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Andrew O'Toole, "Sweet William: The Life of Billy Conn" (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press 2008), table of contents, footnotes, bibliography, index, illus., 350 pp.

Paul F. Kennedy, "Billy Conn: The Pittsburgh Kid" (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2007), table of contents, prologue, appendices, bibliography, illus., 224 pp.

Bill Paxton, "The Fearless Harry Greb: Biography of a Tragic Hero of Boxing" (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2009), table of contents, preface, appendices, footnotes, bibliography, illus., 252 pp.

These three works, all published within a two-year period, may be taken together. They represent the rich sports history of the Pittsburgh area and reflect for Catholics the fact that a number of our sports figures got their start either at Catholic schools or in institutions operated by the Catholic Church. Such is the case with boxers Billy Conn and Harry Greb, who trained at the famed Pittsburgh Lyceum -- a gym and club organized and built by Fr. Laurence O'Connell, the founding pastor of the Church of the Epiphany in Pittsburgh's Lower Hill District in the early 1900s. Designed to keep young men off the streets of the congested neighborhood, the Lyceum succeeded famously in providing training opportunities that were not available at all or within a reasonable distance. Conn, the "Pittsburgh kid", was to win the world light-heavyweight title by age 21; he sought greater challenge in the heavyweight division, challenging champion Joe Louis in one of boxing's all-time classics. Greb held the middleweight and light heavyweight titles and beat every Hall of Fame boxer he ever fought. Dubbed the "Pittsburgh Windmill", because of his freewheeling style in the ring, he fought despite blindness in one eye and died by age 32.

David Shribman and Angelika Kane (eds.), "Pittsburgh Lives: Men and Women Who Shaped Our City" (Chicago: Triumph Books, 2006), table of contents, introduction, illus., footnotes, index, 248 pp.

Pittsburgh's principal daily newspaper has mined its considerable newspaper obituary archives to produce a story of the "giants" who have made the city what it is. Admittedly selective, the stories ranging from a half-page to several pages resurrect many historical figures now lost to many except the elderly.

Of particular interest to Catholic readers is the work's inclusion of John Cardinal Wright, Archbishop John F. Regis Canevin, Father James Cox of St. Patrick Church in the city's Strip District, labor priest Msgr. Charles Owen Rice, and (and one of the few women included) Sister Michelle O'Leary of the Sisters of Mercy. The selected obituaries bear the date of publication; some are accompanied by a photograph. The work also includes the obituaries of a number of once-prominent Catholic laymen.

James W. Garvey, “St. Margaret Mary Parish: A Brief History 1956-2006” (Houston, PA: J. Pohl Associates, 2006), table of contents, illus., appendices index, footnotes, bibliography, 37 pp.

This prolific author and former president of The Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania has again enriched the parish histories of the Diocese of Pittsburgh by this work. This history tracks the foundation, by then-Pittsburgh bishop John F. Dearden, of the parish in the western hills of Allegheny County. Development of the Greater Pittsburgh Airport and construction of the Parkway West between downtown Pittsburgh and the airport resulted in the growth of Moon Township and necessitated creation of the parish. A history of the parish choir is also included in this publication.

“The Faith Community of Our Lady of the Angels, 225 37th Street, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15201” (Chattanooga, TN: Olan Mills Directories, 2003), foreword, illus., index, 42 pp.

This publication follows the standard format of the many church directories issued in the United States for Catholic churches: a pictorial presentation of the parish’s administrative team, the members of the many parish organizations, and the parish members (typically in family groupings, occasionally individual) – followed by the inevitable address listing of the members.

What is unique about this volume is its effort to tie together four formerly independent parishes in the Lawrenceville section of the City of Pittsburgh that were consolidated in the great diocesan reorganization of the late 1980s/early 1990s – St. Augustine (German) on 37th Street, Holy Family (Polish) on 44th Street, St. Mary (Irish) on 46th Street, and St. John the Baptist (Irish, with a significant African-American school population) on Liberty Avenue -- into Our Lady of the Angels parish.

“How Beautiful Upon the Mountains: An Illustrated History of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown” (Hollidaysburg, PA: Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, 2001), foreword, introduction, chronology, illus., appendixes, 112 pp.

This profusely-illustrated volume traces the history of the diocese that was the second to be carved out of the existing Diocese of Pittsburgh in 1901. The work opens with a reprise of the early history of the area, including the foundational work of Father Demetrius Gallitzin. It includes a chapter on the work of Pittsburgh native (of Holy Rosary Parish in the Homewood section of the City of Pittsburgh) Howard J. Carroll --- one of three priest-brothers, two of whom were elevated to episcopal rank --- who served as bishop from 1957 to 1960. He died prematurely while rushing completion of the magnificent diocesan cathedral. This beautiful history is a welcome addition to the many existing works, primarily focused on Fr. Gallitzin, which treat of the early years of the Diocese of Pittsburgh and its then-eastern-most counties.

Jerome Oetgen (ed.), "Boniface Wimmer: Letters of An American Abbot" (Latrobe, PA: Saint Vincent Archabbey Publications, 2008), table of contents, indices, 577 pp.

The letters of Benedictine Archabbot Boniface Wimmer (1809-1875), founder of St. Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe (Westmoreland County), Pennsylvania, provide important details about the early history of this immigrant German order in the United States, but also shed light on nineteenth century Catholic immigrants and Benedictine missionary activity among them. This volume commemorates the 200th anniversary of Wimmer's birth. It consists of translations and English-language originals of 200 of the most important letters that Wimmer wrote between 1832 (the year he entered the Benedictine monastery at Metten in Bavaria) and 1887 (when he died at the archabbey in Latrobe). Some of Wimmer's letters have been previously translated, and some (both untranslated and translated) have been published before. Those in this volume were selected from over 1500 extant letters in the archabbey archives.

"History of the Archdiocese of Miami 1958-2008" (Strasbourg: Editions du Signe, 2007), table of contents, foreward, illus., 200 pp.

Holy Rosary Parish in the Homewood section of the City of Pittsburgh has the unique distinction of producing a number of priests from its family membership – including one set of three brothers, one of whom became an archbishop and another a bishop. In the absence of a true published history of the Diocese of Pittsburgh subsequent to the 1943 publication of Catholic Pittsburgh's One Hundred Years, many Pittsburghers are unaware of the three Carroll brothers: Msgr. Walter Carroll who served in the Vatican during and after World War II, Bishop Howard Carroll of Altoona-Johnstown, and Archbishop Coleman Carroll, who served as Pittsburgh's first auxiliary bishop (1953-1958) and was appointed as the founding bishop of the Diocese of Miami in 1958 --- subsequently becoming its first Archbishop when Miami was elevated to the rank of an archdiocese in 1969. Archbishop Coleman Carroll died in July 1977. This volume – the usual lavish du Signe production replete with sleek text and color photographs – was issued to commemorate the Archdiocese's 50th anniversary of its foundation.

Franklin Toker, "Pittsburgh: A New Portrait" (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), preface, introduction, list, index, 512 pp.

This volume is an updated version of the University of Pittsburgh art and architecture professor Franklin Toker's original 1986 work, Pittsburgh: An Urban Portrait. It is a neighborhood-by-neighborhood, sometimes building-by-building story of the city. Receiving note are the decaying condition of the former Our Lady Help of Christian (Italian) Church in the city's Larimer section. Comments are made about the former St. Joseph (German) Church in the city's Manchester section, the former St. Walburga (German) Church in the East End, Holy Rosary Church in Homewood, Sacred Heart Church in Shadyside, the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse in Oakland and the former Mercy Hospital in Uptown, St. Benedict the Moor (formerly Holy Trinity and later St. Brigid) Church in the Upper Hill District, and Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church in Oakland.

Roman Godzak, "Make Straight the Path: A 300-Year Pilgrimage, Archdiocese of Detroit" (Strasbourg: Editions du Signe, 2000), table of contents, list, epilogue, illus, 160 pp.

This coffee-table book recounts the history of the Archdiocese of Detroit in color photographs and well-written text, provided by the archdiocesan archivist. The value of this volume to Pittsburghers is that it covers the history of two cardinal-archbishops tied to our diocese: (1) John Cardinal Dearden, coadjutor bishop of Pittsburgh 1948-1950 and bishop of Pittsburgh 1950-1959, who left Pittsburgh to become Detroit's second archbishop. He served there until his retirement in 1981 (d. 1988), and (2) Adam Cardinal Maida, a native of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, who became Detroit's fourth archbishop in 1990, serving until his retirement in 2010. This volume ably captures the development of parishes, and to some extent institutions, in the archdiocese during the period of those two prelates' administrations.

Gilbert Levine, "The Pope's Maestro" (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), table of contents, illus., acknowledgments, 466 pp.

The autobiography of this Brooklyn-born Jewish conductor of major orchestras both in the United States and abroad has a particular interest for Catholics in southwestern Pennsylvania. The book has a dual dedication – to both the late Pope John Paul II and to a survivor of the Holocaust. The book begins with the prescient observation that religion cannot be envisioned without great music – be that Jewish liturgical songs or Gregorian chant. Against that conceptual background, the volume lays out the relationship of Sir Gilbert Levine and Pope John Paul II. Levine became the first Western conductor of an orchestra behind the Iron Curtain, when he was selected to head the Krakow Philharmonic in 1987.

Collaboration on papal-sponsored concerts of reconciliation was intended to ease the pained history between Christians and Jews. The great Papal Concert of Reconciliation in January 2004 included the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, celebrating the 25th anniversary of John Paul's papacy – the first time that a U.S. orchestra performed at the Vatican.

Just days before that concert, Levine had led the Pittsburgh orchestra in a Reconciliation concert at Heinz Hall. Levine later conducted the Pittsburgh Symphony in concert at St. Paul Cathedral in Haydn's "Creation" as part of the cathedral's 100th anniversary. The role of then-Pittsburgh bishop Donald Wuerl in the preparation and execution of this musical cooperation is noted; the names of other Pittsburghers also appear in the work. This volume testifies to the religious faith of Pittsburghers and the musical talent of its orchestra.

Julia A. Upton, "Worship in Spirit and Truth: The Life and Legacy of H. A. Reinhold" (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), table of contents, illus., appendices, bibliography, index, 168 pp.

Mercy Sister Julia Upton traces the life and work of a priest whom many consider to be one of the most influential liturgists before, during, and after Vatican Council II. Born in Germany in 1897, the young Hans Ansgar Reinhold entered the famed Benedictine abbey of Maria Laach, but was ordained for the German diocese of Osnabrück. Initially involved in the seamans' apostolate, the young priest left Germany after Hitler's rise to power and Reinhold's encounters with the Gestapo. In 1938, Reinhold settled in Seattle, Washington. The first National Catholic Liturgical Week conference in 1940 marked his entrance onto the American liturgical stage. The year 1956 witnessed his departure from his adopted diocese after years of conflict with successive bishops, his diagnosis with Parkinson's Disease, and his encounter with Bishop John Wright (then bishop of Worcester, Mass.) who took him under his providential care and later arranged the priest's incardination into the diocese of Pittsburgh in 1961, of which diocese Wright had become ordinary in 1959. The author fairly portrays the priest's conflicts with the Washington state prelates as well as the brotherly support provided by Bishop Wright and Cardinal Spellman. This volume reflects Father Reinhold's themes of active participation, social justice, and liturgical development – and establishes how this prolific author and teacher established the blueprint for liturgical reforms implemented by Vatican II. This is a volume well worth reading for its insights into Vatican II, Catholic liturgical development, and the import role of Catholic Pittsburgh with respect to both the Council and the liturgy.

Stephanie Campbell, "Vision of Change, Voices of Challenge: The History of Renewal in the Benedictine Sisters of Erie 1958-1990" (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corp., 2001), table of contents, illus., appendices, footnotes, index, 461 pp.

A member of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, Pennsylvania, traces the enormous changes that her religious community underwent over three decades – beginning several years prior to Vatican II and continuing through the 25-year period that followed the Council's conclusion. Her straight-forward description of the dramatic changes that this originally German immigrant group of Sisters (established in Erie in 1856, just four years after their arrival from Bavaria and original settlement in St. Marys, Pennsylvania) experienced reflects the struggles the Sisters experienced, as well as their strengths and skills in meeting them. While the author provides a wealth of detail about the many initiatives undertaken as the Sisters moved into new ministries, the reader is uplifted by the strong religious spirit conveyed in the Sisters' individual and collective decisions and actions – particularly their openness and risk-taking. As this very readable volume makes clear, while the Erie Benedictines are a relatively small congregation, the Sisters have broadened their initial traditional work into a variety of independent ministries, with a central commitment to peace and its necessary corollary, justice.

“Welcome to Our Table: A Collection of Recipes by Saints John & Paul Parish, Sewickley, Pennsylvania” (Kearney, NE: Morris Press Cookbooks, 2010), table of contents, illus., index, appendices, 607 pp.

This attractive leather-bound cookbook is the latest in the long tradition of western Pennsylvania cookbooks. With this publication, Catholics take no place other than first when it comes to cookbooks! The work opens with a history of the parish -- formed in 1994 to address the exploding Catholic population in the North Hills. Founding pastor was then-Msgr. (later Cardinal) Daniel DiNardo.

Leaving history aside, the easy-to-use 3-ring binder contains hundreds of recipes contributed by parishioners. Organized by chapters (appetizers, soups and salads, vegetables and sides, main dishes, etc.), an easy-to-use index is complemented by Helpful Hints for each chapter. This reviewer suggests that the cooks among you start with the last chapter, “Recipes from Heaven”. With an array of choices, bring on the holidays and entertaining with great food! This reviewer would be remiss in not mentioning the consummate professionalism with which the chairpersons and members of the Cookbook Committee communicated with interested buyers of the cookbook. Madison Avenue has nothing on this group when it comes to first-rate customer service and communication. Bon appétit!

“Our Faith-Filled Heritage: The Church of Philadelphia – Bicentennial as a Diocese 1808-2008” (Strasbourg: Editions du Signe, 2007), table of contents, illus., bibliography, 264 pp.

This massive coffee-table-style book was issued to mark the bicentennial of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Western Pennsylvania was originally part of the then-diocese of Philadelphia until the formation of the Diocese of Pittsburgh in 1843. This work, lavishly illustrated with photographs and maps, is of interest to Catholics in western Pennsylvania because its historical account covers the early history of Catholicism in our area. In 1843, the former rector of Philadelphia’s seminary (Rev. Michael O’Connor) was named as the first bishop of Pittsburgh. This work is an impressive history, reflecting the long-standing commitment of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to the telling of its Catholic story at both the diocesan and parish levels.

“100th Anniversary: The Church of the Resurrection” (Pittsburgh: Church of the Resurrection, 2009), illus.

This book commemorates the 100th anniversary of the principal Catholic church in the city’s Brookline section. Established in 1909, the parish enjoyed a phenomenal growth for much of its history. Its original pastor, Fr. James Quinn served for 46 years. Father Quinn selected the parish’s name to reflect his own birthday, which occurred on Easter Sunday, hence the name “Resurrection.” The history recounts the sale of the convent and the conversion of the old school building into a 26-unit apartment building for seniors, known as Creedmoor Court. Historical and current photographs enhance the narrative. All parishioners who contributed to this publication may be justly proud of the result, as they already are of the rich history of this prominent city church.

C. Prentiss Orr, Abby Mendelson and Tripp Clarke (eds.), "Pittsburgh Born, Pittsburgh Bred: 500 of the More Famous People Who Have Called Pittsburgh Home" (Pittsburgh: Senator John Heinz History Center, 2008), table of contents, preface, illus., lists, indices, 304 pp.

The editors of this lavishly illustrated volume, issued to commemorate the city of Pittsburgh's 250th anniversary, candidly admit in the book's preface that given the thousands of prominent persons who originated in or were part of the city's rich history -- born here or bred here --- their selection of just 500 was as "arbitrary." Illustrated biographical entries are provided. The only Catholic clerical profiles are those of Fr. James Cox (legendary pastor of St. Patrick's Church in the Strip District) and Msgr. Charles Owen Rice (nationally famous "labor priest"). Catholic laity, although not identified by religion, include such prominent figures in a broad range of categories: newscasters (Bill and Patti Burns), actors (Gene Kelly), artists (Virgil Cantini), singers (Perry Como), politicians (David L. Lawrence), sports (St. Justin High School' graduate Johnny Unitas, Central Catholic High School graduate Dan Marino, and the Steelers' Rooneys), and judges (Michael Musmanno). Among the self-promoting sponsor profiles is that of the only Catholic institution included, Carlow University.

Sister Mary Angelita Molina, "My 15 Year Journey in Africa: A Memoir of Sister Mary Angelita Molina, OSF" (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2010), introduction, table of contents, illus., 114 pp.

This is the autobiographical account of a Puerto Rican native who entered the then-Sisters of St. Francis of Millvale (now the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities), who finally realized her calling to the missions among the people of Africa. In the late 1980s, she was invited by the bishop of the Diocese of Benin City in Nigeria to work among in one of Africa's poorest countries. For 15 years, Sister Angelita taught English to the people and developed the catechetical structure in 52 centers in the diocese. Builder of a school and a skating rink for children, she taught widows the art of batik/cloth dyeing so that they could develop small businesses. Despite bouts with malaria and typhoid fever, she continued her ministry -- but breast cancer led to her return to the Motherhouse in Millvale in 2004. Sister Mary Angelita fulfilled her childhood dream of missionary work in Africa; her story continues the Franciscan mission to world into the 21st century. Readers will find her story to be an inspiring account of the challenges she encountered with significant accomplishments in the face of those challenges.