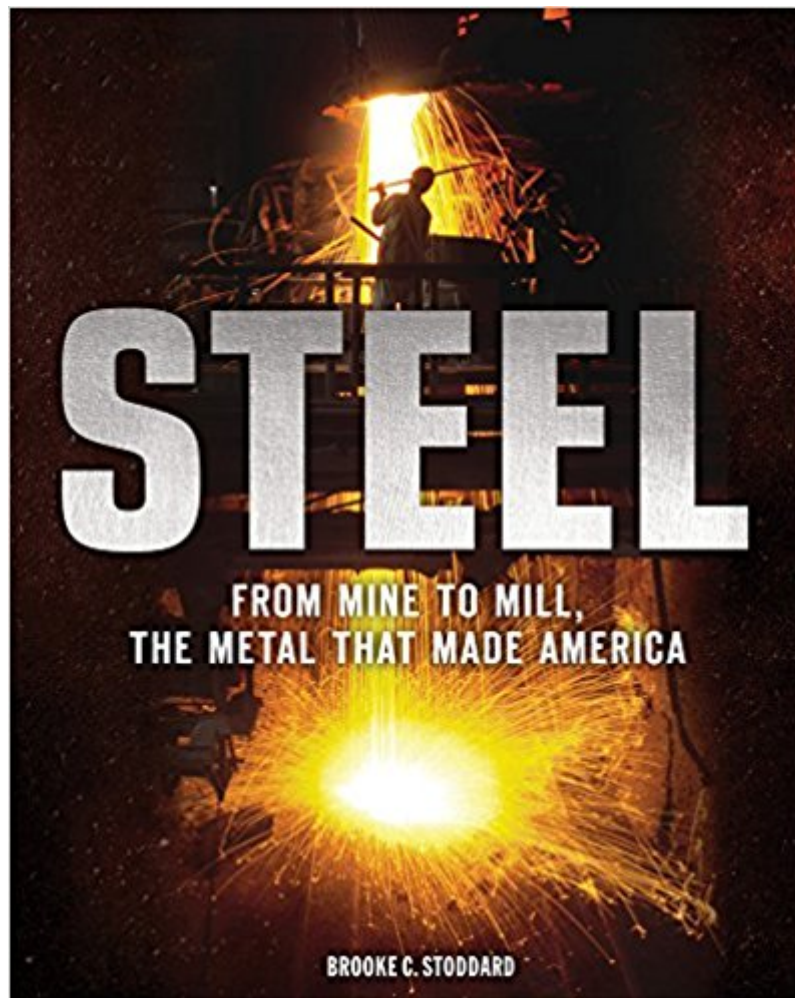




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Steel: From Mine To Mill, The Metal That Made America



Synopsis

Steel provides the backbone for modern civilization - read all about its history, journey, and place in the world. What is steel? How does it work? Why has it been so important? Who are the people who make it? How do they make it? Steel: From Mine to Mill, the Metal that Made America answers these questions. Improperly understood until about 150 years ago and available until then only in small quantities, the metal itself is a delicate dance of iron crystals interspersed with carbon and - depending on intended service - other elements such as nickel, chromium, and molybdenum. Once deciphered, steel began to flow from hearths in increasing amounts for the building of railroads, steel ships, skyscrapers, and bridges, in the process raising to world economic dominance Great Britain, Germany, the United States, Japan, and the Soviet Union. The world's current largest producer is China. While researching this book, author Brooke C. Stoddard descended into Mesabi Iron Range open-pit iron mines, rode with 58,000 tons of iron ore on a 1,000-foot ore boat from Duluth to Cleveland, climbed to the top of the hemisphere's largest blast furnace, interviewed men as they toiled next to their furnaces of liquid steel, and walked the immense rolling mills where steel is pressed into finished products. Along the way, he wrote a narrative of iron and steel from pre-history through the Industrial Revolution and into the present age. Steel is the sinew of modern civilization.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Excellent research and fine storytelling. Stoddard's book is packed with history and technical information presented in an understandable way. He makes the stories and the people real. This

book was clearly a labor of love, and the meticulous gathering of facts and lore make it fascinating to history buffs, students of industry and Great Lakes enthusiasts alike.

The author's goal was to impress a general readership with the extraordinary work that engineers have done and still do, describing this aspect of American life -- the manufacture of useful products -- which is woefully under-reported and under-appreciated. He succeeds. This is not an engineering book, but describes the processes well enough not only to understand, but to just the right degree to enjoy the description. He also describes the lives of the people who do this work, again just to the right degree, as in enough to enjoy the story.

For anyone interested in America's industrial history, this book is a must. Brooke Stoddard presents this vital part of the nation's story in a clear, conversational style. His research took him into the mines and mills, and you can almost feel the heat and smell the fumes. Stoddard combines the skills of a fine writer with those of a meticulous historian, and the result is a pleasure to read.

Brooke has a very engaging way of telling the story of the development of Steel as an important engineering material. By tracing its discovery history, tracking of raw material from the mines, refining that material, and interviewing some of the people who make the conversion happen, he presents this complicated story in a very easy yet genuine way. By interviewing the people who spent their lives working in the Steel Industry, he allows people who never worked in a heavy Industry environment to better understand the subject's breadth. The many illustrations certainly help the reader understand. He covers the development of the Steel Industry in the USA and certain Company failures in such a way the book could also easily fit into a Business School Case Study. Perhaps most importantly, Brooke highlights Steel production and importance of the material itself to the survival of countries during war times... including the USA... is a salute to all the people who made that happen.

A wonderful story of how a British Colony, forbidden by its mother country to build new competing ironworks, grew to outperform its parent by a ratio of 90 to 16 million tons of steel in the peak production year of WW2. Stoddard traces the story of the American Dream applied big time to the ascendancy of American steel to number one in the 20th Century. He then traces the fall of our mighty steel business from first to fourth place worldwide. A sad tale of warnings seen and ignored: of failure to recognize a need to change; of management and labor trying to out score each other; of

declining product quality; of over capacity; of lack of investment in facilities and innovation; of government's lack of action to curb import of heavily subsidized foreign steel; of unfriendly tax depreciation laws. This is a beautifully written and designed book with outstanding illustrations.

"Never think of steelmaking as somehow 'low tech'; it requires an immense sophistication of chemistry and physics, and it is spectacular." So says Brooke Stoddard in the Foreword to this book. Taking you by the elbow, a compelling and entertaining voice in your ear, he then leads you on a journey from the dawn of time to recent headlines to demonstrate vividly and clearly why this is so. His range is vast, from myth and culture --- he links mankind's discovery of iron in meteorites to Superman's creation story --- to the fine detail of how a rolling machine creates sheet steel. Anyone who likes watching a construction site through a hole in a plywood fence, who wants to know the way things work, or is intrigued by the interface of technology and history will enjoy the trip. Illustrations are plentiful and, many of them, gorgeous. Diagrams usefully supplement explanations. My only complaint is that the book, printed on thick, glossy paper, would have benefited from being larger, to give more play to the photos.

Excellent, well researched, and well written story of the creation, development, and culture of steel, with emphasis on how it made the United States into a world power. Brooke Stoddard tells the story well in the book's 3 sections. First he describes how steel evolved as people discovered its alchemy and uses; Second he describes the journey of the making of steel as you travel with him and ride the ore boats and feel the heat of the blast furnaces and meet the people all along the way as they make steel happen; and third, he takes you into the politics of steel and how it has become a developing world industry even as the great steel companies of the US have become less competitive on the world stage. I thoroughly enjoyed this book especially for its story and its educational enlightenment

This is an outstanding book, one that is part history, part travelogue, part science lesson on the metal that has literally built America. Stoddard is a wonderful guide from the Mesabi mines in northern Minnesota to the mills on the East Coast. Fascinating subject and a fascinating book.

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