

CANAWLERS AT REST

OWEN BALL

Find-A-Grave #112053107

b. December 23, 1818

d. January 8, 1887

By Carolyn I. Schmidt

Owen Ball was born in the county of Meath, Ireland on December 23, 1818. At the early age of 17 years he left his homeland to come to the United States. He planned to take up residence in the Middle West, wherein he saw many opportunities. But after arriving, he spent two years employed in Hartford, Connecticut before coming to Indiana. In Hartford he met and married Frances A. Hayes, a native of Hartford, on July 21, 1839. The marriage performed by the Rev. John Brady was witnessed by Peter McLaughlin and Martha Johnson. Owen was 21 years old and Frances was 17. They eventually had seventeen children.

In the latter part of 1841 Owen and Frances moved from Hartford to Lafayette, Indiana, then a small village, traveling by the way of Pittsburg, the Ohio and Wabash rivers. They brought with them their first born, Mary J. Ball.

Immediately on arriving in Lafayette Owen formed a partnership with his older brother, Peter Ball, who had preceded him. It continued until the death of Peter in 1860. The firm of P. & O. Ball were contractors for the Wabash and Erie Canal. The canal had reached Lafayette in 1840. In 1841 Owen built a section of it through the town.

Although things seemed to be going well for

Owen and his family, the month of August 1850 was an exceptionally trying time for them. On August 21, 1850 their daughter Sarah E. Ball was born, but just a few days later their 17 month old daughter, Hester Alice Ball, died on August 24 and their 3 year old daughter, Henrietta S. Ball, died on August 28. It is likely that these children died of cholera that was epidemic in Indiana in 1849. Asiatic cholera is an acute, infectious, epidemic bacterial disease characterized by diarrhea, vomiting, prostration and dehydration. Left untreated it can lead to death in as little as 24 to 48 hours after exposure to it.

In 1846 Owen built a palatial residence on Fiery Street. He and others petitioned for a Catholic church. Until the church was built, a monthly mass given by a visiting priest was held in this home. The home was continuously lived in by members of the family for many years.

In 1852 Owen was awarded the contract for making the right-of-way for the Indianapolis & Lafayette Railroad through what was known as the "deep cut" just south of Lafayette. Owen was one of its first directors and remained a member of the board until its sale to the Cincinnati and Indianapolis Railroad Company.

Also in 1852 the firm of P. & O. Ball embarked in the wholesale grocery business, which was continued by Owen until the day of his death. The U.S. Federal Census lists him as a wholesale grocer in 1880.

Owen had such an abiding faith in the future of Lafayette that he invested all he could in real estate, feeling assured of increasing values. His prediction was realized.

On August 18, 1869 the *Lafayette Courier* stated that "the 'big eight' Moses Fowler, John Purdue, Hiram Chase attorney and banker, Martin Pierce banker, Adams Earl merchant, Owen Ball contractor and merchant, J. H. Telford and Henry T. Sample meat packers, urged voters to approve Tippecanoe County Government of purchasing of LMB railroad stock on August 28, 1869 saying that property values always went up where the railroads were built and it would

give Lafayette “Advantageous Connections.” The route from Muncie to the Illinois line would require about 150 miles of mainline track, plus switching areas, wait zones and spurs. Indiana legislators had passed an amendment to railroad laws allowing city and county governments to give public money to railroad builders. Benton and Tippecanoe counties subscribed to a referendum to give public tax money to the Lafayette, Muncie and Bloomington Railroad, which was chartered on February 28, 1867 in Illinois. Construction began the summer of 1869. It operated under this charter until 1875.

In 1875 Lafayette laymen Owen Ball and James B. Falley advanced the effort to open a Catholic orphanage by donating 51 acres on the south side of their city. On this site Bishop Dwenger began construction of an orphanage named in honor of St. Joseph. The St. Joseph Orphan Asylum for Boys opened in 1876 to 31 boys brought from Rensselaer, Indiana. At another time Owen donated land on which to build the Lafayette Manual Labor School.

The Lafayette Savings Bank was organized on July 1, 1869. From the time of its organization Owen was a trustee of the bank and was, at the time of his death, its vice-president.

Owen was also one of the first directors in the Second National Bank. He was its president at the time of his death when it was in the process of liquidation.

For nineteen years Owen was a member of the Lafayette City Council and was always foremost in any undertaking calculated to promote the growth and prosperity of Lafayette. One source says that the following gentlemen were elected Trustees of the Town of Lafayette, at the Corporation election last Monday:

- First District : JOHN EWERY
- Second District: OWEN BALL
- Third District: ABRAHAM FRY
- Fourth District: ALBERT BARTHOLOMEW
- Fifth District: ALLEN LOYD

In Lafayette Owen displayed his business ability and won a good place in the confidence of a grow-

ing community. The last ten years of his life Owen was an invalid, the greater portion of the time unable to attend to any business. He suffered greatly at times, but bore all with patient resignation and without complaint.

Owen Ball died at 12:20 in the afternoon on January 8, 1887 in Lafayette, Indiana. He was 68 years old. His funeral was held at St. Mary’s church the following Tuesday morning at 9:30 o’clock. His six sons



**OWEN BALL
1818-1887**

acted as pall bearers. He was laid to rest in Section 15 Lot 9 Grave 7 of St. Patrick’s Cemetery Addition in Lafayette, Indiana. His tombstone is almost illegible.

Owen’s obituary appeared in the following day’s newspaper. A portion follows:

“He (Owen) has been identified with the growth and prosperity of Lafayette for more than 45 years and his business blocks around the Public Square and other portions of the city, constitute a monument of his enterprise and influence.

“He leaves surviving a wife and ten children—six sons and four daughters, Mrs. John S. Williams, Margaret F., George H., William J., Mrs. Sarah H. Culbertson, Walter J., Esther F., Louis P., Frederick W. and Charles H.”

Owen’s wife, Frances A. (Hayes) Ball died on August 24, 1902 in Lafayette. She was 86½ years old.

Owen and Frances’ son, Walter J. Ball, was born in Lafayette, Indiana, on July 16, 1853, and, after his graduation from Georgetown University at Washington, D. C. in 1874, entered into the business life of Lafayette where he occupied a prominent position not only in the home of his birth, but in its surrounding territory, having gained a large acquaintance through his father’s wholesale grocery business. He took part in clubs and organizations that would build up and ad-

THE HOOSIER PACKET - OCTOBER 2016

vance community welfare. For several years he was president of the Commercial Club. He became interested in several manufacturing projects. In 1899 he was in the group which organized the Lafayette Loan & Trust Company. He was placed in active management of it and in 1917 was made its president. The institution was successful from the beginning. It had resources of more than four million dollars. In 1919 the Lafayette Loan & Trust Company organized, with its own resources, the Lafayette Joint Stock Land Bank. It had a capital, surplus and reserves of more than \$800,000 and resources exceeding \$9,000,000 when Walter Ball served as its president.

Walter also took an interest in politics, but never sought office of any kind, preferring commercial and financial pursuits. In that field his services were sought and always given for the public good. During the war he was effective in committee work and as a speaker. His business brought him many responsibilities in and out of Lafayette. He served as director of the Indianapolis Street Railway Company for many years and as president of the Association of Joint Stock Land Banks and other clubs and societies. He died on December 5, 1943.

Sources:

- Ancestry.com
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Member trees:
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- Kriebel, Robert C. *The Midas of the Wabash: A Biography of John Purdue*, 2002.
- Roll, Charles. A.M. *Indiana One Hundred and Fifty Years of American Development*. Chicago, IL: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1931.
- Tippecanoe 200: A Hoosier County Recalls Its Past*. Lafayette, IN: Lafayette Printing Company, 1999-2000.
- United States Federal Census 1820, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880
- White, Joseph M. *Worthy of the Gospel of Christ: A History of the Catholic Church*. 2007

OWEN BALL'S FAMILY

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Death</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Cemetery</u>	<u>Married</u>
Ball, Peter	1816	Ireland	11-01-1860	IN	St. Mary's	
Ball, Owen	12-23-1818	Meath, Ireland	1-08-1887	Lafayette IN	St. Mary's	7-21-1839
m. Hayes, Frances A.		Hartford, CT	8-24-1853	Lafayette IN	St. Mary's	7-21-1839
Ball, Mary J.	11-??-1840	CT	1930			
m. Williams, John S.(Col.)						
Ball, Margaret F.	1841	Lafayette, IN	1-23-1898	Lafayette IN	St. Mary's	
Ball, John W.	1843	Lafayette, IN	12-09-1876	Lafayette IN	St. Mary's	
Ball, George H.	10-25-1844	Lafayette, IN	2-03-1927	Lafayette IN	St. Mary's	
Ball, William James	2-08-1846	Lafayette, IN	7-25-1901	Lafayette IN	St. Mary's	
Ball, Henrietta S.	1847	Lafayette, IN	8-28-1850	Lafayette IN	St. Mary's	
Ball, Hester Alice	2-??-1849	Lafayette, IN	8-24-1850	Lafayette IN	St. Mary's	
Ball, Sarah E.	8-21-1850	Lafayette, IN	9-29-1899	Lafayette IN	St. Mary's	
m. Culbertson, ?						
Ball, Albert Owen	1851	Lafayette, IN	3-03-1872	Lafayette IN	St. Mary's	
Ball, Walter J.	7-16-1853	Lafayette, IN	12-05-1943	Lafayette IN	St. Mary's	
Ball, Francis	4-??-1855	Lafayette, IN	9-19-1867	Lafayette IN	St. Mary's	
Ball, Esther F.	10-??-1856	Lafayette, IN	3-09-1925	Lafayette IN	St. Mary's	
Ball, Frances K.	1858	Lafayette, IN	1-25-1877	Lafayette IN	St. Mary's	
Ball, Louis P.	1862	Lafayette, IN	6-01-1930	Lafayette IN	St. Mary's	
Ball, Frederick W.	5-??-1861	Lafayette, IN	12-03-1919	Lafayette IN	St. Mary's	
Ball, Charles H.	10-??-1869	Lafayette, IN	!-12-1951	Lafayette IN	St. Mary's	
Ball, ?		Lafayette, IN				