

George Ade: The Aesop of Indiana

Essay prepared by IHS staff

Born in Kentland, Indiana, George Ade was the second youngest of seven children raised by John and Adaline (Bush) Ade. Lacking enthusiasm for manual labor, especially farming, the young Ade could usually be found with his nose buried in a book. An 1887 graduate of Purdue University, where he met and started a lifelong friendship with Hoosier cartoonist John T. McCutcheon, Ade worked as a reporter for the Lafayette Call and also wrote testimonials for a patent medicine company's tobacco-habit cure.

Ade and the Chicago Record

In 1890 Ade joined McCutcheon on the staff of the Chicago Morning News, which later became the Chicago Record. After proving his worth as a reporter, Ade was put in charge of the column, "Stories of the Streets and of the Town," which McCutcheon illustrated. Ade captured the hustle and bustle of Chicago through such vivid characters as Artie, a young office boy; Doc Horne, a gentlemanly liar; and Pink Marsh, a black shoeshine boy. His column also introduced the work that would make him famous: fables.

A Fabled Career

"I would rather have written Fables in Slang than be President."

William Allen White, Kansas newspaper editor

Ade's humorous fables, which first appeared in book form in 1899's *Fables in Slang*, were an immediate hit with the public. These "modern fables" were syndicated nationally and even produced as movies. Ade also tasted success as a playwright, producing such Broadway smashes as *The Sultan of Sulu*, a comic opera about America's activities in the Philippines; *Peggy from Paris*, a musical comedy; and *The College Widow*, a comedy about college life and football set on Crawfordsville, Indiana's Wabash College campus.

Hazelden Farm

"I am a bachelor but I prefer to live in my own home. My enthusiasms include golf, travel, horse-racing, and the spoken drama. My antipathies are social show-offs, bigots on religion, fanatics on total abstinence, and all persons who take themselves seriously. I love to put on big parties or celebrations and see a throng of people having a good time."

-- George Ade on George Ade

While Ade was busy traveling and writing, back home in Indiana his brother, William, bought on his behalf acres of Newton County farmland. On wooded land near the town of Brook, Ade built an impressive English Manor/Tudor-style home called Hazelden Farm. Ade's home soon became known as the amusement center for the United States, hosting a campaign stop in 1908 by William Howard Taft, a rally for Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose Party in 1912, and a homecoming for soldiers and sailors in 1919.

Final Days

Financially secure through his writings, Ade turned to other amusements later in life, traveling frequently throughout the world and contributing to his two favorite charities-- Sigma Chi fraternity and Purdue University. Along with fellow Purdue alumnus David Ross, Ade offered financial support to enable the university to build a new football stadium, which the college named Ross-Ade Stadium in their honor. After many months of illness, Ade died on May 16, 1944 in Brook.