

# Genealogy

## The Search for the Real McCoy

*Elizabeth Hayward\**

You may wonder what started me off on the search. It was a good deal like the old tale of the woman who washed a spot off her kitchen wall and wound up by redecorating her whole house. I didn't wake up one fine morning and say to myself, "This is a good day to start work on a tome complete with bibliography and footnotes." Instead, I tamely thought it would be a good idea to make labels for a couple of family portraits I'd inherited. Even the idea for the labels wasn't original. When our children were young we used to rent a house in Fairfield, Connecticut, for the summer and in that house were a lot of antiques. The owner of the house had put a tag on each of its heirlooms—sometimes inside the top drawer of a highboy, sometimes on the under side of a cradle—giving the name and dates of the original owner, and occasionally a bit of the heirloom's story.

So it was that soon after the expressman left a pair of large portraits on my doorstep I thought I'd imitate our landlady. All I knew about the pictures was that their subjects, a man in a towering collar and a woman in a gauze headdress, had been my great-great-grandparents, and that their names were John M'Coy and Jincy Collins M'Coy. Other tiny bits of information were lodged in my memory, dust-laden with the years that had passed since my grandfather told them to me. There was something about John M'Coy's having founded a college; something else about his having killed a bear—and what man who lived a century and a half ago didn't kill a bear!—and something further about Jincy Collins M'Coy's having raised a flock of children. But the dates of their lives, the circumstances under which they lived, even the name of the painter who'd made the portraits, were blank.

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\* Elizabeth Hayward comes of a five-generation Indiana family, the first of whom, William McCoy, settled in Clark's Grant in 1811. This talk was first given in brief form at a "Celebrity Luncheon" at Ridgewood, New Jersey, the writer's present home, October 19, 1948. It was expanded for delivery before the College Club of Ridgewood, April 3, 1951. The present paper represents further changes and condensation.

There may have been good fairies around my cradle; there was certainly one prankish one, for among the traits she bestowed upon me is a curiosity that rivals that of the Elephant's Child. Discovering that I knew almost nothing about these people was all it took to make me want to find out a good lot.

And because what I did discover came in a tumbled fashion, without the least regard for chronology or sequence, may I shift it about and tell you, in fairly orderly fashion, what the search revealed? It will help us all if, at the outset, you know what sort of man John M'Coy was, and why I think he merits the mark of the real McCoy, that stamp of quality, be it applied to strong liquor or a knockout punch or, as in his case, just to signify "tops."

In the first place, he was a pioneer. He was born in a settler's fort in western Pennsylvania in 1782. He grew up in Kentucky when that region was truly "dark and bloody ground." He was one of the first settlers in Clark's Grant—and, if that name is unfamiliar to you, just translate it into its modern equivalent, southern Indiana on the Ohio River's banks. He was a major in the War of 1812, a founder of Franklin College and a champion of progress in education, in religion and in Indian affairs. He died at the age of seventy-seven in Charlestown, Indiana, in 1859.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, you see, M'Coy's life spanned the period between the end of the Revolution and the beginning of the Civil War, a period of American history that was marked by great expansion and swift progress. When he was born, there were just the thirteen original colonies; when he died there were thirty-three states. Material progress? John M'Coy himself made the transition from wearing buckskin to broadcloth; from traveling afoot or horseback to riding on trains. His era was an exciting one, for while like Paul he could say (and this is what many a man whose birth took place on the heels of the Revolution did say with pride): "I was born free," yet the development of that freedom into more than words rested on those whose birthright it was.

It has been said that men either mold their times or are molded by them. M'Coy was one of the first group—finding his world far from ideal, he set himself to better it. Often

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Hayward, *John M'Coy: His Life and His Diaries* (New York, 1948), 7, 14-30, 84-91, 113, 133.

his views ran contrary to those popularly accepted; but, once he was convinced of the rightness of an action, nothing could stop him from carrying it out. It was not easy—men who work for progress have a way of being unpopular—but he persisted. Added to the opposition he met from his contemporaries was a handicap that was peculiarly his own: throughout his life he suffered from periodic migraine headaches. Anyone who has that same trouble knows what a thorn in the flesh it is.

In three specific fields John M'Coy worked unflaggingly: for higher education, for humane treatment of the Indians and for an unselfish religion. His success is shown by the fact that some of his aims have been accepted as such commonplaces of everyday life that they are taken for granted. We assume that Indians are human beings and even think it a little laughable that they should be considered vermin, yet in M'Coy's day to accept such a premise, and to act upon it, called for courage. Then, too, many today have known the benefit of a college education—yet in M'Coy's time his plans for a college were met with scorn and ridicule. "Look at me," one of his neighbors might say, "all I kin do is make my mark but the deeds I sign that-a-way are as good as if I'd writ the whole works." Men on the frontier felt that a strong arm had it all over an educated mind, and they were not slow to say so. As for M'Coy's championship of Sunday Schools, missions, and a general distribution of religious texts, this championship brought him the hardest fights of his entire life. Twice, because he stood firm on his principles of sharing his religion with others by these means, he was excluded from his church—and exclusion, in those days, meant about what excommunication does now.<sup>2</sup>

In all his efforts for progress, and in their attainment, John M'Coy was, consciously or unconsciously, helping make the America we know today. Christopher B. Coleman, late secretary of the Indiana Historical Society, summed up his life in these words, "He is as good a representative as could be found of the men, who, without making much noise or attaining political fame, built up this commonwealth in the

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<sup>2</sup> William Harrison McCoy, *History of the Oldest Baptist Church in Indiana Organized at Charlestown, Ind., 1798* (Seymour, Indiana, n.d.), 6-8.

Old Northwest.”<sup>3</sup> Or, as a seventeen-year-old boy exclaimed after reading M’Coy’s biography, “That guy had guts!” I hope you’ll agree that he merited the epithet, the real McCoy.

Now that you have some idea of what the search revealed, let’s see how the facts were found. There were three main trails leading to the goal: printed records, personal papers like wills and letters and diaries, and people. Having been trained as a librarian in methods of research, I found that a map was already in my hand: my curiosity had a means of finding some of the answers to the many questions it asked.

And at the very start of my search I discovered one essential fact: John M’Coy didn’t live in a vacuum. None of us do. We’re influenced by the times in which we live, by our families, by our religious convictions (or the lack of them), and by the places with which we’re associated. In the case of this man, I quickly found that I was just as ignorant as could be; in fact, I don’t see how just one person could possibly have known so little about so much. Among the topics on which I found it essential to inform myself were American history, especially that of the pioneer period, McCoy genealogy, Baptist history (for John M’Coy’s life was interwoven inextricably with that of his church), and Indiana affairs—to say nothing of the similar-sounding but quite different Indian affairs.

Much of this I was able to find in printed sources. To Miss Leonora Patton of the George L. Pease Memorial Library a debt of gratitude is due for patiently sending to out-of-town and even to out-of-state libraries for some of the rare books in these various fields. Even with the privileges of the interlibrary loan, however, it was impossible to get all the books needed, and consequently it was necessary to visit a number of other libraries.<sup>4</sup>

It was from books, then, that it was possible to absorb enough of John M’Coy’s background to begin to understand the circumstances of his life. But what about the man himself? No one had ever written about his career, save in fragments, and no one, so the Indiana State Library informed me,

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<sup>3</sup> C. B. Coleman, Indianapolis, Indiana, to U.S. Maritime Commission, Washington, D.C., March 30, 1944.

<sup>4</sup> A list of the institutions may be found in Hayward, *John M’Coy*, xii.

showed the slightest interest in doing so. To find out about him as an individual, I had to follow trails that sometimes came to a dead end, or that, in other cases, branched out into a regular network of cow paths. These roads led, metaphorically speaking, through old documents and through the personal recollections of many people.

The first documents any competent biographer tries to find are a man's love letters. Why? Not just to pry into the secrets of his tender moments but because in his love letters a man reveals his character as he does in no other written form of expression. Ideals, ambitions, shortcomings—all are shown more clearly in those letters than in any others a person writes. And did I find John M'Coy's? I did not. The young woman he married was a neighbor, there in Kentucky; their courtship had the customary brevity of frontier days and the chances are a hundred to one that John never wrote Jincy a line before they were married. So much for the most fertile field of study of the character of a man. In M'Coy's case, that field just didn't exist.

Since there were no love letters, requests were directed to various members of the family for other letters written by M'Coy, or to him. And out of those first few inquiries developed a correspondence so varied and so far-flung that one of my cousins called me "The Lady Who Lives in Her Mailbox." One relative would send the name of a sister who might have a few facts; she in turn would refer me to a great-aunt, and so it went until letters were being exchanged with people all over the country.

What sort of people? The sort you'll find, if you look for them, in any long-established American family: dozens of farmers' wives, doctors, a forest ranger, a saloonkeeper, members of the clergy, insurance salesmen, teachers, railroad men, members of the D.A.R., students (one of them was a Rhodes scholar), many who are "old and . . . nodding by the fire," politicians, an undertaker's wife and members of the American Association of University Women. Two of my favorite correspondents, a Catholic priest from Kentucky and a Choctaw Indian, wrote me only after the book was published, but there was enough of a variety among the earlier ones to suit almost any taste.

What did we write about? The first letter of inquiry was a generalized one, asking for information about John

M'Coy. Later more specific questions were asked. Among them were questions like these: What was the M'Coy hog brand? (And what possible interest or bearing that could have on the man's biography it is difficult to say. It's true that every family had its own particular hog brand, for hogs ran loose in the early days, just as branded cattle do now on the western plains, and "a crop in the right ear" or "three crops and a slit in the left ear" served to distinguish John Jones's hogs from Henry Anderson's.) What happened to the third picture of John M'Coy? (It was possible to locate only two, one being the oil painting, another a daguerrotype—but his diary referred to a third.) Why did he wait until he was forty-two to join a church? When did M'Coy make his first trip to Missouri? How did he travel? (It turned out that he went by river boat.) When and where did he buy the piano he left to his daughter Eliza in his will? (The answer to that one: He acquired it from an Ohio River steamboat that went on the rocks at the Falls of the Ohio, near his home.) The questions were as varied as the life of the man they concerned.

When the correspondence piled up and the ramifications of the family began to be more than I could carry in my head, I started a genealogical outline. That, too, was in the nature of the spot on the kitchen wall. From a few notes set down on slips of paper, it has grown until now it has the makings of a fairly complete genealogy of the descendants of James McCoy—John's immigrant grandfather. Seventy-five hundred names are in it so far and it's still not finished. You can see why "The Lady Who Lives in Her Mailbox" isn't a bad name for me.

Sometimes cousins trustingly sent their prized old papers without hesitation. One was a young woman in Washington who forwarded a whole trunkful of them. The trunk itself was a handmade wooden chest, first used by a son of John M'Coy when he went off to college about 1829. That son, by the way, was the first Indiana Baptist to earn a degree—and he came off with an M.A.<sup>5</sup> His wooden chest stayed in our dining room all winter; and, in the intervals between braiding my daughter's pigtails and mending my son's socks,

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<sup>5</sup> Isaac M'Coy graduated from Hanover College in 1834 and received the degree of Master of Arts from the same institution in 1837. He may also have been a student at Indiana University since a M'Coy is listed in that institution's first catalogue which was issued in 1831.

I'd read handfuls of them. None were from John M'Coy himself—in fact, by the end of the search no more than a dozen of his own letters had come to light, and some of them were in a museum in Kansas—but among those old letters were a good many indirect references to him.

For instance, in a letter written by an old, old lady there was an account of how, when she was a little girl, she experienced an Indian raid. One dark night prowling Indians took advantage of the absence of the father of the family—he was off fighting in the War of 1812—to set fire to the flax that was piled in the dooryard, intending to invade the house and kill the occupants when the flames were bright enough to light the massacre. The mother escaped out a side door with her children, hiding them in the underbrush. Happily for the family, neighbors as well as Indians saw the flames in the dark and came posthaste to drive off the attackers. No wonder it made a vivid impression on the little girl, and no wonder that, as an old woman, she thought it a story worth recounting. And what did it have to do with John M'Coy? Just this: it was he whose home was attacked, and it was one of his daughters who never forgot the prancing silhouettes of the marauding Indians.

Other papers in that chest revealed much about John M'Coy's children: that there were ten of them and that the brood Jincy mothered was augmented by her sister's motherless flock. Little more is known of this pioneer mother, Jincy Collins M'Coy, beyond the odd fact that she was not married until she was twenty-five; an age which, by pioneer standards, made her an old maid, and that the orphans she raised "rose up and called her blessed." She, as well as John M'Coy's own mother, were literate. And, if it appears odd that this fact is mentioned, it should be noted that for a frontier woman to be able to write a well-composed letter denoted almost as much in the way of educational privileges as the A.B. degree does today. Truly, "the world do move," and women with it.

The trunk was the largest item that a member of the family sent me, but there were smaller things that also shed light on the real McCoy. One was the only personal description of him that remains. It was written in 1884, twenty-five years after his death, to be sure, but while people who knew him were still living. It described him as "tall, slender

and homely." This scrap was forwarded by a doctor in San Bernardino. It was months later when the original brief biographical sketch from which the description had been taken was found, and it was discovered that the doctor's secretary had miscopied it to the extent of changing one letter. That letter made quite a difference, for the original description read, "tall, slender and comely." She'd transformed the man from what today might be called "tall, dark and handsome" into a fellow like Ichabod Crane.

Some of my correspondents were less trusting than those just mentioned. For example, there was a banker in Pennsylvania. He ignored my first letter so I wrote him again, mentioning that I was acquainted with someone in his city; in fact, I'd been her guest recently. His reply came by air mail. "Here's the information you want," he said. "Why didn't you tell me you knew Laura Miller? She was my first Sunday School teacher and anyone she takes under her roof *must* be all right."

Another distant cousin, this time from Illinois, sent a full transcript of the records in her old family Bible, but attached to the transcript was a notarized statement that these records were not for publication. Under those circumstances, they did little good but eventually it was possible to get her consent to use them.

Then there was another midwest cousin who wrote, "Anything you can do to add lustre to the McCoy name will suit me fine. I'm sick and tired of being asked if I've killed any Hatfields lately." It was possible to reassure this cousin, for thanks to research done by William Woodson Harris, it has been proved that the McCoy family of which John M'Coy was a member had no relation to that of the Hatfield-McCoy feud.

Now and then one of the correspondents would refer obliquely to the diary of John M'Coy. No one, however, admitted ever having seen it or knowing its whereabouts. It was only by chance that it was discovered, right in the keeping of my own aunt, Mrs. Lafayette Hillis. She waited to make sure that I was seriously interested in gathering material about John M'Coy, then she sent it to me, from Kansas, one Christmas. Never did Santa Claus bring a gift that was more truly "just what I wanted." All my explorations, up to that time, had uncovered no more than half-a-dozen pages in



John M'Coy's own handwriting. Here, at one clip, were hundreds of pages of his own records. The discovery of that diary brought the realization that I'd come a good way from my original idea of just writing out a label.

Diaries vary with the individuality of the person who writes them. This one, every word of which was legible, was the day-by-day record of a man between sixty-five and sixty-nine years of age, written when his active life was largely over. Even so, it revealed so much of the detail of the life of his times that even to my non-professional eyes it was an important historical document. The Indiana State Library confirmed my guess, offering to finance having the diary put on microfilm. The library's object was to preserve the diary against possible loss and also to make it available to researchers. I had the interesting experience, then new to me, of supervising the making of the microfilm. Copies of it were ordered by various large libraries across the country, after which, to my chagrin, I proceeded to lose the negative in the mail. It wasn't done "with malice aforethought" but it ended the microfilm production abruptly. Now, of course, the text of that diary is incorporated in *John M'Coy: His Life and His Diaries* so there is no need of a microfilm.

The diary is a source of historical information because few diaries of the place and period are available, and more and more, historians are coming to value the social history which such records afford. Written on the spot, they make up for their neglect of big topics by their wealth of detail about small ones.

An instance of what M'Coy's diary showed is his incidental mention of income and expense. His diary is no account book, but from its pages can be reconstructed one man's scale of living and what it cost him to maintain it. The diary shows that in 1851, just a century ago, a man could live comfortably in retirement on an income of less than two hundred dollars a year. Before you sigh for the Good Old Days, let me add that he had to pay a tax bill of \$36.73, about eighteen per cent of his entire income. And even by today's yardstick, that proportion is fairly high. But think of a man's clothing costing only \$17.50 for a whole year, even though it included a pair of tailor-made trousers (which M'Coy called "pantaloons") and—supreme luxury—

a black silk cravat and matching pocket handkerchief, for \$2.30.

With one diary in my possession, that inborn curiosity of which I've spoken drove me to try harder than ever to find the others—for there was clear internal evidence that there were others. By baiting a great many hooks and pulling in the lines at the slightest twitch, I did find two more. There were five of John M'Coy's diaries in all, covering the last seventeen years of his life. Those that eventually came to light were the first, third, and fifth—the second and fourth may have gone up in flames during some good housekeeper's spring cleaning, or they may have floated off in an Ohio River flood—it was on the banks of that stream that M'Coy and his immediate family spent much of their lives. Even the publication of the book about M'Coy has brought no sign of those missing diaries, as I hoped it might. Copies of the book have been bought in practically every state in the Union and dozens of its readers have communicated with me. None, however, have known anything about the two still-missing links. I do know that as late as 1920 one of them was Deep in the Heart of Texas, but even though I've visited that state and made many inquiries there, it's never come to light.

The other two diaries that did materialize were both given me because a member of the family had met me and become convinced that I could be trusted to return them. For instance, a cousin who's on the staff of a hospital in New York came out to have a picnic with our family one day while the search for the real McCoy was in progress. She must have sent a good report back to her Illinois kin-folks, for the next thing—up popped a second diary from that quarter. All the persuasive letters which had been written to that branch of the family had brought not so much as a hint of the diary: a single personal contact gave the needed assurance.

The surrender of the third diary came about in a different way, but again through a personal meeting. One summer my husband and I took our then-small daughter with us on an Ohio River trip. We followed the Ohio's meanderings aboard the "Gordon C. Greene," a typical river boat, from Pittsburgh to Cincinnati. When we reached Cincinnati, where we were to wait over a day before the return

trip, I remarked casually that some of my far-flung cousins lived in Piqua, whereupon my husband said, "Let's call them up and see if they're at home." We did, they were, and so we hired a drive-yourself car and rode through the pleasant Ohio countryside to Piqua. There I met for the first time a cousin, Maysel Davis, who later became a firm friend and a hearty supporter of the search for the real McCoy. That day we visited her she brought down boxes of old papers from her attic—boxes that had much to interest me in their contents. And later, after we got back to Ridgewood, came a letter saying she'd persuaded her brother, an Indiana man, to lend me his treasured diary.

Through such personal contacts it was possible to gather some of the facts about John M'Coy. A cousin in Ohio, a Presbyterian minister, helped to identify the artist who painted those portraits that set me off on the search. While it isn't a hard-and-fast fact, for the portraits are unsigned, there is a strong probability that they are the work of Matthew Harris Jouett, a Kentucky artist who was a pupil of Gilbert Stuart. His work is highly valued and even within the last year some of his paintings, including one of John M'Coy's brother Isaac, were pictured in *Town and Country*.

Then there was Grace Marshall who, at the time of her sudden death, was a candidate for president-general of the D.A.R. She knew of my interest in her family and drove over from Philadelphia to call on me. She shared with me the results of her search of Virginia records, including a full copy of the will of John M'Coy's great-grandfather, John Bruce. Others who called were a French teacher from Louisiana, an official of the California Automobile Association, and a charming young woman from Texas.

Perhaps the most valuable personal contact of all was with the aunt in Kansas, the one who gave me her own copy of a diary. We had never been close while I was growing up, largely due to the accident of geography, but as we wrote back and forth about the progress of the search, we became so. It ended by Mrs. Hillis' paying us a visit—her only trip east—and by my going to Wichita to help take care of her when she was seriously ill. Her interest in the search for the real McCoy grew by leaps and bounds, and I am indebted to her for much help with it. Until her health failed, she made forays in the midwest for me and even after she was

no longer able to travel she used her influence with other members of the tribe on my behalf. She was a childless widow with comparatively few demands on her time and as her interest in the story of John M'Coy developed she became more and more eager to see it finished. Although she didn't live to see the book in print she did read the completed manuscript and hers were among the first words of commendation it evoked.

There were times, of course, during the search when I wondered if it were worth all the trouble and expense. Mrs. Hillis' encouragement helped to pull me out of the Slough of Despond, and then, after the first chapter was written, another lift came. A distant cousin—distant in space as well as in degree of relationship—wrote that he'd heard I'd gathered the story of the start of our McCoys in this country, and offered me twenty-five dollars for the privilege of reading the single chapter then completed. What's more the check was enclosed with the letter. It was the first sign that anyone might care enough about the material to pay for it, and it was a spur.

And so, a little at a time, the story of John M'Coy's life crossed my desk. True, there were gaps in it—there still are. One of them concerns his second marriage. Jincy Collins M'Coy died at the age of fifty-seven, a victim of tuberculosis, the same disease that carried off her sister and left that sister's children for her to raise. Five years later her husband married again, but his second wife, Elinor Finley, lived only a short time. What she was like, where she came from, who her people were, remain unsolved mysteries. A greater riddle is why John M'Coy's children never referred to her, nor did he himself in the diaries written after her death. The full story is one I hoped might come to light with the publication of the book, but like the missing diaries it remains lost in limbo.

Another gap is how M'Coy felt about slavery. The conflict over it was brewing throughout the years in which he kept his diaries, yet there is not the slightest indication in them of his feeling on the matter. His three brothers, with whom he was on the best of terms, were strong in their feeling that slavery was wrong, and if he differed with them it is the only instance in which they did not see eye-to-eye on a question of morals. Two of those brothers left wills that

showed how strongly they felt on the subject. Isaac McCoy wrote in his will that he was the owner of a young slave woman and her children, having bought them out of pity lest the family be divided. He left explicit instructions that the slave children were to be given the same kind of education as his own, and at the expense of his estate, while the mother was to be given her freedom as soon as she had worked long enough for her wages to balance her purchase price. Another brother, Royce McCoy, wrote a letter of sound advice to his children. In it are these words: "Never, my dear children, stain your hands with the blood of the poor oppressed negroes. That is, take no part in oppressing them, in buying, selling or hiring them, and let not one cent come into your possession by the traffic in them." And in his will he provided that a small sum of money that was due him, his share of an inheritance that came from the sale of a slave, was to be multiplied by four and used either to buy that slave's freedom or as a contribution to one of the antislavery organizations, the American Colonization Society.

Perhaps there is a sound reason for John M'Coy's strange silence on this subject. There were, on the Indiana side of the Ohio River, stations on the underground railway which was used by escaping slaves. Remember Eliza crossing the ice? It is barely possible that M'Coy had a part in helping those fugitive slaves. Perhaps some of the innocent-sounding recurrent expressions he used in his diaries, expressions such as "tended to some little domestic affairs," were his code for activities having to do with the underground railway.

Much material was gathered by mail and through visitors, but not all the facts about M'Coy came to me while I sat like a spider in the middle of her web. There was other material, much of it quite important, that necessitated traveling. I visited some sixteen libraries and historical institutions, scattered from Connecticut to Texas; I searched in courthouses and in old cemeteries and, finally, I visited a number of the scattered cousins who'd written me. The courthouses were often, to put it bluntly, drafty and smelly; the old cemeteries had briars that snagged my stockings, but the cousins were a real delight.

One trip took me to Washington, where I consulted the National Archives and two other libraries. To a researcher, the National Archives is like a dream come true. Once the

hurdle of gaining a card of admission is past, using that collection of important documents is like using the very finest private library. Each user, for instance, is assigned a private desk, well lighted, comfortable and—as a crowning attention—equipped with the particular make of typewriter he is accustomed to use at home. The staff is just as outstanding as the equipment; courteous, intelligent, thoroughly familiar with the resources of this great public collection of historic documents.

I was working primarily with the pension records of men of the McCoy family who had fought in the three wars that had a special bearing on John M'Coy's life—his sons and grandsons, by the way, served on both sides of the conflict that is known to some as the War Between the States and to others as the Civil War. One surprising feature of the pledge one must sign to work with these pension records is a statement that you will keep secret anything you uncover that may be to the detriment of a soldier. Naïvely, I asked what could appear in the records, other than desertion, to injure a man's reputation. The man behind the desk looked up and said wryly, "There is such a thing as a soldier's having illegitimate children, you know." After that warning I was relieved, I confess, to find that all the little McCoy's named in their father's pension applications were born in wedlock.

The Indiana State Library and the William Henry Smith Memorial Library of the Indiana Historical Society are other institutions for which I have a warm admiration. Before visiting there, I'd corresponded with members of the staff, and had received many courtesies from them, but, even so, I wasn't prepared for the warmth of the welcome I received in Indianapolis.

At some of the institutions visited, the staff's attitude was clearly that of, "Well, some people have queer tastes, and here's one of the queerest." And at others I was made to feel that I was something that ought to be swept under the rug. Doing an extended research project isn't all free lunches!

In complete contrast to the institutions just mentioned—but not specifically named—was the red carpet welcome received at the Dallas Museum. I went there to examine some family papers that are kept in a locked vault. One of

John M'Coy's sons, his namesake, in fact, was a founder of Dallas and consequently anything pertaining to him is valued by the city. The archivist was as cordial and helpful as could be, and so was the director of the Dallas Historical Society, Herbert Gambrell.

Another excursion took me to Franklin, Indiana, the seat of the college that John M'Coy helped to found in 1834. Franklin is small and its costs are low, but its standards are high. It is fully accredited, nationally as well as regionally.

Thinking that it might add to the story of M'Coy to discover what the college he worked so hard to establish had grown to be, I asked the administrative offices for a guide. The head of the English department was assigned and together we toured the buildings and the campus. Then I inquired about the college's collection of nineteenth century periodicals. It's an odd fact that small midwestern college has material in that field that is absolutely unmatched. No other copies of some of the periodicals it owns are to be found anywhere else at all, not even in the Library of Congress or the British Museum. And so it was that the professor, a muscular man as well as a good-tempered one, spent a large part of one Sunday afternoon lugging big damp volumes off the library's basement shelves. Why *damp*? Because there'd been a flood in Franklin that spring and the pages of those extremely rare volumes were still wet with the waters of that flood. It was well for their preservation that those periodicals were printed on durable rag paper. In their pages was much material valuable for my purpose—stories, written while the events they chronicled were actually happening, of how John M'Coy and those few who agreed with him were struggling against ignorance and even having the hardihood to establish such a college as Franklin.

And so it was that the search for the real McCoy drew to its close—or as much so as the story of a real person ever can be said to be finished. There were enough facts to build up a story of John M'Coy's life on sound evidence; there were transcripts of hundreds of pages of the diaries he'd kept, together with a mass of identifying notes; there were maps and pictures and a family chart to illustrate the story. In dutiful librarian-fashion I'd prepared a bibliography as well as an index. All that was lacking was a publisher, and then, thanks to the suggestion of Howard Peckham of the

Indiana Historical Bureau, even that gap was filled. With the publication of *John M'Coy: His Life and His Diaries*, the search came to its end. It started small, like the spot on the kitchen wall, and it ended, not with a fine, fresh, newly-redecorated house, but with a five hundred page tome.