

## HOMESTEAD REVISITED

by Samuel P. Hays

The Pittsburgh Survey has become a classic in American urban and social history. One of the earliest and certainly one of the most elaborate descriptions of urban social conditions, it provides a remarkably extensive view of life and work in the city of Pittsburgh in the early twentieth century. It has become a major source of evidence about urban conditions of the time, both for Pittsburgh and for American cities in general. Such accounts enable historians to extend their factual knowledge of urban life far below the more affluent levels of society which generated a disproportionate share of historical records. The census statistics provide some information about working people, but studies such as the Pittsburgh Survey add valuable descriptions otherwise unavailable. First and foremost the Pittsburgh Survey is a vital historical record.

The volume of the Survey reprinted here, *Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town*, plays a special role in the entire series. While other volumes dealt with particular subjects such as wages, housing, and sanitation, or particular ethno-cultural groups, the Homestead study brought together many facets of urban-industrial life in a single context. The city was separate from Pittsburgh, with a distinct origin and history, developing as a true "mill town" with its own identity. Here also was a distinctive group of newer immigrants, the Slavs, who could be given special attention in the context of a community established earlier by migrants from Germany, Ireland, and the British Isles. Moreover, the dramatic Homestead Strike of 1892, although often dim in the memories of many by 1908, seemed to provide a perfect backdrop for the study of working-class conditions. Here was a peculiar opportunity to give a community focus and meaning to the larger study of the city.

*Homestead* is also a book with much imaginative poten-

tial which enables the reader to explore far beyond its explicit statements of reality. It is rich with description, some of which the author, Margaret Byington, chose to emphasize and much of which she let go without particular emphasis as it was perhaps far beyond her own focus of concern. The reader can go back, use such information as a starting point, and begin to formulate new questions and follow out new paths of inquiry not emphasized by Ms. Byington. Some books remain tight and circumscribed and hold the reader to a restricted perspective, but *Homestead* has a quality which enables the reader to take the initiative and explore the community on his own. The same quality invites exploration not just imaginatively, but in fact. One cannot leave the book *Homestead* without a keen desire to explore the living reality of the town in person.

There is still a third dimension to *Homestead*, the perspective it reveals of those who undertook the research: the "urban reformers." Historical documents provide evidence for the historian; they also provide insight into the particular viewpoints held by those who produced them. Society cannot be viewed at any moment in time in a universal manner; the vantage point is always specific to time and place. The Pittsburgh Survey and the *Homestead* volume are no exceptions. To the casual reader they may be convincing as a complete description simply by the weight of their information. But it is vitally important that we go beyond this initial impression to examine what these accounts do not tell us as well as what they do. We must consider how an observer at a different time and place, for example the historian of 1974, might wish to take a different tack.

It is especially fitting that on the occasion of reprinting the original volume we examine *Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town* in this light. The reprinting should make more readily available a classic compilation of information, but it should also serve as an occasion on which to examine the particular perspective from which the survey was written. I do not propose here to reconstruct the history of the Pittsburgh Survey, its origin, and its operation. But I do think

it appropriate to examine the perspective of this particular volume so as to become more sensitive to its particular slant. Too often reform perspectives and reform documents from the Progressive Era have been taken to reflect universal rather than particular viewpoints. It is well that we understand reformers and the writings they produced, such as this study, as the peculiar product of time and place, that is, within the context of the sociology of reform. In this way we can secure some insight into the reform movement, into the particular social setting of the observer, as well as the social conditions of those being observed.

I

In the initial stages of the book, *Homestead* appears to be a full-fledged community study. In his Foreword, Paul Kellogg raises this hope when he describes it as a portrayal of "the family and the town" as they are brought into contact with the "mill." The book, he emphasizes, deals with "the forces which are wrenching at the very structure of society," implying by this the forces of modern industrial life and organization. All this prepares the reader for a thorough-going community study which analyzes the relationships among work, home, and community in a single setting.

This expectation is continued by Ms. Byington's initial chapters. They describe the mill setting, the development of the iron and steel works in the new town, and give considerable emphasis to the great strike of 1892. Since then, she points out, the workers have had no control over the conditions that affected them and had taken a whole series of wage cuts without protest. The second chapter continues in this vein, as the reader is introduced to the second part of Mr. Kellogg's trilogy of mill, town, and family. Here is data about different nationalities and male-female ratios, a description of housing and the growth of sub-communities and transportation, and a brief statement that Homestead does not display "extremes of wealth" found in the big cities.

In the pages which follow, however, it becomes readily

apparent that Ms. Byington is interested primarily in a specific aspect of all this: the households of a mill town, and even more specifically, the household budget, how it was spent, and how the expenditure patterns varied with household income. To be sure, this is not all that she included in her observations. But the systematic collection of data was confined to the household budget. Ms. Byington asked 90 households to keep detailed records of the way in which their incomes were spent and from this she skillfully reconstructed patterns of family life, of the use of food and clothing, housing and household furniture, and expenditures for leisure-time activities including church, "amusements," and "sociability." The core of the study consists of the numerous tables which summarize the budget data, and the dominant message which the author wishes to convey focuses on decisions made by housewives in the household. It is not too much to say that she views Homestead as a city through the vantage point of the family budget.

What emerges, then, is a study of the family against the backdrop of town and mill. The mill setting is related to the family budget because income depended entirely upon wages, but more emphasis is placed on how the income was spent than on how it was acquired, or on the factory setting in which it was earned. Similarly, the community is important primarily insofar as its institutions support or threaten the family. Ms. Byington takes pains to describe the "effective" forces in the town which create or, by their absence, prevent the creation of a "wholesome sanitary or civic environment for [the] homes" of Homestead. It soon becomes apparent that the particular segment of the town observed, as is the case with the mill, is only that which establishes the setting for what is observed in the household and which, if different, might make the household "better."

Supervising the development of the budget data gave Ms. Byington an opportunity to visit households and to observe first hand what family life was like, as well as to enter into conversations with women on a wide variety of subjects pertaining to life in Homestead. Her observations are

sensitive and acute. With them she fleshes out the data and adds to the understanding of spending choices within the household. She places special emphasis on the individual variations within similar income circumstances. Given limited budgets, some housewives managed in one way and some in another; to Ms. Byington some clearly also managed better than others. She inquires about the activities of the family outside the home, its patterns of "amusements" and "sociability," the way in which each member spent leisure-time hours, but usually all within the context of how family income was spent. What emerges is a picture of the housewife as a manager of the spending of the household income.

Filled with this kind of information and observation, *Homestead* becomes a document to which students will be especially attracted. Here are the household matters with which they are familiar, and in many cases the households of their own aunts, uncles, and grandparents if not of their own parents, which they know first hand. The exposure to the Homestead household is concrete, and the specifics of food, clothing, family relationships, housework, and "sociability" provide a direct link between the student and the past. Historians often demand that their students enter into history through the remote and the abstract, through the large national event or some theoretical notion such as "social reform." In *Homestead* a different tack is possible, as the students can first be asked to share an experience with which they are familiar and from there move out into the less known.

It is also well to point out the excellent balance in the book between statistical data and personal observation. Historians are accustomed to facilitate entry into history by means of individual observations and individual biography. But Ms. Byington demonstrates that a variety of ways are possible. Her data and the tables which display it are so clear and sensible and demonstrate the power of simple statistics so forcefully that it is exceedingly strange for historians to argue, as many still do, that statistics obstruct an appreciation of the past. Here they clearly illuminate that content

and provide insight into different people in different circumstances, into spending choices in different circumstances to such a degree that the quality of life is understood with far greater depth than would otherwise be the case. At the same time Ms. Byington's personal observations provide added information which goes beyond the statistical tables and which would not otherwise be obtainable. *Homestead* should provide students with a concrete illustration of the value of combining quantitative and qualitative data in the same context not only as a mode of understanding but as two equally important vehicles for entering the lives of people in the past.

It is worth giving *Homestead* a more precise definition as an historical study and to emphasize it as a monograph on the history of the family and the history of women. The first we have already implied by the emphasis on the family budget as the core of the descriptive material in the book. But the family emphasis is more than that. For Ms. Byington seems to select the family for study because she looks to it as the hope for change amid conditions of urban life in *Homestead* which she did not like. Although she speaks of the "inexorable" mill and at times refers to broader social forces, she seems to be looking constantly for other forces for change in the city. These are described variously as "large" rather than "narrow," "enlightened" rather than "ignorant," and "wholesome" rather than "degrading," and she seems to find these in the family. But not in all families. She is constantly comparing a family which manages "well" with one which does not, one which is able to provide "wholesome" opportunities for its children and one which cannot, one which has "ideals" for its children with one which does not.

This is not to belittle Ms. Byington's emphasis, for certainly one of the more limiting aspects of much past social history has been an environmental determinism which does not allow for individual variations of perspective, imagination, choice, and behavior among people in similar circumstances. But it is to define more precisely what Ms. Byington

is after and to sort out what she observes and what she does not. She is certainly sensitive to group variations in income, and particularly so in her descriptions of the Slavs whose lower occupational levels and wages confine them to a lower standard of living and a more limited range of choice. Yet even within the Slavic groups themselves she observes variations in family life which can be reduced to little more than the fact that one family manages in a manner different from another.

*Homestead* is even more striking as a document in the history of women. There is no hiding the fact that Ms. Byington is interested primarily in women as household managers. Her observations about men, about the community, often about children, and certainly about the world of work, are peripheral rather than central. She seems to feel that the crucial element in making life "better" in *Homestead* lies in the managerial abilities of the women. This is not to say that she ignores the limitations of income in improving life, for she does not. But since *Homestead* is a community of rather steady male work, and with few employment opportunities for women, the study of women becomes primarily one of their role in the household. One is not sure that the research was designed with this aim in mind, but its result is to convey the message that the varying abilities of women in their role as household managers is a major element in the different fate of working-class families in *Homestead*.

Let us elaborate on this point. It is easy to argue with considerable justification that the new field of the history of women will not fulfill its possibilities until it moves from a narrow focus on the "movement" to one on the role of women throughout society. To consider this volume as a study primarily in the history of women reinforces this argument. But a further observation could be made. When one considers working-class women one almost automatically thinks of women as factory workers or as workers in the households of others. Yet the work of working-class women was conducted primarily in the home. As Ms. Byington demonstrates, even the task of earning cash by means of

taking in washing and boarders was crucial to family income. More than this, the domestic work of the housewife contributed enormously to the “real income” of the family. To view *Homestead* in this light helps to broaden not only our view of women’s history in general but of the history of working-class women in particular.

Ms. Byington’s focus on women in the household goes far beyond the housewife as a manager of budgets and family finance. She is also a manager of human relationships and of individual aspirations and goals. It is the housewife who keeps the family together and the approved wife does a much better job of this than the less acceptable one. The housewife is responsible for keeping the husband in and concerned about the home. What she does in keeping the house attractive, in providing satisfying noon meals to be eaten in the factory and dinner meals in the evening, in keeping herself looking neat and trim when she welcomes her husband home at night—all this is vital in keeping the husband continually involved in family life instead of letting him slip off to his male companions at the saloon.

The housewife is responsible, moreover, for the growth and development of the children. She keeps them close to home and prevents them from being enticed into the less desirable relationships on the street and in the dance halls. She expresses the family aspiration for the children to improve their lot over and above that of the parents and to secure the education which will make this possible. One of Ms. Byington’s more striking observations is the way in which the housewife’s desire to improve the lot of her sons through their entry into white-collar work by means of education is often frustrated by the economic lure of the mill job. Despite such observations as these, it seems clear that she is especially interested in housewives as managers of family relationships and family ideals, and that she sees the family as one of the major instruments of social change against the backdrop of powerful social forces over which individuals seem to have little control.

There is much in the *Homestead* account which suggests

a pattern of social forces which array the family (and women as managers within the family) against the larger society. Ms. Byington has little faith in the larger social forces. The corporate firms only occasionally appear to be hopeful agents of social change; once she points out that the Carnegie firm's housing is better and cheaper than that provided by others. Nor is she hopeful about trade unions; there had been none of consequence since the 1892 strike and she doubts if even a strong union would make conditions in the town any different. There might be hope in an indigenous group of independent local businessmen who could fight for improved local conditions of life, but these, she observes, are not in evidence. She reserves her bitterest criticism for local government. The city council, she says, is composed of "the type of small politician to be found in office wherever wholesale liquor dealers dominate politics and where the local government is used merely as a feeder for a state political machine," and the aldermanic courts constitute simply "petty tyranny and corruption." She has some respect for the school board and the board of health, which "have the respect of the town, and men of standing are willing to serve on them," but she has little difficulty coming to the general conclusion that the "citizens of Homestead have not succeeded in creating an altogether wholesome sanitary or civic environment for their homes."

Thus, we return to the major tone of *Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town*. It is the homes Ms. Byington is concerned with and what stands out is the emphasis on the family and the housewife as a manager of family finances, family relationships, and family aspirations. As to the larger social forces, there is little evidence of hope for them. We might well provide another subtitle for the book: *The Mill Family Against the Mill Town*.

## II

This focus on the family against the backdrop of the mill town provides the reader with innumerable opportunities

to explore further and more imaginatively than the author does the inner life of the town. The book is a beginning; it is extremely useful in itself. But the power and value of an account such as this lie often in its capacity for constituting a starting point for exploration rather than as a circumscribed and finished product. That *Homestead* has this capacity testifies to its importance as an historical document. Reflecting on it carefully, the reader can follow avenues of inquiry from many starting points through the pages. To facilitate this process, it is well that we suggest several such lines of imaginative exploration.

There is, first of all, the mill. In a mill town one would think that the dominant influence in the community was factory work, how it was scheduled and organized, and how it shaped the lives of people in the community. Ms. Byington sets the mill as background but then focuses on women and the family. She refers to the fact that the labor organizations were broken by the Homestead strike after which there had been no effective voice for the workingmen in the mills. But she leaves to the reader the larger task of translating work and power within the mill into the daily life of the people. It would not have been easy to do this in 1908, for to reconstruct the nature of work within the mill would have been difficult without the cooperation of the firm, which was notoriously opposed to such investigations. We feel a bit disappointed that some member of the Pittsburgh Survey team did not elicit from the men in the mills as detailed information about their work setting in Homestead and about dominant and subordinate relationships within the mills as Ms. Byington obtained about housewives and their family budgets. It is left to us to plunge further, using other volumes in the Survey, into the nature of work in the mills and the human relationships which flowed from the way in which it was organized.

Then there is the possibility of exploring the patterns of social interaction, of human "networks" within the community. While Ms. Byington's particular focus drew attention inward to the family, the reader can use her data as a starting

point for moving outward into the avenues of human contact within the community. Consider, for example, ethnicity and religion. The research of *Homestead* was organized to key especially on the Slavs and distinctions between them and others is well developed. Let us go beyond this to the wide variety of nationalities and religions within the community and work out the patterns of close relationships or separation which they involved. At one point Ms. Byington suggests that “unfortunate” ethno-cultural conflicts existed in the community, and at several others that different values arose from different ethno-cultural traditions. These are clues to be taken up and explored further. Or consider those facets of human relationships outside the home which Ms. Byington describes in terms of what we might call “sociability” and which she is concerned with as recreational attractions which compete with the household for the loyalty of children and husbands. In this case as well, we might wish to go beyond the focus on the family and follow these human contacts out into a reconstruction of the patterns of human relationships in the community at large.

Kinship might be an especially fruitful avenue of inquiry. Here and there are a few suggestions of kinship relationships in *Homestead*, such as the observation that on holidays time was spent with relatives. But we might wish to delve into patterns of intermarriage between family groups or within the primary group networks of ethnic, religious, and racial interaction. One aspect of this raises a curious question. Social reformers in a time of rapid change and stress are prone to emphasize the role of kinship in maintaining stability. Yet in the Progressive Era reformers did not do this extensively and Ms. Byington especially focuses far more on the separate family as a unit rather than on the kinship networks in which the family was involved. This is not to say that we can assume a powerful role for kinship in *Homestead*; it is only to suggest that the more recent concerns about kinship in human relationships might well make us wish to explore this facet of life in the community to a greater extent than Ms. Byington intended to do.

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In very recent years we have also become more interested in generational change and intergenerational patterns. To delve into these was not Ms. Byington's intention, for her analysis was inevitably focused on one point in time. But in her study there are numerous bits of information from which we can well take off, about children, about those in the early stages of establishing a household, about older people. Especially useful are the impressions of the way in which a household becomes transformed as it increases in size, as more room within the house is needed, as young people become wage earners and contribute to the household economy. From this we can go on to the later years, to the relationships between the generations as grandparents and grandchildren appear or to such features as the size of family and the timing and spacing of children within it. Today we are far more sensitive to the life of the elderly and the culture of youth, and to differences in values and outlooks between those in different phases of the life cycle. Such a book as *Homestead* provides us with the opportunity to think imaginatively about this for a time for which there are few contemporary studies.

Finally, there are the patterns of social and economic inequality within the town, which can provide a fascinating variety of perspectives and values as well as conditions of life. Ms. Byington provides some information about these, but only by way of background to her primary interest in the household. It is left for the reader to explore the wider ranges of inequality within the town. The analysis of household budgets and the differences in standards of living which variations in income provide is an obvious starting point. She mentions socioeconomic differences in schools and education, in food preferences, and in the use of the library. In her observations about recreation and cultural institutions she points out that some institutions are participated in more by the middle and upper parts of the social order and she is a bit wistful with the implication that working-class people do not participate in them as much as she would like; after all, they represent the "better values" of the community. Throughout

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the volume, in fact, there is a wealth of data which the reader can put together to formulate a picture of socioeconomic structure and from which further study can be made.

There is still a wider range of problems which can be considered from *Homestead*; those which reach beyond the community itself but in which it is inextricably entwined. It is relatively tempting to confine one's observations to a geographically self-contained area; this simplifies the study and economizes on time and effort. But there are ramifications beyond the community borders. Roland Warren, in his *The Community in America*, has recently warned against the pitfalls of self-contained community studies, and emphasized the segmental and systemic relationships which link particular sectors of the community with the wider world. These can be both formal in the case of organized activities and informal in the case of personal contacts of kinship, friendship, and association. The Homestead study should be approached with particular sensitivity to those bits of evidence which suggest such external relationships so that the reader's imagination can be awakened as to these possibilities.

Today we are also aware of a wider range of the elements of the modernizing process than were the reformers of 1908. The shift from more traditional to more modern values and perspectives is a subtle but profound process. Historians are very much at sea in the task of delineating its various sequences of development. We clearly cannot accept fixed and dichotomous concepts for either "tradition" or "modernity" but we can pinpoint the more traditional aspects of immigrant life in the American city and the more modern tendencies at work on the transplanted values. We can observe within the immigrant generations themselves those ties with the past and those eroding processes of the present. We can confess fully our inadequacies in dealing with this process, but at the same time we can fully affirm its vital role and the need to observe community change within this framework. Psychological mobility, which seems to focus particularly on the value changes implicit in modernization, is a nebulous but vital concept, and studies of communities and people in transition offer a good opportunity to study

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this. There are glimpses of this process at work in *Homestead*, and a sensitive reader can follow out their ramifications.

Finally, one specific aspect of social change and social interaction in the city is sharply etched upon our minds as a result of the work done recently in geographic mobility. The city was a setting for "people in motion." Research done recently on Boston and Omaha emphasizes the extraordinary degree to which the apparently stable city in fact involved constant movement of individuals and families in and out of it. Certainly geographic movement took place both within *Homestead* and between it and the outside world, and we could safely assume that while the balance of stable and moving people might have differed from those of Boston and Omaha, the phenomenon was similar. What was the relation between those who persisted and those who moved? This was not Ms. Byington's task, but we can well use her work as a point of departure for following through the newer perspectives of our own day.

### III

*Homestead* is a product of the reform movement of the Progressive Era, and the Pittsburgh Survey as a whole was a major expression of reform perceptions, values, and objectives. Ms. Byington as an observer and author provides an opportunity for the reader to examine one example of the reform movement and to obtain some insight into its peculiar characteristics. This cannot be done by a cursory reading of the book and by following the pathways which she explicitly sets out. For often the assumptions of an observer and writer remain latent rather than appear manifest in the written words. As the reader follows the pages of the book, therefore, it might well be advantageous to look for clues, assumptions, and unstated outlines of perception, and to follow the author as observer as she wends her way through the social order of *Homestead*. One can focus on the particular choices she makes as to what to observe and what to record. This can be done with almost any book, but

*Homestead* provides a particularly rich opportunity for this kind of foray into the past because it so dramatically reveals the process of observation. For such a venture the book is rich with imaginative potential.

As a reformer Ms. Byington was concerned with bringing about social change and, as was the case with most reformers, she was far more interested in identifying forces making for changes she desired than in a disinterested analysis of social change by itself. One suspects that this was her reason for shying away from a full-scale analysis of the relationships among mill, town, and family; in this nexus she visualized little to foster as an instrument of desired changes. There is, of course, considerable social description here, and some of social and economic inequality, but it seems only to provide the setting, the background for what she felt was wrong and how it should be changed. When reformers dealt with inequality in the early twentieth century they usually did so only tangentially and then only as a setting for something else they were more interested in which they called "injustice." Often they conveyed the feeling that inequality was only temporary and in the process of erosion in the face of reform forces. Reform was more associated with individual morality and intelligence than with social conditions. Thus, they were far more inclined to ferret out those elements of "civic virtue" or individual achievement which would, if allowed to come into play, override the conditions of inequality they observed. They brought to their observations, then, a focus on injustice as a temporary condition to be eradicated, rather than on inequality as a persistent pattern within the social order.

One can follow these reform predispositions in *Homestead*. Ms. Byington seems constantly interested in identifying and latching onto the potential forces for social "improvement" as she desired it, rather than in developing a full-scale social analysis. There are glimmerings here and there of what forces in the town are the hopeful forces; they certainly are not the mill, the town government, or the local businessmen. She is far more frequently positive and hopeful

about institutions developed in the upper middle classes, in such fields as education and civic organizations. But she is also hopeful for the individual forces found among working-class people, not in group or class terms, but in individual terms. Hence her constant effort to differentiate those women who managed budgets and family ideals well and those who managed them poorly.

This peculiar vantage point for *Homestead* might well be linked to the special role played by women in early twentieth-century reform movements. For the role of women in those activities, already well documented, focused primarily on the subjects with which women were peculiarly concerned: the family, women as workers, children, and education. Women became active in education at an early date, and their first success in obtaining the suffrage was in school elections. They became interested in child labor and juvenile courts, in recreational opportunities and nutrition for children. One of their major organizations, the Consumers' League, focused almost entirely on the conditions of women workers, especially store clerks. Women played a leading role in involving many church groups in social reform, and were crucial in setting the tone of settlement house work from which radiated a host of activities.

The *Homestead* volume follows these concerns rather closely. The attention to the family and the housewife as a household manager takes up the peculiar concerns of women; in addition it concentrates on women as sources of improvement in family life and, by implication, in community life as well. The "efficient" and "constructive" development and use of human energy within the household, as well as within the community was far more vital to them than were the larger questions of socioeconomic inequality.

Ms. Byington's observation of individual differences within the community and among the various households could lead the analyst in two different directions. If one is concerned with bringing about social change one is impressed with the way in which the vigor and intelligence of some individuals is greater than that of others and as a result one is

tempted to focus on the role of mobilized enlightenment and intelligence in social reform. Thus, many reformers stressed the role of systematic scientific investigation of social problems and shifted from their detailed research to social work and sociology as the application of rudimentary social science in social change. This, in fact, was the evolution of much of the style of social reform represented by the Homestead study. It led reformers to become involved in the political instruments of applied empirical knowledge.

Attention to individual differences on the other hand, might well also lead to an emphasis on the process of social differentiation as a pervasive and persistent force in American society. One is impressed with the way in which individual choices in a wide range of activities, many of them connected with horizontal, vertical, and psychological mobility, constantly created and recreated inequalities within the American social order; this has constituted one of the most dynamic aspects of our past. *Homestead* provides considerable evidence for such a view, but to look upon that evidence in such a light requires less of a "reformist" vantage point and more a willingness to observe the continuity of inequality in American society. If we are to be concerned, as Ms. Byington was, with ways and means of bringing about change, rather than more thoroughgoing social description, than our analysis of the continuity of inequality can be, as is true in this case, often obscured.

Ms. Byington took the first rather than the second of these directions, and in doing so hers is typical of the perspective of most of the reform movement of the Progressive Era. Such a view was highly selective in its concerns and constituted one phase of the persistent tendency of reform movements and reform historians to be more preoccupied with the eradication of poverty through applied expertise and social manipulation rather than the understanding of social structure and social change as historical forces. The reader might well follow either route. But it would seem wise to be self-conscious about the particular approach chosen.

This study of Homestead, then, is a valuable document

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with which one can become involved in a number of sympathetic relationships with the people of the early twentieth-century American city. It is not simply a record of evidence, but an entry point for exploration into many ramifications of human life. It is especially so for the history of women, the history of the family, and the history of the community. In each case material in *Homestead* constitutes only a beginning, which this review of the partial and particular nature of the evidence and the vantage point of the inquiry hopefully clarifies. But this beginning can lead to a wide range of exploration. The most valuable historical writings are rarely definitive, but rather have a potential for leading the imagination of the reader on to wider ramifications of human life. Such it is with *Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town*, from which one is led out to explore a wide range of perspectives and human settings in the early twentieth century.

Pittsburgh, 1974