

Foundations of Steel

The Susquehanna River and Pennsylvania's iron industry converged at this point and spurred the development of two towns: Steelton and New Market. Across the river from here is the industrial town of Steelton. In the mid-1800s it was a quiet rural area where canal, river, turnpike, and railroads passed through. That changed in 1866 after a handful of businessmen acquired 91 acres on the east bank of the river and formed the Pennsylvania Steel Company. Steelton grew rapidly as the new industry drew an influx of immigrant workers looking for well-paying jobs and a place to settle. By the early 20th century, Steelton had a diverse population of more than 16,000 residents representing more than 30 different ethnicities.

Panoramic view of Steelton, Pa., circa 1900.

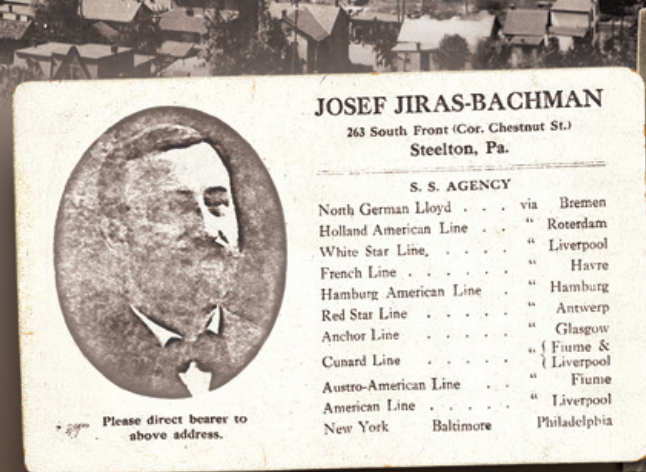
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Example of one type of identification card worn by immigrants arriving in Steelton in the early 1900s.

Courtesy Jon Yetter Collection

Photo of a group of shipping employees from a Steelton merchant mill, 1909.



The Steelton facility was one of the earliest commercial steel plants in America. It used an innovative steel-making process called the Bessemer Method to produce large quantities of steel inexpensively. The steel molded in Steelton built the American railroad system, U.S. military battleships, skyscrapers, and bridges.

Here in the village of New Market, significant growth occurred as a result of the area's steel-making prosperity. In the mid-1800s, it was a small settlement comprised largely of Pennsylvania Germans. New Market, however, grew quickly and became an early bedroom community of Steelton. Many of its residents commuted to jobs in Steelton by ferryboat.



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Susquehanna River Water Trail

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