The editors are to be commended for their careful treatment of a manuscript that is in part barely legible and for their skillful handling of the entire editorial process. The standard of excellence that was established by the first volume, published in 1972, and maintained through the next four volumes has been upheld.

Indiana Central University, Frederick D. Hill
Indianapolis


Born in 1821 and raised just north of Indianapolis, Oliver Johnson grew up with Indiana. He lived until 1907, long enough to regale his grandchildren with stories of his boyhood days. One grandson, Howard Johnson, soaked up these reminiscences, distilled them, and later penned them in the first person, producing an unusual, useful, and always interesting account of pioneer life.

Oliver Johnson's contemporaries appear as individualistic, resilient, inventive people, people who sought and achieved a large measure of self-sufficiency. Their society was also broadly consensual, warmly supportive, participatory, and amazingly trusting. These traits emerge from Johnson's recollections of grist mills, new farms, and hog drives. Social tensions surfaced frequently, the products of local political maneuverings, conflicting customs among settlers, and clashes between eastern values and aspirations and western conditions. Rough play and fist fights were socially acceptable outlets for aggression.

This work is generally free from the sentimentality and sweeping generalizations commonly found in oral histories. Valuable, detailed glimpses of everyday life abound: working with farm animals, solving crop problems, clearing and constructing, balancing a diet, and attending a subscription school. Even so, the many decades separating Oliver Johnson's boyhood from Howard Johnson's writing cast some uncertainty on the work; time may play havoc with memory and motives, making evidence somewhat suspect. The work is further diminished by the omission of an index.
Militating against these weaknesses are helpful sketches and an afterward which links Oliver Johnson's world to Conner Prairie, a "living" museum near Indianapolis. This reprint captures the spirit and essence of pioneer Indiana. Through the writings of Howard Johnson, Oliver Johnson observed: "We had our ups and downs, but nobody went hungry and nobody done much complainin. We just about lived off the land and was satisfied" (p. 33).

James E. Davis


In her study From Wales to Indiana Elfrieda Lang has singled out the Gabriel Woodfill family of Welsh ancestry as a case history of a family business in the Hoosier state. In five chapters of almost equal length Lang chronicles the Welsh heritage in America; sketches the early history of Decatur County, Indiana; discusses the motivation and success of early settlers and settlement in that county; narrates the county's early mercantile history; and concludes by tracing the Woodfill family from Wales to Greensburg in Decatur County and recording the contributions that family made to the county's history. During their years in Indiana the Woodfill family progressed from farming to merchandising, and Lang's last chapter sketches this transition as well as the importance of the merchant to community development. It also shows how the merchant tradition persisted and became intertwined with other community enterprise.

In her research Lang has used manuscripts, government documents, newspapers, periodicals, business directories, articles, and books. Of particular value to the study were original census records, especially those for 1850, which she used extensively. With these records she identified the free inhabitants of Decatur County in 1850 with assets of $5,000 or over and analyzed them on the basis of occupation, nativity, age, and wealth. Then, using county histories, manuscript collections, and personal memoirs, she traced the careers of selected examples from the group. In the use of these resource materials and others, such as surveyor's field notes, Lang illustrates the wealth of material available to those interested in writing family and local history.