

# CANAWLERS AT REST

## CYRUS BALL

b. May 30, 1804  
d. June 30, 1893

By Carolyn I. Schmidt

Cyrus Ball was born in Lebanon, Warren county, Ohio, on May 30, 1804. Being the youngest of six children (three brothers and two sisters) he worked on the family farm and only attended primitive schools for three months each winter. Whenever he could find the time he read history and studied miscellaneous subjects knowing that someday he wanted to become a lawyer. He began passing on his knowledge to others when he was a very young man by teaching school.

In 1825, at the age of 21, Cyrus left the family farm to read law. After further diligent study he was admitted to the Bar in Lebanon, Ohio, in 1826.

Cyrus Ball and his cousin Justice Harland went to Lafayette, Indiana, in 1826 by horseback. There he sought a place to settle and practice law. He soon discovered that there was little need for a law practice in the fledgling community. He decided to set up a general store. He and his brother, Seneca Ball, went to Baltimore, Maryland, to purchase stock for the store and brought it back by boat. The establishment grew steadily and Cyrus took over the entire business 2 ½ years later.

Ball was an early debater in Lafayette. Debating at that time was often carried on around gathering places such as general stores and taverns where gentlemen passed the time discussing politics and issues of the day. This helped prepare him for the legal profession. In 1828 he was admitted to the Indiana bar. He was elected Justice of the Peace in 1831.

On his birthday May 30, 1833 (1832?), and at the age of 29 Cyrus Ball was united in marriage to Katherine Parmelia Smith according to his great-great-

great granddaughter Cecily Gordon Schneider. One history book gives her name as Cordella (aka Christiana) Smith. This was probably misread from handwritten records. She was the daughter of Ira Smith. Cyrus and Katherine Ball had two daughters. Katherine and the girls died approximately three years later of cholera.

In 1834 Cyrus was politically listed as a non-partisan. After having served as Justice of the Peace for 5 years he ran for re-election and was defeated by Mathais Peterson, a Democrat, in 1836. Following his defeat, he started a dry goods business with partners James Hill and Peter S. Jennings. After Hill died in 1837 this business became known as Ball & Jennings. Ball later sold his part of the business to Jennings. Ball and his brother then bought a lot on the corner of Third and Main streets for \$150.

On March 27, 1837, Cyrus Ball along with Samuel R. Johnson, William M. Jenners, Robert Jones, N. H. Stockwell, Dr. E. Deming, L. S. Westgate, Saurin Jenners, Thomas B. Brown, Samuel B. Johnston, John D. Smith, Isaac V. Harter and Benjamin Henkle signed an article organizing the Parish of St. John's Episcopal Church. During the ensuing few days more names were added to the article totaling forty-five. The next year a 28 x 45 foot frame church was built fronting on what was then Missouri Street. A white stack-like structure contained the pulpit below which was a reading desk and below that the communion table. The pews, which at first were sold, were square topped and had doors. The doors were eventually removed and the pews were made free. Candles furnished the light in the building.

Ball was married for the second time in 1838 to Rebecca Gordon, who was cheerful and was a fine judge of character. She was tactful and a very intelligent lady. She contributed verse to various publications and was later the author of anti-slavery stories that were published in eastern magazines. She was born May 16, 1816, in Philadelphia, came to Lafayette in 1837 and died on January 16, 1900 at the age of 93+.

The 1850 Census of Tippecanoe County, Indiana, shows Cyrus age 46 and bank cashier from Ohio and wife Rebecca age 35 from Pennsylvania having five children. To this information has been added additional information about their children as follows:

Cyrus G, male, age 11 - known as Gordon Ball  
Seneca, male, age 9 - became prominent in business and railroad circles. He died December 19, 1907.  
Eugenia, female, age 5  
Cornelius\* (Cornelia), female, age 4 - She died just as she was becoming a young woman.  
Richard E.(Eugene?), male, age 6/12 - As United States Consul to Budapest under President Hayes, Eugene

Ball, died while on duty to Vienna, Austria. His death brought many international and national officials to the Ball home.

\*Please note that the census record was hand written with some names incorrectly misspelled.

Their oldest child was Cyrus Gordon Ball. They used his mother's maiden name as his middle name. The use of Gordon as the middle name for the eldest child has been carried on in the family for generations since that time.

Cyrus Ball volunteered for duty during the Black Hawk War of the late 1830s when Chief Black Hawk threatened to come into Illinois. At that time Chicago was much smaller than Lafayette being merely a trading post. When he and William Reynolds arrived there on their way to the front they couldn't even get enough feed for their horses.

In 1840 Ball became a collector of tolls for the Wabash and Erie Canal, which was open at that time from Lafayette to the Indiana/Ohio state line beyond Ft. Wayne. Advertisements in old Lafayette newspapers preserved at the Tippecanoe Library show that he also insured freight on the canal boats.

Ball's legal education was put to good use in 1840 when he was elected as one of three associate judges for his district. From then on he was always known as Judge Cyrus Ball. His decisions were so carefully thought out and fair that rarely were they reversed by higher courts. In 1852 Ball was elected Associate Judge of the Court of Common Pleas.

In 1841 Ball became a cashier for the Lafayette Branch of the Bank of the State of Indiana. He remained in that position until its charter expired in 1859 and it was liquidated. The Ball's residence at the time was built together with the bank on one side and adjoined a drug store on the other side. The façade of the bank building itself was in the same style as all the other state bank branches with four large columns that were twenty to twenty-five feet tall and formed an alcove in the front. When the charter expired Ball purchased the property on which the bank was located at the corner of Sixth and Main streets.

In 1847 Land for Greenbush Cemetery in Lafayette was purchased and on Feb. 3 it was incorporated. In section 1 of the 1848 Non-code Acts enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Indiana it states that the incorporators "created a body politic and corporate by the name and style of the 'Greenbush Association of Lafayette,' and by that name shall be able to contract and be contracted with, of suing and being sued, plead-

ing and being impleaded, of answering and being answered in all court and places, and in all matters whatsoever, with power to purchase, receive, and hold, and to convey any real and personal estate which may be appropriate to the nature of their association." The incorporators were:

Jesse Andrew  
Zebulen Baird  
Cyrus Ball  
James F. Clark  
Othneil L. Clark  
Thomas S. Cox  
Richard H. Eldridge  
Thomas P. Emerson  
Rudolph S. Ford  
Joseph S. Hanna  
Robert Heath  
William Heath

Luther Jewett  
Joel B. McFarland  
George Nichol  
Godlove S. Orth  
John Purdue  
William F. Reynolds,  
David Ross  
Mathias Scudder  
Lawrence B. Stockton  
Nathan H. Stockwell  
Charles F. Wilstack

The cemetery became a popular burial place. Albert S. White, a senator from Indiana is buried there. (The first canal boat that traveled from Lafayette to Toledo for the grand opening of the Wabash & Erie Canal in 1843 was named for him and a celebration was held in Toledo on May 8 at its arrival. By April of 1844 the Toledo *Blade* was reporting a large fleet of canal boats arriving from Lafayette carrying bacon, lard, barrels of pork, wheat and flour that were bound for eastern markets out of the Toledo port.) By September 1865 Greenbush Cemetery was full. The burial of Civil War soldiers hastened using up the lots. There was a prisoner of war camp in Lafayette. As they died they were buried in the northwest corner of Greenbush. In late December of that year land adjacent to the cemetery was acquired for additional burial plots.

Ball had unusual business abilities. He was a good organizer and promoter. He could foresee the outcome of business transactions. As the first president of the Lafayette Artificial Gas Company, Cyrus Ball held a large amount of its stock. His able management led to its success.

Ball foresaw that the railroads as the new technology would surpass the canals. Being an enterprising and resourceful individual he, along with Albert S. White, was instrumental in constructing the railroad between Lafayette and Indianapolis. It later became a part of the Big Four system.

Ball was one of the original free-soilers and held broad and liberal views. Although it was dangerous, he entertained William Lloyd Garrison and other well known abolitionists in his home and maintained an "underground railroad" station for escaping black slaves.

In April of 1865 the Reynolds Bank merged into the Union National. Its president was J. L. Reynolds and Cyrus Ball served as its cashier, a position for which he was well qualified after acting as a cashier of the State Bank of Indiana. The stock worth \$250,000 was held by seven men. By this time Ball had become a wealthy man.

In 1865 the Balls decided to have a huge mansion built high on a hill south of downtown Lafayette. The land called "the Pasture" had been previously used as pastureland by members of the community. In 1841 the street that ran up it was called Clark Street. The land later appeared as "Prospect Hill" on abstracts. In 1860 the street was renamed "Ninth Street." It is now the Historic Ninth Street Hill neighborhood and contains the country estates of wealthy movers and shakers, who could afford magnificent homes, servants and carriages during the 1853-72 railroad expansion prosperity. Ball's neighbors were:

Gregory Ball

Thomas Benbridge

Moses Fowler - home built in 1852 by wealthy banker and entrepreneur known as the Fowler House Museum or Tippecanoe County Museum

Oliver Pierce

W. F. Reynolds

Henry Sample - home built about 1867 by meatpacker, who had a warehouse on the Wabash & Erie Canal to ship his meat via the canal

Cyrus hired George Post, an architect, to build the home and kept day-to-day records for each workman noting his craft and daily pay and for each supplier noting the material he supplied, its cost and the cost to transport it. When all was totaled, the final cost of the home was \$25,000. It was not completed until 1868.

The style of the home was Italianate/Second Empire. Its original furnishings, which have been preserved and are still being maintained by family descendants, were also of the Second Empire style. Paintings by George Winter, the area's first artist (1837-76) and great-grandfather of Cable Gordon Ball, hang on its walls.

After the death of Cyrus and Rebecca Ball, the mansion was inherited by the following generations:

Cyrus Gordon and Annette Winter Ball (daughter of George Winter)

George Gordon and Georgia Winona Cable Ball

Cable Gordon\* (d, 10-10-1981) and Evelyn Osterman (d, 8-2005) Ball

\*Cyrus and Rebecca's great-great-grandson, Cable



Judge Cyrus Ball Mansion 402 S. 9th Street

Photo by Bob Schmidt

Gordon Ball, was also of political importance to Lafayette. An attorney for about 50 years he was the City Attorney from 1936-37, State Representative from Tippecanoe and Warren counties 1951-60, and Minority Leader of the House of Representatives in 1959. He was the Permanent Chairman of the Indiana Republican Party Convention. He was a Lt. Colonel in the 10<sup>th</sup> Air Force for four years during WWII serving in the China-Burma-Indian Theater. He also served the 10<sup>th</sup> Air Force as Assistant Staff Judge Advocate and later as Acting Staff Judge Advocate.

The Judge Cyrus Ball House located at 402 S. 9<sup>th</sup> Street was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on May 3, 1984. Canal Society of Indiana members, Michael & Cecily Gordon Schneider, are currently living in the mansion.

As Ball grew older, romping with his children and grandchildren gave him much pleasure. He also enjoyed frequent fishing trips to the Kankakee, Wild Cat and Wabash rivers.

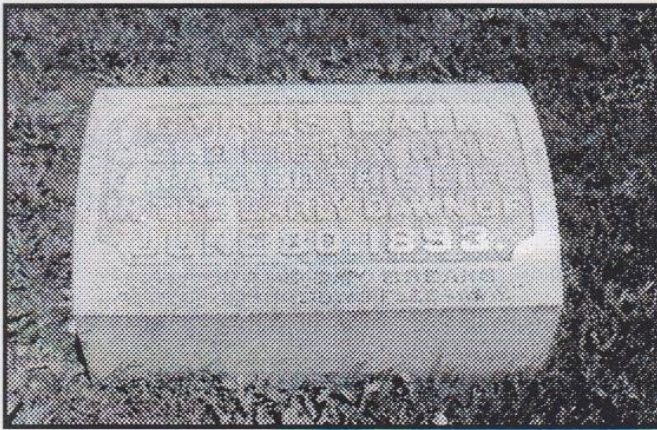
Cyrus Ball had a successful life full of honors. His disposition was "kind, tender, yet firm, straightforward, and determined." He died on June 30, 1893 at the age of 89.

In *Past & Present of Tippecanoe Co., Indiana*, DeHart describes Cyrus Ball as follows:

"He was always distinctively a man of affairs, who wielded a wide influence among those with whom his lot was cast, ever having the affairs of his county at heart and did what he could to aid in its development, then passed serenely on to his eternal rest, leaving behind him a priceless heritage to his family and friends—the record of a life well spent and a good name."

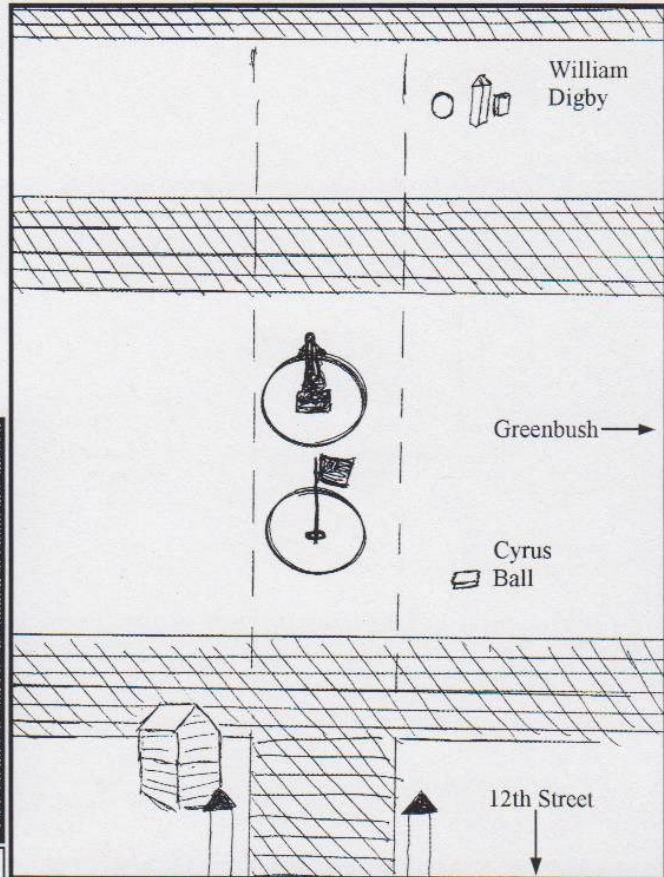
Cyrus Ball was laid to rest in Greenbush Cemetery. To reach his grave stone enter the cemetery through the 12<sup>th</sup> street gates and walk down the center path. On your right two rows before reaching the flag-pole you will find a low stone inscribed as follows:

CYRUS BALL  
AGED EIGHTY NINE  
DEPARTED THIS LIFE  
IN THE EARLY DAWN OF  
JUNE 30, 1893.  
ETERNAL THE DAY BREAKS  
AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY.



Grave stone of Judge Cyrus Ball in Greenbush Cemetery, Lafayette, Indiana

Photo by Bob Schmidt



GREENBUSH CEMETERY

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