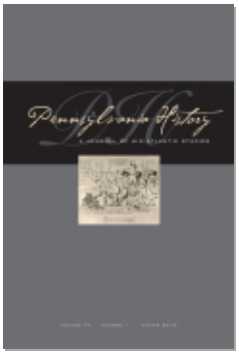
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A Panorama of Pittsburgh: Nineteenth Century Views (review)



John M. McCarthy

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need heroes like Lincoln and Emancipation and villains that include the Copperheads.

ROBERT M. SANDOW
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Christopher W. Lane. *A Panorama of Pittsburgh: Nineteenth Century Views.* (Pittsburgh: Frick Art and Historical Center, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008. Pp. 240. Cloth, $24.95.)

Recently, the Frick Art and Historical Center hosted an exhibition of all currently known nineteenth century printed views of Pittsburgh. In conjunction with that exhibit, the Frick has produced this book, which is a complete catalogue of all of the printed views included in its exhibition. Christopher Lane, the exhibit curator, is its author. The result of these efforts, *A Panorama of Pittsburgh,* is a visually stunning overview of printed views, and an informative read on the business of printing and engraving in the nineteenth century.

This book's greatest strengths are unconventional for an academic review. First, 135 prints are included in the book, many of which are in color. Normally, the inclusion of so many illustrations would almost comically inflate the price of a book, yet its cost is less than twenty-five dollars, far lower than most history monographs. Secondly, Lane's research of the origins of each print, and his discussion of the careers of many of Pittsburgh's important lithographers, is clear, concise, and interesting. Lane wisely avoids trying to contrive a narrative thread; his chief task was to describe in as much detail as possible each print throughout the nineteenth century. The result is a book that is invaluable as a reference tool for historians or anyone interested in Pittsburgh's early history. Especially interesting is Lane's coverage of networking; engravers frequently came to Pittsburgh from Germany, and worked for one firm before starting their own businesses as the city grew and with it demand for prints. A final strength of this book is what amounts to an extremely useful appendix at its back: a detailed list of all known printmakers in nineteenth century Pittsburgh, followed by a chronological list of all of the printed views displayed in the body of the book. Researchers should find these catalogs especially invaluable.

Collectively, the prints in this book evoke a Pittsburgh that is largely absent from public memory. The nineteenth century city was largely commercial (and industrializing), and the kind of industrialization that one generally imagines is of vast factories belching smoke into the sky. The vistas that many image-makers used to recreate nineteenth century Pittsburgh are familiar (often Mount Washington, for example). However, a look at the "Golden Triangle" during most of the nineteenth century sees commercial activity concentrated along the riverfront, not railroad lines. The iconic skyscrapers of the city are absent; church steeples dominate nineteenth century Pittsburgh's morphology. The result is a city that looks almost pastoral to viewers looking back on the past through a postindustrial lens. But Lane's narrative also includes familiar motivations as well. Demand for images of disasters, such as the 1845 fire that destroyed a large portion of the Golden Triangle was strong, as was the market for boosterish views of a prosperous locale. A singular strength of this book, then, is a visual reminder to scholars that cities are dynamic places whose built environment changes dramatically throughout time, but human appetites for visual stimulation transcend eras.

Readers of the book may be curious as to how the exhibit creators settled on the chronology of the nineteenth century. Surely, photography gradually replaced engravings and prints as the most accurate and least expensive way to capture images, but printing of this kind did not stop dead in its tracks in 1900. An explanation of this periodization would have been helpful. Scholars should not purchase this book and expect a comprehensive analysis of the business of engraving, or a critical analysis of how cities marketed themselves through the creation and dissemination of prints either. That task is (and should be) left to conventional monographs. However, *A Panorama of Pittsburgh* deserves a wide audience, perhaps wider than most scholarly books. The reproduction of the prints is first rate, Lane's narrative of the prints' authors is informative and readable, and the book's back matter is extremely useful. Academics will find it useful as a reference and interesting as a glimpse into the business of urban image-making, and general audiences will marvel at the images themselves. Both audiences will find themselves imagining a Pittsburgh that seems to have disappeared as its built environment changed dramatically in the twentieth century.

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