

A Public Charity: Religion and Social Welfare in Indianapolis, 1929-2002

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exciting story of one soldier's battlefield experiences. After enlisting in 1939, Stabler received training for service in the army's 2nd Armored Division. After the United States entered the war, he participated in the Allied invasion of North Africa and the subsequent campaigns in Sicily, the western coast of Italy, and southern France. While in Italy, Stabler suffered dual tragedies: his younger brother Robert was killed in action near Cisterna, and he suffered fairly severe wounds himself from enemy shrapnel. Nonetheless, Stabler continued to serve in a variety of posts, such as radio operator, machine-gunner, and truck driver, among others. During his three years of wartime service, he participated in five major campaigns and countless battles. His vivid recollections of hardship, sacrifice, and camaraderie are poignant reminders of what the "greatest generation" went through to preserve American liberties at home.

Stabler's memoirs are also significant for what they reveal about Native American experiences and perceptions of the war. A member of the Omaha Nation of Nebraska, Stabler was one of 25,000 Indian soldiers who served during World War II. He recalls few instances of discrimination while he served in the military; his comrades were apparently so indifferent about his background that they never bothered to ask him what tribe he was from. After the war, Stabler returned stateside to an uncertain future and, like many veterans, struggled to adjust to life after war. The Omaha people welcomed their veterans home with traditional rituals and ceremonies, and Stabler received his own song in recognition of his status as a *Wano^{nshe}* (warrior). University of Nebraska historian Victoria Smith, who interviewed Stabler and edited the work, does a fine job of organizing the story and placing it in its proper historical context. I highly recommend it.

A Public Charity: Religion and Social Welfare in Indianapolis, 1929–2002, by Mary L. Mapes. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004. xi, 173 pp. Notes, index. \$ 37.50 cloth.

Reviewer Joan Gittens is professor of history at Southwest Minnesota State University. She is the author of *Poor Relations: The Children of the State in Illinois, 1818–1990* (1994).

A Public Charity analyzes the history of social welfare in Indianapolis, while charting the boom and bust course of the nation's concern with poverty throughout the twentieth century. Author Mary Mapes looks at the role Indianapolis has played in addressing poverty, and describes the dynamics between the city's public officials and private, religious social welfare organizations. She finds Indianapolis a reveal-

ing case study in two ways. First, because of its location and settlement patterns, Indianapolis has a southern sensibility, proudly billing itself as the "northernmost southern city." Second, Indianapolis was the city touted by President George W. Bush as the model for his concept of "faith-based initiatives."

Indianapolis's perception of itself as a southern city was crucial to its social welfare development, says Mapes. The city prided itself on limiting public expenditures, even at the height of the Great Depression. In 1933, with unemployment at 37 percent, Indianapolis reviewed its relief cases and reduced them by almost 50 percent. "Two priorities defined locally funded relief," Mapes writes: "discouraging 'dependency' and keeping tax rates low." That philosophy, she makes clear, has survived into the twenty-first century.

Private charity and federal relief filled the gap left by a parsimonious city during the depression. Mapes traces the interplay among the three sectors across the decades. After World War II, when prosperity lifted many needy families into the middle class, private agencies began to redefine their work, stressing their expertise and superior credentials compared to staff implementing federal programs such as Social Security and Aid to Dependent Children. Private agencies frankly directed their efforts to the middle class, emphasizing the therapeutic aspects of social work and focusing on programs such as family therapy and adoption services.

In a pendulum swing, the 1960s saw a renewed interest in poverty. Even Indianapolis, wary though it was of federal funding, joined the War on Poverty. Mapes traces the complicated relationship between federal poverty programs and local agencies, public and private. Finally, she follows the national swing to the right that began with Ronald Reagan's election and continued into the new century. The city government of Indianapolis, always conservative regarding social welfare, wholeheartedly embraced the return of an analysis of poverty based on individual failure rather than structural inequity. Mayor Stephen Goldsmith, using the "Charitable Choice" provision of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, experimented with distributing funds to private charities. Mapes convincingly demonstrates that the War on Poverty had already made effective use of small, locally based charities, many religious. Goldsmith's approach differed in that funds went largely to evangelical churches with a far more conservative political outlook than the more established religious charities in the city.

George Bush enthusiastically praised Indianapolis for developing programs that addressed problems of poverty "one soul at a time." But Mapes clearly questions the assumptions and the underlying in-

tent of the faith-based initiatives. Enlisting religious agencies is not new, she points out. Organizations such as Catholic Charities have long relied on public funding to sustain their work. But the new approach is rife with politics, favoring conservative religious agencies, seriously reducing professional standards, and naively assuming that small religious institutions will actually have the inclination and the staff to take on new social welfare responsibilities, given their already busy ministries. Finally, Mapes criticizes what she sees as the most detrimental aspect of the new view: the rejection of a notion of public responsibility for social welfare and a focus on private charity as the key to this enduring social problem. That shift allows the state to define assistance to the poor as a gift rather than a right of citizenship. As a gift, it may be reduced at the convenience of the giver, precisely what has happened over the past 30 years.

Mapes's book is written with clarity and an obvious belief in the state's responsibility for the social welfare of its citizens. The book is impressive in scope, and her documentation is extensive and persuasive. The book's organization is so sound and the writing so clear that the main points are never swamped by details, a definite hazard in a story this complicated. The monograph does what a case study should do: It gives a wealth of information specific to Indianapolis while illuminating the national history of social welfare—and it does so briefly and eloquently.

The Furrow and Us: Essays on Soil and Sentiment, by Walter Thomas Jack, edited by Zachary Michael Jack. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005. xi, 82 pp. Appendix, notes. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer Barbara J. Dilly is assistant professor of anthropology at Creighton University. Her dissertation was "Religious Resistance to Erosion of the Soil and the Soul among Three German-American Farming Communities in Northeast Iowa."

Walter Jack's great grandson Zachary is a fourth-generation Iowa farmer's son who found that, after 60 years, the wisdom of the old Quaker farmer Walter Jack still spoke to him about what the soil really needs to sustain agriculture and us. For those who grew up with the mold-board plow, this reprint of *The Furrow and Us* could be a nostalgic journey back to Jack's sentimental essays on soil science first published in 1946. But this classic collection is more than just a legacy. If we place Jack's concerns about sustainable growth, local ecologies, and organic methods in the twenty-first century, where they certainly still belong,