

Introduction

A GOOD CITIZEN is well-groomed and fun to be around. She's trustworthy, helpful, courteous, and kind. He's loyal, thrifty, clean, and brave. Good Citizens beware delinquency and obey even minor laws. They tend their yards, brush their teeth in a circular motion, vote in every election, and always try their best. They know, as R. O. Hughes points out in the 1930s textbook *Elementary Community Civics*, "The character of any community, however large or small, depends upon the character of its members. Every good citizen in the community is a good influence. Every evil citizen is a bad influence."

The Good Citizen's Handbook spells out everything you need to know to be a better person, in a healthy home and community, a strong country, and an ideal world. Culled from civics texts, citizenship manuals, government pamphlets, and scouting manuals from the 1920s to 1960s, the guidance in these pages



recalls an optimistic nation, eager to put hand to heart for the "Pledge of Allegiance," knowing all the words and meaning them. It was a time when children might heed the advice of the 1925 primer *What to Do for Uncle Sam* without irony or question: "The Government says that you will be helping to grow into strong, useful citizens if you can learn to eat some of the things like the skin of the apple," and, "If each child in the United States stops to think whether he is wasting or saving for an hour each day, he will make the country richer for his efforts."

Today good citizenship means less to us. We worry far more about our demons than our duties. According to a 1995 *U.S. News and World Report* column by John Leo, entitled "The Unmaking of Civic Culture": "Starting in the 1960s, the nation's sense of itself has been deeply influenced by the rapid spread of therapies, encounter groups, self-help, the language

