



The Battle of Homestead is the most famous event in American labor history, and perhaps the most significant. Just after dawn on July 6, 1892, the battle erupted when locked-out steelworkers of the Carnegie Steel works at Homestead, together with citizens of the town, broke into the closed and fortified mill nick-named "Fort Frick" after CEO Henry Frick. On the bank of the Monongahela River, they confronted a private army of Pinkerton agents hired by Frick as they attempted to land and secure the mill. The battle was soon joined, and raged throughout the day with gunfire, burning oil, and cannon.

At day's end, the Pinkertons surrendered. Seven workers and three Pinkerton "detectives" lay dead, with others wounded. When the Pinkertons were led away they were humiliated and beaten as they passed through a gauntlet of enraged women, children and townspeople. The conflict marked a watershed in U.S. labor relations and casts a deep shadow to this day.

This year's National History Day theme of "Triumph and Tragedy" fits neatly into what happened over 125 years ago. Your research on this subject will reveal a group of workers with good wages and pride in their work faced with much uncertainty over negotiations with a company that wants to take away rights and demand more control over the operations.

Since this is a "Pittsburgh" story, it has been told in the Regional Competition over the years. There is a wealth of information to explore, and a unique opportunity to visit the actual site of the battle, the Pump House, still standing in Homestead. It lends itself to the categories of Documentary, Exhibit, Paper, or Website, and the most challenging category of Performance. An original play centering on the failed negotiations between Henry Clay Frick (for the company) and the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers (for the men) was presented at the Pump House in 2017 for the 125th anniversary of the battle.

The Battle of Homestead has been featured prominently in recent NHDs. A 2017 Individual Exhibit in the Junior Division, finished in 2nd place in the Pittsburgh Regionals, as it focused on the role of one union leader during the strike and subsequent decline of the workers fortunes. In 2018, with the theme of "Conflict and Compromise," the Battle of Homestead would prove to be a winner for three students in the Junior Division Group Exhibit. By taking the story and determining there was no compromise by Henry Clay Frick, they managed to stand out in a big way. After finishing in **2nd place** at Heinz History Center, they dug in and enhanced their presentation for the State competition and finished in **1st place**. Conducting even more research and adding to the visuals, they came in **3rd place in the National Competition!** These 8th graders worked hard, starting in October. They ended up with 11 Primary sources, and 27 Secondary sources for their exhibit! So, you see the story is there – all you have to do is all the hard work to make it come alive.

Besides all the many books written about the battle, and tons of online articles, there is a unique attraction to this subject: the actual site of the battle is still standing in Homestead. (That's a Primary Source!) The Pump House has been visited by numerous students as they conduct their research for an NHD project. Despite the sprawling Homestead mill being torn down in the 1980's, there was a concerted effort on the part of historians to preserve this important landmark. And as the commercial Waterfront Mall was being built on most of the site, the new battle was won and the Pump House lives on today.

Battle of Homestead Foundation Book List

Burgoyne, Arthur. *Homestead. A Complete History of the Struggle of July, 1892, between the Carnegie Steel Company, Limited, and the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers.* **1893** (reprinted as *The Homestead Strike of 1892*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979)

Demarest, David P. Jr., editor. *The River Ran Red: Homestead 1892* (1992).

Krause, Paul. *The Battle for Homestead, 1890-1892: Politics, Culture, and Steel.* University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992.

Miner, Curtis. *Homestead: The Story of a Steel Town* (Pittsburgh 1989)

McCollester, Charles. *The Point of Pittsburgh.* Battle of Homestead Foundation, 2008.

Serrin, William. *Homestead: The Glory and Tragedy of an American Steel Town*, 1993

Whitelaw, Nancy. *The Homestead Steel Strike of 1892 (American Workers).* 2006

Bell, Thomas. *Out of This Furnace: A Novel of Immigrant Labor in America* (with Dave Demarest, 1976)

Wolff, Leon. *Lockout.* 1965

Byington, Margaret F. *Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town. (1910) reprint:* University of Pittsburgh Press; 1974

Standiford, Les. *Meet You in Hell: Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, and the Bitter Partnership That Changed America*, 2005

Edge, Laura B. *Andrew Carnegie: Industrial Philanthropist.* Jan. 2004.

Skrabec, Jr, Quentin R. *Henry Clay Frick: The Life of the Perfect Capitalist.* 2010

Goldman, Emma. *Living My Life* (New York: Alfred Knopf, Inc., 1931)

Kahan, Paul. *The Homestead Strike: Labor, Violence, and American Industry*, (Routledge; 1 edition (December 16, 2013)

Carnegie, Andrew, "The Gospel of Wealth" in *Life in the Iron-Mills*, Cecelia Tichi ed. (New York: Vanderbilt University, 1998)

Brody, David, *Steelworkers in America*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960)

Ware, Susan, editor, *Forgotten Heroes: Inspiring American Portraits From our Leading Historians*, (New York: Free Press, 1998)

Pickard, Doug, *The 1892 Homestead Strike: A Story of Social Conflict in Industrial America*, (Thesis), 2007, <https://scholarship.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/handle/10066/1019>

Skrabec, Quentin, Jr., *Henry Clay Frick: The Life of the Perfect Capitalist*, McFarland Publishing, 2010

<https://battleofhomestead.org/bhf/nhd/>

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