
Book Reviews

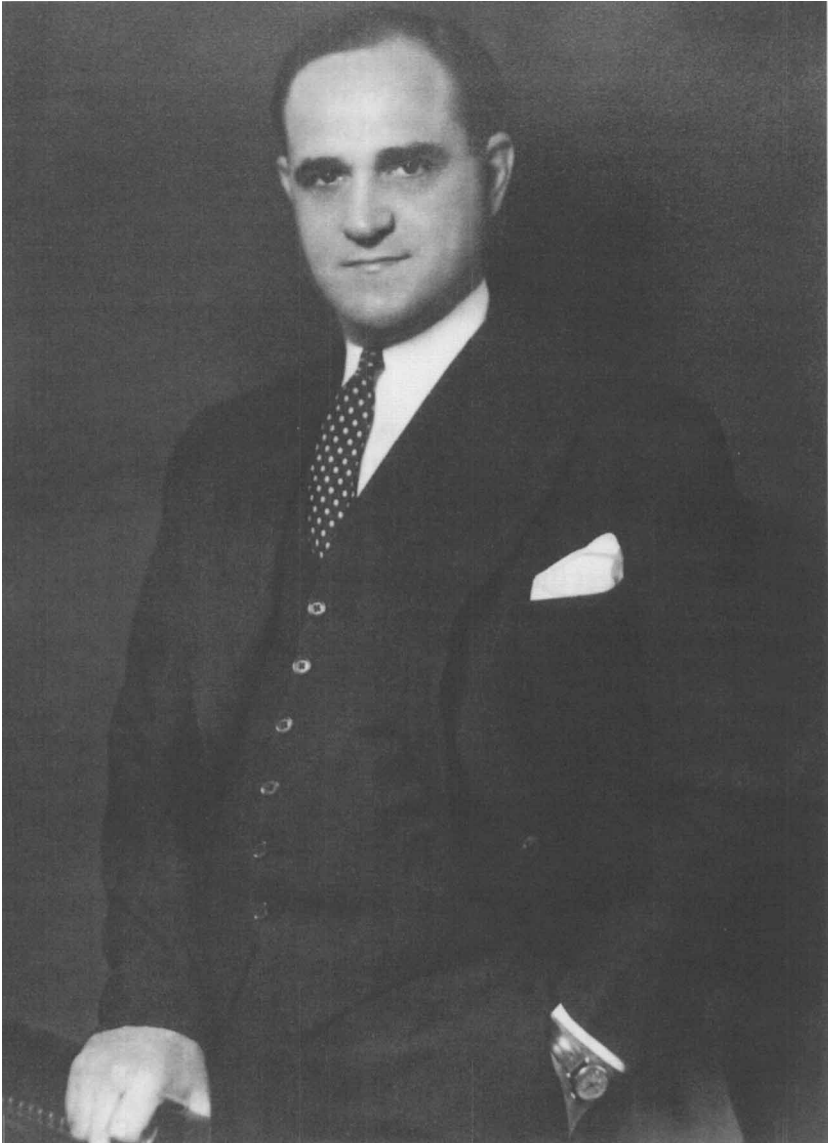
Sherman Minton: New Deal Senator, Cold War Justice. By Linda C. Gugin and James E. St. Clair. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1997. Pp. xix, 370. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

Although Sherman Minton has been the subject of a number of doctoral dissertations, rather surprisingly this is the first published account of his public life. Born and raised in hardscrabble poverty in southern Indiana, Minton early on developed a passion for politics and found a political hero when he witnessed the campaigns of William Jennings Bryan. Minton received his law degree from Indiana University and a master's degree in law from Yale. He served in the army during World War I. After two unsuccessful efforts to run for Congress, Minton, a rabid New Deal supporter, emerged from the rough-and-tumble of Hoosier politics with a Senate seat in 1934. Fortuitously, his desk in the Senate was next to another freshman senator, Harry S. Truman.

An ardent supporter of Franklin D. Roosevelt's unpopular "court packing" plan and a defender of the even less popular Burke-Wadsworth Selective Service Act of 1940, Minton was defeated for reelection. Roosevelt appointed him to the Seventh Court of Appeals in 1941, and his friend, Truman, named him to the Supreme Court in 1949. He retired from the latter position in 1956 because of ill health. He died in 1965.

This splendidly researched work is not simply a very well written account of Minton's career, it is also a careful, if slightly repetitious, analysis of Minton's thinking, especially that which underlay his judicial decisions. How an ardent New Deal liberal in the 1930s could emerge as a rock solid believer in judicial restraint and a defender of governmental power at the expense of the individual's civil rights by the 1950s without changing his populist sympathies is a fascinating subject that the authors handle beautifully. At the same time, while their sympathy and admiration for Minton are quite evident, their evaluations of his decisions are coolly objective.

What the authors set themselves to do they have done very well, so perhaps one should not criticize them for the book they did not intend to write. It does seem a shame, however, that given the opportunity to produce a definitive biography of Minton, they limited themselves largely to his public life. Readers learn that Minton had a wife and, almost as an aside in the last chapter, three children and a number of grandchildren. They also learn that he became a Catholic because his funeral was in a Catholic church. The reticence is all the



SHERMAN MINTON

Courtesy Mary Anne Callanan Collection.

more surprising because a major source for the work was Mary Anne Callanan, Minton's daughter. Minton the politician and jurist is well limned; Minton the man is not.

For all that, this is a fine scholarly work that should be stimulating reading for anyone interested in Indiana and national politics in the 1930s, Minton's work on the Court of Appeals, and most especially the interactions and decisions of the Vinson and early Warren Supreme Court.

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Madeleva: A Biography. By Gail Porter Mandell. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997. Pp. xv, 303. Illustrations, notes, selected publications, index. Clothbound, \$54.50; paperbound, \$17.95.)

This is the first time that I have reviewed a biography of a person whom I have met. Sister M. Madeleva Wolff, C.S.C., president of St. Mary's College, Notre Dame (1934–1961), read poetry at a student convocation at my college soon after her retirement. My president chose me among several humanities faculty to join the two of them for lunch. As Sister Madeleva took her seat at the head of the table, I peered into a face outlined by the fan-shaped wimple of her order and discovered a *grande dame*. She exuded the intellectual gentility that characterized the Christian cultural milieu for which St. Mary's was known.

Sister Madeleva (1887–1964) stated two opinions I have not forgotten after nearly forty years. She disliked coeducation (my college was Indiana's first Catholic college to admit men and women) because women should have their own educational goals and not be evaluated by men's standards. Her second opinion was that, since God is love (I John 4:18), divine justice is secondary; He would abolish hell at the end of time.

Gail Porter Mandell, humanistic studies professor at St. Mary's, presents the intimate story of the spiritual and intellectual journey that took Sister Madeleva from her rural birthplace to study at the University of Wisconsin; from teaching before she finished her studies at St. Mary's to earning the first doctorate awarded a nun at Berkeley; from joining the Sisters of the Holy Cross to spending a sabbatical year at Oxford and in Europe; from heading a struggling Utah college to founding the first graduate program in Catholic theology that admitted sisters and laypersons; from letting students smoke on campus to recruiting the first black students at St. Mary's;