

CANAWLERS AT REST

SOLOMON HOLMAN

b. September 6, 1813
d. August 16, 1852

By Carolyn I. Schmidt

Solomon Holman, was born on September 6, 1813 to Joseph and Lydia (Overman) Holman in Wayne county, Indiana. He was one of twelve children.

Solomon's paternal grandfather was George Holman, who, during the Indian wars of Kentucky's colonial days, was stolen by Indians when very young. George was their prisoner until he was seventeen. He took advantage of his captivity learning the tribe's language, becoming familiar with their habits and customs and developing a great friendship with them. While living in Kentucky George apparently married and had children. His son, Joseph Holman, was born in Woodford county, Kentucky on October 1, 1788. In 1804 George purchased a farm two miles south of where Richmond, Indiana would eventually be located. Sometime thereafter George, Joseph and most likely other family members moved to the farm.

On November 22, 1810 Joseph Holman, age 22, married Lydia Overman, age 18, who was born on June 13, 1792, the daughter of Ephraim Overman. They lived about half a mile from Boston, Wayne county, Indiana for about two years before moving three miles north of Centerville, on Noland's Fork, in March 1812. There, Mary (Polly) Holman, their first of twelve children was born. She later married Chauncey Carter of Logansport.

Noland's Fork was a fine mill stream that ran through Wayne county and emptied into the west fork of the Whitewater River. Year's after Joseph had moved from this home, men living along this stream decided to incorporate the Noland's Fork Canal Company and build a canal, which

was to run from Centerville to the Whitewater Canal Feeder Dam at Connersville. Their application was approved on January 13, 1845, but the canal was never built.

Just after our subject, Solomon Holman, was born, Joseph Holman began his political carrier as a candidate for the territorial legislature in 1814. Voting was

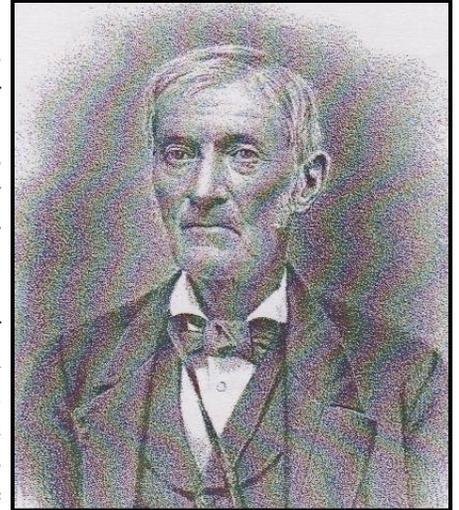
done orally. There was a tie. His opponent Joseph Brown voted for himself, which Holman refused to do, so Holman lost the election. However, Brown died at Corydon before the close of the first session and Holman was chosen to fill the vacancy in 1815.

On October 20, 1814, Henry Bryan surveyed ground donated by Israel Elliott and Ethan A. Stone for Centerville, the oldest town in Wayne county, Indiana. Its trustees were Isaac Julian, Joseph Holman and William Hawy.

At the 1815-16 session Congress authorized a constitutional convention to admit Indiana into the Union. William Henry Harrison, governor of Indiana territory, ordered an election of delegates to the convention. Joseph Holman, Patrick Beard, Jeremiah Cox and Hugh Cull were chosen. Joseph was re-elected in successive elections to serve as a representative in the legislature except for one year and until he moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana in 1823.

Joseph left the Whitewater valley after being appointed by President James Monroe the Receiver of Moneys at the new land office. Joseph and Capt. Samuel C. Vance, Register, opened the office in Fort Wayne that October. He traded extensively in land and all kinds of real estate. Joseph continued as Receiver for about six years through the presidency of John Quincy Adams and was then removed by President Andrew Jackson. Some of these years he was a partner in a tanning, mercantile and pork business. He was elected to the legislature again in 1830 while still at Fort Wayne.

Meanwhile, on October 23, 1826, a treaty between



JOSEPH HOLMAN 1788~1873



This sketch shows the old stone home built by Joseph Holman and razed for the Holman school. Courtesy Peru Daily Tribune

the United States and the Miami Indians was negotiated at the mouth of the Mississinewa river. John B. Richardville, principal chief of the Miamis, was granted several tracts of land in what would become Miami county, Indiana. About one year later, on August 18, 1827, Joseph Holman purchased 640 acres north of the Wabash River from the chief for \$500 in cash and trade.

Joseph founded the town of Miamisport platting his land in 1829 in the hopes that it would become the county seat when a county was established. The streets of the town ran parallel to the river. Town boundaries were the river, Lafayette, Holman and Main streets. He built the first stone house that was torn down in 1890 to build Holman School.

Joseph's idea might have worked if he had not made a big mistake and sold 210 acres on the east end of his property to his friend, William Hood, for \$500. Hood too wanted to have the county seat in his town and, knowing this was a good location, platted the town of Peru adjacent to Miamisport in 1834. It was located near the confluence of the Wabash and Mississinewa Rivers and was named after Peru in South America. The Peru site was so heavily timbered with beautiful specimens of ash, hickory, maple, oak, poplar, and walnut trees and full of underbrush that the surveyors had to whack their way through it. Soil was more valuable than timber at the time and many trees were cut down and burned. But with perseverance the town of Peru was begun with its boundary actually touching that of Miamisport. As the towns grew, the friendship between Holman and Hood declined.

The two towns were located in what was then Cass county. This huge county included what was later to become Cass, Elkhart, Fulton, Marshall, Kosciusko, St. Jo-

seph, and Wabash and portions of LaPorte, Pulaski, and Starke counties. Miamisport and Peru were in Peru and Jefferson townships. The territory south of the river was still owned by the Indians.

Miami County, named for the Miami nation, was formed in 1832 (the year ground was broken for the Wabash & Erie Canal in Fort Wayne, Indiana) and was organized into law on March 1, 1834. Its boundaries were somewhat different from those of the county today. A section to the north was taken when Fulton county was created. Another section to the south of the Wabash River was attached to the county once the last series of treaties with the Miami tribe was signed in 1840.

While organizing the county in 1834, a delegation of commissioners was sent to choose which of the two towns was best suited for the county seat. Hood was quick to act. He arranged to meet the commissioners at McGregor's cabin. There he told them that he would donate the public square and erect a brick courthouse and a jail if they chose Peru.

After Peru was chosen, Hood kept his promise and began to actively pursue the business owners in Miamisport. He offered them lots at low prices and sometimes even free if they would move their businesses to Peru.

Joseph Holman was defeated and moved from the area. Miamisport residents requested the commissioners vacate the Miamisport plat, which they did on June 9, 1841. The forest was removed. Peru became an important center of trade after the Wabash & Erie Canal came in 1837.

In 1835 while the Wabash & Erie Canal was being constructed, an early traveler to the area wrote, "I looked about and what did I behold but a living forest, with about 15 or 20 log shanties and some eight or 10 respectable houses. The village was filled with people working on the Wabash & Erie Canal, from different states."

From 1814-1833 Joseph and Lydia became the parents of 10 more children. They were: Martha Meek (Patsy), Rachel, Elizabeth Rebecca, William Jennings, Sarah, Rachel Jane, Margaretta Lucinda, Joseph George Ephriam and two who died in infancy.

In 1833 Joseph moved to Peru, Miami county, Indiana, where he farmed for nine years. Then his father, George, whose health was failing, asked Joseph to move back near Richmond in 1843, which he did. Joseph's wife,

Wabash & Erie Canal Personnel

The Wabash & Erie Canal provided jobs at all levels — from Canal trustee to unskilled laborer, from superintendent to skilled stone cutter. Each, in his own way, brought the idea of an interstate transportation system to a reality.

Board of Trustees

Thomas H. Blake of Indiana (died Nov. 27, 1849)
Charles Butler of New York
Thomas Dowling (replaced Blake)
W. R. Nofsinger (elected in 1851, up again in 1852)
Austin M. Puett of Parke Co.

Chief Engineer

Jesse Lynch Williams

Engineer

Alphonso A. Cole

Commissioner

James B. Johnson, Esq. of Tippecanoe County

Superintendent

Richard Adams - former superintendent
O. Bird - first district (Aug. 9, 1849)
C. Carter - third district (Aug. 9, 1849)
Stearns Fisher - second district (Aug. 8, 1849)
Mr. Lucas - (1845)
John McManamy - fifth district (Aug. 9, 1849)
A. J. Morley - fourth district (Aug. 9, 1849)

Assistant Superintendent

Solomon Holman

Contractor

John Cooper, Esq. - Peru Dam #3
George L. Dart - section through Logansport and Eel river aqueduct (died February 1886)
Hanna - section through Logansport and Eel river aqueduct
McCleery - section through Logansport and Eel river aqueduct

Lock Tender

James William Stitsworth

Came By Canal Boat

William C.H. Reeder

Through the news articles that were saved at Peru, we have compiled the following list of jobs and the names of those who filled the positions. Note that the names of the common laborers who dug the canal or worked on the boats very seldom made the news.

Canal Boat Captain (various boats/times)

Dana Columbia of the "Indiana"
Charles Cooper of the "Extenuate"
Crippen of the "Chesapeake"
Wm. Dale of "Niagara," "Illinois" & "P.B.Bride"
William Diggins
Dittenburr(n)
Fountain of the "Indiana" & "Empire"
Glassy (Glassby)
Hammon of the "Kentucky"
W. W. Pierce - of Peru
Tillet
Williams of the "L.A. Kelsey"
Phil Williard

Canal Boat Owners

Alvin Crippen of the "Extenuate"
Samuel Doyle & Dickey - boat line in Ohio & Indiana
Patrick and Anna Hassett Martin of "John Jay"
Hull - Wabash boat line
Wells & Co. of the "Express"

Canal Boatman

Jesse Bardough
Hiram Bates
Boone
Robert Bowman
Nelson Conner
Curly
Milo Felt
Sunsman
Myron Tinkler
John Treadwell
M. Young



Toll Collector

Calium H. Bailey, Jr. at Terre Haute
Major Semans at Lafayette

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Lydia, passed away in 1854 and he was left to care for his father. George passed away in 1859 at the age of one-hundred and seven years.

In 1860 Joseph moved to Centerville, Wayne county, Indiana. At some time he moved back to Peru where he died in 1872 at the age of eighty-four.

Solomon Holmon, our subject, grew up on the family farm and learned the business of civil engineering. As an adult he was engaged in many of the public works of Indiana. He first was a surveyor for the Whitewater Canal.

In 1833 he, along with Stearns Fisher and Charles Vorhees surveyed the route for the Wabash & Erie Canal through Wabash county, Indiana. By 1834-35 the only public work that was moving ahead was the canal, but it did not move fast enough to suit John Tipton. The *Logansport Canal Telegraph* of April 4, 1835 carried his open letter to the canal commissioners chiding them for their delay in letting contracts and for failure to announce the precise locations of the canal line through Cass county. He said it was foolish to send engineers to survey elsewhere in the state and neglect the Wabash & Erie Canal.

Tipton's letter brought a flurry of letters to the Indianapolis *Journal* and other papers. Before long canal commissioners David Burr and James B. Johnson as well as Jesse Lynch Williams, chief engineer, joined in writing formal, dignified letters to Tipton accusing him of narrow sectionalism because he rejected public works elsewhere in the state, of using questionable tactics to make a fortune from his official position and of referring to the canal commissioners as simpletons who were unable to resist swindling contractors. Tipton accused Burr and Williams of gross neglect of duty and of locating the canal to benefit favored localities and themselves. He also accused Williams of conspiring with others to influence the election of legislators that were opposed to himself.

In *Indiana Canals*, Paul Fatout says: "Joseph Holman of Miami County circulated a petition asking the legislature to remove Burr and Williams for speculation. In the next session a House committee admitted finding some evidence to support Holman's charges, but absolved Burr and Williams of duplicity; Burr was re-elected as canal commissioner, but by only one vote. Tipton sneered that the committee had done a whitewashing job."

In 1836 Solomon, age 23, was married to Mary E. Forgy, age 20, daughter of Stewart and Margaret Forgy of

Ohio. That year Solomon and Mary made their permanent home on a farm just outside of Peru. They were the parents of Sarah Margaret (1838), Louis Phillip (1841), Lydia J. (1843), William W. (1844), Emma Louise (1847), Joseph Solomon (1849), and George Edgar (1851). Also in 1836 Solomon established the first program to grade the streets in Peru.

The Wabash & Erie Canal was being built through Peru in 1837 and Solomon became engaged as an assistant superintendent under Jesse Lynch Williams in its construction as well as cultivating his farm. After its completion the canal seemed to always be in need of repair.

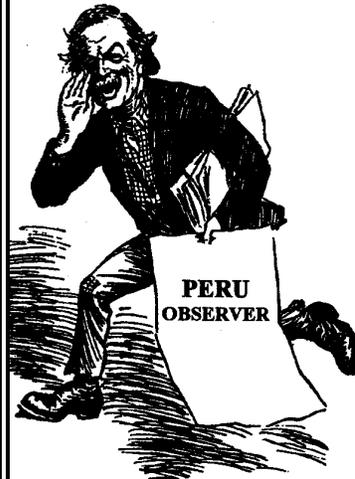
When the time for elections came closer in 1844, the more scathing the newspaper articles against the Wabash & Erie Canal superintendents became. They were accused of delaying the repairs of the breaks in order to keep the laborers in their employ in order to receive their votes at the election. Apparently Solomon, the current Assistant Superintendent, was opposed by the Whig candidate Mr. Stearns Fisher. He was accused of appointing incompetent and corrupt men to do the canal repairs. He was also accused of spending time on his farm instead of going up and down the canal checking for damage. Though areas needing repairs were reported to him, he did nothing and breaches requiring more labor occurred. His state boat workers were said to have been hoeing the boat captain's crops instead of making repairs. The canal was opened to navigation late. Farmers found other means of transporting their crops south and the canal lost tolls.

The editor of the *Observer*, Jim Shields, claimed that the General Superintendent, who was in charge of the land office, had hired John Wilt. Shields said that Wilt controlled the value of White Dog, canal scrip, which needed to be kept at par in order not to rob the laborers of what they had earned. He accused Wilt of depreciating its value so he could buy it up and then turn around and sell it at a profit to those purchasing canal lands when they went up for sale. John Wilt's rebuttal is something to read. He accuses Shields of being an Irish Jackass. Shields writes back claiming that Wilt agrees to all the charges by saying that his earlier conduct was accepted by the Commissioners. Shields is angry with Wilt for questioning his Irish Paternity. Shields then questions Wilt's background of a German father and an Irish mother. Shields says in his article of August 16, 1844, "the issue must strongly resemble a MULE, the most obstinate and despised animal in all creation."

In July 1844 the *Peru Observer* states: "The



You "Irish Jackass!"



You "Stubborn Mule!"

Locofoco was a derisive name given to a radical faction of the Democratic Party, which supported Andrew Jackson's war against the national bank and wanted the attack extended to state banks and paper money as anti-democratic and a form of monopoly. By 1840 the term was applied to the entire Democratic Party by its Whig opponents.

Another article accused Solomon of being incompetent because he had never seen a canal boat and as a result had not constructed the canal for navigation. It accused him of not attending to the breaks in the canal saying, "This officer, who receives a yearly salary from the State, and whose duty requires that he should spend his whole time upon the canal, has not probably, visited the entire line which he has under his charge twice this season. He occupies a little farm near this town, and the people are taxed to pay him an enormous salary for superintending that while the public works go unprotected. He has hardly been off from his farm this season, except to do up a little dirty Locofoco electioneering, which no gentleman of this party would stoop to. The workmen upon the State-boats, which he employs, and to whom he pays away the people's money at his discretion, possess much of his own propensity, and they spend most of their time in hunting and fishing. We are credibly informed that since the present breaks upon the canal have occurred, the whole crew upon one of the State-boats near this place, have been taken from the public service, and employed several days in hoeing corn, chopping, and &c. for the captain of the boat, drawing their pay all the time... The canal land office was accused of selling 'White dog' scrip as stock to finance the canal, depreciating the value of the scrip and using it to pay the laborers on the canal. Apparently the Whigs won statewide election and Solomon Holman changed his party."

The *Peru Observer* of October 12, 1844 carried the following article: RATS LEAVING THE SHIP. Solomon Holman, one of the Superintendents upon the canal, heretofore a most uncompromising Locofoco, and who rendered most efficient aid to that party at the August election by way of pipe laying, &c. has repudiated his former principles, renounced his party, and comes out decidedly for the Whig cause. We cannot say how far the prospect of a change in the administration of the canal, may have operated to produce this sudden shift of position; but however little we may respect the motives of the man, we shall be glad at all times to have his vote."

Solomon was a prominent citizen of Miami County and a leading member of the Masons. He died on August 15, 1852. He was only 39 years old. His funeral was one of

[Wabash & Erie] canal has now been inoperative for nearly a month, and we hesitate not to say, that nine out of ten of the present breakages, were occasioned by the negligence, we might add, willful negligence, of the Superintendents. Many of the worst breaks, which will cost hundreds of dollars to repair, might have been prevented with two hours labor, had they been attended to in season, The water has been eating away the banks for weeks. And the Assistant Superintendent, who has charge of this part of the canal [Solomon Holman], has been informed of the fact; but it would have looked too much like performance of duty had he attended seasonably to it."

The *Peru Observer* of July 20, 1844 says: "We ask Mr. Superintendent Holman, if he would not be performing his duty just as well, to put the canal in operation promptly, and if he must have these men retained to vote against Mr. Fisher, and other Whig candidates along the canal, why, let him hire them, and pay them out of his own pocket, and not tax the people with the expense of the fraud, which he thus seeks to perpetuate upon them. We call upon the honest men of all parties, to look well to this matter, and see that this infamous project of a corrupt public officer be not consummated. Freemen of Indiana! Will you suffer the purity and sacredness of the ballot-boxes to be thus desecrated? Are you prepared to surrender those rights, which God and the laws of your country have guaranteed exclusively to you, into the hands of a body of men, gathered together from the four quarters of the earth, and bribed with your own money, by a faithless and contemptible locofoco stipendiary; to trample upon those rights and paralyze [sic] your political action. Whigs!-Locofocos!-this is a question about party--it strikes at the root of Liberty itself. It is your business -- look to it well!"

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Solomon Holman's Family							
Name	Birth	Place	Death	Place	Marriage	Place	
Joseph Holman*	10-01-1788	Woodford Co. KY	1872	Peru Miami Co. IN			11-22-1810
m. Lydia Overman**	6-13-1792		1854	" " " "			11-22-1810
(12 children, 2 died in infancy)							
<u>Mary (Polly) Holman</u>	1812		1880	" " " "			
m. Chauncey Carter							
Solomon Holman	9-06-1813	Wayne Co. IN	8-16-1852	" " " "	Reyburn	2-02-1836	Miami Co. IN
m. Mary E. Forgy ***	1816		1889	" " " "	"	2-02-1836	Miami Co. IN
Sarah Margaret Holman	1838		1916	" " " "		1-17-1860	Miami Co. IN
m. Ner. Black						1-17-1860	Miami Co. IN
Nellie Alice Black	1861						
Charles Edward Black	1863		1898				
Milton W. Black	1867						
Fred G. Black	1868						
Lewis Phillip Holman	5-24-1841		1902	" " " "			
m. Emily Blake						2-20-1866	
Roxalla Holman	1867		1929	" " " "			
Lou Emma Holman				" " " "			
Lydia J. Holman	1843			" " " "			
m. John Melcher							
Solomon A. Melcher							
Arthur E. Melcher							
William Melcher							
Emma Melcher							
Lottie Melcher							
Jessie Melcher							
William W. Holman	1844			" " " "			
m. Lydia McMillen							
(5 children)							
Ralph W. Holman	1880						
Ethel L. Holman	1886						
Solomon E. Holman	1887						
Margueritte Holman	1890						
Emma Louise Holman	1847		7-19-1873	" " " "		10-28-1869	Peru, Miami Co. IN
m. Samuel Valentine	1846						
Charles Valentine	1871						
Joseph Solomon Holman	1849		1889	" " " "			
m. Melissa Wallick	1849		1899	" " " "			
Jessie Holman	1870						
Omer Holman	1872						
George Edgar Holman	1851		1853				
<u>Martha Meek (Patsy) Holman</u>	1814		1861	" " " "			
m. Isaac Marquiss							
(8 children)							
Jacob Isaac Marquiss							
<u>Rachel Holman</u>	1816		1827	" " " "			
<u>Elizabeth Rebecca Holman</u>	1818		1865				
m1. Robert James							
m2. ? Fisher							
m3. Isaac Marquiss							
<u>William Jennings Holman</u>	1819		1904	" " " "			
m1. Rebecca Burk							
(4 children)							
m2. Martha Butler							
(6 children)							
m3. Kate White							
(4 children)							
<u>Sarah Holman</u>	1823		1896				* son of George Holman
m. Henry James							** daughter of Ephriam Overman
<u>Rachel Jane Holman</u>	1828		1901				*** daughter of Stewart & Margaret Forgy OH
m. Richard Rue							
(13 children)							

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Solomon Holman's Family (continued)							
Name	Birth	Place	Death	Place	Marriage	Place	
<u>Margaretta Lucinda Holman</u>	1830		1901	" "	" "		
m. Samuel Conner (5 children)	1822						
Truman Conner							
<u>Joseph George Ephram Holman</u>	1833		1892	" "	" "		
m. Catharine Morley (6 children)							

the largest Masonic pageants ever witnessed in Peru. He was laid to rest in Reyburn Cemetery, Peru, Miami county, Indiana.

Solomon's wife, Mary, passed away on April 5, 1889. She was seventy-four years old. She also was buried in Reyburn Cemetery in Peru.



Sources:

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Solomon Holman 1813 1852
Mary Forgy 1816 1889
Reyburn Cemetery
Peru Miami Indiana
Photo Pamela Greenwood