
Reviews

Richmond, Indiana: Its Physical Development and Aesthetic Heritage to 1920. By Mary Raddant Tomlan and Michael A. Tomlan. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 2003. Pp. xviii, 364. Illustrations, appendix, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95.)

This book is extraordinarily impressive. Aesthetically, it meets the highest standards—it is attractively presented, amply illustrated, and mechanically flawless. The authors have undertaken a mass of research over two decades, especially in newspapers, and the work is thoroughly and appropriately documented. There are no detectable errors in its thousands of factual statements. The prose is readable and accessible. Most of all, the authors display enormous good sense throughout, not going farther than their sources will support and seamlessly weaving together the architectural, artistic, economic, social, ethnic, and religious history of Richmond. In short, this book is an accomplishment both for its authors and its publisher.

Richmond deserves this kind of treatment. In the nineteenth century, it was the largest city in what had long been the wealthiest county in Indiana. After 1860, as Indianapolis, Evansville, and Fort Wayne surpassed it, Richmond still grew at an impressive rate, with wealth above Indiana norms. Its influential Quaker minority gave it a reputation for thrift, order, and morality. Later in the century, Richmond acquired a reputation as a place that took the fine arts seriously. Painters like John Elwood Bundy and George H. Baker were well known, while the Richmond Art Association, formed in 1897, was one of the first in the state.

The Tomlans' approach is basically chronological. A deft sketch of the city's founding by Quakers from the Carolinas, and the impact of the construction of the National Road in the 1820s, brings one to the first Richmond buildings (mainly churches and private homes) for which we have any descriptions or images. Railroad construction in the 1850s gave new energy to local factories, which turned out farm implements, furniture, and iron and sheet metal. This growth and wealth provided a foundation for a building boom that began before the Civil War and continued to the authors' terminal date of 1920. Different chapters treat factories, homes, schools, commercial and business buildings, and churches. The authors also pay attention to facilities like the city's parks—especially the largest, Glen Miller—and even cemeteries. Always, however, they integrate Richmond's architecture within a context of economic growth and change.

There is no such thing as a "typical" American city, but what partly justifies a study of Richmond is the extent to which it followed larger cultural trends. No Richmond building was ever on a "cutting edge," the recipient of national attention. Richmond's architects were, for the most part, local men, and they were not innovators, content

instead to imitate popular and prevailing styles. But as the Tomlans also note, they sometimes adapted national movements and trends to local needs, such as in the ban of merry-go-rounds and other amusements from Glen Miller Park, or the incorporation of an art gallery in the high school built in 1909.

A few small changes would have improved this marvelous book. While it is mercifully free of jargon, a glossary of architectural terms would have helped this reader, whose vocabulary had not previously included “quoin” and “architrave.” And while the book includes several maps to illustrate the city’s growth, an additional one of the contemporary city, at least its older section, would have helped place the many buildings treated that are still standing. But these are minor quibbles. This is local history at its best: beautifully produced, readable, accessible, and scholarly.

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Spokesman for Democracy: Claude G. Bowers, 1878–1958. By Peter J. Sehlinger and Holman Hamilton. Foreword by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 2000. Pp. xxi, 358. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

By the time he was forty-five, Claude Bowers was an accomplished and influential Hoosier. He had grown up in Indianapolis in the 1880s and 1890s, graduated from high school at a time when few did, won a state oratory contest, pursued a career in journalism in Indianapolis and Terre Haute, become active in state politics, established friendships with Indiana notables Albert Beveridge, Eugene Debs, Samuel Ralston, and Thomas Taggart, twice run unsuccessfully for Congress, served for six years as secretary to U.S. Senator (and Senate Democratic majority leader) John Kern, and become the editorial writer for the Fort Wayne *Journal-Gazette*. An extraordinary life for a poor boy from Westfield, but this was only a beginning. In the following decade Bowers left Indiana to become an influential progressive editorialist for Joseph Pulitzer’s New York *World* and later for William Randolph Hearst’s New York *Journal*, a speechwriter and adviser to presidential candidates Alfred E. Smith and Franklin Roosevelt, the keynote speaker at the 1928 Democratic National Convention, and, not least, a best-selling author.

During the 1920s Bowers extolled the Democratic party in a series of vividly written, powerfully argued, and admittedly partisan popular histories of nineteenth-century political conflict. *The Party Battles of the Jackson Period* (1922), *Jefferson and Hamilton: The Struggle for Democracy in America* (1925), and *The Tragic Era: Revolution After*