

# THE TERRE HALL MYSTERY

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Reproduced below is one version of a nine-by-nine word square that Darryl H. Francis presented in the May 1981 issue of **Word Ways**. It was a revised form of one originally constructed by Palmer Peterson, one of the great formists of the National Puzzlers' League, and perhaps an improvement on the original.

E M P E S T I N G  
 M O I S T E N E R  
 P I E C E R A T E  
 E S C H E R I T E  
 S T E E P E D I N  
 T E R R E H A L L  
 I N A I D A B L E  
 N E T T I L L E S  
 G R E E N L E S S

Darryl experienced difficulties with the name TERRE HALL, which he had found in the 1965 Edition of The Times Index-Gazetteer of the World (the TIG). That reference work uses the name TERRE HALL interchangeably with HEMLOCK, giving each name following the other one, though in a peculiarly inconsistent fashion: TERRE HALL (HEMLOCK), but HEMLOCK TERRE HALL. The name is that of a community in Howard County, Indiana, near the southern edge of that county, some seven or eight miles southeast of Kokomo. According to the 1980 Census, the community of Hemlock has a population of 200.

What Darryl quickly discovered was that the name HEMLOCK appears in many atlases, gazetteers, postal guides, and shippers' guides, but that the name TERRE HALL appears nowhere - except in the TIG. He therefore concluded that the community in question is more frequently known as HEMLOCK than as TERRE HALL, letting the matter drop.

My curiosity piqued, I surveyed my own collection of geographic reference materials, for the period from 1900 to 1984, confirming Darryl's discovery that the name TERRE HALL is unique to the TIG. Where had that gazetteer obtained the name TERRE HALL? Since I also own reference materials going back to 1841, I decided to track TERRE HALL to its lair, on the assumption that the TIG had not simply invented TERRE HALL to pad its content.

I succeeded in finding TERRE HALL in only one of my older reference sources, Rand McNally & Co.'s Universal Atlas of the World, published in 1896. This atlas seemed to make TERRE HALL and HEM-

LOCK two different communities, both in Howard County. Since only HEMLOCK was shown on the map, I could not be certain of that fact, but the inference could be drawn from the index listings of the two names. HEMLOCK was a community with a post office but without a population (its postmaster, presumably brought in from elsewhere, must have had little to do). TERRE HALL, by contrast, had a population of 27 and a Railway Express office, but no post office. My discovery, instead of solving the TERRE HALL mystery, had succeeded in raising additional questions.

I decided to draw upon resources greater than my own. I wrote both to the post office in Hemlock, Indiana today, and to a faithful reader of *Word Ways*, David R. McCord of Redmond, Washington, a geography buff from 'way back (he has rooms full of geographic reference materials in his home, accumulated for the sheer joy of owning them). I owe most of the following information to David McCord and to Ruth M. Sutton, postmistress of Hemlock, Indiana since August 27, 1965. It so happens that her post office celebrated its centennial in 1981. In connection with the centennial, Ms. Sutton's son, Rick L. Sutton, a history teacher in nearby Kokomo, compiled an early history of the community, of which she kindly sent me a copy.

All of us remember 1852 as the year in which the Supreme Court of the United States denied Virginia the right to authorize bridging a natural stream wholly within the limits of that state. Somewhat less memorably, 1852 was also the year in which TERRE HALL, Indiana was first surveyed by John Newlin, at the request of Asa Parker, the proprietor. The land on which TERRE HALL stood was situated in Section 26 of Taylor Township, in Howard County, on an outgrowth of the Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, & Saint Louis Railroad, then known as the Pan Handle. The skillful wording of this sentence leaves me in doubt regarding what was actually known as the Pan Handle - the railroad, its outgrowth, Section 26 of the township, the entire township, or all of Howard County.

The first store in TERRE HALL was owned and operated by Cable and Osborne. Among other things, the store sold Johnson County Bourbon ("rotgut"), dealt out in quantities according to the demand therefor. A steam sawmill went into operation in 1855. In 1877 - by which time TERRE HALL had also acquired a blacksmith shop and a shingle machine - the town's first church was organized. The church, the Friendship Baptist Church, was an offshoot of the Bethany Baptist Church of Tampico, a town about two miles northwest of TERRE HALL and now known as Center. The surnames of the seven organizing members of the church were Mugg, Mugg, Mugg, Mugg, Mugg, and Thatcher (the latter an obvious misfit). The original log church was replaced by a new structure in 1881, 32 by 40 feet in size, at a cost of \$1500.

So far as it is possible to determine at this late date, no atlas, gazetteer, or other reference work published in the first 29 years of TERRE HALL'S existence condescended to recognize that existence: from 1852 to 1881, an impenetrable veil of censorship shielded TER-

RE HALL from the rest of the world. In 1881, however, a momentous event occurred, one destined to alter forever the history and status of that community: the Federal government established a post office there on May 2, 1881, appointing one Andrew J. Cole as the first postmaster. Mr. Cole served with distinction for more than eight years, being replaced by one Benjamin F. Farmer on May 14, 1889. Mr. Farmer fell from grace on March 2, 1892, being replaced by one Amasa B. Seward, but returned triumphantly to the postmastership twice afterwards - from September 21, 1892 to June 23, 1893, and again from February 12, 1896 to May 29, 1899.

Coincident with establishment of its post office in 1881, the town name was changed to HEMLOCK in order to prevent confusion with Terre Haute, Indiana. The new name was apparently intended to commemorate the tree, not the death of Socrates from drinking hemlock. The railroad running through the town - the Third Division of the Columbus, Chicago, & Indiana Central Railroad of the Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, & Saint Louis line - subsequently underwent name changes, first to the Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, & Saint Louis line, and later to the Pennsylvania line. It did not, however, immediately change the name of its station in what was now HEMLOCK, continuing to refer to it as TERRE HALL until circa 1896. The 1892 Edition of Bullinger's Postal and Shippers Guide for the United States and Canada, the 1893 Edition of Rand McNally's Enlarged Business Atlas and Shippers' Guide (the direct predecessor of today's Commercial Atlases, publication of which began in 1911), the 1896 Rand McNally atlas previously cited, and the 1898 Edition of The National Standard Family and Business Atlas of the World (Chicago, Illinois: The Fort Dearborn Publishing Company) all include TERRE HALL. On the other hand, the 1897 Edition of Rand McNally & Co.'s Indexed Atlas of the World, the 1903 Edition of the same atlas, and the 1895 Edition of Bullinger's Guide have eliminated TERRE HALL.

Assuming that 1898 is the year in which TERRE HALL breathed its last gasp, I can state authoritatively that the TIG resurrected a name obsolete for 67 years when it included TERRE HALL in its 1965 Edition. Such dedication to a name that once existed is truly above and beyond the call of logological duty! It is all the more remarkable when you consider that 198,000 of the 343,000 geographic names in the TIG were taken from the Mid-Century Edition of The Times Atlas of the World (1955-1959). That atlas did not list TERRE HALL, and neither did its predecessor, the 1922 Edition of The Times Survey Atlas of the World. The TIG therefore had to make a major effort to find a name missing from all geographic reference works published in the twentieth century. Hats off to the TIG!