

Book Reviews

We Came Rejoicing: A Personal Memoir of the Years of Peace. By Harvey Jacobs. ([New York]: Rand McNally & Company, 1967. Pp. 216. \$4.95.)

In *We Came Rejoicing* Harvey Jacobs shares his recollections of his boyhood in rural Indiana. Jacobs is an alumnus and former faculty member at Franklin College and now heads the Journalism Department at New Mexico State University. He writes with skill and discrimination.

It was a good time and a good place to be a boy. The place was a prosperous Johnson County farm; the time was the 1920's. Apparently, it remained a pretty good place even after the onset of the great depression. The author recalls his eager anticipation of the opening of the sugar camp, the special savor of sugar-camp meals, the never-ending boy's job of carrying wood, and the warm sweet taste of fresh syrup. Educational experience is relived at the "consolidated" one-room school. What it lacked in plumbing, it made up in teaching: Jacobs learned to write. The country church was a vital institution, and Harvey joined via the immersion route along with a dozen other boys during a "protracted meeting."

The rising tide of technological change is treated extensively. There was a Fordson tractor which Harvey drove before his mother thought he should. The costs and characteristics of cars are discussed, and it is clear that the social pattern was being altered by the internal combustion engine. The exciting advent of radio is described in "Don't Jar the Catwhisker." And Harvey had his first airplane ride, flying with a Shelby County barnstormer from the Jacobs hayfield.

Other essays deal with the wheat harvest and threshing, the general store with its varied wares and smells, and the excitement engendered by train traffic at the local station. Tribute is paid to Dr. Carl, the country doctor, and that venerable social-educational mechanism, the Farmers' Institute. Harvey recalls the thrill of buying the right pie in the pie auction, which carried with it the privilege of sitting with the right girl. And there was the weekly visit to the county seat on Saturday night, an event of considerable social and economic significance.

We Came Rejoicing is rich in nostalgia, but it is also good social history. For over a century the independent small farmers were the dominant element in Indiana society. Jacobs pictures this way of life just as cumulative technological change, shifting agricultural economics, urbanization, and the impact of the great depression combined to destroy it. This Hoosier yeomanry built a strong society. While its agricultural efficiency compares unfavorably with the large scale commercial farming that has supplanted it, it produced generation after generation of good citizens. It merits remembrance.

Indiana Historical Bureau

Hubert H. Hawkins