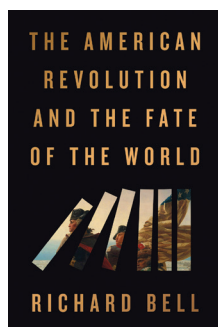
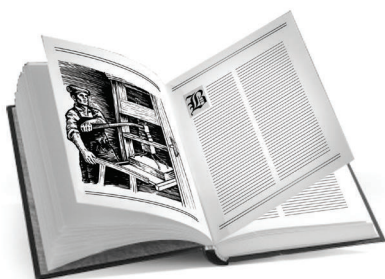


BOOK REVIEWS



The American Revolution and the Fate of the World

By Richard Bell
Riverhead Books, 2025
416 pages
Hardcover, \$35

Reviewed by Brady J. Crytzer

Richard Bell's *The American Revolution and the Fate of the World* invites readers to reconsider the Revolution not as an insular American struggle but as a conflict shaped by (and consequential for) a far wider world. A British-born historian now teaching in the United States, Bell brings an outsider's lens to the subject, urging readers to detach from the familiar classroom narrative and see the Revolution as one chapter in a much larger contest among global empires.

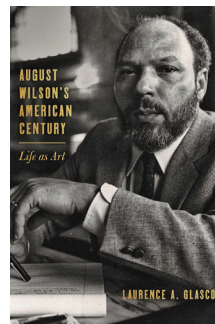
At the core of Bell's work is the idea that the Revolution triggered reverberations far beyond the borders of the 13 colonies. He blends broad geopolitical analysis with vivid portraits of individuals whose lives intersected with these international currents. Bell pays particular attention to people whose experiences often remain on the margins of mainstream Revolutionary histories: enslaved people, Indigenous communities, women, and others whose stories expose the uneven distribution of freedom and upheaval.

Bell extends his inquiry to regions that rarely appear in standard Revolutionary-era accounts. In the Caribbean, he shows how fierce naval conflict among European powers revolved around high-stakes sugar economies. In India, he highlights the ways British anxieties about colonial resistance elsewhere emboldened local actors. Even Australia enters the frame, where shifts in imperial priorities influenced emerging settlement strategies. Through these episodes, Bell demonstrates how alliances forged by the rebelling colonies strained British resources and helped create economic disruptions that rippled across oceans.

The book's narrative is built on a wide base of archival research but remains accessible; Bell avoids jargon and keeps his focus on the interplay between large-scale forces and personal experiences. He also addresses the long-term consequences of the war, tracing how imperial reform efforts tightened control in other colonies, how Indigenous nations faced increasing vulnerability, and how global trade networks reshaped themselves in the Revolution's aftermath.

The American Revolution and the Fate of the World offers a compelling reorientation of a well-trodden subject. Bell's global perspective broadens the traditional timeline and geography of the war, making the book appealing both to scholars and to general readers seeking a fresh vantage point. Its clarity and ambition place it among the standout contributions to recent Revolutionary-era studies. 

Brady J. Crytzer is a specialist of the frontier history of North America and an associate editor of the *Journal of the American Revolution*.



August Wilson's African American Century: Life as Art

By Laurence A. Glasco
University of Pittsburgh Press, 2026
360 pages, 45 B&W photos,
1 map
Hardcover, \$35

Reviewed by Samuel W Black, Director, African American Program

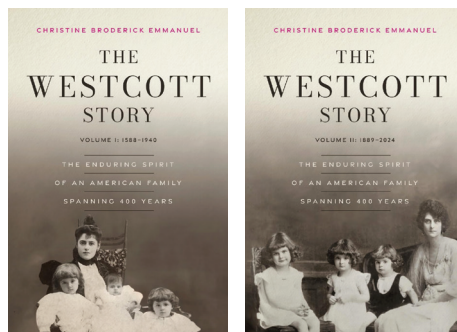
University of Pittsburgh history professor emeritus Dr. Laurence "Larry" Glasco has written a literary biography of playwright August Wilson that explains Wilson's creation of the century cycle of plays that brought him fame and notoriety in his home community, Pittsburgh's Hill District. Unlike the 2023 biography, *August Wilson: A Life* by Patti Hartigan, Glasco has benefited from decades of research, teaching, and being a Pittsburgh local to pen a deep and detailed story of Wilson's life and creativity in *August Wilson's African American Century: Life as Art*. This biography unearths August's process in developing the 10-play cycle that brought him fame and acclaim. Glasco clarifies Wilson's growth as a local poet and member of the Centre Avenue Poets during the Black Art Movement of the 1960s. He portrays the questions around Wilson's Black Nationalist credentials as an issue that followed August throughout his literary life.

Important aspects of the Wilson legacy in St. Paul, MN, and Seattle, WA, clarify his life as a budding playwright and trajectory into the echelon of American theater. Hartigan writes about Wilson's development at the O'Neil and Yale Drama School under the tutelage of Lloyd Richards, but Glasco focuses more on the role of Wilson's Pittsburgh life and development as the buttress to his playwright success.

Glasco reveals the relationships between Wilson and his local Centre Avenue poetic comrades: Rob Penny, Chawley Williams, Nick Flournoy, and Sala Udin. The influence each had on Wilson's writing, first as a poet and second as a literary and nationalist comrade, laid a foundation for Wilson's writing development. Glasco discusses Wilson's relationship with each and their dynamic in developing Black arts and, more importantly, theater arts in Pittsburgh. Wilson's initial struggles with local theater, personal relationships, and family dynamics all offer insight into the life and mind of the man. His writing was influenced largely by European poets such as Dylan Thomas and John Berryman.

A teacher of Hill District history, Glasco lends his historian chops to further dissecting Wilson's plays for historical reference, not as a way of criticism, but to place Wilson's storytelling in the decades he chronicles to better understand the playwright as a member of the community. Wilson's plays are derived from his Hill District community, with characters loosely based on real people and real times. Wilson grew up in a diverse Hill District that included African American, Jewish, Italian, and other European ethnicities. But the characters he portrayed or created for his plays are largely African American.

Wilson's own biracial parentage created an issue within his identity and often left him feeling like an "outsider." Although he was raised by his mother as an African American, fellow students, people in the Black Arts and Nationalist circles, and critics of his playwriting all questioned his racial identity. Wilson stood on his Blackness even to the detriment of his position to empower Blacks in the theater world. Race, culture, and history converge in Wilson's American century of plays. Larry Glasco indeed traces Wilson's life as art in *August Wilson's American Century: Life as Art*. 



The Westcott Story: The Enduring Spirit of an American Family Spanning 400 Years

Volume I: 1588-1940

Volume II: 1889-2024

By Christine Broderick Emmanuel

www.ChristineBEmmanuel.com

Self-published, 2025

380 pages and 372 pages

Paperback \$15.99

Reviewed by Cassandra Maas

As the United States approaches its 250th birthday, not every family can say that it's been around since even before the country was established. However, the Westcott family sure can. *The Westcott Story* shares the history of 14 generations of the Westcott family, spanning the years 1588–2024. It includes the family's roots in Europe, their immigration to the New World, and the family's experiences during the establishment of the United States and the different phases that the country has experienced.

The Westcott Story is an interesting blend of biographic, demographic, and social history. There are references to well-known historical figures and events, all interwoven into the Westcott family story. The family was also impacted by wars, pandemics, weather, and other external factors, reflecting the times and places in which they lived.

The Westcott family also has strong Pittsburgh ties. The author's great-grandfather, Irish immigrant John Broderick, worked 50 years for Jones and Laughlin Steel Corporation. Her great-grandmother's half-sister was a nun with the Sisters of Mercy. A cousin worked at the Homestead Steel Works after World War I. The author's grandfather, Dan Broderick, was the son of Irish immigrants and a native of Pittsburgh, born on the North Side, raised in Dormont, and founder of the family business — D.T. Broderick Lumber Company. The author herself was raised in Pittsburgh, attending school at St. Bernard's. The author's sister, Patricia Broderick, and her sister's husband, Frank Cappelli, created children's songs under the Peanut Heaven record label. Cappelli also created the popular *Cappelli & Company* children's show on WTAE-TV.

The two volumes of this book provide an interesting way to learn about the Westcott family. They also provide a different way to look at the cultural and social history of different areas of the country, including Pittsburgh, through the story of a family that is both unique and yet also relatable in many ways to other families' stories. 

Cassandra Maas has been a volunteer with the History Center since 2018.