

## Indiana Historical Society.

CHRISTOPHER B. COLEMAN

The Society's Committee on Covered Timber Bridges consists of Robert B. Yule, temporarily located at Greensburg, Pennsylvania, chairman, Richard C. Smith, Wylie J. Daniels, and Frederick Polley of Indianapolis and Melvin Davies of Mitchell. In the absence of Mr. Yule from the state, Mr. Smith is acting-chairman. His office is in the Indiana Historical Society Library (William Henry Smith Memorial) in the State Library and Historical Building. This committee has been working since 1931, and its chairman, formerly engineer in the State Highway Department, began his study of these bridges in Indiana earlier than that.

Indiana was one of the foremost of the states, if not the foremost, in surmounting the difficulties, delays, and expense of fords and ferrys by the building of covered bridges. This was principally in the second and last thirds of the nineteenth century. Some of the best and some of the longest bridges in the country were erected in this state. From time to time reports of the committee and lists of bridges have been published in the *Indiana History Bulletin*. An account of the famous Wabash River drawbridge (originally a covered timber bridge) at Vincennes, replaced about ten years ago by the concrete bridge which is one of the finest parts of the George Rogers Clark Memorial setting, was published in the *Indiana Magazine of History*, June, 1935, under the title "The Vincennes Bridge over the Wabash River."

These bridges have been, and are being replaced rapidly by modern concrete and steel bridges owing to the heavier demands of present-day traffic and to the increased cost of lumber. One of the early covered timber bridges was removed and fortunately rebuilt in Brown County State Park. Several others have been saved by relocation of roads and by the interest which has been aroused in these structures. A great many are still doing duty and testify to the sturdiness of this type of bridge. There are several counties, however, in which there are no covered bridges standing.

The Committee and the Society hope that some time an illustrated book can be compiled and published by the Society which will preserve knowledge of these memorials and give readers some of the flavor of the old horse and buggy days.

The Committee on Early Water-Power Mills has been doing a similar work with early mills. It consists of Denzil Doggett, of the Department of Conservation, State Library and Historical Building, Indianaolis, chairman, Richard C. Smith, Frederick Polley, Edgar H. Evans of Indianapolis, Dr. William M. Reser of Lafayette, Eugene S. Wierbach of Muncie, and Arthur G. McMurray, Edinburg. Among the fruits of its labors are interesting reports to Indiana History Conferences published in the *Indiana History Bulletin* beginning in the years 1935-36, an article in the *Indiana Magazine of History*, December, 1936, by Denzil Doggett on "Water-Power Mills on Flat Rock River," and the very imposing collection of accounts and pictures of early water-power mills in every county in the state now on file in the Society Library. A well-nigh complete account of the mills of Tippecanoe County, illustrated with photographs, by Dr. William M. Reser of Lafayette, is as yet unpublished.

One can scarcely over-estimate the part which water-power mills played in the settlement and development of Indiana. They were a necessity in every pioneer community, frequently the center of settlement; without them it is difficult to say whether civilized life could have been maintained in pioneer days. Nearly a thousand sites have been identified in the state and a few of the very early mills are still standing; they are among the most picturesque buildings that one can visit. The rebuilt mill in Spring Mill Park testifies to the interest of the public.

There are enough pictures and authentic accounts of mills in the Society Library to make a handsome volume on pioneer mills. Additional information is coming in and before long the Society ought to undertake the publication of such a volume. It would be one of the most interesting of all its publications, and not the least valuable.

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The Committee on Historical Buildings, Sites and Markers is chiefly active in gathering information and in promoting organization of movements in the interest of preserving historic buildings and marking historic sites. The committee includes Herbert W. Foltz, Architects and Builders Building, Indianapolis, chairman, Abram Simmons of Bluffton, Lorenz G. Schumm of LaPorte, Louis A. Warren and Holman, Hamilton of Fort Wayne, Harry Johnson of Valparaiso,

Francis Van Natter of Vincennes, Julia Le Clerc Knox of Vevay, R. E. Banta of Crawfordsville and Mrs. E. B. Ball of Muncie.

The Committee began with a nucleus of copies of parts of the reports of the Historic Building Survey in Indiana. This project of the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, in collaboration with the Library of Congress and the American Institute of Architects, was headed in Indiana by the chairman of this committee. Its reports contain detailed drawings and photographs and historical accounts of twenty-eight buildings in Indiana of historical and architectural value. The complete original set of reports is in the Library of Congress at Washington. A large number of photographs of structures of all types in Indiana from early log cabins to the George Rogers Clark Memorial at Vincennes are also in the Indiana Historical Society Library. A number of historic places and sites in the state, such as the Bailly Homestead in Porter County, and the old Whitewater Canal at Metamora are awaiting the organization of movements for their acquisition by the county in which they are located, or by the state, and for their restoration and maintenance.