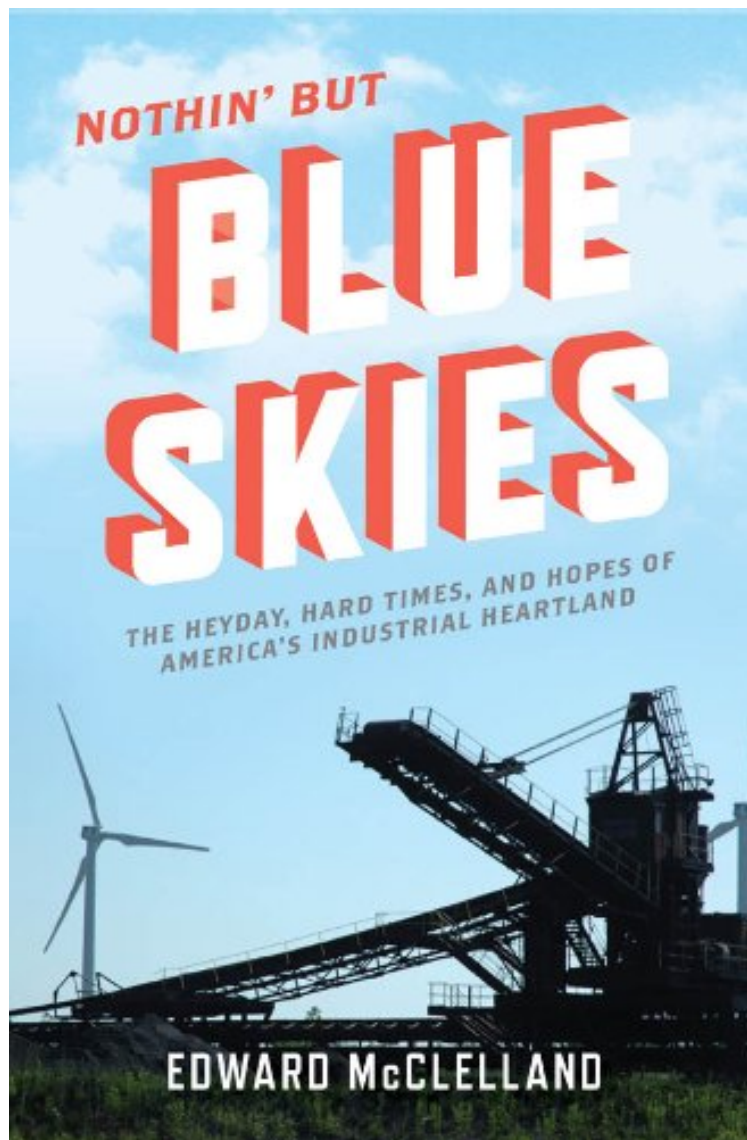


(Mobile ebook) Nothin' but Blue Skies: The Heyday, Hard Times, and Hopes of America's Industrial Heartland

Nothin' but Blue Skies: The Heyday, Hard Times, and Hopes of America's Industrial Heartland

Edward McClelland

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Edward McClelland : Nothin' but Blue Skies: The Heyday, Hard Times, and Hopes of America's Industrial Heartland before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Nothin' but Blue Skies: The Heyday, Hard Times, and Hopes of America's Industrial Heartland:

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Moment in HistoryBy ContentiousWhen I ordered "nothin but

BLUE SKIES" from almost a month ago, I thought Edward McClelland was unduly optimistic in the title and implied premise of the book. Then, I realized the title is a satirical, double entendre, or maybe a triple. He has used his expert reporter's skills to collect heart breaking stories from rust belt communities whose loss of smoke stack industries has brought back "blue skies", which, so far, have not been much consolation to the, much reduced, under employed populations now living smoke free. I grew up in and graduated from public high school in Detroit, worked in two auto assembly plants, and in peripheral industries for the bulk of my working life. I agree with the author that much blame for the decline of the American branded auto industry rests on management denial of world-wide automobile trends and oil supply realities. However, he touches oh, so lightly on the reality that overreaching by the industrial unions was at least as much to blame. The second meaning of "blue skies" is that, for some of the cities, new industries such as urban agriculture, wind powered and direct solar powered electrical generation, et cetera probably will not require reestablishing the smoke stacks. Some of the recovery scenarios my seem unrealistically optimistic, and may be too long term to be politically realistic. Nevertheless, they are more honest, and sustainable than the approach followed by the "feds" with respect to General Motors. In that case ownership was stripped from historic stakeholders, then essentially awarded to the organization whose members would be most likely to vote the correct way. Meanwhile, I must be optimistic myself. I just bought a 2013 General Motors SUV. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Of Steel Mills, Catholic Schools A Lost Golden Age of Smoke and Opportunity By Steve Timble

NOTHIN' BUT BLUE SKIES walks the empty sidewalks, vacant lots, abandoned homes and gutted factories of the Midwest's Golden Age of Manufacturing. Along the way, Ted McClelland introduces us to the people, young and old, that lived, worked and survived this strange and celebrated time. This narrative is more than economics and ruin porn, it's the story of Midwestern Soul, limitless opportunity, class mobility and accomplishment that was followed by loss, longing, poverty and sadness. The author has a great ear for the stories and dialog that tell the day-to-day history of the millions of blue collar workers that saw their future in the smoke and noise of American Industry. And he has a great mind for the benefits that this time brought and the clean, new, world that emerged from the closing of the industrial Midwest. NOTHIN' BUT BLUE SKIES reminds me that there was time in Chicago when the Steel Mills throbbed endlessly and every Catholic School was at full enrollment. It recalls a time of corner bars and work friendships, of softball games and company brass bands. It follows the loss of the neighborhood industry and the birth of a brand new cleaner, greener and perhaps, less soulful Chicago. It's respect for the reader and that time is indescribably sincere and is balanced by a brutal dedication to fact telling and journalism. As a life long Chicagoan and cold-winter Midwesterner, NOTHIN' BUT BLUE SKIES touched my heart and mind. It evoked the world of my immigrant relatives even as it touched on my present life in South Chicago and Logan Square. And, perhaps most importantly, it made me think about the future of the place that I will always consider home. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. McClelland's Biases May Show, but

Blue Skies Works as a Hard-Hitting Economic History By Dave Todaro Ed McClelland's 2013 examination of the part of the United States that extends like a splotch of spilled motor oil from Syracuse, NY in the east, across the Great Lakes to Illinois in the west, is Michigan-centric. Forgive McClelland for this. He's a proud Michigander and like this proud Western New Yorker, he celebrates the role his neighborhood played in making this part of the world the 20th-Century arsenal of democracy. His street cred beyond Michigan comes from travelling to nearly every city of size in the region and learning not only from books, but from people who represent all walks of life. McClelland shows us labor unions and the heroin trade; General Motors and Big Steel; working class families disintegrating under the strain of unemployment; neighbors' creative care for vacant lots, and racial tension. Coney dogs, the Homestead Grays. Profane tirades alongside post-industrial religious revival. Arson as a tool for clearing blight. A city's psyche in relationship to its once-flammable river. Attempts, some successful, to restore some of the former luster to these communities. In the short months since "Nothin' But Blue Skies" has been published, the places he writes about continue to evolve. The region's prognosis (at least judging from Buffalo's current story) is probably rosier than where this book leaves off. But don't be deterred because the story McClelland tells about your hometown is no longer quite up to date. The insights he includes (Example: The riots of '67 didn't destroy Detroit; it was the heroin market created by returning Vietnam vets just as newly-unemployed factory workers needed a new career) are heavy. The book is sobering. And just then, McClelland gooses us with unexpected humor — even taking pokes at himself while telling the story of his native Lansing, Michigan. It works. True to his Michigan roots, McClelland summons the tone of a largely bygone America, where "Union Shop" signs were displayed on its Main Streets, and it was sinful to patronize a non-union business if there was a unionized alternative. To his credit, he spends some time contrasting the effectiveness of Flint's militant locals with that of Lansing's more cooperative ones. This is a valuable portion of the book with evergreen lessons for labor; McClelland could have spent more energy here. Is "Nothin' But Blue Skies" an intentional attempt to show how the free market treats cities that lose market value? Europeans are fascinated by Detroit because their socialistic societies would never allow a city to rot, McClelland explains. A free market proponent might counter that misguided government meddling, such as LBJ's "Great Society" which encouraged welfare over work; and the Federally-sponsored urban renewal programs that turned the cities' neighborhoods

into highways and denuded them of their architectural treasures, nullifies any claim that more government involvement could have helped. In that light, I consider the leading role New York State has played in my hometown's current revival. Fortunately, the private sector has followed the state's lead by pouring its own billion into revitalizing Buffalo. Is it inefficient government meddling when that happens? It will be years before we have enough evidence to make that judgment. For now, McClelland reminded this fiscal conservative that pure ideology seldom provides solutions for real-world problems.

The Upper Midwest and Great Lakes region became the "arsenal of democracy"—the greatest manufacturing center in the world—in the years during and after World War II thanks to natural advantages and a welcoming culture. Decades of unprecedented prosperity followed, memorably punctuated by riots, strikes, burning rivers, and oil embargoes. A vibrant, quintessentially American character bloomed in the region's cities, suburbs, and backwaters. But the innovation and industry that defined the Rust Belt also helped to hasten its demise. An air conditioner invented in Upstate New York transformed the South from a sweaty backwoods to a nonunionized industrial competitor. Japan and Germany recovered from their defeat to build fuel-efficient cars in the stagnant 1970s. The tentpole factories that paid workers so well also filled the air with soot, and poisoned waters and soil. The jobs drifted elsewhere, and many of the people soon followed suit. *Nothin' but Blue Skies* tells the story of how the country's industrial heartland grew, boomed, bottomed, and hopes to be reborn. Through a propulsive blend of storytelling and reportage, celebrated writer Edward McClelland delivers the rise, fall, and revival of the Rust Belt and its people.

From *Booklist* To a steelworker, autobuilder, or shop rat, *Blue Skies* unclouded by smog spell unemployment and economic disaster. In this elegy for the bustling industrial cities of the Midwest, McClelland not only examines what was once the Arsenal of Democracy and is now the Rust Belt, but also profiles the people caught in the decline, from regular Joes to such high-profile figures as Dennis Kucinich and Michael Moore. Focusing on personal tales of woe with sympathy and verve, McClelland brings home the impact of the titanic shift in industry in the last half of the twentieth century. That history is also largely the history of labor unions, whose battles are displayed in full force. Along the way, McClelland provides snapshots of his own journey, which started in a Michigan school next to an auto plant. The result provides an answer for anyone who has ever looked at a shuttered factory and asked, *Why?* —Bridget Thoreson *Idquo*; Engagingly written *hellip*; McClelland's book reminds us of what has transpired in the heart of the country over the past 30 years and of the battering endured by hundreds of thousands of working-class families as global corporatism and federal trade policies gutted the American middle class. *rdquo*; *Los Angeles Times* *Idquo*; McClelland is a terrific reporter, smoothly blending facts from the historical record with the bitter, often profane, conversation of the displaced and desperate men and women he meets and his own reflections. These last are often as witty as they are shrewd. *rdquo*; *The Washington Post* *Idquo*; Focusing on personal tales of woe with sympathy and verve, McClelland brings home the impact of the titanic shift in industry in the last half of the twentieth century *hellip*; The result provides an answer for anyone who has ever looked at a shuttered factory and asked, *Why?* *rdquo*; *Booklist* *Idquo*; McClelland's knack for turning a phrase (*Idquo*; My last two full-time jobs no longer exist. For a Generation-Xer, tales from the 1960s are employment porn.') allows him to tie together these auto and steel towns and capture touching, personal tales so as to bring these dying municipalities back to life, if only on the page *hellip*; A reservoir of information about American manufacturing, labor unions, and social movements, McClelland's book, ironically, stands as a testament to the simple truth that one steel worker told him: *Idquo*; You can't grow an economy without making things, producing stuff. *rdquo*; *Publishers Weekly* *Idquo*; McClelland helps to make the old feel new by drawing on a combination of personal contacts, extensive interviewing and acute observation based on showing up and hanging out. Little-known details emerge throughout *hellip*; his book is admirably long on explanation and empathy. *rdquo*; *Kirkus* *sldquo*; McClelland, a former newspaper reporter, is an engaging writer with an ear for local voices. He has a knack for the memorable phrase and often lends a poetic touch to urban affair *hellip*; by memorializing the best days of American labor, he reminds us of just how much we had. And, of course, how much we lost. *rdquo*; *Robert Smith, Cleveland Plain Dealer* *Idquo*; Edward McClelland, who knows the territory, has produced a dazzling and heart-breaking piece of front-line reporting on the glory days and collapse of the industrial heartland, and on the pain and resilience of the people left in its wreckage. From Syracuse and Buffalo to Flint and Chicago, we meet the workers who wonder what has happened to their lives. Raw and vibrant, *Nothin' But Blue Skies* sings the Rust Belt blues. *rdquo*; *Richard C. Longworth, author of Caught in the Middle: America's Heartland in the Age of Globalism* *Idquo*; In *Nothin' But Blue Skies*, Edward McClelland assembles old-school reporting, memoir, history and wit into a brilliant story about the workers and robber barons who created booming economies, the strikes, politics and global changes that rendered them depressed, and the people from Decatur to Syracuse trying to figure out what's next. Neither starry-eyed nor despairing, *Nothin' But Blue Skies* is the book to read on the past, present, and future of the Rust Belt. *rdquo*; *Anne Trubek, author of A Skeptic's Guide to Writer's Houses and co-editor of Rust Belt Chic* About the Author Edward McClelland is the author of *Young Mr. Obama: Chicago and the Making of a Black President*, *The Third Coast: Sailors, Strippers, Fisherman, Folksingers*, *Long-*

Haired Ojibway Painters, and God-Save-the-Queen Monarchists of the Great Lakes, and Horseplayers: Life at the Track. He has contributed to the New York Times, Playboy, Slate, the Nation, and many other publications. He lives in Chicago.