

in, adding a vital last touch to a fine, honest book that succeeds in doing what the author set out to do. *Ohio Farm* deserves a place on the reference shelf, with the seed and machinery catalogs, and the almanacs.

Bloomington, Indiana

Rachel Peden

A Hoosier Holiday. By Theodore Dreiser. Illustrations by Franklin Booth. Reprint. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1974. Pp. 513. Illustrations. \$19.50.)

This reprint of Dreiser's 1916 book is an expensive but appropriate way to revive a surprisingly vital minor work, retaining Franklin Booth's shadowy, expressive sketches, without editorial apparatus. *A Hoosier Holiday* was conceived by Booth and Dreiser as a joint pot boiler, and the book has suffered from this image as well as from the fact that it came in the backwash from Dreiser's first burst of creative effort—four large novels between 1911 and 1915. Booth shared the meager profits and his sketches have a genuine life of their own. The text is vintage Dreiser, full of his brooding over the tragedy and transience of life, full of his constant shuttling between bitterness and tenderness, vulgarity and delicacy, determinism and sentimental love of life sharp insight and bland commonplace. *Holiday* is thus mostly irony. The return to the scenes of his early life in Terre Haute, Warsaw, Sullivan, Evansville, and Bloomington, planned as a "working holiday," was painful in all the predictable ways. A genial, popular account of travel and reminiscence was for Dreiser impossible. Nevertheless, as cranky and sometimes clumsy as Dreiser was, all the documents in his dogged search for the truth about himself and his world are still impressive. We are embarrassed for him when he seems to be as shaken by mooning over unrequited puppy love as by confronting social injustice or human delinquency, but part of the embarrassment is for ourselves. The principal change in the atmosphere of the book from 1916 to the present is that Dreiser's iconoclasm, pessimism, and outrage are no longer shocking, although the fact that they were shocking in 1916 and for a long time after is enlightening in itself.

Sixty years have added interesting dimensions to *A Hoosier Holiday* as a historical document. The first half of

the book takes us, in Booth's new touring car, through New Jersey, Pennsylvania (long before the turnpike), western New York, and Ohio. Dreiser revelled in the adventurousness of automobile travel with top speeds of forty-five miles an hour, many blowouts, and treacherous, unimproved roads. There are brilliant vignettes of people and places, often interrupted, of course, by Dreiserian digressions. The Hoosier half of the book is darker and more personal, but no Indiana historian can ignore it.

By far the most appreciative and profound review of *A Hoosier Holiday* was by Dreiser's great champion, H. L. Mencken, who, as advisor and editor, may also have had a lot to do with the final text. Mencken was sure that here, "for the first time," was "a clear understanding of the fundamental faiths and ideas, and of the intellectual and spiritual background no less, of a man with whom the future historian of American literature will have to deal at no little length." In 1916, this was an opinion of a minute minority. It is clearly vindicated today, even though *A Hoosier Holiday* does not challenge Dreiser's best novels for literary status, and as autobiographical material was superseded by *A Book About Myself* (1922) and *Dawn* (1931). Mencken's review, along with a generous selection of other notices, is reprinted in Jack Salzman, *Theodore Dreiser: The Critical Reception* (1972). A modern editor might have provided an index, but for most purposes the table of contents, listing the names of the sixty-one short chapters, is sufficient.

Wabash College, Crawfordsville,
Indiana

Walter L. Fertig

Ashbel P. Willard's Paper Wanted

Materials by and about Ashbel P. Willard, governor of Indiana from 1857 to 1860, are needed for a biographical study now in progress. Please forward any information about Willard's correspondence, journals, etc., to: Gerald O. Haffner, Department of History, Indiana University Southeast, 4201 Grant Line Road, P. O. Box 679, New Albany, Indiana 47150