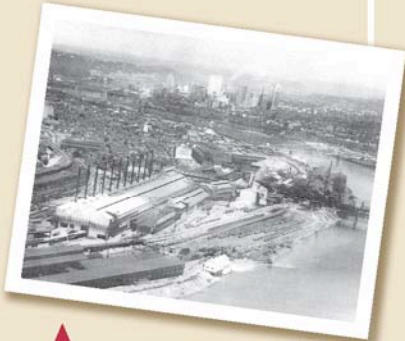


# The Valley of Steel

## BIG STEEL IN THE MON VALLEY

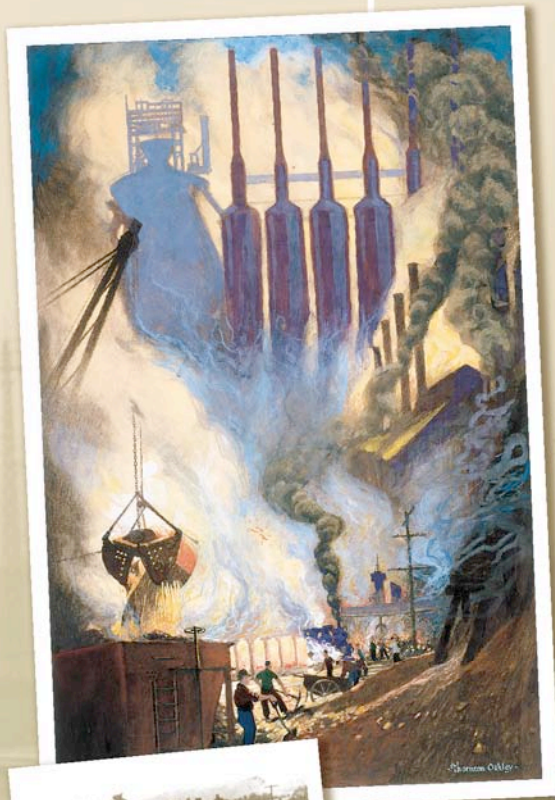


**Jones & Laughlin:**  
The Jones & Laughlin Works just above Pittsburgh had operations on both sides of the Mon and connected them with the Hot Metal Bridge. This bridge has been converted into the trail crossing over the river.

Courtesy of Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area

The great drama of American heavy industry played out along the Monongahela River (the Mon) from West Virginia to Pittsburgh for 150 years. Iron and steel, coal and gas, electrical and railroad equipment were produced in unprecedented quantities from the Civil War to the 1970s. The Mon remains one of the nation's busiest industrial rivers. In Braddock, U.S. Steel's modern state-of-the-art Edgar Thomson Works opened in 1875 and is the last great steel mill operating in the Mon valley.

Pittsburgh's "Big Steel" model of totally integrated production, from owning natural resources to distributing products, was copied all over the world. The conflicts between labor and management that arose in this industrial corridor, including the famous Homestead Strike of 1892, defined American heavy industry for decades.



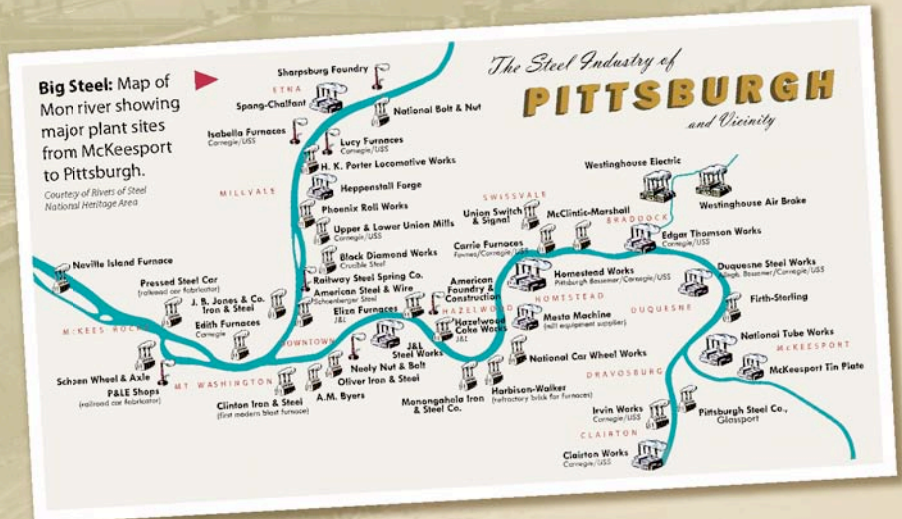
**Heavy Industry:**  
Massive steel production required an infrastructure of bridges, locks and dams, railroads, highways and pipe lines that mark the landscape. Giant structures are still seen in converted mill buildings, bridges, and trail side artifacts.

*"Mills" by Thornton Oakley.*  
Collection of Westmoreland Museum of American Art, Greensburg, PA.



**The Ward:** Generations of people grew up in the wards outside the mills. Worker housing filled the mill towns, and ethnic traditions survive in churches and fraternal organizations.

Courtesy of Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area



**Big Steel:** Map of Mon river showing major plant sites from McKeesport to Pittsburgh.

Courtesy of Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area

Barges lined up at a typical Mon river steel mill.

Courtesy of Sen. John Heinz History Center Archives



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