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Herbert Hoover in the White House: The Ordeal of the Presidency

Charles Rappleye
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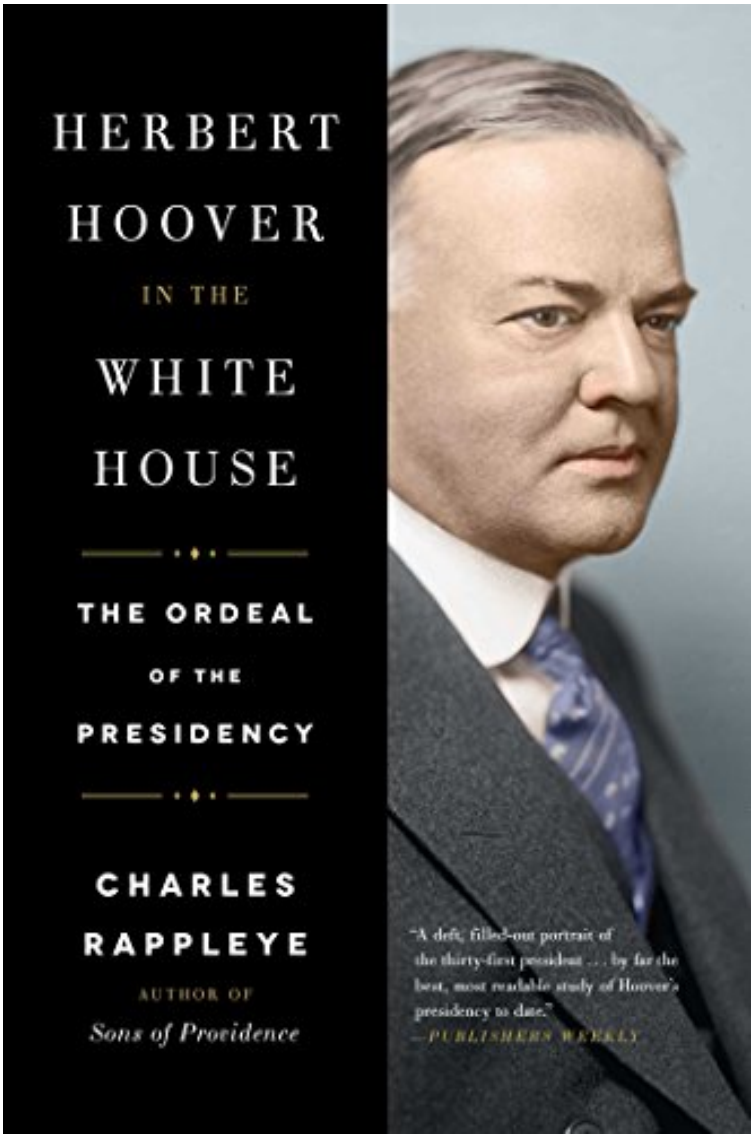

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Charles Rappleye : Herbert Hoover in the White House: The Ordeal of the Presidency before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Herbert Hoover in the White House: The Ordeal of the Presidency:

22 of 23 people found the following review helpful. Hoover inspires both sympathy and frustrationBy Robert FisherIn 1928, many believed Herbert Hoover to be the most qualified man to be the next president. A successful businessman who was also noted for his humanitarian efforts, he had been the outstanding member of the Coolidge cabinet. Yet the Hoover presidency would be like something out of a Greek tragedy; a tale of a man of great gifts, but with flaws that

would bring about his destruction. Charles Rappleye's new book Herbert Hoover in the White House is a compelling read. Even before the onset of the Great Depression, there were signs of trouble. Hoover, a deeply introverted man, was not skilled at political horse trading. He could treat would be allies badly, such as future OSS director William Donovan and his attitudes towards suspected enemies foreshadowed Richard Nixon. Hoover thought that Wall Street speculation could lead to economic problems, but he misjudged just how severe the crisis would be. His political instincts proved awkward; overly optimistic with some economic forecasts, at other times dour when he could have offered inspiration. He was testy and sometimes too eager to have credit for projects. Rappleye provides a very good history of the early years of the Depression, both in the United States and abroad. His portrayal of Hoover makes a reader feel a mix of sympathy for and frustration with the man. Hoover made great efforts fighting the Depression but they often came up short and his personality flaws did him or the country no favors. Herbert Hoover in the White House is a fine cautionary tale about a man who seemed ideal for the presidency right up until the time he actually got there.9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Herbert Hoover was a failed president who was unable to halt the cancerous growht of the Great DepressionBy C. M MillsHerbert Hoover in the White House is popular history writing at its very best! The author confesses that he knew little about Hoover prior to his research for this book. Hoover was an orphan from Iowa who came from a Quaker background. His parents died young and he lived with various relatives. Hoover graduated in the first class at Stanford and became an internationallyf famous engineer. He amassed millions. He was wed Lou Hoover a fellow Standford graduate. They traveled the world on engineering jaunts. Hoover became famous for leading the American relief effort for the starving millions of Europe following the disaster of World War I. Hoover served as Secretary of Commerce on both the Harding and Coolidge admnistrations. Hoover won a landslide victory over Democrat Al Smith in the 1928 election for president. He had never held elective office in his life! Hoover did try hard to stem the tide of the growing economic crisis. He worked with business and industrial leaders but unemployment grew to record numbers and the country sank deeper into the mire of misery. Hoover was defeated in 1932 by Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt the greatest POTUS of the 20th century. Herbert Hoover was a good man who was well intention but failed in office. He was aloof, taciturn, cold and could be rude. Though distant in personality he liked to be surrounded by friends. He had atrocious table manners! . He was an engineer trying to stop the runaway train of the GreatDepression but was himself derailed. The author has done a wonderfgul job on discussing and examining in detail the complex man that was Herbert Hoover. Excellent book well recommended.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Tedious at times but enlighteningBy Steven MeiselThis is a "different type" of biography of one of our more infamous but poorly known presidents. Eschewing (thankfully) long recitations of grandparents' origins and much of his personal life, Rappleye instead focuses on Hoover's times in the White House, with very little time spent on his time as Commerce Secretary or his rehabilitation under Truman. The intent of this book is to describe what, exactly, made Hoover a failed president. Unfortunately, at times it becomes hyper-detailed to the point of a policy primer that only a financial guru could understand. And the often endless policy debates can overwhelm the description of Hoover "the person". Very little time, for example, is spent describing his relationship with his wife, Lou.Despite these shortcomings, Rappleye does succeed in enlightening the reader about Hoover's motivations, his philosophy of government, and the personal weaknesses that prevented him from creating an atmosphere of optimism. That alone makes it an important read for those interested in understanding why he was a failed president.

ldquo;A deft, filled-out portrait of the thirty-first presidenthellip;by far the best, most readable study of Herbert Hooverrsquo;s presidency to daterdquo; (Publishers Weekly) that draws on rare and intimate sources to show he was temperamentally unsuited for the job.Herbert Clark Hoover was the thirty-first President of the United States. He served one term, from 1929 to 1933. Often considered placid, passive, unsympathetic, and even paralyzed by national events, Hoover faced an uphill battle in the face of the Great Depression. Many historians dismiss him as merely ineffective. But in Herbert Hoover in the White House, Charles Rappleye investigates memoirs and diaries and thousands of documents kept by members of his cabinet and close advisors to reveal a very different figure than the one often portrayed. This ldquo;grippingrdquo; (Christian Science Monitor) biography shows that the real Hoover lacked the tools of leadership. In public Hoover was shy and retiring, but in private Rappleye shows him to be a man of passion and sometimes of fury, a man who intrigued against his enemies while fulminating over plots against him. Rappleye describes him as more sophisticated and more active in economic policy than is often acknowledged. We see Hoover watching a sunny (and he thought ignorant) FDR on the horizon, experimenting with steps to relieve the Depression. The Hoover we see heremdash;bright, well meaning, energeticmdash;lacked the single critical element to succeed as president. He had a first-class mind and a second-class temperament. Herbert Hoover in the White House is an object lesson in the most, perhaps only, talent needed to be a successful presidentmdash;the temperament of leadership. This ldquo;fair-handed, surprisingly sympathetic new appraisal of the much-vilified president who was faced with the nation's plunge into the Great Depressionhellip;fills an important niche in presidential scholarshiprdquo; (Kirkus Reviews).

ldquo;Rappleye fleshes out the standard picture of Hoover by using a greater array of primary sources ndash; newspaper accounts, government documents, private diaries ndash; than any previous account. . . . greater gravitas and psychological insight than any biography of a US president to appear so far this year. . . . detailed and gripping.rdquo; (Christian Science Monitor)ldquo;Absorbing . . . an account of both Hooverrsquo;s fall and Rooseveltrsquo;s rise.rdquo; (National)ldquo;Rappleye skillfully succeeds . . . Rappleye constructs a deft, filled out portrait of the 31st president, one that captures as no one else has the political and economic snares that brought down Hooverrsquo;s single term and ruined his reputation forever. . . . by far the best, most readable study of Hooverrsquo;s presidency to date.rdquo; (Publishers Weekly)ldquo;A fair handed, surprisingly sympathetic new appraisal of the much vilified president who was faced with the nation's plunge into the Great Depression. Reading Rappleye's engaging account of Herbert Hoover's (1874 1964) one term presidency, readers may find themselves thinking that maybe the Depression wasn't really Hoover's fault after all. . . . Rappleye valiantly portrays all facets of this conflicted character . . . Concluding with the rise of Franklin Roosevelt, this study is finely focused and fills an important niche in presidential scholarship.rdquo; (Kirkus s)ldquo;Well written and well researched.rdquo; (The Wall Street Journal)ldquo;Why did Herbert Hoover succeed at everything he didmdash;except the presidency? Charles Rappleye provides a convincing answer in this solidly researched, persuasively argued account of Hooverrsquo;s tortured four years in the White House. Dispelling the myths of a heartless or do nothing president, Rappleye confirms his own subjectrsquo;s admonition, lsquo;You canrsquo;t make a Teddy Roosevelt out of me.rsquo; The book could not be more timelymdash;the cautionary tale of a hugely accomplished anti politician, it coincides with a presidential campaign in which inexperience is held up as a qualification for the most political of jobs. Highly recommended!rdquo; (Richard Norton Smith, author of An Uncommon Man: The Triumph of Herbert Hoover and On His Own Terms: A Life of Nelson Rockefeller)ldquo;Contrary to myth, Hoover was no free marketeer and his activist programmdash;especially the RFC and public worksmdash;anticipated the New Deal. But Hoover lacked FDRrsquo;s elixir of leadership and he knew it. Rappleyersquo;s fresh and compelling storymdash;wonderfully toldmdash;changes our understanding of the Depression and the possibilities of the presidency.rdquo; (Jonathan Alter, author of The Defining Moment: FDRrsquo;s Hundred Days and the Triumph of Hope)ldquo;History accords little respect to Herbert Hoover, who is seen as a failed president overwhelmed by an economic cataclysm he couldnrsquo;t manage. But Charles Rappleye delivers a trenchant and vivid narrative of Hooverrsquo;s White House struggles that is notable also for the respect it shows its subject. Sprightly written with plenty of human insight, this book captures the drama of one of the hardest of Americarsquo;s hard times.rdquo; (Robert W. Merry, author of Where They Stand: The American Presidents in the Eyes of Voters and Historians)ldquo;Rappleye portrays Hoover as an able administrator who prevented famines after the First World War and the 1927 Mississippi flood, but wanted to be President in 1928. He found himself between a rock (the Great Depression) and a hard place (his commitment to long run plans for the American economy: balanced budgets and the gold standard). This engrossing book fills in a missing piece in the history of the Great Depression with a detailed narrative of Hooverrsquo;s presidency.rdquo; (Peter Temin, Elisha Gray II Professor Emeritus of Economics, MIT, and author (with David Vines) of Keynes: Useful Economics for the World Economy)About the Authorldquo;A fair-handed, surprisingly sympathetic new appraisal of the much-vilified president who was faced with the nation's plunge into the Great Depression. Reading Rappleye's engaging account of Herbert Hoover's (1874-1964) one-term presidency, readers may find themselves thinking that maybe the Depression wasn't really Hoover's fault after all. . . . Rappleye valiantly portrays all facets of this conflicted character . . . Concluding with the rise of Franklin Roosevelt, this study is finely focused and fills an important niche in presidential scholarship.rdquo; (Kirkus s)ldquo;Why did Herbert Hoover succeed at everything he didmdash;except the presidency? 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He found himself between a rock (the Great Depression) and a hard place (his commitment to long-run plans for the American economy: balanced budgets and the gold standard). This engrossing book fills in a missing piece in the history of the Great Depression with a detailed narrative of Hooverrsquo;s presidency.rdquo; (Peter Temin, Elisha Gray II Professor Emeritus of Economics, MIT, and author (with David Vines) of Keynes: Useful Economics for the World Economy)Praise for Robert Morris: ldquo;Charles Rappleye's biography of [Robert Morris is] a welcome addition to the recent spate of books on the remarkable men who created this country. For it was Morris who, over and over again at critical moments, found ways to ensure that the rebels had the money and mateacute;riel they needed. Mr. Rappleye's lsquo;Robert Morrisrsquo; is a great story, told with narrative skill and scholarly authority . . . . Rappleye has done a marvelous job of explaining why this mostly forgotten Founder deserves our gratitude.rdquo; (The Wall Street Journal)ldquo;[A] passionate biography of a Founding Father. . .. In fluid prose, Rappleye ably resurrects an underrated contributor to the early American republic. Provides thorough coverage of a deserving subject.rdquo; (Kirkus s)ldquo;hellip; an illuminating account of the Revolutionrsquo;s improvised and even dodgy finances.rdquo; (The New Yorker)ldquo;This book, the first full-length modern biography of Morris, restores him to his rightful place among the Foundersrsquo; pantheon and tells the story of a man now known to most Americans only from basketball scores.rdquo; (Pittsburgh Times)ldquo;The first full-length modern biography of an extraordinary, forgotten founder of the American republichellip;the best ever about its subjecthellip;. Rappleye (Sons of Providence) brings Morris and his world brightly alive. Nothing of the financier's full lifehellip;escapes Rappleye, and his judgments are balanced and astute.rdquo; (Publishers Weekly)ldquo;The world needs to know more about Morris, and this highly readable book will surely foster more research and writing.rdquo; mdash;Concord Monitor (New Hampshire)ldquo;[RobertMorris] offers . . . pages to savor, packed with new research and anoverall new look at our founding history that is long overdue. What Mr.Rappleye reveals to us is a historical truth that is as important today as itwas during our perilous struggle for independence.rdquo; (Washington Times)ldquo;This book deserves to be in the historic reading section of high school and university libraries.rdquo; (Pennsylvania Magazine)ldquo;There is a lot to be learned from the storyRappleye tells of Robert Morris. And the tale is eerily familiar today.rdquo; (Boston Business Journal.com)ldquo;Insofar as demonstrating Morris's importance to the American cause, Rappleye succeeds brilliantly.rdquo; (American Thinker)ldquo;Robert Morris was a Founding Father who was ahead of his time. He was a believer in global capitalism, and he helped to create a financial system that would make America a leader in such a world. In this valuable biography, Charles Rappleye chronicles Morrisrsquo;s under appreciated contributions to the creation of a new nation and defends his controversial commercial career. In doing so, he highlights the pragmatism that was a key element in shaping our early republic.rdquo; (Walter Isaacson, author of Benjamin Franklin)ldquo;Robert Morris does not merely return a great man to his proper place at the center of the nationrsquo;s foundingmdash;it gives readers a new understanding of how the American Revolution happened. Anyone even faintly interested in how this country began should read this extraordinary book.rdquo; (Thomas Fleming, author of The Intimate Lives of the Founding Fathers)ldquo;Revolutions are about battles and ideas, politics and diplomacy. But they must also be about dollars and cents, or they fail. Charles Rappelyersquo;s engrossing book puts Robert Morris, the money man of our revolution, back where he belongs, at the center of things.rdquo; (Richard Brookhiser, author of George Washington on Leadership)ldquo;A merchant prince of Philadelphia whose ships ranged from London to China, Robert Morris was the indispensable when the success of the American Revolution hung in the balance. Our armies completely relied on the financial wizardry of Morris. Rappleye skillfully tells the compelling story of the man who kept the American experiment in self-government alive through its darkest days.rdquo; (David Stewart, author of Summer of 1787 and Impeached)Praise for Sons of Providence: "Through this profoundly moving story of two brothers -- one a slave trader, the other an abolitionist -- Rappleye brings to vivid life the history of a formative period in our nation's life. It is a terrific story and a splendid work of history." (Doris Kearns Goodwin, author of Team of Rivals and The Bully Pulpit)"Sons of Providence is a landmark book. One learns things about the American Revolution and the early Republic that amaze." (Thomas Fleming, author of Washington's Secret War: The Hidden History of Valley Forge)"In his inspired choice of the Brown Brothers, Charles Rappleye makes human the division between slave owners and abolitionists that haunted the American Revolution and left consequences that plague us still. Sons of Providence is an epic story of greed, rebellion, and moral courage." (A. J. Langguth, author of Patriots: The Men Who Started the American Revolution)"Charles Rappleye has unearthed the fascinating story of two founding brothers on opposite sides of America's bitter battle over slavery and the meaning of a nation conceived in liberty. This powerfully told narrative sheds new light on the Revolutionary era and one man's impassioned struggle to end slavery before it was too late." (Henry Wiencek, author of An Imperfect God: George Washington, His Slaves,and the Creation of America)Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.Herbert Hoover in the White House INTRODUCTION I was a journalist before I became an author, and all my books tend to reflect the journalistic impulse to discovery. That is, I tend to avoid the beaten path, and choose instead subjects who have been overlooked. That is a rare circumstance for a person who reaches so high an office as the presidency of the United States, but that was the case with Herbert Hoover. That is not because Hooverrsquo;s presidency was insignificant. He led the country in the teeth of the most dire economic crisis in American history, a trauma that, in cause and result, might well be

considered the labor pains attendant to the birth of the modern era. At the same time, all of the civilized world was wrestling with the allure and the dangers presented by the isms of the left and the rightmdash;communism, fascism, and every stripe of the spectrum in between. In this titanic struggle, Hoover found the resolve to stay off the shoals and steer by his own lights. Still Hoover remains very much unknown to most Americans. When he is recalled at all, it is in defeat and in caricaturemdash;the clay-footed conservative who preached the old dogmas of laissez-faire while the false idols of capital came crashing down; handmaiden to the elite, scourge of the huddled masses. Hoover himself must take some responsibility for this thin and misleading depiction, by dint of his stinting approach to public life. He disliked speeches, made few public appearances, and never formed that bond to the American people that has been the foundation for every successful presidency. More than that, Hooverrsquo;s successor in office was the twentieth centuryrsquo;s most important president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Inevitably, Hoover was overshadowed, his travails ignored, and his moments of success forgotten. In the version of the story written by the winners, Hoover played the foil, the stooge to the princely Squire of Hyde Park. Certainly Roosevelt joined in this concerted effort to paint Hoover in the most unflattering tones. In the years after he first trounced Hoover, FDR used him repeatedly as the straw man to knock down again. ldquo;Back in 1932rdquo; became a campaign refrain; nor did Roosevelt confine his hostility to elections. When Democratic chieftain Bernard Baruch proposed drafting Hoover to help organize domestic production during World War II, Roosevelt dismissed the notion. ldquo;Irsquo;m not Jesus Christ,rdquo; the president told Baruch. ldquo;Irsquo;m not going to raise him from the dead.rdquo; And so Hoover remained buried, condemned as a relic of the past by a forward-looking nation. He was a convenient touchstone, a benchmark by which a new generation could measure its politics and its progress, how far they had come and how much they had changed. But that time, too, has now passed by, or at least arrived at an uncertain maturity. The confidence of the postwar era, the bland acceptance of government intervention and large-scale public spending, has been replaced by ambivalence, with doubts about the efficacy of government and perplexity over mountainous debt. With America and Europe bound together in protracted economic stagnation, the idea of some alternative strategy takes on a new urgency. With so many predictions turned sour, denizens of this modern moment might want to look back. This book is not an effort to resurrect Hoover as a forgotten hero ready for a new turn in the sun. His was a failed presidency, and not just because of fate, or poor timing. But I do hope in this work to fill in gaps papered over by homilies and assumptions that are now wearing thin. Not all thatrsquo;s been discarded in the headlong rush to the future has been trash; not all that we have acquired along the way has been gold. The passage of time has wrought another, inevitable effect that makes this book unique, and I hope useful. Until now, every portrait of Hoover has necessarily been colored by the passions and polemics of the era. His biographers were all partisansmdash;committed either to his defense, or, more common, to showing his error, and thus burnishing the reputation and legend of Franklin Roosevelt. That is not the case here. This is the first portrait of Hooverrsquo;s presidency to be drawn at a remove, from published documents and oral histories that can be weighed in the scales of time and experience rather than partisan political belief. Consider, for instance, the question of who started the Depression, and where it began. For those who lived through those difficult years this was a defining issue, freighted with the burden of blame. In the instant, Hoover insisted that the roots lay abroad, that the economic dislocation of the 1930s began with the Great War and the peace settlement struck at Versailles. To the opposition, it was just as obvious that the Depression was homegrown, the product of Republican policies that were implemented in large part by Hoover himself. Both sides played this game. It seems apparent that Hooverrsquo;s insistence on locating the onset of the Depression in Europe was at least in part defensive, and it is equally clear that those who blamed the Republicansmdash;who dominated the boom years but were reviled thereaftermdash;sought to score political points. In the decades since, studies by a generation of economists reached a rough consensus that the Depression was a global phenomenon rooted at Versailles and exacerbated by the efforts of all the Western democracies to resurrect the prewar gold standard. This rendering certainly does not exonerate Hoovermdash;his great error was to fight to the last in defense of gold. But nor does it condemn him the way the New Deal intellectuals would have it. In fact, adherence to the gold standard was one of the few policies to enjoy a real consensus at the time; even those who abandoned gold did so only reluctantly, and only because they saw no way to hold on. Hoover was wrong, but he was not stupid, and he was certainly not the hidebound dullard of popular myth. Hoover is certainly not obscure. His name pops up frequently, albeit usually as the prototype of a failed president, or leading the pack in a worst-president contest. But the actual Hoover, once hailed as the exemplar of the Progressive era, elected in a landslide, embodiment of the ideal of the nonpolitician elevated to high officemdash;that Hoover has been lost to the modern era. I knew little of Hoover when I began this project. My previous books dealt with the nationrsquo;s founding era, and with postwar crime and politicsmdash;for me the Great Depression was a blank, memorialized solely in my grandmotherrsquo;s pronouncements about thrift and toil. I began with just one assumptionmdash;that there was more to Hooverrsquo;s story than the historical caricature marked out above. At first pass I learned the broad outlines of Hooverrsquo;s official portraitmdash;the well-meaning Quaker overwhelmed by historical circumstance, the economic conservative who stood by as the ship of state foundered. Eminent historians vied for the most eloquent condemnation of his tenure; summarizing the consensus version, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., dean of the New Deal interpreters, wrote that Hoover ldquo;was portrayed as the embodiment of the illusions and complacencies of the New

Era, a cold, self-righteous president who misconceived the problems of his age and determinedly sacrificed human beings on the altar of dogma.rdquo; It was a resounding and conclusive verdict. But as I delved into the books and plumbed contemporary sources to follow the course of his presidency a new Hoover emerged, a character and an executive who contradicts the historical Hoover in two fundamental ways. First, Hoover was not the mild Quaker soul that his friends liked to portray, simply unfortunate to have entered the White House at such an unpropitious moment. That was a whitewash, the product of the more common arts of hagiography, and of a kind of journalistic decorum no longer practiced today. Hoover was a kindly enough man in person and to his friends, but in the capacity of his office he was surly, easily frustrated, and sometimes vindictive. He regarded enemies and often his friends with suspicion, allowed few to get close to him, and proved inconstant in his alliances. A look inside his White House sanctum found him seething with anger; his advisors counseled that he use fear as a weapon and Hoover embraced it, winning some legislative battles but losing the war for hearts and minds. The presidency was the first elected office Hoover ever held, and it showed. His status as a political novice served him well in his race against New York governor Al Smith, who was the quintessential politician of the time, a garrulous backslapper who embodied the spirit and the pluck of Gothamrsquo;s tenements. But in office Hooverrsquo;s nature betrayed him. Through a curious combination of arrogance and personal pique he managed to turn much of his own party against him, and within a year, well before the Depression had fully revealed itself, Hoover had shown himself to be hapless and inept as president. When the Depression arrived, then, Hoover was already feuding with Congress and with the press. He retained the nominal powers of his office, but not the sinews of popular and political support. The traditional first-blush honeymoon of his presidential term had already been squandered. This set the stage for the second principal surprise of my research. That was that, contrary to so much written at the time and after, Hoover made an active and energetic response to the economic tsunami that hit the nation. No other officer in his administration was so quick to recognize the implications for employment when the stock market crashed in October, and none was more creative in fashioning a response. That is not to say Hoover was right in the particulars of his program. And he was hamstrung in his policies by his distinctly antidemocratic tendencies, his penchant for secrecy, and his fearful, even paranoid view of those who might disagree with him. But Hoover was not the complacent, clueless stooge of the moneyed classes that his critics derided then and for a generation after. More than that, Hoover was right about some of the most critical questions posed by the historic breakdown in the global economy. The first was the most fundamentalmdash;was this crisis a death blow to the whole idea of capitalism? Was the economic system that had raised up Western civilization, and which had reached its fullest flower in America, was that system doomed? For peoples and nations around the globe the answer was yes. The crisis brought on a wave of revolution, and the advent of socialist and fascist alternatives to liberal capitalist democracy. Many Americans reached the same conclusion, and calls for a new order built around a central economic directorate arose from the left and the right. But in the White House Hoover never wavered, rejecting the idea of a planned economy as inimical to personal liberty and insisting that individual initiative remained the mainspring of economic progress. The passing decades have confirmed Hooverrsquo;s instinct in the most graphic terms. Beyond the watershed question of capitalism per se, Hoover made the further judgment that the primary systemic malfunction exposed by the Depression was the collapse of credit. Here again his powers of perception surpassed those of most contemporary observers in or out of government. And while he proved unable to surmount the breakdown brought on by the credit crunchmdash;it is fair to say that, given the scale of the calamity, no single prescription could have overcome itmdash;he did mobilize a creative, even daring institutional response. That response was creation of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, a multibillion-dollar agency established to thaw frozen assets and open channels of credit by supporting banks and other private institutions with public funds. It was a step that violated Hooverrsquo;s closely held proscription against government action in the marketplace, and it engendered stiff opposition in Congress. But Hoover recognized the need and pushed it through. The RFC stood for decades after as a historical anomaly, a curio from the early days of the Depression, until American policymakers faced a similar crisis in 2008. Then, with the global financial system on the verge of another massive seizure, Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama instituted the Troubled Asset Relief Program, a latter-day reprise of Hooverrsquo;s RFC. Economists and politicians still debate whether TARP was the appropriate policy, but it should at least earn Hoover a reprieve from the early verdict that he failed to grasp the significance of the Depression, or to formulate a response. There are other aspects of the Hoover presidency that have been lost to American political discourse by his historical eclipse, elements less critical to Hooverrsquo;s reputation and legacy but still quite relevant to questions of policy and governance. Hoover was, for example, perhaps the greatest pacifist ever to occupy the White House, and his record of amity to the international community, and hostility to the arms industry at home, could stand as a beacon to later generations frustrated with the seemingly inexorable rise and application of American arms. Similarly, Hoover carved out a subtle and useful thesis on the role of government as a facilitator but not a director in the capitalist system. His guiding principle was ldquo;cooperation,rdquo; a mode that eschewed equally the antagonism of the left and the determined inaction of the right. Hoover was full of contradictions and often obtusemdash;he built a bureaucratic empire at the Department of Commerce while counseling against big governmentmdash;but in this case his preachments fostered an ethos of comity that current-day bureaucrats would do well to emulate. My sense of Hooverrsquo;s progress from the

scene of action to the pages of history does not mean I did not rely on prior works of biography and commentary in preparing this book. I did so freely, as the source notes to this volume will attest. The facts and events remain the same, after all; the difference between this version of Hoover and those that came before lie in matters of emphasis and nuance, not in outright revision. Still, much of the material presented here is being published for the first time. When I began writing there was just a single volume in print devoted to Hooverrsquo;s term in the White House, and that a fairly academic summary, rather than the sort of internal and chronological account presented here. This gave me the opportunity to offer a fresh look at a presidency marked by action, conflict, and momentous crisis. I strove at the same time to fashion a more personal portrait of Hoover than was previously available. Hoover was an intensely private individualmdash;an unfortunate trait in such a public manmdash;and always careful to keep his personal thoughts and feelings out of the public record. I was fortunate, then, both in recounting Hooverrsquo;s presidency and exploring his character, to have at my disposal several texts that were either unavailable or largely overlooked in prior Hoover scholarship. They are the diaries kept by several key friends and associates, documents maintained at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, in West Branch, Iowa, and in the archives at the Hoover Institution, founded at Stanford in 1919 by Hoover himself. These extensive diaries include those kept by Hooverrsquo;s presidential physician, Navy Lieutenant Joel Boone; Hoover press secretary Ted Joslin, whose daily entries enhance the account he gave in his 1934 memoir Hoover Off the Record; Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson, also augmenting a published memoir; the daily diary of Hooverrsquo;s associate and longtime personal financial manager Edgar Rickard; and the exceptionally detailed journal maintained by James MacLafferty, a former congressman who entered into Hooverrsquo;s service as a covert liaison with lawmakers and party activists. I also had the benefit of the personal letters Hooverrsquo;s wife, the former Lou Henry, wrote to her son Allan. Both Lou and Herbert Hoover agreed that they would keep all personal correspondence out of the public realm, but sometime after the death of his mother Allan Hoover decided it would serve the interest of history to place his correspondence with his mother in the collection at West Branch. Loursquo;s reflections on her husbandrsquo;s feelings and motives provide the most intimate possible insights into her husbandrsquo;s trials in high office. Together with an extensive historical record, these personal diaries allowed me to portray an embattled chief executive wrestling with some of the greatest challenges ever to confront any American president. It is a story that has remained hidden from view, overshadowed by the natural resentments of a people who suffered through stunning, unprecedented privation, and by the masterful performance of the far more gifted politician who followed Hoover in office. I endeavor here to restore Hoover to a new generation as a person and as a leader, a man beset by personal contradictions that compromised his tenure in office, but who remained a person of integrity, principle, and even wisdom. He presided over the nation in a time of crisis that may feel all too familiar; in his successes and in his failures, modern readers will find much that resonates today.