
The Spirit of Commerce in the Journalism of Carlos McCarty

*Stephen Harold Riggins**

Carlos McCarty (1873–1934) wrote about national and state events and local history for the Loogootee, Indiana, *Martin County Tribune* for nearly thirty-five years. As the newspaper's only local columnist during the first three decades of the twentieth century, McCarty, a lawyer by profession, probably did more to shape public opinion in Martin County than any other resident. In 1930 when he was elected prosecuting attorney for Martin County, he received one of the largest popular votes in the county's history,¹ a fact perhaps in part attributable to his popularity with the readers of the *Tribune*.

McCarty's column, some years titled with deceptive simplicity "Crisp Bits of News from the County Seat," avoided the controversial issues of the day. His readers encountered few of the sordid scandals, film and radio personalities, or political conflicts that dominated national and state news. Possibly painful local controversies were also apparently deliberately avoided. Ku Klux Klan activities, for example, passed without comment although the KKK parade in Loogootee in the spring of 1924 attracted one of the largest crowds in the town's history.² McCarty also tended to ignore local labor problems and local opinion on prohibition. It is further revealing that while he did write about the lynching of a notorious group of local criminals in Shoals in 1886, he apparently thought

* Stephen Harold Riggins is assistant professor of sociology, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada.

¹ Obituary of Charles Thomas (Carlos) McCarty, Loogootee, Indiana, *Martin County Tribune*, November 28, 1934.

² Reports of the Ku Klux Klan parade in Loogootee can be found in: "Special Police are Sworn in at Loogootee Today," Washington, Indiana, *Democrat*, April 26, 1924; "Little Trouble at Loogootee Celebration," *ibid.*, April 28, 1924. The Loogootee, Indiana, *Martin County Tribune* of May 1, 1924, contains an editorial on the event and an article titled "Had Big Crowd." The leader of the parade, who is unnamed in some articles, was a Loogootee veterinarian named Guy Chandler. See also Stephen Riggins, "Notes Toward a Portrait of Reba (Brown) Chandler," in *The Republic of Indiana*, No. II, ed. Bill Whorrall (Shoals, Ind., 1983), n.p.

such happenings did not merit more than superficial reports.³ On the other hand, McCarty frequently aired his economic opinions in his column, thus providing insight into his and his contemporaries' views on economic issues in southwestern Indiana between World Wars I and II.

A recurrent economic theme in McCarty's *Tribune* column was his promotion among his readers of what Alexis de Tocqueville defined in 1835 as the American "spirit of commerce." Typical American traits, according to the Frenchman, were a preference for commercial occupations and an idealization of entrepreneurship; Americans, he said, were restless, strove for personal success, and were exceptionally willing to take risks.⁴ Whether or not McCarty consciously ascribed the definition of such values to Tocqueville, the southern Indiana lawyer believed in them, considered them synonymous with modernization, and thought them essential to the general good of the community. In McCarty's opinion, however, the residents of Martin County adhered more closely to what the sociologist Max Weber later called "economic traditionalism."⁵ Rather than striving for progress and greater affluence, they seemed to McCarty content to make only enough money to sustain a relatively low standard of living. It was in this context that McCarty promoted the spirit of commerce.

Despite McCarty's frequent criticism of his Martin County neighbors' economic indolence, his own stance regarding modernization was inconsistent. A constant advocate of economic "progress," McCarty nonetheless felt a strong attachment to traditional rural virtues. Although his columns were rarely explicitly nostalgic, particularly during the early 1920s, they often extolled pioneer craftsmanship and self-sufficiency. More often the articles promoted economic development and modern initiative. At the local level McCarty's role models were John Anthony, a man who had experimented in human flight in the 1870s and 1880s, and the founders of the frontier community called Hindostan. In both cases, however, McCarty exaggerated the degree to which these people were committed to the spirit of commerce. The social disorder caused by the Great Depression of course challenged McCarty's belief in this spirit. Unfortunately, the lawyer's death in 1934 denied his readers anything more than his initial reactions to the economic conflict.

³ Carlos McCarty, "Mob Law," *Martin County Tribune*, May 8, 1924.

⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve (1835; abridged, New York, 1964), 112, 115-20, 213-16, *passim*.

⁵ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (1930; student edition, New York, 1958), 59-69. It should be noted that topics discussed in this paper include not only the "strictly economic" but also the "economically relevant," to use Weber's terminology. The latter refers to conduct that is not explicitly economic but that has consequences for the economy. McCarty's repeated effort to boost local pride is an example.

McCarty's background provides the setting for the evolution of many of his economic opinions. The McCarty family came to America early; in fact, Carlos knew of only one ancestor who had immigrated to the United States after the Revolutionary War.⁶ Both his mother's and father's families were pioneer settlers in Martin County, Indiana. During the Civil War Carlos's father, Charles (1830–1895), served as a captain in Company A of the 17th Indiana Volunteer Infantry. Charles remarried after his first wife died in 1870 at the age of thirty-three, and Carlos was born to the second wife, Margaret Ford (1839–1908). Charles Thomas McCarty, or Carlos as he preferred to call himself after a local Spanish street vendor, was born in Vincennes, Indiana, on April 6, 1873. When he was about seven years old, his parents returned to Martin County, and his father practiced law in Shoals. Carlos spent nearly all his adult life there.

McCarty was a member of the second class to graduate from Shoals High School. Because of the small population of the town there were only enough students to form a second class several years after the first class had graduated. During this interval McCarty attended the Southern Indiana Normal College at Mitchell. Typical of his personal reticence in "Crisp Bits of News from the County Seat," McCarty rarely mentioned his own education. Since he did have a high school diploma, one can infer that he was better educated than the majority of his readers. His literary background, however, was apparently very conventional and did not extend much beyond a knowledge of the better-known nineteenth century English and American authors. At various times McCarty referred to the books of Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, and Rudyard Kipling. Samuel Pepys was one of the rare seventeenth century writers whom he mentioned in his columns. Nothing, however, would lead a reader to believe that McCarty had more than a cursory understanding of any of these authors. The lawyer/journalist was also knowledgeable about the more popular mass publications of his day: Indianapolis and Chicago newspapers and magazines such as the *National Geographic*.

McCarty was hired as the Shoals correspondent for the *Martin County Tribune* in the spring of 1891 when he was eighteen years

⁶ Biographical information on Charles Thomas (Carlos) McCarty was obtained from obituaries in the Shoals, Indiana, *News*, November 30, 1934; and the *Martin County Tribune*, November 28, 1934; from "Tribute paid to Carlos McCarty in Washington," *ibid.*, December 20, 1934; and from some brief remarks by McCarty's daughter, Margaret Force, at a meeting of the Martin County Historical Society, April 29, 1984. The major sources for this article itself are McCarty's columns in the *Martin County Tribune* between the autumn of 1918, when McCarty was anticipating the end of World War I, and his death in 1934. Also utilized was Carlos T. McCarty, "Hindustan—A Pioneer Town of Martin County," *Indiana Magazine of History*, X (June, 1914), 54-62.

old.⁷ Around 1894 he briefly became the owner and publisher of a newspaper called the Montgomery, Indiana, *Monitor*, which was published in Daviess County, Indiana.⁸ After that venture failed, McCarty returned to Shoals and, following in his father's footsteps, became a lawyer. He acquired the knowledge to pass the bar examination by apprenticing with his father. McCarty continued his journalistic activities more as a hobby than as a source of support. According to his daughter, Margaret Force, he earned three dollars per article—and a free newspaper.⁹ An added incentive would have been the constant newspaper exposure that was undoubtedly beneficial to his legal practice.

As available information makes no reference to McCarty's involvement in any business venture other than his newspaper in Montgomery, one can surmise that McCarty was uninformed or ill-informed about the practical realities of business, above all those at the corporate level. Certainly, his legal practice would not have brought him into contact with clients from big business. The decade of the 1920s, however, was an era in which large corporations rapidly expanded; McCarty, who may not even have realized it, probably grew increasingly out of touch with contemporary economic conditions.

Surviving articles do not include explicit remarks about McCarty's perception of his role as a journalist, but the following statement about self-censorship is certainly consistent with the column's contents:

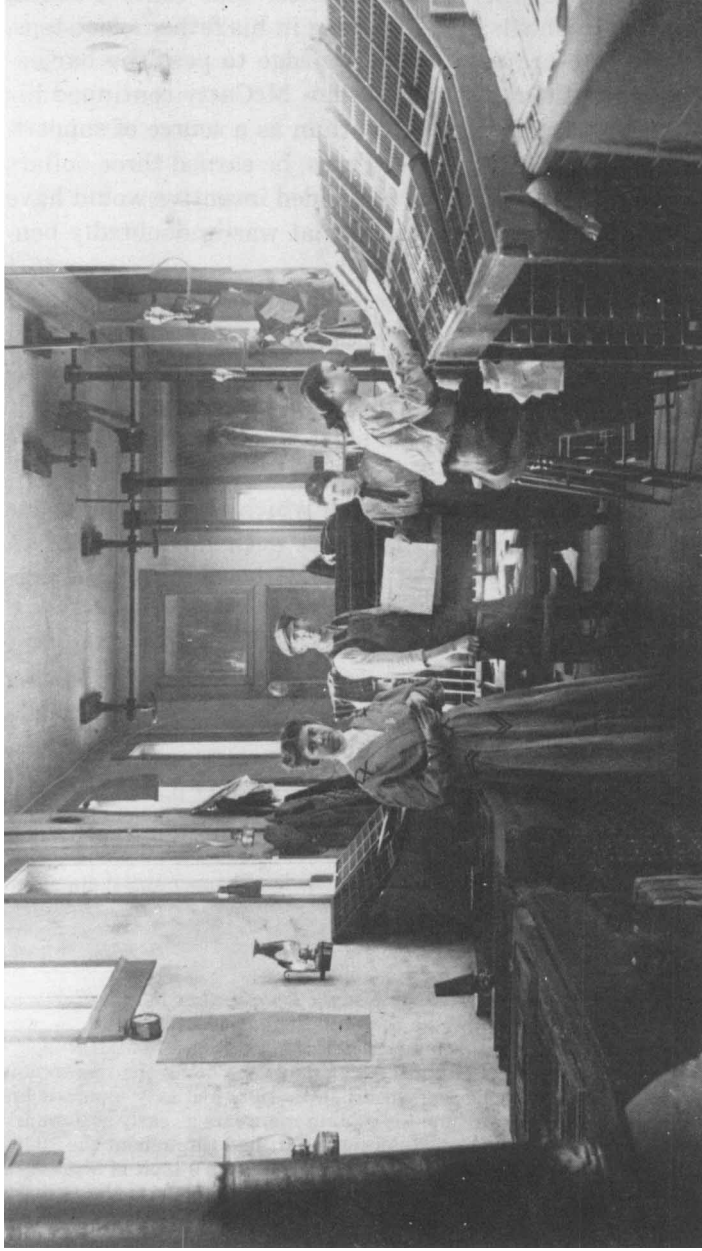
[The local newspaper] always prints everything good about the locality and is very chary of permitting anything to enter its column which would by any means be disparaging. It leaves out more than it publishes and where there is any question as to the better method of procedure in making public local happenings it stands on the side of silence and safety for the community.¹⁰

⁷ The first surviving issue of the *Martin County Tribune* that lists McCarty as Shoals correspondent was published June 5, 1891. At that time, however, he was simply compiling a list of local happenings, not writing articles. McCarty apparently held this position until 1894, August 18 of that year being the last extant issue in which he is listed as correspondent. Then in 1900 McCarty assumed his position as correspondent once again, and his column reappears as early as January 26, 1900. The column at that time took the form that it had throughout the 1920s and 1930s. It consisted of both a list of events and an article on a topic of McCarty's choice. Because the *Martin County Tribune* was not preserved prior to the opening of the Shoals Public Library, few of his articles published before 1917 seem to have survived. The column was frequently reprinted, however, and a search through other southern Indiana newspapers might uncover articles appearing before World War I.

⁸ The Montgomery *Monitor* is so obscure that it is not listed in John W. Miller's *Indiana Newspaper Bibliography* . . . (Indianapolis, 1982).

⁹ Comment by McCarty's daughter, Margaret Force, at a meeting of the Martin County Historical Society, Loogootee, Indiana, April 29, 1984.

¹⁰ Carlos McCarty, "The Local Newspaper," *Martin County Tribune*, April 10, 1924.



LOGOOTE, INDIANA, *MARTIN COUNTY TRIBUNE*, C. 1908 OR 1909
Left to Right: Emma (Penrod) Norris, Ray Brown, Hallie Farrell, Reba (Brown) Chandler

Original photograph by Joseph Alonzo Spears (1880-1938)

Although one looks in vain for comments on the moral dilemma of a journalist trying to shape public opinion, that McCarty intended to influence his readers' beliefs is obvious, most notably whenever he mentions the distorted image of rural southern Indiana found in Indianapolis newspapers. According to McCarty, Indianapolis journalists thought that people who lived in the hills of southern Indiana were simpletons. "Up there people do not think we are far removed from the lowest type of southerners."¹¹ McCarty believed that such biased views produced feelings of superiority in Indianapolis at the expense of southern counties, and he took it upon himself to counteract this negative image, going so far as to claim that the authentic Hoosier traditions could be found only in the southern part of the state. He further declared that he feared the time when all of northern Indiana would be culturally integrated with Chicago.¹²

For most of his life McCarty's political sympathies were Republican, and in the early years between World Wars I and II he sometimes used his column to advance the Republican cause in a straight-forward manner: "The worst that can be said of the Republican administration is that it has not kept Main street clean or kept the globes on the lamp-posts on Main street clean. Rather a small matter . . ."¹³ After the mid-1920s, however, his writing became less strident. Although McCarty harshly criticized Woodrow Wilson during the presidential campaign of 1920, he allowed the decisive election of 1932 to pass with little comment. In the 1924 election he counseled voters not to undermine the two-party system by choosing "self-seeking political parasites" who represented third parties. McCarty feared that, because of their political naïveté, women (as well as men voting for the first time) were especially likely to pick third-party candidates such as Robert La Follette, who was running for the presidency on the Progressive party ticket.¹⁴ In 1919 McCarty equated Bolshevism with anarchy, calling it an "ulcer." It had, he said, the "destructiveness of a lightning bolt," but he believed it to be an expected aftermath of war and unrealistically strict enforcement of the law. His criticism was more tempered than one might expect.¹⁵

As a local politician McCarty was quite pragmatic. Campaigning for office for the first time in 1930, he chose to switch his party affiliation and run as a Democrat. He did not justify his behavior in print, but his reasons are self-evident. Not only had the handling of the economy in Washington, D. C., handicapped Republi-

¹¹ Carlos McCarty, "Blissful Ignorance," *ibid.*, November 10, 1927.

¹² Carlos McCarty, "Current Comment," *ibid.*, March 19, 1931.

¹³ Carlos McCarty, "The Shoals Election," *ibid.*, November 1, 1923.

¹⁴ Carlos McCarty, "A Word to Voters," *ibid.*, January 10, 1924.

¹⁵ Carlos McCarty, "Bolshevism," *ibid.*, May 1, 1919.

cans at all levels of government but Martin County tended to vote Democratic. In addition, the *Tribune* reported that the local Republican party was in disarray. Martin County Democrats won by a landslide in 1930. Changing parties must have placed McCarty in an awkward position during the national election of 1932 because his reaction to the Depression did not suggest that he would have wholeheartedly supported Franklin D. Roosevelt. McCarty also ran as a Democrat in the elections of 1932 and 1934. He campaigned unsuccessfully in 1934 for the office of judge in the 49th judicial circuit, which contains Martin and Daviess counties. The larger population of Daviess County turned out to be a disadvantage for the politician/journalist from Martin County. McCarty died in November, 1934, only a few months after his wife. An obituary mentioned overwork as a contributing cause of his death.

From McCarty's comments in his columns it is clear that he thought only a person's public activities should concern readers. It thus should not be surprising that, despite the duration of his weekly column, little is known about McCarty's private life. McCarty appears to have been the quintessential village lawyer of the early twentieth century except, possibly, for his long commitment to journalism. He was moderately successful in his profession; active in volunteer associations and the Methodist church; and, so far as one can determine, a model spouse. Family photographs show him to have been an attractive and robust young man with slightly wavy dark hair.¹⁶

McCarty's values seem to have been established during the years preceding World War I, and he apparently did not doubt their continued relevance for the 1920s. Too old to fight in the war, he neither experienced nor wrote about the disillusionment that the conflict produced in many younger Americans. The "roaring '20s" were not for McCarty a "jazz age." The world he presented was an austere one of constant work and simple pleasures; in that respect it is a world view similar to the one described in Robert and Helen Lynd's *Middletown*, the classic study of an Indiana community in the interwar years.¹⁷

In his journalism McCarty lavished attention on what might be considered the most insignificant details of small-town life: the wild asters that bloomed on vacant property, the unsightly gravel

¹⁶ During the weeks just before McCarty became Shoals correspondent for the *Martin County Tribune*, the newspaper contained references to the young man's enjoyment of his youth: "Carlos McCarty and Harry Carroll attended the social dance at Loogootee Friday night. The girls say 'come again boys.'" "Where was Carlos McCarty last Sunday night? He looked like a traveling fencepost just pulled out of the mud." *Martin County Tribune*, January 16, February 13, 1891.

¹⁷ Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrill Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in American Culture* (New York, 1929).

pit that he knew to be the remains of a prehistoric lake shore, the tales of a deceased local storyteller. The cumulative effect of such detail is a heightened appreciation of the taken-for-granted.¹⁸ These ordinary but unusual topics gave McCarty's column much of its flavor, but they recorded the quality of small-town life in a manner inconsistent with the writer's promotion of economic modernization and the mass society that accompanied it.

Lightning, during the storm Monday at noon, played hob generally with the street lighting system . . . As a result there were no street lights Monday night, but being a bright moonlit night with the harvest moon at its best, they were not needed.¹⁹

Roy Billings is a well known farmer who lives north of town on a large river bottom farm. Roy has two automobiles, one a small eleven passenger Ford, which is used by the children and neighboring children to drive to town to school and is also used by Roy when not otherwise engaged. Roy also has a large Buick six which he drives when the notion strikes him. One night last week he decided to come to town. It was dark when he started and on his arrival in town he parked, as usual, in the business section. Passers by noticed a peculiarity about the car which was investigated and it was discovered that an old white hen had chosen the top of the Buick for a roosting place before Billings started to town. She was not disturbed and set quietly on top of the car as long as it was on the street, riding back home without her slumbers being appreciably disturbed by her journey to town.²⁰

In November, 1918, anticipating the end of World War I, McCarty noted that a conclusion to the hostilities would not mean an end to competition and strife. Social life was inevitably characterized by conflict, he believed. All that would change would be the way in which conflict was expressed. It would be less violent and channeled into economic activities. Thus he urged readers to organize business associations in order to give their hometowns a competitive advantage. The military metaphors he used to describe the economy were not meant to be critical but inspirational:

The battles of peace must be fought and won just as surely as the battles of war. There is nothing in the future for the place that doesn't go after it. Get ready now during the intermission between war and peace. Look well to your lines, see that they are formerly established, and you will just as certainly win the campaign. You can't stay out of the fight, the battle will be waged for commercial supremacy, for business leadership all about you. If you do not take your part on the firing line and successfully use the advantages you have, and all towns have some advantages, you must expect that at the end of the next decade you will be a back number, you will be completely out of it.²¹

¹⁸ Another work documenting everyday experiences in the lives of Martin County residents is Stephen and Eithel Riggins, *Country Lilacs: Eithel Riggins' Account of the Nathaniel Ledgerwood Family in Southern Indiana, 1830-1930* (Privately printed, 1983).

¹⁹ *Martin County Tribune*, December 31, 1925. This incident was listed as part of the week's events in Shoals.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, October 4, 1923. This incident was listed as part of the week's events in Shoals.

²¹ Carlos McCarty, "Problems of Peace," *ibid.*, November 7, 1918.

That few readers heeded such advice is evident in McCarty's castigation of rural indolence, a theme that continually appeared in his writings. While he celebrated Shoals's slow-paced character, he could also be harshly critical of the town, revealing at the same time an antipathy toward the American South:

The lethargy of the South seems to be creeping up this way and overwhelming us. . . . Property, business, social life, schools and all the other improvements which make any community worth living in are going to continue deteriorating until our section of Indiana will be as far behind the times as are the sleepy and slovenly localities to the south of us.²²

For McCarty there were two categories of people: the "boosters" of economic progress, the group to which he admittedly belonged; and "the pessimists, jeremiahs, and knockers," whom he scorned.²³ Certainly in his opinion there were too many of the latter in Martin County. "Muzzle your knockers," he urged. "Don't let your drones and non-progressive citizens ride you to death. Let the modern, progressive and up-to-date spirit prevail in everything . . ."²⁴

McCarty thought in 1928 that the industrial development of Martin County was lagging behind that of agriculture.²⁵ During the last third of the nineteenth century the major industry in Shoals had been the manufacture of timber products, particularly the making of barrels. Although technological change did play some part in the decline of this industry (metal hoops replaced the wooden ones that were handmade in Shoals), the dwindling number of harvestable trees was the primary factor. In the early twentieth century the making of pearl buttons from mussel shells became the major business in Shoals. McCarty regretfully pointed out that neither industry required complex technology. Shoals factories specialized in the simpler wood products, and only the initial stage of making buttons was done locally. They were then shipped west for final processing.²⁶

Following the 1920 census, which showed the population of Shoals to be stagnating, McCarty worriedly speculated about the reasons for this dormancy. After reviewing what he considered to be the bright economic potential of the county, he concluded that the real cause of stagnation could only be the "lethargy and indolence of our people."²⁷ (Social scientists of the 1980s might say that

²² Carlos McCarty, "A Serious Condition," *ibid.*, August 19, 1920.

²³ Carlos McCarty, "Here at Home," *ibid.*, June 1, 1922.

²⁴ Carlos McCarty, "Your Town," *ibid.*, December 31, 1925.

²⁵ Carlos McCarty, "Timber in Martin County," *ibid.*, March 15, 1928.

²⁶ The following article, based upon conversations with Harold Riggins, describes the button-cutting industry in Martin County in the 1920s and 1930s. Stephen Riggins, "Button Making—A Forgotten Industry," *Loogootee Tribune*, May 10, 1984.

²⁷ Carlos McCarty, "A Serious Condition," *Martin County Tribune*, August 19, 1920.

they lacked achievement motivation.) Given McCarty's adherence to free enterprise and his belief that Martin County was rich in undiscovered natural resources, few other rational explanations were available to him. Every year McCarty wrote articles in which he sought to inspire the spirit of commerce among readers. For instance, in an article titled "Ice Cream and Opportunity," he pointed out that even something as prosaic as ice cream could be highly profitable if people just took the initiative to develop new products.²⁸ Suggestions for improving local communities abound in McCarty's column: more modern utilities, more civic pride, better quality newspapers, merchants displaying their wares more imaginatively, more entertainment for the young in order to keep "people who are wide awake and reaching out for better things."²⁹ The reasonableness and practicality of many of his suggestions probably accentuated the dissatisfaction he felt over his ineffectiveness. Shoals hardly progressed beyond the stage of a one-street business district.

McCarty's favorite solution to Martin County's lagging economy was the development of its tourist potential, either on a free-enterprise basis or with state help in the form of a state park. A park to rival Spring Mill, near Mitchell in Lawrence County, or Brown County State Park, near Nashville, could feasibly have been established near Shoals, which was just as scenically situated in southern Indiana. Once other localities took the initiative in opening recreational areas, however, there were not many attractions that Martin County could offer to distinguish it from the rest of the state. Without something unique tourists would have little incentive to visit Shoals. McCarty was adamantly opposed to the state's purchasing economically marginal farmland for forest reserves because, he assumed, this would result in the loss of tax revenue. He called such solutions "chimerical suggestions, unreasonable, half-baked ideas."³⁰ He died before the proposed reserves became a reality in Martin County. While he occasionally wrote about tourism in a very crass manner ("Wake up and get your fingers in these tourist pocket books."), he was sincerely concerned about the absence of a viable economic base for the county.³¹

Writing during the years between the two world wars, McCarty could draw upon a broad spectrum of knowledge for his columns. The range of experiences available to him as topics helps to explain his reaction to contemporary events. In the 1920s McCarty still had the opportunity to talk to people with pioneer experience, not the first generation Hoosier pioneers perhaps but those who

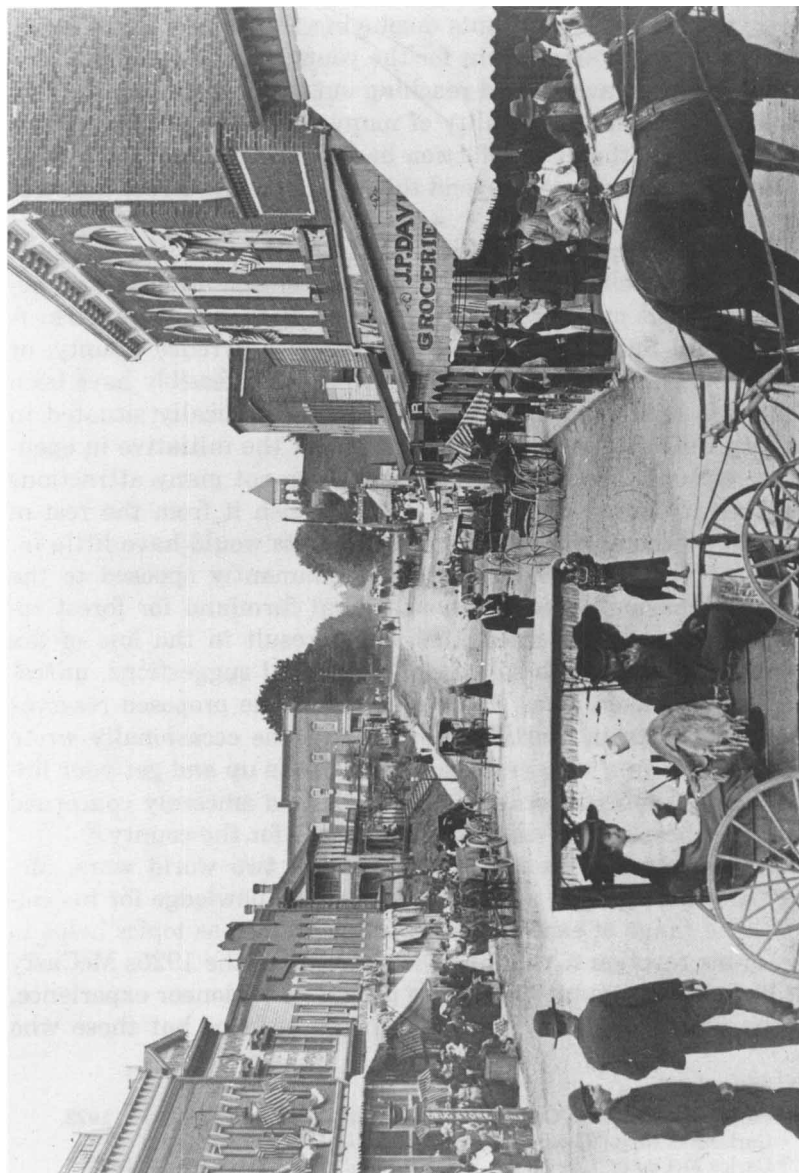
²⁸ Carlos McCarty, "Ice Cream and Opportunity," *ibid.*, February 2, 1922.

²⁹ Carlos McCarty, "The Coming Census," *ibid.*, May 29, 1919.

³⁰ Carlos McCarty, "The Forest Reserve Plan," *ibid.*, February 13, 1930.

³¹ Carlos McCarty, "Random Notes," *ibid.*, July 24, 1930.

MAIN STREET, SHOALS, INDIANA
EARLY 1900S
THE FLAGS PROBABLY INDICATE
THAT THE PICTURE WAS TAKEN
JUST BEFORE A FOURTH OF JULY
PARADE.



Original photograph by Willis C. Landis (1858-1920).

had been born in the 1830s and 1840s and who had also lived under primitive conditions. An article appearing in 1932, for example, commemorated the ninety-third birthday of "Uncle" Levi Wildman (1839–1945). At about the age of six months "Uncle" Levi had come with his parents from Ohio to Indiana. As a boy on his way home from school, he had encountered a bear, and he had accompanied the men who had hauled stone to build the jail in Dover Hill when it was the county seat in the 1840s. McCarty reported on Wildman's account of the construction of the road between the towns of Mount Pleasant and Trinity Springs. The road had, he said, followed in places a line of timber uprooted by a tornado.³²

At the other extreme McCarty discussed the building of a network of hard-surface roads in Martin County and throughout the United States. Indeed, in the 1920s, he wrote about few topics as often as the impact of the automobile on everyday life. McCarty celebrated such new institutions as the gasoline station, writing in an article entitled "Truly American" that its development read "almost like a romance."³³ On another occasion he commented with admiration about the "snappy appearing filling stations."³⁴ He continued to claim that "after all change in America always means improvement";³⁵ yet, he related that the two livery barns in town destroyed by a windstorm had earlier been centers for loafing and playing poker, and he never expected gasoline stations to fill that function.³⁶

Obviously McCarty thought of himself as a staunch supporter of progress; nonetheless, he remained very attached to the past. That his weekly column so often featured articles on local history implies a nostalgic outlook. Furthermore, he idealized Hoosier pioneers. He believed that they were more artistic than their descendants and that they had created "honest, hand made home made" objects while the succeeding generations preferred "bright babbles."³⁷ He liked the coarse texture of cornmeal and buckwheat flour ground in the nineteenth century manner on stone buhrs. He also preferred old-fashioned handmade kites to the new factory-made ones. "Today the boys go to the nearest store and depositing a few nickels, are handed a rolled-up paper affair that has about as much resemblance to an old time kite, as a water dog [salamander], caught about the same time in our streams, has to a real bird dog."³⁸ He

³² Carlos McCarty, "Almost a Century Old," *ibid.*, March 31, 1932.

³³ Carlos McCarty, "Truly American," *ibid.*, November 25, 1925.

³⁴ Carlos McCarty, "The Coming Changes," *ibid.*, February 27, 1930.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Carlos McCarty, "The Old Livery Barns," *ibid.*, March 24, 1932.

³⁷ Carlos McCarty, "Forefathers' Artistry," *ibid.*, October 6, 1927.

³⁸ Carlos McCarty, "Now Comes Kite Time," *ibid.*, March 8, 1928.

was pleased that a millionaire, who could certainly afford the best and the most modern things, had purchased a dilapidated log cabin in order to move it to his property and restore it.³⁹

It must not be forgotten that McCarty wrote for an audience in one of the least prosperous sections of the state. By 1934 little industrial development had taken place in Martin County, and the younger, better educated citizens of the county were moving away. In terms of formal education Martin County also lagged behind many areas of Indiana; in the 1930s it had more nonconsolidated, one-room rural schools than any other Hoosier county.⁴⁰ These factors greatly limited what McCarty could do as a columnist. A successful journalist must be attuned to his audience since he is writing for the present rather than the future. There are many indications in McCarty's writings that he desired to please his public (hence the self-censorship) and thus produced articles combining his own beliefs with what he thought people would like to read. One cannot assume, therefore, that his column was always a perfect reflection of his own opinions. The form in which McCarty's views appeared must also be considered. Short weekly newspaper articles naturally fragment any author's ideas, and since McCarty never kept a scrapbook or collection of articles,⁴¹ "Crisp Bits of News" may have contradictions hidden even from McCarty himself. Nor should one overlook the fact that journalism did not provide his means of support. McCarty was often preoccupied by his legal practice and had to write hurriedly. These factors alone, however, cannot account for his vacillating reaction to modernization. Given the magnitude of the social changes that were occurring and their ramifications on all aspects of everyday life, it is unlikely that anyone could have been unequivocally consistent in support of "progress." McCarty of course recognized the dramatic social changes that were affecting even Martin County, and his comments perhaps reveal something about his reaction to them.

Tempus Fugit, or freely translating, Time Flies; and the times change so rapidly that they are hard to keep up with. A few years ago if an automobile happened to come through a Southern Indiana town and for some reason the driver stopped his car it would be immediately surrounded by a crowd interested in the horseless carriage. Yet one day this week a brand new airplane soared over town with the operator shouting to people that he was carrying passengers at a reduced rate, and

³⁹ Carlos McCarty, "Pioneer Comfort," *ibid.*, December 8, 1927.

⁴⁰ Harry Q. Holt, *History of Martin County, Indiana* (Paoli, Ind., 1953), 242. A study of education in Indiana in the 1920s shows that eighth grade students who attended one-room rural schools were particularly likely to have low academic achievements. General Education Board, *Public Education in Indiana: Report of the Indiana Education Survey Commission* (New York, 1923), 14-15.

⁴¹ Comment by McCarty's daughter, Margaret Force, at a meeting of the Martin County Historical Society, Loogootee, Indiana, April 29, 1984.

only a few people were attracted by the noise of the propellers and the voice of the man so they would look up.⁴²

Despite inconsistencies McCarty continued to believe in the efficacy of free enterprise and to promote it in his column. To promote it effectively, however, he needed real people to personify its values. The national figure that McCarty felt best exemplified the spirit of commerce was Henry Ford. At the local level he looked to John Anthony and to the founders of Hindostan. It might be noted that McCarty himself was committed to the hard work indicative of the spirit of commerce, but little in his life suggests a willingness to take the personal risks he believed to be socially desirable. When writing about his heroes of commerce, McCarty often did not know enough about an event to reconstruct it with certainty. He thus picked from a variety of plausible motives and explanations and in the process sometimes either distorted or simplified events as they are understood today. McCarty's articles are therefore more important because they reveal something about the author himself than because they are factual, objective historical accounts.

McCarty's first hero, John Anthony (1802–1886), was born in Shelbyville, Kentucky. As a young man Anthony moved to New Albany, Indiana, where he worked as a shoemaker. A few years after his marriage he moved his family to the Martin County village of Mount Pleasant where he spent many years farming and where he helped to organize one of the first county schools. Later, Anthony purchased a farm near Shoals and gave part of his land for the building of a one-room schoolhouse. McCarty failed to report that in the 1840s Anthony was fined for “vending spirits without a license.”⁴³

Apparently Anthony made a total of three attempts at flying and “ended his [flying] career” in 1886.⁴⁴ Historical records, unfortunately vague on the technical nature of his flying machines, do at least document the fact that he did build them: “He secured some cheese cloth and other materials and draped them about his arms and legs and tried to fly from a tree, which he climbed to the very top. The attempt resulted in a fall and some broken bones.”⁴⁵ Probably McCarty never saw Anthony's flying machine(s), but he certainly had the opportunity to talk to many people who had been acquainted with the erstwhile aviator; in fact, many were still alive

⁴² Carlos McCarty, “Tempus Fugit,” *Martin County Tribune*, May 26, 1932.

⁴³ Holt, *History of Martin County*, 166.

⁴⁴ “More About Darius Green and his Flying Machine,” *Loogootee Tribune*, November 29, 1951.

⁴⁵ “Proof that Grandfather of Local Resident was a Father of Aviation,” *ibid.*, November 15, 1951.

when McCarty wrote about Anthony on June 16, 1927.⁴⁶ Apparently, Anthony had considered building an airplance as early as 1875. He never actually appeared at a fair held in Loogootee in the autumn of 1881, at which a public demonstration of flying was to be one of the main attractions, because a few days before it opened he was injured jumping from his barn roof during a trial run.⁴⁷ A joke printed in a county history is typical of the local humor recorded in McCarty's column: "While Anthony was recovering from the crash, it is said that a half-wit wanted to know what caused the failure. When the injured man explained that he did not know, as he used his wings exactly like the buzzards, the person meekly inquired, 'Did you spread your tail?'"⁴⁸

From McCarty's point of view Anthony was inspiring because of his idealism, his personal initiative, and his willingness to take risks. McCarty's ideas about the origin of inventions were not unlike the views of the nineteenth century French sociologist Gabriel Tarde. Generally ignoring the influence of broad social factors, both saw inventions as the work of exceptional individuals; both feared

⁴⁶ The June 16, 1927, issue of the *Martin County Tribune* is apparently no longer extant; it was, however, available in the 1950s when a history of Martin County was being written. McCarty's article prompted some readers to give him additional technical information: "Wm. H. Batchelor lived a near neighbor [to Anthony] and he says the machine was mounted on four wheels, the modern ones mounted on two; and that it had a platform where Anthony was to sit during flights, and had wings at each side and a tail, similar in principle like the Spirit of Saint Louis, which was used by Lindbergh in his ocean flight. No motive power was provided by Anthony other than such manipulations as he could make himself." *Martin County Tribune*, June 23, 1927. Batchelor's comments were quoted in McCarty's list of news items. According to the Martin County death records, John Anthony died in Loogootee, Indiana, on January 5, 1886, at the age of eighty-three years and four months. The cause of death is listed as "congestion of the lungs," and he died "after an illness of ten days." No mention is made of his work as a farmer. Instead, the entry for occupation reads "worked at flying machine." It has not been possible to discover the place of burial, but Anthony was possibly buried beside his wife in an unmarked grave in St. John's Cemetery in Loogootee. Death Records, IX, 52, record 315, office of Dr. Donald Beemblossom, Shoals.

⁴⁷ The Shoals, Indiana, *Martin County Herald* of September 1, 1881, includes three scattered references to Anthony's anticipated participation in the fair: "The overshadowing attraction [at the fair] will be John Anthony's flying machine. He will fly beyond doubt." "A continual stream of people could be seen last Sunday, visiting Uncle John Anthony's artificial bird." "There is big talk at Washington [Indiana] to attend the fair to see Uncle Anthony flap his wings, and fly over the trees. We will be there; won't you?"

⁴⁸ Holt, *History of Martin County*, 103. In 1951 another journalist retold the story of John Anthony, quoting a letter from a woman who remembered him from her childhood: "I was about ten years of age at the time and we school children had a lot of fun with Mr. Anthony's 'Buzzard,' as we loved to call his machine, which was constructed of heavy cotton material. We worked hard helping him get it started down the incline, which he built for that purpose, and it was grand riding on the track. The efforts were not entirely in vain, for we got a great thrill helping him to make it fly. Although very young at the time I remember distinctly that it flapped its wings four times before crashing. I often heard Mr. Anthony say 'Some day people will be flying through the air like birds.'" Quoted in *Loogootee Tribune*, November 29, 1951.

that innovative people were constrained by interaction with less daring and less imaginative friends and neighbors.⁴⁹ Whether or not Anthony actually had the traits that McCarty attributed to him is questionable. Anthony did indeed have the courage to stand up to public ridicule, but since he lacked the most rudimentary scientific sophistication, he emerged from the historical record more as a person engaged in a rather irrational quest than a bona fide example of the spirit of commerce. That aspect of the story McCarty downplayed, and he also did not appear to be concerned about the propriety of an eighty-year-old man publicly engaging in dangerous stunts. Perhaps he did not know Anthony's exact age.

The ideological elements in McCarty's presentation of local history emerge more dramatically in his writings on Hindostan. Founded about 1818 or 1819, Hindostan was abandoned in the mid-1820s. Its promising future was cut short when a large number of its inhabitants were killed by a "plague" of unknown origin. The remaining citizens left, and the town fell into ruins. It is not known whether they all left at once or whether Hindostan gradually became a ghost town. The former opinion predominates in folklore; the latter has appeared more plausible to some historians.⁵⁰

According to an 1826 gazetteer Hindostan contained "100 inhabitants, 2 stores, two taverns, 1 blacksmith, 1 cabinetmaker, one saddler, 1 wagon maker, 1 mill wright, 2 shoemakers [*sic*], 2 tailors, and one carpenter."⁵¹ Another source estimated that the maximum population of the town was perhaps five hundred.⁵² Plats of Hindostan survive, but one cannot distinguish between what was planned and what was actually developed. Several travelers noted their visits to the city, and a public speech given in Hindostan on July 4, 1821, was recently republished. McCarty would not have had access to the original oration, however, since only one copy, in

⁴⁹ Terry N. Clark, ed., *Gabriel Tarde on Communication and Social Influence* (Chicago, 1969), 19-36.

⁵⁰ For bibliographical and documentary information on Hindostan see Dr. M. A. Ward, "An Oration Pronounced at Hindostan, Martin Co. (I[ndian]a) on the 45th Anniversary of American Independence," ed. William Barlow and David O. Powell, *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXXIV (June, 1978), 135n. Not cited by Barlow and Powell is J. W. Porter to James Brown Ray, governor of Indiana, Hindostan, December 9, 1825, in *Messages and Papers relating to the Administration of James Brown Ray, Governor of Indiana, 1825-1831*, ed. Dorothy Riker and Gayle Thornbrough (*Indiana Historical Collections*, Vol. XXXIV; Indianapolis, 1954), 100. See also Kate Milner Rabb, *The Diary of John Parsons of Petersburg, Virginia* (New York, 1928), 358-59. Although Rabb's account is fictional, it provides some understanding of the Hindostan community.

⁵¹ John Scott, *The Indiana Gazetteer or Topographical Dictionary* (1826; reprint, *Indiana Historical Society Publications*, Vol. XVIII, No. 1; Indianapolis, 1954), 128.

⁵² Mrs. John Wise to Thomas J. Brooks, November 6, 1822, in "Hindostan, Greenwich and Mt. Pleasant. The Pioneer Towns of Martin County—Memoirs of Thomas Jefferson Brooks," ed. George R. Wilson, *Indiana Magazine of History*, XVI (December, 1920), 291-92.

Massachusetts, is thought to be extant.⁵³ Two business letters and the Hindostan postmark survive, but so far as is known no personal correspondence nor any autobiographical material. It appears to be impossible to describe with certainty the personality of a single inhabitant except Malthus Ward, the July the 4th orator.

Frontier people have often been presented in literature as outcasts, shady characters, or illiterate, simple backwoodsmen. A recent example is Scott R. Sanders's *Wilderness Plots*, which consists of vignettes based upon real characters from the frontier period of the Ohio Valley.⁵⁴ The frontier as a heroic experience is also a major theme in Sanders's writings, but he, unlike McCarty, balances this positive message with a gallery of deviant characters: alcoholics, corrupt government officials, arsonists, whites who behave more savagely than Indians. In McCarty's interpretation, as stated in two articles dated 1914 and 1929, the founders of frontier Hindostan were not only "bold pioneers" but "well to do men, businessmen in the fullest sense." The man McCarty called the "prime mover" in the corporation formed by the founders was a tavern owner, Frederick Sholts. Although Sholts's occupation might be interpreted by some as reinforcing the negative stereotype of backwoodsmen, McCarty saw the tavern as "one of the well known houses of entertainment which was established along the trail between Louisville and Vincennes."⁵⁵

McCarty described Hindostan as being "in the full vigor and growth of a lusty young frontier town." For McCarty this phrase implied commercial activity, and he cited as youthful vigor the "sophistication" of the mills and the business establishments. Also referring to business, he wrote of the "general awakening that was occurring over the entire frontier." McCarty's search in local county records for information about Hindostan's founders reinforced his belief in the grassroots respectability of these men. They were not, as he did not expect them to be, migrant gypsies who left no written trace. Further, "Deed Record Number One" in the county records showed all of them to be native-born Americans.⁵⁶

The founders of the new town referred to themselves as the "Proprietors of Hindostan." Although McCarty did not comment on

⁵³ Ward, "An Oration Pronounced at Hindostan." See also William Barlow and David Powell, "Malthus A. Ward: Frontier Physician, 1815-1823," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, XXXII (July, 1977), 280-91; William Barlow and David Powell, "The Late Dr. Ward of Indiana: Rafinesque's Source of the Walam Olum," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXXXII (June, 1986), 185-93.

⁵⁴ Scott R. Sanders, *Wilderness Plots: Tales about the Settlement of the American Land* (New York, 1983).

⁵⁵ McCarty, "Hindostan"; quotation is from Carlos McCarty, "Hindostan's Founders," *Martin County Tribune*, October 3, 1929.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*; quotation is from McCarty, "Hindostan," 60. See also Deed Record, I, March, 1819-April, 1832, Martin County Courthouse, Shoals, Indiana.

the name, it does have an epic quality and is presumed to be a mispronunciation of the Indian state of Hindustan.⁵⁷ Had the founders chosen another name, such as the "Proprietors of Black Creek" or the "Proprietors of French Lick," the imagery would have been less grand. McCarty wrote of "their dreams of a great city." The town's name can indeed be seen as fitting that description. In McCarty's view these men were goal-directed; they came together not by accident but with the explicit intention of laying out a new town. Considering the poor communications of the era, he thought readers should be amazed that the group ever managed to form. "When we look back a century and ten years ago, and consider how inadequate were means of communication, how difficult it was to get people together who lived far apart we may well wonder how this Hindostan company came to be organized."⁵⁸

When Martin County was organized in 1820, Hindostan became its county seat, and one of the activities of the new county commissioners was establishing prices, specifically those for tavern keepers. McCarty believed that the pioneers tolerated such government intervention in the economy only because there were so few laws restricting their freedom, not because they were any less independent than their descendants. "Think what an uproar would be the result if the commissioners of Martin county at their next session should endeavor to regulate prices in this method. But our forefathers were of sturdy stock. They did not have so much law to confront them as we now have."⁵⁹ Once again, he insisted on the pioneers' natural strength and goodness; they did not need laws to do what was right.

The official end of Hindostan was symbolized by the county seat's being moved to another town. "The sun had set for Hindostan," McCarty wrote. He made an analogy between the trials of the ancient Hebrews and the plight of Hindostan, saying that the streets of the town "echoed to the wail of Rachel weeping for her children." Finally, he presented the pioneers as heroes taken to heaven. They had "left this mundane sphere and taken their places in that city eternal, that celestial community . . . Their battle is over, their victory is won."⁶⁰

Since McCarty died in 1934, only his reaction to the early years of the Depression can be noted. Certainly these years seemed to have strengthened his propensity to look backward for guidance concerning the future. Initially, McCarty's stubborn optimism was unshaken, and he saw no reason to alter his views on the economy. Any tendency to doubt the promise of free enterprise was tempered

⁵⁷ Holt, *History of Martin County*, 28.

⁵⁸ McCarty, "Hindostan's Founders."

⁵⁹ McCarty, "Hindostan," 58.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 60, 61-62.

by his historical consciousness: he knew of many other crises in American history. Since they were all eventually solved, he could see no reason to expect that the current crisis would be different.

The drought of 1881 affected . . . [southern Indiana], yet a year or so later but little evidence was visible of the suffering and loss. The dry weather of 1901 also hit Southern Indiana below the belt, but she came up smiling before she was counted out. And now the combined efforts of panic, depression, flood, ice, hot weather, drought, bean bugs and everything else are not going to leave her in as bad shape as people sometimes fear. Count on southern Indiana to come to the front regardless of her losses and suffering. There is always a better time coming and it generally gets here on schedule.⁶¹

Following the drought of 1930, however, the specter of death from starvation and malnutrition appeared in McCarty's column. "This is war," he wrote, "war against hunger and misfortune, and disease. It needs active fighters as does a war whose object is destruction. This is a war for the salvation of humanity . . ." ⁶² By the autumn of 1931 a mood of despair could be detected in the examples of poverty brought to McCarty's attention: a truck driver did not think either of the two families that he had just moved had any food at home; certain parents had no money to buy school lunches. The solution McCarty offered, self-reliance and help from the Red Cross, was not very practical. He considered the Red Cross the most appropriate agency to deal with the crisis; his earlier prejudice against government assistance remained. "There is little need to wait for assistance from legislative bodies or their various committees. If that is all there is in sight for the suffering people, they need God's pity for their condition and the helplessness of the future."⁶³

In the early 1930s McCarty showed more strongly than before a tendency to promote modernization in terms of pioneer values. In particular he lauded nineteenth century self-reliance. "Looking back we cannot help pitying these folks [the pioneers] in their isolation, but that very isolation was good, from it developed the strongest type of men and women America has ever produced. Maybe a little more isolation and dependence on self effort would be good in these days."⁶⁴ One custom he wanted to revive was the practice of lending money to neighbors, which, he said, would give everyone a personal stake in community prosperity. Attacking mail order houses in Chicago for taking money out of the hands of local retailers, he encouraged readers to trade at home. Do not build up other communities at your own expense, he urged. He regretted, as well, the frequency with which modern investors bought national and inter-

⁶¹ Carlos McCarty, "Random Notes," *Martin County Tribune*, July 24, 1930.

⁶² Carlos McCarty, "The Red Cross," *ibid.*, January 22, 1931.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Carlos McCarty, "1833-34," *ibid.*, December 28, 1933.

national stocks and bonds, thus diverting funds from local entrepreneurs. Such an opinion was consistent with views that McCarty expressed in the 1920s. In May of 1920, for example, he wrote that large industrial centers were "unnatural" and their growth detrimental to the rest of the country.⁶⁵ A few years later, in 1932, he forecast a decentralized economy, home-owned and operated industries spread over the country rather than concentrated in a handful of cities.⁶⁶ Also in 1920, in an article entitled "Greatness or Bigness," he reminded readers that the quality of life was not dependent upon the size of the city that one inhabited.⁶⁷

Whenever McCarty wrote about contemporary conditions, he assumed that there were two conflicting approaches to economic involvement: the spirit of commerce, which few people adhered to, and the more common pattern of economic traditionalism. When he wrote about the past, however, he consistently underestimated the prevalence of traditionalism. McCarty looked to the past for human qualities that he believed to be rare in his day. Most likely, they were as rare in the Martin County of his parents' time.

McCarty's statements on economic issues could be interpreted as evidence of the conservatism that Tocqueville believed characteristic of the legal profession. According to the Frenchman, lawyers occupied a central role in the public life of democratic nations. Once the aristocracy had been rejected as natural leaders, lawyers came to replace them, largely due to their occupational skills; and lawyers, already influential, had little to gain by being innovative.⁶⁸ Although at first glance, McCarty appears to deviate from this pattern since he was in fact promoting social change, as far as the country as a whole was concerned, McCarty's values were not innovative. McCarty's writings, however, do not bear out Tocqueville's claim that values described in his book would be widely shared by democratic nations in the future. If McCarty's column is to be believed, in Martin County, and probably in most of southern Indiana, the values inherent in the spirit of commerce were apparently held by only a minority of the population a century after Tocqueville's visit.

⁶⁵ Carlos McCarty, "Industrial Centers," *ibid.*, May 13, 1920.

⁶⁶ Carlos McCarty, "Some Old-fashioned Prosperity," *ibid.*, March 3, 1932.

⁶⁷ Carlos McCarty, "Greatness or Bigness," *ibid.*, May 27, 1920.

⁶⁸ Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 103-107.