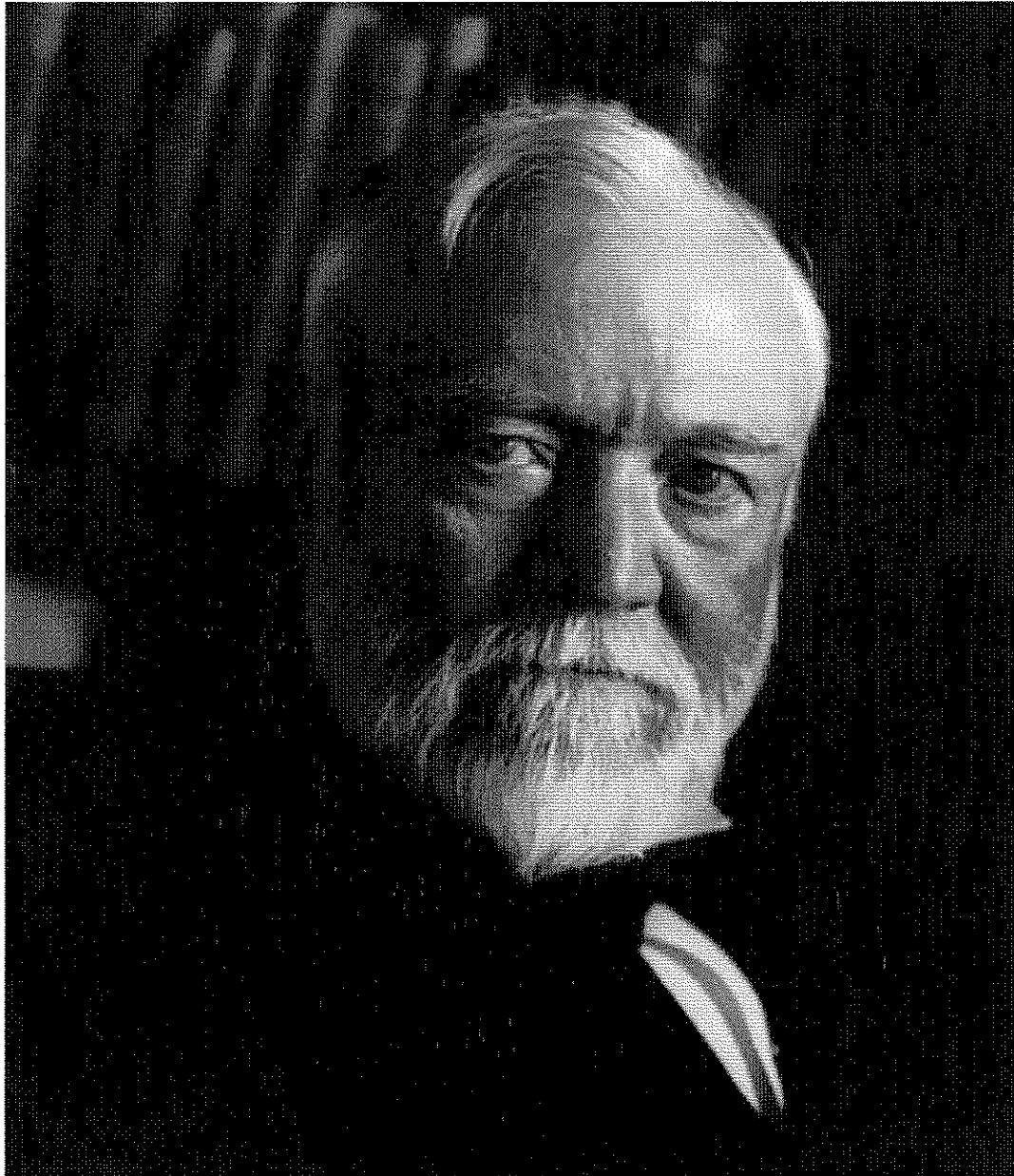

Was Andrew Carnegie a Hero?

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Library of Congress-Prints and Photographs: LC-USZ262-48403

A Document Based Question (DBQ)

STUDENT GUIDE SHEET (SV)

Was Andrew Carnegie a Hero?

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Directions: In the second half of the 19th century the industrial age arrived full-blown in America. It was an age of big railroads, big flour, big oil, and huge bonanza farms. But nothing caught the American imagination more than big steel; and in the field of steel, no person caught America's attention more than Andrew Carnegie. This DBQ asks whether or not Andrew Carnegie is deserving of the title "hero."

It is suggested that you follow these steps:

1. Do the Hook Exercise to help you consider possible heroic traits.
2. Read the Background Essay.
3. Skim through the 10 documents to get a sense of what they are about.
4. Read the documents slowly. In the margins, or on a Document Analysis Sheet, record the main idea of each document.
5. Organize the documents by analytical category. Each category should deal with a central aspect of Carnegie's business or personal life.
6. Develop a thesis and argue whether or not Andrew Carnegie was a hero.

The Documents:

- Document 1: Carnegie's Houses: Dunfermline Cottage and Skibo (photos)
- Document 2: Carnegie on Survival of the Fittest
- Document 3: Carnegie on Costs
- Document 4: Cost of Making Carnegie Steel (chart)
- Document 5: Carnegie Properties: Vertical Integration (map)
- Document 6: Hamlin Garland: Conditions at Homestead
- Document 7: Hours and Wages Compared (chart)
- Document 8: "The Gospel of Wealth"
- Document 9: Carnegie's Philanthropy
- Document 10: Carnegie's "Great Double Role" (cartoon)

Was Andrew Carnegie a Hero?

After the surrender of Robert E. Lee and the passing of Abraham Lincoln, where was America to find its heroes? America was between wars, between successful reform movements, and between famous presidents. Baseball was barely getting started; basketball and football were still to be invented. There were no movie stars because there were no movies, no radio or TV personalities because there was no radio and no television. So where to look for heroes?

One place was business. After the Civil War, American industry was booming. Railroads were built that connected New York with California. Bridges were constructed to span the great rivers. Cities were built with buildings that reached for the clouds. And to help make all this possible – steel rails, steel bridges, steel I-beams – one man emerged, a 5'4" bundle of energy and self-confidence: Andrew Carnegie.

Carnegie Before Steel

Andrew Carnegie grew up poor. He was born in November 1835, in the attic of a weaver's cottage in Dunfermline, Scotland. At age eight, he began his schooling in a one-room school crammed with 150 students. But life was hard in Scotland, and like so many families, the Carnegies made the hard decision to go to America. The family left Scotland for the United States in 1848, settling close to other family members in Pittsburgh.

Andrew was just twelve years old and went to work almost immediately. His family needed \$7.50 a week to make ends meet, and to earn even that small amount wasn't easy. Andy got a job at a local textile mill setting and removing bobbins as they filled with spun yarn. He worked six 12-hour days for \$1.20 a week. A year later Andrew found a new job delivering telegrams.

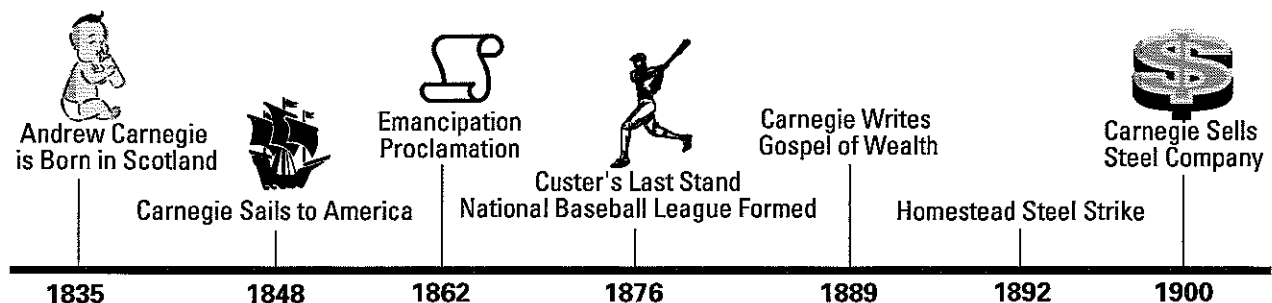
By the time he was sixteen, Andrew was locally famous for being able to decode the dot-dot dash-dash messages by ear, one of only three telegraph operators in the country who could do so. Andrew was now earning \$4.00 a week!

At seventeen, young Carnegie was noticed by the general superintendent of the Pennsylvania Railroad and was hired at \$8.00 a week. Andy's job involved setting schedules and untangling train wrecks. Within seven years he had worked himself up to supervisor of the Pennsy's entire Western Division. Andrew was just 24 and making a solid \$1,500 a year. His future with one of America's strongest railroad companies seemed set.

In the spring of 1861 the nation was in the first weeks of civil war. Washington D.C. was in danger of being taken by Confederate troops. Andy's boss at the Pennsylvania Railroad, Tom Scott, was asked to supervise rail transport of materials and troops in the D.C. area. Scott asked Andy to join him. Andrew played a key role in the evacuation of wounded and retreating Union soldiers from Bull Run, riding the last locomotive out from the besieged pickup station.

Carnegie's next brush with Civil War combat took place in the safety of his Pittsburgh office. Three years into the war, Carnegie received a draft notice from the Union army. Carnegie followed the practice of many wealthy Northern draftees and hired a Pittsburgh draft agent to find a replacement. For \$850 Carnegie bought his way out of military service. It was a legal transaction. An Irish immigrant took the money and served in Carnegie's place.

As the Civil War came to a close, Carnegie decided to leave Pennsylvania Railroad. After a five-month trip to Europe, Carnegie moved to



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New York City with his mother. He loved the idea of living in the business power center of America. But Carnegie had conflicting thoughts. In the Christmas season of 1868, Carnegie sat down in his plush room at the St. Nicholas Hotel and wrote himself a letter:

Dec. '68

St. Nicholas Hotel

N York

Thirty three and an income of \$50,000 per annum. By this time two years I can so arrange all my business as to secure at least \$50,000 per annum. Beyond this never earn – make no effort to increase fortune, but spend the surplus each year for benevolent purposes. Cast aside business forever except for others.

Carnegie's intention seemed clear – he had enough money. He would soon devote himself to higher purposes. Or would he?

Life With Steel

At about the time Carnegie had vowed to get out of business, he made a trip to England. There, in 1872, he met Henry Bessemer. Some 20 years before, Bessemer had developed a special technique for converting iron into the purer, stronger material we call steel. Carnegie was aware of the process but now he saw it up close and he was excited. As Carnegie put it, he “got the flash.” He would adopt the Bessemer process and build a steel mill in America. Within twelve months of meeting with Bessemer, construction of a large steel mill was under way. The mill would be called the J. Edgar Thomson Works.

Carnegie was on the march. With an earlier investment in iron mills and the Thomson steel works under his wing, Carnegie and partners bought another steel mill at Homestead. In the same year, 1883, he acquired a major interest in the Frick coal fields and coke ovens east of Pittsburgh. In 1890 he added the Allegheny Steel Mills. Ore fields, railroads, ships, and still other acquisitions would follow.

Life After Steel

By the end of the century Carnegie was finally ready to put the world of steel behind him. Carnegie had married late in life, and he and his wife Louise had a four-year-old daughter, Margaret. When the famous banker J.P. Morgan indicated he and his partners were interested in buying the Carnegie Steel Company and all of its holdings, Carnegie wrote down a price on scrap of paper – \$480,000,000 – and had it shuttled downtown to Wall Street. Morgan gave it a glance and said, “I accept this price.” The world's most famous businessman was about to become the world's richest ex-businessman. In March 1901, Carnegie sailed with his small family to the Mediterranean, a happy man.

Carnegie's share of the sale was \$225,000,000. For much of the next two decades Carnegie's primary concern was how to give this money away. The story of Carnegie's philanthropy we will leave largely to the documents.

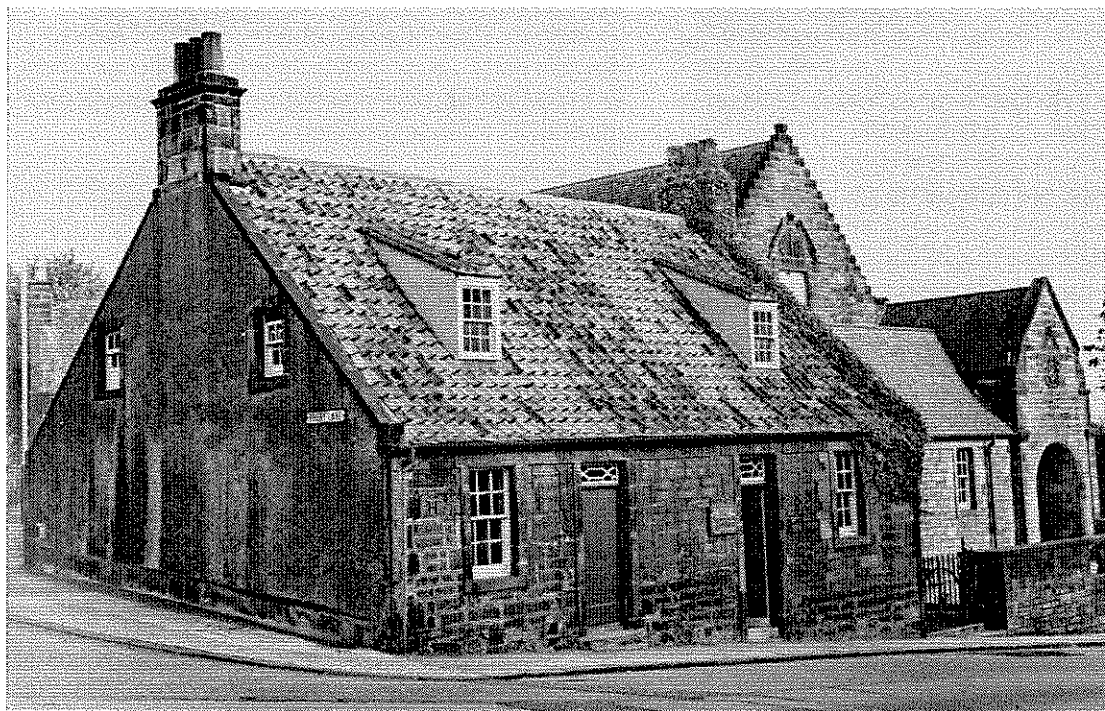
Andrew Carnegie died in 1919, one year after the end of World War I. Survived by his wife and daughter, Carnegie was laid to rest in a cemetery in the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in North Tarrytown, New York. A cross marked his grave with these simple words:

*Andrew Carnegie
Born in Dunfermline, Scotland,
25 November, 1835
Died in Lenox, Massachusetts,
11 August, 1919*

Andrew Carnegie was gone, but his life had been large. The question before us, is how do we measure this life. Examine the documents that follow and determine your answer to the question – *Was Andrew Carnegie a Hero?*

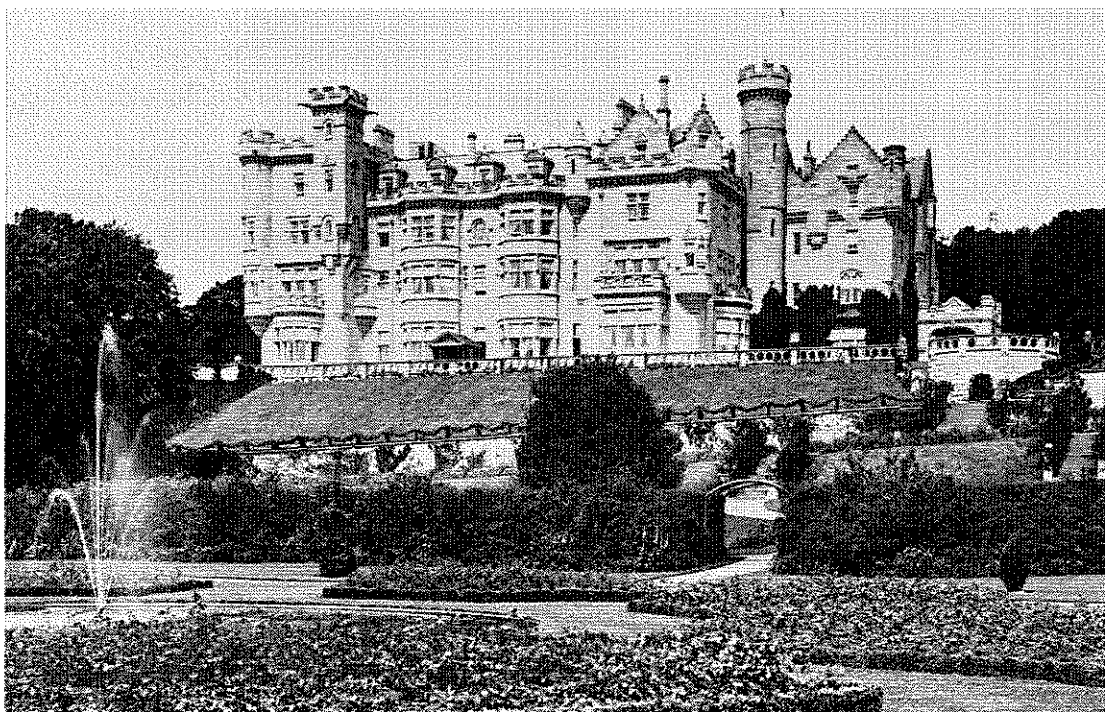
Document 1

Source: Photos courtesy of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh.



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Note: Birthplace cottage of Andrew Carnegie, Dunfermline, Scotland. Carnegie and his family of four lived in an attic room above his father's weaver's shop. The building was shared with another family. Years of residence: 1835 - 1848. Annual rent: \$20



Note: Skibo Castle, Dornoch Firth, Scotland. Andrew Carnegie purchased Skibo Castle in 1897 and made long, frequent visits, occasionally residing there. Renovation cost: about \$10,000,000

Document 2

Source: Andrew Carnegie, "Wealth," in the *North American Review*, June, 1889.

The contrast between the palace of the millionaire and the cottage of the laborer with us today measures the change that has come with civilization. This change, however, is not to be deplored, but welcomed as highly beneficial. It is well, nay essential, for the progress of the race that the houses of some should be homes for all that is highest and best in literature and the arts, and for all the refinements of civilization, rather than that none should be so. Much better this great irregularity than universal squalor....

The "good old times" were not good old times. Neither master nor servant was as well situated then as today. Formerly, articles were manufactured at the domestic hearth, or in small shops which formed part of the household.... The inevitable result of such a mode of manufacture was crude articles at high prices. Today the world obtains commodities of excellent quality at prices which even the preceding generation would have deemed incredible....

(It is to this law (of competition) that we owe our wonderful material development, ... while the law may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it insures the survival of the fittest in every department. We accept and welcome, therefore, ... the concentration of business in the hands of the few....

Not evil, but good, has come to the race from the accumulation of wealth by those who have the ability and energy to produce it.

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Document 3



Source: Harold C. Livesay, *Andrew Carnegie and the Rise of Big Business*, edited by Oscar Handlin, Harpers Collins Publisher, 1975.

Carnegie's watch on costs never let up in his first twenty-five years in the steel business. He grew more fanatical as years passed and competition stiffened. On one occasion in the 1890s, Carnegie asked his friend Frank Doubleday, a publisher, "How much money did you make last month, Frank?" Doubleday replied that he did not know; in his business, statements were drawn up only once a year.

"Do you know what I would do if I were in that kind business?" Carnegie asked.

"No, what?"

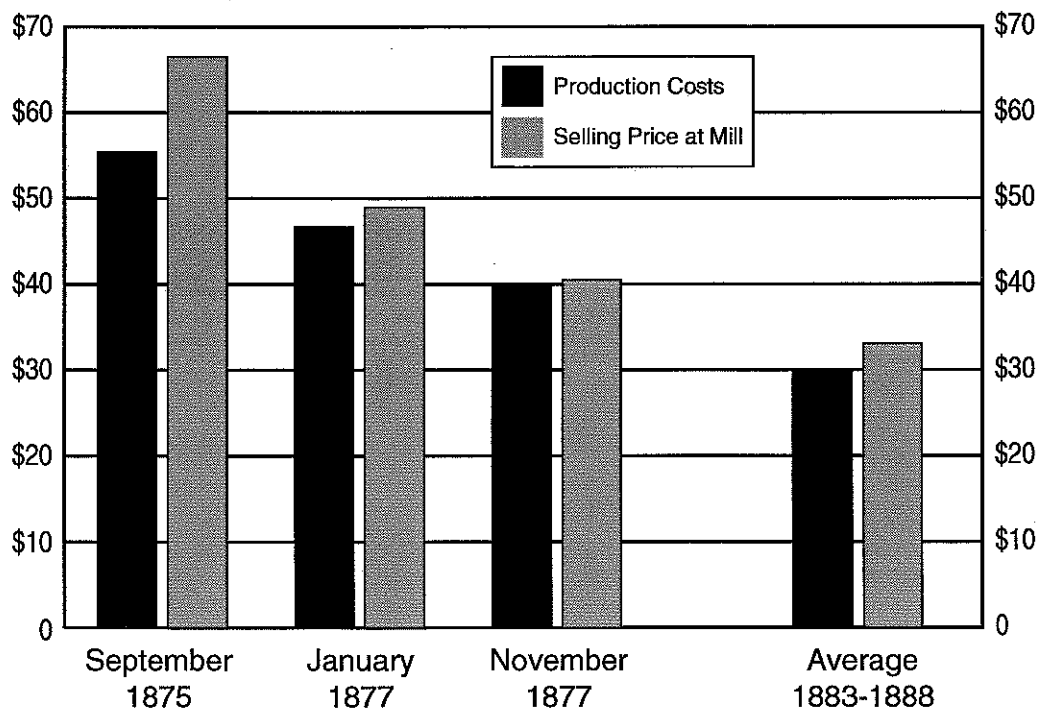
"I would get out of it."

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Document 4

Source: Adapted from William P. Shinn, General Manager, Edgar Thomson Steel Works report; and James Bridge, *The Inside History of the Carnegie Steel Company*, New York, 1903.

Production Costs and Selling Prices for One Ton of Steel Rails
(Carnegie's Edgar Thomson Steel Works)



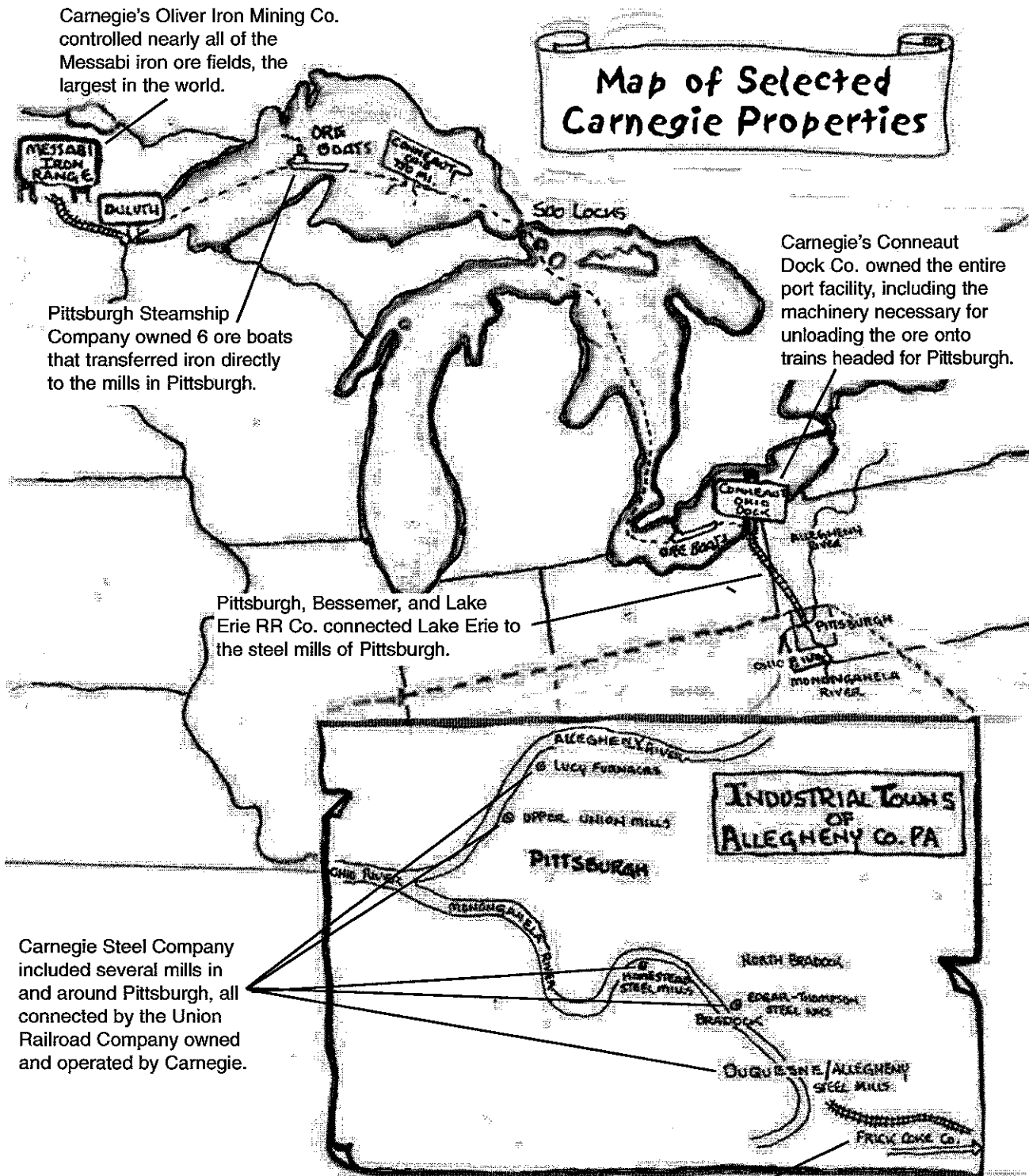
Document 5

 Notes

Source: Map created from various sources. Artist, Robert Negronida.

Document Note: *Vertical integration* is control of the production process from raw material to manufacture and sale of finished product. Carnegie was a pioneer of this business technique.

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Carnegie owned the Frick Coke fields. Coke is a fuel used to melt iron ore into molten iron which then is blasted with air to make steel.

Document 6

Source: Hamlin Garland, "Homestead and Its Perilous Trades," *McClure's Magazine*, June 1894.

Document Note: The Homestead steel mill in Pittsburgh was the site of one of the major strikes in American history. Hamlin Garland, a journalist, visited Homestead two years after the strike and observed these conditions.

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A cold, thin rain was falling as I took the little ferryboat and crossed the Monongahela River to see Homestead and its iron mills...

Everywhere in the boiler plate mill were pits like the mouth of hell, and fierce ovens giving off a glare of heat, and burning wood and iron, giving off horrible stanches of gases. Thunder upon thunder, clang upon clang, glare upon glare! Torches flamed far up in the dark spaces above. Engines moved to and fro, and steam hissed and threatened.

Everywhere were grimy men with sal-low and lean faces. The work was of the inhuman sort that hardens and coarsens.

"How long do you work?" I asked of a young man who stood at the furnace near me.

"Twelve hours," he replied. "The night set go on at six at night and come off at six in the morning. I go on at six and off at six."

"For how much pay?"

"Two dollars and a quarter." (a day)

"How much do those men get shoveling there in the rain?"

"One dollar and forty cents." (A cut has since taken place.)

"What proportion of the men get that pay?"

"Two-thirds of the whole plant, nearly two thousand. There are thirty-five hundred men in the mills. They get all prices, of course, from a dollar and forty cents up to the tonnage men, who get five and ten dollars per day when the mills run smooth."

"I suppose not many men make ten dol-lars per day."

"Well, hardly." He smiled....

(H)igh above ... an engine backed up with a load of crude molten iron....

"Yes, the men call this the deathtrap," repeated my guide; "... they wipe a man out here every little while.... Sometimes a chain breaks, and a ladle tips over; and the iron explodes --- like that.... Sometimes the slag falls on the workmen from the roadway up there. Of course, if everything is working smooth and a man watches out, why, all right! But you take it after they've been on duty for twelve hours without sleep, and running like hell, everybody tired and loggy, and it's a different story."

Document 7

Source: Adapted from Historical Statistics of the United States, Part 1. Bureau of the Census, Washington D.C., 1975.

**Average Daily Hours and Average Daily Wages
in US Manufacturing: 1892**

| Industry | Average Daily Hours | Average Daily Wages |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Textiles | 10.20 | \$1.09 |
| Shoemaking | 9.81 | \$1.58 |
| Paper makers | 10.87 | \$1.33 |
| Machine shop workers | 10.06 | \$1.87 |
| Iron and steel workers | 10.67 | \$1.81 |
| All industries | 10.04 | \$1.46 |

Note: \$600 a year supported a typical six-member family.

Note: In 1900 Andrew Carnegie personally made \$23,000,000. Figuring that Carnegie worked a 50-hour week and a 50-week year, Carnegie's hourly "wage" in 1900 would have been equal to \$9,200. His daily "wage" was therefore about \$92,000.

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Document 8

Source: Andrew Carnegie, "Wealth," in the *North American Review*, June, 1889.

... What is the proper mode of administering wealth after the laws (of survival of the fittest) upon which civilization is founded have thrown it into the hands of the few?

There are but three modes in which surplus wealth can be disposed of. It can be left to the families of the decedents; or it can be bequeathed for public purposes; or, finally, it can be administered by its possessors during their lives....

The first is the most injudicious.... Why should men leave great fortunes to their children? If this is done from affection, is this not misguided affection?

As to the second mode, that of leaving wealth at death for public uses, (why should a man) wait until he is dead before he becomes of much good in the world? ... Men who leave vast sums in this way may fairly be thought men who would not have left it at all had they been able to take it with them....

There remains, then, only one mode of using great fortunes; ... the duty of the man of wealth (is to) set an example of modest ... living...; and ... to consider all surplus revenues ... as trust funds ... to produce the most beneficial results for the community – the man of wealth thus becoming the ... agent for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer; doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves....

The man who dies rich dies disgraced.

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Document 9



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Source: Chart created from Joseph Frazier Wall, *Andrew Carnegie*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1970.

Carnegie's Philanthropy

(Partial List)

| Gifts | Amount | Note |
|--------------------------|---------------|---|
| Princeton University | \$400,000 | To create Lake Carnegie for rowing |
| TIAA | \$1,000,000 | Teachers' Insurance & Annuity Assoc. |
| Dunfermline Trust | \$4,000,000 | Carnegie's boyhood home town |
| Homestead Relief Fund | \$4,000,000 | Fund for steel workers and families |
| Church organs | \$6,248,000 | Total number, 7689 |
| Carnegie Peace Endowment | \$10,000,000 | To "hasten the abolition of war" |
| Universities of Scotland | \$10,000,000 | Endowment for four universities |
| Teachers' Pension Fund | \$15,000,000 | Old age help for poor professors |
| Carnegie Institution | \$25,000,000 | To promote scientific research |
| Free public libraries | \$50,365,000 | Total number, 2811, mostly in US |
| Carnegie Corporation* | \$145,000,000 | Supertrust for administering a large part of Carnegie's remaining fortune |
| Total (This list only) | \$271,013,000 | |
| Total Giving Overall | \$350,695,653 | |

*The Carnegie Corporation's net assets in 2005 were listed at \$2,167,000,000. The foundation is currently giving out about \$100,000,000 a year, most of it to education.

Document 10

Source: *The Saturday Globe*, Utica, New York, July 9, 1892.

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