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Big Bosses: A Working Girl's Memoir of Jazz Age America (Paperback)

By Althea McDowell Altemus

The University of Chicago Press, United States, 2016. Paperback. Condition: New. Language: English . Brand New Book. 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...



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