

INTRODUCTION

CATHECASSA BLACKHOOF IS LARGELY FORGOTTEN IN PITTSBURGH, except for a roughly cut stone marker in Schenley Park. But his life intersected with James Smith, Mike Fink, James O'Hara, and the men and women who forged the city from the 1750s into the early nineteenth century. The warrior fought against George Washington during General Braddock's 1755 campaign to dislodge the French, and later clashed with US forces driving indigenous people from land they once roamed. After their defeat at Fallen Timbers in 1794, he acknowledged US supremacy. A year later he signed the Treaty of Greenville that conceded native claims to western lands and encouraged the Shawnee to coexist with "white people." When the republic failed to deliver on its promises, he implored President Thomas Jefferson to stand by its word. Blackhoof, who remained the principal leader of the Shawnee until his death in 1831 at the age of 109, was sadly disappointed by Jefferson's response. Though he resisted efforts to push the Shawnee across the Mississippi River, Blackhoof believed that continued warfare was futile. His attempt to coexist was a path not taken. Smith, Fink, and O'Hara had little interest in accommodating indigenous people, whom most white people feared and many loathed. Instead, they created Pittsburgh in their own image.

Thomas Mellon, Martin Delany, Margaret Carnegie, William Frank, Miranda Hollander, and thousands like them came to Pittsburgh in the first half of the nineteenth century knowing little of the people who had first lived in the region. They hoped to improve their prospects; only some succeeded. Following the Civil War, waves of immigrants from southern, central, and eastern Europe arrived. So did wayfarers from the Eastern Seaboard and African Americans from southeastern states. Many came to tap the opportunities the rapidly industrializing region offered in its mines, mills, and factories. George and Elena Kracha, Palmira and Agostino Carlino, Mamie and William Tinker, and other émigrés added new ethnic, religious, and racial pieces to the cultural mosaic established by earlier migrants.¹ More men came at first because Pittsburgh's economy offered women fewer opportunities. Over time those who stayed made choices about where to live, whom to marry, what religious and social groups to join, whether to vote, and when to take their protests into the streets. Their decisions and those of their children and grandchildren propelled Pittsburgh into the twentieth century. They built the city and surrounding towns and defended their way of life during the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and World War I. But they also fought with each other as they endeavored to establish themselves in the region.²

Rapid industrial growth and a surging population created a dynamic, ever-changing urban economy and neighborhoods where people sometimes thrived but often struggled. Some came equipped with skilled trades, such as puddler James Davis of Welsh ancestry, or with education, such as Isaac Frank, the son of German Jews. Boys like Andrew Carnegie and Henry Oliver tapped their social connections in Allegheny City's Scottish immigrant community, while philanthropist Kate McKnight benefited from her family's lineage and ample wealth. They for the most part achieved considerable status and forged remarkable careers. Others without such advantages, such as Miranda Hollander and Mike Dobrejcak, settled here as unskilled, disposable workers in factories, mills, and mines or joined the ranks of domestic servants and day laborers in construction and hauling where low wages, insecure employment, and dangerous conditions circumscribed life.³

Class and cultural differences divided these diverse immigrants and native-born Pittsburghers between the shop floor and managerial offices, and thwarted efforts by unskilled and skilled workers to seek common ground. Ethnic, religious, and racial solidarities provided some comfort and mutual assistance but also sparked animosity. None carried a heavier burden of difference and discrimination than the Delanys and Tinkers, whose African American heritage visibly distinguished them. Irish, Italian, and southern and eastern European Catholic immigrants also felt the sting of perceived racial differences for a generation or longer. Through the eyes of

management, Kracha's son-in-law Mikhail "Mike" Dobrejczak, was just a "Hunky."⁴ It did not matter that he learned English and became a citizen; Mike never escaped the limitations and injustices of unskilled millwork. Instead of entering the mills, Italian immigrant Agostino Carlino's sons carried on their father's stonework and, as second-generation ethnics, participated more fully in American life, speaking English, gaining education, and purchasing homes. Similarly, German Jew William Frank's sons achieved success in business and the professions.⁵ So did William Tinker's son Carl, who became a pharmacist, one of the few professions open to African Americans in the city. Though their names were not affixed to downtown skyscrapers or corporations, these immigrants' tenacity and that of their sons and daughters shaped Pittsburgh's emerging narrative.

Pittsburgh began as a remote colonial outpost on the North American frontier in the 1750s. Nearly a century and a half later it was a national powerhouse. The eighteenth century's wars of empire, initiated by England and France, periodically enveloped southwestern Pennsylvania. These conflicts brought faraway rivalries to the succession of forts and villages at the forks of the Ohio River. Native Americans, the first people to rove through the region, were prominent actors in these imperial struggles and their aftermath. They bore the brunt of European expansion, which took their land and dismissed their humanity. Once stewards of the backwoods, most indigenous people would abandon the territory.

With the conclusion of the American Revolution and the formation of the United States, the frontier town of Pittsburgh at the confluence of the three rivers—the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio—became the lynchpin for trade and migration between Philadelphia and Baltimore to the east and settlements rising in the Ohio Valley to the west. Insulated from more advanced eastern competitors by the seemingly endless ridges of the Allegheny Mountains, Pittsburgh grew into a modestly sized city with aspirations of becoming the mid-continent's commercial emporium. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, western settlement had inexorably moved to and beyond the Mississippi River Valley, where newer cities—Louisville, Cincinnati, and St. Louis—more easily serviced the receding frontier. The rapid development of railroads further eroded the natural advantages of the city's location at the headwaters of the Ohio River. Both freight and passengers could now bypass Pittsburgh as they journeyed westward.

As these commercial roles declined, manufacturers partnered with market-savvy, financially resourceful merchants to exploit nearby coalfields and develop nascent glass and iron industries. Demand for munitions during the Civil War and a burgeoning railroad market for rails and equip-

ment transformed the once commercial city into a center for iron manufacturing. With the shift from iron to steel after 1880, several small partnerships evolved into modern industrial corporations led by entrepreneurs who were as innovative as they were aggressive. The likes of Andrew Carnegie, B. F. Jones, Henry Oliver, Henry Clay Frick, and George Westinghouse boosted Pittsburgh and southwestern Pennsylvania to national leadership in mass-produced steel, railroad equipment, coke, and machinery. Local investors and venture capitalists, notably but not only the Mellons, developed the capacity to underwrite new products such as aluminum and plate glass. They backed the costly transition to vertically integrated production. The latter entailed controlling primary resources such as coal and iron ore, engaging in each phase of production, and marketing finished goods under one corporate umbrella. The financiers also underwrote buyouts of competitors and engineered mergers to form ever-larger corporations that reverberated throughout the country and crossed borders. With its population surpassing a million before World War I, the Pittsburgh industrial region ranked among the nation's half-dozen largest metropolitan areas. But its rapid growth came at a steep cost for many.

Pittsburgh's industrialists, bankers, and professionals heartily embraced a private enterprise, free market ideology stressing individual initiative and responsibility. Many were Scottish and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who believed that the accumulation of wealth and power was a sign of their favorable predestination by God. Business leaders saw only a limited role for government and favored leaving the economy to the operation of market forces. They considered individuals largely responsible for their own welfare. Men and women whose wealth derived from commercial and professional pursuits or family inheritance exercised substantial power and authority. Sharing family connections, neighborhoods, churches, clubs, and political affiliations, they forged a cohesive class identity. Protestants dominated the city's upper class, while Catholics like Daniel Rooney and Jews like Isaac Frank who succeeded in Pittsburgh's business and professional arenas built separate social spheres.⁶ As the region grew, the elite class became more varied in composition but remained self-consciously distinct from the socially diverse working and middle classes who comprised the bulk of the population. The wealthy enjoyed considerable control over the business and political life of the city, though their hegemony was weakening by 1900.⁷

The power and perspective of the upper class did not go unchallenged. Mass production, new waves of immigrants, and feeble governmental responses to public needs fomented dissatisfaction and conflict, even blood-

shed. As owners' and workers' interests diverged in the first half of the nineteenth century, workers' protests, strikes, and violence punctuated peaceful, though fragile, labor relations. Skilled craftsmen eventually gained a measure of power on the shop floor by leveraging their unity and knowledge of production. But between the Civil War and World War I, mechanization in factories and mills, along with the increasing scale of production, shattered skilled workers' traditional craft practices and power. In spontaneous work stoppages, organized labor actions, and at the polls, Pittsburgh workers protested their deteriorating wages, working conditions, and status. Girls and women took axes to the doors of textile factory compounds in 1848. The entire community angrily protested the use of the state militia to suppress railroad protesters in 1877, and the Monongahela River turned red with the blood of Pinkerton detectives and mill workers in Homestead in 1892. But manufacturers, with the support of the upper class, the state's police power, and the courts, usually prevailed. The arc bent toward justice in the workplace, but very slowly.⁸

Remarkable diversity along ethnic, religious, and racial lines further fragmented the region's social cohesion. Those divisions both incited conflict among different groups of working people and fueled opposition to upper-class rule. Long-standing animosities between Protestants and Catholics turned vicious at times and exacerbated underlying citizen distrust of civic leaders. Enmity among ethnic groups and between skilled and unskilled workers frequently disrupted labor's unity in their episodic challenges to manufacturers. As industry decentralized, spreading along the rivers beyond the original urban core, and improved transportation facilitated residential suburbanization, Pittsburgh's classes and cultures grew farther apart. This spatial separation, reinforced by western Pennsylvania's hilly topography and rivers, splintered the region into dozens of small, autonomous civil divisions, triggering its legendary fragmentation.⁹ The uneven distribution of public services, such as water, sewers, street paving, and lighting, underscored stark political and class inequalities. Environmental and health problems especially burdened industrial neighborhoods and mill towns.¹⁰ These inequities provoked sporadic political mobilization to bring about more satisfactory conditions for underserved communities.

Pittsburgh's neighborhoods and the region's small towns forged strong identities based on class, ethnicity, race, and place. They also encountered powerful centralizing counterforces. Huge corporations, such as the Carnegie Steel Company with its sprawling network of plants, mines, railroads, and Minnesota ore reserves, centralized operations and set new standards for industrial efficiency and output. In response, labor groped toward overcoming its internal divisions in order to field commensurate organizational power. Similarly, Pittsburgh's rapid growth, especially the annexation of the

South Side in 1872 and Allegheny City in 1906, cried out for a central government authority that could manage citywide infrastructure. A budding cohort of professional managers in business and government added to the separation of, and friction among, classes and local communities. These large, centralized institutions with growing bureaucracies threatened community control over schools and governance, even churches and charities. These forces contributed to a pervasive and almost innate distrust of outside authority that can be traced as far back as the "Whiskey Rebels" in the 1790s.

In sync with the nation's free market, individualistic, and political economy, Pittsburgh became a leading industrial metropolis. A few individuals grew unimaginably wealthy, and the city's East End, where Westinghouse, H. J. Heinz, Frick, the Mellon brothers, and other industrial magnates lived, became one of the most affluent neighborhoods in the country during the late 1800s. A comfortable middle class also emerged, but the largest share of the population lived with neither a secure nor adequate income. Mike Dobrejcek and steel laborers across the region feared the destitution that frequently accompanied workplace injury, illness, or layoffs. Clustered in neighborhoods fouled by a degraded environment, they lived in ramshackle dwellings and crowded tenements. Women like Elena Kracha and Mary Dobrejcek suffered the consequences of industrial capitalism as much as men. Largely excluded from the workplace, they were tasked with keeping the family healthy, bearing and rearing the children, and supplementing household income by taking on piecework or taking in boarders. Providing a bed and food for single men who labored in the mills, washing their clothes, and offering them a semblance of family life were the only ways many families survived, but added to women's already strenuous familial duties. In the struggle to remain afloat, the Carlinos and other immigrant, low-income families often depended on churches, charitable groups, and a marginally responsive government to ameliorate their situation. Voluntary philanthropic and reform efforts, occasionally supported by local and state government, experienced modest success. But whenever environmental, housing, and health reform proposals impinged on the conduct of business, they faltered in the face of powerful forces that privileged industrial growth and the assumed rights of private property.¹¹ Consequently, the problems associated with treacherous workplace conditions, poverty, and severely polluted air, water, and land challenged civic leaders throughout the twentieth century.

While economic and social inequalities diminished for European immigrants' children and grandchildren, racial discrimination stifled African Americans' prospects. Having fled slavery, Martin Delany and other African

Americans in antebellum Pittsburgh formed a small, viable, and free community, only to have the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law tear it apart. They slowly rebuilt their community after the Civil War. Beginning in the 1890s, a new wave of black migrants began making their way to the city. Those who came with education and expertise, like Cumberland Posey Sr. and Robert L. Vann, redefined African American success in business and journalism. But among them were many poorly educated, unskilled, rural southern folk. Tensions arose between long-term black residents and these impoverished migrants. The latter in particular suffered discrimination in employment and segregation in housing that made it difficult to escape poverty and find a reason to remain in Pittsburgh, which contributed to higher residential turnover for African Americans than most other émigrés to the city.

The centralization of corporate and financial power under the control of the city's elite, whose skyscraping headquarters downtown bore their names, increasingly distanced them from the working-class communities spread throughout the city and region. A growing rancor and distrust across the widening class divide aggravated the municipal fragmentation already hindering the cooperation necessary to resolve metropolitan issues. In short, the rapacious industrial capitalism that carried Pittsburgh to the front ranks of American industrial metropolises came at a terrible cost. It left the city and region economically and socially imbalanced, environmentally degraded, and racially divided, challenges that defined the region for the next century.

Ironically, this rapacious phase of industrial capitalism was already changing by World War I. With reformers, local government, and labor organizations nibbling at upper-class prerogatives, the elite's grip was eroding. A handful of powerful national corporations wrested ownership of the iron and steel industry away from them.¹² Carnegie Steel's demise exemplified this shift. Though the company was Pittsburgh's premier industrial corporation at the end of the nineteenth century, it and nearly two dozen other local iron and steel companies merged in 1901 to form the U.S. Steel Corporation. The industrial behemoth, the largest company on the planet, was headquartered more than three hundred miles away in New York City. During the twentieth century large national organizations with priorities that had little to do with Pittsburgh replaced other corporate decision makers. The process was uneven and slower than in several, often smaller, industrial cities, but no less painful when Pittsburgh corporations and banks were gobbled up. Of course, Pittsburgh businesses were not just victims of the nationalizing process. Some corporate and financial powers, including Alcoa, Gulf Oil, Heinz, Westinghouse, and Mellon Bank, had been investing and expanding into national and international markets as early as 1920

and did so even more aggressively after World War II. By then corporate Pittsburgh's branch plants, satellite offices, and investments in real estate developments were scattered from coast to coast.

The pre-World War I industrial metropolis was the product of more than 150 years of innovation, cooperation, and conflict. Those decades set the foundation on which Pittsburgh and the region—its citizens as much as its business leaders and their companies—would navigate the twentieth century. In terms of economic and population growth, Pittsburgh was at the top of its game, but the twentieth century was not kind to the city or the region. Increasing competition from other metropolitan areas, the Great Depression, and an overspecialized industrial base diminished the region's growth rate. Fear of long-term economic decline after World War II fostered a new, coordinated relationship between Pittsburgh's corporate leaders and local government officials to finally confront the region's persistent problems and diversify its economy. Despite significant success, especially in addressing air and water pollution, and national acclaim for its redevelopment program known as Renaissance I, Pittsburgh remained overly concentrated in its capital-intensive, pre-World War I industries and vulnerable to the harsh effects of globalization. At the same time, civic leaders cavalierly overlooked the damaging effects of urban redevelopment on low-income residents.

During the 1970s and 1980s overspecialization and globalization's irresistible pressure devastated much of the region's economic base, forcing it to turn away from its traditional industries. Unthinkable plant closures, the departure of iconic corporations, massive unemployment, racial strife, and steep population loss stimulated aggressive, partially successful redevelopment programs. But redevelopment and the shift to medicine, education, and high tech left a trail of winners and losers across southwestern Pennsylvania. Highly educated technology workers and professionals thrived, while former industrial and unskilled, low-wage workers floundered, many leaving the region forever. They held on to their emotional ties and clutched Terrible Towels as the Steel City became the City of Champions, but they could no longer support themselves in their hometown as industry contracted and their livelihoods crumbled.¹³

Still, Pittsburgh and southwestern Pennsylvania endured the twentieth century's tribulations. Pittsburgh's prospects for the twentieth-first century look decidedly more favorable than they have for more than half a century. Many attribute this persistence and transformation to the resilience and roguishness forged by the workers, entrepreneurs, and their families in the

cauldron of the nineteenth century's rugged, impressive, and unsympathetic industrialization. Others point to the financial resources of its legacy foundations, the innovative impacts of its research universities, and the increasingly attractive amenities of its recuperating environment. These positive attributes can be traced in one way or another back to its formative years. This book spans the creation of Pittsburgh through World War I.