

BOOK REVIEWS



The Wingless Crow

By Charles Fergus

(University Park, Pa.: Penn State University Press, 2007)

170 pp., \$17.95 softcover

In a world more concerned with how to find enough energy to power SUVs down city streets, it's refreshing to read about the importance of fencerows. Did you know that a single gram of soil lying beneath a fencerow can support 10,000 lives? Neither did I before reading Charles Fergus' essay "Arteries" in his newly reprinted collection *The Wingless Crow*. "Arteries" refers to the fencerow's life-supporting and sustaining place in the otherwise treeless spaces of central Pennsylvania, where the majority of Fergus' essays find their settings.

Reading through this collection, written for *Pennsylvania Game News* between 1978 and 1992, is like reading a biology textbook written for

entertainment as opposed to information. "Stump-sitting," the book's first essay, describes the extremely non-scientific act of sitting on a stump and observing the wilderness around you. It's the perfect introduction into Fergus' world, one where nature is appreciated in all of its forms. These essays are so full of information and striking imagery that to ingest more than one at a time seems unfair to both reader and text.

To cite an example, in "A Fair Day for Hunters" he goes to great lengths to depict the circumstances surrounding the hunting of turkeys, pheasants, rabbits, ducks, grouse, doves, squirrels, and deer. The reader experiences the excitement of the chase, and is therefore somewhat spent when it comes time to move on to the next selection, an equally intricate portrait of the difficulties of owning and maintaining an old house in the country.

Each essay follows the same format: roughly one thousand words told from the perspective of the naturalist himself. It

should come as no surprise that the great outdoors provides so many unique storytelling opportunities, but rather the revelation comes from the ability of Fergus to

make each subject accessible to less knowledgeable readers.

"Hiking on Your Stomach," for instance, outlines the necessity of preparing adequate food for forays into the wilderness. "They say an army marches on its stomach. The axiom applies equally to backpackers and backcountry hunters," Fergus imparts. "It is part of the experience to rise and travel at leisure ... you may dawdle over breakfast, cooking a meal that not only fuels your body but also lifts your spirits, making you better able to appreciate your surroundings." This is a prime display of Fergus' unique relationship to his readers, in that he is no superhero outdoorsman. Rather he is happy to share some common sense advice with his audience that to be at peace with nature, you have to be at peace with your stomach first.

While some essays in the collection might not hold the interest of the casual environmentalist, every selection holds at least one nugget of knowledge that is sure to make the reader stop and think about taking a nice, long walk outside.

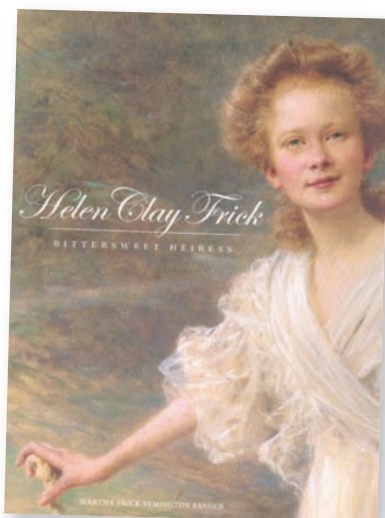
Maxwell Jones is a freelance writer currently teaching GED preparation through AmeriCorps in the Allegheny County Jail.



Helen Clay Frick: Bittersweet Heiress

By Martha Frick Symington Sanger
(Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007)
386 pp., illustrations, \$40 hardcover

Helen Clay Frick was a complex person with a mission to protect and preserve her father's reputation and legacy. This biography is written by her grand-niece, Martha Frick Symington Sanger, who takes care to tell the good, the bad, and the ugly in the life of the Frick family. Many facets of Helen Frick's persona are revealed: fiercely loyal daughter, generous philanthropist, art savvy collector, world traveler, anti-German



leanings, strong-willed business woman, patriot, and caring benefactor.

These different qualities would be difficult to understand without an in-depth look

into Helen Frick's childhood and upbringing. Helen's father Henry Clay Frick was a domineering industrialist who made his fortune in the coke and steel industry and gained notoriety as a union strikebreaker. Henry never wanted his daughter to marry, and she never did. Helen's mother Adelaide's severe bouts of depression made her distant from the family. Two of Helen's

siblings both died tragically young. According to Sanger, these deaths and the family's reaction to them played a major role in Helen's shaping.

As a young girl, she accompanied her father on trips to Europe, purchasing the art that formed the basis for the Frick Collection in New York. After her father's death Helen continued to build this collection as well as her own. She also funded the University of Pittsburgh's teaching collection and had a hand in the art acquisitions for it and for The Frick Art Museum. This book is generously illustrated with artwork from assorted collections. There are also family and personal photos from the personal collection of the author as well as the Frick Archives to which Sanger had extensive access.

When her father died in 1919, Helen then age 21 became the richest unmarried

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BOOK REVIEWS

woman in America. In addition to the art collections, she also generously supported philanthropic endeavors. She was not without her faults, however, and Ms. Sanger holds no punches when she points these out even though she has fond memories of her "grauntie." Helen carried with her an anti-German prejudice after seeing the devastation in Europe as a nurse near the front lines in World War I. In fact, she barred anyone of German descent from accessing her art library and personal museums. She was also at almost

constant battle with the all-male board of directors of the Frick Collection.

Helen Clay Frick: Bittersweet Heiress, well-researched and straightforward, provides an insightful glimpse into one of the most prominent and influential Pittsburgh families.

Debbie Day, a 2007 graduate of the MLIS program at the University of Pittsburgh, works in the Library and Information Sciences program at Pitt as Program Support Specialist.

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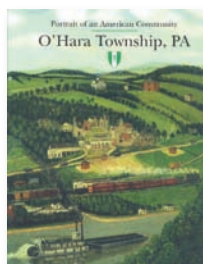
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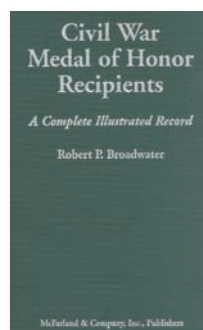
BOOK REVIEW CAPSULES



Portrait of an American Community: O'Hara Township, PA

(Pittsburgh: Township of O'Hara, 2008)
Illustrations, index, ix,
280 pp., \$39.95 hardcover

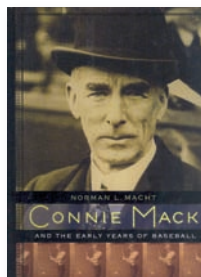
O'Hara Township is across the river from Pittsburgh's Highland Park. The township has produced a book rich with information on their history. It's rare to see a community history so thoroughly researched including bibliographies at the end of each chapter and a complete index. Every page is full of interesting facts.
—Art Louderback



Civil War Medal of Honor Recipients: A Complete Illustrated Record

By Robert P. Broadwater
(Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland and Company, 2007)
Illustrations, indices, vii,
351 pp., \$55.00 hardcover

The approaching sesquicentennial of the Civil War makes it an important subject. Each Medal of Honor recipient is listed with his birth date, reason for receiving the medal, and a photograph, if available. The book is indexed in many ways including, regiment, place of action, state, and birth year of recipient.
—Art Louderback



Connie Mack and the Early Years of Baseball

By Norman L. Macht
(Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2007)
Illustrations, index, xvi, 708
pp., \$39.95 hardcover

Connie Mack played for and also managed the Pittsburgh Pirates from 1894-1896, before managing the Philadelphia Athletics for 50 years. This book covers his life and career until 1914 and is a fascinating look at the early days of professional baseball. —Art Louderback

Historic Photos of Pittsburgh



Text and captions
by Miriam Meislik
(Nashville, Tenn.: Turner
Publishing Company, 2008)
Illustrated, 206 pp., \$39.95
hardcover

Miriam Meislik has picked wonderful photographs of Pittsburgh from the archives of the University of Pittsburgh. These are scenes familiar to Pittsburghers but from another time. She has also worked on an online photographic project, Historic Pittsburgh, <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/pittsburgh/>, which is definitely worth visiting. —Art Louderback

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