

The Hoosier As An American Folk-Type

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The richness of American imagination was documented by a young diarist who described the composition of Michigan's early population by enumerating as many as eight popularly conceived types of frontiersmen. They included Yankee, Hoosier, Yorker, Yahoo, Buckskin, Buckeye, Chegoe, and Sucker.¹ Long familiar in the American tradition and long taken for granted, such stereotypes are encountered wherever one turns.² The mere enumeration of these popular terms does not imply their qualitative parity, since they varied widely in their vividness and in popular acceptance. The Hoosier symbol, which was used to indicate the distinctive culture imputed to Indiana, not only stood out from other western folk symbols, but was the nearest rival to the Yankee folk creation in vitality and in general acceptance.

The degree to which a stereotype justly reflects the characteristics of a people or a region raises fascinating but treacherous questions. Perhaps a historian should avoid a topic in which hearsay, fancy, small talk, and even slander are the principal raw materials. The Hoosier stereotype might be dismissed as a piece of subjectivism were it not for striking parallels to objective fact. Not only did Indiana receive a smaller proportion of the foreign-born than other states of the Old Northwest; but migration from the great northeastern Yankee region through the plausible Toledo-Maumee-Fort Wayne gateway was much smaller than one

¹ Louise Fogle (ed.), "The Journal of Ebenezer Mattoon Chamberlain," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XV (1919), 254.

² The social importance of such fixed mental patterns or images, which may or may not be in accord with the facts they are supposed to represent, was pointed out some years ago by Walter Lippmann in his *Public Opinion* (New York, 1922), 79-129.

would expect from examination of the map.³ Thus, ascription to Hoosiers of a compound of traits derived from the southern uplands appears relevant to early Indiana's predominantly southern population. The popular notion that Indianans were a fever- and ague-ridden race was matched in objective fact by an ill-drained and swampy terrain. Flippant treatment of Hoosiers in the secular press is probably related to the frustration acknowledged by eastern religious workers who tried to make Puritans out of Hoosiers, as well as to the lack of enthusiasm of eastern migrants for Indiana destinations. The relative isolation of Indiana, the slowness of Yankee cultural penetration, and a deficiency of accurate knowledge in eastern minds concerning Indiana must have had their bearing.⁴

Concerning the oral transmission of the stuff of folklore and popular clichés—rumor, idle talk, anecdote—one can say little except to recognize its eminent importance and deplore its loss, a loss which emphasizes present dependence upon manuscript and printed evidence. Recorded evidence of the Hoosier stereotype falls into general classes: journalistic quips, and, particularly conspicuous, a crude sort of newspaper feature which for convenience and because of its special character may be called the "Hoosier story."

A fertile source of Hoosier stories is the humorous monthly periodical *Yankee Notions, or Whittlings from Jon-*

³ See Joseph E. Layton, "Sources of Population in Indiana, 1816-1850," *Bulletin of Indiana State Library* (12 vols. Indianapolis, 1905-1917), XI (1916), No. 3, pp. 3-26, and the maps in Lois K. Mathews, *The Expansion of New England* (Boston, 1909).

⁴ The generalizations in this paragraph are based upon materials cited later in this paper or in Richard L. Power, "Wet Lands and the Hoosier Stereotype," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1914-), XXII (1935-1936), 33-48, and *idem*, "A Crusade to Extend Yankee Culture, 1820-1865," *New England Quarterly* (Orono, Maine, 1928-), XIII (1940), 638-53. For examples of the estimates of eastern missionaries concerning the "moral geography" of Indiana see the *Home Missionary* (82 vols., New York, 1829-1909), XVII, May, 1844, pp. 19-21, and December, 1844, p. 187; and XXII, October, 1849, p. 151.

Whether a wet terrain is especially productive of folk-types is a query suggested by a seventeenth-century reference to the English fens: "A picture . . . is given in Camden's *Britannia* which describes the inhabitants of the peat fens of Cambridgeshire as 'a kind of people according to the nature of the place where they dwell rude, uncivil, and envious to all others whom they call *Upland-men*; who stalking on high upon stilts, apply their mindes, to grasing, fishing and fowling.'" This was found in Henry C. Darby (ed.), *An Historical Geography of England before A. D. 1800* (Cambridge, England, 1936), 446.

athan's *Jack-Knife*, which ran through fifteen volumes from 1852 to 1866, and which seemingly considered itself a New York version of *Punch*; indeed, in the first volume appeared a cartoon representing exchange of copies of the two periodicals across the Atlantic.⁵ While other states than Indiana provided the putative settings for rustic anecdotes—Arkansas, Missouri, Tennessee, Kentucky, each supplying two or three instances per volume—Indiana was distinguished not only by more frequent mention but by more extravagant literary treatment.⁶

While the full-length Hoosier story, which even a tolerant critic would pronounce a generally low literary form, might fill most of a column of a newspaper, there was no standard length. To what extent these stories or references, over fifty of which appeared in *Yankee Notions* in something over a decade, were original with that periodical would be difficult to determine. Some of them are clearly borrowed, since a reader recognizes them in prior sources. That certain stories, copied and recopied in widely remote parts of the country, remained current for years is also quickly evident. How brisk was the traffic driven by journalists in floating stories of this general type was remarked a century and a quarter ago by Hezekiah Niles who said that a single mail brought five or six copyings of a story on the tantalizing theme "How Lorenzo raised the devil."⁷

Sometimes direct, sometimes vague and oblique, often coarse, insipid and pointless, Hoosier stories appear to be a journalistic innovation intended to ridicule a type of culture which was antithetical to that of the Yankees. It was probably not accidental that a periodical founded to epitomize the Yankee genius of humor so promptly seized the Hoosier type as a way of lampooning a contrasting way of life. And it is perhaps not accidental that the Yankees chose the neutral ground of the Old Northwest as the place of deriding a way of life derived directly from the South. Literary history thus augments the broader records of cultural adjustment in emphasizing the Yankee and the Hoosier as outstanding native folk-types of nineteenth-century America.

⁵ *Yankee Notions, or Whittlings from Jonathan's Jack-Knife* (New York, 1852-1866), I, 130.

⁶ There were four references to "Hoosier" in the initial number. *Ibid.*, 11, 17, 22, 25.

⁷ *Niles' Weekly Register* (Baltimore, 1811-1849), XII (1817), 403.

As the portrayer of a comic strip must constantly invent situations to preserve the momentum of his creation, so did the anonymous purveyors of the Hoosier myth fancy their principal in a series of exploitable situations. Thus one finds, in addition to stories in which details of person or of environment are stressed, numerous stories of situation: the Hoosier eating; the Hoosier amid sophisticated surroundings and grandeur; his first experience with steamers, street cars, or trains; and the Hoosier at the circus, at fisticuffs, or on the stage. Also too good to be overlooked was the bringing together of stock characters: the Hoosier with the Yankee, the Irishman, the Frenchman, the Jewish peddler, or the dandy. He was pictured as making a ridiculous public wager with Dan Marble, the circus man, or as impudently heckling Jenny Lind during one of her performances.⁸

While crude consistency is maintained with respect to the language, physique and dress of the Hoosiers, as well as the physical environment imputed to Indiana, the Hoosier Quixote is sometimes appropriated to weirdly impertinent uses: a Baptist minister is made to deliver a discourse on New York politics in Hoosier dialect; a supposed Hoosier "brag," who in fact lends only his merest label, is coerced through a series of dull cartoons in six numbers of *Yankee Notions* in which the adventures of the braggart take him as far as the North Pole.⁹ Like Davy Crockett who, "as the legend expands," turns up in Haiti, Japan, Brazil, and the South Seas, like the Yankee of stage and legend who finds adventure in France, England, Poland, Algiers, Spain, and China, the Hoosier was used as a utility man by the mid-century romancers, although his imaginary travels were apparently much less extensive than those of the other figures.¹⁰

Why the Hoosier as a type, who otherwise approached or equalled the Yankee as a folk figure, never gained prominence on the American stage presents an interesting query. A search of the indexes of eleven volumes of George C. D.

⁸ *Yankee Notions*, I, 317, 361; II (1853), 29, 334; III (1854), 217; VII (1858), 156, 195; IX (1860), 285; X (1861), 9; XI (1862), 8. *Ohio Farmer* (Cleveland, Ohio, 1848-), VIII (1859), 407. *Porter's Spirit of the Times* (New York, 1856-1860), I, 178. *Granite Farmer* (Manchester, New Hampshire, 1850-1852), III, January 7, 1852.

⁹ *Yankee Notions*, VI (1857), 253; II, January to June, *passim*.

¹⁰ Richard M. Dorson, "The Yankee on the Stage—A Folk Hero of American Drama," *New England Quarterly*, XIII, 467, 481, and n. 50.

Odell's *Annals of the New York Stage* discloses only the inclusion of Barnum's "Hoosier Giant," a museum piece rather than *dramatis persona*.¹¹ Perhaps public curiosity concerning the frontier type was fulfilled by devices such as the Crockett stories and almanacs, and even by Crockett as a stage figure, since the Crockett theme and personality, by the same evidence, enjoyed a considerable vogue on the stage.

Among the few stories which attained a truly entertaining level is the one which concerned a Hoosier, "an ugly man," wrongly believed by a group in a grocery store in "Chickenville," Missouri, to be suffering from the shock of a recent steamboat explosion. "It's one of the unfortunate sufferers of the bustin of the Franklin," said a compassionate Missourian as he invited the luckless man to steady his nerves with a drink. As the nerve-shaken one raised the tumbler to his lips there was hilarious laughter at the grotesque homeliness of his features. "He's hardly got over bein' blowed up yet," implored the host reprovingly. "Less make up a puss for him." After a purse of sixty-five dollars had been raised it became known that the homely man from Indiana had actually been at a distance of several hundreds of miles from the exploding boiler.¹²

Also relieved by the touch of a gifted raconteur was the story called "The Ager Candidate," which stemmed from the political career of the Honorable Joseph A. Wright, Governor of Indiana at mid-century. Re-elected, the Governor held open house. Among the callers was an oldish farm wife from Morgan County, which county was described in the story as being a noted fever and ague district. Singularly happy in her compliments to the Governor, the farm woman assured him: "They needn't run any man agin you, Governor, down in our region of the country; we believe in you—we do!" The Governor was grateful but surprised, and assured the admiring guest that he hoped to be faithful to party and to public trust. But the rustic woman was not through. She did not care about party and public matters: "You go ahead and make your Indian vegetable ager pills, and we'll gin you a majority down our way, party or no party." Thus it leaked out, the story concludes, that the people of Morgan

¹¹ *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York, 1927-), I to X, and XII. The "Hoosier Giant" appeared in V (1931), 578.

¹² *Yankee Notions*, VI, 272.

believed the Governor to be the manufacturer of "Wright's Vegetable Pills" which the Morgan folk found a sovereign specific for their great plague, fever and ague! But the Governor did not think it worth while to enlighten Morgan County.¹³

Withal, the literary traffickers in the Hoosier folk-type did not drive too hard a bargain with the figure they purveyed. No weakling, his roistering courage in physical encounter belied his supposedly debilitating environment. The Hoosier's sense of humor salted many a story. Although the Hoosier might be "green to the highest degree of verdancy, ignorant and awkward, and attired in the acme of flashy bad taste,"¹⁴ he was likely to prove "quite as sharp as city folks."¹⁵ After making fun of the Hoosier's appearance, with his "little head perched on a crane's neck," and exposing him to embarrassment and humiliation, the narrator often permitted his rustic principal to come off victorious by means of a crashing verbal broadside. Thus the Hoosier, baffled by the intricate menu of a first-class hostelry, at length exclaims: "Bring on your soup, and *then I'll pitch into biled vittles*. Yeou tax all the same, they say, and it's hard choosin'—so I'll just try one plate through the lot; I will, *ef I bust*."¹⁶ Even in such heavy-handed stories as the one in which the Hoosier, too terrified or stupid to leap to the clear, is chased a long distance by a steam locomotive and finally plunges to the implausible safety of a swill-barrel, the victim is allowed to proclaim triumphantly: "Now here I am, a real double-revolving snoly-gloster, ready to attack anything but a combination of thunder and lightning, smoke, railroad iron and hot water."¹⁷

Notwithstanding the slatternly, swamp-bred women prescribed by legend as the mates of the ungainly males, it seems possible that the writings of these local-colorists dealt more charitably with its people than with Indiana as a place. Along with the extreme rurality and illiteracy imputed to Indiana the unwary reader of mid-century was encouraged to believe that barter economy, wildcat finances and bank

¹³ *Ibid.*, VIII (1859), 347.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, VII, 195.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, IX, 285.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, VI, 365.

¹⁷ *Granite Farmer*, III, December 29, 1852. This story also appeared in *Yankee Notions*, II, 29.

notes, disorderly and ignorant legislators, unenlightened public policy, and easy divorce chronically emphasized the state's lapses from social orthodoxy. Of the year's residence in the state required to obtain divorce, *Yankee Notions* relayed the advice that the cure was worse than the disease.¹⁸

That only real humorists should have essayed the delicate medium of local color is certain from clumsy attempts such as the one which gave the address of the imaginary Zekle Peppermint as "Turkey Buzzard Holler, Skunk Township, Polecat County, Indiana."¹⁹ And that serious writers sometimes bore down more heavily than the irresponsible is shown by an editorial of the Springfield, Massachusetts, *Republican* when that great newspaper declared concerning wartime appointments to the Department of the Interior:

Nobody seems to go into it head or tail that does not hail from that state—the meanest, after all, in the West, and one of the meanest in the whole free Union. Why should it have more fevers and ague and ignorance and bad politics than any of its sisters? Perhaps because it was settled, in a greater degree, by poor small whites and small slaveholders of the South.²⁰

Although instances of such verbal directness are mercifully infrequent, similar outbursts were doubtless related to those broader social differences which must have had much responsibility for causing the Civil War itself.

Glancing somewhat afield—it is impossible to escape the similarity of social conditions which obtained during much of the nineteenth century in the southern third of Indiana and in the part of southern Illinois popularly called "Egypt." Conspicuous in either region was the relatively low per capita value of agricultural wealth and the high concentration of southern-bred population.²¹ What is perhaps of special significance in the case of Indiana was the large contingent

¹⁸ *Yankee Notions*, VI, 84-85; VII, 156; VIII, 228; *Granite Farmer*, III, February 12, 1852.

¹⁹ *Yankee Notions*, VI, 26.

²⁰ Springfield, Massachusetts, *Republican*, January 31, 1863, as quoted in the Lafayette, Indiana, *Daily Journal*, February 11, 1863.

²¹ Maps prepared from data derived from the *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*, show that extreme southern Illinois had a block of thirty-four contiguous counties with a per capita value of farms less than \$100; southern Indiana had twenty-one such counties, less nearly contiguous; each state had a few such counties in its northern half. Ohio, more uniformly wealthy than either, had only nine such counties.

of population which came from North Carolina—almost 27,000 persons as indicated by the federal census of 1860. This was the largest number of North Carolinians living in any northern state; and only two southern states, Georgia and Tennessee, had given homes to more. When the social history of North Carolina is recalled, the large proportion of North Carolinians in Indiana's population—Ohio reported by the same census 4,701 and Illinois 13,597—assumes an interesting relevance to the questions now being considered.²²

For it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that North Carolina may be called the mother of humble southern folk types. Here was Colonel Byrd's "lubberland." Here was the colony which had suffered commercially and socially from standing between rich and haughty neighbors; a common-wealth accustomed to disparagement by travelers and journalists; whose natural advantages were said to be slightly appreciated at home and little respected abroad—the latter probably caused by the former, thought Hezekiah Niles.²³ From thence was reported the same sort of religious and social landscape which distressed and baffled the sons of the Puritans in southern Indiana and in "Egypt."²⁴ From North Carolina came a ludicrous anecdotage similar to that concerned with Indiana: of dogs without long tails—long-tailed ones would knock off the huckleberries chasing foxes and rabbits; one never saw a man or boy with buttons on his pants; they used pegs—wore the buttons off climbing for persimmons.²⁵ From these reasons one may suggest a special connection between the Hoosier type which reproduced, and sometimes exaggerated, the folkways of the southern upland and the large migration received by Indiana from North Car-

²² *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860*, Population, 130, 104, 398. Niles' *Weekly Register*, XXVIII (1825), 86, reported that ten members of the Indiana House of Representatives were natives of North Carolina. Of other states giving over two members Kentucky and Virginia had given seven each, Pennsylvania six, and Connecticut three.

²³ Niles' *Weekly Register*, XIX (1821), 352. See also *ibid.*, XIV (1818), 239. For disparaging accounts by travelers see A. Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824-1825*, (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1829), II, 37-38, and Michel Chevalier, *Society, Manners and Politics in the United States . . .* (Boston, 1839, trans. by T. G. Bradford), 118-19.

²⁴ *Home Missionary*, I, 76-77. Reverend S. Lemmon to Messrs. Badger and Hall, April 21, 1826, and other letters from North Carolina, 1826-1830, *passim*, in American Home Missionary Society Papers, Chicago Theological Seminary.

²⁵ *Yankee Notions*, VI, 255.

olina;²⁶ not forgetting several thousands of Quakers, not typical uplanders, who came from North Carolina to Indiana.

While there is little mystery as to why stereotypes make their appearance, the course of their development is not always simple. Why, for example, did a stereotypic tag fix itself on southern Illinois, "Egypt," as a region, while in the case of Indiana "Hoosier" was more nearly personal and state-wide in what it connoted? Why did the Hoosier stereotype develop greater vividness and persistency than other western folk symbols? To what extent is any stereotype, once formulated, self-perpetuating? One may hazard that any regional stereotype is the resultant of numerous circumstances: of physical realities which determine lines of communication and which exert a selective influence, positive and negative, upon migrations; of geographical and social information and misinformation; of desire to have human situations reported in the slashing strokes of caricature. Once formulated, these accretions of fact and popular fancy must have been largely self-propelling, for people are loath to surrender their legends. Upon the pictures called up by these impressions starved imagination could feed; upon them creative imagination could build. Yankee, Hoosier, Yorker, Yahoo—merely to recite the names is to risk being captured by their rhythm.

A query which occurs at this point concerns the extent to which faithful reporting of the Indiana scene was prevented by the influence of a fixed image in the minds of the reporters; in other words, did witnesses insist upon finding in Indiana what the cliché promised? For upon this play of subjective influence would depend much concerning the reputation of the state and its people.

For example, it would be interesting to know the extent to which the English Captain Blane, who traveled in the state, allowed the hearsay of the steamboat deck and the tap-room to color the statement in his book, published in London in 1824, that "The Western Americans, and particularly those

²⁶ Guion G. Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill, 1937); the opening chapters provide an entertaining account of this phase of North Carolina's past.

of Indiana, are more rough and unpolished in their manners than those of any country I ever travelled in."²⁷ Perhaps it was an openness to suggestion that caused a Massachusetts Yankee in northern Indiana to write, on his first experience with western illness, "now . . . I know how the Hoosiers must feel." For this Yankee apparently resigned himself to physical impairment by his very act of entering the state.²⁸

If only itinerant foreigners and unacclimatized outlanders had reported a distinct social milieu in Indiana it might be suggested that they were misled by limited opportunity for observation. But those from nearby, who presumably should have been more familiar with Indiana, also reported a peculiar mode of Hoosier life as well as a process by which outsiders became naturalized to the environment. This appears from a letter of one I. N. Bereman, who wrote back to Ohio telling about his new wife, Ann Ferguson. As her husband described her, she was an old maid of thirty-two years, both homely and poor, possessing a character without blemish; a Baptist, and a Kentuckian by birth. But, careful to place his wife in a good light with Ohio relatives, the bridegroom explained: "She had been but 4 or 5 years in the country, and had not got hoozherized so as to be like the natives."²⁹ Although they are not of great aid in estimating the weight of subjective influence, these preceding examples show the forthrightness of bona fide references which lie close to the stereotype.

Nor is the problem much clarified by the close parallel between fanciful and supposedly serious writings. This parallel, often evident, may be illustrated by two bits of composition which appeared in the year 1859, the one a rank yarn of a Kentuckian who had made the error of removing to Indiana and, as a squatter, settling near Vincennes:

²⁷ Captain William Blane, *An Excursion through the United States and Canada during the Years 1822-1823*, (London, 1824), 140.

²⁸ *Boston Cultivator* (Boston, 1839-), XIV (1852), 380.

²⁹ I. N. Bereman, Madison County, Indiana, to Sally A. Bereman, New Market, Ohio, August 28, 1835, Bereman Collection, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

But I wasn' there a week, a'fore I seed the jump. Every darned thing had the ague, and some on'em the milk sick. Squatters shook so hard they had to nail a cover on the bedstead at night to keep 'em from falling off; an' a stake and ridered fence wouldn't stand more'n a year. For the matter of a fortnight I shook to pieces every night, and it took two hours to find my arms and legs in the morning.³⁰

The other bit of writing, supposedly veracious, concerned "a genuine specimen of that class of men called Hoosiers," further described by the writer who had encountered his subject at a hotel on Sugar River, Wisconsin, as a "gaunt, melancholy man, sallow with ague, and filled with an ambition to unfold his melancholy tale. . . ." The Hoosier had left Kentucky, he related, in order to settle in Posey County, Indiana; here he had been fearfully set upon by the ague, sold his cabin to a Yankee for a watch, heard there was "a right smart chance of timber on the Wisconsin River, and thar's whar I am bound for to go."³¹

Thus, one may take his choice between serious and fanciful accounts; the impression he would gain of Indiana's society and environment would often be about the same in either case. It is little wonder that fantastic ideas of Indiana's landscape prevailed in many minds long after the geography and society of her neighboring states had become by comparison an open book. Something of the lightness with which easterners carried their knowledge of Indiana's terrain and natural history must be reflected even in such a roguish libel as the following one, said to be a New England girl's view of the Wabash country:

Great Western waste of bottom land
Flat as a pancake, rich as grease;
Where gnats are full as big as toads,
And 'skeeters are as big as geese.

Oh, lonesome, windy, grassy place,
Where buffaloes and snakes prevail;
The first with dreadful looking face,
The last with dreadful sounding tail.

³⁰ *Yankee Notions*, VIII, 119-21.

³¹ *Great Republic Monthly* (2 vols., New York, 1859), I, 635. The quotations are taken from one of a series of articles evidently by one writer.

I'd rather live on camel's rump,
And be a Yankee Doodle beggar,
Than where they never see a stump,
And shake to death with fever'n ager.³²

Perhaps an investigator of the future will analyze the process by which the sharp light of understanding penetrated the vapors which obscured Indiana's society. Even the assiduous editors of *Yankee Nations* eventually tired of stories of legislators too ignorant to wind a watch or of congressmen-elect who set out in the wrong direction for Washington, since in the last three or four volumes of that serial the number of Hoosier stories is negligible. It would be interesting to know the time of appearance and the amount of credit due the several "normalizing" forces—infiltration of new stock, the building of railroads and highways which have helped Americans to know how their neighbors live, and the social uniformities induced by the machines. A clue to the substantial changes that were taking place by the middle of the 1850's is the note appearing in an Eastern paper that "of the ninety-one counties of Indiana, the inhabitants of eighty can leave home in the morning, go to Indianapolis, attend to business there, and return the same day."³³ One would doubtless find also that the drainage renaissance, noticeable about 1850, and coming to a new phase of effectiveness about 1880, was of cardinal importance.³⁴

Yet in spite of ameliorative forces, literate outlanders surrendered the Hoosier stereotype with reluctance. The account left by a woman journalist of California who visited Indianapolis during the summer of 1876 is in point. Writing under the name of "Kate Heath"—her real name was Julia B. Foster—the visitor spent a long paragraph, surgery and Victorian, expressing surprise at the middle-class sophistication of the city. Yet she could scarcely give up the quest

³² *Yankee Notions*, X, 317.

³³ *Moore's Rural New Yorker* (New York, 1849-), VIII (1856), 242.

³⁴ See *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Drainage of Agricultural Lands*, map preceding p. 1, and *passim*. Charles Kettleborough, *Investigation of the Drainage Laws of Indiana* (typed MS., Indiana State Library, 1914), 49, and *passim*. *Fourteenth Census of the United States*, VII, *Irrigation and Drainage*.

without finding at least one Hoosier. "Before I left California," she declared,

I thought I should find Hoosiers in Indiana, and rough uncultured Hawk-eyes in Iowa; but somehow I am woefully disappointed, for they all seem to be men and women everywhere, and a lady traveling alone has only to put her trust in God and the conductor. . . . I almost believe I have seen one little Hoosier though . . . who is kind of cold-colored, a sort of drab that takes in hair, eyes, face and dress, and baptizes each with a shivery and melancholy bluish tint. She occupies the position of "second girl" and when she comes to fill the drinking pitchers she rattles the ice around in a sad-eyed way as if to tell you how she was cut out for an iceberg herself, filled up with a warm soul and sent here to tend to the pitchers and draw water out of the cistern. Someone said once it was because she'd had the chills so much, but when the question was asked her she answered: "No, mem; but I had the ager off an' on for seven years." When she isn't well she says she feels "kind of donsie," and when you come suddenly upon her mopping at the pitchers she turns a shade bluer, and exclaims, in a thin, indigo tone, "Granter grievous, what a scare!" When hot weather comes she says she "just stops around," and when she tidies her wispy hair and puts on a clean dress she "reds herself up a bit." She jerks one shoulder and says she came "out of the North, dropped round in the West awhile," and finally concluded to "hire out." She thinks Indianapolis is "no slouch of a town." Is she a genuine Hoosier, do you think? I don't dare ask hereabouts.³⁵

Also interesting, to end examples, is a piece entitled "The Hoosiers at Home," contributed by Mary Dean to *Lippincott's Magazine*, three years after Kate Heath's visit. Bringing to her assignment a considerable amount of social understanding, Mary Dean associated the "true and most characteristic Hoosier" with the Scotch-Carolinian, suggesting that, "If you want to know how Fingal or Ossian kept house, enter a Hoosier cabin." She correctly appraised the toughness of the Hoosier cultural fiber, insisting that they had deeply influenced their neighbors, "though they do not themselves change with the lapse of the ages." Although Mary Dean saw many things to praise in the Hoosiers—dignity, nonchalance, refusal to be hurried; tall and powerfully strong men; children with good faces, and eyes with a "steady

³⁵ Indianapolis *Journal*, July 6, 1876, quoting the Sacramento, California, *Record-Union*. For information concerning the identity of "Kate Heath" the writer is obliged to the Librarian of the San Francisco Public Library.

Hoosier look"—she repeated much of the old story without cautioning her readers that the same conditions might apply in two dozen other states: many homes without windows; indifferent farmways; full poorhouses, idlers haunting groceries and saloons, when farmers were offering two dollars a day in harvest. Fundamental to her picture were the "ancientry," striking in their "Dantesque leanness," with hair and beards perfectly sublime in their abundance, patriarches who had survived the plaguy wetness of the Indiana terrain:

An old man who has all his life seen the white mist rising of mornings from the "sloo," whose farm goes "squish" under his feet for lack of drainage, and is posted along its roadside fences with advertisements of "The Great Ague Cure" makes a wonderful picture.³⁶

Although Mary Dean may have been simply less naïve than Kate Heath in confessing what she expected to find, both of the accounts fall well within the period which has seen the Hoosier legend softened more nearly to coincide with changes in Hoosier society. Interestingly, the chronology of the data cited in this paper makes it clear that the influence of Edward Eggleston's famous *Hoosier Schoolmaster*, published in 1871, preceded as it was by almost a half-century of literary depiction of the Hoosier type, was fixative rather than generative.

Public property, a stereotype, is appropriated to all sorts of uses. If, on the one hand, a writer in the *Atlantic Monthly* unkindly placed "Hoosiers" between "Plug-uglies" and "Gamblers," in enumerating the sorts of people who overran the city of Washington during the tense weeks following Lincoln's first election,³⁷ Indiana folk were doubtless pleased when Walt Whitman described Lincoln as a "Hoosier Michael

³⁶ *Lippincott's Magazine* (Philadelphia, 1868-1916), XXIII (1879), 441-44. Miss Caroline Dunn, Librarian of the William Henry Smith Memorial Library of the Indiana Historical Society, very kindly called attention to an obituary item in the *Indianapolis Star*, October 21, 1917, which stated that Miss Dean, a contributor to several magazines, was born at Deansboro, New York, in 1839. Members of her family who located in Indianapolis about 1870 are listed in the city directory beginning in 1871, although Mary Dean is not listed for many years thereafter.

³⁷ *Atlantic Monthly* (Boston, 1857-), VII (1861), 6.

Angelo," even when he added that the face was "so awful ugly it becomes beautiful with its strange mouth, its deep cut, criss-cross lines, and its doughnut complexion."³⁸ In spite of its sometimes uneasy implications there are comforting reflections concerning the Hoosier stereotype. If peoples and regions are to be represented by tags and symbols, one may well prefer them to be of a thumping and positive sort. Gusty, full-blown and flamboyant, there was nothing half-way or milk-and-waterish about the Hoosier stereotype. In present days when it is common to deplore the prospect of eventual erasure of cultural variety it is a comfort that Indiana has the tradition of being different; a solace that Indiana was distinctive enough to generate a robust stereotype. It is to be hoped that Indiana is indeed "the State that has not been ironed out," in the words of a reviewer of Heath Bowman's recent book, *Hoosier*.³⁹

Mary Dean remarked the "Oriental indifference" of the Indiana folk, and further explained: "A Hoosier is unimpressible, incurious and incapable of awe. He lives at an inaccessible height of self-respect" ⁴⁰ What matter then if eastern editors, enterprisers and uplifters appeared less interested in Indiana than in her neighbors? What matter if the public appeared content with garbled or incomplete information concerning the state?—one could read the widely circulated Albany *Cultivator* of 1838, for example, and gain the impression that Indiana was almost the only sickly spot on the continent that sickly summer.⁴¹ What matter if an easterner, despairing and thrice bereft from residence on the Wabash, used the name of that river to epitomize heartbreak?—"My wife thinks we have been pretty thoroughly *Wabashed*," one of them wrote.⁴² What matter if an ob-

³⁸ Quoted by Roy P. Basler, *The Lincoln Legend* (Boston, 1935), 95.

³⁹ *New York Times Book Review*, August 10, 1941, p. 19.

⁴⁰ *Lippincott's Magazine*, XXIII, 442, 443.

⁴¹ *Cultivator* (Albany, New York, 1834-1865), V (1838), 162. The *Home Missionary*, XI (1838), 149, whose editors received quarterly reports from scores of localities remarked: "Almost every Missionary report which comes from beyond the mountains, speaks of the present as a sickly season."

⁴² Reverend J. R. Wheelock, Greencastle, Indiana, to Absalom Peters, January 23, 1837, American Home Missionary Society Papers, Chicago Theological Seminary. The Wheelocks had lived at Clinton, Indiana.

server at Buffalo near the same time thought the probable destination of a ne'er-do-well migrant with fourteen or fifteen worthless dogs would be "Indiana, or the Lord knows where"?⁴³ Notwithstanding occasional protests, the Hoosiers remained singularly unmoved by it all. Serene, like their friendly visitor Kate Heath, they appear merely to have put their trust "in God and the conductor."

⁴³ *Genesee Farmer* (Rochester, New York, 1831-1865), IV, August 23, 1834.