

Silverport 8/7/48  
Knefler

city became the hub of the transportation systems of the state. Germans, moving west from Cincinnati in the middle of the century, went to Indianapolis or to St. Louis, and their habits of industry and love of good music and living imposed some patterns on the city.

One theory often expressed in Indianapolis is that its population increased because people would come into town on an interurban and never go home. Throughout the years, it has maintained its rather rural character. It is a city of 438 churches predominantly Protestant, and church life and associated activities are extremely important. Nearly every grown male wears a lapel button of some sort—Shrine, lodge or veterans' organization.

The architecture, too, seems an index to the character of the place and its people. All of the bad and quite a lot of the good in Midwestern American taste are exhibited. Some of the loveliest homes in the country are in Marion County, and some of the most hideous slums in the United States are in the "mile square," the downtown section which is the city Ralston designed. Dominating everything is the Indiana Soldiers and Sailors Monument—"the monument" to Indianapolis—in the circle which Ralston made the hub of his radiating streets.

At first the governor's mansion was in the circle, but one of Indiana's first ladies objected to hanging out her wash so publicly, and the governor moved elsewhere. In 1887, Bruno Schmitz was commissioned architect for a monument in the circle, and it was completed in 1901. It is a tall, graceful, 284½-foot shaft, ending in a thirty-eight-foot statue of Victory, torch in one hand, sword in other, facing due south. The War Between the States was still an issue when the monument was built. At the base are fountains and heroic groups, sculptured in stone by Rudolph Schwartz. There is an observatory at the top, and the view from there, unless it is an exceptionally bad day, is, through the smoke and haze, almost to the edge of the town. Visitors are occasionally startled by the monument, seeing in it American Victorian tastes gone absolutely wild, but they can get to like it. It was described nicely by Mrs. Susannah Tarkington, widow of Booth Tarkington. She said, "I think it is rather sweet."

A number of impressive buildings surround the circle, but the most fitting, the old English Hotel, which houses the town's main legitimate theater, is to be torn down. The English is a low, weather-beaten building of true dignity.

The monument, with its singular charm, is one of the factors in a besetting municipal problem, and a typical one in that nothing much gets done about it—pigeons. They infest (Continued on Page 115)



"The monument," centerpiece of the city. Atop a shaft 284 feet tall is a thirty-eight-foot figure of Victory. To visitors it is monument building gone wild; to one gentle resident, "rather sweet."