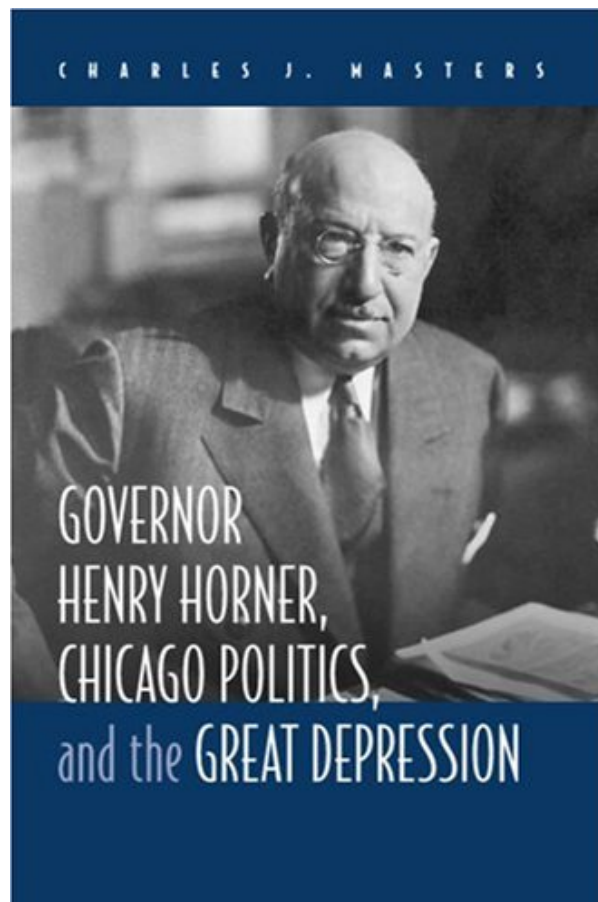


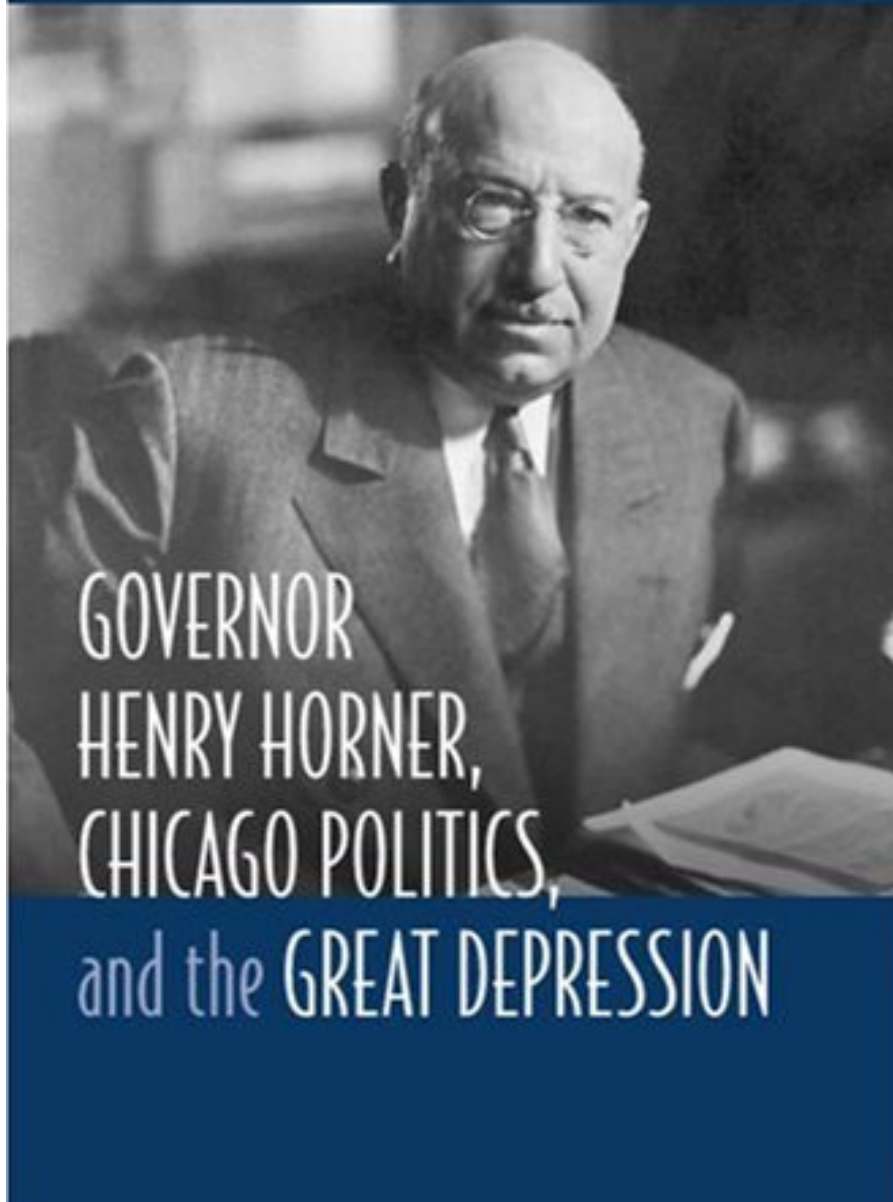
**GOVERNOR HENRY HORNER, CHICAGO
POLITICS, AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION
BY CHARLES J MASTERS**



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Review

“An exciting and intimate portrayal of one of the great governors of Illinois, Charles Masters’s book reads like a political thriller and is sure to please those who love to explore the intersections of Illinois politics and government in the first half of the last century. A real winner.”—James R. Thompson, former governor of Illinois

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The portrait of Horner that emerges in Charles Masters' account is that of a deeply principled man, committed to a practical, common-sense politics organized "not in terms of abstract policy, but in terms of people and material conditions." The book's first half provides the reader with a good overview of Chicago politics from the city's founding until the 1930s. But the book begins to really shine with its account of Horner's 1932 campaign for governor and his ensuing eight years as the state's chief executive.

Masters' well-written and entertaining popular history captures a unique perspective on the Depression, looking at President Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal from the perspective of Illinois and Chicago politics. In doing so, he has recovered a frequently forgotten strand of opposition to the New Deal, fiscally conservative but nevertheless deeply sympathetic to the plight of the poor and to limited government intervention on their behalf.

(Chicago Tribune 2007-03-25)

About the Author

Chicago attorney Charles J. Masters is also the author of *Glidermen of Neptune: The American D-Day Glider Attack*, which was a featured selection in both the Military Book Club and the Aviators' Guild Book Club. A recognized authority on World War II, he has been a guest on numerous radio shows and was an adviser and the key speaker on History Channel's "Silent Wing Warriors."

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Many have never heard of Governor Henry Horner of Illinois, yet his story is remarkable. Governor Henry Horner, Chicago Politics, and the Great Depression focuses on Horner's career in law and politics from 1915 to 1940, while examining the economic and political dynamics of Illinois during the darkest period in American history. This principled governor managed to maintain his political integrity in a climate where honesty was a liability, says author Charles J. Masters, but the few historians who include Horner in their narratives offer contradictory and dismissive characterizations of him. Masters corrects the public record and reintroduces Horner to political lore as a man who brazenly fought both the Chicago Democratic machine that worked to plot his downfall and Roosevelt's White House to steadfastly do right by the people of Illinois.

In this first book-length treatment of Horner in over thirty-five years, Masters traces the politician's career, the history and politics of Chicago, and the effects of the Great Depression in Illinois. The volume details Horner's life as a lawyer, probate judge, and two-term Democratic governor of Illinois. Horner's relationships with President Franklin D. Roosevelt and such political players as Michael "Hinky Dink" Kenna, "Bathhouse" John Coughlin, and Chicago mayors Carter Harrison, Anton Cermak, and Ed Kelly are set against a backdrop of assassination, political sniping, court-packing schemes, Prohibition, and the New Deal.

Governor Henry Horner, Chicago Politics, and the Great Depression examines the governor's management of the political and economic challenges of the state when millions of Americans were jobless, homeless, and hungry. The severely divergent economic and political positions of the state's northern industrial and southern agrarian interests made the period even darker. Masters shows how Horner stemmed foreclosures, dealt with bank closings, placated unpaid teachers, soothed massive labor unrest, fed the hungry, and confronted the ever-present threat of revolution. While Hitler's Germany was spreading Nazism throughout Europe, some Americans were questioning the fundamental order of their own political system, suggesting that socialism, communism, or Nazism could offer a better way. Masters addresses how Horner, Illinois' first Jewish governor, dealt with these challenges to the U.S. political system.

A story long absent from the historical record, Governor Henry Horner, Chicago Politics, and the Great Depression offers a portrait of the man, his style of governance, his successes, and his failures. The volume, with eight illustrations, effectively reevaluates Horner's historical reputation and role in Illinois politics in the midst of the worst economic depression in our nation's history.

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Most helpful customer reviews

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Interesting Read

By Bob K

What a great book. My wife knows how much I love Chicago history and she picked this book up for me over the holidays. I don't get a chance to read much, and am very selective about what I spend my time reading. I had purchased two books on my own since I had a weekend off, A Michio Kaku Physics book (this guy is a genius) and a the biography of Augustus Caesar. I felt bad not reading the book my wife bough me so I thought I would give it a try.

The book was truly riveting. It is hard to describe what an amazing (but definitely overlooked) figure Horner is in Chicago history. I literally did not put the book down for 16 hours. If you like Chicago history, or history at all for that matter, pick up this book. This is the first review I have ever felt compelled to write. I don't have time to read, let alone write reviews, but this book provides an insight you won't find in any class, or on any bookshelf if you aren't looking for it. I cannot tell you the last time I enjoyed a book so much.

It is my sincere hope this author takes on another history book, and I really hope it is a Chicago history book. I can't remember when I read something this well written and enjoyed it so much.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

An Intriguing Illinois Governor Gets His Due

By Gary T. Johnson

Masters brings a lawyer's understanding to solving the enigma that was Henry Horner, who was Governor of Illinois from January 1933 through October 1940. Born to a well-do-do Jewish family, he had a great sympathy for the common man. His relations with the political establishment were complex. He rose from Probate Judge to Governor, but was unafraid to take on both the Kelly-Nash organization and FDR. He was married to public service, and spent his Sundays while Governor making surprise visits to mental institutions, where he would visit patients and compare purchase vouchers against supplies to see if there were any discrepancies. A dedicated collector, his extensive Lincoln collection is now among the treasures of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. This is a welcome and revealing account of a complex man. His story is a true hidden gem of Illinois history.

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