

The Rise Of The Hoosier Metropolis

MAXINE LYERSON

Indianapolis one-hundred and twenty-five years ago was almost an unknown region where solitude reigned supreme. We who see it today as one of the world's finest cities find it hard to picture the infant capital consisting of four or five cabins and spread over a distance of perhaps two miles. It might be difficult for us to imagine the "Crossroads of America" as once a part of an impossible Indian trail. Who would have thought that the wilderness of that time was the beginning of a superb town, the making of a great inland port? Its inhabitants then had little hope of its ever being more than a small village. Very few people dreamed that it would soon shelter a well-developed civilization; that the haunts of savage men and beasts were to be transformed into peaceful habitats, and that the cold dark ground would yield inexhaustible riches. It was only a matter of years before the forest and swamps would be replaced by beautiful landscapes. Stillness would soon be changed to the hum of industry, and Indianapolis would take her place among the leading cities of the world.

Realization of this dream came in April, 1816, when Congress authorized the setting aside of four sections of land in the central part of the state, on which to establish a permanent capital. Selection of a site for its capital stands out as one of the most important events in Indiana history. Not until January, 1880 did the Legislature appoint a committee for this purpose. Many prominent citizens held places on the committee. Among them were such men as George Hunt, John Conner, John Tipton and Stephen Ludlow. Ten members were appointed to the com-

mission but only five had occasion to serve. These five traversed White River Valley, making examinations as they advanced, and very naturally reached conflicting conclusions. The one point on which they all agreed was that the capital should be located on White River, as it was the only navigable stream in the central part of the state. Three possible locations were then considered; Conner's Station, a small town almost four miles from Noblesville, The Bluffs near Waverly, and the mouth of Fall Creek. After much deliberation the committee chose the mouth of Fall Creek. There were several reasons for choosing this location. First the river afforded a good boat landing. Then there was ample high and level ground for the city and Fall Creek was a good mill stream. Also there were high banks on both sides of the stream, insuring in times of high water a certain passage.

After the selection of the site and before the town was plotted, a name for this "New Purchase" had to be found. This was the difficult job of the Legislature. Several names were suggested, among them "Suwarrow" and "Tecumseh." These, the commissioners argued, had no meaning and were thus rejected. Other names were given, discussed, laughed at, and voted down. The house convened and adjourned many times without coming to any agreement. Finally at the next meeting the name, Indianapolis was proposed. The name created quite a laugh. However the matter was discussed fully; adequate reasons were given in support of the propositions, and the name gradually commended itself to the committee and was thus accepted. After this adoption the news-

papers made considerable fun of it, as an unheard of and unpronounceable word, and for many years called it "Nap'lis" for short. The principle reason given in favor of adopting the proposed name was that

the Greek termination would indicate to all the world the locality of the town; *polis* being the Greek word for city and the combination *Indiana-polis*.

A Vacation

WILLIAM G. SPELLMAN

We were going to Hawaii for a rest. The doctor had said we needed a short vacation, but that was his idea, not ours.

We flew up to the island of Mani from Honolulu. The sun had just risen out of the ocean and, through patches of mist, we caught intermittent glimpses of palm trees, pineapple plants, and long stretches of white beach. It is impossible to give names to all the shades of green that cover tropical islands. The long black runway seemed to leap up under the plane and we were rolling along the ground. It was hot! How can anyone be expected to rest on a vacation that takes him from one hot climate to another? We shouldn't have come. We might just as well have stayed on Tinian.

Mrs. Anderson was nice, a small woman in a cool print dress, with grey hair which was almost completely hidden under an oversized white hat. We liked her immediately because she made us feel at ease. The sun had burned away the mist and, while driving, our hostess maintained a steady stream of chatter, first on the names of the mountains, then on the names of each group of flowers we passed. If one is ever at a loss for words in the Hawaiian islands, the hosts of flowers and plants will provide an endless source of material.

We were getting up higher now; the

air was cool and sweet. We turned into a driveway and, at the end of two long rows of stately royal palms, a beautiful home could be seen. This was a long way from Tinian; this was civilization. Our rooms were large and cool; the beds were soft and clean. Our meals were eaten slowly to the accompaniment of gentle conversation and the soft padding of the sandals of the two Japanese serving girls. The days were spent in pursuit of pleasure. We went swimming, played tennis, and drove up into the mountains and down to the beaches, through fields of pineapple and sugar cane. The evenings were spent quietly and leisurely playing cards or reading, just living like human beings again.

It came to an end, as all good things do. We said bood-bye and promised to come back, but we knew, and I believe they knew, that we would probably never meet again.

The black runway moved slowly at first, then more rapidly and the ground seemed to drop away beneath us. Through patches in the mist, we could see a few familiar landmarks. Then it all became a blur of many shades of green and the mists closed in, blotting out the island forever.