

Book Reviews

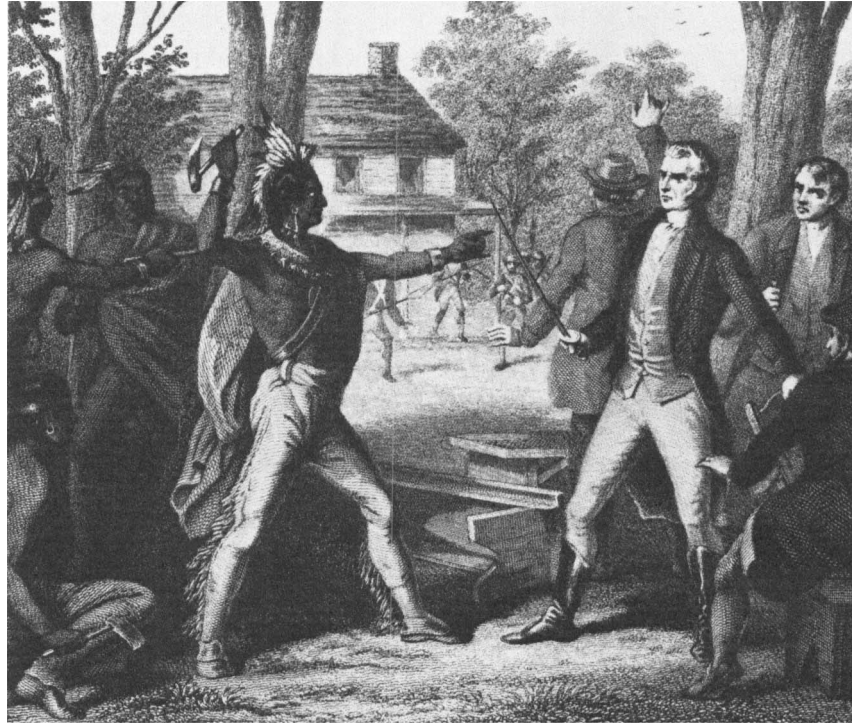
Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership. By R. David Edmunds. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1984. Pp. viii, 246. Maps, illustrations, note on sources, index. Clothbound, \$14.95; paperbound, \$5.95.)

Tecumseh was, arguably, the single greatest Indian leader in history. So great was his reputation that William Henry Harrison campaigned for the presidency on the claim that he had defeated him in battle, while Richard M. Johnson later ran for vice-president using the boast that he had slain him. Allies and enemies alike recognized his greatness both before and after his death. Yet this great Indian leader, so important to the early history of Indiana and the Old Northwest, has so far escaped the pen of a great biographer.

R. David Edmunds published *The Shawnee Prophet* in 1983 in an attempt to correct the emphasis that popular historians had placed on Tecumseh by showing that it was Tenskwatawa, Tecumseh's brother, who first forged the pan-Indian movement in the Old Northwest with his religious revivalism. Far from riding the coattails of his more charismatic brother, it was Tenskwatawa who provided the focal point for Indian unity. According to Edmunds, Tecumseh did not emerge as the movement's leader until after the Treaty of Fort Wayne in 1809. While Edmunds's book certainly offered a much-needed corrective to previous historians' dismissal of Tenskwatawa's spiritual movement, his blanket argument for the supremacy of Tenskwatawa over Tecumseh before 1809 is still a debatable point.

Edmunds presents the same interpretation of the relative influence of the Prophet and Tecumseh in his new book, *Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership*. Large sections of this brief biography are devoted to the Prophet and his religious movement. Since Tecumseh does not begin to emerge as the dominant force in the Indian confederacy until after 1809, since he does not become the undisputed leader of the movement until after the Prophet's defeat at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811, and since he is then slain in battle in 1813, Tecumseh's moment in history's spotlight is indeed quite brief. Edmunds's interpretation of Tecumseh tends to undercut his importance, and the book becomes almost a joint biography of the two Indian brothers.

No historian is better qualified to write on Tecumseh and his movement than Edmunds, and this book is ably written in a clear and lucid style. The author is especially good at clarifying



THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN TECUMSEH AND WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON AT VINCENNES IN AUGUST, 1810, REFLECTED THE TENSION BETWEEN INDIANS AND WHITES IN THE WABASH VALLEY (COURTESY OF THE CINCINNATI HISTORICAL SOCIETY).

Reproduced from R. David Edmunds, *Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership* (Boston, 1984), [102].

the inter- and intratribal rivalries that wracked the midwestern tribes. Although not footnoted, the book is based on a wide range of primary and secondary sources that the author has absolute mastery of.

Within the constraints of the *Library of American Biography* series, Edmunds has done a fine job of presenting a complicated and important era of history in a refreshing, interesting manner. The book should find wide usage on college campuses, the audience at which this biography series is aimed. General readers, however, may come away from *Tecumseh* disappointed. Edmunds emphasizes events over personalities and scholarship over high drama. Few tales offer the epic sweep of Tecumseh's tragic story; yet, the author often seems purposefully to neglect rich opportunities to add color and drama to the narrative. In



BOOTH TARKINGTON
1869-1946

Reproduced from Susanah Mayberry, *My Amiable Uncle: Recollections about Booth Tarkington* (West Lafayette, Ind., 1983), frontispiece.

reaction to the work of previous popularizers, Edmunds is exactly careful in his scholarship, sticking close to his sources and avoiding the bold narrative strokes that might have made his book more exciting reading. Nevertheless, this is still the best biography of Tecumseh. It is a careful reconstruction of a man and his era that will prove of great interest to readers of the *Indiana Magazine of History*. Readers can only hope that Edmunds will again turn his considerable talents to this topic in the future, when he will not be constrained by the demands of a series format.

University of New Mexico,
Albuquerque

Paul Andrew Hutton

My Amiable Uncle: Recollections about Booth Tarkington. By Susanah Mayberry. Introduction by James Woodress. (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1983. Pp. xii, 148. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$12.50.)

Susanah Mayberry has written a brief account of her memories of her illustrious great-uncle, with whom she and the other youngsters of the large Tarkington-Jameson family were thoroughly enamored. Although her personal recollections of one of Indiana's most famous and prolific authors deal with only the last fifteen or twenty years of Booth Tarkington's life (he died in 1947), the book is supplemented with a brief biographical sketch of the writer's earlier years. This information is taken largely from the work of James Woodress, Tarkington's major biographer who also supplied in the introduction to Mayberry's book a most useful overview of Tarkington's career and significance as a writer, and from the autobiographical fragment, "As I Seem to Me," that Tarkington published in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1941.

In some ways this is an exasperating book; rambling and disorganized, it often loses its supposed focus on Tarkington while offering instead long passages on the author's young, full, and, yes, pampered life during her famous relative's declining years. According to the author's personal reminiscences, however, the highlights of her youth and adolescence were her many visits to the Tarkingtons, either at their showplace home in Indianapolis or at their mansion, Seawood, in Kennebunkport, Maine. Amid the surfeit of details about the luxurious home furnishings and even "The Game" (p. 79) of charades played frequently at the Tarkingtons, there emerges useful and at times fascinating tidbits of information about Tarkington's impish nature, his lifelong delight in practical jokes, and the way in which he drew