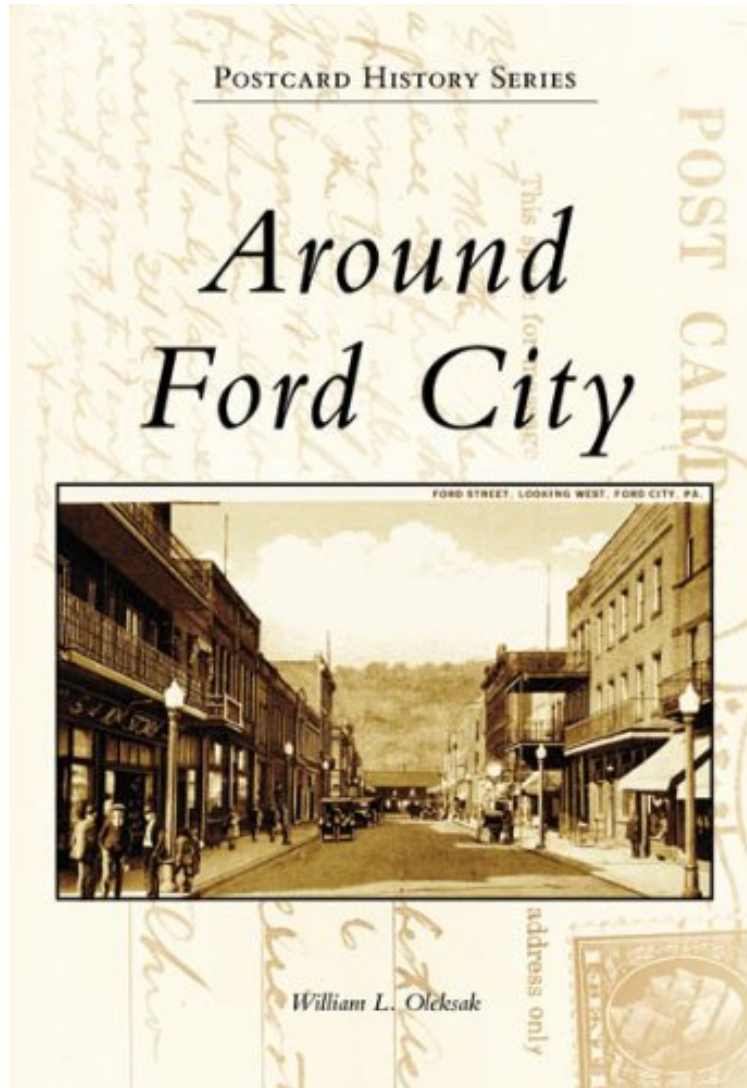


[Download] Around Ford City (Postcard History: Pennsylvania)

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William L. Oleksak

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Ford City was once known as one of the fastest-growing communities in Pennsylvania. The Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company and the Ford China Company, both established by John B. Ford, made this town the destination of many United States citizens, as well as European immigrants searching for a new life of employment and prosperity. The vintage postcards in *Around Ford City* reflect the essence of this hardworking, proud, ethnic community. The people, along with the factories, hotels, churches, and many homes, have grown together over generations to form the spirit of Ford City.

Publication: Valley News Dispatch Article Title: Alle-Kiski Valley authors represent range of writing Author: Tamara Simpson Girardi Date: 11/17/2008 Alle-Kiski Valley authors represent a range of nonfiction and fiction. William Oleksak has collected Ford City postcards for 25 years and has organized them into a book to commemorate his hometown. Gary Link is telling the historical stories of 1840s Pittsburgh in a series of historical crime novels, his latest focusing on the Underground Railroad. Ryan Lee Klingensmith has written a book to be used as a training tool in residential treatment facilities for children and teens stricken with mental illness. And John Heilman has written about a boy who refuses to accept propaganda. Instead, he's seeking truth for his family and himself. The Alle-Kiski Valley writing community remains prolific. Here's a glimpse at four of the latest local offerings. 'Jason and the Astronauts' John Heilman sees the journey of his main character similar to that of Jason and the Argonauts from Greek mythology. In the Greek version, Jason is searching for the Golden Fleece. Success will mean he is the rightful king. In Heilman's version, Jason is on the quest for truth, something he can believe in a world of propaganda and weakness. "This book addresses every area where traditional American values are under attack, but this kid just doesn't buy it," says Heilman, of South Buffalo Township. Heilman describes the book as two stories. The first details a trip Jason's father and uncle take to Brazil to investigate a radio signal that suggested something was moving toward the Earth in that location. It turns out to be an ameteor, but the two men return home changed because of a mysterious encounter. Jason is not pleased with the way his father and uncle are behaving at home, and through his search for truth in classrooms where teachers profess their own agendas and in the school hallways where his friends succumb to drugs, he is able to solve the mystery. Heilman, who practiced internal medicine under his middle name, Daniel, in Tarentum, retired in 2003 and has been working on "Jason and the Astronauts" for the past two years. "I've tried to cover so much in this book," he says. "It's very ambitious, but it's about life. You've got to keep your mind clean, keep drugs out of your mind, and be skeptical. You can't believe everything you hear." The book is available online. 'Quiet Room Charlee' Seventeen-year-old Charlee has spent a lot of his time in residential treatment centers and has met with several diagnoses. The most recent is post-traumatic stress disorder. But as the protagonist of Ryan Lee Klingensmith's "Quiet Room Charlee" is nearing age 18, he wants to become free of his medication. Klingensmith, who has a master's degree in psychology from Pacific Western and is completing a master's in community counseling from IUP, says when he mentions his job to people, they don't even realize residential treatment centers exist. He's written the book as a guide for staff working in these places, but also to inform people what so many children are going through. "There are a lot of traumatized kids out there that are going through a lot," he says. "And they end up in a lot of odd behaviors. People attribute them as bad kids when they really are traumatized kids." (The treatment center) is the last chance for them to be successful." Klingensmith has experience working in an inpatient psychiatric hospital, Torrance State Hospital and residential treatment centers. The book was published through Publish America and will be used in college psychology classrooms at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and Chatman College in California. It's also being used at two residential agencies as a training resource. "Quiet Room Charlee" is available online at [www.ryanleeklingensmith.com](#) or through the author's Web site, [www.ryanleeklingensmith.com](#). 'The Throughway' The mid-19th century Pittsburgh constable John Parker returns in Gary Link's third historical crime novel, "The Throughway." The latest installment in the series has Parker facing an order to capture a group of runaway slaves. He finds himself in a difficult position as he realizes the network of residents who are part of the Underground Railroad. One of them is very important to him. Competing with Parker is a slave capturer who prefers to return the dead bodies of slaves back to the south. "(John Parker is) somebody who's really stricken by the death of his wife," Link explains the backstory of the earlier books. "One thing that helps him come out of that is that he gets a new job as Pittsburgh's constable. He clings to this job through his personal tragedy to bring purpose back to his life and help him climb out of depression. "His duty is very important to him." Link, of South Buffalo Township, includes historically accurate details of the city in his books, including a visit from Frederick Douglass. It highlights Pittsburgh's participation in the anti-slavery movement. Link's next book, which will focus around the 1848 cotton factory riots in Allegheny City. He expects to have it out in 2010. The records manager at a Pittsburgh company called Astorino, an architectural and engineering firm, Link gives talks at local libraries and teacher organizations. He's working on a teaching resource for the first three books that he plans to distribute free of charge. "The Throughway" can be purchased at any online bookstore and at Borders in Pittsburgh Mills Mall or by e-mailing the author at theburntdistrict@hotmail.com. 'Around Ford City' Ford City resident William Oleksak wanted to share the postcards of the borough he's been collecting for the past 25 years. As part of an Arcadia publishing local history book, he organized his post cards into topics such as industry, Ford Street, a city of churches, parks, recreation and sports. "It's mostly pictures," he says. "But people like that, because they like to look at pictures."

But the pictures and captions together tell the story of a proud, booming river town. One picture in the People and Places chapter shows a scene of a massive crowd in 1944 giving a group of World War II soldiers a solemn and supportive goodbye as they go to fight for their country. The early pages of the book feature several images of PPG, the lifeblood of the community before it closed in 1990. "PPG was the mainstay in our town," Oleksak says. "When it closed down, it took the heart out of our community. There's a lot of young people who don't realize what that empty field by the bridge was, where they tore it down. They don't realize how important it was to our town." Oleksak says he has no intention to publish again. He's just happy to share his collection with his other residents who love Ford City and with the younger generation, many of which he taught as a fifth grade science teacher at Lenape Elementary. He retired in 2006. "A couple of ex-students took the book and went all over Ford City, looking where things used to be," he says. "And they looked at the buildings that are used for different things to see what they were used for back in the heyday." The book is available in Ford City at Klingensmith's, Janny's Hallmark, Marcia's Garden, and Lindy's Candy Cupboard, in Kittanning at the Christian Bookstore and Kittanning news, and online at .com. About the Author William L. Oleksak, the son of a glassworker, is a retired teacher and a lifelong resident of Ford City. He graduated from Ford City High School and Clarion University of Pennsylvania with a master's degree in elementary education. He has spent the last 25 years collecting memorabilia and postcards from his hometown.