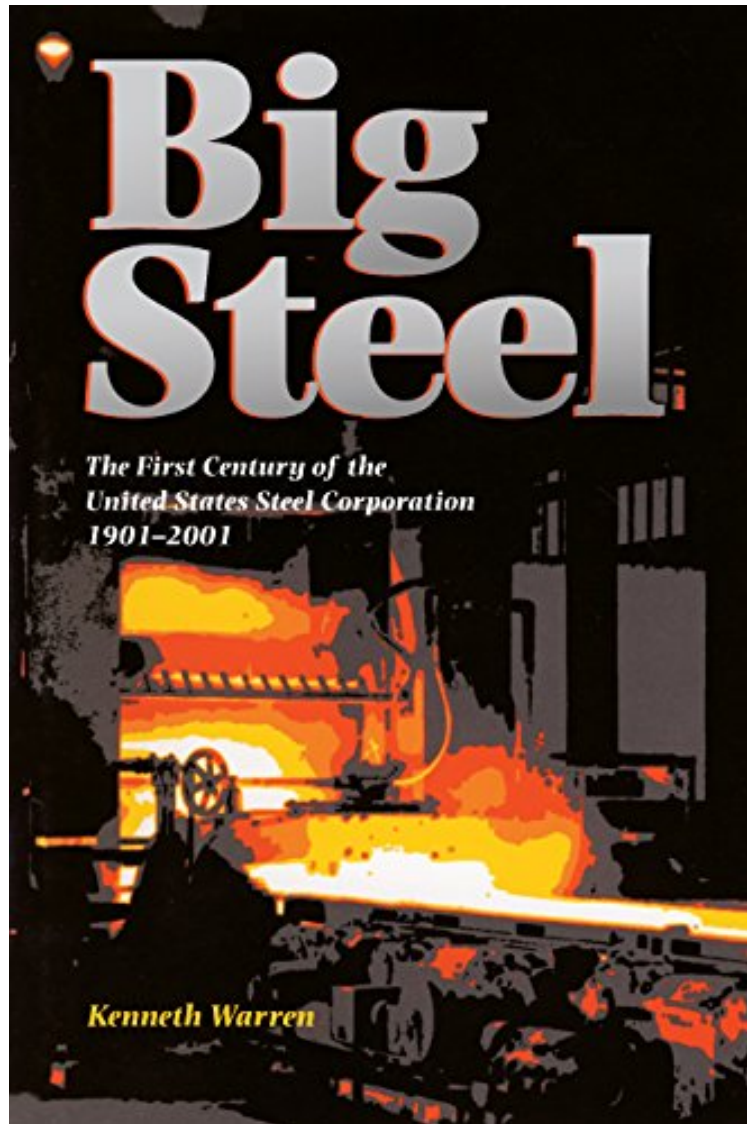


Big Steel: The First Century of the United States Steel Corporation 1901-2001

Kenneth Warren

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Kenneth Warren : Big Steel: The First Century of the United States Steel Corporation 1901-2001 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Big Steel: The First Century of the United States Steel Corporation 1901-2001:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good historyBy FredI spent over 32 years in steel in Cleveland and enjoyed reading someone else's view point on why the industry failed and how it grew in another area of the country. It explained a lot we didn't see from where I stood.10 of 13 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating,

highly commended "corporate biography" By Midwest Book Review When the United States Steel Corporation was formed in 1901 it was the world's largest industrial organization producing two-thirds of the steel used in building America's cities, and with a job roster of more than one million individuals over the course of the following century. Big Steel is the story of US Steel over ten decades and how, although it dominated the industry for decades, was still subject to market forces and unexpected handicaps. In Big Steel, author Kenneth Warren draws upon the USX archives to provide an informative, fascinating, highly commended "corporate biography" and along the way explores how labor relations affected company management and strategy, how and why US Steel gradually declined; and how drastic measures taken in the 1980s and 1990s lead to a reemergence of this quintessential American company into once again establishing itself as a leader in steel-making efficiency.³ of 6 people found the following review helpful. Slow Read By Jeffrey Urdan Extremely well-researched, and virtually unreadable. This book is a never ending stream of figures on steel tonnages and plant openings/closings. The author provides little in the way of explanation of the vast amount of industry jargon in the book (If you already know what is different and interesting about Continuous Casting, Finishing Capacity, Open Hearth vs. other blast furnace types, etc. this probably won't bother you). There are some interesting story lines relating to the personalities, changes in American society, and the arc of the corporation as an entity over 100 years, but they are lost in the endless forest of statistics and the repetitive theme that the corporation was too big for its own good.

At its formation in 1901, the United States Steel Corporation was the earth's biggest industrial corporation, a wonder of the manufacturing world. Immediately it produced two thirds of America's raw steel and thirty percent of the steel made worldwide. The behemoth company would go on to support the manufacturing superstructure of practically every other industry in America. It would create and sustain the economies of many industrial communities, especially Pittsburgh, employing more than a million people over the course of the century. A hundred years later, the U.S. Steel Group of USX makes scarcely ten percent of the steel in the United States and just over one and a half percent of global output. Far from the biggest, the company is now considered the most efficient steel producer in the world. What happened between then and now, and why, is the subject of Big Steel, the first comprehensive history of the company at the center of America's twentieth-century industrial life. Granted privileged and unprecedented access to the U.S. Steel archives, Kenneth Warren has sifted through a long, complex business history to tell a compelling story. Its preeminent size was supposed to confer many advantages to U.S. Steel—economies of scale, monopolies of talent, etc. Yet in practice, many of those advantages proved illusory. Warren shows how, even in its early years, the company was out-maneuvered by smaller competitors and how, over the century, U.S. Steel's share of the industry, by every measure, steadily declined. Warren's subtle analysis of years of internal decision making reveals that the company's size and clumsy hierarchical structure made it uniquely difficult to direct and manage. He profiles the chairmen who grappled with this "lumbering giant," paying particular attention to those who long ago created its enduring corporate culture—Charles M. Schwab, Elbert H. Gary, and Myron C. Taylor. Warren points to the way U.S. Steel's dominating size exposed it to public scrutiny and government oversight—a cautionary force. He analyzes the ways that labor relations affected company management and strategy. And he demonstrates how U.S. Steel suffered gradually, steadily, from its paradoxical ability to make high profits while failing to keep pace with the best practices. Only after the drastic pruning late in the century—when U.S. Steel reduced its capacity by two-thirds—did the company become a world leader in steel-making efficiency, rather than merely in size. These lessons, drawn from the history of an extraordinary company, will enrich the scholarship of industry and inform the practice of business in the twenty-first century.