

BOOK REVIEWS

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Patrick Vitale, *Nuclear Suburbs: Cold War Technoscience and the Pittsburgh Renaissance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021), softcover, table of contents, endnotes, index, illus., 298 pp.

The 1960s witnessed not only the bulldozing of neighborhoods in the City of Pittsburgh under the guise of urban renewal, but also the exponential growth of Pittsburgh's eastern and southern suburbs as research facilities proliferated. Westinghouse became the leader in the development of nuclear reactors for naval vessels and power plants. This book details how suburban life changed — including the years-long struggle over school desegregation that resulted in formation of the Woodland Hills School District in the eastern suburbs. Included in the story is the flight of white children from privileged public schools seeking refuge in St. Bartholomew School in Penn Hills and St. Colman School in Turtle Creek; this aspect alone makes this work a fascinating read about the complex interplay of technical advancement, renewal, and justice. The author is a native of Pittsburgh's eastern suburbs and an assistant professor of geography at Eastern Connecticut State University.

Marion Amberg, *Monuments, Marvels, and Miracles: A Traveler's Guide to Catholic America* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2021), softcover, table of contents, illus., index, 480 pp.

Any Catholic seeking to escape from COVID isolation need only get into their car and start a vacation or pilgrimage to some of the 500+ holy sites listed in this new travel book. The penchant of the author (a freelance journalist and frequent writer on religious travel pieces) for the unique and unusual is on full display. Each site has its own story that includes architecture, religious history, artifacts, and the healing brought by prayer. Color photographs, Catholic trivia, websites, and other pertinent information are included. Sites in or near Western Pennsylvania include: Columbus Chapel and Boal Mansion Museum in Boalsburg (Centre County), The Ark and The Dove in Gibsonia, Old St. Patrick's Church in Pittsburgh, St. Anthony Chapel in Pittsburgh, St. Nicholas Croatian Church in Millvale, the Basilica of St. Michael the Archangel in Loretto, and Decker's Chapel in St. Mary's (Elk County), which was built in 1856 by German immigrants and is considered to be one of the smallest Catholic shrines in the world. All of the sites are places where American Catholic history was made. Happy trails!

David J. Endres, *A Bicentennial History of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati* (Milford, OH: Little Miami Publishing Co., 2021), table of contents, endnotes, bibliography, index, illus., 248 pp.

The academic dean/associate professor of church history at Mount Saint Mary's Seminary of the West in Ohio has written a bicentennial history of the archdiocese of which he is a

priest. This scholarly but readable volume presents selected vignettes of people and places that represent the Archdiocese of Cincinnati's distinctive history. The author's narrative is refreshing, complemented by a wealth of photographs. The archdiocese's historic relationship with Western Pennsylvania is accurately presented through the inclusion of Monsignor Andrew Lambing's published research and the groundbreaking work of Mercy Sister M. Eymard Poydock, who founded a cancer research institute at Mercyhurst College in Erie.

James V. Gambone, Jr., *Ride the Wild Pony and Other Stories from 57 Steuben Street — A Children's Book for Grown-Ups* (Crystal Bay, MN: Elder Eye Press, 2021), softcover, table of contents, illus., 92 pp.

These are the memoirs of the first six years (1945-1951) of a native of Pittsburgh growing up in the city's West End — which was a multi-ethnic and multi-racial neighborhood. The focus is the author's extended family, which includes his Polish grandmother (a numbers bookie) and an Italian father (a classic "don"). Many readers will relate to the rough-and-tumble life of this Catholic family in post-World War II Pittsburgh. The author is a teacher in the School of Public Health at Capella University and has a multi-media consulting firm.

John C. Bates, *The Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania: Its Origins, Establishment, Decline, and Resurrection* (Pittsburgh: Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 2020), softcover, table of contents, appendices, bibliography, 520 pp.

The histories of American historical societies that have been published typically take the form of brief journal articles. The book-length history of Western Pennsylvania's Catholic historical society is a welcome exception to the norm. Several years of research enabled a former president of the organization to write its history in order to preserve for posterity the efforts of a small but dedicated group of Catholics to preserve the story of Catholicism in Western Pennsylvania, and to provide a template for those in other dioceses who might consider forming a Catholic historical society. The book begins and ends with separate biographies of Monsignor Andrew Lambing, who authored the first diocesan history in the United States. Between the two biographical studies of Lambing, the author presents a comprehensive view of who and what shaped the religious and cultural lives of Western Pennsylvania Catholics from colonial times to the present.

Anthony Happy Lariccia, *Sundays with Sister SSJ: A Tapestry of Stories from My 395 One-Hour Visits Every Sunday with an Unforgettable 87 Year Old Nun I Had Not Seen in 46 Years* (Bloomington, IN: Archway Publishing, 2020), hardcover/paperback/kindle, table of contents, illus., 336 pp.

This is the charming story of an Erie Catholic who, in his

mid-50s, meets up with his former second-grade teacher from Sacred Heart School in Erie. The initial reunion leads to a series of weekly meetings over seven and one-half years that provide the text of this volume. The nun, Sister Marie Therese Decker of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania, is a woman with a life of experiences that are shared with the author and the readers. Her many stories make for a great read and provide a nostalgic flashback to life in northwestern Pennsylvania over many decades.

Nathan C. Walker, *The First Amendment and State Bans on Teachers' Religious Garb: Analyzing the Historic Origins of Contemporary Legal Challenges in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2020), softcover, table of contents, glossaries, tables, footnotes, index, 262 pp.

This work examines the twelve-decades-long history of government bans on religious garb by teachers in public schools. Pennsylvania was and remains at the center of this conflict. The debate began in 1894 when the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden, who had been dismissed for wearing habits while teaching in a public school in Cambria County (*Hysong v. Gallitzin*). The legislature responded by passing an anti-religious garb statute in 1895, which is still in effect today. The author, a constitutional rights specialist, examines the legal and policy issues in a comprehensive analysis — and challenges his readers to consider whether fundamental constitutional rights are advanced where restrictions impact religious practice.

E. W. Borgoyne, *Slovak Americans of Braddock, Pa.: The Soul of the Monongahela Valley* (2020), softcover, table of contents, illus., endnotes, bibliography, 166 pp.

This historical novel by a native of the old mill town of Braddock traces the story of three generations of the author's Slovak family from its Austro-Hungarian roots to the post-World War II period. This family history is representative of the hundreds of thousands of European Catholic immigrants who settled in Western Pennsylvania. It is a straightforward but uplifting account of the challenges encountered by immigrants and their descendants.

Vincent T. Ciaramella, Erika M. Ciaramella, and Enzo Ciaramella, *Greats in the Graveyard: A Guide to Baseball Players and Personalities Buried in Allegheny County* (Pittsburgh, 2020), softcover, table of contents, illus., bibliography, appendix, 178 pp.

Generations of Western Pennsylvanians have been passionate about baseball. This volume draws upon the local attractiveness of that sport and presents some of the “great” baseball players, managers, announcers, and even umpires from both the Major Leagues and the Negro Leagues who are buried in forty cemeteries throughout Allegheny County. Fourteen of these cemeteries are Catholic. The book is complete with grave photos and burial information. The creators of this volume are a teacher, a stay-at-home-mom, and a photographer.

Bill Fay, *The Church Musicians Guild of Buffalo: From Catholic Choirmasters to Church Musicians 1946-2011* (Buffalo: NFB Publishing/Amelia Press, 2020), softcover, table of contents, illus., appendices, bibliography, 103 pp.

This volume traces the development of the Cecilian School of Music from its origins in mid-nineteenth century Germany to Milwaukee and the establishment there of the Catholic Normal School, which produced hundreds of musicians for German-speaking parishes in the United States. Caspar Koch, an 1892 graduate, headed to Pittsburgh where he served as both organist at Holy Trinity (German) parish in the Hill District and organist for the City of Pittsburgh, giving weekly concerts at Carnegie Hall in Pittsburgh. His son, Paul Koch, continued the weekly concerts while serving as organist at St. Paul Cathedral for 40 years. Paul was responsible for the great von Beckerath organ in Pittsburgh's cathedral. This work provides a history of American Catholic liturgical music, while offering the foundational history of organ music in Catholic Pittsburgh.

Greg Czarnecki, *Gannon University* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Press, 2019), softcover, table of contents, illus., bibliography, 128 pp.

Bishop John Mark Gannon opened Cathedral College in Erie in 1933. The institution then evolved into Gannon College (later University), bearing the prelate's surname. This latest volume in the publisher's campus history series presents in pictorial and narrative form the history of Erie's largest Catholic university, which now boasts of a branch campus in Florida. The pictures, drawn from the university's archives, are exceptional. The author is a former university faculty member, member of the board of trustees, and president of the alumni association.

Steven D. Gardner, *History of an Allegheny River Town: Freeport, Pennsylvania*, rev. ed. (Morrisville, NC: Lulu Press, 2019), softcover, table of contents, illus., bibliography, 580 pp.

Freeport, located on the Allegheny River in Armstrong County, is the focus of this comprehensive history of a community that was laid out in 1797 when the area was still part of Allegheny County. The author devotes considerable space to the story of St. Mary of the Nativity parish, its school, its cemeteries, and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden who served in the parish school. While the decline in the community's population in recent decades has been reflected in a parish merger and closing of the school, this volume recounts the early years of Catholic growth and the continued Catholic presence in Freeport. The work features many historic photographs, maps, and charts. The author is a retired naval officer who did not grow up in Freeport, but his wife did; he devoted two and a half years to interviewing, researching, writing, and obtaining photographs that tell the community's 225-year story.

Nancy E. Martin (Jerome F. Coniker, ed.), *Servant of God, Gwen Coniker: God Leads, Faith and Trust Follow*

(St. Louis: Enroute Books and Media, 2019), softcover, table of contents, illus., appendices, bibliography, 334 pp.

Gathered Fragments has previously noted the cause for canonization of Gwen Coniker (1939-2002). This volume presents the definitive biography of the wife and mother of thirteen, whose life repeatedly brought her to Pittsburgh, where some of her large family lived. She and her husband Jerry (1938-2018) co-founded the Apostolate for Family Consecration, produced television shows for EWTN, and opened Catholic Familyland in a former seminary in the Diocese of Steubenville. Coniker's cause was opened in 2007.

Mark Holan, *His Last Trip: An Irish-American Story* (Tampa, FL: Mark Holan, 2013), softcover, table of contents, illus., bibliography, notes, 213 pp.

A native Pittsburgher and journalist has authored a biography of his grandfather, William Diggin, who emigrated to Pittsburgh from County Kerry, Ireland. Diggin became a streetcar conductor and met an untimely end aboard a streetcar near St. Mary of Mercy Church at the Point in December 1941. The author's meticulous family research presents a rich story of churches, people, and events that readers will recognize and warm to. This hard-to-find volume is available through Pittsburgh's Carnegie Library. A true delight to read — even if you're not Irish!

Thomas A. McCabe, *Miracle on High Street: The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of St. Benedict's Prep in Newark, N.J.* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), table of contents, illus., endnotes, index, 340 pp.

From the time of his establishment of St. Vincent Archabbey in rural Latrobe, Archabbot Boniface Wimmer envisioned the creation of satellite Benedictine monasteries in quiet rural areas. The one exception to his plan was the establishment of St. Benedict Abbey in the heart of urban Newark, New Jersey in 1868. In short order, the departure of the German-language speakers and later the white population left the Newark establishment as a fortress in the midst of an urban jungle with every known socio-economic problem. This volume traces the history of the monastery and its famed prep school, which overcame urban adversity to become a sports and academic center with a national reputation.

Monsignor Timothy P. Stein, *Where God Reigns: A History of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown 1911-2007* (Altoona, 2007), softcover, table of contents, illus., bibliography, 79 pp.

This volume by the now-deceased editor of the *Catholic Register* newspaper of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown chronicles the work of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth in that diocese for almost one hundred years: educational institutions, a home for the elderly, and Mercy Hospital in Altoona. The research and writing of the volume consumed four years in the life of Stein, who was a former chaplain to the order.

Lisa A. Miles, *Resurrecting Allegheny City: The Land, Structures and People of Pittsburgh's North Side* (Pittsburgh, 2007), softcover, table of contents, bibliography, index, illus., 275 pp.

The year 2007 marked the centenary of the annexation of the City of Allegheny into the City of Pittsburgh, with the former becoming Pittsburgh's "North Side." This volume, published in connection with that centennial event, draws upon the Allegheny City archives which had been located and catalogued. The author's Introduction acknowledges the limiting focus of her book. Alas, much of Allegheny's rich Catholic and ethnic history is not included — such as even an acknowledgement that Allegheny was once a separate diocese with St. Peter's serving as its cathedral church. There is note of St. Clare's Academy for Young Ladies on Nunnery Hill and passing mention of St. Boniface Church. Happily, other volumes tell the Catholic story of the City of Allegheny/Pittsburgh's North Side.

Valentine J. Brkich, *The History of Saints Peter & Paul Parish, Beaver, PA: 175th Anniversary — 1830 to 2005* (2005), softcover, table of contents, illus., 41 pp.

This small volume presents a history of Catholicism in Beaver County, focused on one of the earliest parishes to be organized in what would later become the Diocese of Pittsburgh. The author, a freelance writer, is a life-long resident and historian of the town of Beaver.

Mary Stanton, *From Selma to Sorrow: The Life and Death of Viola Liuzzo* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2000), softcover, table of contents, illus., endnotes, bibliography, index, 264 pp.

The civil rights movement in the United States has produced a number of martyrs — one of the most controversial was Viola Liuzzo who was shot to death by KKK members during the 1965 voting rights campaign for Blacks in Alabama. Liuzzo was a native of Western Pennsylvania (the borough of California in Washington County) and a Catholic. By the time of her death at age 39, she was living in Detroit with her husband and five children. Liuzzo's funeral was held at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Detroit with Martin Luther King, Jr., in attendance. More than 30 years after the murder, this volume is the first comprehensive biography of Liuzzo as a person — set against a backdrop of the civil rights struggle, the KKK, and J. Edgar Hoover's FBI. While a statue of Viola Liuzzo was erected in Detroit, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission recently rejected an application for a State Historical Marker to honor her in Washington County.