



Donald F. Carmony

Professor Donald F. Carmony retired as editor of the *Indiana Magazine of History* effective December 31, 1975. His editorship spanned twenty-one years. During that time the circulation of the magazine increased from about 2,300 to approximately 5,000, and the number of articles reviewed for possible publication at least doubled. Professor Carmony's high standards kept the *Indiana Magazine of History* ranked among the top periodicals which focus on state, local, and regional history. Those who know and have worked with Professor Carmony recognize that his knowledge of Indiana history is unsurpassed and that his contributions to the state, the university, and the historical profession are incalculable. He will continue to teach in the Indiana University Department of History.

In the following article Edward J. Moss of the Indiana University News Bureau perceptively captures Professor Carmony in all his varied roles: scholar, author, historian, administrator, farmer, editor, Hoosier, and friend. The article first appeared in the *Indiana Athletic Review*, October 18, 1975.¹ Except for minor editorial changes and a few modifications to bring it up to date, it is reproduced here as originally written.

Donald Carmony—Mr. Indiana History

*Edward J. Moss**

Historian Donald F. Carmony could have stepped from the pages of one of a multitude of books Hoosier authors have written about the state. He has become a part of the

¹ The *Indiana Athletic Review*, published by the Indiana University Foundation, is the official program for athletic events at Indiana University. The issue of October 18, 1975, was the program for the Indiana University-University of Iowa football game.

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Indiana history he has taught, written, and researched for over forty years.

He was born in 1910 on a Shelby County farm. His father, in Hoosier pioneer fashion, was a jack of all trades. Dr. Carmony talked about his early life in an interview:

"My father taught school for over thirty years. He was also an undertaker (they say mortician these days), he sold furniture, and he farmed. We also raised Newfoundland dogs which we sold all over the country. I remember people buying a puppy, and then losing it and writing to request another with the same kind of markings."

Dr. Carmony, as in most farm families of his day, became a participant in the daily operation at an early age:

"I suppose the first thing I remember is riding the roller. That was a couple of large, round blocks of wood—connected with a metal axle through their center and a platform, with a seat on it, over them—and pulled by two horses. It was used to mash clods. I'm sure at age five or six I was doing some of that, but Dad would be certain that I had gentle horses.

"I used both the walking plow and the riding plow. I liked the one row riding cultivator, but the metal seat got awfully hot in warm weather. Sometimes I went barefoot but this was dangerous because if the cultivator hit a rock or something it might jam your foot against the metal."

Dr. Carmony, who is professor of history at Indiana University, Bloomington, served as editor of the *Indiana Magazine of History* from 1955 to 1975. He was chairman of the Indiana Sesquicentennial Commission from the time of its organization in 1960 until its ending in 1967. He was vice chairman of the Indiana Museum Study Commission in the 1950s and was a member of the Indiana Civil War Centennial Commission.

Dr. Carmony was a member of Indiana University's Sesquicentennial Committee and served on the university's bicentennial committee and the Bloomington Bicentennial Committee. He is currently a member of the Indiana State Review Board for the National Register of Historic Places, the New Harmony Commission, and the Indiana American Revolution Bicentennial Commission. In 1974 the presidents of the Associated Colleges of Indiana elected Dr. Carmony to membership in the Indiana Academy, and in the spring of



DONALD F. CARMONY DISCUSSES WITH ASSOCIATE EDITOR LORNA LUTES SYLVESTER THE LAST ISSUE OF THE INDIANA MAGAZINE OF HISTORY FOR WHICH HE SERVED AS EDITOR

Courtesy Indiana University News Bureau, Bloomington.

1975 he was awarded the Leather Medal by Sigma Delta Chi for distinguished service to the university.

The route from farm boy to respected scholar and historian was not an easy one, nor did it occur by design.

Dr. Carmony's early farm tasks included providing water for wheat threshers, milking a half dozen cows, and helping his dad harness as many as eight horses before breakfast.

"We tried to be in the field by 6:00 a.m.," he recalled. "In the busy season we might have the chores done, have breakfast, and be at work by 5:30 a.m. I can remember coming in at night so tired I would eat supper and crawl upstairs to bed, even before sundown."

At that time, Dr. Carmony hadn't "the slightest interest" in Indiana history. He liked farming and with some encouragement probably would have stayed on the farm. Until he got to high school, the only schools he had attended had been where his father taught.

When he got to high school, Dr. Carmony developed an interest in mathematics. When he graduated from Manilla High School in Rush County, there was a record nineteen members in the graduating class.

From high school he went to Indiana Central University to major in mathematics. About halfway through college he became interested in history, and he stayed on at Indiana Central to accept a part time position teaching history. Incidentally, he has been a member of the Indiana Central Board of Trustees since 1943.

Dr. Carmony went on to Indiana University to do graduate work in history and taught again at Indiana Central and at the Fort Wayne and South Bend campuses of Indiana University. This led to his being made academic dean for what was then Indiana University's Extension Division. In 1959 he left his administration post to become a full time member of the History Department faculty here.

Dr. Carmony has not been one to hide his history under a basket. He has talked to teachers, service clubs, historical societies, fraternal and patriotic groups, and just about any other kind of gathering in Indiana. Researchers and graduate students in this and other states commonly call upon him to help in finding and evaluating source materials for their historical research.

Which period of Indiana history has been the most exciting? Dr. Carmony believes his own period has.

"I think recent decades have clearly been those of greatest innovation and greatest advances in science, education, and culture," he said. "There are many people who feel the pioneer period, roughly the first half of the nineteenth century, was the golden era. Those who are nostalgic about this period forget the hardships and deprivations which existed. It's true very deep and personal relationships existed and it was not the anonymous society we have today, but it was still a hard life."

When Indiana gained a historian it didn't lose a farmer. Dr. Carmony has a large garden and a number of fruit trees at his Bloomington home and each year produces enough fruit and vegetables to keep his pantry well stocked.



Courtesy Indiana University News Bureau, Bloomington.