

Good Books for Troubled Times

Because of health concerns and governmental orders, all tours and talks are on hold until at least the middle of April.

Even as you care for your well-being, you can realize conditions could be much worse. In 1918, for example, the death rate from the flu was in the thousands. As had been the case in many horrid pandemics killing millions of people, the authorities had little idea of what they were doing. Instead of solid information, which they lacked, they readily called for public sacrifice and measures that gave the appearance of action. For example, there was a craze for gauze face masks, devices ineffective against the virus causing the disease. The government lifted shutdown orders as part of mobilizations for World War I. Besides, the population made no heed to a stay-at-home order on November 11, Victory Day.

This comes out in Phil Goodstein's *Robert Speer's Denver*. That book, focusing on the Mile High City during the first 20 years of the 20th century, includes a lengthy discussion of the 1918 epidemic. At that time, William H. Sharpley, a disciple of Mayor Robert Speer, was in charge. Back in 1915–16, Sharpley had been the city's de facto mayor when he was also commissioner of health as part of the city's commission government. As the manager of health in 1918, the physician guided the city's inept means of dealing with the killer flu. Within a few years, Sharpley went on to be a member of the Ku Klux Klan when that group dominated the city from 1923 to 1926.

Robert Speer's Denver came out in 2004. It lists for \$24.95. It is yours for only \$5.00 with the order of Phil Goodstein's new book, *The Denver School Busing Wars* (Denver: New Social Publications, 2020, ISBN 978-0-9860748-5-1). The 502-page volume lists for \$24.95. With *Speer's Denver*, it is yours for \$30.00 post and tax paid.

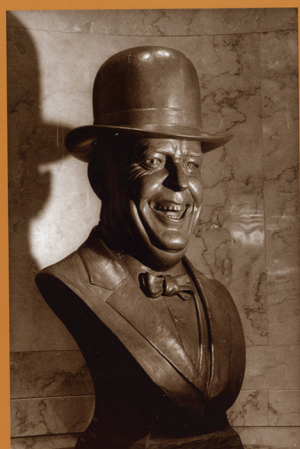
The Denver School Busing Wars is volume two of Goodstein's monumental, three-part *History of Denver Public Schools*. Volume one, *The Denver School Book* (Denver: New Social Publications, 2019), is also \$24.95. (With an order of the other two books, it is yours for a total of \$50.00.) The *School Book* looked at the emergence of the Mile High public school system through

the administration of Superintendent Kenneth K. Oberholtzer in 1967. On the surface, he left behind an extremely efficient district with nearly 100,000 students.

By the time Oberholtzer retired after 20 years at the helm of Denver Public Schools (DPS), racial divisions haunted the school district amidst the civil rights upheavals of the day. The situation exploded in 1969 when candidates opposed to busing for integration swept the May school board election. After the new, anti-busing majority reversed the existing desegregation policy of DPS, proponents sued in the federal courts. In a landmark case, *Keyes v. School District #1*, the United States Supreme Court ruled Denver must have integration regardless of the costs or consequences. In the process, DPS seemingly imploded with its enrollment dropping to about 55,000 within 15 years. What happened here, complete with teacher strikes and other upheavals, is the heart of the extremely well-illustrated the *Denver School Busing Wars*.

The book will be out in mid-April. Originally, a number of signings and talks were planned as part of its launch. All have been postponed. You can get it via mail order for \$25.00, tax and postage included—assuming the post office stays open—from New Social Publications; Box 18026; Denver 80218. Notices about book events and tours will resume once the city regains its health.

Robert Speer's Denver 1904–1920



Phil Goodstein

