

**The History of Sparrows Point:**

**An Epic Civilization**

**by**

**Bill Barry**

**Historical Society of Baltimore County**

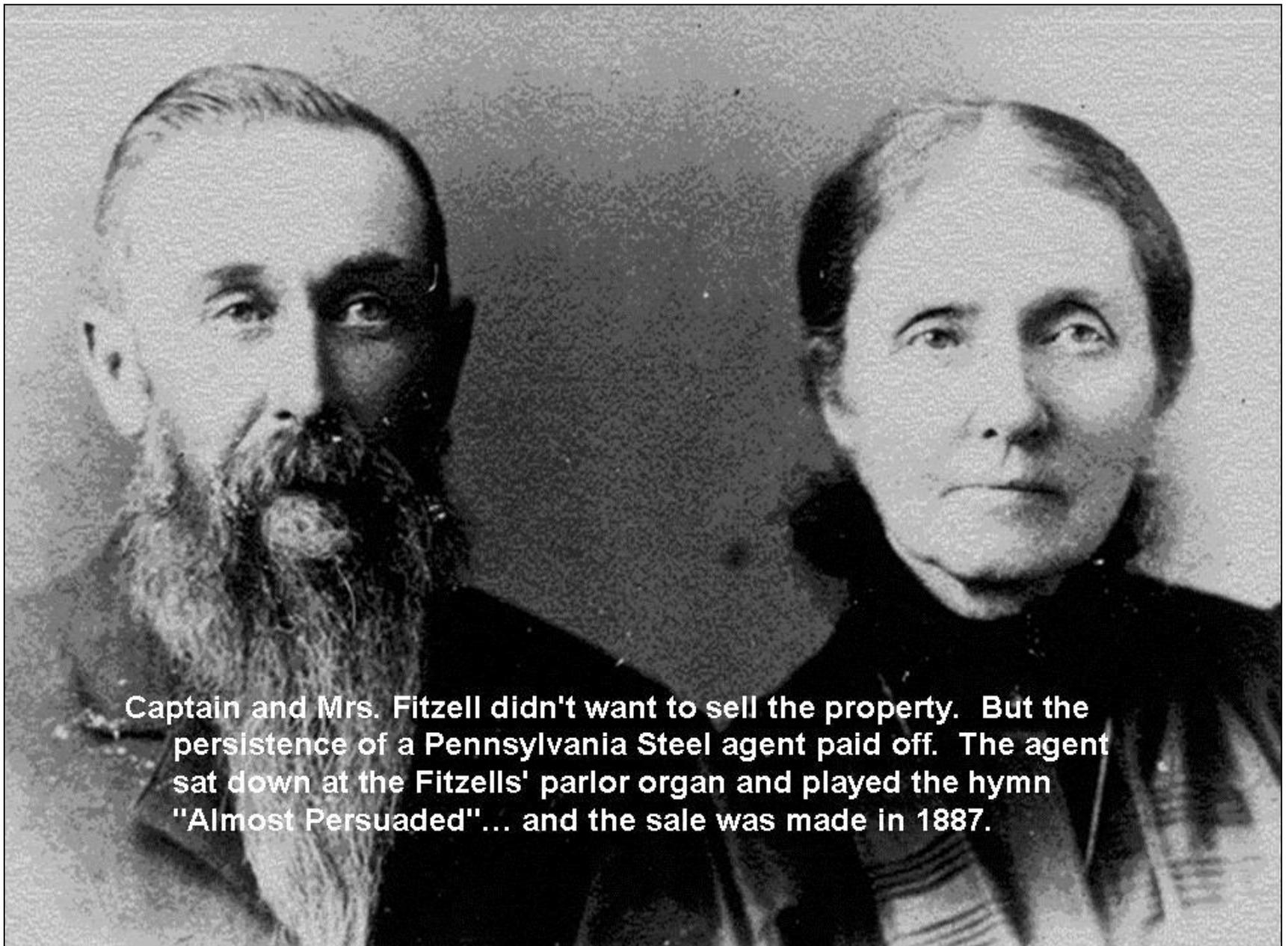
**2014**





The Sparrows Point cemetery was located behind I Street on the North Side of town near the garages. Probably the Trotten family burial place, it contained the graves of

- John Trotten, who died in 1809 at age 38,
- Sarah Trotten, who died in 1856 at age 68,
- James Trotten, who died in 1804 at the age of 9 months
- Thomas Long, who died in 1823 at age 16.

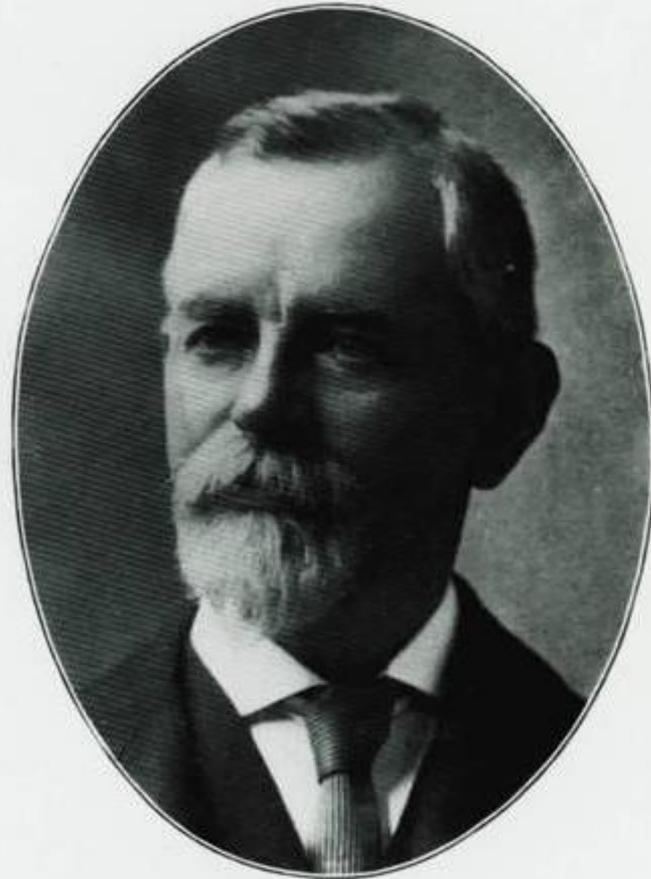


Captain and Mrs. Fitzell didn't want to sell the property. But the persistence of a Pennsylvania Steel agent paid off. The agent sat down at the Fitzells' parlor organ and played the hymn "Almost Persuaded"... and the sale was made in 1887.

IRON AND STEEL AND MACHINERY



FREDERICK W. WOOD,  
Born, Lowell, Mass., March 16th, 1857.  
President, Maryland Steel Company.

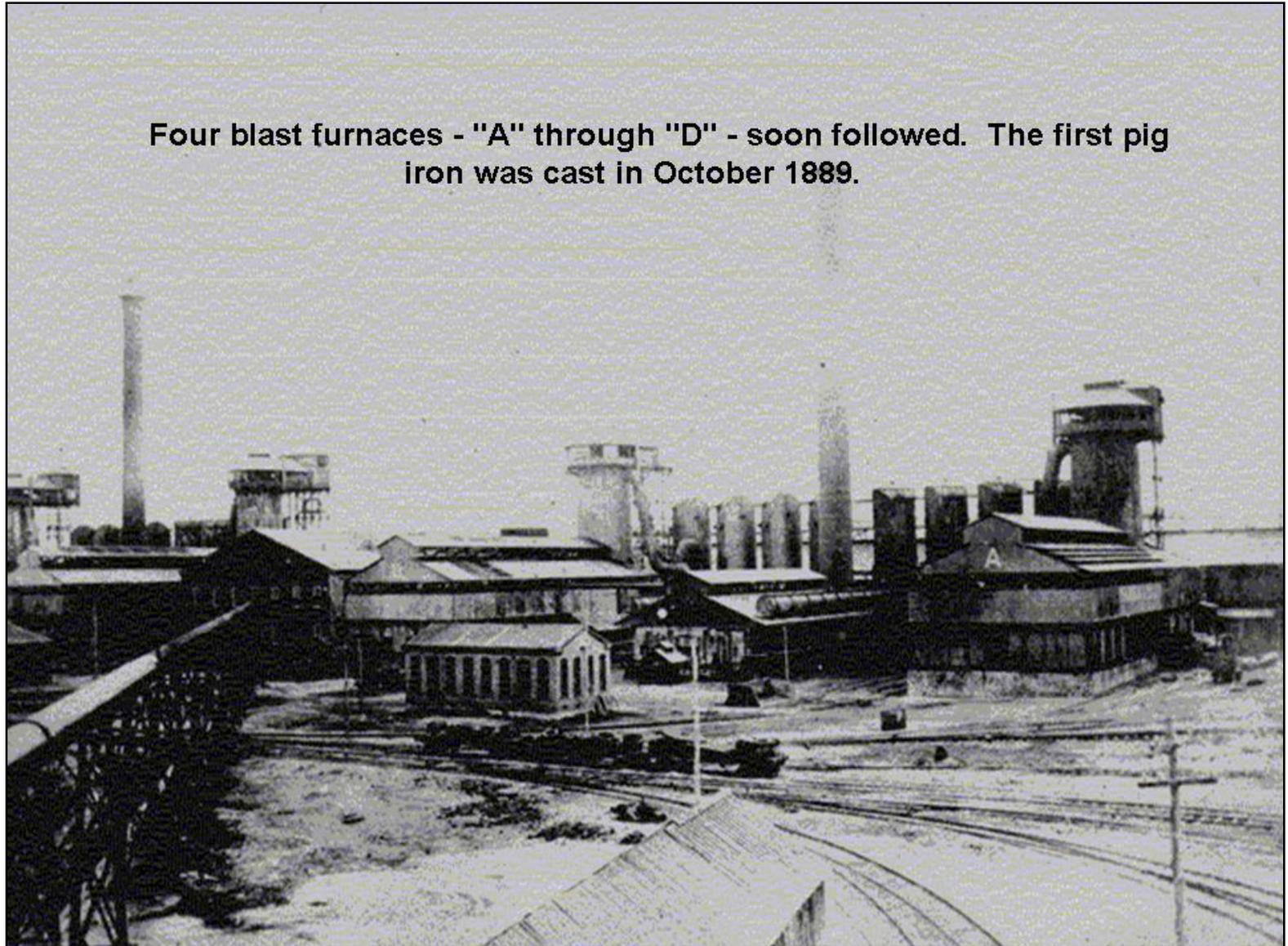


RUFUS K. WOOD,  
Born, Lowell, Mass., November 8th, 1818.  
General Agent, Maryland Steel Company. Founder  
of Public School Kindergartens in  
Maryland, 1872.

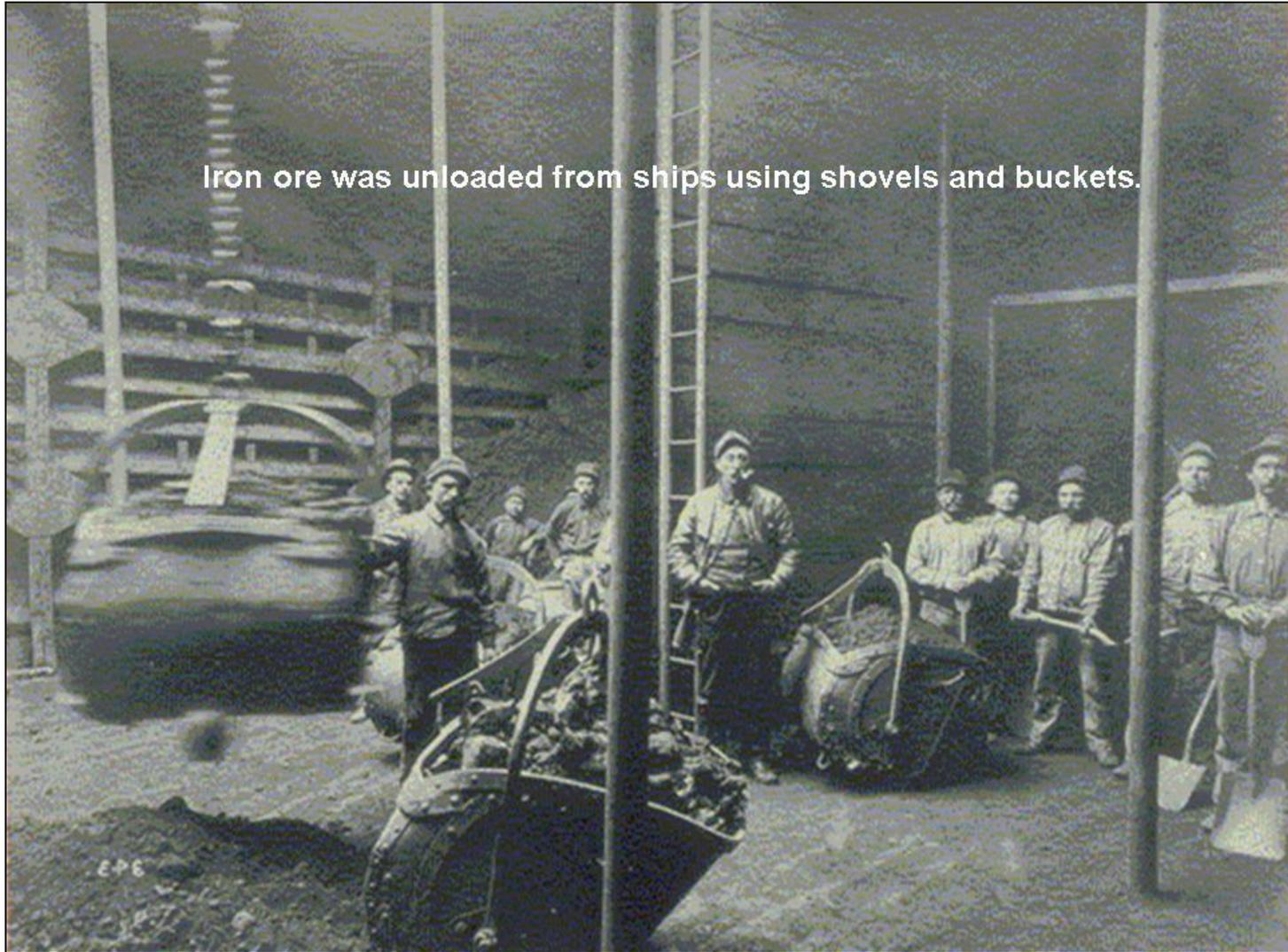


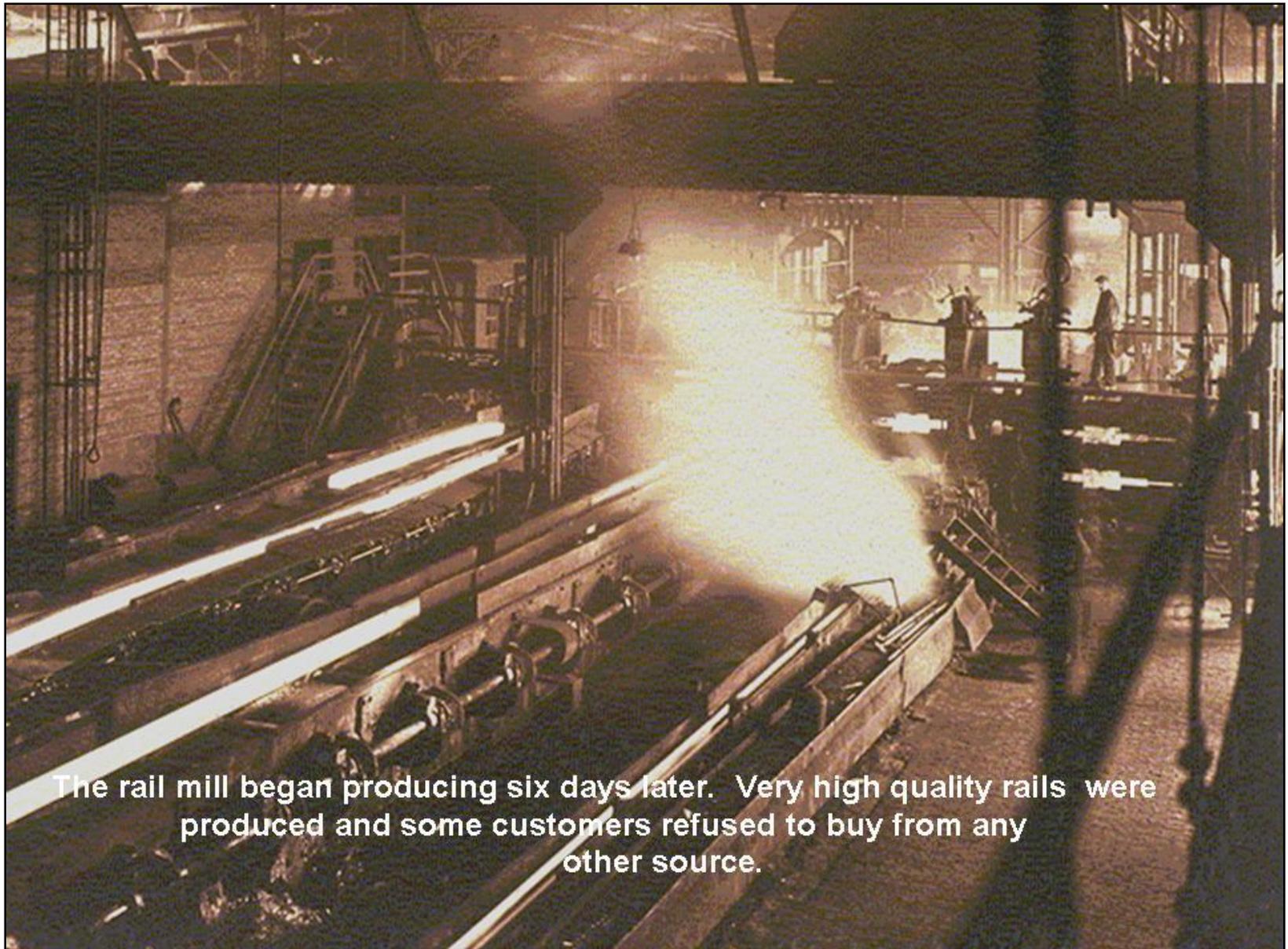
FITZELL'S FARM & PEACH-ORCHARD SPARROWS POINT MD. 1888

Four blast furnaces - "A" through "D" - soon followed. The first pig iron was cast in October 1889.



Iron ore was unloaded from ships using shovels and buckets.





The rail mill began producing six days later. Very high quality rails were produced and some customers refused to buy from any other source.

***“Two Fatal Accidents at Sparrow’s Point. –***

**Mr. Robert Tippett, an inspector of boilers in the employ of the Maryland Steel Company at Sparrow’s Point,, was injured by the explosion shortly before noon on Wednesday, and died at the Point, Thursday morning. Mr. Tippett was employed as an overseer of all the boilers, and while on top of the rail mill boilers, the valve exploded. The force of the explosion blew him off the top of the boilers. He was scalded from his face to his knees, and his skull was fractured by the fall. The cause of the explosion is unknown.”**

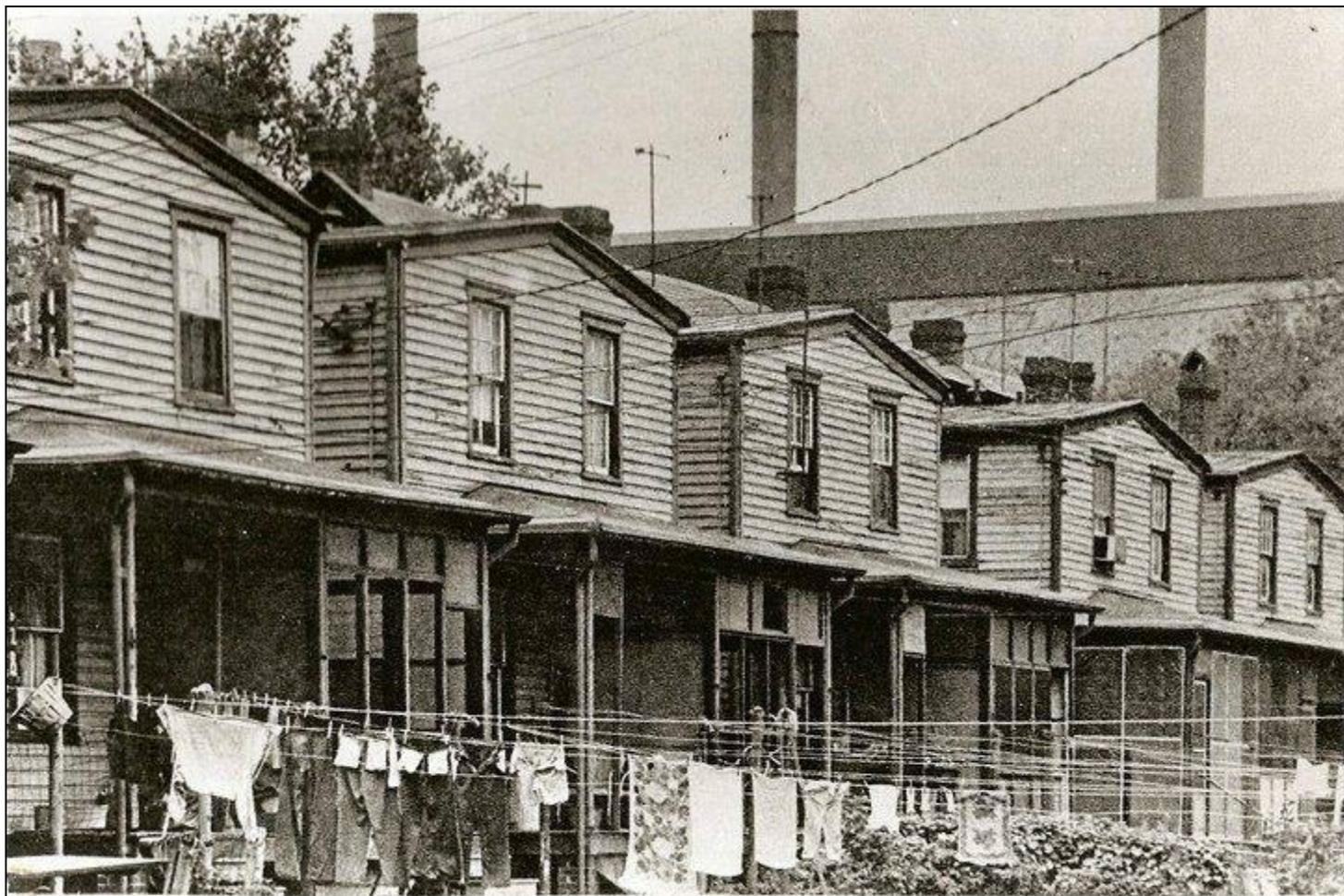
**“Michael Sheliga, a Polish laborer in the boiler shop, was instantly killed at noon Thursday. Sheliga attempted to cross the railroad track ahead of a shifter that was running into the round house. He was struck and killed. Sheliga was about twenty years old.”**

***--Baltimore County Democrat, July 11, 1891***  
**Courtesy John McGrain**



And housing was needed, too. The town of Sparrows Point began to grow. This is "C" Street in 1893.





57

Early view on "P" Street, showing a typical "wash-day".



The Bessemer made the first steel in Maryland on August 1, 1891.

160

**MARYLAND STEEL COMPANY.**

*Law Martin* Worked 1st to 15th *June 97*

Hours or Tons.	Rate.	
3033	60	Total Earnings: 18 31
		Stone, . . . 11 60
		Rent, . . . 6 50
		Miscel's. <i>W</i> 20
		Balance . . . — 01

Explanations on Monday following  
General Pay Day.



June, 1897 pay stub--Courtesy Tony Saladino

Sparrow's Point, Maryland.

January 9th, 1897.

Under this date the Maryland Steel Company hereby agrees to pay R. W. Finch four cents (4¢) per ton for unloading from his scows into cars on its wharf such shells as may be used in blast furnace "A" in the process of smelting weekly. The account to be taken from the blast furnace records.

R. W. Finch hereby agrees to load all other shells he furnishes the Maryland Steel Company into cars on its wharf for storage for future use without charge.

This arrangement to be discontinued at any time with one week's notice.

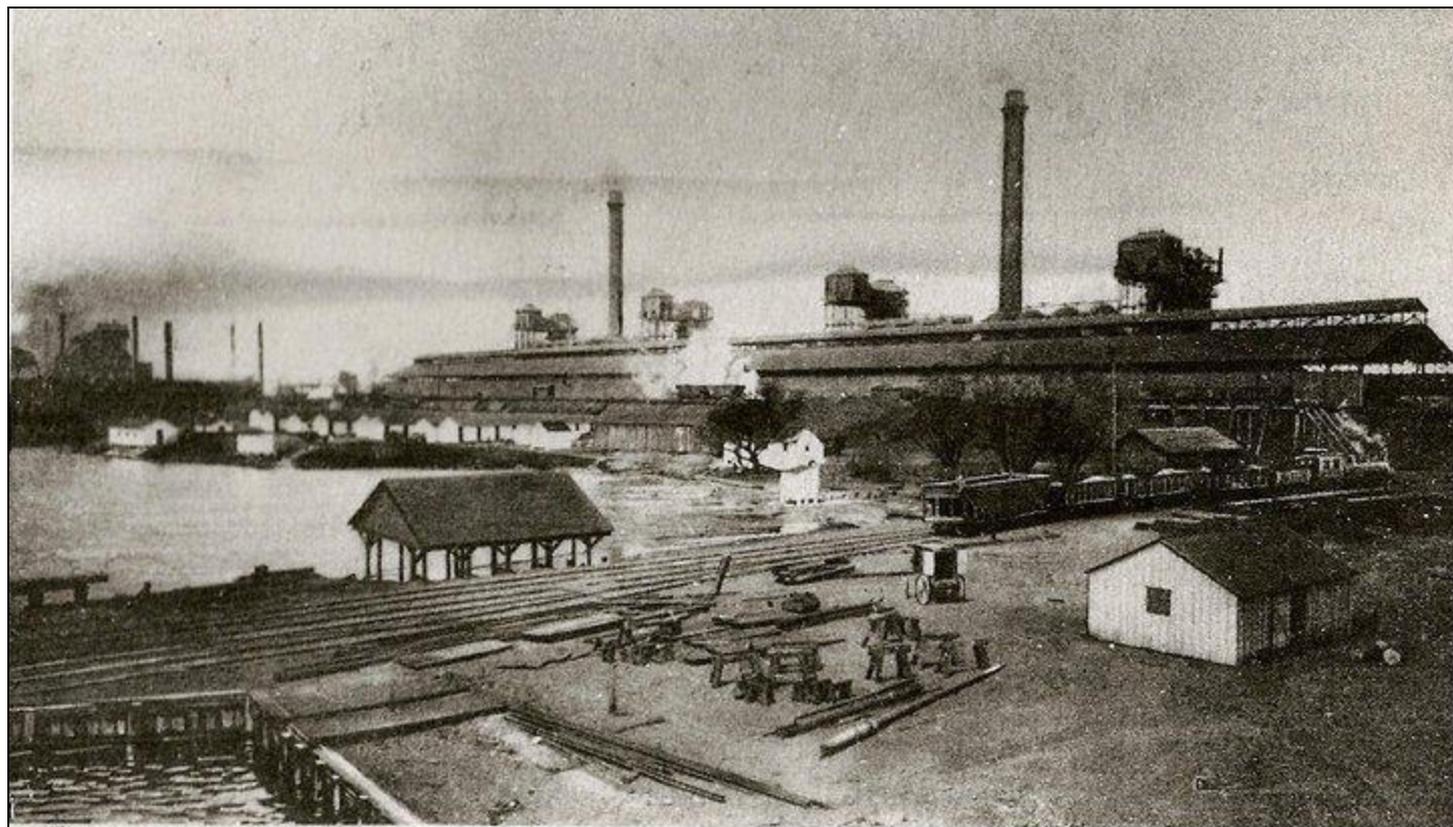
WITNESS:

*J. Park*

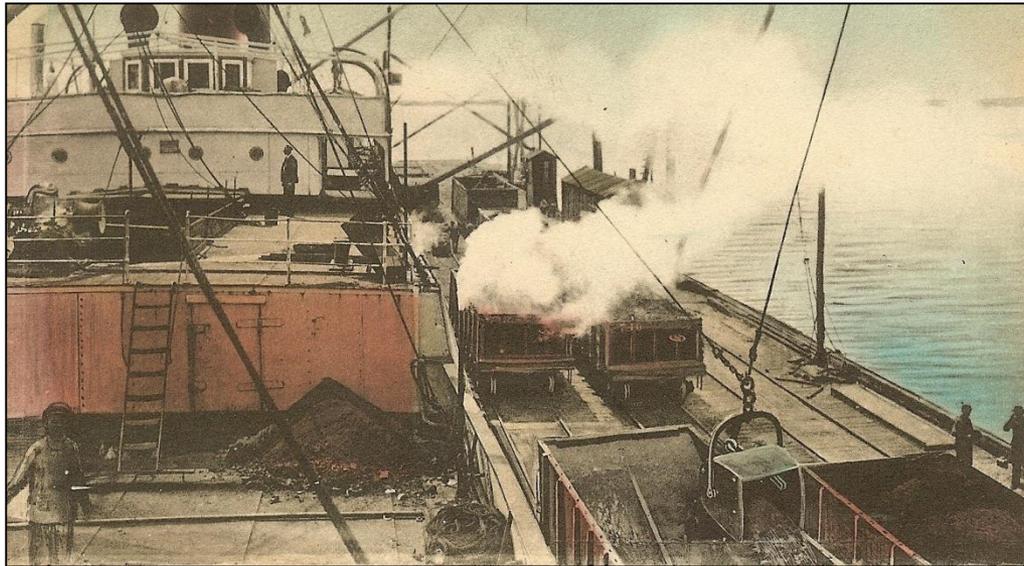
*Rufus H. Wood*

General Agent Maryland Steel Co.

*R. W. Finch*

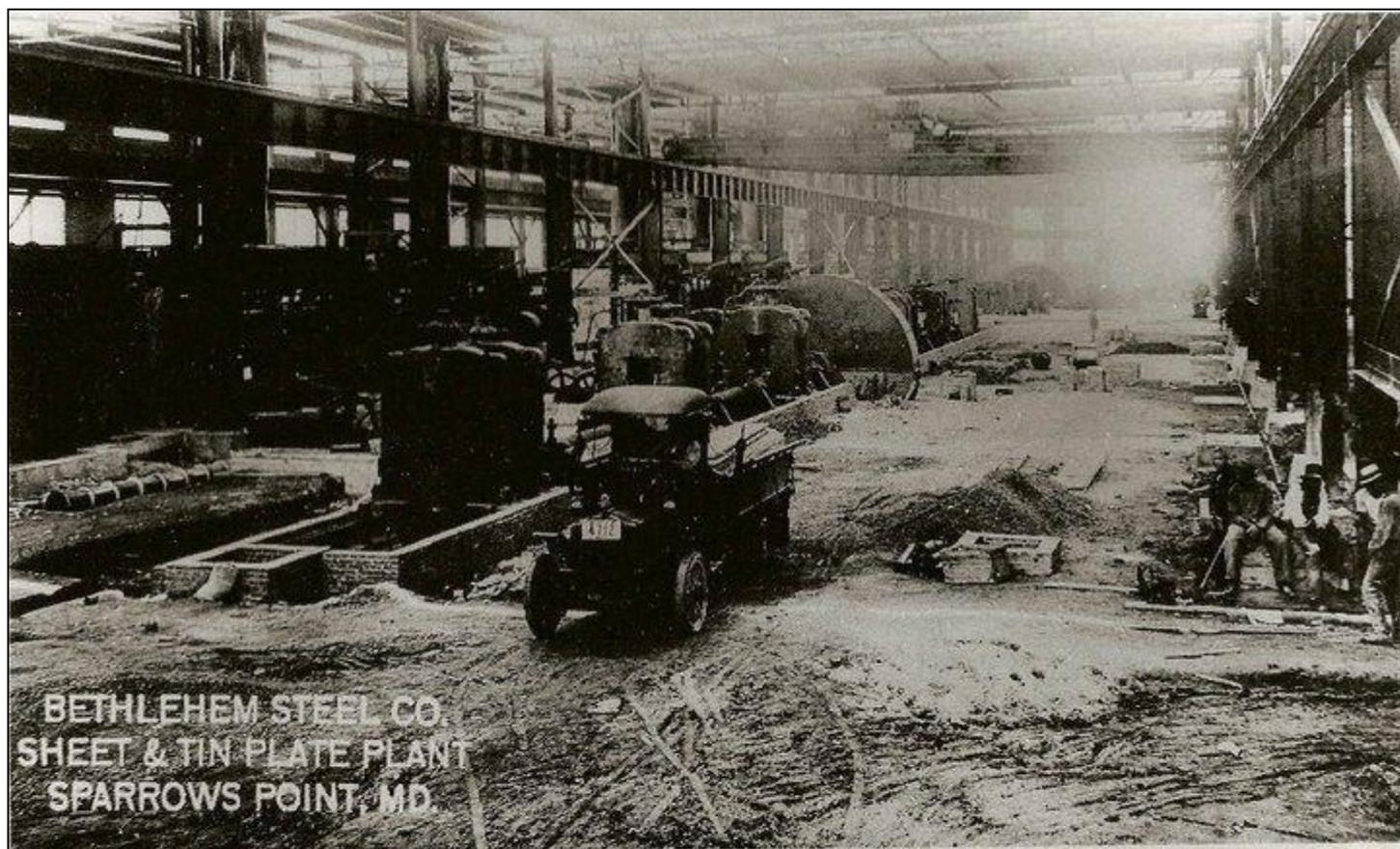


Picture from pre-1900 post card captioned "Furnaces of the Maryland Steel Co., Sparrows Point Md". Shanties for early workers can be seen middle left. Note buggy standing alone. (Autos and trucks were not in general use yet.)



Postcard of the ore dock--1907  
Courtesy John McGrain



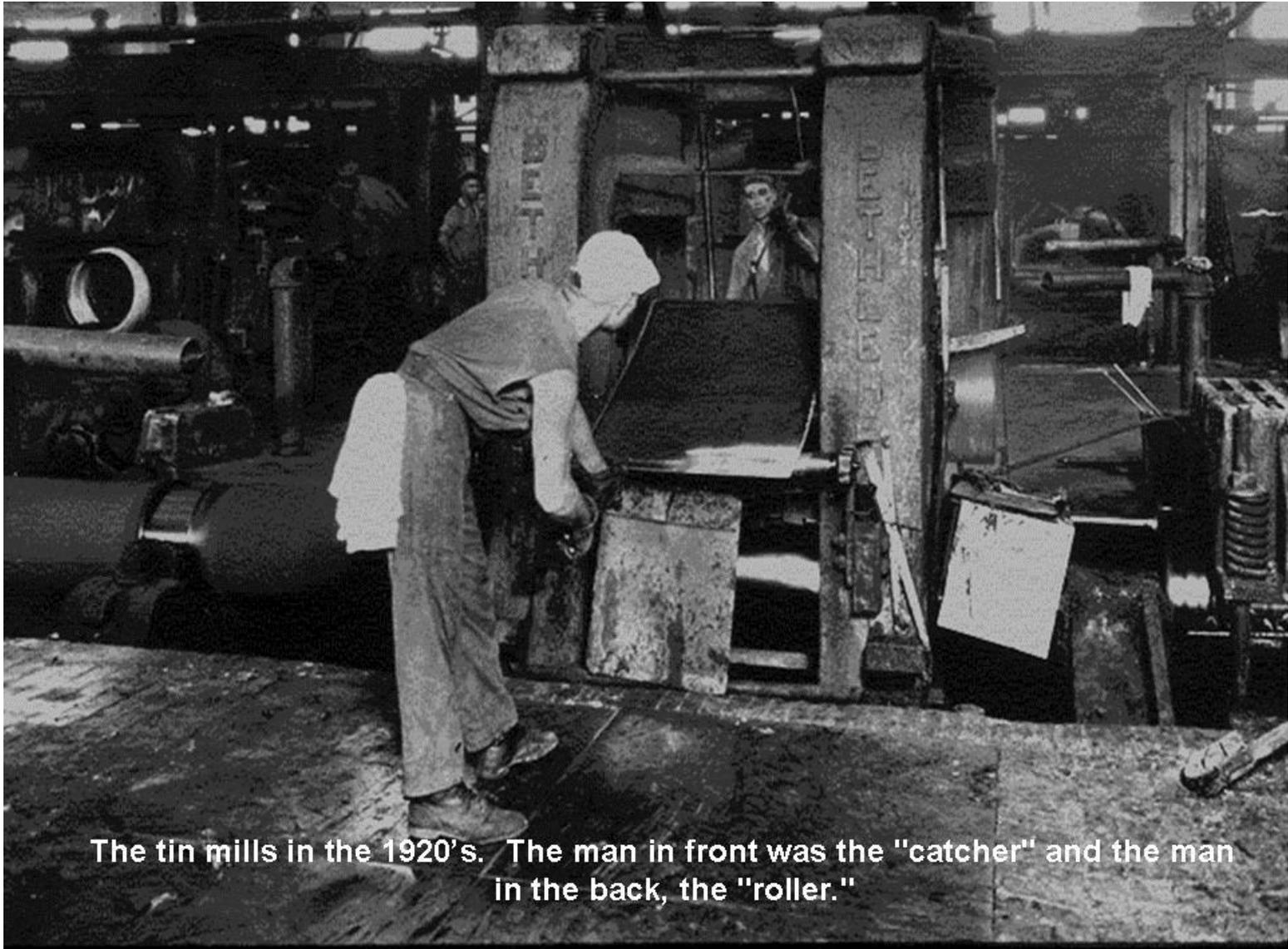


BETHLEHEM STEEL CO.  
SHEET & TIN PLATE PLANT  
SPARROWS POINT, MD.

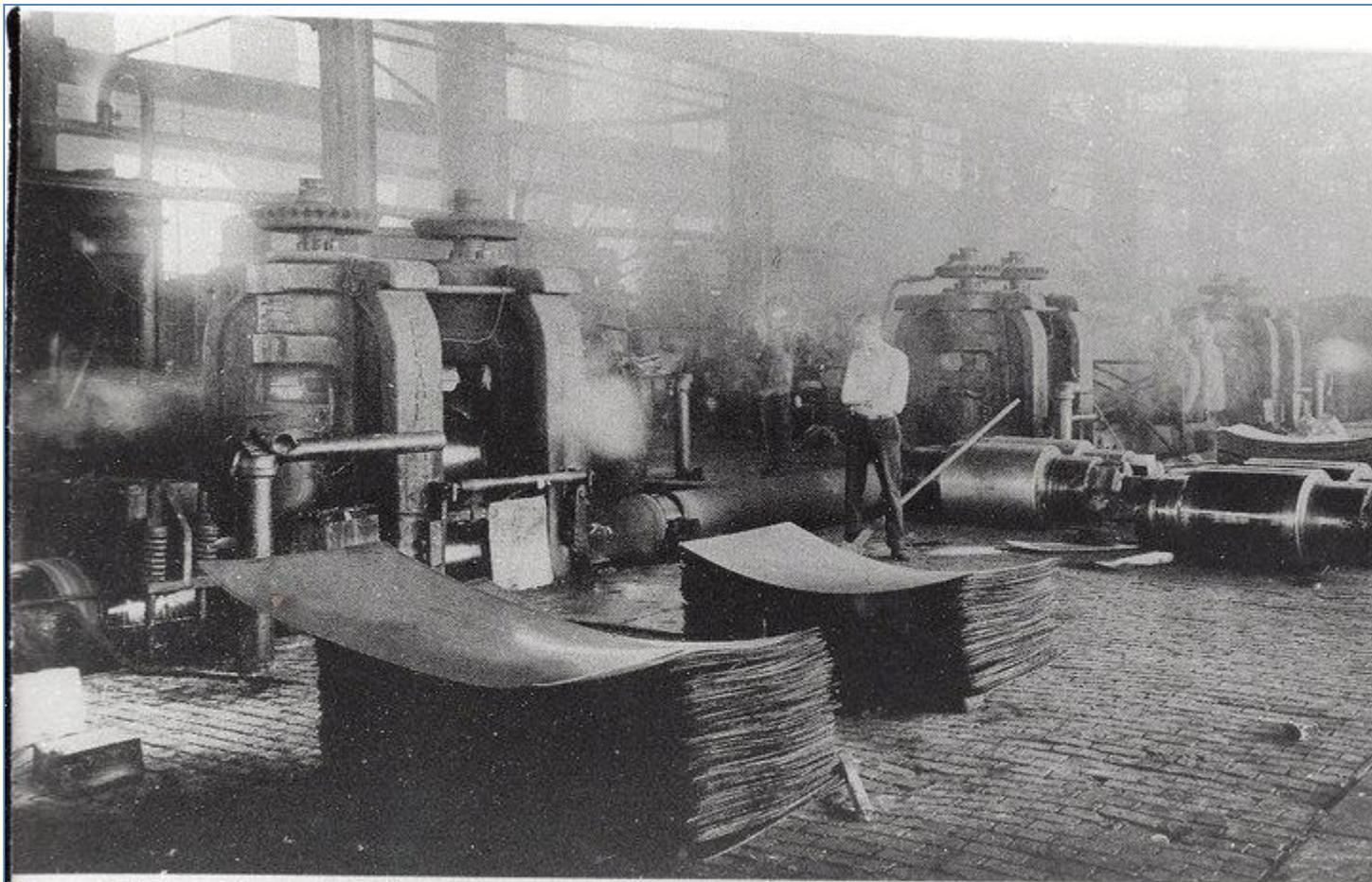
*The original 12 hot mills begin to take shape in June 1917. A single shaft, with a power wheel at its center, drove six mills. The other group of six mills is in the background. Reheating furnaces are at the left. These mills were marked "National Roll & Foundry Co., Avonmore, Pa."*



The Point--early 1920's

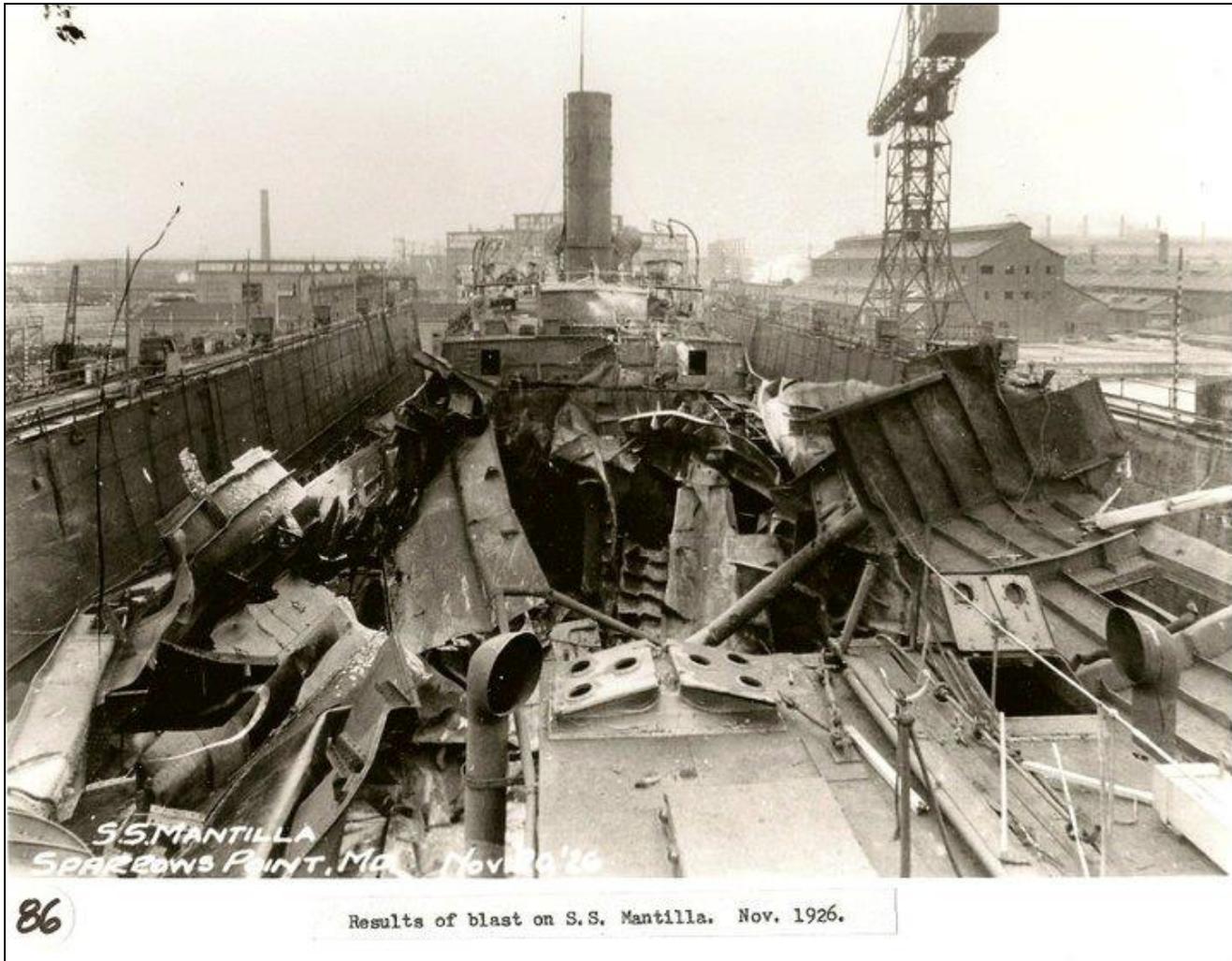


The tin mills in the 1920's. The man in front was the "catcher" and the man in the back, the "roller."



*An additional set of 12 hot mills was added in 1920, and a third set of 12, shown here, came on in 1925, making a total of 36. Two years later, in 1927, the addition of 12 more mills brought the total to 48 and the capacity to 4,250,000 base boxes, or 210,000 tons, annually. Two employees (blurred on mill at left) worked each mill — a feeder and a catcher. These mills are marked "Bethlehem."*





Courtesy of Al Westra



The Bungalows (1914)

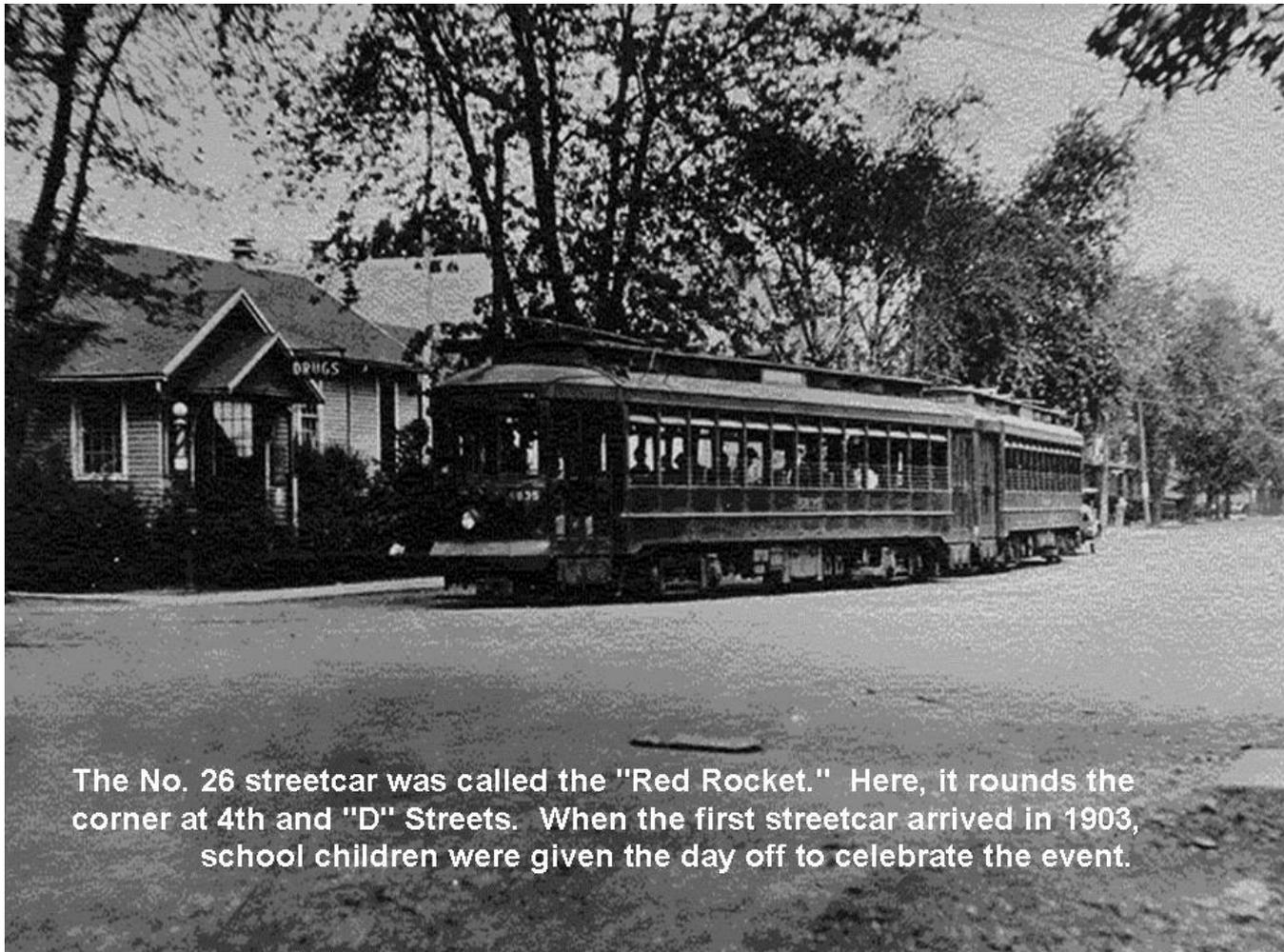
Courtesy Archie Thompson



Residents of Sparrows Point were noted for the pride they took in their town.  
1928.



1929 photo of the grandfather of Mike Lewis,  
current USWA officer



The No. 26 streetcar was called the "Red Rocket." Here, it rounds the corner at 4th and "D" Streets. When the first streetcar arrived in 1903, school children were given the day off to celebrate the event.



110  
Quitting time! - Loading the #26 street cars (known as the "Red  
Rockets"). Sparrows Point - date uncertain. SHIPYARD "LOOP"



Early picture, probably in the 1920's, showing women inspecting tin plate in the assorting room. (They were known as "tin-floppers"). Management insisted only women could perform this task, (men were to "heavy-handed"). The only men permitted in the assorting room were the "reckoners" who counted out 112 sheets of inspected tin plate and packaged them for shipment.



The Tin Room where the “tin floppers,” 200 per shift, worked, checking each sheet of tin plate for defects by “flopping” it over—World War II



Mother of Tony Saladino, with Mrs. Alexander, who Staged theatricals with her “girls” from the Tin Room



Members of the Employee Representation Plan, the company union in 1928. The ERP was established to block unionism.

**A SIGNED CONTRACT WITH BETHLEHEM STEEL  
IS YOURS FOR THE ASKING—**



**VOTE FOR THE SWOC  
IN THE LABOR BOARD ELECTION**



# ELECTION VICTORY ASSURED



Vote SWOC-CIO-Sept. 25th

Vote SWOC-CIO-Sept. 25th

**Now is the time to sign that  
Union card and pay your dues**

VOTE SWOC-CIO-Sept. 25th

VOTE SWOC-CIO-Sept. 25th

**JOIN your thousands of fellow Steel Workers  
in the Sparrows Point plant by being a  
member-in-good-standing. Your member-  
ship in the Union assures a Union vote on  
ELECTION DAY . . . . .**

## Sept. 25th, 1941

Vote SWOC-CIO-Sept. 25th

Vote SWOC-CIO-Sept. 25th

**100% Union Means 100% Contract**

**Steel Workers Organizing Committee  
C. I. O.**



OFFICES

32 Dundalk Ave.      3600 Eastern Ave.      712 N. Bond St.

VOTE SWOC-CIO-Sept. 25th VOTE SWOC-CIO-Sept. 25th

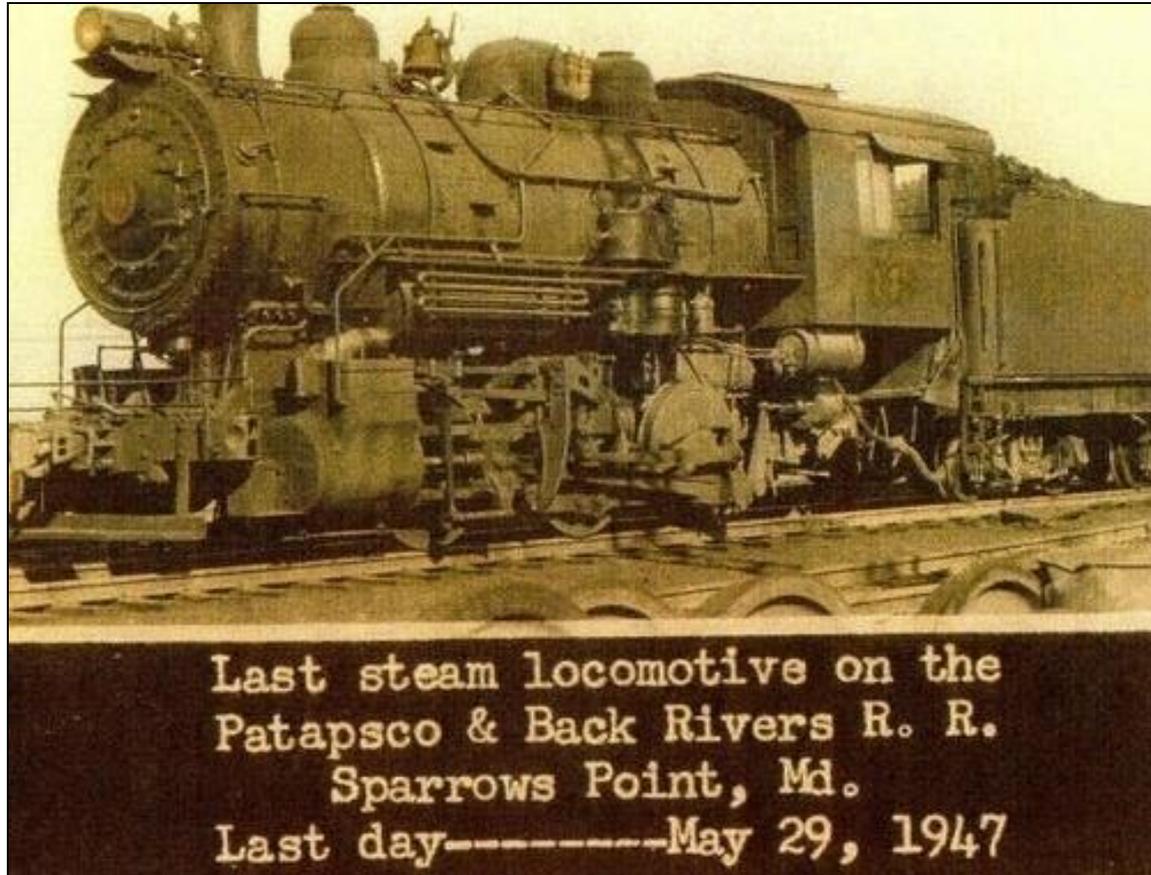




1942 At Sparrows Point, workers celebrate triple launching.  
Photograph by A. Aubrey Bodine.



Stewart Cort displays the prestigious Army-Navy "E" production award. The plant met its goal less than a year after the attack on Pearl Harbor.



Courtesy Bill McLyman



A. Aubrey Bodine--1949



Workers in the pipe mill--1952



Courtesy of Bob Mulkey



“Drink soda from steel cans”



Returning to work after the 1959 strike

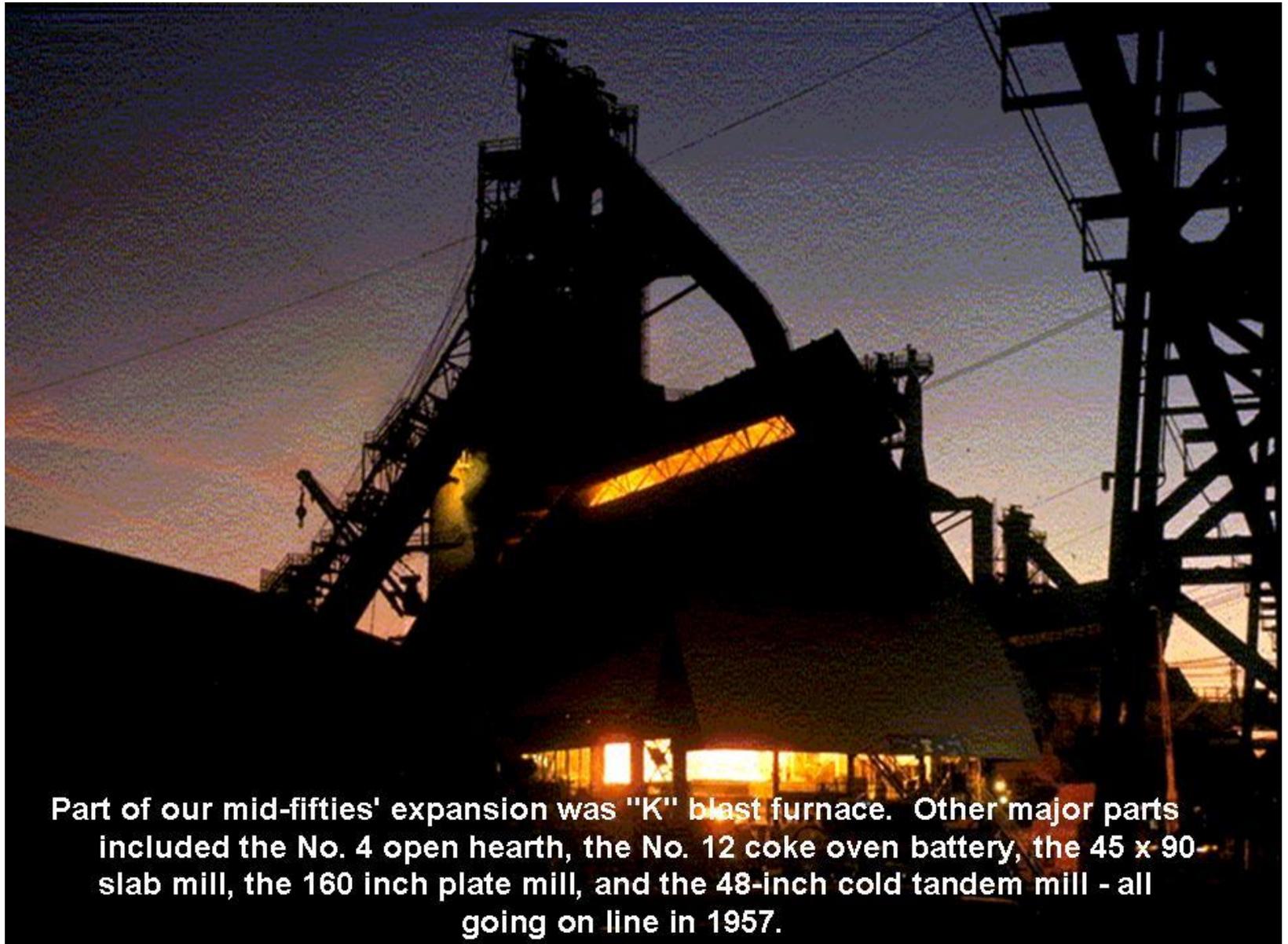
[http://wn.com/steel\\_strike](http://wn.com/steel_strike)

THOU SHALT NOT  
SCAB

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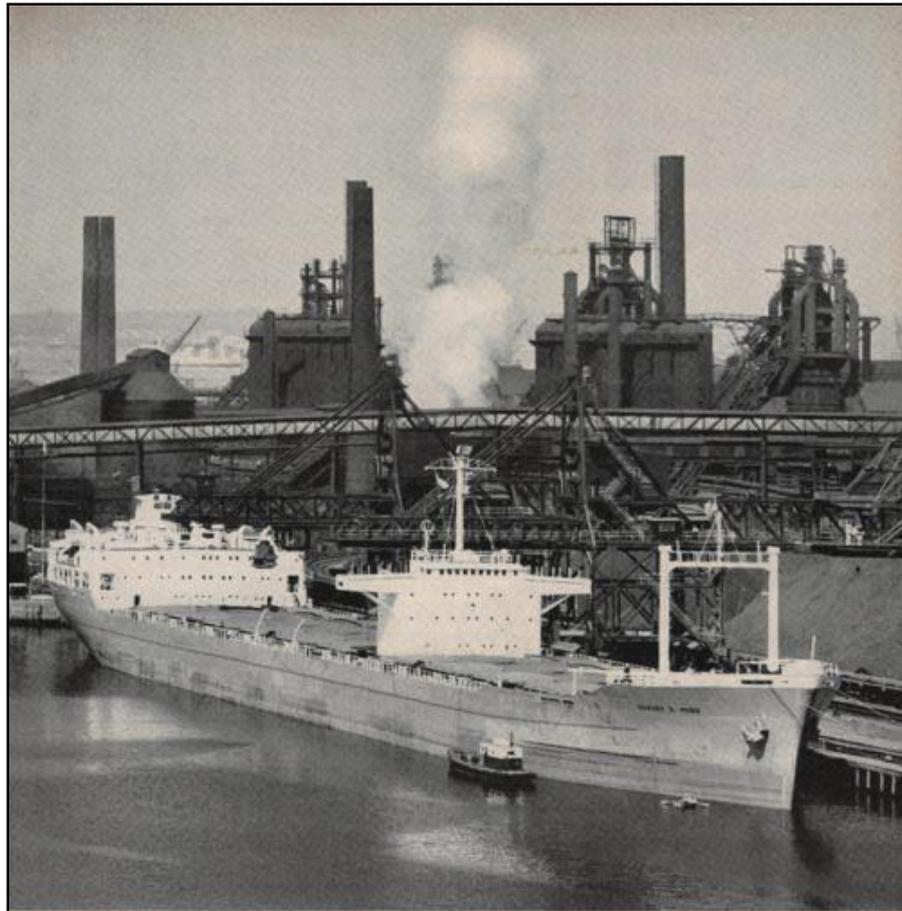
UNION  
USWA  
LOCAL 1712  
LABOR

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**Part of our mid-fifties' expansion was "K" blast furnace. Other major parts included the No. 4 open hearth, the No. 12 coke oven battery, the 45 x 90 slab mill, the 160 inch plate mill, and the 48-inch cold tandem mill - all going on line in 1957.**





1958  
from Kevin  
Nozeika

**This shipload of iron ore is just one day's supply  
for the nation's largest steel plant**

At our own deepwater docks Bethlehem's Sparrows Point Plant receives huge quantities of iron ore, coal and other materials. And from its strategic tidewater location just southeast of Baltimore, steel flows to the Eastern Seaboard, and to Gulf, Pacific, and overseas ports.

This plant has an annual capacity of 8,200,000 tons of steel ingots. That's sufficient steel to make more than 2½ million automobiles and enough left over for millions of such useful products as refrigerators, kitchen ranges, and air conditioners.

**BETHLEHEM STEEL**





Searching for a lost relative



But, by 1974, homes had been bulldozed down and the town was no more.  
The housing as cleared away to make way for "L" blast furnace.



The Consent Decree in 1974 was a significant moment for civil rights in the steel industry, a movement that started in the 1940s



Courtesy Jim Blankenship



Aerial of world-class Cold Mill - commissioned in 2000.



Modern steelmaking—the 68” Hot Mill office

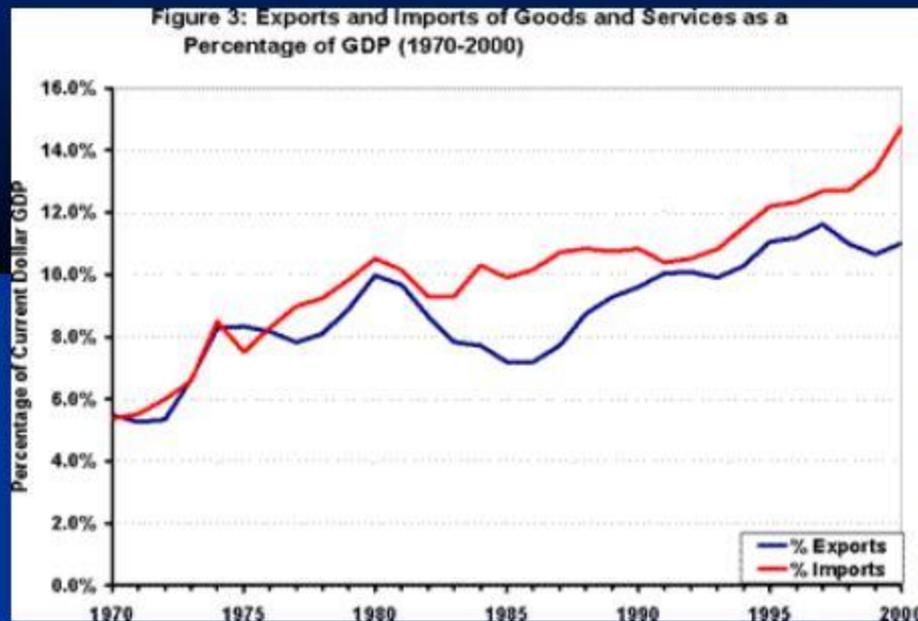


The cold rolling plant at Bethlehem Steel Sparrows Point in 2003  
Photo by Algerina Perna *The Baltimore Sun*

**Coils wait for shipment at cold mill. The mill is capable of producing 1.5 million tons of cold-rolled sheet products.**



# Deindustrialization

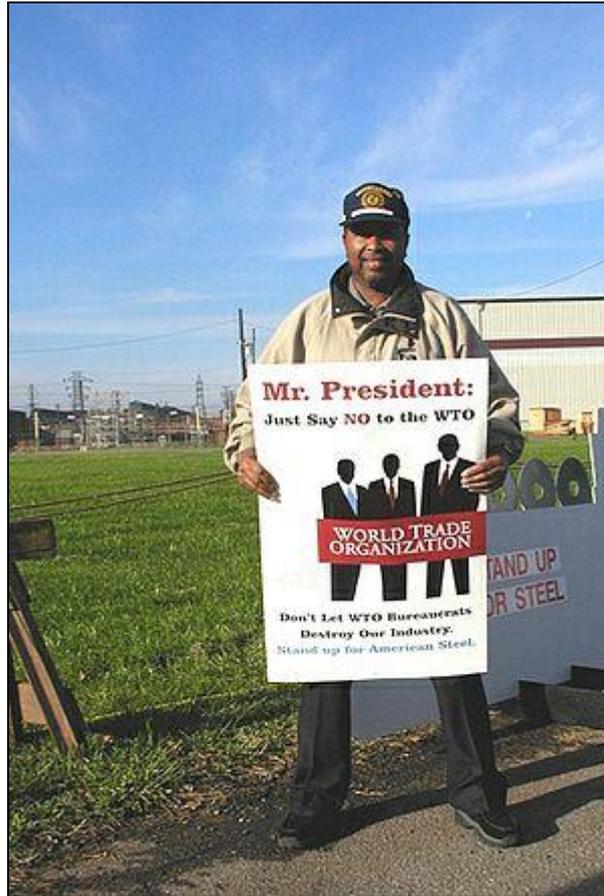


- Increases in foreign industrial efficiency allowed Europe, Asia, and Latin America to effectively compete by producing quality goods for a lower cost.
- Many American companies began outsourcing labor to foreign countries to remain competitive.
- This chart illustrates the balance of trade. The United States increasingly imports more than it exports.





Demonstration on Merritt Blvd in Dundalk--2003



Phil Pack--2003



Photo by Jay Mallin-2005



In the plate mill area of Bethlehem Steel plant, where over 5,000 are presently employed, Douglas Penn, age 56, works as a "Heater." He was photographed in the charging crane, with the "3 High Mill" behind him. He is responsible for slabs coming out of the furnace at 2450 degrees F. as they go into the 3 High Mill which forms the slabs into specific widths. Penn, who has worked at Bethlehem Steel for 36 years, said, "I take cold slabs, put 'em into burners and heat 'em up. You get accustomed to the heat. If the outside temperature is 100 degrees, it is 150 degrees in here. In this job, you have to be careful with what you are doing. If you do not keep your mind on your job, you can easily mess up." Photo by Amy Davis *Baltimore Sun*

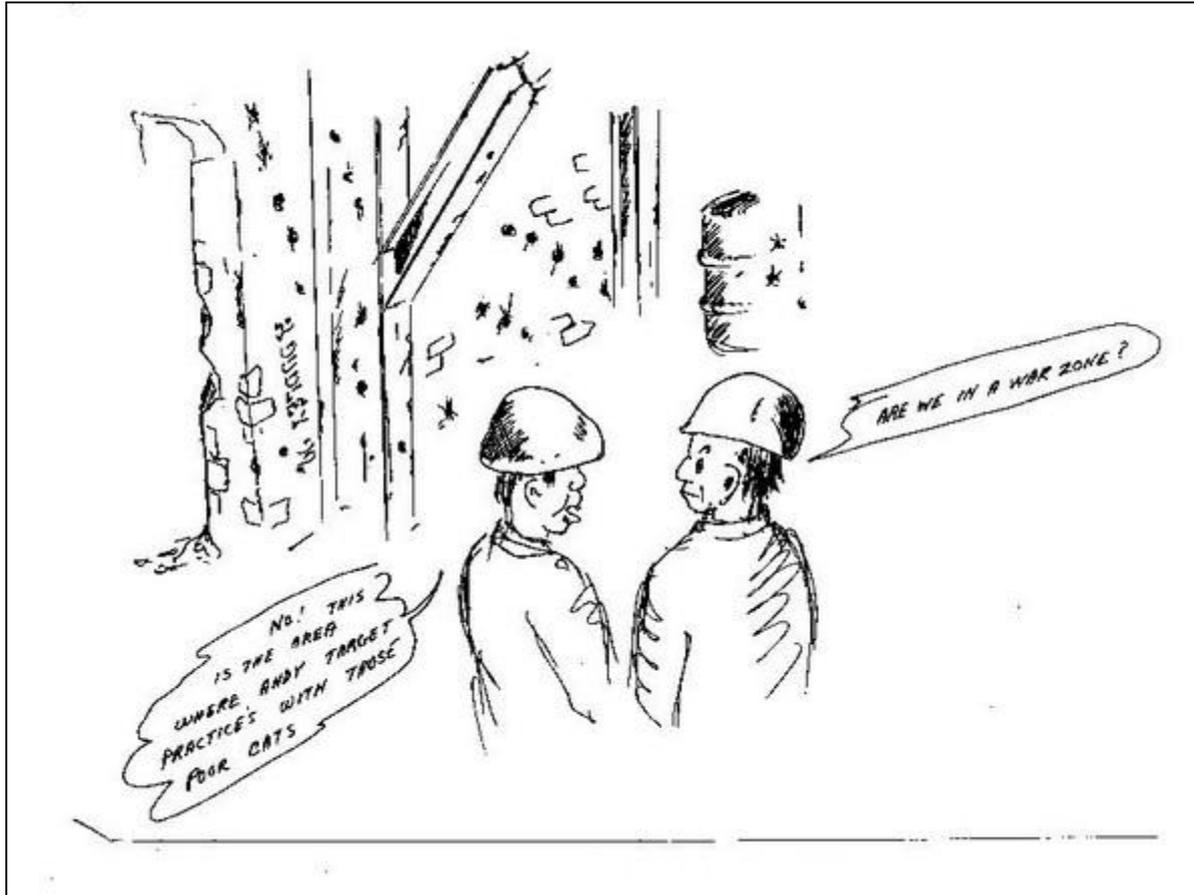


Photo By Algerina Perna *The Baltimore Sun*





Baltimore Sun



Cartoon by Ralph Dudley



Photo courtesy Barbara Morris



For Lamont Handy-El--2013





“The Card Players”



Courtesy Sparrows Point Memories Facebook  
Photographer and subject not named



Working a double shift

Photo by Lamont Handy-El



Retirement Party

Courtesy Louis Tauber



Steelworkers in the global economy  
Strike against Mittal Steel at Katowice, Poland,  
2006



**SIGN INSIDE SPARROWS POINT PLANT GATE "G",  
7-29-2013**



As one of the last 2,000 employees of the steel mill at Sparrows Point, I have been reading with interest The Sun's reporting of the steel plant's demise. Included in the last article was mention of a faded sign proclaiming "America – Strong as Steel" ("Sparrows Point auction brings hundreds to buy", Jan. 24). After the 9-11 tragedy, I was asked by my superintendent to paint a symbolic and patriotic sign.

Before the sign was placed at the plant entrance, it was the backdrop for a steelworker's rally at our union hall and at the national "Stand Up for Steel" rally in Washington, D. C. Now, years later, the Sign is again symbolic – of the destruction of steelmaking at Sparrows Point and 2,000 faded steelworkers.

Donald V. Castronova, Jarrettsville – 1-28-13

**Archie Reid Thompson** That makes me sick. My Grandfather came to this country from Scotland after World War 1, because there was no work there. He had an Uncle and cousins here in Sparrows Point, so he came here to work. He was a decorated War Hero, awarded a medal and commendation from King George, the Queen's Grandfather. He started working there in 1922-23 and someone in our family worked there until it closed in 2011, including me. My Father and his Brother and Sister were born in the house in the bungalows and my Grandmother lived there until the town was razed in 1972-73. (50 years) Their house is the only house still on Sparrows Point Property, on Wharf Road, now the Pleasant Yacht Club. Anyone who says the plant was bad for this area needs a quick kick in the Ass! We're going down the drain thanks to our politician friends. Don't forget to Vote.

December 23, 2013

Sad day. It's the one year anniversary of myself and many others losing their job at RG Steel after the company filed bankruptcy. Miss my job and coworkers soo much. I'm never going to work at a place as awesome as that ever again. Not many people can say that they don't dread going to work...Well, working at the point, there was never a time where I dreaded going. Not to mention it was nice not living off a strict budget!

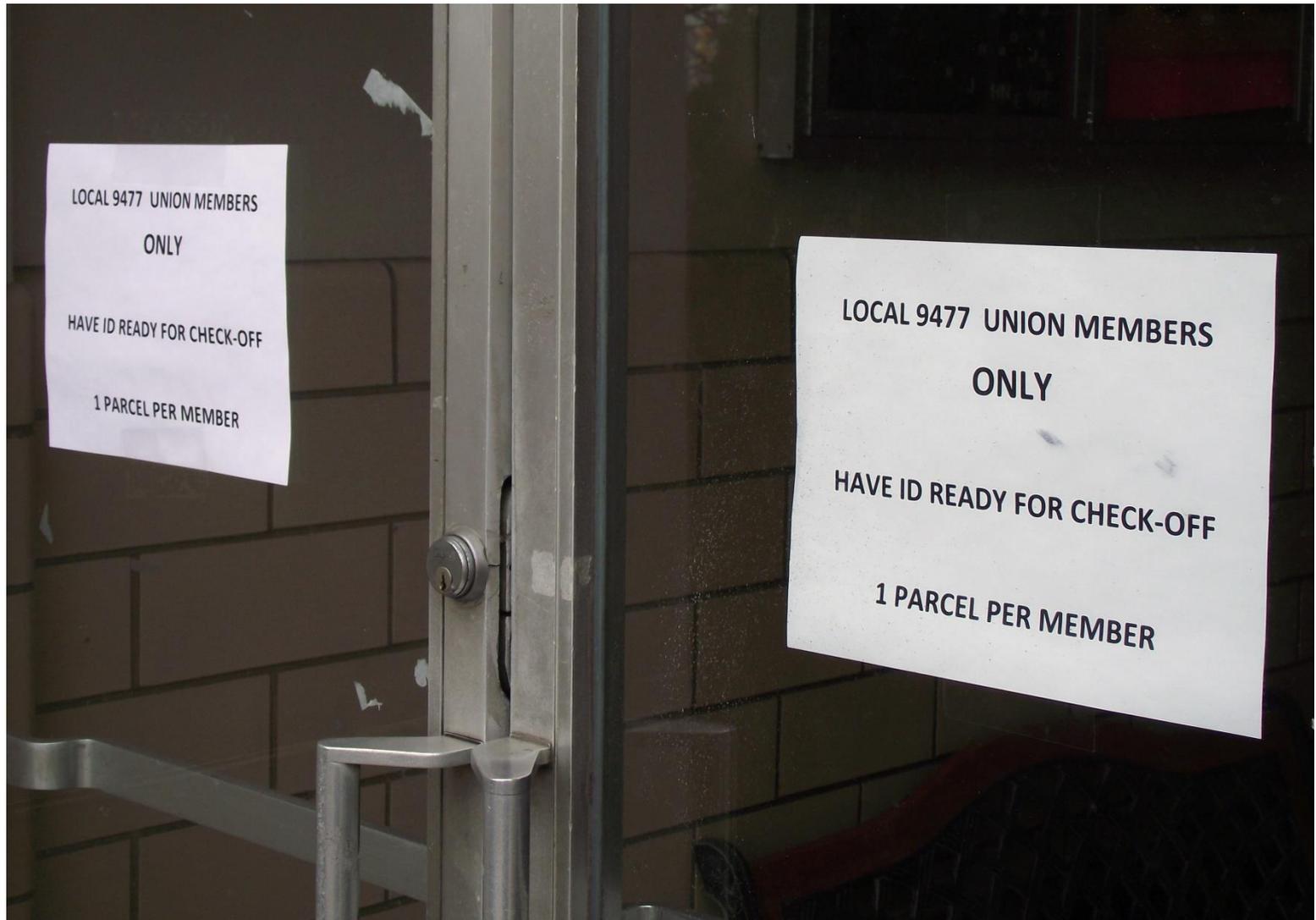
Lisa Marie June 8, 2013 *Memories of Sparrows Point (FB)*



Rededication of Steelworker Memorial  
Dundalk Heritage Park—October, 2013



Food Bank-Steelworkers Union Hall. November, 2013



Food Bank at Steelworkers Hall—November, 2013

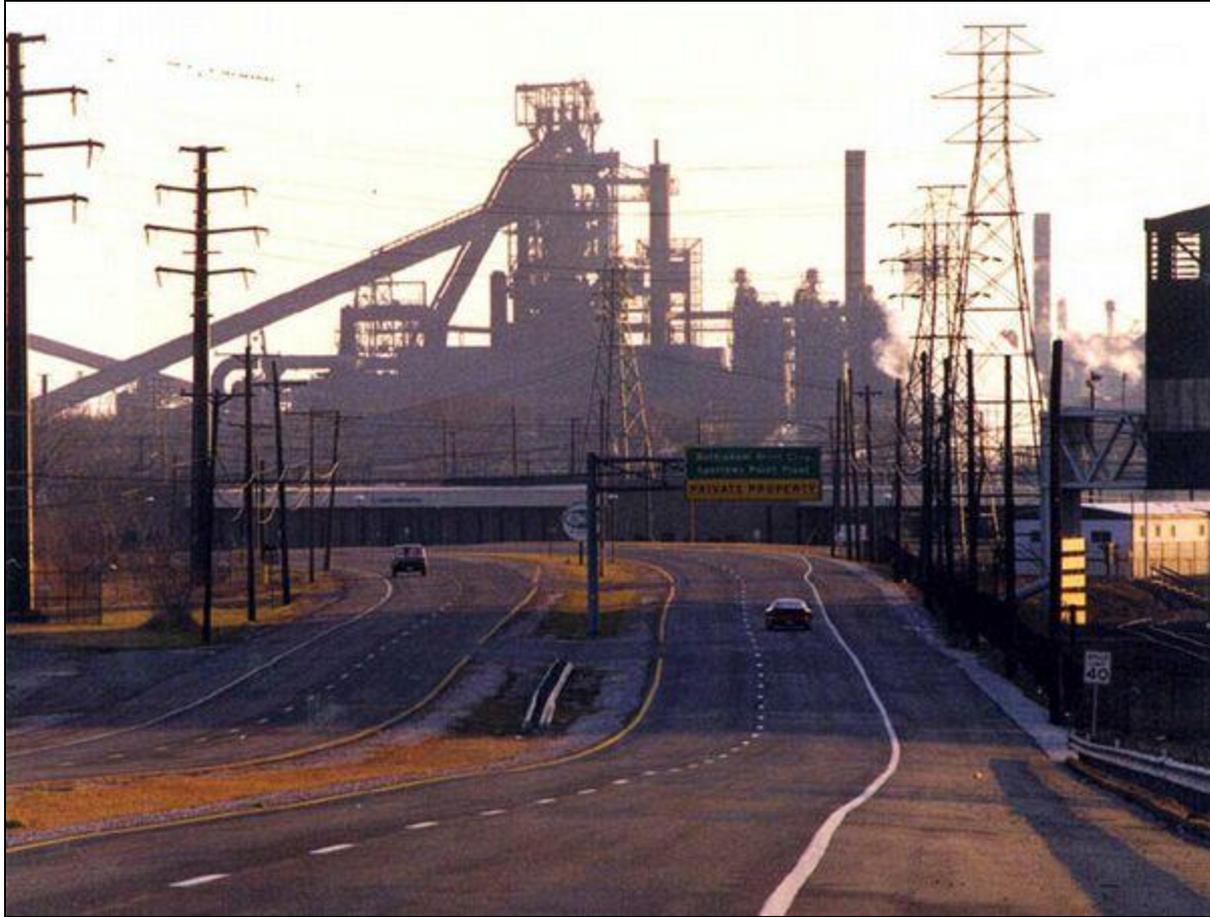


Food bank at Steelworkers' Union Hall—November, 2013



“The attached pictures of the demolition of the Plate Mill buildings speak for themselves (taken 7-29-13). “

Mike Stilwell





“Of particular note is the Christmas star on the top structure of ‘L’ Furnace, which has been lit over the past three decades during the Christmas holidays. It is now doomed to be dark forever.”

---Al Westra and Mike Stilwell (2014)