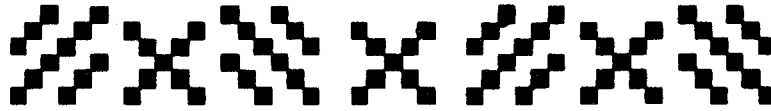


Hazelden Farm: The Preservation of George Ade's Home

*Edited by Randall W. Jehs**



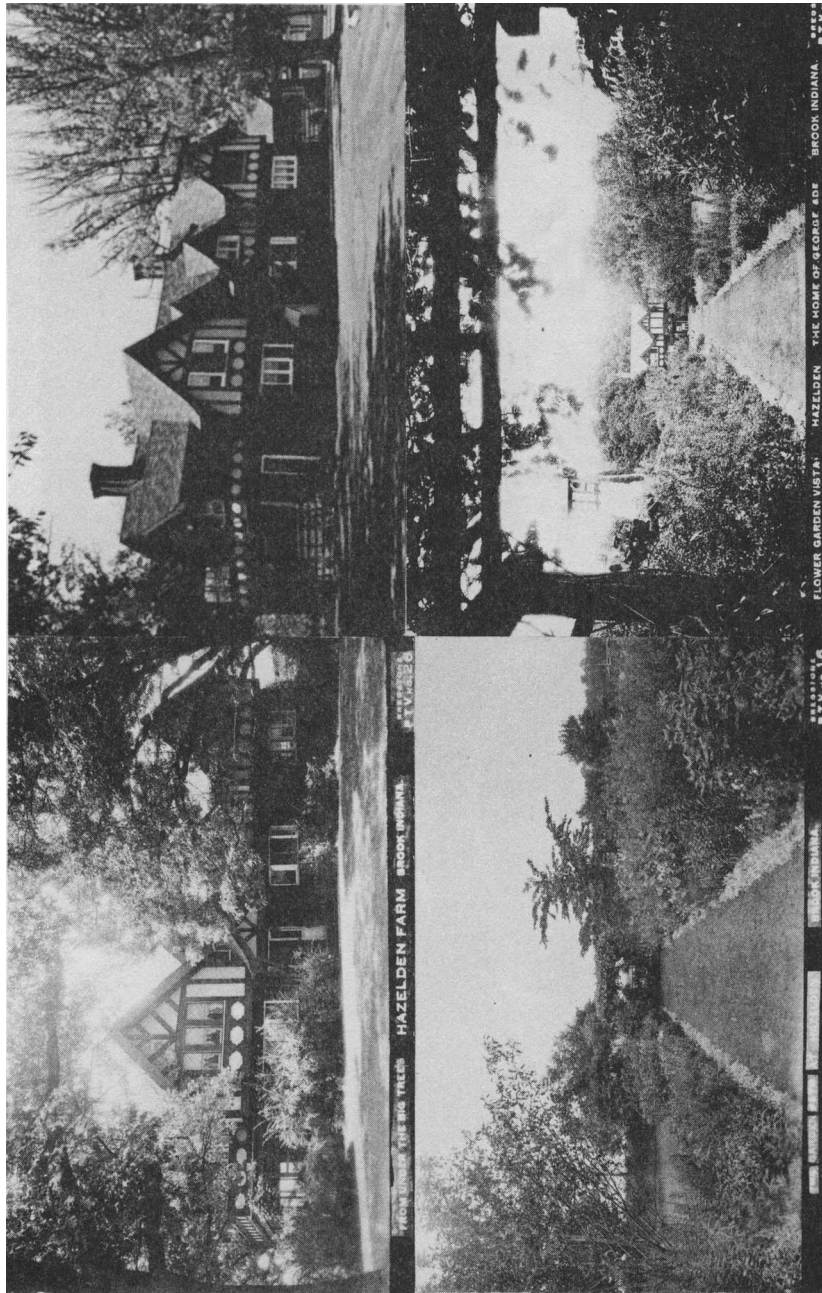
For forty years, George Ade, noted Hoosier humorist, playwright, and author, lived, wrote, and played host both to the nation's great and to his Newton County neighbors on his farm of over 400 acres near Brook, Indiana. When Ade purchased the land in 1902, there was on it a grove of oaks which seemed "a nice spot to put a little cottage." He envisioned "a little shack" which he could use as a retreat whenever he felt a need to get away from the active literary life of Chicago, where he had established himself in 1890. However, by the time he moved into his new "bungalow" in 1904, it had grown into an Elizabethan manor house "about the size of a girls' school," as Ade himself said, complete with cow barn, greenhouse, caretaker's cottage, dance pavilion, several smaller outbuildings, swimming pool, softball diamond, and forty foot water tower. The grounds were landscaped and elaborate gardens were laid out with grape and rose arbors. Decorators came down from Chicago with plans for the interior of the house, to which Ade contributed tapestries, furniture, and art objects he had collected on travels to the Far East. The result was somewhat eclectic—the living rooms made an exotic oriental effect while the bedrooms were in Early American—but it was comfortable. Ade soon found himself staying less and less often in his room at the Chicago Athletic Club and writing more and

* Randall W. Jehs is the field agent for the Indiana Division, Indiana State Library. Appreciation is expressed to Mr. John R. Funk, President of the George Ade Memorial Association, Kentland, Indiana, for providing information, photographs, and documents.



GEORGE ADE

Courtesy John R. Funk, Kentland, Indiana



Above Left, c. 1925; Above Right, 1971; Below, The Garden Path

Courtesy Indiana Division, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis

more behind the huge desk in his study at the "homestead" he christened Hazelden Farm.¹

Ade did not remain constantly at Hazelden, of course. The business of publishing his books and producing his plays and the pleasure of the company of friends elsewhere frequently drew him out of rural Indiana. "You may acquire peace of mind by listening to the breeze in the trees," he said, "but you will not get any man-size experiences out of botany. If you wish to keep tab on the human race you must go, once in a while, to where the interesting specimens are assembled."² Yet, because his hospitality was both homey and expansive, it was not rare to find that the interesting specimens were assembled in Newton County. Ade took pleasure in seeing people enjoying his home, and Hazelden was often as far from a quiet retreat as it was from a one horse farm. The neighbors became accustomed to walking right in without knocking, and huge crowds of visitors regularly descended upon the place. Ade hosted annual community parties, conventions of Sigma Chi, the fraternity he had joined while a student at Purdue, a Fourth of July homecoming for soldiers and sailors in 1919, and political windings of all sorts. William Howard Taft opened his campaign for the presidency with a rally at Hazelden in 1908. Charles G. Dawes closed his campaign for the vice-presidency there in 1924. Almost any event, even the opening of a segment of state road, could become an excuse for festivities at George Ade's farm.³

¹ This description of the development of Hazelden Farm is based on Fred C. Kelly, *George Ade: Warmhearted Satirist* (Indianapolis, 1947), 156, 181-86. The quoted words are on pages 156 and 183. Ade was born in Kentland in 1866. He attended Purdue, sporadically studied law in Lafayette, and worked on newspapers there before becoming a reporter on the *Chicago Morning News*, later the *Chicago Record*, in 1890. He soon had his own column, excerpts from which were published as *Stories of the Streets and of the Town* in 1894. *Fables in Slang*, perhaps his most enduring book, sold 69,000 copies in 1900, the year it was published, an event which encouraged Ade to resign from the *Record* and devote himself full time to writing books and plays. In 1903, *The Sultan of Sulu*, a light operetta for which he wrote both the lyrics and the dialogue, became the first of a long series of his plays which were successfully produced in New York. Besides the biography by Kelly, see Arthur W. Shumaker, *A History of Indiana Literature: With Emphasis on the Authors of Imaginative Works Who Commenced Writing Prior to World War II* (*Indiana Historical Collections*, XLII; Indianapolis, 1962), 444-73. Ade's works are catalogued in Dorothy R. Russo, *A Bibliography of George Ade, 1866-1944* (Indianapolis, 1947).

² Quoted in Kelly, *George Ade*, 230-31.

³ *Ibid.*, 219-34; Shumaker, *History of Indiana Literature*, 463; Howard F. McMains, "The Road to George Ade's Farm: Origins of Taft's First Campaign Rally, September, 1908," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXVII (December, 1971), 317-34; Kentland, Indiana, *Newton County Enterprise*, October 13, 1932.

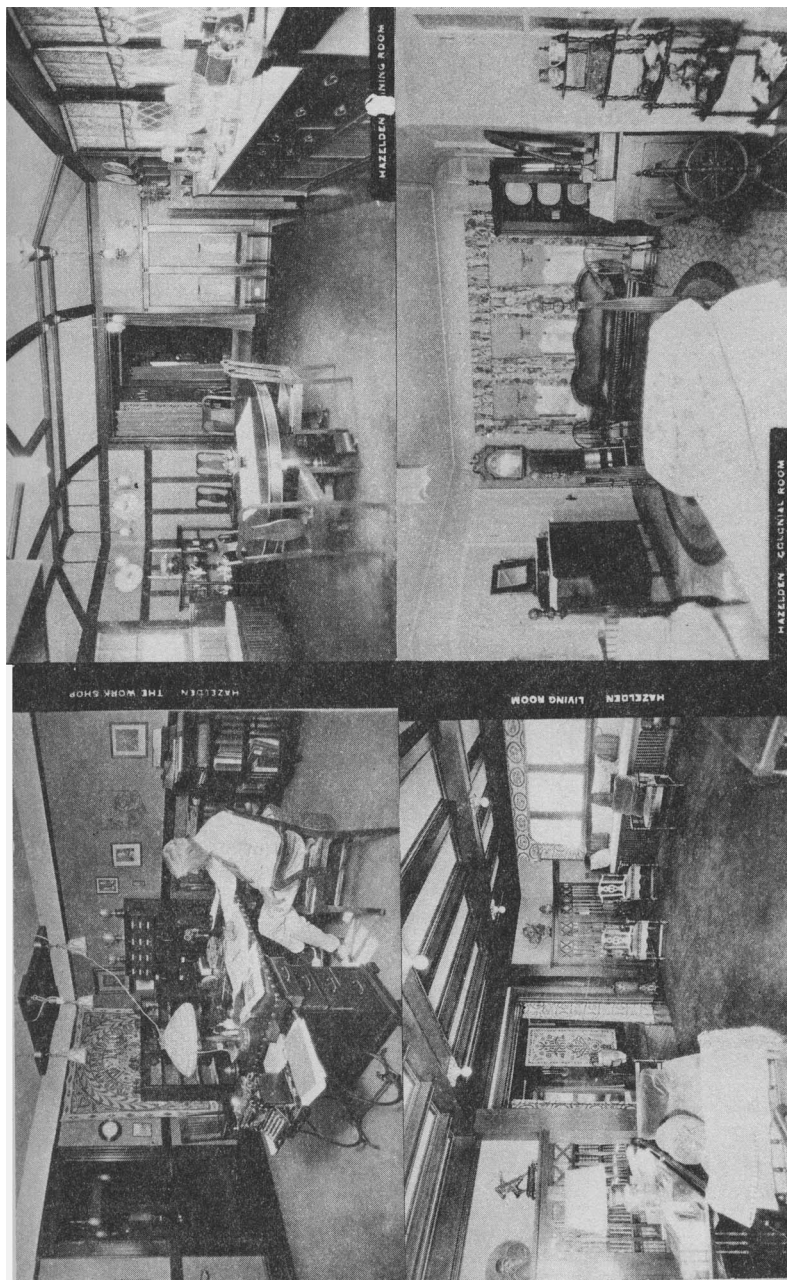
The following correspondence involving Ade, Richard Lieber the director of the Indiana Department of Conservation, and Meredith Nicholson the well known author, diplomat, and journalist, concerns what was to be the fate of Hazelden after Ade's death.⁴ Ade offered to leave the farm to the conservation department for use as a state park, but Lieber demurred, feeling that a park "would be the unmaking of Hazelden and its memories." He suggested instead that Ade provide for its preservation as a literary museum, which "would set aside your home as a shrine and at the same time would permit the good friends and neighbors to come in and enjoy a quiet day in the open." Nothing definite came of this 1932 effort, but it indicates Ade's desire to have Hazelden's tradition of hospitality continue in some form after his death. The correspondence also demonstrates that Lieber, who is so completely identified with the state park idea, was also interested in the development of other forms of public recreational and educational facilities and did not encourage the acquisition of parks where he felt they would be inappropriate.

Never entirely giving up the notion of leaving Hazelden to the state, but apparently unable to decide precisely what to do with it, Ade left the question open in the will he wrote in 1934. Probated after his death ten years later, the will directed that the house and its immediate environs be turned over to a five man board of trustees who would have full power to dispose of the property. Ade suggested that the trustees transfer the estate either to Purdue University, to the state conservation department, or to an association or foundation which would undertake to manage it. He did not bind the trustees to any of these suggestions,⁶ however,

⁴ Richard Lieber, a nationally known figure in conservation, was the founder of the Indiana state park system. He was director of the state Department of Conservation from its creation in 1919 until 1933. See Robert Allen Frederick, "Colonel Richard Lieber, Conservationist and Park Builder: The Indiana Years" (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Indiana University, 1960). Meredith Nicholson's best known literary works are *The Hoosiers* (1900), a study of Indiana culture and literature; *The Valley of Democracy* (1918), a collection of essays on the midwest; and two novels, *The House of a Thousand Candles* (1905) and *A Hoosier Chronicle* (1912). Between 1933 and 1941 he served successively as United States envoy to Paraguay, Venezuela, and Nicaragua. See Shumaker, *History of Indiana Literature*, 325-37.

⁵ See below, pp. 152, 154.

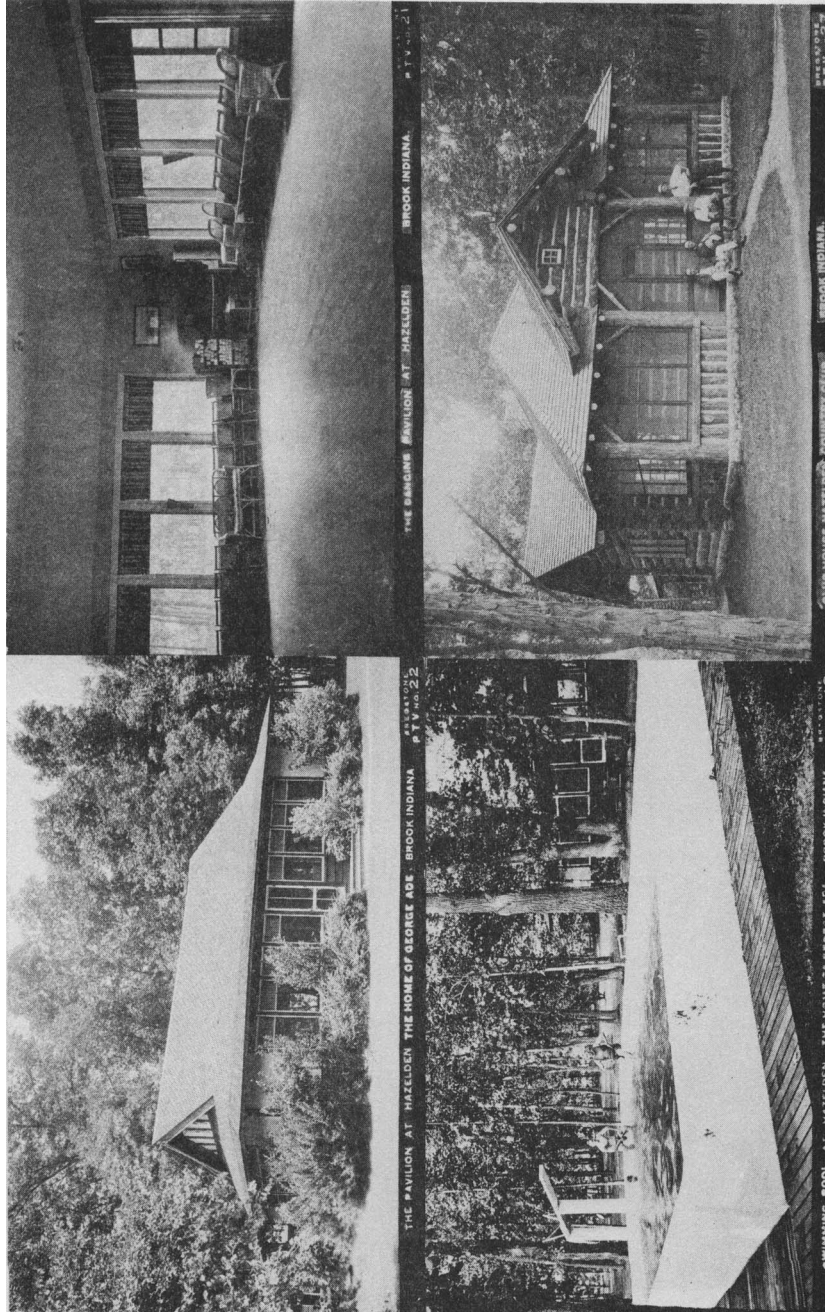
⁶ George Ade's will, signed March 21, 1934, and probated May 29, 1944, thirteen days after his death, is filed in the office of the Newton County clerk, Kentland. A copy is held by the George Ade Memorial Association, Kentland. The five trustees of Hazelden were to be the president of the



HAZELDEN FARM

"Work Shop," Dining Room, Living Room, "Colonial" Bedroom

Courtesy Indiana Division, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis



HAZELTON FARM

Dancing Pavilion, Swimming Pool, Club House

Courtesy Indiana Division, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis

and on September 20, 1946, they conveyed the property to Newton County, which proposed to build a hospital on the site with the house becoming a nurses' residence.⁷ A disagreement between the towns of Morocco and Kentland over locating the hospital on the farm led to a referendum among the county's citizens in 1946, and, though the outcome favored Hazelden as the hospital site, money difficulties delayed the project even further.⁸ Meanwhile, the estate fell into disrepair and ruin. A threat to terminate the insurance on the house created sufficient interest so that in 1953 Governor George N. Craig appointed a twenty man board to study the Hazelden dilemma. When this board was unable to devise a solution, the house and grounds were left to suffer neglect for nearly a decade longer.⁹

In 1962, the house was acquired by the George Ade Memorial Association, formed that year in Kentland. Announcing plans to preserve the home as a suitable literary shrine, the dedicated members of the association raised \$20,000 by the fall of 1962 and began restoration. Within a year the major repairs on the house were completed, though work still continues on the building and its furnishings. Today, the Ade home is once again the scene of many social and cultural events, including wedding receptions, parties, and meetings of local organizations such as the Newton County Historical Society. Three upstairs rooms serve as a museum in which copies of Ade's books and other memorabilia are displayed. In the future, the George Ade Memorial Association hopes to be able to maintain regular visiting hours when the house can be open to the public.¹⁰ At long last, through the efforts of concerned local people, Ade's desire that Hazelden Farm continue to be used and enjoyed is finding a measure of fulfillment.

Board of Trustees of Purdue University; the president of Purdue University; Joseph A. Andrew of Lafayette, Indiana; James D. Rathbun of Kentland, Indiana; and Joseph W. Reeve of Rensselaer, Indiana.

⁷ Telephone interviews with John R. Funk, president of the George Ade Memorial Association, January 3, April 3, 1973.

⁸ The citizens of Morocco, located ten miles northwest of Hazelden Farm, were anxious to acquire the hospital, as they had lost a battle with the citizens of Kentland over the location of the county courthouse many years before. See Richard S. Simons, "Will Hoosiers Save Hazelden?" *Indianapolis Star Magazine*, November 15, 1953, pp. 6-8. The George Ade Memorial Hospital on the Hazelden site was finally dedicated in 1960. Telephone interviews with John R. Funk.

⁹ Telephone interviews with John R. Funk.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* The grounds surrounding the house remain the property of Newton County.

Oct. 16, 1932.¹

Col. Richard Lieber,
Department of Conservation,
State House,
Indianapolis, Ind.

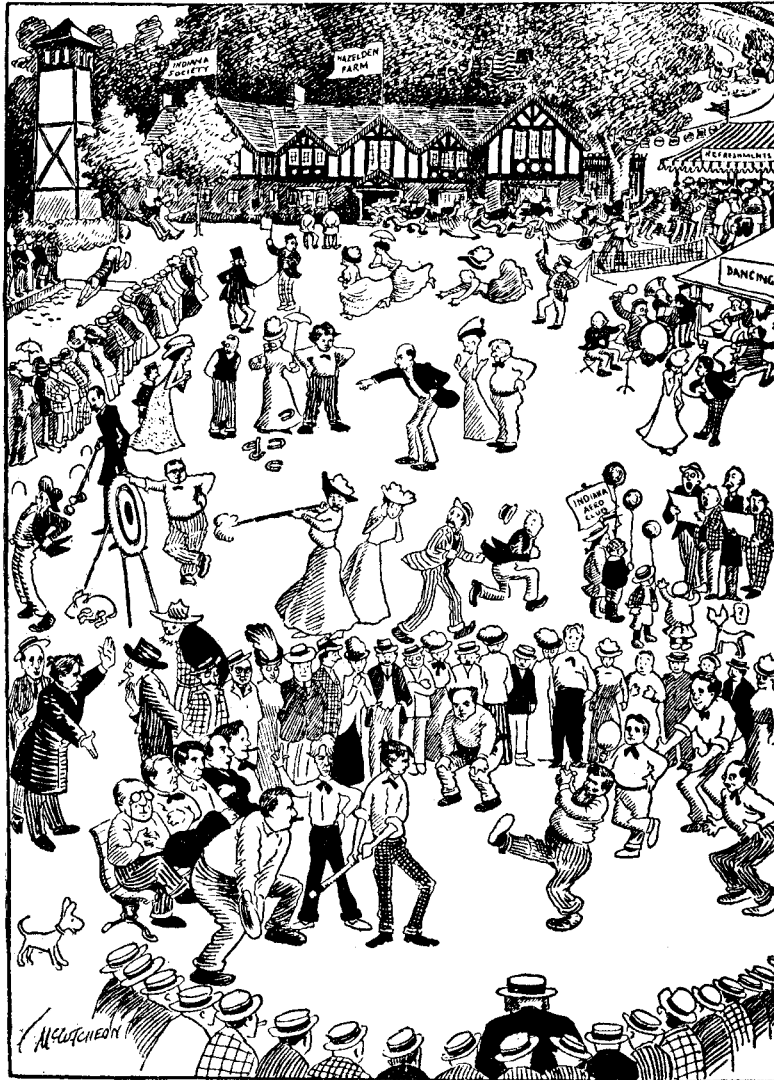
Dear Colonel Lieber:

I was sorry to learn from a letter written by your Secretary that you would not find it possible to be at our celebration of the opening of the road.² For a little while I have had a rather heavy project on my mind. The other day I talked it over with Clarence Doland, your Manager at Clifty Falls, and he gave me some encouragement. Here is the whole situation and I will try to make it brief: I live here on a farm of about 430 acres. A small part north of the new State Road and another part east of my home grounds are occupied by the Hazelden Country Club, although the ground belongs to me and I have a large but undetermined equity in all the improvements. My home is in a grove of about ten acres with many wide open spaces for recreation grounds. South and west of my park there is some bottom land and also some beautiful upland, heavily wooded. To the south are the farm buildings. In my will, as it now stands, I am leaving the entire farm [*sic*] to a corporation not yet formed, to be called THE GEORGE ADE FOUNDATION, the idea being to carry on an arrangement with the Hazelden Country Club and maintain my home and continue our policy of using the home grounds. What I would now like to do is this, divide the farm into three tracts, giving the farming section at the south to someone of my relatives, give the forty or fifty acres at the northeast unconditionally to the Hazelden Country Club

¹ The editing of the following letters was accomplished using photocopies of the typewritten originals found in the Archives Division, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis. In the first letter, four handwritten corrections, presumably made by George Ade, were added to the original typed copy. These corrections have been incorporated in this reproduction. Otherwise, except for minor changes in spacing, the letters have been transcribed exactly as they appear in photocopy.

² A segment of State Road 16 in Newton County was officially opened on October 8, 1932, with Governor Harry G. Leslie and other officials in attendance. Part of the ceremonies were held at Hazelden Farm. Kentland, Indiana, *Newton County Enterprise*, October 13, 1932.

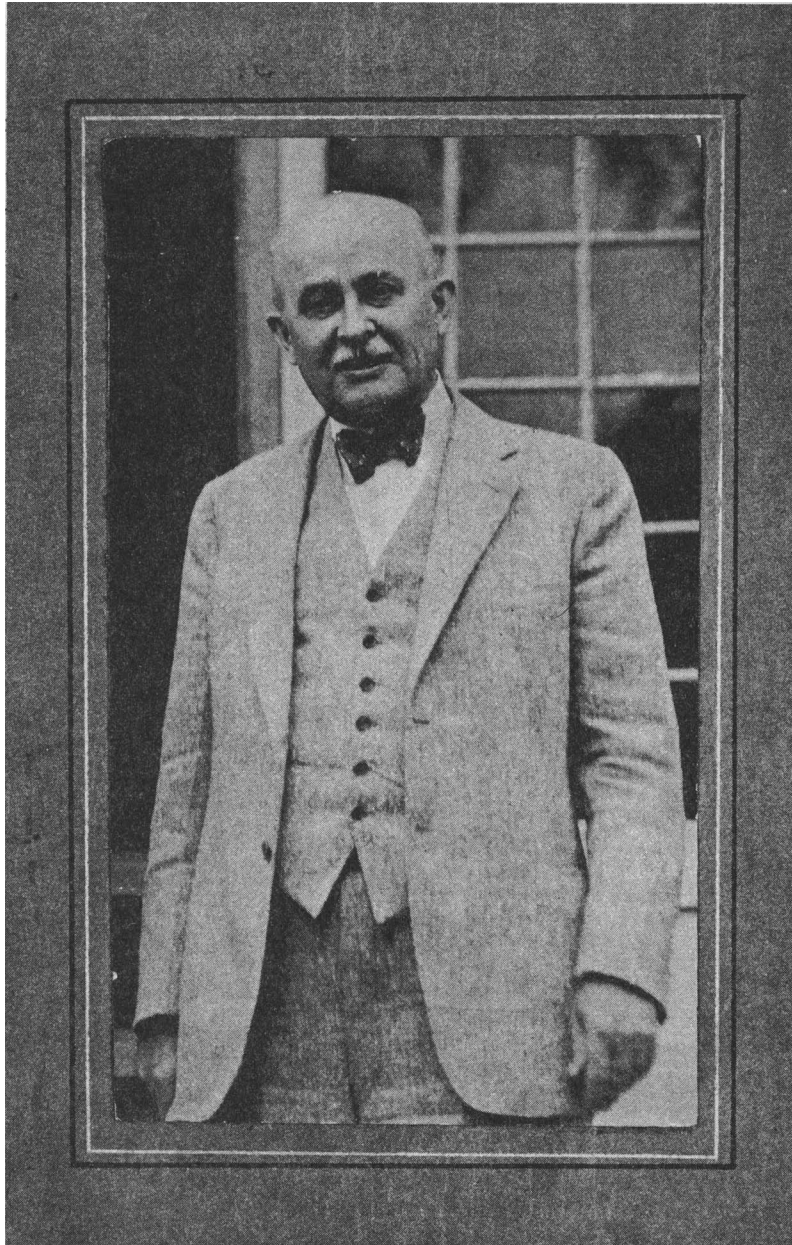
THE INDIANA SOCIETY WILL SOON FORMALLY OPEN THE PICNIC
SEASON AT MR. ADE'S FARM.



DRAWING BY JOHN T. McCUTCHEON

James Whitcomb Riley and Booth Tarkington
are among those on the bench.

Reproduced from Fred C. Kelly, *George Ade: Warm-
hearted Satirist* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co.,
1947), facing p. 161. Courtesy Evelyn Shaw McCutcheon.



RICHARD LIEBER

c. 1919

Courtesy Wayne R. Guthrie, *Indianapolis News*

and give my home grounds with all of the buildings thereon and the woodland pasture to the south and all of the country beyond to the Iroquois River west of this tract to the State of Indiana, Department of Conservation, if it cares to accept it.³ As nearly as I can guess there would be in this tract between eighty and one hundred acres. Any of one [*sic*] your viewers or surveyors could readily determine the extent of it. The buildings on this tract include my home, a large garage, a storage house, a green house, a caretakers house with comfortable outbuildings, a cow stable, an ice house, a large pavilion for assemblages or dances, probably 50x35 feet, a row of dressing rooms and shower bath along side of the swimming pool. My suggestion would be to throw a fence from the north and south putting the pavilion and the swimming pool into the general public park and leave the other buildings in my home grounds and making the admission to them somewhat more restricted, although I would not be disposed to make the slightest suggestion as to what those restrictions should be. The land which I am offering as a public park gets its value because it is adjacent to my home grounds which have become quite well known. Only a week ago we had four thousand people here to celebrate the opening of the state road. Part of the park I am describing is on high ground, suitable for camping, part ranges off into low lands toward the river and there is one dip in the ground between the north and south end but these low lands are wet only for a few weeks in the year and it might be that eventually you would want to connect up the whole thing with the river and make an interesting artificial lake of the low land.

I want to turn the whole tract over to the state so I will know it will be properly cared for. If it is something that the state can use I will be glad to learn the facts in the case. One thing is certain, we are giving them the beautiful home tract with a number of buildings and a very attractive setting. The state park would be entirely distinct from the Hazelden Country Club but the privileges of the Hazelden Country Club would be available to all visitors to the state park at a very reasonable rate, those who used the club could find food at the club house. If you could drive up this way some time

³ This will was superceded by a new one signed March 21, 1934, which was probated upon Ade's death in 1944. The will is filed in the office of the Newton County clerk, Kentland, Indiana, and a copy is held by the George Ade Memorial Association, Kentland.

before the leaves fall off the trees and things look too bleak, you could look over our premises and look at some of the photographs of it as it appears in good weather and probably make up your mind in a hurry as to whether or not the whole proposition would interest you. It would go to your department without any strings attached to it and it would have this advantage, that is that the upkeep would be very low because we have every kind of building that might be needed for caretakers and their assistants, including residences, garages, green houses and store rooms etc. I shall be interested to hear from you at your convenience.

I am, with best wishes

Sincerely,

[signed] George Ade

October 17th 1932

George Ade, Esquire,
Hazelden Farm,
Brook, Indiana.

Dear Mr. Ade:—

I read with very great interest your letter of October 16th. Last week Governor [Harry G.] Leslie spoke to me about the same matter. Of course I regretted my inability to be present at the celebration of the opening of the road. The occasion would have incidently [*sic*] furnished me with a better understanding of your property.

Off hand I should say Hazelden will not make a state park for I fear it would be the unmaking of Hazelden and its memories, but I hope to be able to submit to you a better idea to work out your own intentions. You see besides state parks we have a number of state memorials, such as the [James F. D.] Lanier Home, the Old State House, the Pigeon Roost Monument, the Nancy Hanks Lincoln Burial Ground, the Tippecanoe Battleground and the George Rogers Clark Memorial coming in. Indiana has literary memories, not to speak of the present, and it is my hope to work out with you and such other friends as you may designate, a plan to have the George Ade Foundation prepare and maintain a literary museum at Hazelden. This would set aside your home as a shrine and at the same time would permit the good friends



"A SORT OF AN APOLLO CLUB"

Seated, George Ade and Booth Tarkington
Standing, James Whitcomb Riley and Meredith Nicholson

Courtesy Indiana Division, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis

and neighbors to come in and enjoy a quiet day in the open.

I find that I have to speak at Purdue around noon Wednesday, the 19th. If agreeable to you please wire me upon receipt of this letter and I shall drive up to Brook in the afternoon. You can intimate to me at that time how far my suggestion meets your own ideas and if so we can talk over the matter at sufficient length.

With kindest greetings, I am

Sincerely yours,

Richard Lieber.

October 17th 1932

Meredith Nicholson, Esquire,
Indianapolis, Indiana.

Dear Meredith:—

Only a brief note to tell you confidentially that George Ade wishes to turn over his delightful property to the State for public use. He thought of a state park. I disagree with him and think that we ought to make Hazelden into a Hoosier literary museum.

The thing is only in my mind and has not yet assumed any shape. What would be your reaction? Do you think the thought is worthwhile and how would you suggest to proceed, it being understood that the State would take possession, put the house in a condition of safety from fire and make a sort of an Apollo Club out of it with all members dead or absent.⁴

I wrote George I would come up sometime this week and talk things over with him. Kindly keep the matter to yourself until we have a chance to formulate plans.

Sincerely yours,

Richard Lieber.

⁴The original Apollo Club was composed of a circle of friends who met under the auspices of Ben Johnson in the Apollo Room of the Devil Tavern in London during the seventeenth century. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1961), V, 858.