

## **James Tillery Moffatt: Canal Trustee Wanna-Be**

(1791-1861) Find-A-Grave # 128483347

By Carolyn and Bob Schmidt

James Tillery Moffatt was born in New York City on October 2, 1791. After residing for some years in New Jersey, he moved to Ohio for a short time and then to Vincennes, Indiana, in 1818. While at Vincennes he was the presiding officer of the Chapter of Masons there and was in possession of the Order.

James married Julia Boudinot (1805-1864) on December 17, 1822 in Knox county, Indiana. They were the parents of 5 children: Blackford Boudinot Moffatt, Maria Moffatt, Catharine (Kate) B. Moffatt, Caroline Julia Moffatt, and Theodora Moffatt.

In 1829 James moved his family to Terre Haute. On January 12, 1829, age 27, he bought Lot 182 on North Second Street in Terre Haute from William Merriman. There he built a brick house, which was the family's home for many years. He later moved into a new home on the north side of Mulberry, between Sixth and Seventh Streets in Terre Haute.

In Terre Haute James became the first High Priest of Terre Haute Chapter, No. 11 of the Order of Masons. He was a carriage maker by trade, but his interest in politics led him to be an Associate Judge [some sources say Probate Judge or Judge of the Circuit Court]. Although he held no law degree, there were many men in Terre Haute at this time who weren't lawyers by profession and were called Associate judges.

Terre Haute was incorporated as a town on January 26, 1832 and, since James was an early pioneer of the village, he was made clerk and sometime before 1838 became its mayor. He did much toward the improvement of the city, working faithfully in its best interests until his death.

James T. Moffatt served his district as an Indiana State Senator from 1837-1843. While in the Senate in 1838 he introduced Bill # 260 "an act to amend the act to incorporate the town of Terre Haute, which was read the 1st, 2nd and 3d times and passed. He was a delegate to the 1844 Whig Convention in Baltimore, which nominated Henry Clay.

Although the Wabash & Erie Canal was important to Terre Haute's growth, it had many financial as well as physical problems. Indiana wanted to be relieved of its burden. With the assistance of Charles Butler, the State of Indiana reached an agreement with the new bondholders and turned the Wabash & Erie Canal over to them on July 31, 1847.

Canal construction had ended at Lodi in 1847. Now, emerging from the state's financial problems of the early 1840s, the Wabash & Erie Canal appeared to have a new life and the potential for economic gain. Construction would proceed south from Lodi to Terre Haute. Then the Cross-Cut Canal to Worthington would be reworked. Construction would then continue south and connect to the old Central Canal works for the last 20 miles to Evansville. Terre Haute would now house the headquarters of the Wabash & Erie Canal from 1847 through 1876.

Administration of this new agreement was to be done by two trustees elected by the bondholders and one trustee elected by the state. The bondholders chose lawyers Charles Butler of New York and Thomas Blake of Terre Haute. With only one board position available, a struggle occurred for this position among the various regions along the western side of the state.

James T. Moffatt wanted to be elected the 3<sup>rd</sup> trustee. On October 12, 1847 he wrote the following letter to Hon. W.A. Porter, a key member of the Indiana House of Representatives in Corydon, Indiana, seeking support for his candidacy for Trustee of the Wabash and Erie Canal:

"I shall be a candidate at the ensuing session of the Legislature for trustee on behalf of the State for the Wabash and Erie Canal and shall be much gratified to receive your favorable consideration and support. My location as well as my personal feelings induced me during several years service in the Legislature to make every effort in my power for the prosecution and completion of this work, and hence I believe that I am fully acquainted with all its interests and resources and as the State has but one Trustee, against two selected by the Bondholders, it seems to me important that he should not only be familiar with the subject, but should reside at this place where the office is kept, and take part in the transaction of the business, otherwise the office of Trustee will be a mere sinecure [little responsibility], and the agents of the Bondholders transact the whole business."

James T. Moffatt had been a state senator, served Terre Haute well, and lived on the western side of the state where the canal was to be completed, but he did not fare well in the early balloting. Although his name appeared on the first ballot that was put before the Indiana House of Representatives, one source shows his name being withdrawn after the 4th ballot by Mr. Cookerly while another source shows his name not appearing on the 4th ballot. Names of other candidates were withdrawn, some put back on again, and new names added as they attempted to get a majority vote for someone.

This competition between individuals for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Trustee position is reflected in the other candidates on the legislative ballot. Initially Nathan Palmer was appointed by Governor Whitcomb to fill this position and he served from July to December 1847, but now the position was to be an elected one. In the early balloting Palmer was the favorite. As the balloting continued strength was gained by 3 regional candidates. Robert N. Carnen, a Whig from Vincennes, who was running pretty equal with Austin Puett, a Democrat, from Rockville in Parke County. Joseph S. Hanna, a Lafayette businessman, also polled well.

On December 11, 1847 Mr. Cookerly presented a bill fixing the salaries of the Trustees of the Wabash & Erie Canal as follows: the non-resident trustee, Mr. Butler, \$1,500; the two others \$1,200 each. It was ordered to a second reading.

By the 11<sup>th</sup> ballot on December 16, 1847 a majority for trustee had still not been reached. There was a frenzy in the House and Senate at that time because Andrew Kennedy, an ex-member of Congress, had come down with smallpox while staying in Indianapolis at the Palmer House, which was owned by Nathan Palmer. Some of Indiana's senators and representatives had visited him prior to the diagnosis, were scared they would catch it and wanted to get out of town. The Indiana House of Representatives asked the Senate to adjourn until January. The Senate

## BALLOT RESULTS FOR TRUSTEE OF THE WABASH & ERIE CANAL

BALLOT	<u>1ST</u>	<u>2ND</u>	<u>3RD</u>	<u>4TH</u>	<u>5TH</u>	<u>6TH</u>	<u>7TH</u>	<u>8TH</u>	<u>9TH</u>	<u>10TH</u>	<u>11TH</u>	<u>12TH</u>	<u>13TH</u>
J H Bradley	2	9	7	3	2	*	*	*	*	*	*	1	*
M G Bright	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	1	*	*	*	*
Basil Brown	1	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
R N Carnan	19	20	33	43	33	37	49	50	61	64	58	28	28
Willard Carpenter	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	26	27
Robert Chyandler	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
C C Graham	1	1	1	*	0	8	8	4	0	0	*	*	*
Samuel Hanna	29	27	26	25	34	36	24	19	*	*	*	20	18
James G Jones	18	19	21	19	18	11	6	7	12	15	14	*	*
James McCampbell	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	8	4
Daniel Mace	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	1	13	15	*	*	*
James T Moffatt	14	11	5	3	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
H C Moore	5	2	0	0	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Osborn	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	1	*	*	*
Nathan B Palmer	41	37	26	14	20	8	2	0	0	0	2	*	*
John Pitcher	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Austin M Puett	20	22	28	31	36	46	54	66	56	50	60	59	63
Riley	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	1	*
Scattering	2	3	4	6	4	0	0	1	5	3	5	1	1
Wm Z Stewart	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	1	1	*	*	*
Blank	*	1	3	*	4	2	5	1	3	1	4	2	4

BALLOT	<u>14TH</u>	<u>15TH</u>	<u>16TH</u>	<u>17TH</u>	<u>18TH</u>	<u>19TH</u>	<u>20TH</u>	<u>21ST</u>	<u>22ND</u>	<u>23RD</u>	<u>24TH</u>	<u>25TH</u>
J H Bradley	2	2	1	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
M G Bright	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Basil Brown	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
R N Carnan	24	19	10	10	12	14	16	17	18	*	*	1
Willard Carpenter	30	37	33	30	20	14	*	*	*	*	*	*
Robert Chyandler	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	5	9	*
C C Graham	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Samuel Hanna	16	13	31	36	42	45	46	47	47	1	1	2
James G Jones	*	*	*	*	*	2	13	13	10	*	*	*
James McCampbell	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	0	1	2	1
Daniel Mace	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
James T Moffatt	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
H C Moore	*	1	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Osborn	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Nathan B Palmer	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
John Pitcher	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	10	64	63	64
Austin M Puett	66	66	63	64	66	66	66	66	68	70	64	75
Riley	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Scattering	3	4	3	2	2	2	3	3	1	1	2	3
Wm Z Stewart	1	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Blank	1	1	2	4	4	3	2	0	2	6	7	3

came back saying they would adjourn until the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday in February, then later changed it to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in January.

The adjournment due to the one case of smallpox was thought to be ridiculous. The *Wabash Express*, Volume 7 Number 1, Terre Haute, Indiana of December 22, 1847 quotes the following from the *Sentinel*:

“Upon the whole, is not this one of the greatest *farces* ever enacted by a legislature of grave and wise men? So it seems to us, and so we feel bound to say.

“If the legislature had done up the little work of importance requiring its action—which might have been done since the occurrence of this ‘alarming’ case of Small Pox, and had then adjourned *sine die*, we think they would have shown much more wisdom than they have done under the influence of the ridiculous panic, by which they, or many of them, have been affected.”

The balloting did not take place when scheduled on January 10, 1848, but a few days later. The House invited the Senate to attend the ensuing balloting and the Joint Convention then proceeded to vote by ballot for the Wabash and Erie Canal trustee. It took 14 more ballots and several days to reach a majority vote.

Judge James G. Jones, the 1<sup>st</sup> Mayor of Evansville in 1847 and Secretary of the Canal Bank of Evansville, was a Whig and only received a smattering of votes. On the 12<sup>th</sup> ballot votes for Jones were switched to Willard Carpenter, a business man from Evansville. Meanwhile Austin Puett was emerging with a vote count of about 63. Joseph S. Hanna, of Lafayette, polled a steady 20-30 votes early on but emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> ballot with 45 votes to become a challenger to Austin Puett. By the 23<sup>rd</sup> ballot most of the opposition support for Hanna switched to a new candidate from Evansville, Judge John Pitcher, but it was too late. Another late candidate, Robert A. Chandler, a businessman from Williamsport, received 9 votes on the 24<sup>th</sup> ballot. However, on the 25<sup>th</sup> ballot Chandler’s previous votes went to Puett, who received 75 votes, the majority. The political contest was over.

On January 18, 1848, “Austin M. Puett having received a majority of all votes given was declared by the President of the Convention duly elected Trustee on the part of the part of the State, of the Wabash and Erie Canal, to serve as such for a term of three years from the date of his election.” *Journal of the Indiana Senate During the 32nd Session of the General Assembly* See also Austin Puett in the CSI website Canal Biographies (G-M) section.

Although James T. Moffatt was not elected a canal trustee, his public service did not end. On May 25, 1849 he was appointed Postmaster of Terre Haute. He held this position for four years, 1849-1853. During an 1862 court case, involving the delivery of mail by the Terre Haute and Richmond Railroad Company versus the United States, he testified that he was an owner of some stock in the TH&RR Company and explained how the mail was transported by the railroad as follows:

“I was postmaster at Terre Haute when the United States mail was first put upon the [rail] road, and remained in the office about one year afterwards. The amount of mail matter carried daily

each way during that time was about one thousand pounds. I was also acting as a substitute for A. O. Hough, who was route agent on the mail line between Terre Haute and Indianapolis, and on said road about one month before the mail was thrown off said road, and I think the weight of mail matter carried would average about three tons each way, and two trips per day.

“A portion of the letter mail from Cincinnati and the east was carried from Louisville, by the way of Vincennes, to St. Louis, in four-horse coaches; a small portion of the letter mail came by the Terre Haute route to St. Louis, also in coaches, but the mass of the mail matter went from Cincinnati, via the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, to St. Louis, by steamboats. — Railroad communication opened between Terre Haute and St. Louis about the first of July, 1855.”

While serving as postmaster, James hired 18-year-old Preston Hussey to work in the post office. Preston was the son of George Hussey, who had a farm near the village of Terre Haute. Preston eventually married Moffatt's daughter, Kate B. Moffatt.

The 1850 and 1860 U. S. Federal Census reports give us the following information about James and his family. Note that his age, that of his wife and the ages of his children vary between the two and do not totally agree with other sources.

The 1850 U. S. Census lists James T. Moffatt as post master, with real estate valued at \$8000, born in New York. His household includes Julia Moffatt, age 43, born in New Jersey; children all born in Indiana — Blackford Moffatt, age 24, lawyer; Maria Moffatt, age 19; Catharine Moffatt, age 13; and Caroline Moffatt, age 11; Preston Hussey, age 24, clerk, born in Indiana; Catharine Boudinot, age 39, \$1000 estate, born in New York [likely Julia's sister]; Theodore Moffatt, age 8

The 1860 U. S. Census shows James T. Moffett (Moffatt) age 67 living in Ward 5, Terre Haute, Vigo county, Indiana. Living with him are Julia Moffett age 55, his wife, who was born in New Jersey; children all born in Terre Haute: Catherine age 20, Caroline age 19, Theodora age 18; Cath Bondirnt [Boudinot] age 53 and Miles Day age 18, color black. His real estate and personal estates were valued at \$16,000 and \$3,000. Shown also in this census is B. B. Moffett (Blackford Moffatt), age 32, attorney, real estate \$8,000, personal estate \$9,000, born in Indiana.

Judge James T. Moffatt was a member of the Terre Haute City Council for several terms. He was appointed Street Commissioner on May 30, 1853 when Terre Haute became a city. He was an active Mason. He died at age 70 in 1861 and was buried November 12 in Woodlawn Cemetery, Terre Haute. Find-A-Grave #128483347

Julia Boudinot Moffatt, James' wife, died in 1864. She is buried at Woodlawn Cemetery as well. Find-A-Grave #128483428

We know the following about James' and Julia's children:

Blackford Boudinot Moffatt graduated from Indiana University in 1851. He was appointed the City Attorney on May 30, 1853 when Terre Haute became a city. He died May 21, 1865 and was buried in Terre Haute.

Maria Boudinot Moffatt, who was born in Indiana on June 10, 1830, married John Dayton Condit, Sr. (1825-March 31, 1900) on March 8, 1853 in Vigo county, Indiana. They had 5 children: Mary Louise Condit, born Jan. 23, 1856; Harold “Harry” H. Condit, born May 27, 1861, died 1937; James M. Condit, born July 1, 1863, died 1907; Charlotte M. Condit, born February 15, 1866, died 1937; and John Dayton Condit Jr., born June 17, 1868, died July 14, 1870. Maria died on July 4, 1906 in Chicago, Illinois and was buried on July 6, 1906 in Woodlawn Cemetery, Terre Haute, Indiana. Find-A-Grave #36070816

Catherine “Kate” B. Moffatt, who was born in Terre Haute in 1837, married Preston Hussey (1825-1914) on September 21, 1865. Kate died at age 39 on June 13, 1876, leaving her husband with 2 children: Florence Hussey Early (1868-1927) and Warren Hussey (1822-1937). Kate was buried in Highland Lawn Cemetery, Terre Haute, Indiana. Find-A-Grave # 127551743

Caroline Julia Moffatt, who was born in Terre Haute in February 1839, married Edward L. Huestis (1839-1917) in 1873. After struggling with breast cancer for two years she died at the age of 66 on June 7, 1905. She was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in Terre Haute. Find-A-Grave #130771546

Theodora Moffatt was born in Indiana. The 1850 Census shows Theodore Moffatt as being a male, age 8. The 1860 Census shows Theodora Moffatt (Moffatt) as being a female, age 18. No more was found to clarify these records.

#### Sources:

Ancestry.com United States Federal Census: 1850, 1860

Appointments of U. S. Postmasters 1832-1971.

Condit, Blackford, *The History of Early Terre Haute from 1816 to 1840*. New York, NY: A. S. Barnes & Co. 1902.

E-bay Neil Sowards, CSI member from Fort Wayne, Indiana, found on E-bay a stampless folded letter with a red circular date Terre Haute, IA. OCT 12 (1847) that was hand stamped “PAID.” It was written by J. T. Moffatt to Hon. W.A. Porter, a key member of the Indiana House of Representatives, in Corydon, Indiana seeking support for his candidacy for Trustee of the Wabash and Erie Canal.

Esarey, Logan. *History of Indiana from its Exploration to 1922*. Dayton, OH: Dayton Historical Publishing Company, 1922.

Indiana Compiled Marriages 1802-1850. (James Moffatt & Julia Boudinot)

Indiana Death Certificates 1899-2011. (Caroline Julia Huestis)

McCormick, Mike. *Terre Haute: Queen City of the Wabash*. Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2005.

*Proceedings of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons in the State of California at its Annual Convocation, A. I. 2424*. San Francisco, CA: Frank Eastman & Co., Printers, 1904.

*Reports The Court of Claims, Submitted to the House of Representatives, during the Second Session of the Thirty-Seventh Congress, 1861-'62*. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1862.

*The Wabash Express*, Volume 7 Number 1, Terre Haute, Indiana of December 22, 1847.

U.S. Find-A-Grave Index 1002—Current.

Condit, Maria Boudinot Moffatt #36070816

Huestis, Caroline Julia Moffatt #130771546

Hussey, Catherine “Kate” B. Moffatt #127551743

Moffatt, James Tillery #128483347

Moffatt, Julia Boudinot #128483428

Wikipedia