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## Review: 'Portraits in Steel: An Illustrated History of Jones & Laughlin Corporation'

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In sum, Bianculli's latest work is a welcome addition to the body of scholarship surrounding American railroading. This first volume of five, although able to stand alone, is an exciting first glimpse at what is to come. Although White's book is more detailed in the treatment of individual aspects of locomotive technology, Bianculli has produced an informative book that complements White. In addition, Bianculli discusses locomotive history and technology in a manner appropriate to a lay audience, a task not successfully completed until now. Thus, the *Trains and Technology* series should become a valuable resource for the expert and beginner alike.

Efstathios I. Pappas

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*Portraits in Steel: An Illustrated History of Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation.* By David H. Wollman and Donald R. Inman. Kent, Ohio: Kent State Univ. Press, 1999. ix+331 pp., illus., appendices, notes, bibl., index. \$70 hb (ISBN 0873386248).

Recent developments at the time of this review (2001) call for the addition of one final chapter to *Portraits in Steel: An Illustrated History of Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation*. Jones & Laughlin's (J&L's) successor firm, LTV Steel, is currently declaring bankruptcy. Consequently, numerous questions concerning the fate of its workers, the future of a once-vibrant industrial region, and the role of the federal government in industrial planning are subjects of intense private and public concern. This work, therefore, is most timely, as it places the controversial current event in historical context, and it does so in a most elegant way through inclusion of many photographs and illustrations.

The authors, David Wollman, a professor of history at Geneva College, and Donald Inman, a long-time employee of J&L Steel and LTV Steel, draw on ephemeral, textual, and photographic material located at the Beaver County, Pennsylvania, Industrial Museum. In doing so, they produce a well written and visually attractive work that modulates beyond local history, since J&L and its precursor and successor organizations were among the leading producers of iron and steel in America from the mid-19th century to the present. Further, J&L was often recognized as a technological leader, and its relations with organized labor, while far from exemplary, reflected one significant strand of American business thought and practice. Without doubt, the history of J&L is worthy of this book-length monograph.

Established in 1853 as the Jones, Lauth, and Company, the firm soon gained a new partner in banker James A. Laugh-

lin, while losing John and Bernard Lauth, immigrant artisans whose expertise had laid the fledgling company's manufacturing foundations. During the remaining years of the 19th century, family partners came and went, and the business changed its name to Jones & Laughlins (1861), Jones and Laughlins, Limited (1883), and Jones & Laughlin Steel Company (1902). Despite these and other far more complex changes, founder Benjamin Franklin Jones remained the company's heart and soul until his death in 1903. Under Jones's leadership, J&L followed the strategy of vertical integration, pioneered a sliding wage scale agreement tied to the price of iron, introduced open hearth and Bessemer Steel production, and installed numerous new mills. Steady expansion, including the construction of a new plant in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, positioned the firm for the increased demands associated with World War I. In 1923 the company was reorganized as a publicly owned corporation and remained a leading independent iron and steel manufacturer until 1968, when Ling-Temco-Vought Inc. gained controlling interest. A wholly owned subsidiary of the LTV corporation in 1974, J&L was renamed LTV Steel in 1988 after merging with Republic Steel, and it is this corporate entity that may well cease operations in 2001.

The strengths of this book, despite its authors' rather modest claims concerning the historical narrative, are many and its weaknesses, few. Corporate leadership, for example, is characterized by a series of well-researched biographical sketches that ends with Admiral Ben Moreel's retirement as chairman of the board in 1958. Labor relations, often stormy at J&L, were carefully traced; indeed, this purported "lite history," often delves rather deeply and analytically into this area. Descriptions of mid-20th-century processes in the manufacture of stainless steel, blooms, billets, sheets, strips, hot roll rods, wire, tubes, and beams make this book especially useful to the student wanting to learn more about the fundamental operations and equipment that were typically employed in this industry. With appendices that list company chronologies and details of equipment in operation at specific plant sites, this work satisfies those with a fine eye for factual details. And then there are the hundreds of reproduced company documents, personal and group photographs, advertisements, and memorabilia that tell the J&L story most powerfully.

That is not to say that this volume is without shortcomings. In particular, beginning with the 1960s, the authors' analyses depend heavily on Paul Tiffany's *The Decline of American Steel: How Management, Labor, and the Government Went Wrong* (1988) and John Hoerr's *And the Wolf Finally Came: The Decline of the American Steel Industry* (1988). This

overreliance on these two secondary sources was disappointing, given the authors' inherent advantages related to location and personal experience. For example, the inclusion of insights derived from oral histories or the obvious wealth of textual materials would have added breadth and texture. Additionally, far too much of their historical interpretation of recent developments in the company's history turned on the rather negative personal recollections of one former executive, Harold Geneen. And while early biographical narratives of men like B. F. Jones, George Laughlin, B. F. Jones, Jr., Tom Girdler, and Ben Moreel and their corporate contributions are praiseworthy, the discussion of the more recent post-1970 executives and their leadership, including William J. Stephens, William R. Roesch, and Thomas C. Graham, are thin at best. Indeed, entries on these and other recent executives included in the 20th-century iron and steel volume of the *Biographical Encyclopedia of American Business* (1994) generally were more analytical and complete but unfortunately not referred to. Finally, one wonders how appropriate it was for the authors to include considerable graphic material illustrating J&L advertising between 1958 and 1960, and a 1978 booklet entitled *Making Steel with Jake and Looey*. These two sections added numerous color photographs, illustrations, and cartoons, thereby increasing the price of this book to a rather expensive \$70 and thus limiting its distribution to a few select libraries.

One final comment about this book, which should not be construed as negative, relates to the short descriptions accompanying the many photographs contained in *Portraits in Steel*. It is convention to minimize descriptive labels. At times, however, the photographs and reproduced documents demanded more connectivity with the narrative text as well as explanation and exegesis. A number of these images were remarkable reproductions of the place, its people, their tools, and technologies. All of this came together in the making of steel, one of the most striking of manufacturing activities, both visually and in terms of scale. All too often, in my opinion, readers routinely skip over this revealing and valuable evidence from the past.

In sum, if one is interested in the history of the iron and steel industry, this work is a must read. Despite the shortcomings noted above, *Portraits in Steel* is exactly as advertised, rendering images of the men and machines that created and sustained the material world of iron and steel.

John A. Heitmann

*Moving People from Street to Platform: 100 Years Underground.* By Ray Orton. Mobile, Ala.: Elevator World, Inc., 2000. 77 pp., 132 b&w illus. \$49.95 hb (ISBN 1886536252).

The subject of this intriguing book is a brief history of the escalator systems employed by the London Underground during the 20th century. The first chapter outlines the origins of the Underground; the second provides an overview of escalator history in the 20th century; the next three chapters cover the "first" escalators up to 1920; and the remaining eight chapters trace the technological development of the escalator and its use in the Underground up to the year 2000. The author provides five "events lists" or cultural/technological timelines between key chapters. These are intended to place escalator design and use within a broader framework. The work has no footnotes or bibliography. However, the reader is referred to the Web site for the London Transportation Museum for additional material on the history of the Underground <[www.ltmuseum.co.uk](http://www.ltmuseum.co.uk)>.

Ray Orton is an engineer with more than 25 years of experience working for the London Underground. Thus, he is intimately acquainted with this topic and the intriguing cast of characters who, over the years, designed, installed, and maintained the several hundred escalators required to efficiently "move people from street to platform." The aim of the book is threefold: first, to provide a concise history of the development of the escalator as a distinct means of vertical transportation; second, to trace its continued development and use in the London subway system; and third, "that after reading the book, some of my [Orton's] enthusiasm rubs off, and members of the traveling public, can understand and appreciate the importance of the escalator to the Underground network" (p. 7).

It is the latter aim that begs the question: who was Orton's intended audience? On the one hand, the book is filled with information easily understood by a lay audience, including the events lists, comments on users' perceptions of this new technology in early-20th-century London, pictures of the Underground during World War II, etc. On the other hand, Orton's account seems directly aimed at his fellow engineers and other members of the vertical transportation industry. His descriptions of various installations and escalator types are sufficiently technical (and sufficiently concise) to only truly resonate with someone well versed in this technology. The various escalator types, copiously illustrated with photographs often taken from similar points of view, look more or less the same to the untrained eye. In fact, while perhaps an unfair comparison,