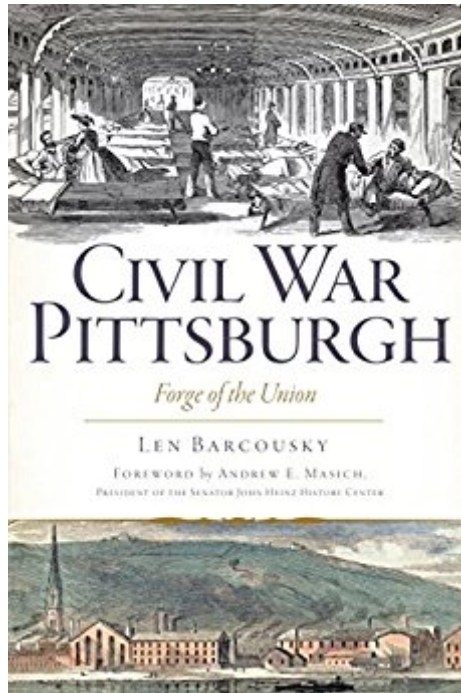




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Civil War Pittsburgh: Forge Of The Union (Civil War Series)



Synopsis

On Christmas Day 1860, the "Daily Pittsburgh Gazette "announced that more than one hundred cannons from the nearby U.S. Arsenal were to be shipped south. Fiercely loyal to the Union, Pittsburghers halted the movement of the artillery, which would have been seized by secessionist sympathizers. Over the course of the Civil War, Pittsburgh and Allegheny County provided both troops and equipment--including heavy artillery--in disproportionately large numbers. While no major battles were fought nearby, local soldiers and civilians sacrificed and suffered--the Allegheny Arsenal explosion in September 1862 left seventy-eight dead and was the worst civilian disaster of the war. Thousands dug trenches and joined militia companies to defend their city as others worked to support the wounded soldiers. Reporter Len Barcousky draws on the next-day reporting of the predecessors of the "Pittsburgh Post-Gazette "to craft a gripping and insightful view of the Steel City during the Civil War.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Poor, journalist-written account of Pittsburgh during the Civil War. This very short summary included

way too much about events far away on the battlefield and only skims the surface of what was happening in Pittsburgh. The only part of the book worth remembering was the coverage of the arsenal explosion. There is very little here about recruiting troops and very little on the economy of Pittsburgh either. There are no primary source footnotes anywhere. If anything, reading this book has motivated me to do more research and writing into Pennsylvania during the nineteenth century.

This book was very short and lacking any "meat." There seems to be a lot more information right below the surface what was presented. One gets the feeling the writer was facing a deadline and page limit, although the author does remind us every time either of the two newspapers are mentioned that one backed the Republican ticket and the other backed the Democrat ticket. In fact each chapter seems like they were written as stand alone essays, because there is a lot of information repeated throughout the book. While the choice of pictures was good, it seems like a map or two would have been helpful.

Very disappointing! This book was too short and lacked content. I found it to be very disjointed, and lacking in depth. I would not recommend it to anyone.

Certainly Pittsburgh is not in the top dozen cities one would name when discussing the Civil War. Author Len Barcousky however shows us that while there were no battles fought here and that no Confederate army seriously threatened the area the Pennsylvania city played a role in the Union success. While heavily for the Republican party and Abraham Lincoln, Pittsburgh did have a strong states rights wing. This difference is borne out by the city having two newspapers, one supporting each party: the Gazette was Republican with the Post being Democratic. They each spun events their way. Author Len Barcousky, an editor and reporter with what is now the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette had access to both papers and has used this archive in creating his interesting look at "The arsenal of the Union." The book begins with a visit from President-elect Abraham Lincoln in February 1861. The author tells the contrasting stories of Lincoln's visit to the city. The Post of course plays up the visit and the Gazette instead chooses to talk about the physical appearance of Lincoln. Other interesting stories include a telling of the tragedy at the Allegheny Arsenal, killing over 75 persons mostly women and girls. The explosion happened on the same day as the Battle of Antietam so Barcousky puts forth that the tragedy was under-reported due to the great loss of life in Maryland. He does make what I thought an unusual comment comparing the reporting of the destruction to that of reporting on 9/11/2001 in New York City. I'm not sure this was really the best

choice here nor do I see the relation of a terrorist attack to management and employee negligence. The late 1860 story of more than 100 pieces of artillery almost being sent south makes for good reading as does the story of POW Josiah Copley who compliments some southern officers for doing the best they could for the prisoners. The book wraps up nicely discussing the 1939 GAR meeting held in Pittsburgh and also a story of the last Allegheny County Civil War soldier dying 1946, Joseph Caldwell. With no notes and a small bibliography this is really more a book for a casual reader or somebody with a passing interest rather for somebody wanting in-depth information on the "Steel City" during the war. The book has many b/w illustrations though I think a map showing just how close Pittsburgh is located to what was the Confederacy would have been a nice addition. Overall though, still worth a look.

A nice collection of Pittsburgh related stories based on accounts from Pittsburgh newspapers

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