

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.

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English, Indiana: Memories of Main Street. By E. C. Roberts, as told to Nick Roberts. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991. Pp. ix, 144. Illustrations, maps. \$17.95.)

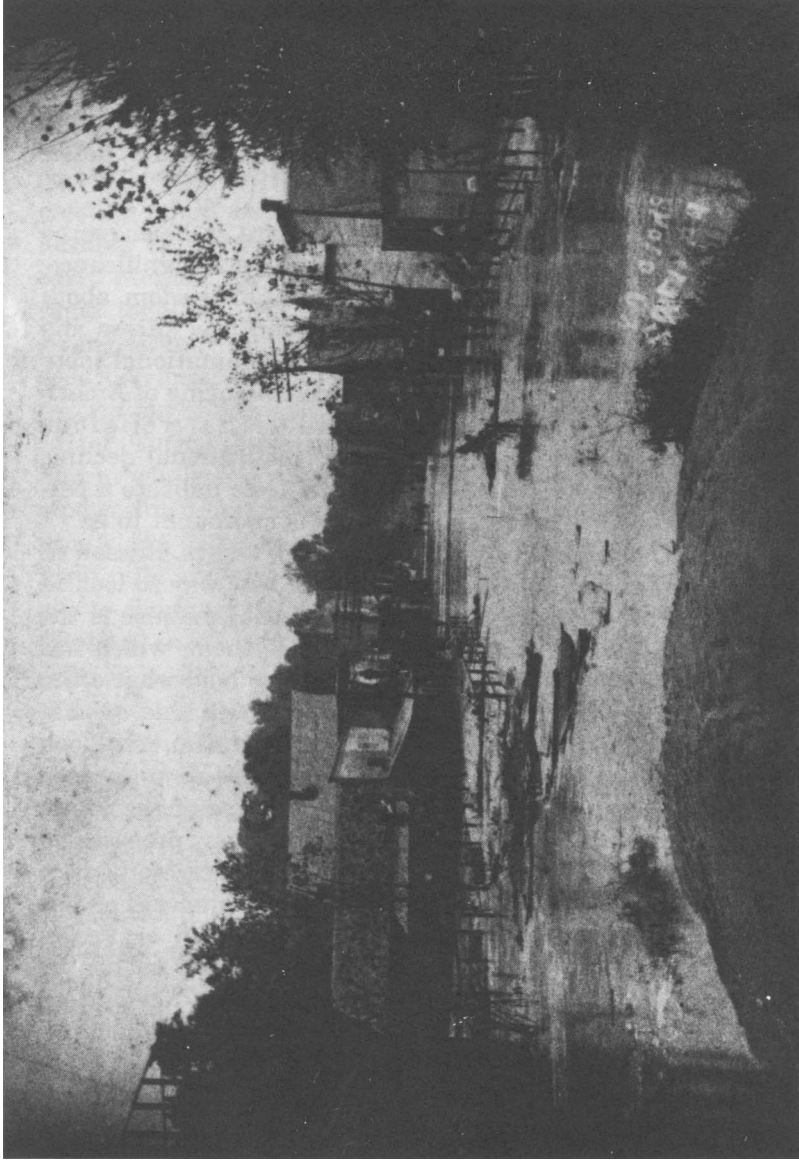
Under closer examination the good old days oftentimes turn out to be a bit tarnished, burnished only by convenient memory. That is not the case, however, with *English, Indiana*, as remembered by E. C. Roberts. Of course, his timing was right, and the town's history is perfect for reminiscence, as ideal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



MAIN STREET FLOODED

Courtesy James E. Hankins.

One might wish that Roberts had lived a more adventurous life. But he tells it like it was. And if you take this book in a single seating (it is only about a two-and-one-half-hour read), the sense of relaxed satisfaction fills the bill.

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Early American Methodism. By Russell E. Richey. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991. Pp. xix, 137. Appendix, notes, index. \$25.00.)

In an era when American denominations are so beleaguered that many wonder about their long-term viability and significance, it is rare to find fresh perspective. Conventional wisdom about their financial crises, the widening gap between pew sitters and denominational bureaucrats, and the loss of denominational identity abounds. There is much talk about the restructuring of American religion, about new non-denominational religious entrepreneurship, and about the problem of institutional decline. Taken together the prevailing wisdom and rhetoric indicate a pervasive confusion about what a denomination is and ought to be.

In a compact, dense, and insightful series of essays, Russell E. Richey of the Duke Divinity School proposes a new way to look at denominations. Part of the current denominational malaise is the poor type of institutional history written about them, which has yielded far too many monotonous accounts of who held what office when and which denominational statement followed this or that crisis. Richey's antidote, a powerful piece of revisionism, is to look at a denomination not first and foremost as an institution but as a living religious discourse. By auditing the discourse of the prototypical American denomination, Methodism, Richey proposes to uncover its hidden original character. Early American Methodism (1770–1810) spoke four languages, not one, he concludes. Pondering whether Methodists' early experience was "Babel or Pentecost," Richey identifies: 1) a popular language of piety spoken by all who shared in the great evangelical revival of post-Revolutionary America; 2) a distinct trans-Atlantic Wesleyan language; 3) the episcopal language of the Church of England; and 4) the republican language of Whiggery, the civic rhetoric of British political dissent and the young United States. These four languages tumbled together in the early discourse of Methodism, co-existing in circuit riders' journals and conference minutes. The mere fact of their co-existence suggests that Methodism was something far more complex than the institutional histories, which listened primarily to the third language, portray.

This "vernacular" reading traces the fall of early Edenic Methodism, with its rich fraternal community of faith, to a situation