
"The old flag flies, and rules again!" wrote George Boker in a stanza of the hymn of the Union League. In so doing he united patriotism and politics, and at once established the formula for the Union League of Philadelphia. Maxwell Whiteman's history of the league traces the origins of this formula and details its development for the century following its founding in 1862. Although this is a "house history," it is really more than that, for Whiteman skillfully integrates the history of the Union League with social, economic, and political changes in Philadelphia, across Pennsylvania, and throughout the United States.

The roots of the Union League stem from the organization of the Republican party in the mid-1850s. Its members grew up with the antebellum reform movements, and the principles and crusades of those turbulent years shaped individual philosophies as well as guided the league's principles and partisanship. The Civil War cemented both, and the league eagerly embraced both the party and philosophy of Lincoln. Electioneering for Republican candidates and support for the party's platform became essential for acceptance into what was largely a political club — although one restricted to men of uncommon wealth and elevated social position.

Throughout the Civil War the Union League distributed thousands of pamphlets attacking Copperheadism and supporting Lincoln's administration. After Lincoln's assassination, league members transferred their support to Andrew Johnson. This alliance soon fell apart, however, when the new president refused to prosecute congressional Reconstruction measures. Thereafter the Union League steered a steady course along Republican paths. It remained true to these tenets throughout its first century.

Maxwell Whiteman has written an engaging volume. He has successfully demonstrated that the Union League was not a secret society, and that it was more than a mere social club. Yet the social reform activism of league members dissolved quickly after the Civil War. Too often, one suspects, good intentions fell victim to an inclination to defend the status quo and the Republican party at all costs. Philadelphia gentlemen lost a sense of crisis, and too often showed
more concern for the league, instead of analyzing social and political problems. A strong commitment to clean government led members to attack machine politics and urban corruption, but also to support immigration restriction and specifically restrict women from league membership. For anyone interested in both the possibilities and limitations of such organizations, this volume offers much.

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This is the first biography of an important figure in American history. It is based on primary sources, some of which have been newly discovered, some ignored, some underused, and some misused. It supplies new information about people and events described many times over in earlier histories and biographies, and in so doing it clears away a bit of the incrustation of myth and misconception that has surrounded them.

Charles Michael Schwab (1862-1939) was a Western Pennsylvania country boy with all the Horatio Alger qualities — inexhaustible energy, burning ambition, dauntless courage, and incredible luck — that make a modern biographer wince with embarrassment, even while discovering that the subject really was like that and that such things sometimes actually did happen in the Gilded Age. He got a job in Andrew Carnegie's steel mill in Pittsburgh when he was seventeen, made himself indispensable there, married Miss Emma Eurania Dinkey, his landlady's daughter, and became Carnegie's protegé at twenty-two. That began when he was sent to Carnegie's home, charged with delivering the daily tonnage report personally to the master; Carnegie, who was out, returned and listened quietly to Schwab playing the piano. Schwab became general superintendent of the Homestead mill at twenty-four and of the Braddock works, largest in America, at twenty-seven. He became a Carnegie partner at thirty, president of Carnegie Steel Company at thirty-five, and president of United States Steel at thirty-nine. Three years later he became head of his own company, Bethlehem Steel.

Charles Schwab was surely the most atypical, the least orthodox,