

# TURNING THE PAGE

## History Book Evolving Into TV Documentary

By Kevin Lilly

Thousands of people in Indiana and beyond have enjoyed reading the poignant words of Hoosier historian James H. Madison. In 2016, they and others will have the opportunity to see those words transformed to the television screen.

WFYI Public Media is converting the book, *Hoosiers: A New History of Indiana*, into a four-part documentary to be aired starting this spring.

In the book, Madison discusses Indiana's past and its transformation from an Indian frontier to its present-day commercial and residential landscape. Along the way, he weaves in Hoosier values, such as individual freedom and a general distrust of government. He includes the triumphs and shortcomings of the people and events that have shaped the 19th state of the union.

Like Madison, who sought to "engage minds and hearts with stories that connect past, present and future" with his book, WFYI's documentary crew brings a passion to this project. Team members spent many hours over several months traveling from the Ohio River to Lake Michigan and places in between to capture the essence of Indiana.

Led by producer Kim Jacobs, WFYI interviewed descendants of key historical figures as well as little-known history makers. The crew also uncovered important, historical documents stored in attics and even used a drone to provide a bird's eye view of some of the state's beautiful natural features.

In turning words from a page to sound and visuals for TV, WFYI tapped into Madison's enthusiasm. Jacobs says his "eyes light up" when recounting Indiana's history. He narrates portions of the documentary and conducts interviews as one of many voices found in the film.

Jacobs warns viewers not to expect a political chronology.



Producer Kim Jacobs and videographer Doug Moon interview Suzie and Dan Hunt, part of a farming family that has been in Rush County near Carthage for 175 years. The Hunts are Quakers, whose ancestors participated in the Underground Railroad.



Videographer Vinnie Manganello becomes part of a Civil War re-enactment at Conner Prairie.



Susan and Anne Emison, part of a sixth-generation Knox County family, share artifacts (with producer Kim Jacobs and videographer Chris Elberfeld) of ancestor Thomas Emison, who fought in the Battle of Tippecanoe.

Instead, viewers will see and hear a social history. Events surrounding the Civil War, the Ohio River and African Americans, for example, are told by direct descendants of those who had first-hand experiences. Jacobs says these family members have done their due diligence and proudly recount the details of their ancestors' struggles and successes.

Jacobs wants the documentary and the stories it portrays to inform people, as well as invoke an urge to engage with the history that is undoubtedly a prologue to the future. Among the stories viewers will see:

- Indiana contains some of earth's most fertile ground. As a result, farmers have been providing food for the state, nation and world for many years.
- In 1810 at the Grouseland mansion in Vincennes, an intense meeting took place between then Indiana Territory Gov. William Henry Harrison and Tecumseh, the Native American leader of the Shawnee. The two argued over the validity of a land treaty and the pair nearly came to violent blows.
- In Lake County, immigrants played a pivotal role in the steel mills. Their influence can still be seen in diverse neighborhood cultures.
- In the early 1800s, hundreds of free African Americans, mostly from North Carolina and Virginia, started a new life in what is known as the Beech settlement in Rush County. The rural farming community flourished alongside Quakers for a number of years before the population declined by the 1900s. But not everyone departed farming for urban life. Descendants of the Hunt family remain on land acquired more than 100 years ago. They describe their family's efforts to assist slaves traveling to Canada via the Underground Railroad.

Other historic moments include former slave Mary Bateman Clark suing for and winning her freedom. The 1821 court case set a precedent

that linked indentured servitude to slavery, both of which were illegal in Indiana.

Clark's descendent, Eunice Trotter, is a trailblazer in her own right. *The Indianapolis Star* hired Trotter as a reporter in 1976. She worked her way up to editor, becoming the first African American woman to serve in that role in the paper's history. She has gone on to enjoy an accomplished career in journalism and leadership.

John Mutz, the former lieutenant governor, recognized coming changes in the domestic automobile industry. In response, he began courting the Japanese to bring auto manufacturing plants to Indiana. At the time, he was told the only Japanese plant he would ever bring to the state was a bonsai tree. To the benefit of thousands of Indiana families that now rely on the jobs that exist where corn and soybeans once grew, Mutz proved the naysayers wrong.

These are just a small taste of what the WFYI documentary attempts to capture of the state's history.

Madison says he hopes every Hoosier, especially those who say they never liked history much, will indulge in the documentary sponsored by the Indiana Historical Society. Maybe they won't take interest in all Indiana history, he adds, but maybe a portion – like the canals and their importance to the state's economy in the 1800s, much like today's highways. Making these connections shows the importance of knowing what has transpired leading up to the present.

"We have traditions here in Indiana, and they have created paths and those are sometimes great paths and sometimes not, but they are certainly there and you can't just wipe them away and pretend they don't exist," Madison offers. "So, to look forward, you must look backward."

**RESOURCES:** James H. Madison, Indiana University, at [www.indiana.edu](http://www.indiana.edu) | Kim Jacobs, WFYI, at [www.wfyi.org](http://www.wfyi.org)

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