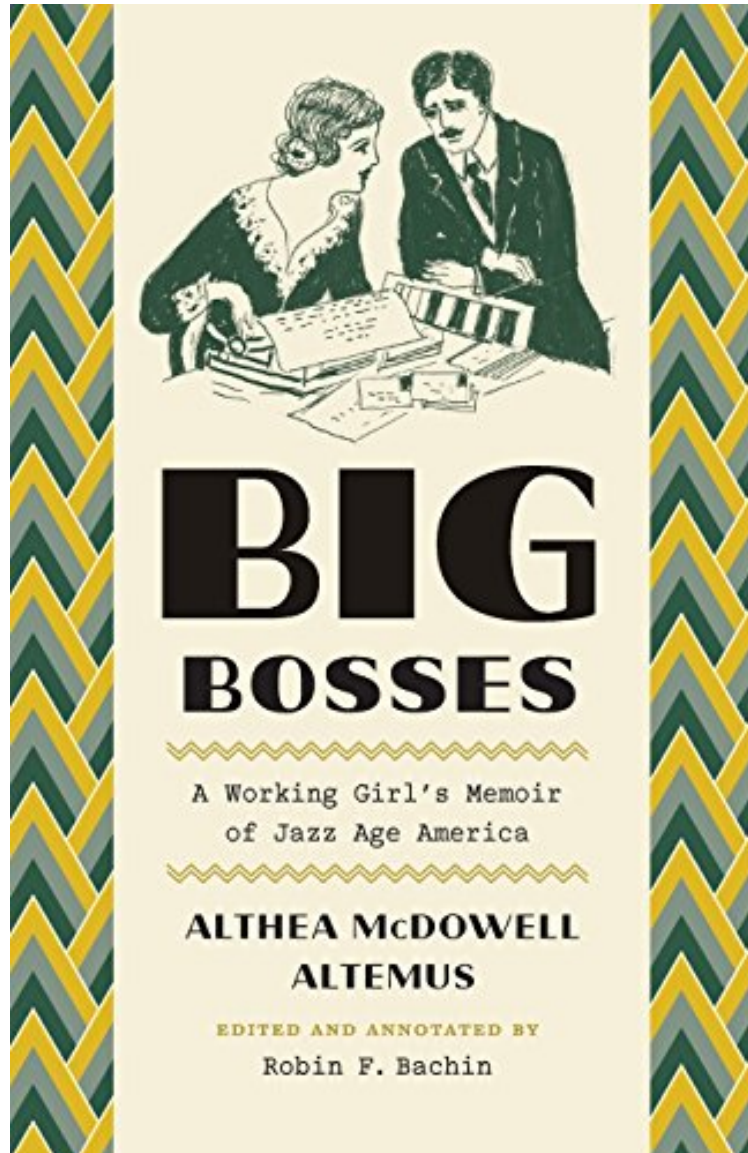


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## Big Bosses: A Working Girl's Memoir of Jazz Age America

*Althea McDowell Altemus*

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#582066 in Books 2016-11-18 2016-11-18Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.50 x 1.00 x 5.50l, .0 #File Name: 022642362X192 pages | File size: 79.Mb

**Althea McDowell Altemus : Big Bosses: A Working Girl's Memoir of Jazz Age America** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Big Bosses: A Working Girl's Memoir of Jazz Age America:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Enjoyable read! Wish it were longer...By Terri2050It was interesting; although I must confess I thought some of it read more like a novel than a true telling of her life. I was confused about her choices, how she came into money (seemed to do quite well for a single mother), so can't help but

believe it was less than truthful in many ways. But interesting for the "timepiece" of writing it is. She seemed remarkably open minded for the time in history and the USA. Makes you wonder if the 30s and 40s were a time of regression in openness after the 1920s? 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating (if tiny) window into another era--- Wonderful! By Face Fascinating miniature time capsule featuring a voice rarely heard from the period. I love this kind of history--- the perspective of the "everyday" person providing a window into what ordinary life was like at the time. The only disappointment is that it's so thin; it's not a terribly long memoir, and not very fleshed out. That being said, the supporting text (and the research that was done to produce it) really help provide context. One feels as though one is getting a glimpse through a small window into an entirely different world. It's just a little frustrating because the window is so small! Nevertheless, it's extremely worthwhile. Wonderful stuff for anyone interested in pre-Depression America. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A curiosity By Mountainmango The author's language is a bit peculiar. I appreciate that no editing was done to the original text but it's a pretty good read. I wish the editors had substituted the real people's names for the pseudonyms used.

Sharp, resourceful, and with a style all her own, Althea Altemus embodied the spirit of the independent working woman of the Jazz Age. In her memoir, *Big Bosses*, she vividly recounts her life as a secretary for prominent (but thinly disguised) employers in Chicago, Miami, and New York during the late teens and 1920s. Alongside her we rub elbows with movie stars, artists, and high-profile businessmen, and experience lavish estate parties that routinely defied the laws of Prohibition. Beginning with her employment as a private secretary to James Deering of International Harvester, whom she describes as probably the world's oldest and wealthiest bachelor playboy, Altemus tells us much about high society during the time, taking us inside Deering's glamorous Miami estate, Vizcaya, an Italianate mansion worthy of Gatsby himself. Later, we meet her other notable employers, including Samuel Insull, president of Chicago Edison; New York banker S. W. Straus; and real estate developer Fred F. French. We cinch up our trenchcoats and head out sleuthing in Chicago, hired by the wife of a big boss to find out how he spends his evenings (with, it turns out, a mistress hidden in an apartment within his office, no less). Altemus was also a struggling single mother, a fact she had to keep secret from her employers, and she reveals the difficulties of being a working woman at the time through glimpses into women's apartments, their friendships, and the dangers sexual and otherwise that she and others faced. Throughout, Altemus entertains with a tart and self-aware voice that combines the knowledge of an insider with the wit and clarity of someone on the fringe. Anchored by extensive annotation and an afterword from historian Robin F. Bachin, which contextualizes Altemus's narrative, *Big Bosses* provides a one-of-a-kind peek inside the excitement, extravagances, and the challenges of being a working woman roaring through the 20s.

Lively and enchanting. . . . Her tales [are] dishy, witty and a ton of fun. . . . It's unclear what Altemus intended for this manuscript, which she wrote in 1932, but never released. What is clear is that, thanks to the efforts of her descendants, Hoffman, and Bachin, we are lucky now to have this remarkable and remarkably well-written document of everyday life and work in 20th century America from a perspective that is all too rarely seen.