



ACROSS MY DESK

By Brian Butko, Editor

Pittsburgh Prints

The earliest three images of Pittsburgh were drawn when the city was a small frontier outpost—and then they were not printed until decades later. That’s just one of the many fascinating things I learned in *A Panorama of Pittsburgh*, a catalog accompanying an exhibition of prints at The Frick Art Museum. Curator and catalog editor Christopher W. Lane explains the paucity of early images:

This was a factor of there being no native printmaking industry in Pittsburgh, but it was also a result of there being no significant local nor national demand for printed images of Pittsburgh until well into the nineteenth century. Pittsburgh was not of sufficient natural splendor nor economic significance for those elsewhere to be seeking prints of the city, nor for artists to be rushing to the west to capture its rustic charms.¹

It wasn’t until the rise of industry that demand arose for views of the city, but it was for local businesses and not the city itself. Around 1815, glass manufacturers Bakewell, Page and Bakewell commissioned an engraving of their glass factory to be used as their billhead, the first image of Pittsburgh to appear *in print*. Its chimneys disgorging smoke was the first appearance of what would become an iconographic image of the city.

The first known rendering of Pittsburgh was made a quarter century earlier. Lewis Brantz, passing through in 1790, wrote, “The view enjoyed at this place, from two elevated spots is, in truth, the most beautiful I ever beheld.” His small watercolor, *Pittsburgh in 1790*, remarkably has survived. However, his diary was not published until it appeared in Henry Schoolcraft’s *Information Respecting the History, Condition and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States* in 1853. And Schoolcraft had Seth Eastman redraw Brantz’s watercolor as the basis for a steel engraving by J.C. McRae, *Pittsburgh in 1790*. Thus, the first view of Pittsburgh did not appear in print until 63 years after it was drawn, and then in a form twice-removed from the original. The next two views of the city, from 1796 and 1817, similarly waited decades before publication.

The History Center loaned almost 20 images for *A Panorama of Pittsburgh*. Among them were many dramatic panoramas of the

city along with more ordinary publications like the two seen here. The supplement to New York City’s *The Daily Graphic* of September 29, 1882, features images of Pittsburgh from a wood engraving. The other is an 1878 advertisement for Armor, Feurhake & Co., one of the many partnerships of William Gillespie Armor, who as an artist, engraver, or publisher had a hand in more lithographic prints of Pittsburgh than anyone

All HC L&A.



else. Visit the History Center’s Library & Archives to see them in person and enjoy the amazing detail found in these works of art. ☀

¹ Lane, Christopher W. *A Panorama of Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh: Frick Art & Historical Center, 2008) p.19.

For more information about the prints or catalog, contact Christopher Lane at The Philadelphia Print Shop, www.philaprintshop.com, (215) 242-4750. For more about the History Center’s collections, call the Library & Archives at (412) 454-6364.



Readers Reply

In Brian Butko’s column in the Summer 2008 issue of *Western Pennsylvania*

History, he asked the question, “Any reader remember the big marine?”

I do. I was living in Dormont in 1943 and I saw my first big league game on August 26, 1943. The Pirates lost to the Cubs 3-2, breaking my 10 year old heart. Watching Vince DiMaggio strike out to end the game remains a vivid memory 65 years later.

Yes, the big marine was a big presence at Forbes Field in 1943 and was removed after that season. America was at war in 1943 and we all did what we could to support the boys overseas. I had three older cousins in the service. One each in the Army, Marines, and Navy. I saved newspapers and rounded up automobile tires and tin cans for recycling. You may not believe this but we even turned in kitchen fat to make nitroglycerine. The local gas station weighed our offerings and gave us a

few pennies for each contribution. I was also a “Junior Commando.” That was a program sponsored by a newspaper for kids to support the war effort.

Bob Kienzle
Kettering, Ohio

The cover on the summer issue is fabulous—the best I have ever seen on a *History* magazine. Is it taken from a larger painting or was it done just for HSWP? Is it available anywhere in an original form?

In the story about the tank that roared the writer mentioned that Nov. 15, 1927 was “... a cold winter’s day...” Did seasons change earlier in 1927?

Is Nelli[e] Bly buried in Pit[t]sburgh?
My heart leaped when I turned to page 4. I was at Forbes Field the night that the Marine was dedicated. Many memeories [sic] were reawakened in my thoughts.

Great issue.
John Carlson

- *Prints of A Warning for General Braddock are available from www.lordnelsons.com/. ~ed*
- *It must have been a “wintry” day. ~ed*
- *No, Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx. ~ed*