Few events in American history have received as much attention as the Civil War. Thousands of books and articles document all aspects of the conflict, carefully dissecting battle plans and troop movements, painstakingly documenting the smallest details. Historians—both amateur and professional—have examined every day of the four year war. And historical reenactors have devoted thousands of hours and dollars to recreating this chapter in American history. Despite this tremendous amount of literature and attention, we know surprisingly little about the personal experiences of ordinary soldiers or civilians during the war, as they relate to a social historian’s field of study. We have countless diaries and letters, but social historians have just begun to analyze these texts in a broader, historical context.1 As a result, a great deal of information about the war and its citizens as it pertains to the field of social history remains untouched.
Realizing that secondary documentation of Pittsburgh's home-front during the Civil War was almost non-existent. I'm in the middle of writing a historical fiction which partially takes place in antebellum Pittsburgh. Wikipedia helped me sort my facts out some, but that ubiquitous online resource can't hold a candle to the detailed intimacy contained in Arthur B. Fox's exhaustive manual. Thanks to this book, I've learned about everything ranging from Pittsburghers' attitudes toward the south prior to the Civil War, to the locations of camps and forts, to the exact dates of the formations of various volunteer brigades, Civil War-era medicine, the iron industry, and exactly how the