ENCYCLOPEDIA OF INDIANAPOLIS

PEOPLE HERITAGE CULTURE

Presented by the
POLIS Research Center
at
Indiana University-
Purdue University
at Indianapolis

Fall 1992 *Volume 2 • Number 1*

Politicians, Parties, and Public Opinion:
The Political Heritage of the Circle City

Politics has played a significant role in the emergence and development of Indianapolis. From the debate over the site of a new state capital in 1820 to the 1991 mayoral election, individuals and groups have rallied to promote causes, fought in vicious electoral and legislative battles, and joined in pursuit of common goals and objectives.

Numerous issues have remained in one form or another as continuing battlegrounds for political parties, even in more recent years. In 1847 voters approved a special tax to establish and maintain a free school system. Schools and taxes continue to top the political agenda in 1992. Mayor Thomas Taggart (Dem.) secured funds from the city council in the 1890s to purchase land and to lay the foundation for the creation of a city park system. The role of the city in providing traditional services is now the subject of intense debate. Conservatives in the 1940s and 1950s fought the increasing federal role in state and local government, resulting in a strong anti-federal aid position on the part of local Republicans. Local politicians still debate what role federal funding should play in supporting local services. And governmental efficiency has been the watchword of political campaigns from the 1830s to the present.

As the largest city in the state, Indianapolis has had significant national political clout. Indianapolis residents Thomas A. Hendricks (Vice-President, 1885-1889), Benjamin Harrison (President, 1889-1893), and Charles Warren Fairbanks (Vice-President, 1905-1909) were well-positioned for their elevation to the nation's highest offices. Likewise, Thomas Taggart in the early 1900s and Frank McKinney in 1951-1952 were so effective at building Democratic strength in the state that the party tapped them to serve as national chairmen. Congressman Louis Ludlow (Dem.), representing Indianapolis-Marion County during the 1930s and 1940s, was a leader in the neutrality movement of the prewar years, proposing legislation to require a nationwide referendum before Congress could declare war.

Surprisingly, Indianapolis, known today for its political conservatism, has been the birthplace of many ideological movements and the center of less orthodox political activity. Jacob P. Chapman, editor of the Free Soil paper, *The Chanticleer*, agreed to form the People's Party in Indianapolis in 1854 to oppose the pro-slavery policies of the Democratic Party. During 1884 the Greenback Party staged its national convention in the city, but later joined with another People's Party (Populists) to denounce high taxes, the rising public debt, child labor, and the use of public money to build railroads and factories. In 1900 the newly-formed Socialist Party of America held its national convention in the city and nominated Eugene V. Debs for president. During the 1920s, D. C. Stephenson and the Ku Klux Klan gained enough influence to control both city and state governments. In 1958, Indianapolis residents who advocated an ultra-conservative and anti-communist agenda formed the John Birch Society.

Indianapolis also has not been exempt from the political corruptions and scandals usually associated with larger urban areas. Attorney Calvin Fletcher, writing in his diary on December 25, 1821, complained about political candidates gathered at McGeorge's tavern along White River who courted votes by unheading a barrel of cider, which everyone "permiscussously [*sic*] drank . . . [to] intoxication." Later, in 1860, the Republican Fletcher commented upon the Democrats' use of foreigners "to vote twice or ten times," and regretted that he had "lived to see such corruptions . . . [which] have become very common & admitted to exist by 90 out of 100 voters and freemen." After the local 1886 elections, a group

Continued inside

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Politics in Indianapolis

George W. Geib, Butler University

Can you identify a "fast" precinct? Tell a "stiff" from a "mummy-dummy?" List, in order, the vice-presidential nominees from Indianapolis? If you can, you've mastered some of the interesting sidelights from the city's political past.

More important, can you explain the local electoral base of Democrats and Republicans? Can you find the roots of current reform issues in the agitations of the past? Can you spot the critical elections that have given vigor to local debate? These and similar topics are central to the Politics section of the *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis.*

Intense political competition has characterized the quest for power in Indianapolis from the 1820s to the present. Election observers note that, in contrast to the one-party dominance found in many American localities, both city and county have been consistently marked by vigorous two-party competition. At every level from Court House (or City-County Building) to White House, the elections of 1992 promise to continue that grand tradition.

Three general features usually cause local voter turnout levels to exceed national averages. First, Indianapolis has possessed active, well-developed political organizations, including both parties and interest groups. Second, the city has enjoyed active and often highly partisan newspapers and other mass media. And third, the varied mix of local population has led to serious differences of both issues and personalities that encourage political participation. Local humorists suggest that the first words of many local children are, "Although I am not currently a candidate. . . . "

The political entries of the *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* will survey this varied, exciting, and often serious world of power and influence. Our approach has been to start by looking at the two major parties and, in less detail, the minor parties that have been the vehicles for electoral competition. From there we have added significant ideas and events that illuminate public participation, from political journalism to the Copperheads of the Civil War.

Indianapolis politics has been marked by strong personalities, over twenty-five of whom will have individual entries. Living politicians will not receive separate entries, in keeping with *Encyclopedia* policy, but will appear in the context of entries dealing with important recent elections and issues. Altogether more than eighty entries will capture the key conventions, societies, issues, and scandals that have given shape to partisan debate in the city.

Observers of 1992 and beyond will want to compare the current election to past contests--from 1860 to 1991--that have influenced political realignment and change. Voters caught up in such current social debates as abortion will be able to look back to earlier struggles over prohibition, women's suffrage, and slavery. And voters wondering if all things remain the same even as they change will be able to test their perception in the entries on political finance, organization, and public opinion. Finally, several focusing essays will provide an overview of the major parties, the independent tickets, the legal context, and the key groups -- from ethnics to journalists -- who have created the context within which the political process operates.

Contributors of the political entries include academic historians, working journalists, professional politicians, a campaign fund-raiser, and a public-opinion pollster, each of whom will contribute their special perspective. The result will be a variety of voices, a range of opinions, and a freshness of insight about politics in Indiana's capital city. ■

Politics - from page 1

of politicians were charged with altering voter tally sheets in the so-called "tally sheet forgeries," a scandal that culminated in a lengthy inquiry and increased tension between the parties. In 1915 a Marion County grand jury indicted the mayor, the police chief, and several others on charges of election fraud and vote bribery; the principal figures were eventually acquitted.

Politics has always been, and will continue to be, a rich and critical part of the Indianapolis experience. It has been both the means of uniting people in common causes and dividing them along ideological lines. Ethnic and racial groups have used politics to gain recognition and power in the community, while others have sought to exclude them from participating in the political process. The mass media, limited initially to reporting political activities and election results, now has a significant impact on public opinion through the selection of news stories and the presentation of sound bites over the airwaves.

Ideally, politics must strive to affect the greater good of society. That cannot occur, however, unless we study and understand our political heritage, learn how to use it to improve life in our own community, and encourage greater participation in the democratic system that has become the model for developing countries around the world.

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Meet the Contributing Editor - Politics

George W. Geib, professor of history at Butler University, serves as the contributing editor of the Politics section of the *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis.* A specialist in the early American republic and the American Midwest, he is widely recognized for his knowledge of state and local history and his experience in local party politics. As a result, Geib brings special insight to the *Encyclopedia* project.

Geib is the author of numerous articles on various topics and three books on Indianapolis history — *Indianapolis: Hoosiers' Circle City* (1981), *Lives Touched by Faith: A Sesquicentennial History of Second Presbyterian* (1988), and *Indianapolis First: A Commemorative History of the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce and Local Business Community* (1990).

Politics and civic affairs are a special interest of Geib's. He has served on several local committees and boards, including the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission. He is very active in the Republican Party at the local, state, and national levels, having served as an author of manuals for precinct committee workers, polling and registration coordinator, and consultant for the Marion County Election Board. In 1984 he was one of Indiana's twelve presidential electors. ■

NEH Challenges Community to Fund the Encyclopedia

In June 1992, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) announced the award of an offer of $98,012 to the *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* that must be matched by local contributions. The NEH grant process is very competitive with awards made to fewer than 20 percent of the applying projects.

Reviewers gave the highest evaluations to the *Encyclopedia* project, calling it a national model. In written comments, these experts described why they recommended this project for a grant:

- "This project . . . has a sharper functionalist and modernist angle of vision of its city. Functional significance and bearing upon modern day Indianapolis are accorded as much importance as is the coverage of every last individual and institution that ever saw the light of day. That is a very attractive feature. . . "
- " . . . the final volume will be a contribution not only to a scholarship on Indianapolis but an altogether accessible volume for the public."
- "I am particularly impressed by the careful organization of the volume."
- "This is a relatively modest budget for what looks like an unusually valuable, well-organized project."

With this grant, the NEH has challenged the Indianapolis community to provide the support necessary to complete the *Encyclopedia* by 1994. Although to date the community has already contributed more than $90,000 to the *Encyclopedia*, the project needs an additional $326,000 to meet its scheduled publication.

The National Endowment for the Humanities has expressed its belief that individuals and organizations in Indianapolis will continue their generous support. In the months ahead, we will ask the community to answer the NEH challenge with significant donations to the *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis.* ■

SUPPORT THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF INDIANAPOLIS!

YES! I vote for the *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* with my contribution of:

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You may also pledge your support for future payment.
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Politics in Indianapolis on the "Urban Agenda"

IUPUI faculty members William Blomquist and Brian Vargus will join with Butler University professor George Geib to debut the 1992-93 "Urban Agenda" with a discussion of "Politics in Indianapolis". The presentation is free and open to the public and is scheduled for Wednesday, October 14, from 12 noon to 1:00 p.m.

"Urban Agenda" is hosted with the cooperation of the Associated Group in their headquarters at 120 Monument Circle, Conference Room A. This central location is easily accessible to downtown workers, who may bring a brown bag lunch to the presentation. Beverages are provided.

The POLIS Research Center and the School of Liberal Arts at IUPUI present the "Urban Agenda" to allow faculty members to present their research on urban affairs to the citizens of Indianapolis. These discussions will be of particular interest to professionals working in the private and public sectors who are interested in new approaches to the challenges facing Indianapolis in the 1990s.

For more information on this series, or to receive a complete schedule of the 1992-93 "Urban Agenda", contact Lamont Hulse at (317) 274-2458. ■

Politics Section - Approved Entries to Date

Abraham Lincoln's Funeral Cortege
Abraham Lincoln's Visit to Indianapolis
Antebellum Politics
Anti-Saloon League
Athletic Club
Bates, Hervey
Beebe Temperance Case
Beveridge, Albert J.
Book, William
Bradford, James L.
Brown, H. Dale
Coffin, George V.
Columbia Club
Conrad, Larry
Conventions and Rallies
Copperheads and Copperheadism
Coy, Simeon
Critical Realigning Elections
De La Matyr, Gilbert
Defrees, John
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Election Laws and Practices
Elections of 1860, 1896, 1925, 1932, 1940, 1967, 1975, 1991
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Fairbanks, Charles
Fishback, William P.
Fusion Party
Germans in Politics
Gresham, Walter Q.
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Hendricks, Thomas A.
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Hudson Institute
Indianapolis Taxpayers' Association
Irish in Politics
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John Birch Society
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Kern, John W. Sr.
Ku Klux Klan
Liberty Fund
Lincoln Day Dinners
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McKinney, Frank Sr.
Merrill, Samuel
Monetary Conventions (1890s)
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Municipal Reform Movements
National Democratic Party Convention (1896)
Nativist Parties and Movements
Niblack, John
Ostrum, Henry
Party Symbols and Logos
Pogue's Run, Battle of
Political Campaign Finance
Political Interest Groups
Political Journalism and Journalists
Political Patronage
Political Power Brokerage
Political Redistricting
Politics in Indianapolis, 1820-1990
Politics of Social Reform
Progressive Party in Indianapolis (1912)
Public Opinion and Polling
Railroad Track Elevation
Republican Action Committee
Republican Party
Shoemaker, Seth
Smith, Caleb
Socialist Parties and Movements
Stephenson, D.C.
Swift, Lucius
Tally Sheet Forgeries (1886)
Temperance and Prohibition
Third Parties and Independent Tickets
Torchlight Parades
Townsendite Conventions in Indianapolis
Veterans in Politics
Voter Registration
Ward and Precinct Organization
Whitewater and Kentucky Factions
Women in Politics
Workingmen's Party
Yandes, Daniel

Politics in Indianapolis

1822 Indianapolis holds first election on April 1: voters choose associate circuit judges, clerk of the circuit court, recorder, and three county commissioners.

1840 Capitalizing on the "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too" slogan, supporters of William Henry Harrison build a log cabin on corner of Washington and Illinois and offer free hard cider to voters in presidential election. Whigs also carry the municipal election for the first time.

1856 Germans capture offices of clerk, marshal, and assessor in city election. German newspaper *Freie Press* supports newly-formed Republican Party because it opposed the extension of slavery.

1863 State Democratic convention in city leads to disturbances and rioting in opposition to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and military difficulties of the time. Known as the "Battle of Pogue's Run."

1869 First successful Jewish candidate in Indianapolis, Leon Kahn, elected to Indianapolis Common Council; serves for eight years.

1887 Thomas Taggart (Dem.) begins political career as county auditor, serving until 1895. Later serves three two-year terms as mayor, and then elected chairman of the national Democratic party.

1888 Local supporters of Benjamin Harrison for President form the "Harrison Marching Society;" later founded the Columbia Club, unofficial headquarters of the local Republican Party.

1889 Albert J. Beveridge (Rep.), attorney with firm of McDonald and Butler, elected US Senator by General Assembly; reelected in 1905. Advocate of US imperialism.

1896 National Democratic Party (Gold Democrats) holds nominating convention in Indianapolis.

1900 Social Democratic Party holds first national convention in Indianapolis and names Eugene V. Debs as presidential candidate, Job Harriman as vice-president.

1901 Group of men and women, including Eugene V. Debs and other Socialist leaders, meet in Masonic Hall in Indianapolis and found the Socialist Party of America, criticizing capitalism and seeking to convert Americans to the socialist ideology.

1905 Charles Warren Fairbanks (Rep.), Indianapolis railroad lawyer and US Senator from 1897-1905, becomes 26th Vice President, serving under Theodore Roosevelt.

1920 Indianapolis Athletic Club conceived by group of local businessmen to promote "clean sports, amusement, and sociability" among members; becomes unofficial headquarters of the local Democratic Party.

1922 David Curtis Stephenson moves to Indianapolis and becomes grand dragon of the KKK in Indiana and 22 other northern states. Under his leadership, Klan grows in numbers and dominates state and local politics.

November First broadcast of election results in Indianapolis. WFBM radio broadcasts election news, interspersed with live orchestral, piano, and vocal music. The Indianapolis *News*, *Times*, and WFBM flash election returns on large screens placed on downtown buildings.

1928 Louis Ludlow, reporter for the Indianapolis *Sun*, *Sentinel*, *Journal*, and *Press*, elected to Congress representing Seventh District (including Marion County). Serves in House of Representatives until 1948. Known as champion of equal rights amendment for women and for unsuccessful campaign to pass constitutional amendment requiring a national referendum to declare war.

1930s Reginald Sullivan (Dem.) serves as mayor from 1930 to 1935 and 1939 to 1943. Fused coalition of Catholics and African-Americans, winning first term by 33,000 votes.

1951 Frank Edward McKinney, local banker and Democratic politician, serves as national chairman of the Democratic Party, 1951-1952.

1964 John J. Barton (Dem.) elected mayor. Re-establishes Indianapolis Housing Authority (dormant since Great Depression) and with aid of federal funds initiates low-income housing projects.

1966 Republican victories in general election of 1966, mayoral election of 1967, and general election of 1968 provide Marion County Republicans with strong base to begin consolidation of city/county government.

1967 Richard G. Lugar, a 35-year old businessman and former Rhodes scholar, defeats incumbent John Barton by 9,000 votes to become first Republican mayor since 1951. Re-elected in 1971.

1969 Unigov bill enacted, reducing influence of black voters from 25 percent to 14 percent of expanded city's electorate.

1975 William H. Hudnut (Rep.) defeats Robert V. Welch (Dem.) 124,100 to 109,761; three minor party candidates receive 3,986 votes. Re-elected in 1979, 1983, and 1987.

1982 Indianapolis Taxpayers Association, first established in 1940s and disbanded in 1967, re-established to monitor appropriation of tax monies for county-wide ambulance system.

1984 The Hudson Institute, a public policy research institute, relocates to Indianapolis from Croton-on-Hudson, New York.

1991 Marion County Prosecutor Stephen Goldsmith (Rep.) defeats State Senator Louis Mahern (Dem.), 110,545 to 79,817, in mayoral election.

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Marion County
Number of Votes for President & Governor
Republican-Democrat

	PRESIDENT		GOVERNOR	
YEAR	REPUBLICAN	DEMOCRAT	REPUBLICAN	DEMOCRAT
1932	Hoover	Roosevelt	Springer	McNutt
	98,256	106,661	97,254	107,516
1948	Dewey	Truman	Creighton	Schricker
	103,603	97,915	90,375	111,364
1956	Eisenhower	Stevenson	Handley	Tucker
	162,566	99,102	157,482	103,665
1960	Nixon	Kennedy	Parker	Welsh
	166,202	121,336	150,281	136,900
1964	Goldwater	Johnson	Ristine	Branigin
	143,015	152,418	135,565	159,426
1968	Nixon	Humphrey	Whitcomb	Rock
	162,503	115,715	166,756	132,735
1972	Nixon	McGovern	Bowen	Welsh
	206,065	102,166	173,754	132,181
1976	Ford	Carter	Bowen	Conrad
	177,767	145,274	180,472	141,410
1980	Reagan	Carter	Orr	Hillenbrand
	168,680	126,103	182,257	128,613
1984	Reagan	Mondale	Orr	Townsend
	184,880	130,185	165,048	147,049
1988	Bush	Dukakis	Mutz	Bayh
	184,519	128,627	161,593	150,024

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