



WHAT'S A HOOSIER

That's the question most asked by Indiana visitors. No one seems to know exactly where the word "Hoosier" (hoo-zhur) came from, but there are plenty of stories on its origin -- 30 at last count. Here are some of the more popular theories:

- Hoosiers are well-known for their questioning and it is possible the nickname originated because they could not pass a house without pulling the latchstring and crying out "**Who's here?**"
- In 1851 Amelia M. Murray reported that she heard the name Hoosier originates when settlers shouted "**Huzza!**" when gaining victory over a marauding party from a neighboring state.
- Kentucky contractor Samuel Hoosier hired Indiana workers to build the Portland canal at Louisville. These superior laborers became known as "Hoosier's Men" or "Hoosiers" and carried the nickname back north with them. Unfortunately, no one has ever been able to prove the existence of Mr. Hoosier.
- Before its use in America, Hoosier was used in England to refer to someone who lived in the hills or mountains. It may be related to the French *osier* meaning someone from the countryside. This term is still commonly used in Eastern Canada.
- Indiana poet James Whitcomb Riley said the origin of the title "Hoosier" came from the pugnacious habits of the early settlers. "They were vicious fighters ... [and] frequently bit off noses and ears. This happened so often that a settler coming into the barroom after a fight would see an ear on the floor and ask, 'Whose ear?' "

Today the word is used to denote an Indiana native or resident. Although the origin is uncertain, one thing is clear about the word -- "Hoosier" and Hospitality go hand in hand.

Famous Hoosiers with Indianapolis Connections

- Larry Bird, President of Basketball Operations and former coach of the [Indiana Pacers](#)
- David Letterman, late night talk show host
- Jane Pauley, news personality
- Oscar Robertson, basketball legend
- Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds, Grammy-winning songwriter
- James Whitcomb Riley, poet
- Michael Graves, architect
- Benjamin Harrison, 23rd President of the United States

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