the *Appeal to Reason* and its Hoosier founder to the attention of what one hopes will be a wider audience.

**STEPHEN L. COX** is the senior historian at Conner Prairie, Noblesville, Indiana. At one time he served as editorial assistant on the Eugene Debs Papers at Indiana State University, Terre Haute.


The electric interurban, once the backbone nationally of short distance travel, shouted its last hurrah in Indiana. As systems rapidly disappeared elsewhere, most surviving Hoosier lines gathered under the umbrella of the newly created Indiana Railroad, which breathed a few more years of life into a dying industry.

George K. Bradley, an experienced interurban writer, describes not only how Indiana Railroad operated but why it appeared. Its roots revert to a utility empire that controlled scattered electric rail and power properties through a holding company, ultimately named Midland United, headed by Samuel Insull of Chicago. Efforts to merge Insull properties had been unsuccessful until 1930 when Indiana’s two largest interurban systems, Union Traction and later Terre Haute, Indianapolis and Eastern, were purchased at receiver’s sales and slipped into an available corporate shell. Management of three existing properties was added. At 800 miles, the system became the country’s largest.

Misreading the developing impact of the private automobile, Indiana Railroad immediately pruned weak lines and boldly ordered thirty-five high speed, one man cars, hoping to cut costs and improve ridership. But it was not enough, and in 1933 Indiana Railroad slipped into receivership. The receiver was a surprise, politically motivated appointment—Bowman V. Elder, a non-railroad man. Bradley considers this fortunate because Elder fought tenaciously to keep the system operating, something that a railroad-oriented receiver might not have done.

Within four years the system had become marginally profitable, but a 1937 strike called to enforce excessive wage demands was, according to Elder, “the final straw that broke the camel’s back” (p. 124). The court ordered dissolution but relented under pressure of a belated employee petition. From this weakened position, the course was all downhill. More lines were abandoned each year as management, sometimes substituting buses, fought a stubborn rear guard action. The last lines were abandoned in January, 1941, although one survived eight months longer under a sister company.

Bradley’s book also describes twelve Indiana Railroad city operations and three freight lines that outlived the system. A compli-
INTERURBAN RUNNING ON MARKET STREET IN INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

Courtesy Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.
cated color map shows the system and details dates of abandonment, yet, additional maps, particularly of city systems, a corporate structure chart, and an index would have been helpful. Nevertheless, the book is a valuable addition to the literature of an important transportation era.

RICHARD S. SIMONS, Marion, Indiana, is vice-president of the National Railway Historical Society and president of the Board of Trustees, Indiana Historical Society.


Under closer examination the good old days oftentimes turn out to be a bit tarnished, burnished only by convenient memory. That is not the case, however, with English, Indiana, as remembered by E. C. Roberts. Of course, his timing was right, and the town's history is perfect for reminiscence, as ideal as his timing.

Roberts was born in English in 1908. He was present when the first automobile arrived in a town resistant to knee-jerk change. He grew up in an era when going seven miles to Fargo was an all-day undertaking. Roberts lived through outdoor plumbing, small town morals, prohibition, the arrival of paved roads, the rise and demise of spas, the days of clubhouses for boys, and a time when Saturday night surpassed all others in excitement.

As for the town, English stayed small enough to sidestep the explosion of industrialization. It was part of a region synonymous with a quieter lifestyle. And the focus of the citizens, their ethics, would translate to many Indiana towns of similar size and potential during the same era.

Then history and weather conspired. After the disastrous flood of 1990, the last of several, English residents determined to move to higher ground. The old town was to be abandoned. It appears almost providential that Roberts and his son, Nick, a writer and photographer, should be able to collaborate on what English was. The father knew the town's history from some of the founders and lived the rest. The son had the skills to bring his father's reminiscences to print. It was an unusual instance of a town dissolving while a historian was present to paint its past at the moment of fading.

For all those reasons, *English* will be especially welcomed on the shelves of those readers from or in similar Indiana towns. Do not expect fireworks. The smalltown mainstreets of yesterday had pot-bellied stove atmospheres. Look for the joy in learning the origin of the nicknames; many small-town residents have them. There are tales of horses and buggies, fixing flats, waiting for the election news, doing your bathing at the swimming hole, maturing and earning a living, and marrying as a natural progression.