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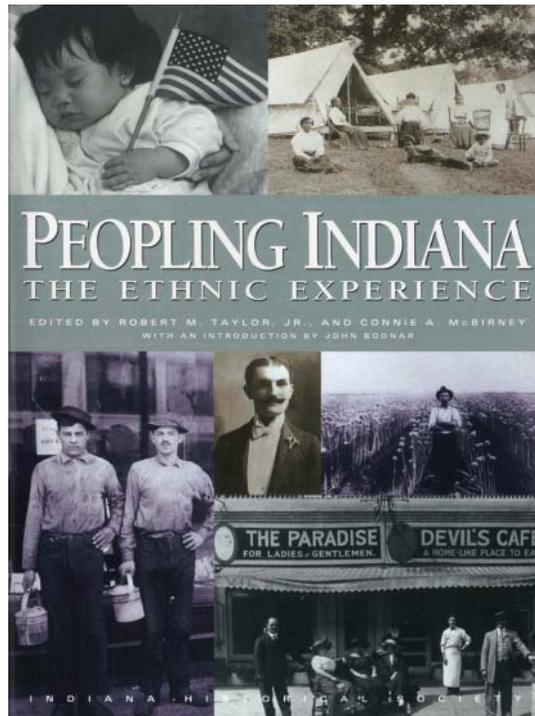
“INTRODUCTION:
Ethnic History in America and Indiana”

by John Bodnar

for the Indiana Historical Society Press publication:

Peopling Indiana
The Ethnic Experience

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“INTRODUCTION: Ethnic History in America and Indiana”

by John Bodnar

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In 1993 *Newsweek* magazine asked a sample of Americans what they thought about immigration. Although most respondents felt immigration was good for the nation in the past, a majority thought it was undesirable in the present.¹ What the modern survey could not convey was that Americans have always been ambivalent about immigration and ethnic diversity. Some have valued the contributions immigrants made to economic growth. It was for this reason that midwestern states attempted to recruit newcomers in the nineteenth century. Others, however, feared for the future of American institutions and imagined that strange newcomers would not exhibit the same devotion to the values of democracy and freedom as the native born. In recent times employers dependent upon immigrant labor, such as agricultural interests in California, have lobbied to sustain the flow of unskilled workers. But many other Americans, often forgetting their own immigrant ancestry, have supported measures restricting immigration or denying newcomers access to various forms of government assistance. Whatever side one takes, the historical study of immigration and ethnic diversity in the United States makes it clear that despite controversy people of varying backgrounds continued to come to the United States and make a place for themselves regardless of whether they were welcome or not.

Both America and Indiana were affected deeply by the continual arrival of people with distinctive cultures. Whether the portal was Plymouth Rock, Ellis Island, or a train station in Hammond, new settlers, often with beliefs or traits vastly different

from the majority, entered the nation and its states to play an active role in social and political events. While some fled political turmoil or religious persecution, most were motivated by economic considerations and were seeking places to earn a living. Some came to stay and others intended to return to a homeland. Although immigrants were often at the center of disputes, they invariably played vital historical roles wherever they located.

The volume of immigration to the United States was staggering. From 1820 to 1975, over forty-seven million people came as immigrants. That figure included eight million from the Western Hemisphere, two million from Asia, and nearly thirty-six million from Europe. By the time of the first federal census in 1790 one million African Americans and four million Europeans, mostly English, Welsh, Scotch-Irish, and Germans, already resided in the United States. In the nineteenth century the ethnic structure of the colonial period was quickly transformed. The early English, Scotch-Irish, German, and African-American groups expanded, and new clusters of Irish, Italians, Jews, Swedes, Norwegians, Slavs, Hungarians, and Mexicans emerged. Canada also supplied nearly four million newcomers, including many who spoke French.

Immigration to colonial America was based on an acute need for inexpensive labor. Proprietors seeking to develop large colonies and planters, such as those in Virginia tidewater seeking to grow crops for a world market, needed a constant stream of settlers and workers. Probably over one-half of all white laborers drawn to the colonies before 1776 were indentured servants or poor Englishmen who worked in the colonies for a fixed period of years to pay off their debts and gain their freedom.

Indentured servants either died from poor living conditions or eventually completed their obligations and left their employers. Thus the need for labor was continuous. African labor was one solution that Virginia planters turned to in 1619. Although most African Americans were not legally

slaves when they first arrived, a system of slavery was gradually imposed upon these involuntary immigrants by the 1660s.

Impoverished Englishmen and African Americans were quickly joined by Scotch-Irish, Scots, and German settlers. As many as 250,000 Scotch-Irish immigrated to the American colonies before 1776. Although their decision to move was influenced by Protestant ministers in Ulster, they began leaving in 1717 primarily because of a dramatic increase in the rents they were charged as tenant farmers. They were joined by artisans and laborers from the Scottish Lowlands who faced economic hard times and moved to the tobacco colonies as indentured servants. Germans started to arrive in Philadelphia in 1683, attracted in part by William Penn's promises of religious toleration. By the 1760s over 60 percent of Pennsylvania was German.

Immigrant streams to America often grew as extensions of European population movements. In the century after 1630 rural workers were always moving because of poverty and land shortages. Agents hired by land speculators and proprietors in the colonies could tap into these migratory streams and entice already mobile individuals to move across the ocean. This is essentially what happened between 1630 and 1642 when 21,000 immigrants moved out of the migratory patterns of East Anglia and sailed to Puritan New England.²

The modest levels of colonial immigration were dwarfed by the movements of the nineteenth century. From 1815 to the Civil War, five million people immigrated to the United States. About one-half the number came from England and about 40 percent of the total came from Ireland. Another ten million came between 1865 and 1890, mostly from northwestern Europe. Finally about fifteen million arrived between 1890 and 1914 when the outbreak of war in Europe temporarily arrested the flow. This later group brought many more southern and eastern Europeans—Poles, Jews, Slovaks, Italians, and Greeks—than had ever come before.

The American economy produced a steady demand for unskilled and skilled workers and farmers throughout much of the nineteenth century. After the 1880s, however, this demand was almost exclusively for unskilled workers to fill the growing number of factory jobs. The impact of this growing demand was felt more heavily in areas of Europe that were undergoing substantial economic changes by the 1880s. Dislocated for the land, unsure of whether to remain in the United States, and possessing few skills, southern and eastern Europeans moved into industrial work in pursuit of a livelihood.

Five major factors in nineteenth-century Europe led to increases in immigration: a dramatic population increase, the spread of commercial agriculture, the rise of the factory system, the proliferation of inexpensive means of transportation such as steamships and railroads, and outbreaks of religious intolerance. These factors did not make an impact everywhere at once, but where they did, especially in fertile agricultural regions, immigration to America became a distinct possibility.

Agricultural regions were the crucible in which these forces met. The need of growing cities such as London, Budapest, or Berlin to import food encouraged farmers with means to acquire more land in order to expand production and profits. Commercial rather than subsistence farming stimulated the rise of large estates and increased the overall price of land. Thus, small owners or aspiring owners found it increasingly difficult to acquire sufficient acreage in Europe to support themselves. The problem for these smaller farmers and tenants was compounded by the marked rise in European population rates after the Napoleonic Wars. Food supplies, no longer drained off by war, were now more plentiful, diets improved, and life expectancy increased. Family members lived longer and had more children. A reduction in the amount of land available for farming and an increase in the number of people attempting to live off the land meant that some would have to leave.

Immigrants who were farmers in Europe often attempted to farm in the United States, especially before the 1880s when land was cheap and readily available. Skilled artisans from Europe sought factories and small shops. Immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, especially Jews, Italians, and Slavs, almost invariably settled in cities. Regardless of their point of origin or their destination, they all developed a set of strategies that would facilitate their settlement and adjustment in a new land. Ethnic difference aside, all immigrants were pragmatic people who acquired much information about America before they arrived. Letters from relatives in the United States told them something about land costs, wages, and job openings. Promotional literature from railroads and states unfortunately offered exaggerated descriptions of opportunities.

Because agriculture required much planning and investment, the Swedes, Germans, and Norwegians who settled in regions such as the Midwest seldom decided to return to Europe. Between 1868 and 1873, when crop failures devastated their homeland, over a hundred thousand Swedes crossed the ocean, influenced by news of the Homestead Act and the promise of free land. These immigrants quickly learned what crops would bring market rewards. Thus, Norwegians in Wisconsin planted wheat and Mennonites in Kansas brought hardy wheat strains from Russia that flourished on the plains.

Those moving to cities exhibited a similar degree of knowledge and adaptability. Jews, Italians, Greeks, and Slavs concentrated in industrial cities such as New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and Boston, where they knew unskilled jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities were increasing. They moved in intricate networks of family and ethnic contacts that provided them with information on occupations, housing, wages, weather, and transportation. Thus, Italians already knew of the harsh conditions that existed in the meatpacking plants in Chicago and tended to shun them in favor of outdoor construction work. In the same way Irish immigrant families, who needed income

of children as well as adults, tended to settle in areas where child labor was plentiful.

For some the decision to move to America was compulsory. Persecution for religious or political beliefs forced many to flee their homes in search of greater tolerance. In late-nineteenth-century Russia and eastern Europe, Jews were attacked in pogroms, prevented from owning land, and hindered in their pursuit of higher education. In Sweden, prior to 1860, public worship in the country was forbidden outside the Church of Sweden. Many dissenters from the Lutheran establishment left for Illinois between 1846 and 1854. Chicago was the destination of German radicals and socialists in the same period who fled arrest for their political views in their homeland and established organizations in the United States that supported labor and political protest.³

American society reacted to the foreign born with a mixture of acceptance and contempt. Settlement house workers such as Jane Addams and Lillian Wald operated centers in urban neighborhoods to teach newcomers domestic and civics lessons and help them adjust. Other Americans were less considerate. Fearing for the future of their jobs or for the strength of American institutions, some citizens sought to end immigration completely. Early in this century the American Federation of Labor supported a bill preventing the entry of newcomers who were unable to read. In 1920 California denied Japanese immigrants the right to own land, and native-born citizens actually beat Italian American in Illinois and burned their homes.⁴

Despite the obstacles immigrants made lasting contributions to American society. They gave this country its major religious strains—Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish. British coal miners and German, Italian, and Jewish socialists brought traditions of social justice that resulted in better wages and improved working conditions for millions. Significant American business ventures such as the Bank of America and Steinway pianos were founded by immigrants. Elizabeth Arden founded a business empire based on cosmetic products for

women. Major works of literature, often about the immigrant experience, were written by foreign born writers such as Ole Rolvaag and Mary Antin. Immigrant groups brought such a variety of foods to this country that ethnic restaurants constituted one of the key ways in which newcomers entered the American economy. And the number of immigrants who made major contributions to American life is striking: John Jacob Astor, Alexander Graham Bell, Samuel Gompers, Alexander Hamilton, John Paul Jones, Colin Powell, and Knute Rockne. Irving Berlin wrote "God Bless America." Gerty Cori, who was born in Prague, was the first American woman to win a Nobel Prize for medicine. Mary Anderson, from Sweden, and Angela Bambace, from Italy, became leading labor organizers.

The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 established annual quotas that favored northern Europeans over southern and eastern Europeans and curtailed the massive flow of immigrants into the country that had started in the nineteenth century. And the Great Depression and World War II kept immigration rates low; some five hundred thousand Mexican workers were actually deported during the early 1930s because it was feared they took jobs away from the native born. In 1948 Congress did pass a Displaced Persons Act that eventually admitted some four hundred thousand Europeans uprooted by war, although refugees from Palestine, China, and India were ignored. But a substantial return of immigrants to America would have to await congressional action in the 1960s.⁵

The Immigration Act of 1965 abolished the discriminatory quotas of the 1920s. In its place it substituted a system based on family preference. Only about 290,000 immigrants would be allowed to enter the country each year, but relatives of newcomers already here would be exempt from such quotas. Thus, once an immigrant became a citizen he could bring relatives here and reconstitute his family. This provision would ultimately result in the arrival of a much larger number of newcomers than legislators had ever imagined. Skilled workers in demand by the American

economy and refugees stood in line after kin as categories that could also gain ready admittance.

Congress anticipated that migration streams would continue to emanate primarily from Europe after 1965. But a general improvement in the European economy, worsening conditions in Latin America, a war in Indochina, and the system of family preferences resulted in a complete shift in immigrant origins. Newcomers from Asia and Latin America quickly began to outnumber Europeans. During the 1970s three-quarters of the four million immigrants who came to the United States were from the Third World. In a twelve-year period after 1966 more people came here from Asia than from Europe, and Mexican immigration increased significantly.

Although historic immigrant streams consisted of some people with strong educational and skilled backgrounds, the incidence appeared to be higher after 1965. Arriving in sleek jetliners rather than steamships, many urban professionals now immigrated to the United States. Between 1965 and 1974, seventy-five thousand foreign-born physicians entered the country in response to an increased call for medical services resulting from the initiation of Medicare programs. If the American press gave relatively little attention to the changes enacted in the 1965 legislation, newspapers in countries such as Korea featured discussions of the law and explained its details. Over thirteen thousand Korean medical professionals, a majority of whom were female nurses, entered the United States after 1965. Thousands of additional Koreans entered large cities and opened small businesses that served inner-city residents. These newcomers were doing what immigrants to America had always done: entering niches in the economy left open to them. By 1977 there were over forty-five hundred Korean-American small businessmen in southern California.⁶

Not all contemporary immigrants were skilled professionals or aspiring businessmen. Large numbers of Arabs entered Detroit-area auto plants, and Mexicans in southern California

moved primarily into that region's service economy. Haitian immigrants who moved to south Florida in the 1980s encountered problems of adjustment that were exceedingly difficult. Fleeing political repression and one of the poorest economies in the Caribbean, these Haitians, most of whom were under thirty, were treated harshly by Florida officials who feared they would become public charges. The Haitians were kept in government detention centers where they suffered psychological distress. With few relatives or skills to rely on, these arrivals found it difficult to secure work. By 1985 about one-third of the Haitian males in Florida were unemployed. To adjust and survive in a strange land, Haitians were forced to rely heavily on female household members who could earn a minimal wage and some form of public assistance.⁷

Many immigrants after 1965 were refugees. They consisted of people with a wide diversity of skills, educational training, and cultural backgrounds that influenced their adjustment to American society. The major refugee groups included Cubans and Indochinese. About two hundred thousand people, mostly from the middle class, fled Cuba after Fidel Castro's assumption of power in 1959. Subsequent waves consisted mostly of poor, working-class Cubans who often arrived in Florida in boats operated by relatives already living in Florida. By 1980 Cuban Americans dominated the economic and political life of the Miami area.

Indochina was the second major source of refugees after 1965. The United States immediately accepted 130,000 Vietnamese after the fall of Saigon in 1975. As Communist power spread through southeast Asia, an increasing number of ethnic Chinese, Cambodians, and Laotians sought asylum in the United States as well. By 1985 about 700,000 Indochinese had entered the country, many of whom were resettled through churches and other sponsoring agencies rather than through networks of kin and friends. Although large numbers of Vietnamese possessed skills and strong educational backgrounds, many Cambodians and Laotians were peasants who could not

enter the economy easily. By 1985 Indochinese refugees were 15 percent less likely to be employed in southern California than the population as a whole and were in need of some form of government aid.

The largest ethnic group to enter the United States after 1965 came from Mexico. By the 1970s over sixty thousand Mexicans were entering the country legally each year, and a far greater number were undocumented aliens moving into manufacturing jobs in Texas and California. By 1980 nearly one million aliens from Mexico were apprehended annually by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Many, of course, intended to stay in the country only temporarily, and large numbers returned to Mexico, especially each December when they rejoined their families for Christmas. It was because of the strong links between the employers of unskilled Mexicans in agriculture and manufacturing and the aliens themselves that the Immigration Reform Act of 1986 provided amnesty to undocumented aliens who had been in the United States continuously since 1982.

By the 1980s the pattern of immigrant adjustment revealed mixed results. Those with skills, educational training, and extensive family networks did reasonably well. Thus, the median family income of Cubans was nearly 30 percent higher than that of other immigrants of Hispanic origin. Asian immigrants arriving between 1970 and 1980 had mean household incomes that nearly equaled the income of the native born. On the other hand, Mexican Americans forced into unskilled work earned mean family incomes well below the Asians and the native-born whites.

The complex process that shaped the ethnic history of the nation also left its imprint on the state of Indiana, although sometimes to a lesser extent. In the 1860s the United States consul at Glasgow, Scotland, noted that while emigrants leaving the city knew a great deal about Wisconsin, they knew little of Indiana. In part, this was due to a state legislature, unlike the legislature in Wisconsin, that

was reluctant to spend much money on promotional literature designed to attract newcomers. As a result of limited advertising and slower economic development in the nineteenth century, Indiana's foreign-born population was less than the other states in the Old Northwest. Even after industrial expansion attracted more newcomers after the 1880s, the 1920 federal census showed that Indiana had the highest proportion of native-born whites of any state in the nation.⁸

But the image of a largely homogenous state is revised considerably in the essays in [the book, *Peopling Indiana*]. Once historians decided to investigate more carefully, they found an extensive and rich record not only of ethnic diversity but also of the significant role immigrant and racial groups played. If Indiana did not replicate the extent of ethnic diversity in the rest of the nation, these essays prove that the encounter between people with different cultural and racial backgrounds was still a pivotal theme in its history.

Many writers have noted the popular image of Indiana as a location of prosperous farms and small towns inhabited by “confident, prosperous, neighborly, tolerant and shrewd” people. Turn-of-the-century Hoosiers lauded James Whitcomb Riley for fostering this image in his poetry, which praised the spirit of friendship and community in the state. The “people's poet,” and this celebration of the idea of a rustic and homogenous state devoid of the urban scars and ethnic and racial diversity of the rest of America, was so popular by 1900 that many citizens framed his poems in their homes. Riley's view of Indiana was steeped in the memory of the pioneers who settled the region in the early nineteenth century. Riley referred to modern inventions like the railroads and factories as “foolery” as he sang the praises of the agrarian world.⁹

This book [*Peopling Indiana*] challenges the home-spun notion of Indiana. It does not say that neighborliness and a significant level of homogeneity were absent in the state, but it does prove that Indiana was not nearly as provincial as Riley thought and that it experienced ethnic and racial

differences to a greater extent than its popular image would suggest. Ironically, as the book explores the state's ethnic diversity, it actually reveals the ability of Hoosiers to be open-minded. Writers such as John Bartlow Martin and John Gunther, who rightly pointed to a pattern of intolerance in the state's history, have tended to ignore the state's capacity to accommodate variety. Ultimately in Indiana, as in America, people with different cultural backgrounds found ways to participate in the common project of building a civil society.¹⁰

Individuals from all over the world and from throughout the United States were attracted to Indiana for reasons that were more complex than the presumption that it was a special place of neighborliness. This book demonstrates that the goals and aspirations of the people who settled the state were varied. In the nineteenth century the availability of land and opportunity and the launching of vast internal improvement projects attracted newcomers. Pioneer farmers entered Indiana on the National Road or along water routes like the Ohio River and found land in the southern part of the state.¹¹ Development of the northern part of the state was hastened in the 1830s by the construction of the Wabash and Erie Canal. Boats taking grain to Toledo would return with immigrants. And who could blame them for coming. Land in Lagrange in 1833 was selling for \$1.25 an acre.¹² Settlers of Scottish descent arrived from Pennsylvania about 1813 and settled the area around Canaan in Jefferson County. Englishmen from Yorkshire came to Wayne County as early as the first decade of the nineteenth century because they could get land upon which to employ their well-developed agricultural expertise. Most Scandinavians moved into farming in the upper Midwest and avoided Indiana in the last century because they felt the soil was “slack and swampy.” But many did settle in Tippecanoe, Fountain, Warren, Benton, Newton, and Jasper counties where some better land existed. In fact, it was at the site of a Scandinavian immigrant's farm that plans were made in 1918 to create the Indiana Farm Bureau. Even Poles came to farm Indiana in

the nineteenth century. Although the majority of Poles eventually settled in industrial areas, as early as 1860 Poles from Poznan settled near La Porte and worked on existing farms in order to save money to afford places of their own.

Some early immigrants to the state were simply unusual individuals who saw unique opportunities to pursue highly personal dreams. A few German women probably came to the state because marriage partners were rather easy to find. One immigrant in Indiana wrote to Germany explaining how two females he knew found spouses less than six weeks after arriving in Indianapolis.¹³ George Rapp and his followers left Germany and attempted to create a religious enclave in the wilderness. They finally arrived in Indiana in 1814 and established a community based on Christian fellowship. John Rice Jones, born in Wales in 1750, headed west to the Northwest Territory in 1786, moved into the practice of law, and soon became attorney general of the territory he helped to organize. Stephen Theodore Badin, who came to the United States from France in 1792, became the first priest ordained in this nation and until his death in 1853 ministered to the needs of Catholics throughout Kentucky and Indiana.

Canal and railroad construction attracted laborers as well as farmers. By the time the Wabash and Erie Canal was completed in 1853, thousands of Irish settlers, fleeing famine in Ireland, had come into the state to find work. Irish and German laborers worked on building the National Road in the 1830s and often ended up staying in towns such as Indianapolis and Terre Haute. By 1860 the capital city had two German-American newspapers.¹⁴ Eventually railroad construction had the same effect. Thus, French Canadians were drawn to northwest Indiana both to farm and to work on the New York Central rail line.

Industrialization not only created more work opportunities for newcomers to the state but it also created more attempts at the direct recruitment of immigrants. In 1882 thirty-two villagers in Sopron Country, Hungary, accepted the offer of steamship agents of the Studebaker wagon

works and the Oliver plow plant in South Bend to book passage to the United States. Their intention may have been to return eventually to their native land after increasing their savings, but, of course, thousands did stay. In a similar fashion the American glass industry brought skilled Walloon Belgians from the Liege district to the Muncie area. By 1900 nearly fifteen hundred persons of Belgian birth lived in the six-county region around Hartford City. Between 1906 and 1914 the United States Steel Corporation recruited Croats, Slovaks, Lithuanians, and Poles to its Gary works. In Indianapolis a Slovene immigrant by the name of Jurij Lampert recruited workers between 1895 and 1907 for the National Malleable Castings Company from villages in his native land.

Even without direct recruitment the expansion of industrial jobs in the state acted as a magnet to people seeking improvement in their incomes and their lives. The proximity of steel mills in Gary to Chicago's large Scandinavian communities drew many Swedes and Norwegians across the state line. In a similar manner, Sicilians, Piedmontese, and Venetians "who had strong backs and were good workers" moved to Vermillion County to mine coal. Additional numbers of Italians settled in Richmond, Logansport, Fort Wayne, and Elkhart to work in the repair shops and yards of the Pennsylvania and New York Central railroads.

African-American migration to the state was stimulated tremendously by occupational opportunities created by wartime. Freedom from slavery caused the first major thrust of blacks into the state once the Civil War had ended. The state's African-American population more than doubled in the decade of the 1860s; Evansville's black population went from 96 in 1860 to 1,408 in 1870. During World War I blacks found many more job openings in Indiana factories. United States Steel in Gary directly recruited black workers from 1914 to 1918, and the *Chicago Defender*, a leading black newspaper, advertised jobs in Indiana. By the war's end, Gary had nearly 5,000 blacks. In World War II a similar pattern was evident. In the first two years of the war the black population

of Evansville increased by 2,000 and the overall unemployment rate for African Americans in the entire state declined by over one-half.¹⁵

Economic forces alone, however, could not explain entirely the pattern of ethnic settlement in Indiana in this century. After World War II many displaced persons, unable to return to their European homelands, were brought to Indiana by the charitable actions of Hoosiers. Latvians and Estonians came to Indianapolis in 1949 and 1950 through the efforts of a Lutheran church that helped them find jobs and homes. To qualify for admittance to the United States under the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, newcomers needed the assurance of sponsors that suitable housing and employment were available. Balts were dispersed through the state under this program. In the Calumet Region Hungarian Americans already here helped refugees from the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. In a display of neighborliness that would have pleased James Whitcomb Riley, women in Indiana Harbor held bake sales and collected clothing and household goods to help the newly arrived refugees. In Gary Polish Americans established a club to help displaced Poles learn to speak, write, and read English. At Richmond, Earlham College brought young Japanese-American students who had been interred in detention camps in the West to Indiana for an education.

In the late twentieth century neither industrial jobs nor charity can fully explain the pattern of immigrant settlement in the state. Highly trained professionals, intent on careers in modern society, have located in the state. These immigrants came more often by plane than boat and were much less likely to settle in ethnic neighborhoods or communities as their predecessors had in the previous century. In the 1950s a closer relationship between the United States and Iran caused many educated Iranians to move to Indiana. Two Iranian engineers started an engineering firm in Lafayette in that decade and invited colleagues from their homeland to join them. Among the earliest known Korean residents in Indianapolis were Han Won Paik and Chinok Chang Paik who

moved to Indianapolis in 1962 after completing graduate degrees at Northwestern University. Both eventually became college teachers. As early as 1971 the Indiana-Philippine Medical Association listed 179 members in the state who were practicing in seventy-two different communities. In 1984 an Indiana Chinese Professional Association was organized that included professors and scientists from Purdue and Butler universities.

Variations in ethnic backgrounds and motivations for coming to Indiana did not preclude the existence of distinct similarities in the process of adjustment. In both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as this collection of essays [in *Peopling Indiana*] make clear, most newcomers inevitably built a rich communal and institutional life that facilitated their adjustment to a new and often strange environment. The energy they invested in building churches, community centers, and fraternal associations was impressive. If their economic situation was at times precarious, their associational life was vibrant. In these communities they not only found comfort and friendship, but they also blended the old culture with the new.

Organizing was what immigrants and migrants did best. By 1840 African Americans formed Bethel AME Church in Indianapolis, Allen Chapel in Terre Haute, and a Baptist church in Evansville. These early churches helped blacks develop a sense of community while being shunned by whites, and they served as social centers as well. By 1916 Indianapolis contained sixteen black Baptist churches. In the nineteenth century residents of Fort Wayne were aware that "Irish Town" was located in the southwestern part of the city. In New Albany an Irish settlement known as "Bog Hollow" was located between the Southern Railroad tracks and the Ohio River. The counterpart in Indianapolis to these communities was known as "Irish Hill." In addition to the central role played by the Roman Catholic Church in such neighborhoods, St. John's Church in Indianapolis sponsored lectures, Irish cultural entertainment, card parties, and religious retreats. The Irish newcomers could join a whole host of ethnic organizations

including the Knights of Father Matthew and the Catholic Knights of America. Founded in 1851, the Indianapolis Turner Society became the center of German-American political and educational activity. These organizations offered immigrants and migrants a forum to discuss the leading political issues of the times and furthered their adjustment to a new society.

The associational impulse continued unabated in the twentieth century. Italians in Mishawaka formed two neighborhoods: Calabrians settled north of the St. Joseph River while northern Italians lived south of the river. By 1927, ten years after the wartime demand for labor had brought them to the Calumet Region, Mexican Americans had built a church, Our Lady of Guadalupe, opened a grocery, two tailor shops, four barbershops, nine restaurants, and eleven pool halls. Similarly in Whiting Slovaks organized St. John's Church in 1899, created a branch of the First Catholic Slovak Union, and built the Slovak Dom, a home for plays, weddings, dances, and other social activities. In the 1920s in South Bend the names of Belgian organizations revealed how these communities promoted both ethnic and American identities. Belgians could join the Belgian-American Club, the Belgian Bicycle Club, or the Belgian Archery Club. In the Belgian section of the third ward residents not only preserved ethnic identity by continuing to speak Belgian into the 1960s but also fostered Americanization by electing members of their community to the city council. In a similar manner Slovenes in the Haughville neighborhood of Indianapolis supported a church as well as two dozen saloons where they could speak their native language. Slovenes also used their organizational base to ease themselves into the larger society by forming a football team that would play other teams—such as the Fort Harrison Eleven—in the 1930s.

The voluntary imperative to assimilate, a major theme documented in this collection, was clearly evident in the widespread involvement of newcomers in entrepreneurial activities. Both the Indiana and American economies were ultimately

open to ethnic newcomers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This collection indicates that the drive for business success marked all groups in both centuries under review. As early as 1799 a Swiss immigrant named Jean Jacques Dufour and his wife were the proprietors of lucrative vineyards and pastures in New Switzerland and had attracted other Swiss families to the site. At New Harmony George Rapp not only sought to build a religious community but also purchased land on the Wabash River to build a brewery, a distillery, and mills, which not only provided for the members' own needs but also allowed them to sell a surplus. By 1819 the Harmonists were making more than twelve thousand dollars annually and had the highest per capita income in the state. The Harmonists were so successful that they eventually organized their own bank. Hoosiers saw Jewish and Syrian peddlers carrying their goods across the state in the last century. In Richmond in the 1850s Germans owned the three largest dry goods stores in the town. In Evansville John A Reitz, who emigrated from Westphalia in 1836, started a sawmill and became a "lumber king."

The entrepreneurial drive continued in the twentieth century as a means of adjusting. In Indianapolis black businesses dominated the area around Indiana Avenue. Funeral homes, restaurants, and clothing stores were operated by African-American proprietors. Syrians opened at least eleven groceries in Terre Haute, and Slovak immigrants in Whiting bought a bank. In the 1920s East Chicago Poles could get loans to buy homes from a building and loan association established by Joseph Wlekinski and his brother. By 1915 Lithuanians in East Chicago had established taverns, meat stores, a bakery, a tailor shop, restaurants, and a printing house. Today Chinese restaurants, like the one Lee Lai Fong and his family started in Valparaiso in 1976, represent a continuation of the theme of ethnic enterprise.

Indiana not only welcomed the economic assimilation of newcomers but also their political participation. John Badollet, a native of Switzerland, became the land register at Vincennes and in 1816 was

a delegate to the Indiana constitutional convention. He joined five other European immigrants at the gathering in Corydon, which included four from Ireland and one from Germany. Edward Hannegan, born in Ohio but proud of his Irish ancestry, was elected to Congress from Indiana in 1832 and was known throughout the state for his oratory and his “Irish wit.”¹⁶ The presence of Irish immigrants in the state, in fact, caused the state constitutional convention in 1850-51 to ease voting requirements for immigrants. In the 1850s there were twenty-two natives of Ireland in the General Assembly. Samuel Judah, an early Jewish settler in the state, practiced law in Vincennes, was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1824 and an outspoken Jacksonian, and was elected to the state assembly five times between 1827 and 1840.

The political participation of various ethnic groups, as this collection suggests, continued in a vigorous fashion into the twentieth century. In 1934 Daniel Perrotta, an Italian American, was elected to the Gary city council, and his attempt to lead a fight against organized crime in the city cost him his life. After World War II African Americans in the state pursued an agenda to ease segregation. Their efforts helped pass a measure abolishing segregation in the public schools in 1949 and the adoption of civil rights laws in Indiana in 1961 and 1963. In 1967 Gary elected a black mayor, Richard Hatcher. Slovak Americans attained political recognition when Robert A. Pastrich was elected mayor of East Chicago and Peter Visclosky was elected to Congress in 1984.

The inclusion of ethnic groups into political life was invariably hastened by the pressures of war-time. These moments allowed newcomers to demonstrate their loyalty to the host nation and gain greater acceptance by joining the armed services. During the Civil War many men from England and Wales in Indiana enlisted in the Union army. One, William Stockdale, lost an eye and a leg but received reassurance from his father in England that he had fought for a good cause. German immigrants in Indianapolis also became active

supporters of the abolitionist crusade and the war. The Turner Hall in the city was a center of antislavery activity, and many Germans were attracted to the Union army because military service meant certain citizenship. During World War I Belgians in Mishawaka volunteered to fight with American forces in Europe out of hatred for the German kaiser. When Germany was defeated these same citizens burned the kaiser in effigy and played patriotic tunes. Slovak women in the Calumet Region prepared bandages and performed other tasks useful to the war effort. During World War II all ethnic groups in the state bought war bonds, and families from ethnic communities shared with other Hoosiers the sacrifice of their sons on the battlefield. Louis and Maria Scotece, natives of Italy and residents of Richmond, sent five sons to the military, including one who was lost at the Battle of Midway in 1942. Even during the Cold War ethnic Hoosiers demonstrated their desire to be part of the state and the nation by protesting the visit of Nikita Khrushchev with a parade of five hundred cars near Hammond.

Despite the general thrust toward assimilation and acceptance, Indiana’s ethnic history contains episodes of hostility and intolerance. Often bias in Indiana as elsewhere resulted from the fear of losing jobs. Thus, when Irish and German workers came into the state during the building of the canals in the nineteenth century, many citizens joined Know-Nothing organizations that denounced immigrants. Slovenes in Indianapolis were the target of rock-throwing residents who feared their wages would be lowered. In 1907 native-born Hoosiers in Bedford, feeling the impact of layoffs from a recession, set fires to some Italian property and posted handbills urging them to “vacate” the town. In the 1920s the Ku Klux Klan directed its hostile views toward newly arrived ethnic groups. A lady in Clinton recalled how the Klan broke into her house and destroyed the wine her Italian-born father made, and a woman in Logansport claimed the Klan prevented Italians from getting jobs. Mexican Americans in East Chicago still note the fact that many of their

relatives were deported in 1932 for fear they were taking jobs away from native-born Hoosiers.

Race, of course, led to conflict in Indiana as it did in every other state. In the early nineteenth century Native-American villages were destroyed, and tribes such as the Miami suffered removal from the state in 1846. In the 1920s the increased movement of blacks into Gary and Indianapolis, initiated by the demand for wartime workers in 1917 and 1918, led to the construction of segregated high schools such as Gary Roosevelt and Crispus Attucks. In Marion in 1930 two young black men were lynched by an angry mob.¹⁷

One of the most virulent examples of intolerance toward people with distinctive ethnic traits may have taken place during World War I. Incited by national patriotic campaigns, many Hoosiers carried the war against the Germans home to German Americans in their state. In 1869 the Indiana legislature exhibited tolerance by allowing German to be taught as a language in the public schools. By May 1917 public schools in the capital city enrolled nearly ten thousand students in German classes. But during World War I an intense debate took place over whether such instruction was unpatriotic and should be allowed to continue. Critics claimed that the study of the German language would ruin the "moral welfare" of the city's children and thus were able to get German instruction eliminated. The town of Germany, Indiana, actually changed its name to Loyal, and East Germantown became Pershing.¹⁸

Towns and people altered their names to gain acceptance and overcome prejudice. But ethnic communities and their members generally flourished in the state, and newcomers continually pursued paths into the Indiana economy and political system. In the end the ethnic history of Indiana and America proved immigrants and migrants could be embraced and accommodated despite their unique cultures. The spirit of neighborliness that intrigued James Whitcomb Riley proved equal to the task of confronting bigotry. The essays [in *Peopling Indiana*] underscore this process of adjustment. Taken together they convey the

rich story of immigrant movement into Indiana throughout its history and contribute to our understanding of a very vital process that continues to affect our lives.

Notes

1. *Newsweek*, 9 Aug. 1993, p. 19.
2. For the colonial experience in immigration see Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction* (New York: Knopf, 1986)
3. Philip Taylor, *The Distant Magnet: European Emigration to the U.S.A.* (New York: Harper, 1971), 58; John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 86; George M. Stephenson, *The Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration: A Study of Immigrant Churches* (New York: AMS Press, 1972).
4. See John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1988).
5. See Mark Wyman, *DP: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1951* (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1989).
6. David Reimers, *Still the Golden Door: The Third World Comes to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
7. Alejandro Portes and Alex Stepick, *City on Edge: The Transformation of Miami* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 38-60.
8. Maurice G. Baxter, "Encouragement of Immigration to the Middle West during the Era of the Civil War," *Indiana Magazine of History* 46 (Mar. 1950): 34-36.
9. See John Bartlow Martin, *Indiana: An Interpretation* (1947; reprint, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 105-8; James H. Madison, in the introduction to the 1992 edition of Martin's book, discusses the rural image of the state. See also John Gunther, *Inside U.S.A.* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 386.
10. Gunther, *Inside U.S.A.*, 386-90.
11. Logan Esarey, *A History of Indiana: From Its Exploration to 1850* (Indianapolis: W.K. Steward Co., 1915), 239-47, 254-57.
12. *My Town, Your Town, La Grange 1836-1936* (Lagrang, Ind.: Lagrange Sesquicentennial Committee, 1986), 7; John Ankenbruer, *Twentieth Century History of Fort Wayne* (Fort Wayne, Ind.: Twentieth Century Fort Wayne, Inc., 1975), 114.
13. George Theodore Probst, *The Germans in Indianapolis, 1840-1918*, rev. ed. by Eberhard Reichmann (Indianapolis: German-American Center and Indiana German Heritage Society, Inc., 1989), 15.

14. James J. Divita, *Ethnic Settlement Patterns in Indianapolis* (Indianapolis: Indiana Division of Natural Resources, 1988), 14.

15. See Robert A Lowe, "Racial Segregation in Indiana, 1920-1950" (Ph.D. diss., Ball State University, 1965), 20, 113-14; Darrel E. Bigham, *We Ask Only A Fair Trial: A History of the Black Community of Evansville, Indiana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 21-23, 226; James B. Lane, *"City of the Century": A History of Gary, Indiana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 70.

16. Martin, *Indiana*, 44-45.

17. Lowe, "Racial Segregation in Indiana," 57-60.

18. Clark Douglass Kimball, "Patriotism and the Suppression of Dissent in Indiana during the First World War" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1971), 163-78.