Alabama Claims) as well as the employment of military commissions outside the area of actual hostilities (the Supreme Court case of Ex parte Milligan).

Neff explicitly prepared his narrative with the layman in mind. It takes no legal training to appreciate his argument: he has clearly defined his terms and rendered complex notions understandable without resorting to distorting simplification. Here and there, the author’s dry wit makes a brief appearance, but on the whole he presents issues in a fairly systematic way that enlightens the reader. Students of the war will find that a careful reading of this volume will pay off in a more informed understanding of the conflict, its conduct, and its consequences.

Brooks D. Simpson is Foundation Professor of History at Arizona State University, where he teaches at Barrett, The Honors College. Among his recent books is The Civil War in the East: Struggle, Stalemate, and Victory (2011).

Nothin’ But Blue Skies: The Heyday, Hard Times, and Hopes of America’s Industrial Heartland
By Edward McClelland
(New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013. Pp. 343. Bibliography, index. $27.00.)

Globalization and the steady decline of manufacturing within the United States have prompted growing numbers of academic and journalistic studies of the impact of deindustrialization on the nation’s communities and workers. Journalist Edward McClelland combines autobiography and a reporter’s eye for human stories as he explores industrial decline in cities of the Midwest and the Mid-Atlantic. He covers a broad canvas both chronologically and geographically—Homestead in 1892, the Great Steel Strike in 1919, the Flint sitdown strike in 1937, the 1967 Detroit riots, and more recent developments in industrial cities stretching from Syracuse to Chicago all play in his narrative.

This book strikingly reveals the different ways that historians and journalists approach similar historical events. McClelland relies principally on visits to deteriorating cities and industrial sites, and he narrates personal stories based on interviews with residents of these communities. There are no footnotes and no list of persons interviewed, and when McClelland does offer statistics to complement individual accounts the reader has no idea where the information comes from or how the author came up with his figures. Finally, readers do not know whether the names of the people who provide the countless vignettes are real or pseudonymous. As a historian and the co-author of a book on industrial
decline in the anthracite coal region of northeastern Pennsylvania, I found these differences frustrating.

More importantly, *Nothin’ But Blue Skies* lacks an interpretive thread that ties together the stories of the devastated cities and the lives of McClelland’s interviewees. The book begins and ends with visits to Gus’s Bar in Lansing, Michigan, a shop bar close to a General Motors plant. Gus speaks about the hard times he and the community have experienced with the decline of automaking. At the book’s end we learn that Gus has sold his bar and will be going back to his native Greece. His personal story seems meant to stand for the larger story of Lansing’s decline and that of the midwestern industrial belt over the past five decades. Like the book as a whole, however, the story is evocative but not very substantial.

The lack of an overall interpretation leads to an often confusing organization of chapters. Chapter 13, for example, begins with an account of how the foreclosure crisis devastated Slavic Village, a Cleveland neighborhood that saw thirty percent of its homes go into foreclosure in 2006, but then it shifts without much transition to individual accounts of two auto industry employees, Tom Lavey and Nick Waun, whose jobs disappeared in the economic meltdown that accompanied the mortgage crisis. The material here is very similar to stories told in other chapters more focused on individual communities—Lansing, Flint, Buffalo, and Syracuse, for instance. It is often difficult to figure out why particular stories appear in one place in the narrative rather than another. Consequently, the reader gains no sense of development or change over time in the course of the book. Moving as it does between historical background and contemporary reportage and organized generally in geographical terms, the text lacks a coherent narrative or interpretation.

Historians may find this work useful as primary source material, and they may be able to mine it for individual accounts that parallel or complement their own analyses of deindustrialization, but as a work that stands on its own, *Nothin’ But Blue Skies* is a disappointment.

**Thomas Dublin** is Bartle Distinguished Professor at the State University of New York at Binghamton and is the co-author of *The Face of Decline: The Pennsylvania Anthracite Region in the Twentieth Century* (2005).