

**AMERICAN CITIES:
THEIR METHODS OF
BUSINESS**

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American Cities: Their Methods of Business by Arthur Benson Gilbert

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BY
ARTHUR BENSON GILBERT, M.A.
Formerly with the Extension Division,
State University of Iowa

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PREFACE

The improvement of the means of communication between different parts of the nation and between nations, has developed a strong competition between cities as a whole rather than simply between the citizens of different cities. More and more business fails or succeeds because of the city which harbors it. Where a man takes goods to the market, he takes with him his city with its good and bad influences. The city conditions under which he has prepared his goods for the market may make him successful over others or they may bring defeat.

The great problem of city promotion is just this new need to make the city an efficient partner with its business rather than an undirected force acting on that business. That problem is to make use of the city with its multitude of possibilities in what H. G. Wells calls "the every day drama of human getting." But business success, of course, is no more the whole field of city promotion than the individual income is the whole problem of the individual. Every science and art has a relation to city development.

In the near future the American city is going to be

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more than just a miscellaneous group of people. It is going to become a powerful force making for the business success of its citizens. Success in augmenting the flow of prosperity to the city will in turn stimulate the artistic, the cultural, for with such success comes greater hope, greater faith in the future, greater freedom from total absorption in the mere problem of getting. The whole trend of business life is forcing this development, but by proper community thought and action, these favorable conditions can be achieved much earlier.

This book is sent forth with the hope that it may help to concentrate attention on the possibilities of constructive city evolution. The aim has been to express briefly a philosophy of city improvement -- not a statement of the utmost that can be hoped for, the ideal city, but the methods by which directed improvement can begin, the path along which real improvement must travel, the means by which the ideal, if it ever be reached, will be reached. It is hoped that this philosophy will help in bringing together all those groups of citizens who will gain by real city promotion but who are more or less separated now from supposed differences in interest, and that it will help to isolate those interests hostile to fundamental improvement.

The author is chiefly indebted to the teachings and

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influence of Tom L. Johnson, the late Mayor of Cleveland, Ohio, the first man in the United States to grasp clearly the principles by which cities must be promoted. Converted first by the works of Henry George, this great pioneer devoted himself utterly to the task of human betterment, so wonderful did the prospect of this task appear once its principles were grasped. Johnson, with his intimate understanding of business and his association with large business of his day, was able to round out a philosophy of city development that comprised all essential factors. If his principles had received more publicity, if he had not been opposed so bitterly by a congealed conservatism that was nation wide and that controlled nearly all avenues to public opinion, American cities would now be years ahead of their present development. But the force of events has cracked this crust of conservatism. Conservatism has simply delayed the application of correct principles rather than strangled them for all time. The Johnson principles that made Cleveland the best city in his time in the United States, must soon receive universal recognition. There is scarcely a point of importance in this book for which I am not indebted to either Mr. Johnson or a fellow disciple of his, Mr. W. G. Osborn.

A. B. GILBERT.

St. Paul, Minnesota.

March 1, 1918.

