

John East flamboyant attorney

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Perhaps the most flamboyant lawyer to practice his trade in Monroe County was a John Ransom East, better known among his contemporaries as John "Rouser".

A GENUINE MONROE COUNTY native, East was born in Indian Creek Township in 1845. After a stint in the Union Army during which he accompanied General Sherman on his famous march to the sea, East tried his hand at teaching before entering Indiana University.

Armed with a law degree in 1870 and shopping around for a firm that would appreciate his legal expertise, East approached James Rogers. He was initially rejected for lack of experience. However, they teamed up until the following fall when East was elected to a four-year term as County Clerk.

A STAUNCH SUPPORTER of the Democratic Party, the lawyer drew huge audiences by promising free

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pigs to the ugliest Republican in the crowd. Also a Prohibitionist he parted company with the Democrats at their 1882 State convention because they refused to adopt a dry platform plank. True to his convictions, East traveled over the state bitterly attacking big brewery interests entrenched in political high places.

Although East should have had a promising political career at the state level, the Democratic Party never forgave him for his temporary defection. However, in 1896, he was elected to the state legislature, defeating Nat U-Hill.

A MAN OF MANY TALENTS, East tried his hand at novel writing, after reading Lew Wallace's *Ben Hur* and declaring that he could do just as well. His *Theolopus Wallop* was first published in 1890. The second edition which appeared six years later was renamed *Captain Wallop* with the same text but better findings and illustrations.

His next literary venture was never completed. Based on a weird murder that attracted his attention as a lawyer, it was abandoned after two accused dental students were convicted and hanged and the victim's head was never found.

HIS NICKNAME, John "Rouser" was given him because of his ability to move the courtroom occupants to tears.

His most eloquent performance was in behalf of a woman who had been accused of poisoning her husband. Using the defense tactic that the death was a