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## Book Reviews

*Jacob Piatt Dunn, Jr.: A Life in History and Politics, 1855–1924.* By Ray E. Boomhower. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1997. Pp. xxvi, 174. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliographical essay, index. \$24.95.)

At first glance, the subject of this book, a male, upper middle-class intellectual, might seem less than worthy. He distrusted ethnic minorities and, in part out of political partisanship, worked for passage of a new state constitution that would restrict their franchise. He reinvigorated his state historical society and state library, in part as a means of increasing the availability of materials for his own literary activities. Finally, he lost his position as city comptroller, in large measure because of suspicion that he was part of a scheme that allowed the mayor improperly to receive city funds.

In this instance, as is often true, first glances are deceiving. This book, as it turns out, is both important and fascinating. Indeed, the author provides a case study of the Progressive movement in the United States and gives a balanced portrayal of an individual who—while achieving neither fame nor elective office—left a remarkable legacy of public service. At the same time, Ray E. Boomhower has revealed in yet another way the connection between culture and politics in the United States.

Whatever his foibles (most of which he shared with his contemporaries), Dunn, Boomhower points out, heeded his convictions—based on the ideals of Thomas Jefferson—that democracy depended upon a citizenry with knowledge of what had gone before and a willingness to draw upon that knowledge to prevent or remedy the abuses common in government, such as greed and lust for power. Dunn, accordingly, believed that historical scholarship was inseparable from citizenship. Knowledge from painstaking research in the documents, he believed, would make the past accessible as a resource essential for sound public policy. One is reminded here of Dunn's contemporaries, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, and another famous Hoosier of earlier years, General Lew Wallace.

Dunn's contribution, Boomhower shows, originated in the liberal arts tradition of the Protestant institutions of the nineteenth-century American Midwest (in this case the Methodist church and Earlham College). Dunn used his inveterate optimism, faith in the judgment of an educated citizenry, analytical abilities, and fascination with history to improve society. By the time his life was over in 1924, at age sixty-nine, he had obtained a law degree from the University of Michigan and written numerous books and articles, including a widely acclaimed study of Indian policy in the West, histories of Indianapolis and of Indiana, and an authoritative dictionary of

the Miami Indian language. He helped put on a permanent footing the Indiana Historical Society (becoming its secretary) and the Indiana State Library (serving four years as state librarian). He assisted in establishing a system of local public libraries in the state and was a major influence in the state Democratic party. He helped to reform the government of Indianapolis; lobbied successfully for the secret ballot; and, to eliminate corruption, proposed a new, Progressive constitution for the state. The latter action, while not successful, gave its most prominent supporter, Hoosier Governor Thomas R. Marshall, sufficient national acclaim to be elected vice-president of the United States in 1912.

This brief and readable biography is a contribution to the history not just of Indiana but of the United States. Drawing upon the resources that his subject did so much to preserve, Boomhower has performed a task worthy of his subject.

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*Reverend Joseph Tarkington, Methodist Circuit Rider: From Frontier Evangelism to Refined Religion.* By David L. Kimbrough. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997. Pp. xxi, 218. Illustrations, appendix, notes, selected bibliography, index. \$35.00.)

Readers of this journal should find David L. Kimbrough's study of the grandfather, indeed the family, of Booth Tarkington of considerable interest. Carefully researched, lavishly documented, full of intriguing anecdotes and asides, the volume will repay careful attention.

The problems are few—the mistaken declaration that Methodist classes chose their own leaders, exhorters, and even circuit riders (p. 3); the failure to recognize John Fletcher's *Checks* (1835) as a centerpiece of Methodist apologetics (p. 48); the interpretation of "location" as moving to another circuit instead of leaving the itinerancy altogether (p. 66); the failure to explain Joseph Tarkington's role as presiding elder, his most important ministerial office (pp. 102ff.); the equation of early nineteenth-century seminaries (secondary schools) with later theological seminaries. These few problem stand out because of the otherwise erudite treatment of Methodism. The bibliography and citations are quite remarkable, ranging from obscure early accounts to the most recent interpretive breakthroughs.

More vexing is the organization of the volume, which chronicles the life of Tarkington and depicts through his experience the transformation of Methodism from plain-style frontier, dualistic evangelicalism into a genteel faith. Both tasks invite a chronological narration, in which direction Kimbrough in fact proceeds successfully