

AREA OF THE KILLING

ROADS: Main

Secondary

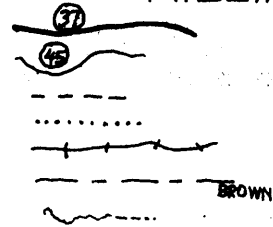
Minor

Dirt

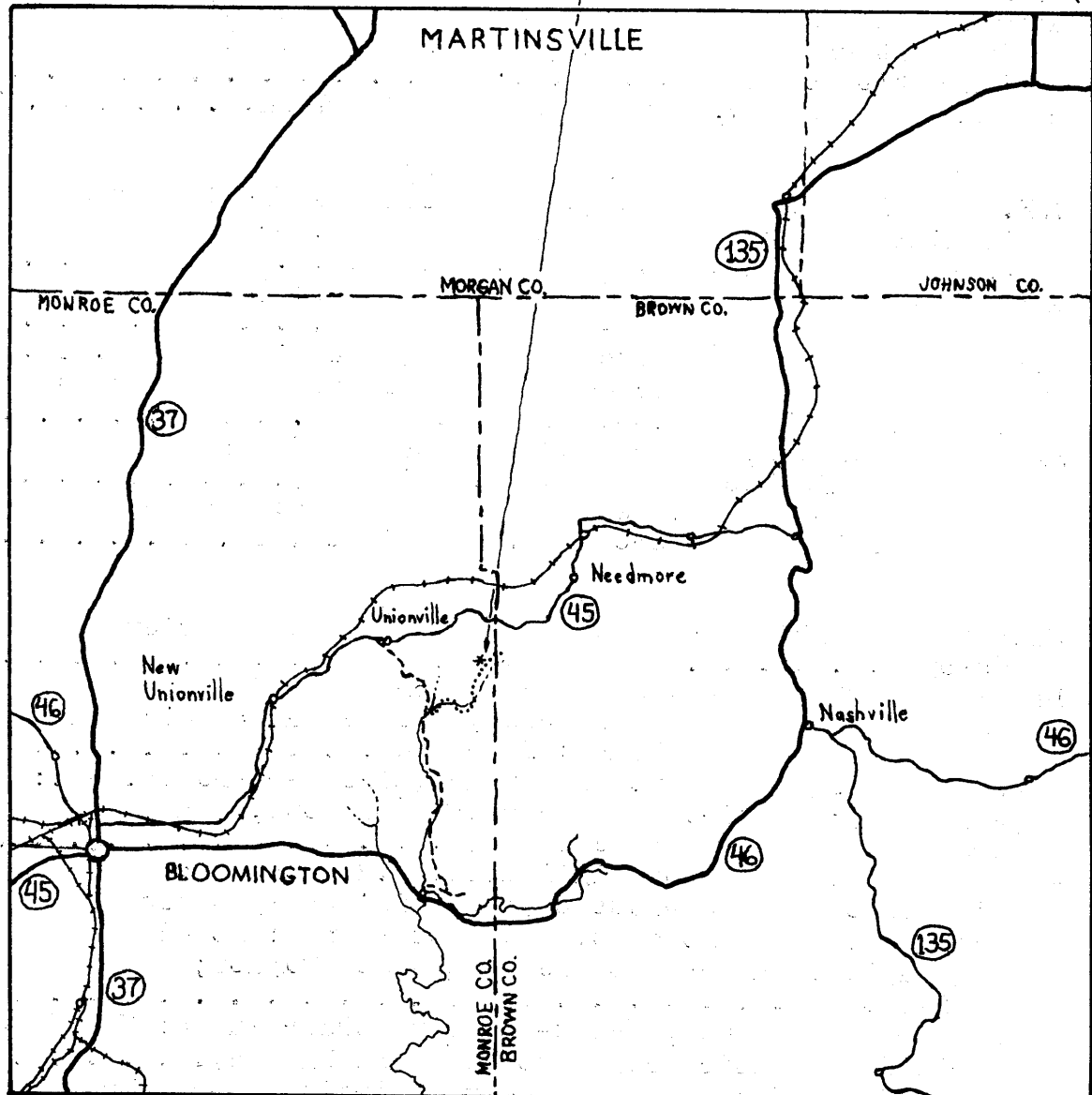
RAILROADS

COUNTY LINES

CREEKS



SITE OF THE KILLING



From: Army Map Service, "Indianapolis," NT 16-2, Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C. 1954;
revised by U.S. Geological Survey, 1968.

THE FORD-MCCOY KILLING: A LOOK AT FOLK HISTORY

Ormond H. Loomis

Historians, it seems, have a propensity for dividing the past into blocks of time, or periods. The results of their studies are often expressed in terms such as "the movement" or "the age, began with and ended when." Folklorists, on the other hand, search for the enduring nature of cultural phenomena. Their forte is in demonstrating the continuity through time of cultural elements present in such diverse human activities as storytelling, singing, and working. Both disciplines try to achieve a fuller understanding of man by analyzing the by-products of his existence. A fundamental question arises where the two overlap, generated by the differences in their approaches: Is it valid to describe the flow of human history in terms of distinct time units?

The divisions created by scholars may work well when one has a political, national, elitist focus. The birth or death of a great man, a declaration of war or the signing of a treaty, the establishment of an office or the enactment of a law, and other kinds of distinct, visible, documentable events, can be linked to fluctuations in man's progress. Perhaps, however, it is inappropriate to write an account of the common man, those who, if remembered by history at all, usually figure as anonymous statistics, in terms of conventional periods. Talking with an average individual about the past usually reveals that for him or her memorable events are strung together in a largely dateless continuum.

The distinction between elite, national history and grass roots history has been made by several scholars. A clear statement of this distinction can be found in "History of the Elite and History of the Folk," by Richard H. Dorson. He goes beyond simply pointing out that to get at the hitherto short-shrifted folk side of history, one "does not begin with the past or the top [of society], but with the present and the individual." He calls attention, as well, to the usefulness of "oral traditional history" as a tool, distinguished from "oral history" which "simply applies the formulae of elite documentary history." In the forward to Yesterday in the Hills, Calvin S. Brown goes a step further, suggesting a three part organization of folk history. He says:

the past is not an entity, but a trinity. The top layer is the immediate past, which stretches from the evanescent present back to the vague border between childhood and adolescence. . . . Below the level of this immediate past lies the stratum which is best described as the real past. It embraces the whole period of childhood recollections, and

many of these are recollections of things told by parents and grandparents. . . . But everything before it, from the Carolina parakeet to the brontosaurus, from the New Madrid earthquake to the formulation of our galaxy, is lumped together in. . . [the] historical past. This is the past that is learned from books rather than personal experience or contacts.²

Thus there is an awareness that to accurately relate grass roots history, the researcher may need to depart from the format and interpretation conventionally applied to historical data.

In order to examine the folk recognition and delineation of a specific historical era, this researcher talked with a seventy year old native of a rural, southern Indiana community about his personal history. The informant whose comments prompted the study was "Bo" Smith. At the end of an interview, he mentioned that an incident, during which his father and uncle, the sheriff, brought in a murderer, might be interesting and worthy of later conversation. Though Bo admitted he was a child in 1910, when he thought the incident took place, he said he remembered it, and two, similar killings which occurred at about the same time. Just a few miles away, he said, at a place called Brummett Creek (see map), a Ford shot two McCoy's. This was the murder in which his family figured. The other two murders were, first, one caused by flailing tempers between two rival families who lived a little northwest of Bo's home, and second, one resulting from a jilted lover's fire, which took place in the vicinity of a nearby university. According to Bo, these three events were characteristic of an age when violence and killing were more common locally than they are today, a period which seemed to end around the time of the Ford-McCoy incident.³

Smith was a captivating storyteller. The polish and completeness of his oral style placed his narratives in a category beyond mere recollection. Indeed, his neighbors had cautioned the researcher against relying too heavily upon the veracity of Bo's tales. The well structured sagas he related included tales about working on construction crews in Indianapolis, playing pranks at church as an adolescent, carousing at dances in the county seat during prohibition, helping his father cut wood as a child on the farm in winter, lumbering in California for the WPA, and more. These could have been arranged in a linear, chronological fashion; but they were not so arranged by the informant. Moreover, these were incidents in only one individual's history, not necessarily shared by his neighbors. Whether or not others in the community had the same perception of a more violent period in their common past, a period which ended around 1910, and whether this was seen as part of a grass roots history, rather than a strictly personal interpretation of history, remained a question.

An effort was made, therefore, to learn how a community views its past; a past which may be distinctive but, from the perspective of an average citizen, is essentially unrecorded. Using the Ford-McCoy killing as a reference point, various residents of Unionville, Bo's neighborhood in eastern Monroe County, were asked if they knew of this specific event. If they did know of it, they were questioned further to see how they thought it fit into the history of the area. While state and local histories, court records, newspaper articles and other written sources were examined for comparative information, the oral reminiscences of Unionville natives were relied upon as the source of local perspective. The basis for such an approach lies in the finding of those, like Lynwood Montell³, who recognize that folk accounts of the past embody the grass roots beliefs about it.

One of the difficulties in compiling a picture of the past from oral tradition is that not all who know of an event are eager to share their knowledge with the general public. The interviewer took down some of the information contained here only after the tape recorder had been turned off at the request of informants who asked not to be quoted directly. Other information has been omitted entirely, for there were details that people hold in strict confidence. In an attempt to protect the identity of all those who were kind enough to talk with the researcher about what is still an emotion-laden subject, all informants' names have been disguised. Aside from names, though, data is presented as recorded.

Though some of them mention periods ending around 1910, conventional historians can hardly be said to represent Bo Smith's point of view. Almost without exception, Indiana chronicles written for the scholarly audience, and including the first decade of the twentieth century in their coverage of the state's history, make no mention of any particular age of violence or killing.

Clifton J. Phillips is the exception. Writing about Indiana from 1880 to 1920, he says:

One particular legacy from the state's frontier past which persisted in some rural areas until late in this period was vigilantism. Apparently the first official attempt to deal with this phenomenon occurred in 1874, when Governor Thomas Hendricks designated a special fund to be drawn upon by the state attorney general for an investigation of vigilante activities in Crawford and Washington counties. In the next decade the same general region gave birth to the "White Caps," a curious kind of regulator movement which flourished for many years in Indiana. Although their origins and mode of organization remained cloaked in mystery, the White Caps were

thought to be members of a secret order somewhat akin to the Ku Klux Klan and dedicated to the enforcement of a private standard of morality upon the community, if necessary, by the rifle and lash.⁴

It seems clear that Phillips is including as a part of a multifaceted period an extra legal institution that used displays of violence as a modus operandus. In addition, he dates its inception at around 1880. We may assume that he dates the end of the period somewhere near the close of the first decade of the twentieth century, for later he writes, "eventually public opinion began to turn against the masked night riders, . . . and several alleged white Caps were convicted and imprisoned in Bartholomew and Monroe counties in the period from 1908 to 1912."⁵ In the same section of his work, we learn that there was more violence during this age than that caused by the white Caps. According to him, "in addition to the types of private law enforcement described above, mob violence frequently erupted in Indiana during these years. Both Negroes and whites suffered at the hands of lynch mobs which attempted to take the law into their own hands in order to deal out punishment fitting to persons accused of murder or other violent crimes."⁶ Phillips has isolated a time which seems to correspond to Smith's. Yet it must be pointed out that Phillips' work cannot claim to embody the grass roots view any more than Barnhart's and Carmony's or Morrison's works do. Phillips' sources are journals, newspapers, and books--not personal, folk documents.

Turning to sources of a more local nature, one might hope to find grass roots information regarding Unionville in autobiographies. Unfortunately, personal chronicles written by early residents of Monroe County and vicinity were left by people affiliated with the state university situated in Bloomington, the Monroe County county seat. Except perhaps as they relate to the university, they reflect an elite bias also.

Though specific information on the grass roots society under consideration is scarce, interpreting what we do know about it in the light of other similar societies can be revealing. A study of law in a traditional Anglo-American community, for instance, found a well-defined code, maintained through self-regulatory practices and functioning to exclude outsiders.⁷ Horace Kephart's discussion of southern, Scotch-Irish highlanders in Appalachia sketches a clan based system. Within it, family quarrels often reach the proportion of a feud and are transmitted for generations. External, written laws are subjected to community control when the most powerful kinship group elects its chosen representative to public office.⁸ On the basis of accounts like Jordan's and the evidence of cultural geographic flow patterns, one would expect to find conditions similar to those described above, especially those outlined by Kephart, in a neighborhood such as Smith's.

Before the time of easy automobile transportation, Unionville was a center of some local significance. Until about 1904-1905, when the railroad came through, it "was the only village in Benton township."¹⁰ Seven miles northeast of Bloomington, it contained a post office, a tannery, a barrel stave yard, a wagon spoke manufacturer, and two blacksmith's shops. It lay along a ridge route, and, when the railroad was built, a stop was created only a few miles away which became New Unionville. Like state histories, local histories tend to follow the elitist model. They include details of local settlement, biographical sketches of civic leaders and of those who chose to pay historians for a mention in their works, and an occasional bit of local color. It is worth mentioning two relevant events that recur fairly consistently in the books.

The first is linked with a township south of Benton, but bears generally on our topic. This account, one of the best of which is found in Forest H. "Pop" Hall's Historic Treasures, regards counterfeiters and the local response to them. According to him, counterfeiting and other illegal trades designed to cheat honest citizens were widespread in the second half of the nineteenth century. They flourished in remote areas of Monroe County. He sees the formation of vigilante bands as a reaction to the criminals responsible for these activities. After a considerable discussion of both sides of this condition, he says,

These men [vigilantes] did succeed, and the plan soon became quite popular as a means of settling with criminals. One man was shot in the jail at Bloomington by a mysterious crowd of men, who overpowered the guards. While the plan had been a success for the purpose it was originally meant, it led, however, to grave abuses in a short time. In more than one section of the county, a number of men who entertained a grudge against a neighbor, would assemble at night, thoroughly disguised, and then give the man a terrible whipping.

Formal, written law was therefore, for a number of reasons, generally ignored in rural sections of the area.

The second item actually occurred in Unionville itself. It is the Cox murder. In 1861, John B. Cox's family was "brutally murdered" by an unknown party. Contemporary opinion regarding what happened was divided, and one consequence of it was that Cox, who survived the attack that had taken his wife and children, "was taken to Bloomington for safekeeping, where he was questioned closely." The case was never satisfactorily cleared up. "Several men were arrested and tried, but were acquitted from lack of evidence. Others believed that Cox himself, who was subject to his fits of insanity, had committed the deed."¹²

Only one local historian, C. Earl East, has scrutinized the public sources sufficiently to go beyond isolated events, such as vigilante reactions to crooks and murders, to the point of inferring that a grass roots phenomenon was unfolding in time. In his book Believe It With East, an attempt at non-elite history based on newspaper articles, he devotes two chapters to the lawlessness of bygone days. At one point, he writes, "lest this chapter on Mob Violence and the one on White Capping create a false impression [that] southern Indiana was once more lawless than other states let's hurry to add no Hoosier mob to this author's knowledge ever burned a victim at stake."¹³ Yet again, without references to the actual stuff of the folk, their oral statements or personal correspondence, one cannot help wondering if they see these early times as East does.

East does not mention the Ford-McCoy killing, but he has certainly spotted a frequent early twentieth-century newspaper theme. Looking through copies of the Bloomington Telephone for the years around 1910, the reader finds reference to at least one local shooting or robbery in almost every issue. In the copy which appeared immediately after the shooting with which we are directly concerned, there was an article on "1906-07 Killings." It began:

"Thou shalt not kill" 5th commandment. In Bloomington and Monroe county during the past year there have been nine 'killings.' These together with frequent so-called "white-cap" affairs, are rapidly giving old Monroe the reputation of being the "bad" county of the state.¹⁴

Commenting elsewhere in that edition, the reporter who covered the Ford-McCoy clash says, "it seems Monroe county has more than its share of murders the past few years."¹⁵ Another piece which appeared the same day dubbed the place where the McCoy's were shot "The Valley of Death," because of the large number of "tragedies that have happened on Brummett Creek."¹⁶ Events of this sort did not go unnoticed outside the immediate vicinity. In 1903, the Indianapolis News,¹⁷ reported Governor Turbin's reaction to violence in Monroe County.

The Ford-McCoy incident occurred on Thanksgiving day in 1907. The following edition of the local newspaper covered this story, devoting over half of the community news space to this incident. Word of the shooting even received attention in the Indianapolis News and other state newspapers.¹⁸ The legal ramifications of the clash wore on for more than three years. An idea of exactly what took place between Ford and the McCoy's can perhaps be reached most objectively today through the following excerpts from the Bloomington newspaper account of the official close of the case:

For a third time, Edward Ford, who killed Joel and Frank [Joel's son] McCoy at the Widow Hally's in "death valley" near Unionville on Thanksgiving Day, 1907, told his story of the killing to a jury . . .

He said that the wottow[sic] McCoys came to where he was chopping wood and that Joel McCoy was the first to speak of their previous trouble. He admitted, however, to being the first to speak between himself and Frank McCoy. Ford claims that Joel McCoy had struck at him once with his ax and had partially raised the ax to make another strike. It was then that Ford, so he testifies, drew his revolver and fired. The two widows of Joel and Frank McCoy testified Thursday. Mrs. Frank McCoy said that she and her husband went to her father's home after they had heard of Frank's being accused of poisoning Ford's horses. They prepared to move into a new house but it mysteriously burned. The morning of the double murder Frank left home at 8 o'clock to join the wood choppers. An hour later she heard shooting. She and Mrs. Joel McCoy went to the scene on the hillside. Frank was dead with five bullets in his body, Joel was dying with a bullet through one of his lungs.¹⁹

Journalistic pieces which appeared immediately after the shooting supply numerous details. There is an obvious attempt by the press to give both sides of the story. Comments such as "it was pointed out by McCoy friends when they heard the [Ford's sons'] story today that it has been almost a week since the tragedy--plenty of time for the boy witnesses to trump up a favorable account if they cared to do so,"²⁰ and an article captioned FORD KNOWN IN BROWN [County]. // Failed to Heed Litecap warning and was Severely Beaten, //²¹ suggest, however, that reporters held some bias. Space given to listing the jurors, attorneys, and Judge acting in the trial is evidence of the same elitist orientation found among conventional historians. Newsworthy entries, such as "Edward Ford is in the county jail and will remain there until the grand jury takes action on his case as first degree murder with which he is charged, is not a bailable offense,"²² giving technicalities of the charges, court procedures, and final dispositions also reflect a non-folk approach.

On the other hand, there is grass roots information in the newspaper reports. For example, some point out that an atmosphere of feuding existed between the Fords and the McCoys. The potential for mob action directed toward Ford, the slayer, is recognized, as well. The fact that the shooting was associated with a community cork session--cutting wood to help a widow prepare for winter--which included traditional festivities, also receives attention. Finally, the local importance of the deaths which touched people from Benton, Folk and Bloomington townships, [and] from Brown County,²³ is emphasized. In one account, we read that "the double burial was the largest country funeral ever held in this county,"²⁴

in another, "the entire country side is engrossed in the tragedy, work has been practically suspended and nothing is talked about but the fatal clash of the McCoy's and Ford."²⁵

Not everyone around Unionville today knows of the killing. Natives, like Bo Smith's nephews Timmy (age 11) and Billy Joe (9) Roberts, or Tom Richards (24) who has spent most of his time away from the town since he left for college, had never heard of it. In light of Richard Sweterlitsch's observation that "indoctrination into local legends is a gradual process; that even by late years in high school, the majority . . .²⁶ are not active participants in historic legend circulation," it should not be surprising that these young boys were not acquainted with this bit of community lore. Another who was unaware before being asked of the tragedy was the clerk at the Unionville general store. He claimed he would not know much area history because he had lived there just a few years. Possibly the incident is not one which will have long word-of-mouth circulation.

Nevertheless, native area residents over the age of thirty seem to have heard at least a little about the killing. Timmy's and Billy Joe's father, William (32), remembered having heard about the McCoy murder on Brummett Creek. He however thought the sheriff at the time was some one other than his great uncle Joel. Homer Richards (53), Tom's father had heard of it too, but he said he "was never much for that [local history] stuff." Mr. and Mrs. Richard Harris (mid-thirties), daughter and son-in-law of a descendant of the McCoy line, remembered talking about the killing "a few weeks" before the interviewer called on them. They had known of it for years. All they could share, regarding the incident itself, was that they knew it happened in the woods near Brummett Creek, and that someone involved had an ax. James and Alma Cooper (late fifties) contributed roughly the same information from their memories of childhood talk. Eugene Lincoln (44), "born and raised" in Unionville, now living in New Unionville, knew of it too; but like Richards, had no more specific information on this murder to offer.

An interesting fact was manifested in conversations with informants such as these. While their contribution to the story complex was small, they were all able to direct the researcher to one or more other(s) in the area whom they knew could give a better account than they. Clearly, there existed a communication network through which these informants had learned the grass roots history.

The referrals given fall into two slightly overlapping categories; people who were possibly old enough to remember the killing, and those living on Brummett Creek. Of more than a dozen individuals in the combined two groups, all knew of the event, referred to it by name before the interviewer named it, and volunteered some

specific details.

Most gave their personal perspective. Luck (73) and Floyd (68) Medfield, direct relatives of the murdered men, told how they remembered talk of the killing in their family. Luck even recalled seeing the older children cry as they returned home to learn the news and then seeing the horse drawn hearse. Elsie Evans (84) recalled that the shooting happened a year before her wedding. She said she could remember the commotion as the sheriff passed through town with Ford in his wagon. An eighty-two year old lady, who in 1907 lived over five miles north of Unionville, said she heard of the murder, back then, in the days before she and her neighbors got newspapers. Dick McDonald (late fifties) had talked about the incident three or four years ago when he and his family picniced with his mother on a hill near where the tragedy happened. Otis Green (75) even produced newspaper clippings printed just days after the event, but he too remembered the community's reaction.

Allowing for minor variation, there was surprising conformity between the numerous, independent renditions of what happened. Moreover, the combined grass roots accounts roughly parallel the newspaper reports. Only two significant differences are observed. Basically, the story contains six distinguishable factors: background information on Ford, his motivation for the deed, the shooting itself, bringing the murderer to jail, pre-trial information on Ford, and the trial(s). Looking back on this, the researcher was able to add a seventh factor, post-trial developments, by asking informants what became of Ford. Data on this seventh point was not found in print. In reviewing this material as it is presented here, the reader should keep in mind that this organization was not created by the folk who tell the stories of Ford and McCoys. The traditional oral history is a relatively unstructured complex of beliefs about what happened and why.

The newspapers of 1907-1911, and residents of Unionville today, seem to agree that James Edward Ford was not a welcome member of the old community. The written record holds that he lived in Arkansas and Illinois before coming to Indiana, and that he moved to Monroe from Brown County. As mentioned earlier, he was also supposedly run out of Brown by White Cap pressure. Giving a contemporary local sketch of the killer, the Bloomington Telephone says:

Many of the neighbors refer to Ford as the "badman from Jackson creek" and others speak of him as "Bob Ford's cousin," the latter name being given because it is said that many times Ford . . . has claimed kin with Bob Ford, the bandit who turned traitor and brought the sensational career of the notorious Jesse James to an end by shooting him from behind.²⁸

Folk tradition is more specific. It maintains that Ford was a rich crook. Though few would let themselves be quoted, no one from the two groups of principal informants denied having heard others say that Ford was a counterfeiter. The only person to talk freely about this side of Ford was Smith. The conversation with him went:

CL: You were saying that somebody up here [Drummett Creek] was a counterfeiter.

BS: That was these Fords, right there on top of the hill, that that un [Edward] and ol' Lempsy [another Ford]. They made it out of block tin.

CL: They made the what, now?

BS: Half-a-dollars, they never made nothin' but a half-a-dollar. You couldn't tell um from a real half-a-dollar. They'd take an' make um through the winter time. Nobody knowed wherever they made um er anything, an' they never did get caught.

People remember that this and other illegal activities made Ford wealthy. In modern oral tradition, he was ostracized by the old community because he was an outlaw, profiting while his honest neighbors endured poverty, not because he moved to the area from other parts. This is a significant difference in the folk version.

The poisoning of Ford's horses is always cited in the more complete individual accounts of the shooting. A newspaper report has it that Ford blamed the younger McCoy, Frank, for the poisoning because Ford thought he had traced what he believed were the culprit's footprints to Frank's farm.³⁰ Notes regarding ill feelings between Ford and the McCoy's over a mortgage transaction also appear in newspapers, with the implication that this might have been the real cause of the clash.³¹ Most people interviewed attribute the shooting to Ford's deviant character. Informants mention poisoning as the only apparent motivation behind the murder. They add that the McCoy's were not responsible for the poisoning. Some simply say that the poisoning was a fiction, or that others were involved. More complicated explanations hold that the horses died from accidentally eating sorghum pulp; from eating poisoned corn, left as bait by the McCoy's and stolen from their farm by Ford; or from accidentally eating poisoned corn left by Ford as bait for others. Buck Redfield said emphatically, "he [Ford] killed two innocent men." His statement sums up the grass roots point of view.

only Ford's sons witnessed what took place. Newspapers and oral tradition acknowledge this, but their testimony apparently did not count for much with the authorities. For the folk, the boys'

presence at the crime apparently means that there were no witnesses. An excerpt from an interview with Mrs. Evans illustrates this point.

CL: Were there any witnesses?

EE: Oh, no.

CL: Nobody there to see it?

EE: Nothing, only this Ford's boy, a'course, was with him.³²

Consequently, informants refrain from commenting on exactly how the fight proceeded. They are certain, however, that the McCoys were not the instigators. Most point out that the McCoys had only gone to help a widow lay up wood, a community tradition, a norm. A few gave facts to support the notion of Ford's evil intent and guilt. For instance, Floyd Redfield mentioned that the Fords had cut openings in the brush around the McCoys' farmsteads through which to shoot at the McCoys. As another example, Buck Redfield clarified a newspaper story he remembered. According to the article, Dave McCoy, the first relative of the McCoys' to arrive at the scene after the killing, scared Ford away; from a distance it looked like Dave was carrying a shotgun. According to Buck, however, Dave was only carrying an ax.

One of the more interesting differences between the folk and the printed accounts deals with how Ford was brought to jail. Here oral sources directly contradict the written. There is agreement that the killer turned himself in. The newspaper report is that Ford went to Needmore in Brown County to surrender. This fact is echoed by most people in Unionville today. A written source goes on to say:

Ford's explanation of this is that he wanted to go to Indianapolis to give himself up instead of Bloomington as he thought the Sheriff was related to the men he had shot. The Sheriff is related by marriage to Dave McCoy but not to either of the dead men.

Ford gave himself up readily and even, he says, thanked the Coroner for making the arrest. Through his mind the fears of mob law ran, he thought of the scene he had left back on the hillside, and was afraid that the friends of the McCoys might attempt to take him from the officers. Coroner rather told him he would be protected and at 2 o'clock he was taken in charge by Sheriff Matliff and brought to this city [Bloomington].³³

In the minds of grass roots sources, particularly those descended from the sheriff's immediate family, the sheriff was related to the dead men. The entire story of how Matliff and a deputized brother went after Ford is exciting. Yet the point for us to note

from it is that the oral tradition implies Ford's fear of the sheriff was well founded. One lady says, "he [the sheriff] stopped to water his horses out here to the branch. He wanted to give this man [Ford] a chance to git out, you know, and git away. Hun, so he could shoot him, kill him. So they wouldn't have no expense with the trial."³⁴ Buck Redfield did not know how true it was, but he had heard it said that the sheriff left Ford unhandcuffed to encourage an escape. Though Ford may have been considered an outsider, he apparently knew, better than the news reporters, where he stood in relation to the community's legal code.

While he awaited the outcome of three trials, the killer attracted little attention. After the last trial, a newspaper piece mentions "Ford and his family . . . reside in the north part of town and Ford has a place at the Showers [furniture] factory. He has been working at the factory since his release from jail after the first trial and has proved himself a steady workman."³⁵ People in Unionville said they thought he stayed in jail, but said so without the certainty they demonstrated on other points. This difference in views is considered insignificant by this researcher because of the lack of attention paid to it by all sources.

We have already seen that Ford was found not guilty. The court ruled that the shooting was done in self-defense. One reads in the papers how "several witnesses in the case have died and others have moved away, so the attorneys on both sides are having considerable trouble with their evidence,"³⁶ and "new evidence was brought to light this morning [January 13, 1911] and was in favor of Ford."³⁷ Thus the proceedings went, until the verdict was reached. Oral tradition acknowledges the outcome, but not the justice behind it. Generally, it is felt that people "just wore out at" the trial procedure, an opinion which roughly coincides with the media report. More specifically, it is believed that "maybe" payments were made to the judge. Others implied that the expensive, Indianapolis lawyers he hired gave Ford an unfair advantage, particularly when the case lingered. To an extent, these impressions can be supported by newspaper reports of a "famous Indianapolis criminal lawyer [Ford brought] into the case" and "dramatic words to the jury."³⁸ The most important thing for us to note, however, is that, for the people around Unionville, Ford's innocence was never proven.

After the final trial, Ford is reported to have said, "'All I want now is to be left alone.'"³⁹ Whether he got his wish or not is apparently irrelevant. He drops out of the news at this point. Informants say he went north and was killed in another quarrel, became a preacher in Indianapolis, or returned after a while to die a slow death in a Columbus, Indiana hospital. The only point of general agreement in oral tradition is that he went north, leaving the Unionville area. It seems certain that he never returned to this community.

The question of how this killing fits into grass roots history remains. The fact that, though not recorded in history books, it exists in the memories of local residents across a span of over fifty years is significant. Such a fact, however, becomes apparent through research. It is not consciously recognized by the folk to whom the oral tradition belongs. One could hypothesize that the memory of the event persists because it touched a greater number of lives than other events in the community's past. Yet would this really be the case? Church reunions, local elections, the advent of public utilities, and the removal of the New Unionville railroad station probably touched more.

People seem to remember the Ford-McCoy killing through associations they make with it. Because it happened in connection with a traditional community wood chopping, it seems to stand out as part of a bygone, golden age characterized by greater cooperation between good neighbors. Older residents, like Buck Redfield and Bo's older brother Thomas Smith (73), remember the activity as a regular part of their past lives. Younger ones, like the Harrises and Lincoln, know only that the McCoy's were following an old local norm of helping a widowed neighbor. Also, several informants both old and young linked this shooting, as Bo Smith had, to other violent crimes which occurred in the distant past as part of the golden age. Four informants suggested that the Cox family slaying was an example of a similar crime that should be studied. Three informants urged the researcher to look into an old Brown County murder.

ps Yet the era of violence is not necessarily perceived as bad. The violence directed toward those whose activities lay outside acceptable community standards. Numerous residents linked the Ford-McCoy incident to a change in the method of local law enforcement. Five out of the seven who were old enough to recall the transition from one period to the next talked about how this incident coincided with the decline of white capping. One man said bluntly that the murder happened at "the close of the white caps" time. A lady explained the event was "unusual," not because murders were rare, but because this one "made 'em [area residents] mad. It's a wonder they hadn't vent down there an' took 'im outa the jail an' hung 'im. Back them days, you know, you take back fifty year ago, an' people done something mean, they didn't wait for the law. White caps got 'em." Here, it seems, is grass roots recognition of the loss of direct, informal, community legal authority. The importance of folk law diminishes in the transition from this neighborhood's golden age.

We see common people noting a change in the social structure which shapes their lives. The overall impression is that the Unionville folk history does mark some sort of period ending around 1910. It is not as distinctive as some of the turning points in elite history, but it belongs to this tradition in a

far more poignant way than those described by historians such as Barnhardt and Carmony. Before this transition point, families settled grievances in open confrontation, neighbors helped worthy friends, groups of citizens, both public mobs and private vigilantes, maintained community standards, and an outsider, rich from illegal acts, was given no advantages. Afterward, money and government law could intervene, as this synthesis of oral traditions about the Ford-McCoy killing illustrates.

It can be concluded that the folk do indeed divide their past into periods, albeit their own. The difference between the grass roots record and the elite is essentially one of perspective. We see that an event which exemplifies a change in local order stands out for Unionville residents beyond the period of "Beveridge and the Progressives." Between old newspaper accounts and modern oral reports, differences tell us more about the bias of the individual sources than about the objective truth of what took place between the Fords and the McCoy. Other folk histories, because of differences in perspective, might not make the same grass roots delineation drawn by this community. The oral traditions of Ford's descendants are not represented here since these individuals are no longer a part of the Unionville area. Yet their account of history is as vital to our understanding of the past as that given by Unionville residents, or by scholars. In the study of a folk history, historians, folklorists and other investigators need to be aware of the perspective held by indigenous community members, and should strive to include the folk view in interpretations of the past.

NOTES

1. Richard M. Dorson, "History of the Elite and History of the Folk," Folklore: Selected Essays (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), p. 241.
2. Floyd C. Watkins and Charles M. Watkins, Yesterday in the Hills (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1973), p. v.
3. Lynwood Montell, The Saga of Coe Ridge.
3. Interview with Bo Smith on February 9, 1974, at the author's home.
4. Clifton J. Phillips, Indiana in Transition, The Emergence of an Industrial Commonwealth, 1880-1920 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau and Indiana Historical Society, 1968), p. 371.
5. Ibid., p. 373.
6. Ibid., p. 374.

7. James M. Acheson, "Territories of the Lobster Men," Conformity and Conflict, ed. by James M. Spradley and David W. McCurdy, Second Edition (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), pp. 393-401.

8. Horace Kephart, Our Southern Highlanders, Enlarged Edition (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), especially Chapters 17, "The Law of the Wilderness," and 18, "The Blood-Feud," pp. 379-427.

9. Henry Glassie, Patterns in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968).

10. Forest M. "Pop" Hall, Historic Treasures (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1922), p. 122.

11. Ibid., p. 137; also see C. Earl East, Relive It with East (Bloomington, Indiana: by the Author, 1962), pp. 213-214; and History of Lawrence and Monroe Counties, Indiana (Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen and Co., Inc. 1914), p. 420.

12. Hall, p. 122; and History, p. 406.

13. East, p. 145.

14. Bloomington Telephone, December 3, 1907, p. 1, col. 5.

15. Ibid., p. 4, col. 4.

16. Ibid., p. 1, col. 4.

17. Indianapolis News, April 27, p. 1, col. 3; and 29, p. 1, col. 1, 1903.

18. Ibid., December 2, 1907, p. 11, col. 2; December 3, 1907, p. 18, col. 2, and Telephone, December 10, 1907, p. 4, col. 3.

19. Telephone, January 17, 1911, p. 4, col. 4.

20. Ibid., December 6, 1907, p. 1, col. 5.

21. News, December 3, 1907, p. 18, col. 2.

22. Telephone, December 3, p. 1, col. 7.

23. Ibid., col. 3.

24. News, December 2, 1907, p. 11, col. 2.

25. Telephone, December 3, 1907, p. 4, col. 1.

26. Richard Dieterlitsch, "Jack's Defeat and His Creek," Indiana Folklore, 5:1 (1972), 8.
27. Telephone, January 17, 1911, p. 4, col. 4.
28. Ibid., December 3, 1907, p. 4, col. 1.
29. Taped Interview with Bo Smith on February 13, 1974, at the old McCoy farmstead, Brummett Creek, Unionville, Indiana.
30. Telephone, December 3, 1907, p. 1, col. 4.
31. Ibid., January 17, 1911, p. 4, col. 4.
32. Taped Interview with Mrs. Elsie Evans on March 27, 1974, at her home.
33. Telephone, December 3, 1907, p. 4, col. 1.
34. Taped Interview with Mrs. Evans.
35. Telephone, January 17, 1911, p. 3, col. 4.
36. Ibid., p. 4, col. 4.
37. Ibid., January 13, 1911, p. 1, col. 1.
38. Ibid., January 17, 1911, p. 3, col. 4.
39. Ibid.