

# Norman Hapgood Biography

## Norman Hapgood

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# Biography

As an editor and author during the Progressive era in the United States, Norman Hapgood (1868-1937) was involved in vital issues affecting government policy and civil rights.

Norman Hapgood was born in Chicago, Ill., on March 28, 1868, of intellectual and affluent parents. The family prided itself on both Revolutionary and Tory ancestors. After graduating from Harvard College, he became a journalist.

In 1897 Hapgood joined the *New York Commercial Advertiser* as a literary and drama critic. He made a reputation for clear writing and independent opinion. *Literary Statesmen and Others* (1897) and *The Stage in America 1897-1900* (1901) were informative and varied, though in their criticism of playwrights Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw and partiality for James M. Barrie they revealed Hapgood's bias for sweetness and light.

In 1902 Hapgood became editor of *Collier's Magazine* and a central figure in social and political muckraking (that is, exposé) writing and reform efforts. He entered cautiously into reform, repelled, for example, by the "sensationalism" of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*. Nevertheless, he found himself drawn into such major public events as the battle for pure food and drugs and the movement to curb the power of "Czar" Joseph G. Cannon, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. *Collier's* quarrel with Secretary of the Interior Richard A. Ballinger concerning the disposal of government lands in Alaska was outstanding, and it cost William Howard Taft's administration its credibility with the general public.

Hapgood left *Collier's* in 1912 to edit *Harper's Weekly*. Now keenly aware of free-speech issues and eager to create a supranational body that could control militarism, he sought to aid President Woodrow Wilson in furthering both. In 1919 he was Wilson's controversial minister to Denmark and a founder of what became the Foreign Policy Association. As editor of *Hearst's International* (1923-1925), he opposed the Ku Klux Klan and also industrialist Henry Ford as a supporter of anti-Semitic propaganda. In 1927 Hapgood's *Professional Patriots* exposed organizations that suppressed civil liberties. His last political enthusiasm was Democratic presidential candidate Alfred E. Smith, whom he saw as a latter-day Lincoln, and whose campaign biography, *Up from the City Streets* (1927), he wrote with Henry Moskowitz. Hapgood was editor of the *Christian Register* when he died on April 29, 1937.