

## A History of Indiana: A Review

Before the appearance of this sumptuous volume\* of four hundred and ninety pages, the author had become favorably known as a careful and patient investigator of Indiana History by his papers published in the Indiana Historical Society publications, one entitled *Internal Improvements in Early Indiana*, the other entitled *State Banking in Early Indiana*. By this more ambitious historical venture he will become more widely and favorably known.

In his *History of Indiana*, Mr. Esarey unfolds a wonderful story of which only a brief outline can be given in this review. The first five chapters are devoted to the period preceding the organization of the Northwest Territory, telling of the early Jesuit Missions, the French Settlements, the English Conquest, Pontiac's War, the capture of Vincennes by General George Rogers Clark, the short period of Virginia rule, and the Indian campaigns during the period of the American Revolution. Chapter VI describes the government of the Northwest Territory; chapters VII and VIII detail the history of the Indiana Territory from 1800 to 1816, including an account of Burr's Conspiracy, the battle of Tippecanoe and frontier life. The remaining chapters from IX to XXI tell the history of the State from 1816 to 1851. Chapter X relates to the State government at Corydon from 1816 to 1825; chapter XI to the economic development from 1825 to 1835; chapter XII to religion and education in early Indiana; chapter XIII to politics from 1825 to 1840; chapter XIV to the removal of the Indians from the State; chapter XV to the public lands in Indiana; chapter XVI to systematic internal improvements; chapter XVII to the Second Bank of Indiana; chapter XVIII to the pioneers and their social life; chapter XIX to the Mexican War; chapter XX to the Constitutional Convention of 1850; chapter XXI to politics from 1821 to 1850. Appended is a bibliography of twelve pages followed by a fair index.

The subject chosen by Mr. Esarey presents an inviting theme for the historian, one full of romantic interest, of thrilling adven-

\**A History of Indiana From its Exploration to 1850*, by Logan Esarey. W. K. Stewart Co., Indianapolis, 1915.

ture, of heroic achievements, of hard struggles with nature and still harder with savage foes, and of marvelous developments.

The period of Indiana history preceding the admission of the State has already been pretty fully covered by noted Indiana historians such as John B. Dillon, Jacob Piatt Dunn, William H. English and William H. Smith. Mr. Dunn's admirable history of this period has long been regarded, and probably will long continue to be regarded, as a standard authority, especially that portion of his volume which treats of the period between 1800 and 1816 and the struggle to prevent the introduction of slavery. But Mr. Esarey has cultivated a field only partially developed by prior historians. In the portion of his volume which tells the story of the State from 1816 to 1851, his care and industry and his merits as an historian are conspicuous. In his preparation of it he has rendered a great service to the State and his work will be highly appreciated by all who are interested in preserving its history.

The early history of Indiana reaches back beyond that of the earliest known Indian tribes which inhabited the region now included in its limits, finally fading away in misty traditions of the Mound Builders, a region governed at different periods by the French, by the English, by Virginia, by the Old Confederation, and by the United States. In very early times the bold La Salle had traversed it, and it had been visited by some of the Jesuit missionaries. A few French traders had penetrated into these wilds and the merry songs of the *coureurs de bois* had been heard on the Wabash and its tributaries, but no white settlements had been established until after the beginning of the eighteenth century.

One of the routes traveled by the French from Canada to New Orleans was from the west end of Lake Erie up the Maumee, then by a short portage to the headwaters of the Wabash, thence by the Wabash, the Ohio and the Mississippi to New Orleans, and along this route forts had been erected, one at Fort Wayne, one at Ouiatenon near Lafayette, and one at Vincennes. Here had been fought many battles between the tribes composing the great Miami Confederacy and their allies with the fierce Iroquois, and here the Miamis had sought refuge from them and from the fiercer Sioux of the northwest. Pontiac had marched his savage warriors through this region and it had often been traversed by the Indians in their warlike expeditions. During this period and prior to the organization of the Indiana Territory had occurred the capture by

General George Rogers Clark, the Hannibal of the West, as he is termed by Mr. Dunn, of Vincennes on which was based the claim, later asserted by the United States and recognized by Great Britain, to the Northwest Territory, a vast area now including the States of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin.

All this had occurred before Indiana Territory was organized in 1800. From this period the history of Indiana becomes still more fascinating. The area included in what is now the State of Indiana was in the very heart of the old Northwest Territory. In 1800 it was still a vast solitude waiting for the magical touch of civilization to develop its marvelous resources. It was covered with dense forests. In the valleys of White River and the Wabash there was the greatest profusion known on the North American continent of what scientists call high grade trees, oaks, poplars, sycamores, walnuts, elms, maples and other monarchs of the forest, many of gigantic size. The beautiful Ohio washed the territory on the south and its northern extremity touched Lake Michigan; through its limits flowed the Wabash, White River, Tippecanoe, the Mississinewa and other beautiful streams; and in the northern part were many lovely lakes. In the woods deer, turkeys and wild game of all kinds abounded and the streams and lakes were full of fish. There were still left a few buffaloes, remnants of vast herds that in still earlier times were wont to come up from the south and feed on the Kankakee marshes. It was an ideal home for the red men and it has been supposed that more of them congregated in early times, in northern Indiana than in any other part of North America. But the lands were as inviting to the white men as they were to the red men. The soil was of marvelous fertility, and all kinds of fruits and vegetation flourished in it as soon as the ax of the pioneer had let in the sunlight.

To reach this region, far remote from the seats of civilization in the eastern and southern parts of the country, it was necessary to travel by long and dangerous routes, by water and by land, and through unbroken forests infested by savage beasts and savage men. Those who left their old homes to venture into this darkest America did so knowing that they would probably never return, and probably would never again see the homes of their childhood and the faces of their kinsmen left behind. But those who came were men and women of stout hearts. We have often been told of their primitive homes, of their homespun clothing, of their rude sports, of their

quaint speech—a compound of old English, of Yankee dialect, of Southern expression, but the caricatures that have been drawn, especially in works of fiction, give us but an imperfect idea of the people themselves.

Among those who came were men who represented the best stock in America, the old Puritan stock of New England, the Scotch-Irish stock of Pennsylvania and the Carolinas, those of the very best blood of Virginia and Kentucky. Many had fought, or their fathers had fought, under Washington in the War of the Revolution, or under General Anthony Wayne in the Indian wars of the northwest. They were imbued with the spirit of liberty and they had inherited profound respect for the principles of constitutional government, handed down from their English and American ancestors. Nearly all were poor. The necessities of their situation made them dependent on one another and converted every community into a little democracy and made the settlers hospitable. If their log cabins were of the rudest sort the latch-string was always out. They had little education and but few books and what they had were mostly treasured heirlooms brought with them and eagerly read by those who thirsted for learning. There were few schools, but this is not to be wondered at when we remember that the children who went to the few schoolhouses were sometimes obliged to go for miles, crossing swollen streams and traveling through trackless forests, still infested with bears, panthers, wolves and wildcats. There were no colleges nor universities. Indeed the sites of Indiana University and Purdue were long parts of the wilderness, not yet open for settlement by white men, and occupied by the Indians. It need not surprise us when we find in the chapter in Mr. Esarey's volume devoted to Religion and Education only six pages about education. These were enough, however, in which to tell what little there is to be told about education in early Indiana. Nor need we be surprised to find that the word "literature" is not mentioned either in the table of contents or in the index of Mr. Esarey's volume. Men whose energies were of necessity devoted mainly to hewing homes out of the wilderness, to providing shelter and food for their families, and to repelling attacks of wild beasts and treacherous foes, had little time in which to read books and less in which to write them. But the early pioneers persevered. They cleared the forests and drained the swamps and converted them into fruitful fields;

they made roads and bridges; they built towns and started cities and before 1851 they had laid the foundations of a great commonwealth.

Their work was difficult and subject to many setbacks. When the State was organized in 1816 the Indian title had been extinguished in only the southern third of the territory; all the rest was still claimed and occupied by the Indians. In the central third of the State, afterwards known as the New Purchase, the Indian title was not extinguished and the lands were not open for settlement until about the year 1821. It was not until about 1835 that the Indians were removed from the northern third of the State. Until the removal of the Indians the white settlers lived in constant apprehension of their savage neighbors and there were many bloody encounters between them, finally culminating in the battle of Tippecanoe, the last great battle between the white men and the Indians east of the Mississippi.

The State early began the making of internal improvements and in 1836 a gigantic but wild and visionary scheme of such improvements was launched. It soon broke down leaving the State greatly, almost, as it then seemed, hopelessly in debt. Various other States had engaged in similar schemes and of those which did so, many shamefully repudiated their obligations, but it should be recorded to the honor of Indiana that it paid every dollar of its own.

The great financial panic of 1837 was severely felt in Indiana as elsewhere. There was little money; business was paralyzed; everywhere there were visible financial ruin and desolation and everywhere banks suspended payment. Again Indiana preserved its financial honor. Mr. Henry V. Poor, author of *Money and Its Laws*, says of the State Bank of Indiana: "Owing government, as one of the deposit banks, at the time something over \$1,000,000 it promptly paid the amount in coin. During the whole trying period of the suspension, which in the west lasted several years, with a capital of only about \$2,500,000 it usually retained coin reserves equaling \$1,000,000. \* \* \* It was for a long time a bright spot in a vast desert of incompetency and ruin."

Senator Turpie's tribute to the early pioneers of Indiana is as deserved as it is beautiful.

"In that primitive age there was an innate honest simplicity of manners, as of thought and action. Fraud, wrong-doing and injustice were denounced as they are at present; they were also discredited, dishonored, and branded with an ostracism more severe

than that of Athens. Wealth acquired by such means could not evade, and was unable to conceal, the stigma that attached to the hidden things of dishonesty.

"The moral atmosphere of the time was clear and bracing; it repelled specious pretensions, resisted iniquity and steadily rejected the evil which calls itself good. Moreover there never has been a people who wrought into the spirit of their public enactments the virtues of their private character more completely than the early settlers of Indiana. We have grown up in the shadow of their achievements; these need not be forgotten in the splendor of our own."

Mr. Esarey's interesting volume closes with the year 1851. History must have a suitable perspective and perhaps sufficient time has not yet elapsed in which to continue the history of Indiana to a much later date than 1851. Yet wonderful as was the progress of the State from 1816 to 1851, its progress since 1851 has been still more wonderful. Since then have been developed our great railroad system, both steam and interurban, our manufacturing and mining industries, our improvements in agriculture, our large cities, and not only these but we have seen the rapid advance in education and literature, the growth of our magnificent free-school system, of our splendid universities and libraries, in fact our gratifying growth in all the elements that have made Indiana what it is today. One of the most important periods in the history of the State is that between 1860 and the close of the Civil War, during which Oliver P. Morton, the great war Governor, was at the head of the State government, when Indiana proved its loyalty to the Union by sending to the front a larger proportion of her fighting population than was sent by any other State, except one, and when her soldiers were conspicuous in every important battle from Carricks Ford to Five Forks. All this remains to be told by future historians.

In subsequent editions of Mr. Esarey's book some additions should be made to the bibliography, which should include Julian's *Personal Recollections*, Turpie's *Sketches of My Own Times*. Woollen's *Biographical Sketches of Early Indiana*, and perhaps others. Mention should also be made of the English collection, by far the largest and most valuable in the state of unpublished manuscripts. To the gathering of this collection the late William H. English, long the honored President of the Indiana Historical Society, devoted almost his entire time during the last ten years of his

life, traveling extensively over the country and collecting at great expense photographic views of places and men, old records, documents, letters, and materials of all kinds illustrating the history of Indiana. Part of this material was used in the preparation of the *Conquest of the Northwest* but a large portion still remains unpublished which should at some time and in some way be made available for preserving the history of the State.

In his preface, Mr. Esarey recounts some of the difficulties under which historians have labored in writing a history of Indiana. Prominent among these difficulties has been the apparent inexcusable apathy of the people of the State and of the State Legislatures. Until recently little aid has been furnished the historian by the State of Indiana. The manuscript of the *Executive Journal of Indiana Territory* lay for nearly one hundred years securely locked up in a glass case in the office of the Secretary of State and was finally printed by the Indiana Historical Society. There was not even a catalogue of the official publications of Indiana Territory and of the State until one was published by the same society. Not a cent was appropriated for the support of the society until recent years. Since then only a scanty allowance of \$300.00 per year has been made for the publication by the society of historical documents. This is a humiliating confession, considering the liberal appropriations made by other States to preserve their history, Massachusetts, for example, has at State expense, printed all its old colonial records and laws, its Revolutionary rolls, its vital statistics and everything of value illustrating its history. Even poor little New Hampshire with scarcely enough soil on its granite rocks to make a respectable ant-hill, but which, if it does not produce great crops, produces great men, has printed not only its old colonial, but its old town records. Even the newer Western States like Kansas, Minnesota, Colorado, Nebraska and Montana make large annual appropriations for the preservation of their history.

There are signs of a revival of interest in the study of Indiana history. In this the Indiana Historical Society, the Indiana University, the Indiana Magazine of History and the teachers of Indiana have all aided and the Indiana Legislature at its last session made a generous appropriation of \$5,000. To this good work Mr. Esarey's volume will prove to be a timely and valuable contribution. Surely the history of Indiana is worth preserving. D. W. H.