

## A Hoosier Arcadia

By GEORGE S. COTTMAN

Irvington, Indiana, now an integral part of the city of Indianapolis, vaguely defined in its boundaries, and its name unrecognized by the Post Office Department, was for more than a score of years a distinct entity. More than that, it was so positively distinct, it is hardly straining a point to say that during its period of infancy and youth it was unique. The present generation of residents for the most part know it as a well-improved residential section with a reputation for respectability, where they come to their homes each night from their down-town vocations. They do not even know of certain antecedents that have contributed to the present desirability of that section, and much less of the idealistic and "literatesque" history of the old Irvington. A year or so since, the present writer placed in the branch library there a collection of material preserved through the years which contains within itself, and with tolerable completeness, the data for such history. It was hoped that in a community of many literary clubs, and in this day of much seeking after local history material someone would discover the interest that inheres in the collection referred to, and make use of the same. So far as is known to the writer, no one has done so, and lest they should not, the task is here essayed of gathering up in a fashion the story of early Irvington, the separate town.

Irvington, platted in 1870, was the first of that belt of suburbs that during the 'seventies and 'eighties grew up around the capital city. In its reasons for being, Irvington was different from all the others, with the possible exceptions of Woodruff Place and Stratford. The latter was indeed an ephemeral venture that drew its inspiration from Irvington. With these exceptions, the other detached communities were so many overflowings from the industrial expansion of the city, but Irvington had for its inception and motive a distinct ideal of social betterment as sharply defined, though not so radical, as the ideas that led Robert Owen to establish the colony of New Harmony. After the initial experiment Irvington's ideal, like that of New Harmony, was much modified by those conflicting influences that have their birth in human nature and which so fatally thwart Utopians — as will be

shown. Its establishment as an Indianapolis suburb was, in the first instance, largely accidental, the primary cause being a bitter county seat war which resulted in the removal of the seat of justice of Wayne County from Centerville to Richmond. This meant the collapse of Centerville's prosperity, and by reason of it two citizens of the town, Jacob Julian and Sylvester Johnson, were disposed to shift their activities to fresh fields and pastures new. Julian seems to have been the first to entertain the idea of starting a new community founded on certain ideal principles, but the proposition, when suggested to Mr. Johnson, was met half way.

Contingency number two occurred when Jacob Julian on a business trip to Indianapolis chanced to meet the Rev. T. A. Goodwin, who, besides being a Methodist minister and an editor did some real estate business on the side. Goodwin had in hand for sale a tract of land which he thought admirably adapted to Julian's contemplated social center, being but five miles from Indianapolis, favorably situated on high ground, and of sufficient extent for the desired purpose—the price \$100 per acre. This sounded so alluring to Julian that he went out to look at it. Subsequently he came again in company with Sylvester Johnson, and, to shorten that part of the narrative, the two of them purchased the solid holding of about 304 acres from its non-resident owner, Jacob Sandusky.<sup>1</sup> The tract is now bounded on the east and west, respectively, by Arlington and Ritter avenues, while north and south most of the space between the C. H. & D. R.R. track and Pleasant Run was taken up. The first plat of the town comprised this area, but it was soon enlarged. Happily for the furtherance of the scheme, Dr. Levi Ritter, who owned the farm of 80 acres adjoining the Sandusky purchase on the west, fell heartily in with the new town project with its unusual features. He coöperated with the original proprietors by laying out an addition that carried the boundary westward to the present Hawthorne Lane. This was in September, 1871.

Here then the idealists began to work out their conceptions of a model community. The original town plat showed at a glance that it was something different, with its looped and curving streets wandering in all directions and lying on the map in a tangle. Its unique character was carried out in

<sup>1</sup> Jacob Sandusky, a Pole, who sometimes wrote his name Sowdusky, as property abstracts show, acquired much cheap land in various parts of the West. Sandusky, Ohio, is said to have been named for him.

other ways. Most towns make a bid for industries as a means to prosperity, but instead this one banned factories and the like. The desire was to found a place for residence which would draw its subsistence from the adjacent city. Here the business man might enjoy a home life of idyllic pleasures, his children guarded from social evils. The town was spaced accordingly, the lots containing from one to three acres, while the stipulated cost of houses was to be not less than \$6,000—which meant a mansion in those days. A very few of those stately old buildings that must have cost far in excess of the sum named, still remain, testifying to the opulent tastes of those who may be called the charter members of the community.<sup>2</sup> The chief promoters, Jacob Julian and Sylvester Johnson, set the pace by erecting two great brick structures very much alike in design and appearance. Their spacious grounds were in keeping and their owners were exemplars of what suburban residents should be, with their love of trees, shrubbery and general rusticity. This was especially true of Mr. Johnson, who was a skilled horticulturist, and up to the time of his death his ample acreage was enriched by choice fruits. His faith in the adage that “an apple a day keeps the doctor away” was amplified to the belief that more than one a day was better, and a lingering memory of him in his latter days is the picture of the old gentleman, distinguished by his bushy white beard and venerable “plug” hat, munching apples as he walked down the street. With the first-comers generally floral beautification seems to have been an aspiration and a delight, for we are told by a reminiscient writer of “old-fashioned flower beds designed as stars, crescents and triangles, and gorgeous in mid-summer with geraniums, verbenas, cigar plants, touch-me-nots, fuschias, heliotropes, tuberoses” and so on, while another says “it seemed that every lady spent hours daily during the summer months digging in her flower beds and arranging bouquets to send sick neighbors.”<sup>3</sup>

All this was but part and parcel of the cultural and esthetic ideas that lay back of the Irvington experiment. The peculiarities of the town plat, to return to that feature, while suggested by those of a Cincinnati suburb known as Glendale, were modified according to the topography of the Sandusky

<sup>2</sup> The George W. Julian residence, still standing, was built at a cost of more than \$18,000, as revealed by Mr. Julian's diary.

<sup>3</sup> These intimate descriptions are gleaned from articles by Mrs. Grace Julian Clarke, daughter of George W. Julian, and Mrs. Joseph Hunter, whose above contributions are in the branch library collection referred to.

purchase, the building sites occupying the higher spots and the drives more or less following the drainage depressions with but secondary attention to the customary rectangular system of streets. If an especially fine tree contested a right of way the tree remained and the thoroughfare curved accordingly. Thoughts of a future automobile age with its feverish mania for getting there quickly troubled the primitive Irvingtonians not at all—what they preferred was the curved line of beauty flowing freely through the landscape. This ideal was further enhanced by two circles symmetrically placed and ingeniously made a part of the system of sinuous streets. One of these was to be a little public place, specifically named "Irving Park," and the other (where the Methodist church now stands) was designated "College Circle," the intention being to establish there a girl's school of higher education.

The ideas, respectively, of Jacob Julian and Sylvester Johnson diverged in certain respects and yet worked together admirably to fix the character of the suburb. Julian gave the cultural impulse. He it was who bestowed the name "Irvington," in token of his admiration of Washington Irving, one of his desires being that a statue of the author should stand in Irving Circle. Doubtless he may also be credited with the idea of the school in College Circle. He left evidence that he was a man of fine tastes, literary and otherwise, who should be generously honored in view of the fact that influences which he set in motion grew and expanded till the town became an acknowledged seat of culture. After the part which he played in the realizing of his dream, he died very poor having been obliged to relinquish his fine home.

Sylvester Johnson's especial *bete noire* was the liquor traffic and it is safe to say that his greatest incentive to the promoting of a new community was the establishing of preventive conditions. I have heard him say that he yielded to certain notions entertained by his fellow-promoter on condition that Julian would allow him a free hand in the matters he had most at heart. What he regarded as his proudest accomplishment was the incorporation into the title-deeds of lots the following clause which is filed with the plat in the county recorder's office:

The grantee accepts this deed from the grantor with the express condition that he, his heirs and assigns will not erect or maintain, or suffer to be erected or maintained, on the real estate herein conveyed

any distillery, brewery, soap factory, pork house, slaughter house, or any other establishment offensive to the people, and that he will not erect or maintain or suffer to be erected or maintained on said premises any stable, hog pen or other offensive building, stall or shed within fifty feet of any avenue in said town, and that he will not sell or suffer to be sold on said premises any intoxicating liquors except for medical, sacramental or mechanical purposes strictly, and he accepts this deed on the further agreement that the right to enforce and compel compliance of the above conditions rests not only in the grantor, his heirs and assigns, but in all the property holders and inhabitants of said town.

These provisions, especially as regards liquor, have held to the present day. Irvington in all its sixty-two years of history has never had an open drinking place, and this has given a lasting character to it as a temperance community.

On April 7, 1873, about two and a half years after the first platting, Irvington became an incorporated town, and on April 7 of that year the town board held its first meeting. The first ordinances passed were in line with the ideas of the proprietors. One was to plant trees wherever needed along the streets;<sup>4</sup> one was to protect birds; and another was to forbid livestock running at large. Before long self-government and the problems of law making for a bucolic community took on a humorous aspect—but that is another thread of the story. Let one thread at a time be developed.

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*The Golden Age.* Not all the history of early Irvington is suggestive of Arcadian dreams, but the idealistic spirit of the founders continued for years to tincture that less lovely current of life that takes its trend from the kinks of human nature and sordid necessities. Mrs. Clarke, whose memory goes back to the beginning, has given us some pleasant pictures of the pristine period when there were enough like-minded families of means to give the community the distinctive character originally intended. In its first steps the venture was as intriguing as that of the famous "Brook Farm," without the radical labor requirements that were fatal to the New England colony. The dream of these first-comers generally, doubtless, was much the same as that of George W. Julian, who, fortun-

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<sup>4</sup> That the proprietors were lovers of trees is indicated by such street names on the original plat as Cherry, Elm, Walnut, Maple, Oak, and Beechwood. This sentiment long persisted and in the course of the years Irvington people have fought to protect their trees against devastating utilities. On one occasion one of these utility corporations ruthlessly mutilated some fine forest specimens that stood on the edge of Butler campus so as to interfere with their wiring operations. The college authorities applied to law so promptly and so vigorously as to leave a permanent salutary effect.

ately, recorded in diary form, the lure to him.<sup>5</sup> He wanted seclusion and aloofness from the turmoil of life, but not isolation. He expresses a desire for "libraries and society" and to be within touch of civilization with its onward movement—advantages which this location afforded. "The city of Indianapolis," he says, "is destined to be one of the largest in the Northwest, and the town of Irvington will be one of the handsomest in the state, and singularly accessible to the city." This "singular accessibility," before even a mule-car traversed the five miles between the two points indicates how undemanding the satisfaction of the simple life could be in those days.

It all depends upon the spirit. With the good old family nag as an aid and a disposition to take things in a leisurely fashion, the first Irvingtonians got along enviably well. Neighbors in the full sense of the term, there was not a little visiting to and fro between families, with games of croquet in the big grassy yards by summer and euchre of winter evenings, not to mention other forms of innocuous recreation. The country-like spaces in all directions with places to explore and things to discover were an abiding delight to the children. As child nourishment compare that, if you will, with the perpetual, vicious diet fed out so copiously to the rising generation by that form of poison known as the "movie." Glimpses of an intellectual atmosphere are afforded by the free loaning of books from private libraries, and if the collection of Mr. George Julian, which still remains intact, is one to judge by, the literary culture was of the solid and classic brand.

A year or so after its incorporation the little town was stirred by a new and glowing hope. The Northwestern Christian University, a promising school of higher education, which had been in Indianapolis for twenty years, was outgrowing its original plant and casting about for a more commodious home. As a community asset, it was considered valuable enough to stimulate rivalry for its capture. As has already been said the first plan of Irvington had included the proposal of a school of the higher sort, "College Circle" having been offered for that purpose. Thus far nothing had ever come of this little sub-dream, but now Providence was playing directly into the hands of the Utopians. That they were quick to appreciate their

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<sup>5</sup> George W. Julian, a brother of Jacob Julian, was one of the valued additions to the village. He was first elected to Congress in 1849, and later served several terms in the period of the Civil War and reconstruction. A noted Free Soiler, he was one of the best known men in Indiana.

chance is shown by the sequel. Irvington sought the school vigorously. Raising a bonus of \$150,000 and offering in addition twenty-five acres of land for a campus, by the liberality of the community, the institution was obtained in the face of competitive inducements. It was a good investment.

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*Town and Gown.* This assimilation was a happy and logical union for both Irvington and the College, the detachment and idealistic atmosphere of the former according well with the "classic shades" of tradition. From 1875, the year that Butler University opened at Irvington, throughout the town period the institution gave a tone and character and a prestige to the community.<sup>6</sup> The "Classic Suburb" it came to be called, and though that was often in a spirit of raillery, underneath lay the serious recognition that the appellation was fitting. One of the effects immediately following the acquisition of the College was a stimulation of real estate values in the vicinity of its site and a platting of additions there that, had there been building in proportion the center of population would have been shifted to a locality quite outside of the original plats. Some of the many contemplated houses were constructed, and to this day there are some of the once fine residences of the 'seventies scattered to the southwest of the old campus.

Following the changes of time came other mutual benefits, more intimate and more enduring than profits to real estate agents. The aftermath of the panic of 1873 seems to have reached Irvington rather tardily; but it came. After five or six years of booming and high realty values things collapsed with the proverbial "dull, sickening thud," and for years they stayed "collapsed." Houses and lots once fancy-priced could be had at pretty much the purchasers own terms; platted areas became obliterated by weeds, and numerous tracts fenced in for cow pastures patterned the town with barbed wire entanglements. Meantime Irvington had grown from a village to a town, but not exactly along the lines anticipated by the founders. The increase of population, some of it caused by the coming of the college, represented in the main people of modest means who could not hope to own \$6,000 homes with generous, beautified surroundings. The idealistic sentiment now most in

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<sup>6</sup> The name Northwestern Christian University was changed to that of Butler University in 1877, in honor of Ovid Butler, recognizing his gifts and services. Subsequently it was known as Butler College, but now again it is called Butler University.

evidence among the dwellers in Arcadia was an appreciation of the institution in their midst where their children might have educational advantages above the usual. "Town and gown" were most happily paired. The loyalty of the citizens to the school took the form of a lively interest in its intellectual and social affairs. The College was at once their pride and the main source of public entertainment. The exercises of the literary and oratorical societies, the chapel addresses and many of the receptions to students were more or less shared in by the townsmen, while commencement week was a sort of annual festival of the spirit, when everybody was regaled with lofty thinking. Also, the college folk were sharers in the town life. The professors, for the most part, were personally acquainted with the man on the street; now and then one of them figured in town politics, and there are traditions of some of the earlier faculty members descending to the plebeian level by doing public work on the town thoroughfares under the road laws then prevailing. More conspicuously the occupants of the chairs took part in the indigenous culture of the citizenry, especially through the medium of a literary club. President A. R. Benton, of the College, was also president of the club for several years. Other faculty men, not infrequently, contributed to the program along the lines of their specialties.

This home-made club, by the way, was so unusual in character as to merit further notice. The "Citizens' Club" it was called, which was an appropriate name, for it was everybody's organization—if, indeed, it could be called an organization. It had no fixed membership, no dues or assessments, and no fixed place of meeting. Its monthly sessions were held at the homes of first one townsman and then another as the spirit of hospitality moved this one or that one to proffer entertainment—which hospitality usually included what the small town newspaper designates as "delicious refreshments." The intellectual and gustatory offerings of the occasion were as free as salvation, or even more so, for no collection was taken up, and whosoever would might come and partake. As traversing the streets by night and afoot was somewhat difficult, they tried as far as practicable, to keep to a moonlight schedule for their meetings. When fixing the time for a subsequent meeting, the calendar was always called for to determine the time of full moon. If for any reason the queen of night failed as a luminary, then the seekers after culture wended their ways



along winding muddy thoroughfares depending on the aid of lanterns to escape the dangers of ditches and puddles. The papers presented for consideration and discussion, which left the subjects to the free choice of the contributors, were as varied as the characters and interests of the diverse gatherings. One man, I remember, who had given his life to the subject, proved by exhaustive arguments and charts that the earth had attained to its present rotund proportions by accretions from outer space, and that it had also expanded so as to unfold the continents of North and South America which were once doubled together like a jack-knife. When, by the aid of the charts, the two coast lines were laid together—lo! there they were, and no professor present could say a word so smitten were they with a sense of their own inadequacy. All of which adds to the piquancy of those old-time memories.

To return from this divergence, there was also a business bond between Irvington and Butler. Not only did the citizens feel a sort of proprietary relationship and think of it as *our* College, when sentimentally considered, and not only did Irvington contribute her quota to the student body, but the segregation of about three hundred young people, who had to be fed and lodged created an industry that in those tight times was a godsend to many a thrifty housewife who had to turn an honest penny; and this, of course, strengthened the union. Another thing that made for solidarity was, doubtless, the comparative isolation of the place. Despite Mr. Julian's "singular accessibility," the distance to the city with the transportation facilities of those days did not conduce to much running back and forth and that made very good reasons why the suburban unit should be sufficient unto itself. In the beginning the only public service was furnished by the two railroads which ran the customary accommodation trains. Then with the advent of the College came a mule-car service, or rather alleged service, which was such a joke that to this day the mention of it excites the risibles of those who remember it. This vehicular traffic line, seeking its goal from the Indianapolis end, furtively sneaked through an obscure section of the city to the south-east till it found English Avenue. Along this roadway it took a straight shoot to a point on the eastern horizon; thence three or four miles, more or less, to a point south of Butler College where it dodged around a corner of the campus to make its way slaunchwise through a weed-grown common till it found

an Irvington street. It finally wound up at a turntable near the hub of the town from which it went back by the same route to the place of beginning. Cost of the tour, ten cents each way; time consumed, dependent upon good or ill luck.

The cars supplied for this conveyance of the populace to and fro were of the "dinky" or "bob-tailed" variety, engineered by a crew of one, and with slots and a long tube running down either side of the car in lieu of a conductor. A nickle dropped in a slot rolled down the sloping tube till it was caught in a sort of glass box which the driver on the front platform could look into, thus keeping track of his fares. If the nickles and the passengers didn't tally in numbers—and sometimes they didn't—as likely as not Jehu would stop all progress and, holding the innocent and the guilty alike responsible, decline to go further until the requisite number of coins emerged into view. The fare for the journey was collectible in two installments, five cents carrying one to Sherman Drive at Stratford, the half-way point. Here the driver would open the front door, poke his head through and bleat out in persuasive tones: "Another fare, please."

The transportation equipment of that seemingly far-off time and place should be described with some minuteness for the benefit of a generation that hardly knows a mule, much less a mule-car. The "bob-tail" vehicle spoken of, with its rear omnibus-like step instead of a platform, was drawn by a pair of attenuated mules equipped with little whisk-broom tails and long waving ears. The value of the ears is unknown, but the tails evidently served the same purpose as a crank on a model T Ford, for, whenever the driver as an initial step toward starting things leaned over his dashboard with a gad or switch hook and proceeded to dust the mules' hides, the tails would set up a brisk rotary motion, generating sundry groans and internal rumblings as the little beasts strained at the collars. Presently everything would be under way—no mean miracle when a car was packed to the limit with human freight. When a crowd of effervescent students made up the cargo, they added to the gaities of the situation according to the contagion of their inspirations, and, as they are prolific of inspirations, their performances were sometimes extremely diverting. Among the lingering recollections of their pranks is that of a college chorus accompanied by hideous squeaks and shrieks which student "strap-hangers" had learned to produce by a

certain peculiar swing on the hand straps. The concerted swaying which was imparted to the car, threatened to derail it, to the wrath of the driver and the demoralization of the laboring mules. On one occasion when travel was suspended by reason of an unpaid fare and the driver came back in the car to reason about it, a college girl slipped out on the front platform, fastened the door behind her and whipped up the mules to stop speed before the official driver realized what was happening.

A particularly adventurous transportation risk was taken when one tried to get home by the last night car. If all those aboard could be compressed into the "bob-tail," well and good; if not it was for the unaccommodated, neither well nor good. The writer remembers at least one enforced jaunt when he with two companions walked the five miles eastward after theater hours; after all, this was not much harder than trying to get there by a jammed car subject to mishaps. At the sharp street turnings on the city end of the route it was no uncommon thing for the clumsy vehicle, which had no bogie-truck, to be pulled off the track. That meant that it had to disgorge its passengers in order to be put back. After this there would be a grand scramble for seats, when many who had been fortunate before now became strap-hangers. The adventures were varied. One night a party of students bound Irvingtonward in a snow storm had to get out repeatedly to help push the car through the drifts. At the stables, near the edge of town, the driver, in this instance, objected to going farther, declaring that he would not be able to get back alone. His decision meant a mile, more or less, of snow wading for the students. In the midst of his troubles with snow-drifts, the conductor-driver had neglected to collect the second fares at Sheridan Drive. He was now informed that no more would be paid until he had discharged his full obligation. This turned the tables, so two or three stable hands were roused out to go along as assistants on the return and the run was completed. Incidentally, the extra nickles were not dropped in the slots but delivered by hand. Another fugitive tradition is that on a certain day the car broke down, leaving the passengers marooned in a sea of mud far from their destinations. They were rescued by "Tip" Shank, a local live-stock dealer, who happened along with a big-empty cattle-wagon and took them all to town.

The comedies of the transportation service did not end with the mule-cars. In course of time, the "back-door route" from the city to Irvington was changed to a more direct one by way of Washington Street and the National Road, and new types of cars were experimented with. First the company tried a steam "dummy" till one day it ran off the track and into a ditch, injuring several persons, then they turned to electricity. The first venture with the new motive power was a big storage-battery car that was brought from New York City. It had been troubled with chronic ailments there, but evidently it was thought by our car company that a change of climate would restore it to health, so it was bought. They or we or somebody proudly christened it "Jumbo," and by that name it always went. Like the famous elephant whose cognomen it bore, "Jumbo" was impressive in appearance but did not specialize as a runner. However, as a balker the big car was in a class by itself. To see it start out in the morning with its capacious interior full of men and women bound for their daily work in the city was a striking illustration of the truth, that hope springs eternal in the human breast. Time after time it was thought that at last the problem of transportation was to be solved, but somewhere down the line the car would stop stock still without apparent reason. Then would follow a clinical diagnosis of "Jumbo's" internal troubles by the motorman and conductor which would eventually result in a new release of energy. Meanwhile, of course, the time scheduled for beginning office work was clocking on without intermission, and, whenever "Jumbo's" exasperating balk continued too long, fuming passengers would begin to "pile off" and scurry on afoot till overtaken again. One passenger, an Englishman, who by virtue of his nationality and his profession as a teacher of music, was irascible and temperamental, would regularly walk off his wrath in this fashion.

A newspaper wag of the day made the most of this system of transportation. He dubbed the new line the "get-off-and-push route," affirming that "Jumbo," like any big box on castors, would run fairly well down hill but that a pushing contingent was called for to help make the grades. The balking, he maintained, the same as with a horse, was an indignant protest against overloading. His theory seems not unlikely when it is known that a load consisted of "Seventy-five or eighty passengers with a proportionate number of baskets,

boxes, rolls and bundles all jammed together in one mass." "One day," the facetious writer continued, "there will be an item for the newspapers when the tail-gate gives way and a few tons of compressed humanity are spilled along the track." In a similar vein he added that "when that autocrat of the road, the haughty conductor, comes along he wedges, burrows and squirms his way through the car, walking over the weak, planting his foot in an occasional market basket and setting his heel wherever he can find a cherished corn. When his gentle presence is gone the killed and maimed are piled up in a corner." This disproportion between the Irvington traveling public and the traveling accommodations long continued to invite the attention of the humorist and the veracious chronicler above quoted, gives further curious and interesting facts:

By reason of the improved packing system the Irvington people are undergoing a strange amalgamation process, being so ground into each other by intimate contact that in many cases their respective identities are quite destroyed. But recently two men were so mixed up at the end of their ride that each took the other's basket and went to the house of the other under the impression that he was that man. If this thing continues the domestic and other complications threaten to become embarrassing. It has a political significance, too. If some of our reliable straight-ticket Democrats or Republicans should become adulterated in this manner it might operate as an unexpected factor in our next election.<sup>7</sup>

In due course "Jumbo" and patent insides as well went the way of all failures and was succeeded by the over-head trolley. This was the beginning of car service that was not a "joke", and added to natural gas, which came a little earlier, marked the beginning of a new era for Irvington and the passing of the old regime.

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*The Fate of Arcadia.* As may be gathered from the foregoing narrative Irvington, partly by reason of its intimate touch with Butler College, retained for twenty years or more a distinctive character, not, indeed, quite in line with the original conceptions of the founders, but one which, in the retrospect, offers much that is pleasing, and unforgettable to those whose

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<sup>7</sup> I venture to add another chronicle of the mule-car period from the same Ananias: "Recently", he says in one of his characteristic accounts, "a countryman with a load of hay drove along the track in front of us, and our mules, ate their way into the load like a pair of bugs into a mellow apple till their heads and attenuated necks as far as the withers had quite disappeared from view, while their hitherto scrawny bodies gradually swelled out in semblance of two inflated bladders. When, finally, the man discovered that there was a cavity as big as a hogshead in the rear of his cargo he lifted up the strains of his dulcet voice and blue flame and brimstone came forth like the fiery breath of Apollyn. His team, being brisk walkers, had got us to town twenty minutes sooner than we had anticipated, and so we appeased him by a collection and assured him that he might make a good thing out of it if he would drive up and down the track tolling the omnivorous mule."

memories love to turn back to it. Nevertheless the changes came for natural reasons, and in the transition from the original community with its Arcadian ideas to that of the less romantic present we can trace the social forces that have always thwarted Utopian dreams. No community, it would seem, can for long be made up of people who think alike along idealistic lines, and who can afford to indulge their ideals. With the rank and file it is, in the nature of things, a struggle for existence, and the struggle must follow along ordained prosaic ways of living. To do the work of a town laborers must be comparatively numerous, and workingmen can not own big houses on big tracts. Since the Julian-Johnson plan made no provision for the housing of the humbler class, it was inevitable that the big tracts, or at least many of them, should in time be divided and subdivided for cheaper homes for more people, and that stipulated costs for houses could not hold in the great majority of cases. Hence, before very long, we find Irvington, as a growing town, swinging away from the original intent. The new trend was aided by the long period of depression which followed the financial slump of 1873, when a general stagnation, commercially speaking, settled upon the place.

But the inability to maintain a program of opulence was not the only nor even the chief factor in changing the character of the community as it advanced from village to town. Most of the people who gravitated to Irvington as a desirable living place brought with them no "hifalutin" delusions about an Arcadian existence. Instead they represented a practical and democratic Americanism with a strong leaning toward all that the constitutional Bill of Rights gave them. The first line of cleavage to manifest itself seems to have been on the question of the divine right of a poor man's live stock and the rights of the esthetes to have their flowers and shrubbery protected against the incursions of destroying beasts. In the endeavor to satisfy first the one and then the other of these two classes, the Town Board was from the beginning of its governing functions kept jumping from the frying pan into the fire and back again. At the first sitting, an ordinance was passed in favor of the landscape gardeners which forbade owners to permit hogs and cattle to run at large in the streets. Not long after mules, horses and sheep were added to the outlaw list. We may judge that this class legislation stirred up the posses-

sors of the hogs and cattle to the point of rebellion, for presently this indiscriminating ordinance was modified to one against "vicious and breachy cattle", and which now prohibited animals "known to be in the habit of jumping, opening gates or pushing down fences," to pasture on the streets and commons. In regard to well-behaved live stock, it was provided that "no owner shall be entitled to have more than three such cattle running at large at any time unless herded by a competent herder." Another provision, which seemed to be a concession to Cerberus, was that "it shall not be unlawful for any horse, mule or ass having its head tied to its foreleg . . . so that its head can not be elevated above a level with the lower portion of its body, to run at large."

But no amount of ordaining, however judiciously modified, served to harmonize the two classes that opposed each other on the question of free pasture rights within the corporation. The family cow, particularly, was an asset too valuable to be dispensed with, and the unfenced areas of the little town offered succulent grasses too tempting to be safe from the devouring jaws of Sukey. Memory says that as late as the later 'eighties there was a vigorous war for more drastic legislation on the cow issue. Even after the sought-for protective ordinances were permanently established on the record books of the corporation, the local humorist gives us a picture, through the medium of the *Indianapolis News*, of the town marshal using his family clothesline for a lariat and dragging in to the pound reluctant bovine culprits "all shorn of their ferocity and weighed down with a sense of guilt."<sup>8</sup>

The division of the town into these particular factions from inherent causes was but the forerunner of cleavages that were conspicuously in evidence as long as Irvington remained an independent corporation. Doubtless they existed and still exist in all American communities, but, in this vanishing Arcadia, the principle of getting what you want by fighting for it was exercised with exceptional vigor—so much so, in fact, that for years Irvington matters furnished material for no end of facetious copy for the *Indianapolis* papers, and the "Classic Suburb" was considered a fair preserve for smart cub reporters, with no closed season. The general line of separa-

<sup>8</sup> By this time, too, the ordinance promoters had secured laws against chickens, and the local funny man, in his plain, unvarnished fashion, related how the town marshal, yclept "chief of police", was embarrassed by private garden patches and barbed wire fences, when he attempted to arrest law-breaking fowls.

tion that came to be established, after the acute live stock period, was between those who held to a broad gauge idea of improvements and those who regarded internal improvements as infernal improvements, beyond certain limits—which limits meant very few public works. This ever-recurring bone of contention so dominated the politics of the town as to give rise to two local parties, the regulation Republican and Democratic organizations being supplanted by temporary groups known as the “Home Rulers” and the “People’s Party.” Between these the pot of town politics was kept boiling, sometimes furiously, as the fires were fed by such issues as streets and sidewalks, street lighting, fire protection, water supply and what not. No proposition of any kind, ever came to the fore, but had two sides, and the town hall was the public arena where all those forensically talented, or who thought they were, might have a chance to prove it.

Between the crossfires of opposing advocates the Town Board was a sort of buffer or shock absorber. In those pre-movie days when entertainment was rarer than now, that was one of Irvington’s ways of getting thrills, relished all the more when a little political chicanery was thrown in. A good example was furnished when the People’s Party called a great mass meeting to discuss indignantly a “burning issue”, and the leaders of the Home Rulers wedged themselves in with a carefully-prepared and studied method of procedure and audaciously captured the meeting. One of the comedies of these occasions was the case of a young man living at the edge of town who was studying law and who found excellent training at the Town Board hearings. He was an eloquent advocate and, no doubt, was considered a valuable asset to the side he happened to be on, till some one remembered that his home was outside the corporation, so that he was not entitled to any voice whatever in the affairs of the town.

Thus it is within the bounds of truth to say that most of the major improvements, that have converted the primitive Irvington that was into the Irvington that is, had to fight their way step by step. For example, the paving of the main thoroughfare (now Washington Street) had one long history of opposition, punctuated with injunction suits and delays.

An unsettled problem for a long time, made more acute with every fire that occurred, was the inadequacy of the water supply for fire protection. The demand for some sort



of equipment other than the "bucket brigade" was a matter of perennial agitation, and the present writer recalls one occasion when competitive dealers in such equipment brought their various types of hand engines to the town for demonstration, and a spectacular squirting contest was staged down in the bottom lands by Pleasant Run, where sundry shacks had been built for the sole purpose of burning. The exciting exhibit of flaming sheds and their extinguishment by water pumped furiously from the creek caused a complete muster of the boys of the town who enjoyed a memorable treat.

The question of an adequate water supply, indeed, played a prominent part in the movement that ended in the annexation of the suburb to Indianapolis in 1902. The last-named issue, quite in keeping with the habits of the town, developed vehement and rival partisan groups. Everybody wanted water, but some wanted to get it in one way and some in another. One faction was for bonding the town; the others advocated the surrender of the town's autonomy for the sake of annexation to Indianapolis, which would automatically take care of the water predicament as well as several other vexatious problems of government.

This fight was the last of the long series that had given character and piquancy to the history of Irvington. The annexationists abetted by the Indianapolis City Council had their way, and the city, anaconda-like swallowed up the suburb and proceeded to make it over. The post office department tried to obliterate it as an entity, but still it retains its identity and continues to bear the name its founders gave it. One point to be remembered is that the little community which the writer has ventured to call a "Hoosier Arcadia" did not, for inevitable reasons, grow according to the plans and specifications of its founders, and yet much of what was best in those plans persisted in Irvington and gave an idealistic reality to its history. The safeguards that Sylvester Johnson threw around it have operated to the present day. The educational and cultural dreams of Jacob Julian, through the medium of Butler College, have affected more lives than anybody can estimate, and still leave mellow and inspiring memories with those who are old enough to hark back to that first chapter. Such memories are quickened and saddened by the thought of the old college halls now standing, empty and forlorn, but once vibrant with young

and hopeful life—a center where dreams and aspirations were nurtured.\*

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\* In 1876 (the Centennial year) a presidential proclamation called upon the authorities of several cities and towns "to collect in proper form the prominent facts connected with their rise and progress with a view to their preservation and transmission to posterity." A resolution of the Irvington Town Board dated July 4 of the year named appointed John F. Julian, the town clerk, to prepare such a history. If the work was done the writer has been unable to find trace of it. Such a contemporary history carefully prepared would have been a document of interest and value.