Bigham offers an especially rich account of the evolution of the leadership of this community. He is at his best in tracing the transition of the black middle class from the late nineteenth century to the early and mid-twentieth century. The popularity of Booker T. Washington’s philosophy among the middle-class had as much to do with the pressures exerted by powerful whites on a local level as it had to do with their own inherent appeal. Although organized “integrationism” was weak in black Evansville, there was plenty of resistance to “accommodationism.”

Bigham traces the emergence of a new articulate “race pride” in Evansville during the Depression years of the 1930s. Although neither Garveyism nor the “New Negro” appear to have had any influence in the Evansville of the 1920s, these ideas did find resonance in the thirties. This was expressed on multiple levels: politically, through a new independence which redefined black relationships to both established parties; economically, through the development of black businesses which served a black clientele; socially, through the further development of black institutions and organizations.

Moreover, this new “race pride” did not preclude relations with whites. In fact, in this period a new set of relations developed in some new quarters, as manifested by the rise of the UAW-CIO in Evansville and by the new strength of the New Deal-based Democratic party. Working-class Afro-Americans built new cooperative relations with working-class whites. And in so doing, they began to build the foundations for their struggles for equality in the late twentieth century.


Toward the end of Walter Gresham’s life, a Republican senator dubbed him “that old Welkin of diplomacy, that plantigrade pachyderm from the Wabash.” The tone of contempt reflected the dislike GOP members felt for a man who had been both postmaster general under Republican Chester A. Arthur and secretary of state during Grover Cleveland’s second presidential term. The political journey that Gresham took through the complex politics of Indiana during an intensely partisan era from one party to another is well chronicled in Charles W. Calhoun’s excellent new biography.
Throughout his career Gresham aroused strong passions among those who dealt with him in Indiana politics. He and Benjamin Harrison disliked each other intensely, yet he worked closely before 1892 with Charles W. Fairbanks. Some men regarded Gresham as presidential material; others found him a clumsy intriguer. After two years in Cleveland’s cabinet, Gresham died in May, 1896. He left some personal papers and a legacy of protest against the public life of his time. His wife prepared a warmly favorable two-volume biography, but otherwise Gresham faded from even the historical second rank until the 1960s. Then scholars of American diplomacy, particularly those persuaded that overseas markets drove policy-making during the 1890s, focused new attention on Gresham over the past two decades.

Calhoun writes about Gresham to explain his role in the actions and passions of that day, not to align him with some modern interpretive controversy. Researched with impressive thoroughness and written with authority and insight, the resulting book is balanced and fair. Calhoun recognizes Gresham’s strengths, but he also identifies those instances when his subject contradicted his own principles and pretensions. He is not convinced that Gresham was a market seeker. “A close examination of Gresham’s attitudes and actions reveals little foundation for this interpretation” (p. 134) is how Calhoun puts it with characteristic clarity. The chapters on Gresham as secretary of state, the heart of the book, are a series of lucid and thoughtful case studies. The treatment of Hawaii is especially judicious on a subject where it would have been easy to praise Gresham as a premature anti-imperialist. Instead, Calhoun skillfully traces the fusion of principle and pique that moved the secretary’s policies.

Calhoun shows that many men in the Gilded Age believed Gresham would make an admirable national leader. It is harder now to recapture what made him someone who was often suggested for high office. A proponent of republican virtue, Gresham called himself “a firm believer in popular government” (p. 116). Yet time after time Gresham shrunk from putting his candidacy to the test of the ballot box, and he gained prominent positions through appointments and the kindness of the politicians he so often scorned. As Calhoun skillfully shows, Gresham spent “a lifetime of political alienation” (p. 221). He thought of himself as the person to call the nation back to the virtues that had made the United States great, and he was ever at a loss to understand why his fellow citizens never recognized what he could do for them. Like Cleveland, he regarded politics as a dreadful, self-inflicted penance that he performed for his country. After following Gresham’s career of self-doubt and barely repressed ambition through Calhoun’s fascinating narrative, the best epitaph for this Hoosier statesman is the
phrase attached to the British politician Lord Rosebery. Gresham too wanted the palm without the dust.

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Edwin L. Becker's history of the Church Federation of Greater Indianapolis belongs in every Protestant parish library in Indianapolis. It provides an excellent summary of the first seventy-five years of federation history seen in the context of both American and local religious history. In addition, Becker deserves commendation for his broad view of religious history in its social context.

Organized in six chronological chapters, Becker's monograph is traditional in its methodology. Becker clearly offers officially sponsored history, since he undertook this work for the federation's Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Committee. He displays a thorough mastery of the federation's collection of the written documentation of its own history. In addition, Becker also demonstrates an acute understanding of how federation history can be traced in local newspaper accounts of its work and in oral history interviews.

As he documents the way the federation has represented institutionalized cooperation among Protestant churches in the region, Becker also shows that white Anglo-Saxon Protestantism is no longer as secure or as dominant in Indianapolis religious and socio-political life as it was in the pre-World War I era. Becker deserves special commendation for attempting to describe how the federation has been a leader in confronting the problems of racism in Indianapolis and how the role of black churches within the federation has gradually expanded.

While Becker does an excellent job describing how the federation has responded to racism, he says amazingly little about how the federation has responded to sexism, although the work of women prominent in federation history is described in some detail. When the Women's Department disappears in the 1930s, women as a group seem to vanish from Becker's history.

In addition to wondering why the role of women has not been treated in greater detail, one also wishes that Becker had treated the federation's relationship with the Roman Catholic community in greater detail. It is also significant that Becker treats the Jewish community's relationship with the federation basically in terms of rabbinical support of efforts for greater racial understanding and