

Crusader for Democracy: The Political Life of William Allen White

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ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

Wells, Jeff. "Crusader for Democracy: The Political Life of William Allen White." *The Annals of Iowa* 78 (2019), 223-225.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.12574>

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Twin Cities and made up of women of Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish descent, comprehended citizenship and suffrage through the lens of their experiences as immigrants. Focusing on just three counties limits our appreciation of the movement's diversity in these three states and of the ways different groups of midwestern women understood and worked for political equality.

Despite these limitations of scope, *Woman Suffrage and Citizenship in the Midwest* offers valuable insight into midwestern women's long, difficult struggle for the ballot and provides compelling analysis of what their suffrage activism can tell us about gender, citizenship, and national belonging.

Crusader for Democracy: The Political Life of William Allen White, by Charles Delgadillo. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2018. vii, 315 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Jeff Wells is associate professor of history at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. His current research focuses on the journalists of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party.

William Allen White gained widespread attention with his 1896 anti-Populist editorial, "What's the Matter with Kansas?" He continued to influence national politics for more than four decades. Other biographers emphasize White's midwestern values and relationship with his home town of Emporia, Kansas; in *Crusader for Democracy* Charles Delgadillo explores how White applied his regional small-town ideology during his career as a national political figure.

Throughout the early twentieth century, White (1868–1944) was the voice of the midwestern middle class. He bought the *Emporia Gazette* in 1896 but cultivated an audience far beyond Kansas as a writer for influential progressive magazines, as a novelist, and as a syndicated correspondent at major events such as the Versailles Peace Conference and the Washington Naval Conference. He broke from the influence of a political boss to become an independent voice for reform within the Republican Party, which dominated Kansas politics. He admired and befriended Theodore Roosevelt and forged relationships with his successors. His extensive international travel informed his commentary. In the Soviet Union, White observed that the Russians had exchanged liberty for security and peace. His tours of fascist countries convinced him that social justice was a national security issue. He was a liberal internationalist during the 1920s, when the GOP was defined by conservatives and isolationists, yet he remained loyal to the party throughout his career, with the notable exceptions of his support for his hero Theo-

dore Roosevelt's 1912 Bull Moose presidential campaign and his own 1924 bid for governor as an anti-Ku Klux Klan independent.

Delgadillo's political biography arrives with White's strand of liberal Republicanism extinct and its memory fading. Fortunately, however, the book's release coincides with renewed interest in the study of the Midwest as a region and its ideology. White's career coincided with the peak of the Midwest's political and cultural influence. Delgadillo relies heavily on White's correspondence with politicians to demonstrate how White employed "midwestern ideals of community and neighborliness" to shape policy (2). White's midwestern liberalism combined calls for political and economic justice with cultural conservatism. He believed in using the government to advance the general welfare. He did not, however, view government as a way to advance major social change.

Delgadillo's work is not a hagiography; he readily acknowledges White's flaws and many contradictions. White supported unions but sought ways to settle labor disputes without strikes. The Great Depression and the drought of 1930 caused many of White's neighbors to lose faith in the American system. In response, White wanted the federal government to provide relief, but he refused to endorse Franklin Delano Roosevelt. White attacked the Klan but helped fuel anti-Catholic attacks against 1928 Democratic presidential nominee Al Smith. Delgadillo explains, "Like many midwesterners, White's cultural ideology during the decade centered on two basic concepts: the Midwest was the heart of American civilization and it was under attack by outside forces" (168). To White, Smith's urban and immigrant constituency represented a threat to the midwestern culture forged by native-born white Anglo-Saxon Protestant men.

Students of Iowa political history will be interested in Delgadillo's exploration of how White's midwestern worldview shaped his politics. The book also mentions White's relationship with two prominent Iowa politicians. White shared information with Albert B. Cummins during the progressive phase of the career of the Iowa governor and U.S. senator. White gave active support to Herbert Hoover's 1928 presidential campaign. He boosted the businessman he described as "a farm boy" with more zeal than he had given any presidential candidate since 1912. Hoover, however, failed to seek White's advice as other presidents had done, and White was frustrated by Hoover's slow response to the onset of the Great Depression. His administration's efforts to orchestrate opposition to progressive Republicans seeking reelection to Congress troubled the editor even more. But personal relationships and loyalty mattered to White, and, despite meeting with Franklin Dela-

no Roosevelt, he felt obligated to endorse Hoover's reelection despite knowing that he would not win.

Delgadillo's epilogue notes how Hoover tried to use a 1950 speech to portray White as a conservative. White's long political career provides plenty of fodder for agreement and disagreement for readers on all points of the political spectrum. Delgadillo's balanced account avoids passing an overall judgment on White's politics and provides an accessible reminder of a bygone political tradition—one worthy of additional research.

Swift as an Arrow: The Story of Thomas Benoist, Pioneer American Aviator, by Melody Davis and Gary R. Liming. Chesterfield, MO: Mindwings Press, 2017. vi, 306 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, notes, index. \$26.95 paperback.

Reviewer Janet R. Bednarek is professor of history at the University of Dayton. She is the author of *Dreams of Flight: A History of General Aviation* (2003) and *America's Airports: A History of Municipal Airports in the United States, 1918–1947* (2001).

Thomas Benoist was one of numerous young men, many from the Midwest, enthralled with the new technology of the airplane and determined to make it his life's work. Unlike most, Benoist actually found a way to make something of a living as an aircraft builder, parts supplier, and exhibition pilot/manager. Authors Melody Davis and Gary R. Liming trace the history of Benoist's company from its origins in 1909 in St. Louis, Missouri, to its end following the founder's untimely death in 1917 in Sandusky, Ohio. Benoist is perhaps most remembered for his role in establishing the first passenger-carrying airline in the United States, which operated for about three months between St. Petersburg and Tampa, Florida, in 1914.

This work would appeal mostly to those interested in the very early years of the aircraft industry in the Midwest. Benoist's story could offer some broader context to demonstrate just how wide open aviation was in its pioneering years. One early history of aviation in Iowa, for example, names a dozen or more young men who also sought to find fame and fortune in the pioneering years of aviation.

Swift as an Arrow also shows how midwestern cities, such as St. Louis and Sandusky, figured prominently in early aviation history. It could have benefited from a larger comparative context—for example, comparing Benoist (born in Missouri in 1874) with Glenn Martin (born in Iowa in 1886), both of whom started in aviation at roughly the same time, yet with vastly different levels of success.