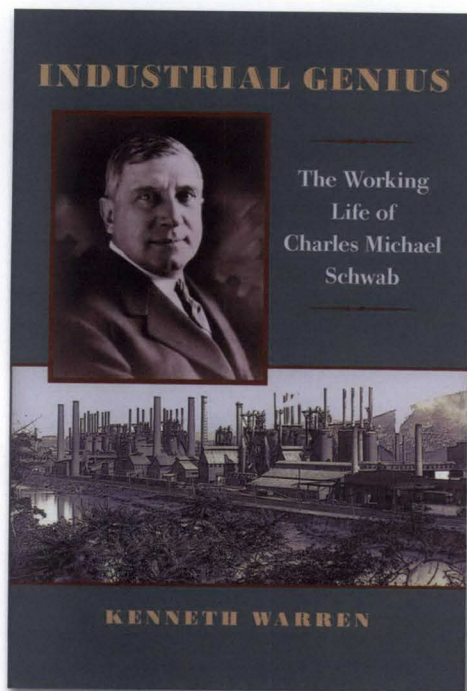


BOOK REVIEWS



Industrial Genius: The Working Life of Charles Michael Schwab

By Kenneth Warren

(Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007)

B/W photos, notes, bibliography, index, 304 pp.

\$35.00 hardcover

Kenneth Warren's latest book takes its place amidst an impressive body of scholarship concerning the American steel industry. A professor at Oxford, Warren's books include *Big Steel: The First Century of the United States Steel Corporation 1901-2001*; *The American Steel Industry, 1850-1970: A Geographical Interpretation*; and *Wealth, Waste and Alienation: Growth and Decline in the Connellsville Coke Industry*. Already having written the best business biography of Henry Clay Frick, *Triumphant Capitalism: Henry Clay Frick and the Industrial Transformation of America*, he has now produced a biography that represents a significant advance over Robert Hessen's *Steel Titan: The Life of Charles M. Schwab* published in 1975. Warren tells the story of Charles Schwab who became president of Carnegie Steel at 35 years of age,

the first president of U. S. Steel four years later, and then president of Bethlehem Steel, which he built into America's second largest steel producer.

Warren's book on Schwab, while recognizing his managerial talent and energy, provides a more balanced appraisal of the negative impacts of the tough labor policies of the great steel men than does Schwab's previous biographer. Hessen, as befits an admirer of the ultra-conservative novelist/philosopher Ayn Rand, focused more on the personal flaws that limited the dominance of the great man, rather than the consequences for workers and their communities of the aggressive and acquisitive drive of industrial capitalism. To his credit, Warren poses the question: "Was confrontation or even the grinding down of workers the only way of dealing with labor?"

Like many men who arrived in Pittsburgh during the extraordinarily expansive economic growth that followed the Civil War, Schwab was in the right place at the right time. Broad-based technological breakthroughs, the rapid exploitation of a nearly virgin natural world, and an expanding availability of labor power provided by immigration and improved public health created conditions that made possible a veritable explosion of material production and wealth accumulation never before seen in human history.

Pittsburgh was at the epicenter of this eruption of production for 50 years and men like Schwab, Frick, Carnegie, and Andrew Mellon rode the wave and came to see themselves as the titans, moguls, and barons of the new world order. Schwab caught the wave and artfully maneuvered his way to the top of the industrial heap, combining a solid steel operations background—learned from the redoubtable Captain Bill Jones in

Braddock—with a talent for salesmanship that was capable of charming workers, bankers, and politicians.

A small town boy from the intensely Catholic central Pennsylvania town of Loretto, Schwab had a sharply competitive nature and an enormous capacity for work. Becoming the superintendent of the Homestead Works in 1886 at the age of 24, he developed an expertise in the production of armor plate, introducing basic (as opposed to acidic) open hearth steel production to the United States. Upon the death of his mentor Bill Jones in a furnace accident in 1889, he took over the reins of the Braddock mill, only to return to Homestead following the 1892 strike. At both plants he used his personality and constant presence to control the workforce, while squeezing pay scales and dealing firmly with labor disputes.

Schwab played several important roles in American industrial history. As president of Carnegie Steel, he used his close relationship with Andrew Carnegie and his diplomatic skills to negotiate the creation of U. S. Steel. The emergence of the world's first billion dollar corporation forestalled an industrial war between Carnegie and his rivals including his bitter enemy, Henry Clay Frick, who was backed by Andrew Mellon. Ironically, Schwab's triumph and accession to the presidency of the nation's biggest corporation led to his own undoing. As the chairman of the board of the new behemoth, Judge Elbert Gary, and its financier J.P. Morgan, sought industrial stability and financial predictability rather than the wheeling and dealing competition practiced by Carnegie's "boys."

Schwab's other major contribution came as president of Bethlehem Steel where his knowledge of armor plate and shipbuilding made him an important contributor to

America's rise as a world-class military power before and during World War I. His drive for innovation led him to adopt the Grey universal mill, producing structural H-beams that became industry standard. While U. S. Steel dithered and lost market share, Bethlehem became the premiere producer of armaments with customers on four continents and a major producer of structural shapes for bridges and skyscrapers. Despite all his business success, however, Schwab's personal fortunes dove during the Depression, and he was forced to sell off his New York mansion and magnificent Loretto estate. The gambling instincts that had served him so well on the way up now accelerated his downfall.

Despite his charm, he proved to have little time for workers' rights or sympathy for the economic realities faced by both workers and the unemployed. Unlike Carnegie with his libraries and music halls, or Frick and Mellon with their art collections, Schwab left little to posterity except his own dramatic story, artfully recounted by Kenneth Warren in this impressively researched account.

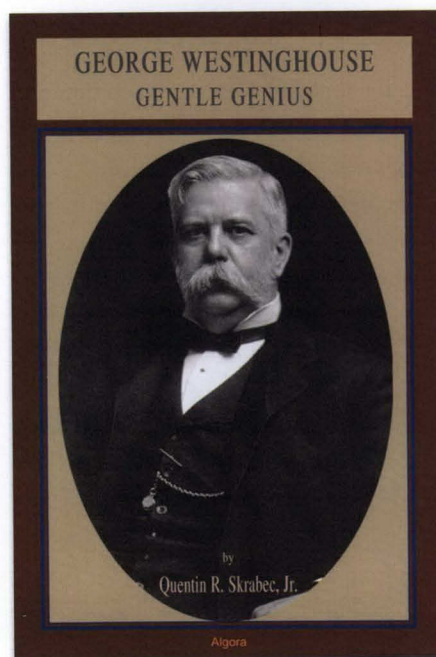
Charles McColleston is professor of Industrial and Labor Relations at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and director of the Pennsylvania Center for the Study of Labor Relations.

George Westinghouse: Gentle Genius

By Quentin R. Skrabec, Jr.

(New York: Algora Publishing, 2007)

Bibliography, index, 259 pp., \$29.95 hardcover



Many people are familiar with the Westinghouse name but know little about the man behind the products. George Westinghouse is, in fact, difficult to know; he avoided photographers and public speaking, and not one journal or notebook of his writing has ever been found. Nevertheless, Quentin Skrabec strives to understand the man behind the inventions in *George Westinghouse: Gentle Genius*. Since little personal information about Westinghouse remains, Skrabec takes an innovative approach to his subject, examining the lives of men who had an impact on him, such as J.P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, and Thomas Edison. By describing these people, and noting how Westinghouse responded to their actions, Skrabec draws conclusions about Westinghouse's personality. He also presents the reader with a thorough context for his evaluation through summaries of the technology and business practices of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The book opens at the beginning of the financial panic of 1907, the year in which Westinghouse would lose his electric

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company to the bankers who controlled the company's debt. Skrabec paints a detailed picture of the financial environment and personal relationships underlying these events, revealing a deeper, more lifelike version of the situation and Westinghouse as a person. Skrabec employs this same combination of social, financial, and technical detail to illuminate Westinghouse's development as both a man and a business person. From his struggles to sell his first "railroad frogs" to his triumph with turbo-generators, Westinghouse's "independence of mind" and drive to achieve is evident.

Throughout, Skrabec takes the time to contrast Westinghouse's approach to innovation with Thomas Edison's Menlo

Park laboratory and the Edison Electric Company. Gradually, Westinghouse's innovative approach to corporate research and development takes shape.

Westinghouse's "Holland Puritanism" upbringing is a major theme in the book. During many of his struggles and successes, these religious beliefs are the root of his moral stance. By providing historical context and comparisons to his peers, Skrabec describes how many of these values were unique for a man of Westinghouse's time and status. From paying inventors for patents, to treating employees fairly and a belief in the benefits of competition under anti-trust capitalism, Skrabec depicts Westinghouse as a man who held strongly to his principles even

under adversity. At the same time, this intense morality is difficult to reconcile with Westinghouse's competitiveness and success. As Skrabec describes it, "He seems at times too pure to be real. Westinghouse wanted to win but did not want the trophy ... he certainly didn't fit the Robber Baron image, so popular in the Gilded Age. He had the humanity of a monk, which doesn't fit his zealous drive to win."

Skrabec brings a strong voice and complementary background to the subject matter. With a Ph.D. in Manufacturing Management and personal ties to the Pittsburgh area, Skrabec accurately places George Westinghouse in both manufacturing and Pittsburgh histories. By the end of the book, the reader understands Westinghouse as a unique engineer who was driven to achieve and rooted in strong moral values. He was interested in many areas of practical science and technology. He ran his business on what Skrabec describes as a "Christian-based capitalism" system, always searching for a more efficient way to produce better products while giving his employees the means to better themselves. Through Skrabec's illustrative comparisons and contextual descriptions, the reader begins to know George Westinghouse by understanding his world.

Cassandra Nespor works at the Carnegie Mellon University Archives. Previously, she organized the Westinghouse Electric Corporation Records at the Heinz History Center Archives.

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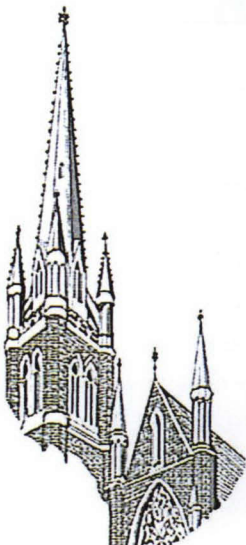
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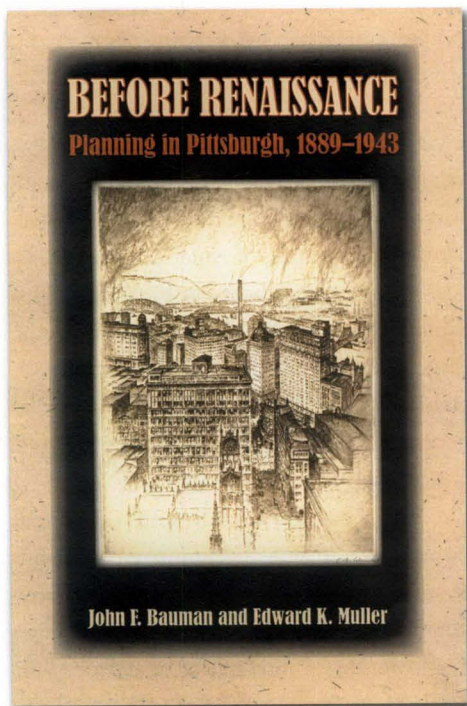
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Before Renaissance: Planning in Pittsburgh, 1889-1943

By John F. Bauman and Edward K. Muller

(Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006)

Maps, illustrations, photographs, index, notes, pp. 331

\$27.95 softcover

Before Renaissance: Planning in Pittsburgh, 1889-1943 attempts to provide a review of professional planning efforts in Pittsburgh at the turn of and through the early 20th century. By focusing on this roughly 50-year window spanning both world wars, Bauman and Muller painstakingly trace finite efforts across a range of issues, personalities, and eras. Their inclusion of the mélange of international and national actors in the creation of plans to modernize Pittsburgh adds to the book's texture.

The authors' attention to detail provides numerous and interesting insights into how the Steel City's landscape resulted from interactions associated with professional planning efforts. They provide rich coverage of Pittsburgh's early industrial development through its bosses and ring-led efforts, and

they report on planning's limitations and renaissances in the three-river city. Each of these depictions offers insights into the city's emergence. Many of the key players' core ideas in the development of the city's plans, including Charles Mulford Robinson, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and Frederick Bigger, are reflected in the city today. Given the depth of material presented on these planning giants' ideas, and the considerable discussions they generated, one can only wonder what manifestation they would have taken if all were actually present in contemporary Pittsburgh's infrastructure.

The inclusion of numerous maps, figures, and portraits helps frame this study. Moreover, the authors' use of an extensive

note section provides much needed clarity and supports many of their assertions and conclusions. As well, their thorough index helps the reader move quickly to related areas in the book. Such attention to detail is a clear indication of the considerable time Bauman and Muller spent designing and developing their study. As a result, urban study, history, and planning students will be able to gain much from this effort.

Despite these assets, I struggled to make my way through this volume. In large part, this is due to the authors' use of obtuse and unnecessarily long sentences, which obfuscate many of their points and make for tedious text. The extent of the redundancy may reflect the failure of a copy editor to better

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weave the nine chapters into a more coherent whole. Further, the absence of clear and useful segues within and between chapters serves to create confusion and hinders the reader from reaching the kinds of conclusions the authors appear to want to create.

This is perhaps best reflected in the failure of the authors to make the best case for the role of Frederick Bigger, who is portrayed throughout the volume as the enlightened leader of planning in Pittsburgh. My reading suggests that Bigger's inability to compromise on his visions was central to early miscues, errors, and failures in planning. The authors attempt to portray him as a visionary, and he may well have been—clearly, there is evidence

of brilliance in his design and understanding of a range of important issues at the core of Pittsburgh planning. The latter is perhaps best reflected in Bigger's catering to and incorporation of local elites and power brokers' ideas and concerns in his efforts—a decision that reflected his political savvy.

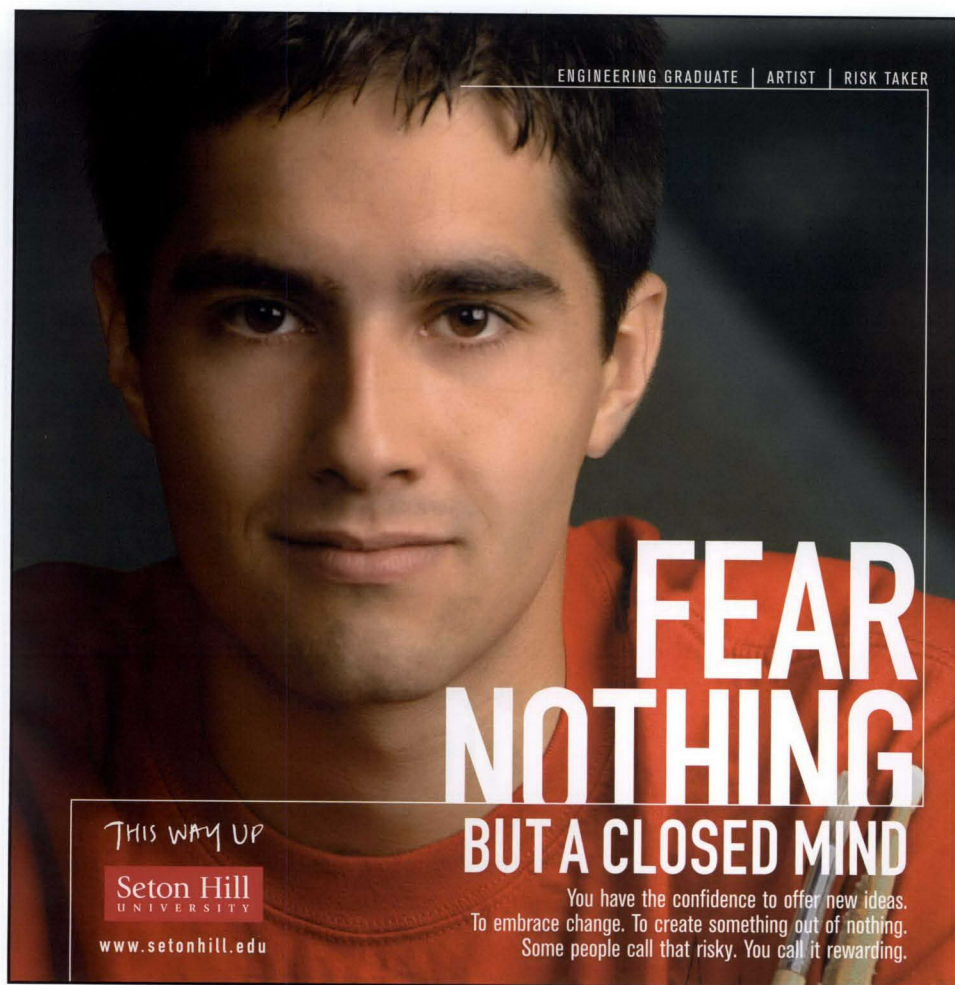
At the same time, however, his work with several national planning efforts (the authors suggest he worked with either the U.S. Emergency Fleet Corporation or the U.S. Housing Corporation during a period when his efforts at home were greatly needed) reveals something else could well have been occupying his attention. Further, his regular sojourns to New York to “intellectualize” with

Lewis Mumford, Clarence Stein, Henry Wright, Fred Ackerman, Robert Kohn, and others involved in the creation of the Regional Planning Association of America suggests his focus may not have been on Pittsburgh. His inability to adequately reconcile Pittsburgh's needs with those of Allegheny County also inhibited Bigger from achieving some of the successes that would reflect his status as a visionary.

Clearly, Bigger's early and dedicated commitment to housing improvements and his strong advocacy of an integrated highway system enjoyed relatively little success despite his efforts. He was not able to weave together the ability to know what needs to be done, the ways to get it done, and final accomplishment. This failure in no small part contributed to Pittsburgh's slow involvement in planning, and may well be reflected in Frank Lloyd Wright's harsh criticisms of the city's efforts.

Despite this inconsistency, Bauman and Muller have produced an important book. It is thorough, detailed, and well researched. I recommend it to those with an interest in understanding how Pittsburgh became the city it is today.

A.E. Luloff is professor of Rural Sociology at The Pennsylvania State University. He teaches, conducts research, and writes about the impacts of social change, as a result of socio-demographic shifts, on the natural and human resource bases of the community.



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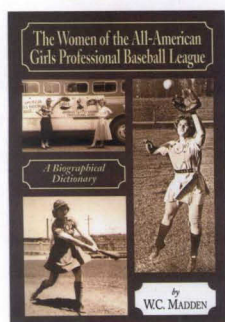
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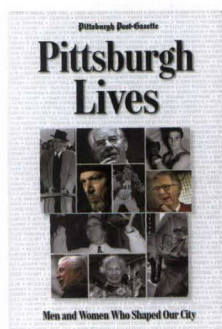
The Women of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League: a Biographical Dictionary



By W.C. Madden
(Jefferson, N.C.:
McFarland & Co., 2005)
Illustrations, index, vii,
288 pp., \$35.00 softcover

The 1992 motion picture, *A League of Their Own*, starring Madonna, Geena Davis, and Tom Hanks, brought to light an all but forgotten part of American sports history: women's professional baseball. During World War II women entered the labor force in large numbers and also ventured into professional sports. The author has compiled a complete list of all the players in the league with stats and short biographies of their playing careers, along with many photographs of the players in uniform. This book has only a brief history of the league but more information can be found in *The Origins and History of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League* by Merrie A. Fidler, also available in the History Center's library. —Art Louderback

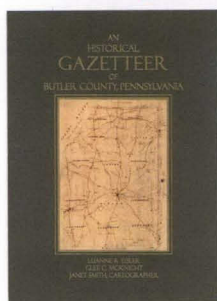
Pittsburgh Lives: Men and Women Who Shaped Our City



Edited by
David M. Shribman
and Angelika Kane
(Pittsburgh: *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 2006)
Illustrations, viii, 248 pp.,
\$16.95 softcover

"Pittsburgh Deaths" might be a more apt title as this publication has collected obituaries from the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* from the mid-19th century to the present. They serve as great, short biographies of both the famous and infamous. There are the expected notables like Stephen Foster, H.J. Heinz, and Andrew Carnegie along with sports figures such as Honus Wagner and Roberto Clemente. *Pittsburgh Lives* is also filled with residents who were known but forgotten such as Robert Lansberry, who walked the city streets wearing a sandwich board and complaining about his mail being censored, or Tex Gill, an owner of massage parlors who was a woman but always dressed as a man. Individuals are categorized by their accomplishments, i.e. politics, industry, science. —Art Louderback

An Historical Gazetteer of Butler County, Pennsylvania

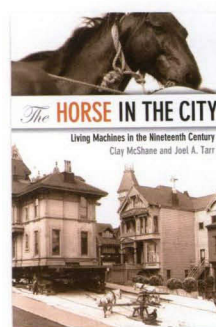


By Luanne Eisler,
Glee McKnight,
and Janet Smith
(Butler: Butler Area
Public Library, 2006)
Illustrations, maps, index,
373 pp., \$45.00 hardcover

This book is a blessing to historians and genealogists. If every county could publish this kind of information, research would be much easier. Almost anyone conducting historical inquiries has run up against a Hoag's Hollow or Holsinger's Bend and searched maps and histories of the area with no luck finding them. Sometimes these place names are legitimate but usually they are nicknames given by local people, identifying

an area. This gazetteer lists both the local and historical names for places. It gives the historical name for Grant City as Gum Stump, and the local name and location of French Mary Hill, which had a brothel outside of Petrolia. (By the way, Hoag's Hollow is where Dr. Hoag lived outside of Daisytown in Washington County and Holsinger's Bend is a very sharp curve on Route 130 in Level Green, Westmoreland County.) —Art Louderback

The Horse in the City: Living Machines in the Nineteenth Century



By Clay McShane and
Joel A. Tarr
(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins
University Press, 2007)
Illustrations, bibliography,
index, xi, 242 pp.,
\$50.00 hardcover

At the dawn of the 20th century, horses were everywhere, performing hundreds of tasks in America's growing cities, but by mid-century they had vanished. The authors explore a world hard to envision today, where animals provided transportation of goods and people (either individually or on horse-drawn streetcars), hauled building materials to cities, and carried waste away. Just as urban centers today cope with cars, horses had their own needs: stables to house them, feed that had to provide enough nourishment, waste and dead animal removal, and proper medical care. This book explains the intricate coexistence between people and horses as it was and also addresses the decline of animal as machine as modern technology took its place. —Art Louderback