

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*

*Lincoln* (1929) were best sellers that overshadowed more scholarly and balanced accounts in shaping public perceptions of the nation's past. *Jefferson and Hamilton* drew a sharp contrast between an inspirational democrat and an elitist proto-Republican. Bowers's characterizations were "thrilling," according to Franklin D. Roosevelt in the only book review he ever published. *The Tragic Era*, an account that excoriated Republican conduct following the Civil War and justified the rise of the solid Democratic South, helped mold a generation's racist views of Reconstruction. Though never again with such influential effect, Bowers continued to write history, biography, and memoirs during his twenty-year career as U.S. ambassador to Spain and Chile and even after his retirement in 1953.

Bowers's most notable feat may have been to help heal the 1920s split between northern and southern Democrats. He did so by recalling both a glorious shared past, in the age of Jefferson and Jackson, and a shared ill-fortune in the face of overweening Republican power during Reconstruction. His 1928 keynote speech to the Democratic National convention in Houston, one of the few such speeches ever given by someone other than an elected official, was regarded as a triumph. In a useful foreword to this volume, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. places the speech "among the most effective political orations of the century." In 1929 Bowers declared that if the Democratic party did not appreciate *The Tragic Era*, "I have written my last line in an attempt to serve it."

Holman Hamilton, a childhood neighbor of Bowers and a journalist before becoming an academic historian, began work on this biography in the 1950s. Peter J. Sehlinger, now a retired IUPUI professor, took over the half-finished project upon Hamilton's death in 1980 and completed its substantial domestic and foreign archival research. Sehlinger and Hamilton's narrative is more impressive in listing Bowers's political and literary contacts and his state political activities than in examining the evolution of his thought or the extent of his influence. Unfortunately, though they quote many favorable reviews, the authors offer little detail about the gestation and substance of Bowers's books, much less their relationship to existing literature. The importance of his political speeches, particularly those in 1928, is asserted but not altogether adequately elaborated or contextualized. Likewise, the authors often capture Bowers's personal activities better than the larger historical context of his life, as, for example, when Bowers shifted from journalism to diplomacy during the Spanish Civil War, World War II, and the early Cold War. Sehlinger and Hamilton's book does not represent the fully satisfying biography of Claude Bowers that the influential Hoosier deserves.

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