

Theodore Dreiser attended IU

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In the passing parade of Hoosiers who came to Bloomington to get a university education there was one who became famous or infamous, depending on how you feel about him.

THEODORE DREISER CAME into the world at Terre Haute in 1871, the ninth child of a religious father and a mother who belived in exorcism. (Theodore was a puny baby and his mother enlisted the help of a neighborhood woman who dabbled in the occult to save his life.)

~~The Dreisers had been dogged by bad luck, and~~ Theodore was born on the wrong side of the tracks. One older brother, Roman, chased rainbows all his life. Another brother, Paul, had been designated by his father for the clergy. Instead, he rebelled, changed his name to Paul Dresser, and composed "On the Banks of the Wabash".

THE DREISERS MOVED to Warsaw, and while



THEODORE

DREISER

Was 22 when

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they lived there Theodore had a teacher named Mildred Fielding, who was impressed with him. Unable to "make-it" financially in Warsaw, the family moved to Chicago, where Theodore got a job as a stock boy in a hardware store. His Warsaw teacher, who had become the principal of a Chicago school,

presented herself at the Dreiser household and persuaded Theodore to go to Indiana University. She was so determined, in fact, she made him an offer he couldn't refuse — she paid the \$300 for his freshman year.

Overwhelmed, Theodore prepped himself for his year at IU by reading popular novels about Ivy League college life. The reality of his life was different. To say that when he stepped off the Monon train in Bloomington in the fall of 1889, that he was an ugly duckling is an understatement. He had a cast in one eye, a receding chin, buck teeth, a suitcase of hand-me-down clothes, and an inferiority complex.

THE STILL FLEDGLING Indiana University had recently moved from the southern end of College Avenue to Dunn's Woods. In later years Dreiser wrote: "There were, in addition, six or seven other buildings, of brick or wood scattered rather casually over a large and physically varied campus, which to

(Continued on page 2, col 6)