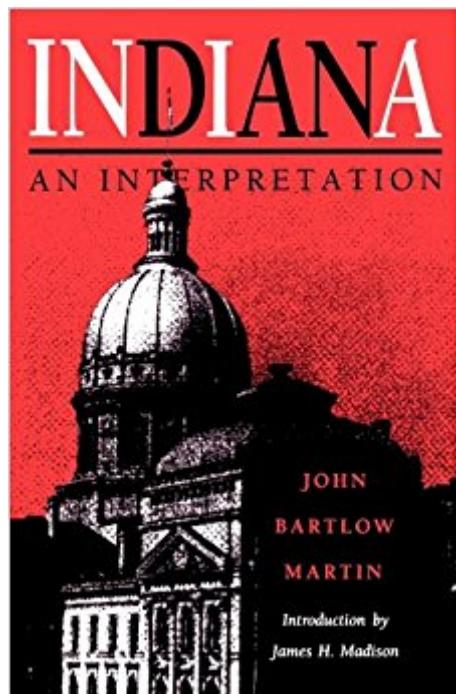


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Indiana: An Interpretation



Synopsis

Beginning with the State Fair as a window on Indiana as a whole, Martin interprets the Hoosier state and its history, from the Civil War and its impact on the state to the period during and just after World War II. As he says, "It is a conception of Indiana as a pleasant, rather rural place inhabited by people who are confident, prosperous, neighborly, easygoing, tolerant, shrewd."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

JOHN BARTLOW MARTIN (1915–1988) was a journalist and free-lance writer who grew up in Indianapolis and was graduated from DePauw University. He worked for the Associated Press, was a reporter for the Indianapolis Times, and was the author of numerous articles, stories, and books.

This book was written in 1947 when Indiana was a very different place. Yet this book endures as a compelling and sometimes critical look at important people, times, and events in Indiana's history. Martin tells about Indiana's beginnings: How people came to settle here, what those people were like. He shows how the Civil War played out in Indiana, where every fourth-grade student is now told that "brother fought against brother." He describes the poverty of Indiana farm life and how natural gas made many men wealthy, both in the late 1800s. He tells of the "golden years" in the early 1900s, as cities began to rise. And he explains the troubled years of the 1930s and 1940s, which were fresh in the memories of this book's first audience. Martin's most compelling writing,

however, is reserved for his portraits of colorful Indiana men: Hoosier poet James Whitcomb Riley, socialist leader Eugene V. Debs, infamous Klansman D. C. Stephenson, and others. The story of Debs is the best part of the book. Martin clearly sympathized with Debs, who championed the worker from his Terre Haute home and, later, from the Presidential campaign trail and, finally, from prison. Debs's story is all the more interesting to me because I lived in Terre Haute for several years in the 1990s. My apartment was a mile or so north of Debs's home on Eighth Street, which still stands as a historical site. I can imagine the physical setting of Debs's Terre Haute activism as Martin relates it. But it is difficult for me to imagine the spirit of the city in those days, if nothing else because the city's current sleepiness stands in such stark contrast.

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