

Cacogenic Indianapolis; Just Call Me Ishmael

For a reading at The Indianapolis Literary Club on April 4, 2011 David E. Young

This is a story from the Golden Age of Indiana, a preacher who would be sitting among us were he still alive, and eugenics, a dark side of our state's history.

The protagonist of my essay, is one Oscar Carleton McCulloch, whom I will presently introduce in much more detail. In 1877, Oscar Carleton McCulloch left the relative sophistication of Chicago and Sheboygan, Wisconsin for the marshes and plains of Indianapolis to minister to Hoosiers, some of whom he found to be appalling. Soon after he arrived, his encounter with a poor family changed his way of looking at charitable giving. He developed an antipathy toward pauperism and devoted much of the rest of his life to eliminating the culture of poverty through an approach that he called "scientific charity" and "Applied Christianity".

At the end of the nineteenth century, Indianapolis was the sixth most populous state in the country and both political parties wanted Hoosiers on their national ticket Indianapolis was a literary and publishing powerhouse with at least four men who were, or were about to be, wildly successful in their literary lives: James Whitcomb Riley, Meredith Nicholson, Booth Tarkington, and George Ade. Lew Wallace had preceded them. Oscar and other public intellectuals were also living in an age of tremendous scientific discovery and innovation. From Darwin and Spencer they extrapolated ideas about improving the human race through better breeding. The pseudo-science they relied on was called eugenics and the foundation they laid grew slowly in the early 20th century until a German revolutionary named Adolph Hitler adopted it as his blueprint for the building of a master race.

With the demise of Adolph Hitler, eugenics was thoroughly discredited and became "politically incorrect" long before "political correctness" entered our vocabulary.

Today, some sixty-five years after the death of Hitler, we are again at a crossroads. Science is advancing faster than our civilization can absorb the new learning. In the not too distant future, but probably after most of us have shuttled off this mortal coil, scientists will have the capability to genetically design a human being who will be free of hereditary diseases, who will have the physical make up of an NBA power forward or an NFL linebacker. Teenagers will no longer have to worry about the shame of acne nor the heartbreak of psoriasis. And these results can be race-neutral.

Oscar thought he had a plan to eventually eliminate the underclass. Today we do not have a clue as to how we might improve the lot of that underclass. We can pump billions into early childhood education in the hope of offsetting the harm done by bad parenting and other negative nurturing practices in the home. Perhaps we can show kids how they can get a piece of what we used to call the American Dream - before the Bernie Madoffs, real estate shysters, and hedge fund managers with financial products that even they did not understand, laid waste to that dream. Yes kids, you can advance even if you have no particular talent or skills. All it takes is a positive attitude, hard work and honesty, along with those other precepts in the Boy Scout's creed.

Look at Rush Limbaugh! Kicked out of college, fired from at least seven jobs, fired by at least three wives. Did he give up? No he persevered and look at him now. I took my philosophy courses soon after Roger Bannister broke the four minute mile. My favorite professor, a bitterly sardonic misogynist, loved to take on the cult of positive thinking. "Look at that one-legged man," he said. "The only reason he can't run the four minute mile is that he won't try hard enough." The professor had no way of knowing that one day amputees would attach computer driven springs to their stumps and out-distance those poor mortals whose legs were flesh and bone. Many years later,

I was greatly amused to come across a newspaper feature showcasing my old professor. There he was in a railroader's cap, showing off his model train collection which filled his whole basement; endless loops of track replete with a cute little village. He had another life which I could never have imagined.

In January 2009, I was doing some free reading at the downtown Borders Book Store periodical rack when a book review in the magazine Reason caught my eye. The short review was inaccurate and misleading but my course was set. The book reviewed was entitled "Inventing America's Worst Family; The Rise and Fall of the Tribe of Ishmael" by Nathaniel Deutsch. I was further intrigued when I learned that the inventor of this family was an Indianapolis preacher named Oscar Carleton McCulloch. His 1996 biography by Genevieve Weeks, a Professor in the Department of Social Services at IUPUI, had been sitting unread on my Hoosier bookshelf for at least a decade right next to a biography of Henry Ward Beecher. The Weeks' biography is a good read for those interested in the development of the modern welfare state, but has little to say regarding Oscar's interest in eugenics. More about the "Worst Family" later, but first let me tell you more about our very own Oscar Carleton McCulloch, one of the first presidents of the Indianapolis Literary Club.

Oscar was the son of a successful pharmacist and after a stint in business school, Oscar himself became a drug salesman, traveling throughout the Midwest for a company based in Chicago. In the 1870's he was making \$3500 annually, a princely salary at that time. But, he was not happy. He had had a strict Presbyterian

upbringing and could not suppress his desire to become a minister. He left the

pharmaceutical business to attend the Chicago Theological Seminary - despite the warning of his father that he would find no financial security in that profession. After completing religious training, he accepted a pulpit at a Congregational Church in Sheboygan. His time there was short and he was somewhat divisive

as he wished to open his church to working people, notwithstanding the objections of many influential members of his flock, He was following the advice of Henry Ward Beecher, who wrote: "The door of admission to the church should be as wide as humanity". So after much agonizing internal debate and conflicting statements about his intentions, he left Sheboygan (apparently voluntarily) in 1877 to take the pulpit of the Pilgrim Congregational Church, which at that time was located directly west of the Episcopal Christ Church Cathedral. on what is now known as Monument Circle He was promised a salary of \$2500 per year, but often had to plead with the trustees for his money. The Congregationalists did not imitate the Methodists by selling or renting pews to the wealthy. His diary abounds with his efforts to get more money from his flock. His friend, Henry Ward Beecher had been the minister at Indianapolis Second Presbyterian Church, also on Monument Circle, in the years before he moved to New York City where he preached at the Pilgrim Congregational Church in Manhattan until his death in 1887. Beecher and McCulloch corresponded and Beecher spoke at Oscar's church at least once. In 1884, Beecher came to Indianapolis to deliver a sermon on "Evolution and Revolution".

In 1860, the population of Indianapolis was only 18,611. Indianapolis, as a developing rail center grew rapidly and by 1870 the population had grown to 48,244. The end of the Civil War saw an influx of returning veterans, freed slaves, and more migrants from the Upland South. When Oscar came to Indianapolis in 1877, the population was estimated to be 75,000, an increase of approximately 400% in 17 years He arrived at a time of economic upheaval, with significant unemployment and additional stress due to a general reduction in wages.

Prior to the 1870's pauperism was seen by most citizens as a nuisance, not a menace. The pauper's "aggressive pursuit of alms violated Victorian and Christian notions of the meek and modest poor, as well as those of the classical liberal American vision of the able bodied performing an honest day's labor". Charity had been dispensed by the township trustees and the Indianapolis Benevolence Society. When the city was small, the recipients of charity and their condition in society were generally known and no investigation was necessary before dispensing or withholding aid.

In the early 1880's, Oscar sold the church property on Monument Circle to William English for \$15,000. He then leased the space back while he was building a larger church on the southeast corner of Meridian and New York Streets. William English then added to the English Hotel and Opera House on the Circle using one of the walls of Oscar's church. The new church, which was a hulking red brick structure, was completed in 1884. Less than twenty years later, it was torn down to make room for the

new United States Courthouse and Post Office.

Oscar called the church “a people’s college” with an open door to those who wished to learn. The church also offered a lending library, prenatal and child care and a visiting nurse. The Pilgrim Congregational Church eventually merged with the nearby Mayflower Congregational Church and later moved to its present location on Pennsylvania Street in Williams Creek. The church is now known as the First Congregational United Church of Christ. For a long time, a portrait of Oscar Carleton

McCulloch, painted by his friend, T.C. Steele, was displayed in the church parlor above the fireplace mantel. I have been informed that this portrait has been stolen and its current whereabouts are unknown. T.C. Steele did portraits of several members of the Literary club and some are still in the club’s possession.

Little is known of McCulloch’s views regarding minorities. He was old enough to have served the Union cause in the Civil War, but did not; presumably because he had health problems which troubled him throughout his life. Little is said in his copious diary about minorities. It is quite possible that he did not deem them worthy of comment. His emphasis was always on the white race and he was almost obsessive in his belief that the scourge of the white race was its degeneracy. Oscar was a supporter of organized labor and, unlike his friend Henry Ward Beecher, sympathized with labor in the many strikes that occurred in the late 19th century.

One of his most controversial stands involved Chicago’s Haymarket Square Riot in 1886, in which a peaceful rally in support of the eight-hour day turned bloody when someone threw a bomb at the police line, murdering a police officer, and igniting a fury.

He believed that the eight anarchists involved in the Riot, who were sentenced to death did not receive a fair trial. He wrote in his diary that several lectures he had planned to give were cancelled and he was castigated in the press for using the pulpit to make such a personal statement.

1877 was the year when the Indianapolis Literary Club was organized, Oscar was not a charter member, but he apparently applied to join the Club as soon as he heard about it. He was accepted as a member in December, 1877 and got right to work reading his first essay, on the contribution of Darwin to religion, in January 1878. For several years the Club met in one of Pilgrim Congregational Church’s meeting rooms. Oscar presented four essays and, in 1889, became the twelfth President of the Club. As did many churchmen in the late 19th century, Oscar venerated science. He was a student of Darwin and liberal in his interpretation of the Bible. His friend, David Starr Jordan, a renowned biologist, President of Indiana University, and later the first President of Stanford University, was reluctant to join Oscar’s church because he could not accept the church’s Statement of Faith. Oscar muscled his application for membership through the membership committee and Jordan became an active member. A few years later, in 1884, Oscar persuaded the congregation to vote in

a new constitution which deleted language referring to a literal belief in The Holy Scriptures and the belief that everyone was born a sinner.

No one ever thought of Oscar as an original thinker, but he was very bright, a tireless organizer and a thoughtful leader. He was strongly opposed to direct charity and reworked several charities into organizations that later developed into state agencies and the current United Way. He believed that giving direct aid to poor people who were unredeemable was not productive. In 1880, he wrote in Organized Charity in Cities:

“No social student will question the existence of such a law of degeneration in society, or has failed to see such degraded forms of life. He sees the social parasite, the pauper in whom the instinct of self-help has disappeared. He sees the children, under the same law, becoming like their parents, and in all this he is powerless to help”.

He termed his approach “scientific charity” which operated within the framework of “Applied Christianity”. His method involved developing case histories of the poor to separate the worthy poor from the unworthy poor who were undeserving because granting them aid would only encourage them in their degenerate ways. We see an echo of this in our own times as our city fathers have attempted to discourage citizens from contributing directly to panhandlers in downtown Indianapolis by directing donors to collection boxes where the money can presumably be put to a more beneficial use. What is our obligation, if any, to the poor? Should we contribute to them individually or only through charitable organizations? The Bible says that “the Poor shall always be with you”. Anatole France famously wrote “The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread.” Oscar, in the spirit of Social Darwinism, opposed all forms of “outdoor” or private, direct charity, in favor of “indoor” or institutional charity.

Now, on to the “Worst Family”, and Oscar’s role in inventing it. Soon after he came to Indianapolis, Oscar toured an impoverished area of the city and came upon a couple who wished to be married. Oscar performed the ceremony and returned several months later to revisit the newlyweds. He was shocked to learn that the bride had replaced the groom with an earlier husband and the man Oscar joined to her in Holy Matrimony had been sent packing. This, along with the dire poverty he witnessed, impressed him greatly.

At about the same time, he read Richard L. Dugdale’s study of the Jukes’ family: published in 1877 as “The Jukes; A Study in Crime, Pauperism, Disease, and Poverty”. Although Dugdale invented the name Jukes, he did study a real cacogenic family in rural New York. Cacogenic refers to an individual or family with a dysgenic or defective

gene pool. When Oscar began his study of the Indianapolis family, he gave some credit to Dugdale for inspiring his work. Oscar settled on an actual family named Ishmael for his treatment. With the help of the Center Township Trustee's and a researcher named James Wright from what would later be known as the Chamber of Commerce, Oscar amassed 1,692 case histories of the Ishmaels and those he

considered to be their extended kinfolk. His studies accounted for about 10,000 people in 30 families. This study lasted for eight years. Oscar must have essentially covered almost all of the city's poor in his study. He presented his findings in a short address at Cleveland, Ohio in July, 1888. His audience was the annual convention of the National Conference of Charity and Corrections. He later was elected president of that Conference and hosted its annual meeting in Indianapolis in the Spring of 1891.

The use of the Ishmael family name in the study was unusual. All of the other published family studies used pseudonyms to protect the privacy of those studied. Perhaps, as a preacher, he found the name Ishmael to be symbolic. In the Bible, Ishmael was the first born son of Abraham by his concubine, Hagar. During Hagar's pregnancy, the Angel of the Lord spoke to her saying that her son, Ishmael, would be a "wild ass of a man, constantly at odds with his brethren". Later, Abraham had a second son, Issac, by his wife, Sarah. Because she was jealous, Sarah drove Hagar and Ishmael into the desert. Throughout literature ever since, the name Ishmael has conjured the outcast. The moorish Ishmael became the link between Abraham and the Islamic religion. You will probably remember that Ishmael or the Tribe of Ishmael appeared in the works of James Fenimore Cooper (*The Prairie*) and Herman Melville (*Moby Dick*). The 19th Century novelists were not kind to the backwoods Hoosier. The Hoosier Schoolmaster, in Edward Eggleston's work of the same name had to contend with a trustee who was also a thief. After safely relocating to Manhattan, Henry Ward Beecher's wife, Eunice White Beecher, anonymously wrote a scathing novel about her life in Indiana before the Civil War. Hoosiers were outraged and attempted to ban the novel, "From Dawn to Daylight by a Minister's Wife," which depicted Indianapolis as a "primitive, disease-infested backwater, devoid of culture or modern sensibilities." [Encyclopedia of Indianapolis, Page 605]. The members of Second Prez were doubly outraged because she accused them of stiffing Henry for his salary. That would not have been a surprise to Edward Eggleston's Hoosier Schoolmaster or even Oscar Carleton McCulloch who had to go hat in hand to get what was promised him. It is understandable that New Yorkers or Bostonians would see Indiana as a flat miserable swamp peopled by unwashed savages who never missed an opportunity to lie or steal. Even the stories about the origin of the term "Hoosier" are often uncomplimentary, but we need not get into that here.

One person who did much to rehabilitate the image of Indiana was James Whitcomb Riley, who was as famous as a rock star in his time. His *Little Orphant Annie* was modeled on Mary Alice White, a child abandoned by her parents and dropped off at the Riley home in Greenfield where she was expected to earn her keep, She was

eleven and Riley, whom she called "Bud" was twelve. She was with the Riley family for a year until a relative came to take her away. Mary had had a tough childhood and the genteel Riley's were fascinated by her rough language and strange tales. For no good reason she was considered to be one of the Ishmaels. The present day Ishmael's who have their own website have gone along with the gag and have a song about her on their compact disc. Riley made efforts to find her later in his life, but was

apparently unsuccessful. At the time of her death, a few years after Riley's death in 1916, she was the subject of a lengthy obituary in the Indianapolis Star. She had apparently been a farm wife and mother of four living only a few miles away from the Riley Homestead most of her life. At his death, Riley was attended by Dr. Carleton Buel McCulloch, Oscar's son and another member of the Literary Club. Carleton ran for Governor of Indiana in 1920 and 1924 on the Democrat ticket. He lost his last race to Edward L. Jackson, who was a front man for the Ku Klux Klan. But I digress.

What was the appearance of the Ishmael Family in 1880? It is important to note that the family was probably tri-racial. The largest component, by far, consisted of Whites from the Upland South, descended from United Kingdom ancestors who were sent to the colonies as criminals, prostitutes, or otherwise undesirable citizens. One of the patriarchs, Ben Ishmael, believed to be Welsh, served in the American Revolutionary War. He later moved to Kentucky where he was a farmer. At some point he moved West while his descendants moved north to Indiana. Oscar did not disparage

Ben Ishmael and noted that some of his descendants who stayed in Kentucky did well. It is not clear why most of the family left Kentucky. Many farmers, including the father of Abraham Lincoln, left Kentucky because of difficulties in obtaining clear titles to land. Although the Indiana Ishmaels worked in agricultural jobs when they could find them, there is no reason to believe that they bought farmland in Indiana. The other components, runaway African-American slaves and displaced Native Americans melded in with the Ishmaels over generations. Perhaps their race was not apparent to the late nineteenth century observer, as the Ishmaels (and many other poor people) were so dirty that their skin color was difficult to determine. Oscar's description was much more colorful "they were, as a rule, a large, raw boned class, coarse, rough in their manners and ways of life, and primitive in their eating. All was fish which came to their net. They lived in the hills and hunting was the chief occupation...That the family was of a low and thievish bent is a natural conclusion and such was the case.....It was an ignorant family. There was no pretense of education among them. They were classed separately, and their associates were few except as they found among the outlaws of the hills and Indians. Their features have always been the same in general outline. Narrow, retreating foreheads, eyes which look like the eyes of a pig.....When on the road they are free and easy, full of a sort of glee and happiness which is not easy to describe unless one can appreciate the lawless feeling which they have when they find themselves traveling so constantly that officers of the law have no terrors for them.....The Ishmaels never seem to try to accumulate property to any extent.....They

seem to be unable to conceive of a life beyond the tomb.”

Elsa F. Kramer, writing for the Indiana Magazine of History in “Oscar C. McCulloch and Twentieth Century Eugenics” describes where the Tribe of Ishmael lived and how they earned their keep:

The Ishmaels and their kinfolk lived “in a log house on Tennessee street; above Indiana Avenue on the banks of the canal; on the edge of Possum Hollow; in Dumptown, in ownerless land behind a cemetery near White River; in predominantly black Bucktown and Sleigho; in tenements and houses of ill fame; in shacks or hovels in the swampy ground along the rivers and creeks; Near what is now Wishard Hospital and Military Park.” Typical work while wintering in Indianapolis included “hauling ashes or wood, cutting ice, scavenging the dumps for marketable items, scraping the grease off White River to sell to the soap companies”.

Before we romanticize the Ishmaels as free-spirited revelers who only wanted to be let alone, let us consider the case of Ben Ishmael’s great Grandson, France Ishmael. Oscar’s assistant, James Wright, wrote: “ France [Ishmael] earned his living by killing Saint Bernards, Newfoundlands, and other large dogs, typically by the undetectable means of poison. Posing as a good Samaritan, he would then notify the owners that their beloved pets had died, generously offering to remove the cumbersome carcasses for a quarter. France would then haul his canine victims to a secluded spot outside the city limits, where he skinned the dogs and sold their pelts for a dollar to eager rugmakers”.

So, that is one depiction of life in Indianapolis in the late 19th Century. Nature, red in tooth and claw, was pushing mankind into a dystopia that could only be averted by radical action. Oscar’s solution, as expressed in his 1888 speech to the National Conferences on Charities and Corrections was to institutionalize all of society’s defectives to prevent them from breeding more of the same. Three years later, Oscar Carleton McCulloch would be dead. Oscar had been sick all of his adult life. When well, he tended to overwork himself and then would have to take several months off to regain his health. In the summer of 1891, he toured Europe with the church’s travel club, but had to return early because of his condition.

Two sermons Oscar preached in his last year on this earth dealt with poverty. Like many ministers with wealthy congregations, he was bothered by a saying attributed to Jesus in Matthew 19:24: “And again I say to you: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of

heaven". He addressed this in a sermon entitled "The New Law of Poverty". He preached : "...you may preach poverty everywhere, but 99 out of 100 will try to escape it. It is a thing to be dreaded. It is a thing to be hated. It is a thing to be left behind for it hinders a man in the possession of the birthright that God meant he should have. Poverty and Civilization cannot go together.....On the other hand wealth and civilization go together.....wealth is the rich soil in which a human soul-root unfolds its powers and becomes its possibility. God meant that we should flee poverty..... your life is a trust, hold it for those that need [it]....not the relinquishment of wealth, but its wise distribution – holding it for human service. This is the new law of poverty". That same year he preached "The Law of Mutual Aid". This sermon shows him to be somewhat uncomfortable with Social Darwinism. He simplifies his message by referencing "Darwin's Law of the Survival of the Fittest". Surely he knew that this concept was associated with Herbert Spencer and Darwin avoided using it. Living in the Golden Age of the late 19th Century, he permitted himself the fancy that the age of disastrous war and megalomaniac leaders had passed into history. His message was: "Men are asking: how, then in view of Darwin's Law of the Survival of the Fittest, can we have any warrant for going behind and picking up those weak ones that nature would have left to die, or to reform those who are deformed, whom nature found unfitted for her struggle.....What warrant have we for sympathy says this new doctrine of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest?.....A wrong use has been made of that law of the survival of the fittest. That is not the prime factor in nature. The prime factor in nature is the law of mutual aid."

Oscar goes on with many examples of how animals help one another. Were he still alive he would be interested to learn that recent studies in anthropology among contemporary tribes of hunter-gatherers suggest that humans alone seem to be able to cooperate and reciprocate with others of their species outside their family or band. This may be the critical factor that separated men from the apes five million years ago.

Oscar concludes his sermon:

"...lonely, tyrannic men are disappearing. No longer does an Alexander stride across the world, or Caesar or Napoleon dream of universal empire. The word of the present is together. The unions and the confederations, whether of workmen or employers, all are signs of the effort nature is making toward association. God's word is together..... God has made this law of mutual aid so strong that he has impressed and stamped it upon the life of everything that breathes".

Oscar preached his last sermon in September, 1891. He died in Indianapolis at the age of forty-eight in December 1891. He had been ill since early in that year with a painful tumor in his groin which had been wrongly diagnosed as Tuberculosis. His illness was never diagnosed while he was alive but was found on autopsy to be Hodgkins Disease His funeral was a grand affair in which he was justly honored for all of his charitable work which benefited Indianapolis and the nation as a whole. The members of the Indianapolis Literary Club voted to attend the funeral in a body. On December 20,

1891, a memorial service was held at the English Opera House. His fellow preacher and friend Myron W. Reed, minister of the Second Presbyterian Church and a member of the Literary Club, memorialized him on a funeral card:

“In whatever mansion of the father’s house he finds himself, on earth, or in heaven, he will be a hopeful man; not looking backward but looking forward; not looking down but looking up; ready to lend a helping hand and not afraid to die”.

Matt Ridley, in his book “The Rational Optimist: How Prosperity Evolves” wrote:

“The craze for eugenics that swept the world, embraced by left and right with equal fervor, after 1900 ...caused the passage of illiberal and cruel laws in democracies like America as well as autocracies like Germany, took as its premise the deterioration of the blood lines caused by the overbreeding of the poor and the less intelligent. A huge intellectual consensus gathered around the idea that a distant catastrophe must be averted by harsh measures.....” Theodore Roosevelt was quoted as saying “I wish very much that the wrong people could be prevented entirely from breeding; and when the evil nature of these people is sufficiently flagrant, this should be done. Criminals should be sterilized and feeble-minded persons forbidden to leave offspring behind them”.

The root of all that was evil in society was seen to be biological and definitely not socio-economic.

Despite his immersion in the works of Spencer and Darwin, Oscar was not so hard-hearted as to apply biological determinism to the germ plasm (as genes were called in his day) of children. “We have to get hold of the children,” he often said. He believed that if children were rescued early enough from their defective parents, there was hope that they might be saved. And, near the end of his life, he, along with most of those involved in the movement to reform charities, began to convert from biological determinism to seeing all of the poor as worthy of redemption. Oscar seemed to be always slightly ahead of his time.

Oscar’s family study was a methodological disaster. He lost control of his unit of analysis by going from family to tribe to the entire pauper class. His objectivity was questionable as he seemed to have formed his answers before he began his research. Brian Siegal, who studied the Ismaels in depth, notes that Oscar’s assistant, James Wright, fabricated many of the case histories. The people he interviewed were real, but dates, places of birth, and other material facts did not match up with census data and other relevant historical data. It is fair to assume that Wright exaggerated the Ishmaels for his own amusement and Oscar accepted his work at face value.

In 1907, Indiana became the first state to pass a law authorizing compulsory sterilization

of any confirmed criminal, idiot, rapist or imbecile in a state institution.” Confirmation required the recommendation of the institutional physician and two qualified surgeons.

The law had a colorful legal history and was finally repealed in 1977, during the administration of Otis Bowen, who had the image of a kindly family doctor from New Bremen, IN. It is estimated that 2,500 Indiana inmates were sterilized under this policy. Nationally, 65,000 individuals were sterilized with over 20,000 sterilizations in California. In December, 1948, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide which prohibited involuntary abortion, infanticide, and mandatory sterilization.

And what about the Ishmael's? Follow up studies in the Twentieth Century showed that they had given up their wandering ways, found regular employment, and more or less blended in with their larger communities after leaving Indiana. The crude lives that they and other impoverished families endured in the Nineteenth Century gave rise to the modern welfare state and created employment for a vast new class of professionals dedicated to helping them. The Ishmaels, whose ancestors got along by doing nasty jobs that others wouldn't do, probably wish that they had been left alone.

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Wikipedia, the source that dares not speak its name, everywhere, now

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