

Collection #
SC 2732

HOOSIER LETTERS COLLECTION, 1835–1845

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Processed by

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October 2004
Paul Brockman
April 2007

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF 1 folder (5 letters and 2 transcriptions)

COLLECTION:

COLLECTION DATES: 16 August 1835; 21 November 1836; 24 June 1838; 10 August 1839; 25 December 1845

PROVENANCE: Symmachus Trading Co., Boston, 1954 and 1956; Jack Phelps, Williamsburg, Indiana, 2004; Larry Lafoe, Indianapolis, Indiana, 2006.

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: Other early manuscripts in the Smith Library with references to "Hoosher" or "Hoosier": D.C. and Lettia Nicoson (SC 1145); and Isabelle M. Rinehart (SC 1270). George T. Blakey, "Stalking the Elusive Hoosier's Nest," *Traces of Indiana and Midwestern History*, Volume 11, No. 3 (Summer 1999), pp. 4-13.

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1954.1213; 1956.0615; 2004.0478; 2006.0429

NOTES: This is an artificially created, active collection. Additions will be made as they become available.

HISTORICAL/BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The letters in this artificially created collection are single, unrelated letters containing early references to the word "hoosier" or a derivation of the word's spelling. The term "Hoosher" or "Hoosier," as it relates to the people of Indiana, was first published in 1833, in a poem called the "The Hoosier's Nest" by John Finley.

What is a "Hoosier?" There is no single answer to this question, and many theories were presented through the years. Most of the definitions are none too flattering, and a few are quite humorous. Among these was the belief that "hoosier" evolved as a term describing Indiana's settlers as woodsmen or rough hill people. There is also a general belief that a Louisville contractor named Hoosier employed several Indianans, thus the moniker of "Hoosier's men" was applied. Some propositions claim more validity than others, but one certainty is that this term has gained widespread use in popular culture to define a person as either a resident or a native of Indiana.

The letter, written by "**S.T.H.**" in Richmond (Wayne County), Indiana, to Abigail P. Harvey living in Chester County, Pennsylvania, in 1835. Through research, it was discovered that S.T.H. was **Sarah T. Harvey**. Sarah was the sister of Abigail's husband Ellis. She was born 26 May 1798 in Pennsylvania. It is unclear whether she had come to Indiana to live or just to visit, as she did not immediately set up house but rather spent time visiting relatives and friends. Eventually, Sarah married George Pearson. In the 1880 U.S. Census, Sarah T.H. Pearson was living in New Jersey with her niece.

Abigail P. Harvey lived with her husband Ellis and son Elisha in Chester County, Pennsylvania, throughout her life. She was born Abigail Phipps 21 August 1797 and died in 1874. Her husband, Ellis, was born 20 May 1796 and died in 1870. They had two sons one of which, Eli, was born in 1837 and died in 1840. Their son Elisha, who never married, was born in 1835.

The letter discusses different people and places S.T.H. has visited since her recent arrival in the Richmond area in Indiana.

Sources:

AncestryPlus. <http://www.ancestry.com>. Accessed 27 September 2004.

Information in the letter.

Pusey Family Genealogy. <http://www.gunboatempires.com/genealogy/Puseys.htm>. Accessed 14 October 2004.

Jacob Kunkle was born in Pennsylvania in 1792 and moved to Marion County, Indiana where he was living in Wayne Township

E. [Eamong?]H. Kennedy was living in Muncietown (now Muncie, Delaware County) in the 1830s. No other information was located.

Herman Lawson was born in New York in 1810 and moved to Michigan City (LaPorte County).

E. D. Briggs is probably Ephraim Briggs who was listed in the 1860 census as being born in 1784 in Vermont and residing in Rochester, Windsor County [same as the J. C. Tilden, the addressee and the location from where the Whitcomb family prominently mentioned in letter migrated from.

Source:

Heritage Quest Online <http://www.heritagequestonline.com/> 1860 census information accessed 17 April 2007.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Sarah T. Harvey's letter to Abigail P. Harvey mentions visiting relatives and new friends with whom she had become acquainted through Quaker meetings in Richmond, Indiana. Some of the people mentioned in the letter are brother Pusey and Pusey relatives, the Mason family, James Frame and family, Aunt L., Saml. and Ell. Coale, and Joseph and Lydia Plummer, all of whom lived in or around Richmond at the time the letter was written.

The letter contains several references to "Hooshers." These include references to a "Hoosher nest," "Hoosher worsted wool," and the length of time it takes to become a "Hoosher," one year. The letter also discusses life in Indiana through the eyes of a Quaker who has recently arrived from Pennsylvania. This is the earliest reference to "Hooshers" or "Hoosiers" in the Indiana Historical Society's manuscript collections.

There is a transcription of this letter done by the processor, Amy C. Belcher, on 15 September 2004.

Jacob Kunkle of Indianapolis relates in his November 21, 1836 letter to Reah Frazier in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania of the 1836 presidential election in Indiana where "'Old Petticoats' has gone ahead in our Hoosher State by seven or eight thousand [votes]."

E. D. Briggs writes from St. Louis while on a trip back home in Rochester, Windsor County, Vermont on 24 June 1838. He tells of his travels through Indiana and his visit to the Whitcomb family living in Clinton, Vermillion County. Asa Whitcomb and his wife are praised for their hospitality and further described as "double and twisted Hoosiers."

E. [Eamong?] H. Kennedy in writing to his friend H. Jenks in Newtown, Pennsylvania from Muncietown (now Munice), Indiana, on 18 August 1839 states that “Horatio still has the office of County Surveyor and has his ‘very Hoosierist wife’ still.”

Herman Lawson writes from Michigan City, Indiana to John J. Monell of Newburgh, New York on 25 December 1845: “I think of going down to Indianapolis to see how the Hoosiers Legislate—there is some choice spirits among the members—how the devil some of them find there way there and back is more than I can imagine.”

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CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, SC 2732).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.