



# Jonathan Jennings: Indiana's First Governor (Indiana Biography Series)

*Randy Keith Mills*

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During the rough-and-tumble world of frontier Indiana politics, two men stood head and shoulders above their contemporaries—William Henry Harrison and Jonathan Jennings. Harrison, the hero of the Battle of Tippecanoe, established a powerful political machine as governor of the Indiana Territory and went on to become the ninth president of the United States. Jennings stood as Harrison's biggest rival, leading the fight to keep slavery out of the Hoosier State.

History, however, has not been kind to Jennings, who became Indiana's first governor and served four terms in Congress. In this fourth volume of the Indiana Historical Society Press's Indiana Biography Series, Randy K. Mills, noted historian and writer, has produced a groundbreaking look at Jennings, one of the nineteenth state's most complex and fascinating figures. Mills details how Jennings worked his way up the state's political ladder to become a hero of mythical stature to some, winning praise as "a young Hercules" and "the Colossus of Indiana," a champion of freedom and hero of the people.

Jennings's rise to the pinnacle of power in Indiana quickly turned to tragedy as he wrestled with alcoholism. By his death in 1832 at the relatively young age of fifty, Jennings had fallen far in the hearts and minds of the Hoosier public. For several decades, no gravestone marked Jennings's final resting place. Using personal letters, official government records, and newspaper and diary accounts, this biography presents a more thorough and balanced assessment of Indiana's first governor. The book also illuminates an important period in Indiana and American history as well, a time when "electioneering madness" played a major role in the life of the country.

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