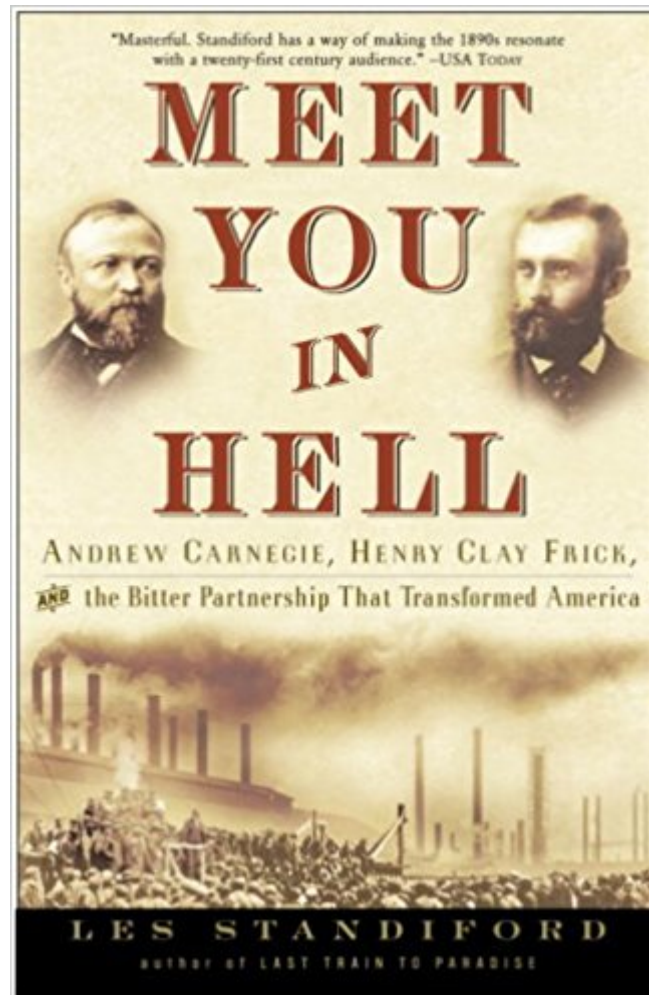


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Meet You In Hell: Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, And The Bitter Partnership That Changed America



Synopsis

Two founding fathers of American industry. One desire to dominate business at any price. The author of *Last Train to Paradise* tells the riveting story of Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, and the bloody steelworkers' strike that transformed their fabled partnership into a furious rivalry. Set against the backdrop of the Gilded Age, *Meet You in Hell* captures the majesty and danger of steel manufacturing, the rough-and-tumble of the business world, and the fraught relationship between the world's richest man and the ruthless coke magnate to whom he entrusted his companies. The result is an extraordinary work of popular history. Also available as a Random House AudioBook and an eBook

Book Information

Paperback: 336 pages

Publisher: Broadway Books; Reprint edition (June 13, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1400047684

ISBN-13: 978-1400047680

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.7 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (108 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #132,971 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #38 in [Books > Business & Money > Industries > Manufacturing](#) #44 in [Books > Business & Money > Industries > Industrial Relations](#) #393 in [Books > Business & Money > Biography & History > Company Profiles](#)

Customer Reviews

We live in a time where it's hard to comprehend the wealth, power, and influence wielded by men like Carnegie, Rockefeller, J.P. Morgan, and Vanderbilt. Folks like Bill Gates and Warren Buffett carry only a whisper of the Goliath stature that was attained by a select few in the 1800s. "Meet You in Hell" is Les Standiford's telling of the story of the rise and fall of a relationship between two such men, Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick. Frick, the lesser known of the two, created an empire of his own in coke production (the steel-making input, not the soda or the drug) before being swallowed up by Carnegie Steel and agreeing to run that entire operation for Carnegie. Carnegie was a man accustomed to getting his own way, but his new employee Frick possessed his own ideas on how a company should be run. The differences between the two surfaced occasionally early in their relationship, and were tested further by the Homestead Mill strike in 1890s which

ended in the deaths of many strikers and Pinkerton detectives. This conflict is the true focus of this book, but interestingly doesn't come across as the watershed in the relationship between Carnegie and Frick that Standiford really wants it to be for the sake of his book. That honor comes later, when Frick tries to trick Carnegie into selling his company to a secret group of speculators with a terrible reputation on Wall Street. This book is still quite an interesting story about the Homestead strike, labor relations in the industrial age, and the relationship between two titans of industry, but the stories don't mesh the way Standiford sets you up to believe they will.

The dramatic centerpiece of Les Standiford's dual biography of Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick is the bloody clash between striking steelworkers and imported Pinkerton "detectives" at Carnegie's Homestead, PA plant in early July of 1892. Fourteen people were killed in that battle, and many more injured. Homestead may have been the signature event in the intertwined careers of Carnegie and Frick, but Standiford's book makes clear that it was not the reason that their close partnership turned to bitter enmity and mutual recrimination. Their breakup came seven or eight years later over a disagreement concerning a proposed sale of the giant Carnegie firm to outside investors whose credentials and intentions were suspect. Thus, while Standiford's account of the week-long Homestead crisis is cinematically vivid, it does not by itself tell the whole story of the two men's lives. Both were born dirt poor (Carnegie in Scotland, Frick in western Pennsylvania) and rose through the industrial ranks through their own strong ambition and financial cunning. They joined forces only when they found they needed each other. Carnegie was the top man, Frick the on-site chief operating officer. Carnegie at least publicly claimed to support working men and their right to organize, but Frick was an unapologetic anti-union hardliner. When Homestead exploded in gunfire and mob violence, Carnegie, vacationing back in Scotland, gave Frick full support for whatever means he adopted to suppress the strikers and keep the company sound. Only after it was all over and the dead had been counted did Carnegie express some mild criticism of Frick's tactics.

This is well-covered territory for any avid student of steel's history: the rise of two great pillars of the steel industry, the focal event based on the bloody Homestead strike, and the increasingly bitter demise in the relationship between Frick and Carnegie that followed. The two preceding reviews provide excellent insight as to the value of the book and the character of the men. Homestead produced, in final count, thirty-one deaths. The original clash, in early July 1892, just outside of Pittsburgh, killed a small number of men. One Pinkerton guard brashly shot himself in the head in

front of his colleagues stuck in the barge rather than fall into the hands of the strikers. Carnegie -- by most accounts -- felt betrayed by Frick's hard-nosed handling of the Homestead crisis. Carnegie insisted, especially after the deaths of Pinkerton "police" and striking workers -- that he would have just let the plant stay idle, wait the strikers out, and offer them no reason to fight. Carnegie wanted to be loved; he dreamed that a worker might even say, "If only you had been here, this would not have happened." Frick would not have any of this. He had firm, well-entrenched ideas not only about his rights as a capitalist, but also in his skills and obligations as Carnegie's chief operating officer. The book does best at contrasting these two men. In some respects they were very much alike. "Ruthless" is not too harsh a word to describe the manner in which they cut costs, built their networks of industries, and squeezed out minor players. They were the masters of the dominant network of the day, based on steel and rail. As entrepreneurs Carnegie may still have not found an equal, not even in Bill Gates, although there are some parallels in the lives and methods of the two men.

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