

Roger Sullivan and the Triumph of the Chicago Democratic Machine, 1908-1920

Roger Sullivan was a powerful Democratic politician who controlled Chicago politics from 1908 to 1920. He used a combination of patronage, intimidation, and corruption to build a political machine that dominated the city's government. This article explores Sullivan's rise to power, the methods he used to maintain his control, and the eventual decline of his machine.



Roger C. Sullivan and the Triumph of the Chicago Democratic Machine, 1908-1920 by Richard Allen Morton

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Sullivan's Rise to Power

Roger Sullivan was born in Chicago in 1865. He grew up in a poor Irish-Catholic family, and he dropped out of school at a young age to work in a factory. Sullivan entered politics in the 1880s, when he became a precinct captain for the Democratic Party.

Sullivan quickly rose through the ranks of the Democratic Party. He was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives in 1892, and he served as the party's chairman in Cook County from 1896 to 1908. Sullivan's rise to power was aided by his close relationship with John P. Hopkins, a wealthy businessman who was the Democratic Party's national treasurer.

The Chicago Democratic Machine

Sullivan became the boss of the Chicago Democratic Machine in 1908. He used a combination of patronage, intimidation, and corruption to build a political machine that dominated the city's government. Sullivan's machine controlled the city's elections, and it was able to deliver votes for Democratic candidates at all levels of government.

Sullivan's machine was based on patronage. He used his control of city jobs to reward his loyal followers. He also used intimidation to keep his opponents in line. Sullivan was known to use violence and threats of violence to silence his critics.

Sullivan was also a master of corruption. He used his political power to enrich himself and his friends. He accepted bribes from businesses and individuals who wanted to do business with the city. He also used his control of the city's government to award contracts to his friends and supporters.

The Decline of the Machine

Sullivan's machine began to decline in the 1910s. A series of scandals and investigations led to the erosion of public support for the Democratic Party. In 1919, Sullivan was indicted on corruption charges. He was convicted and sentenced to prison in 1920.

Sullivan's imprisonment marked the end of the Chicago Democratic Machine. The machine's grip on the city's government was broken, and the Democratic Party was replaced by the Republican Party as the dominant force in Chicago politics.

Sullivan's Legacy

Roger Sullivan was a powerful and corrupt politician who controlled Chicago politics for over a decade. His machine was a model of corruption and inefficiency, and it left a lasting legacy of distrust in government.

However, Sullivan's machine also played a positive role in Chicago's development. Sullivan used his political power to improve the city's infrastructure and to provide social services to its residents. He also helped to bring about the election of some of Chicago's most progressive mayors, such as Carter Harrison Jr. and Edward J. Kelly.

Roger Sullivan was a complex and controversial figure. He was a corrupt politician who abused his power, but he also played a positive role in Chicago's development. His legacy is still debated today.



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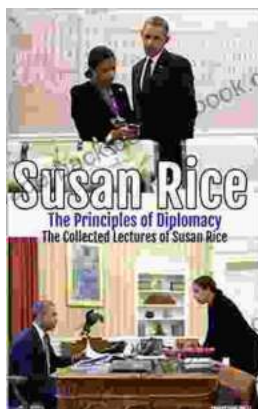
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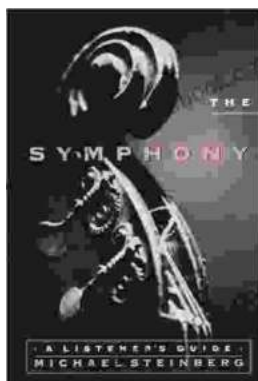
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