



Stephen M. Jenks

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1901-1974

By James B. Austin

Stephen M. Jenks, who retired in 1966 as Executive Vice-President-Engineering and Research for the United States Steel Corporation, died in Pittsburgh on April 12, 1974, at the age of seventy-three. During his forty years of service with U.S. Steel, he became one of the steel industry's best-known engineers and executives. Although he had been widely recognized within the company for his engineering skill, he first came into national prominence as General Superintendent of the great Gary Steel Works, at Gary, Indiana, during the years 1940 to 1949, when the production of that plant was critical for the war effort. In later years, as head of research, he exerted a prime influence on the development of the first large-scale continuous slab-casting facility at Gary, and he made significant contributions to the development and installation of automatic controls on rolling mills. Beyond these professional achievements, he was as much interested in men as he was in machinery and materials.

Stephen Jenks was born in Port Huron, Michigan, on February 18, 1901. Following early schooling there, he went to Cornell University, from which he received the degree of Mechanical Engineer in 1923. After graduation he worked for a brief period as a blast furnace blower at the Aliquippa Plant of Jones and Laughlin Steel Corporation. In 1925 he began his long association with U.S. Steel by joining the American Steel and Wire Company, then a subsidiary, as an engineer. Four years later he was transferred to

Gary, Indiana, as a fuel engineer, but he returned to Pittsburgh in 1933 as a power engineer. He was promoted to Assistant Chief Engineer in 1935, and a year later became Chief Engineer of the Construction Division of Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation, another subsidiary of U.S. Steel. In 1937 he returned to Gary as Chief Engineer of Gary, Steel Works and in that same year was named Assistant General Superintendent. In 1940 he was appointed General Superintendent.

Nine years later, he was made Manager of Operations for the Chicago District of Carnegie-Illinois Steel, but in 1950 he was named Vice-President-Operations with headquarters in Pittsburgh. When Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation was merged into U.S. Steel in 1951, he was appointed Vice-President of Manufacturing. In 1959 he became Executive Vice-President-Engineering and Research, a position he held until his retirement in 1966.

In recognition of his many outstanding accomplishments, in 1956 the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers gave Stephen Jenks the Benjamin F. Fairless Award with the citation: "For distinguished achievements in iron and steel production and ferrous metallurgy." When the United States inaugurated a series of technical exchanges with the Soviet Union in 1958, the first delegation to visit Russia was a group representing the American steel industry. Stephen Jenks was a prominent and valuable member of this team. In 1966 he was made a Fellow of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, and in 1968 he was elected to the National Academy of Engineering. From 1970 to 1972 he served on the Ad Hoc Panel on the Abatement of Sulfur Dioxide Emissions from Industrial Sources of the NAE-NRC Committee on Air Quality Management.

Among his special technical interests were the blast furnace and the open hearth processes that he was constantly trying to improve. He was a strong advocate of the use of sintered ore in the former and was much concerned about the development of better refractories for both of them. What he saw in the Soviet Union during his visit there led him to intensify his efforts to expand the use of sinter within U.S. Steel, and he became a leader in the design and

construction of large ore-sintering plants. He also stressed the need for improved refractories and for better designs for open hearth furnaces.

One of Stephen Jenks' most notable engineering efforts, however, was the building of a defense armor plant within six months during World War II. Under a contract placed by the Defense Plant Corporation with U.S. Steel in April 1942, he directed the design and construction of a complete seventy-five-acre plant for rolling, flame cutting, heat treating and testing armor plate for tank tops. This involved moving a complete rolling mill and its motor drive from Gary Steel Works to a new location about a mile away. The plant went into production in October 1942.

In spite of his many professional responsibilities, he always found time to engage in civic affairs. While at Gary he was Director, and at one time First Vice-President, of the Indiana State Chamber of Commerce. He served for a time on the Indiana Governor's Tax Study Commission. He was Director of the Gary Industrial Foundation and of the Community Chest. Throughout World War II he was Chairman of the Gary Chapter of the American Red Cross. He was a Trustee of the Carnegie Institute of Technology and a member of the Cornell University Council.

He had a special interest in young people. He was for some time President of the Allegheny Council of the Boy Scouts of America and served on the Boy Scouts Executive Board. Jenks was also named Chairman of a Youth Service Committee, which made some specific recommendations aimed at curbing youth crime in Allegheny County.

But these bare bones of Stephen Jenks' career do not do him justice, because they only hint at one of his outstanding characteristics-his great friendliness and warmth, which contributed so much to his success as a leader of men and in his participation in public affairs. He obviously liked people, was considerate of them, and was always ready to help them. In matters of engineering he could be precise and demanding, but you always knew that you had his support at all times. So he has left behind him not only some technical monuments to progress in the steel industry, but also a fine example of leadership and the art of managing men.