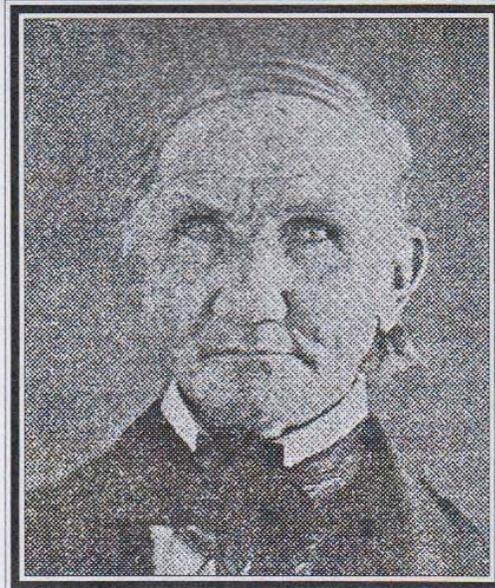


CANAWLERS AT REST

RICHARD L. BRITTON

b. May 2, 1790
d. May 26, 1850

By Carolyn I. Schmidt



Richard L. Britton's father was a soldier in the Revolutionary War. Richard belonged to the best American stock, had money and came to the west to speculate in land.

Ft. Wayne Lodge

When Fort Wayne was still a part of Randolph county, a group of men met on March 2, 1823, in the rooms of General John Tipton inside the pickets of the abandoned fort. Tipton was a member of Pisgah lodge No. 5 of Corydon and, along with the others, wished to organize a Masonic lodge. Two months later in May 1823 they presented a dispensation to create Wayne lodge, No. 25, Free and Accepted Masons of Fort Wayne to visitors from other lodges. Richard L. Britton attended the meeting in Fort Wayne, Indiana, as a visitor from St. John's lodge No. 13, Dayton, Ohio. This may have been Richard's first visit to the town.

On October 10, 1823, John Tipton received the charter and was authorized to constitute and form Wayne lodge No. 25. After a while the lodge moved to Washington hall located on the southwest corner of Columbia and Barr streets. In June 1828, Joseph Holman was elected Master. A two-story brick lodge was completed in the summer of 1830 at the west end of Columbia Street on the north side of the Wabash & Erie Canal basin (known as Orbison Basin since Hill & Orbison had a warehouse located there). Public sentiment arose against the secrecy of Masonry after William Morgan disappeared in 1826. Some thought that he had been murdered by the Masons for revealing their secret work. Attendance dropped off and the lodge and lot were put up for sale to the highest bidders. Although it was appraised at \$2,000, Joseph Holman, Richard L. Britton, Francis Comparet and Hugh Hanna purchased it

for \$1,328 as reported at the lodge meeting on June 10, 1833.

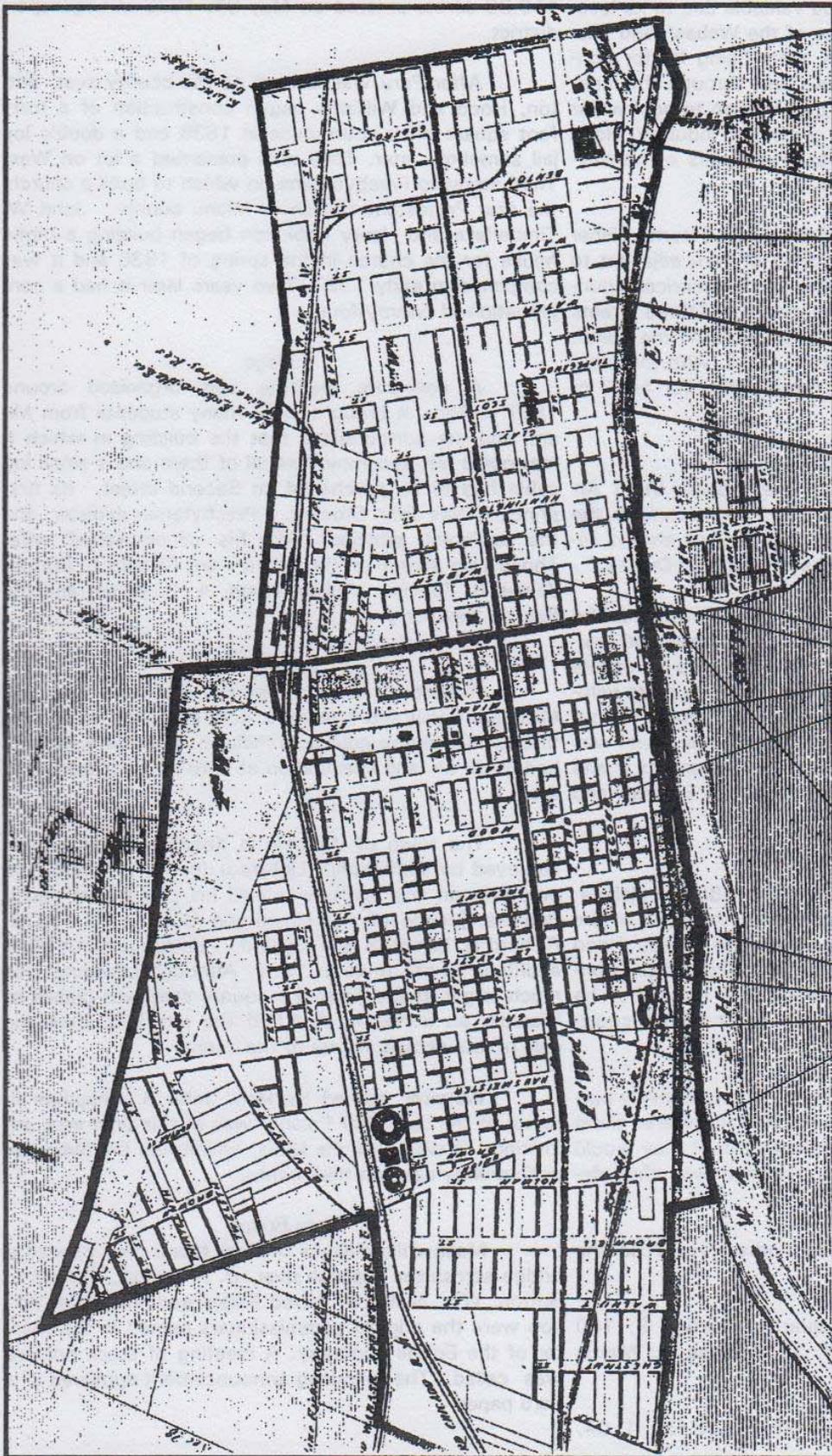
On October 23, 1826, a treaty between the United States and the Miami Indians was negotiated at the mouth of the Mississinewa river on the Wabash river. Jean (John) Baptiste Richardville, principal chief of the Miamis, was granted several tracts of land in what would become Miami County.

On August 18, 1827 Joseph Holman purchased the area north of the river from Richardville for \$500 in cash and trade. There Holman founded the town of Miamisport platting his land in 1828 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, which was torn down in 1890 to build Holman School.

Holman's idea might have worked if he had not made a big mistake and sold 210 acres at the east end of his property to his friend, William Nesbit Hood for \$500 in 1829. Hood had come to Fort Wayne from Dayton, Ohio in 1822 and had been appointed a Circuit Court judge by Governor James Brown Ray on June 15, 1824.

Peru

Judge Hood also wanted the county seat on his property. In 1833 he moved his family from Fort Wayne to his land. In 1834 he sold two thirds interest in it to his Fort Wayne friends. One third went to Jesse L. Williams for \$3,000 and one third interest to Richard L. Britton for \$3,000. Williams, the Chief Engineer of the Wabash & Erie Canal, and Britton, a man of considerable



- WABASH FEEDER CANAL
- WABASH FEEDER DAM #3
- LOCK #20
- SITE OF PRESENT DAY WAYNE STREET BRIDGE
- WATER STREET
- WABASH RIVER
- WABASH & ERIE CANAL
- CANAL STREET

Original plat of Peru

- Wabash & Erie Canal
- Wabash St.
- Sixth St.
- Hood St.

BROADWAY DOUBLE TRACK COVERED BRIDGE

Original plat of Miamisport

- Wabash River
- Lafayette St.
- Main St.
- Holman St.

1876

PERU, IN
From Baskin &
Forester Co.

Illustrated Historical
Atlas of Indiana

wealth, knew the land would be valuable due to its location. It was near the confluence of the Wabash and Mississinewa rivers and contracts were being let for construction of the Wabash & Erie Canal through the land. A dam was to be built across the Wabash to pool water to feed the canal and provide water for industry. Hood retained the other third interest. The deeds of conveyance were dated July 26, 1834.

Hood, Williams and Britton hired Stearns Fisher to lay off lots and platted the town of Peru adjacent to Miamisport. It was named for the South American country. The town extended one street east and three streets west of Broadway and six streets north of the canal. Sale of the lots opened on July 4, 1834, with the more valuable ones fronting on the canal selling for \$400 or more.

Canal Contractor

Richard L. Britton is on the Indiana State Archives list of Wabash & Erie Canal Contractors. In the *History of Miami County* it said that he was always referred to by old settlers as "Dickey L," or "old Dickey."

The area was so heavily timbered with beautiful specimens of ash, hickory, maple, oak, poplar and walnut trees and so 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 canal was constructed and the town of Peru was begun. As it and Miamisport grew, the friendship between Holman and Hood declined.

County Seat

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.

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. Holman was thus defeated and moved from the area.

Richard Britton purchased other properties the following years:

Township 33, Range 7, NW quarter, Section 9, 160 acres, entered on December 29, 1835 in the Ft. Wayne district

Township 31, Range 6, E half SE & Lot No. 1 04,

110.23 acres, entered on May 31, 1836 in Logansport district

After Peru was chosen as the county seat, Britton, Hood and Williams began construction of a forty foot square brick courthouse in 1836 and a double log jail sometime later. They also presented a lot on West Third street to Presbyterians on which to build a church, the first Protestant church in Miami county. John W. Timberlake and Henry Robinson began building a frame house for the church in the spring of 1836 and it was completed in early 1837. Two years later it had a congregation of twenty-four.

College

A collegiate institute was organized around 1837 in Peru. It brought in so many students from Miami and the surroundings that the building in which it met could not accommodate all of them and a small log cabin had to be purchased on Second street. Its first principal was John Stocker, a Presbyterian minister, and the assistant principal was his accomplished wife. Those who served on the board were Richard L. Britton, James B. Fulwiler, William Hood, A. S. Keiser and the Rev. S. Newberry.

Warsaw

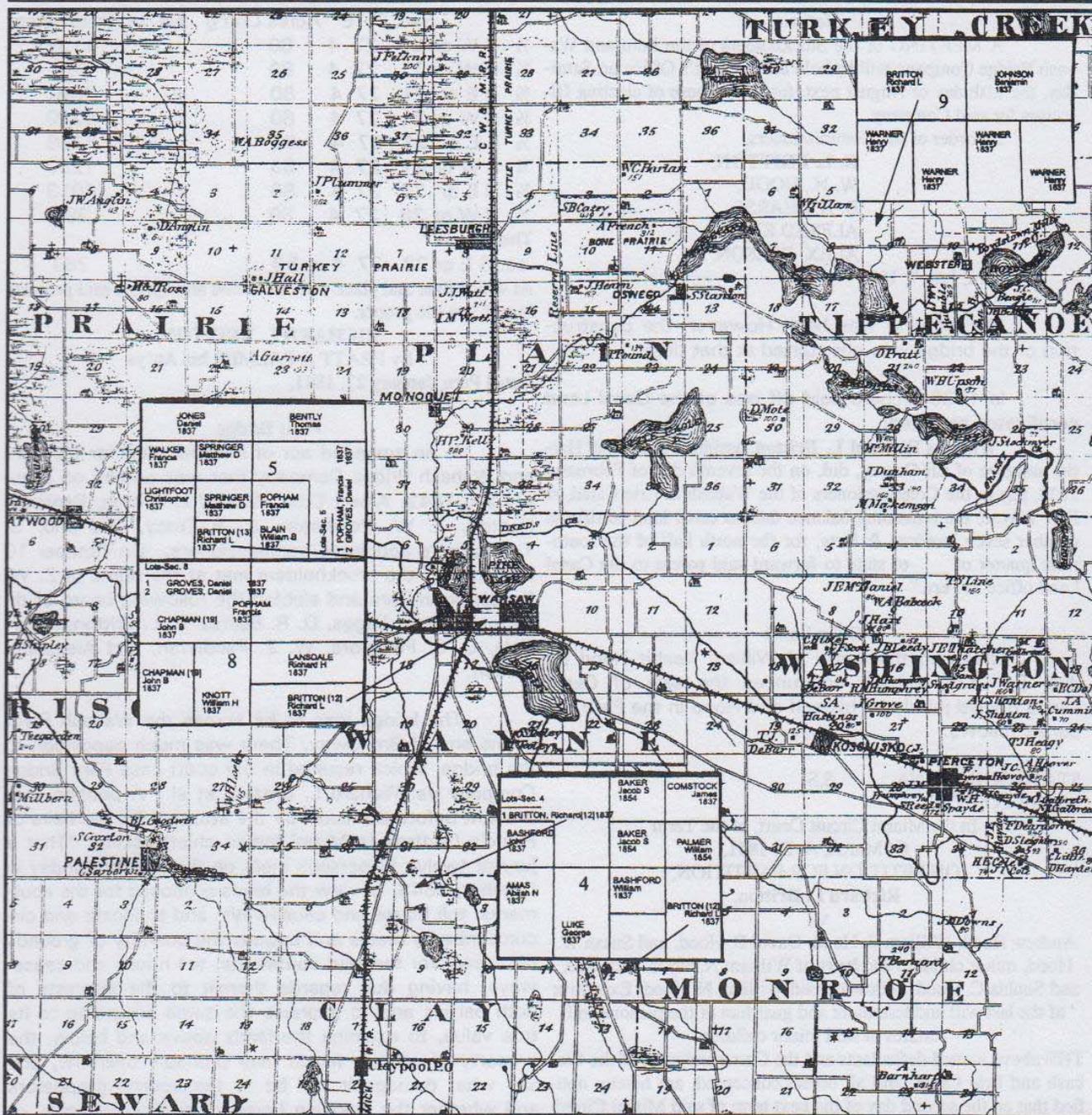
Richard L. Britton learned that the Erie and Michigan Canal and a railroad were proposed to be built through Kosciusko county in Indiana. With the money he had made on land speculation at Peru he purchased land there.

The town of Warsaw in Kosciusko county was surveyed by Christopher Lightfoot for W. H. Knott, the proprietor of the town who filed his plat before Jacob Rannels, justice of the peace, on October 21, 1836. Richard H. Lansdale and Richard L. Britton laid out other additions to the town in 1837. Although Leesburg was much larger at the time, the county seat was placed at Warsaw on condition that half the proceeds from the sale of lots should accrue to the county.

Warsaw, named by Hon. John B. Chapman in honor of the capital of Poland, was at this time very uninviting. It was near the lakes, which had tall tamarack and scrubby oaks on their banks.

Peru Bridge

Meanwhile citizens of Peru found they needed a bridge across the Wabash river. D. R. Bearss, Richard L. Britton, Wm. N. Hood, Alfred Keiser and Alexander Wilson were the original commissioners named in the charter of the Bridge company. A meeting of stock holders was called. The following announcement appeared in a Peru paper:



**Property Owned by Richard L. Britton
A PORTION OF KOSCIUSKO COUNTY, INDIANA**

- May 20, 1837 Section 9 Township 73 N Range 7 E (northwest quadrant)
- Aug. 10, 1837 Section 5 Township 33 N Range 6 E (southwest quadrant)
- June 30, 1837 Section 8 Township 33 N Range 6 E (southeast quadrant)
- June 30, 1837 Section 4 Township 31 N Range 6 E (northwest quadrant)
- June 30, 1837 Section 4 Township 31 N Range 6 E (southeast quadrant)

Map from *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Indiana 1876*. Baskin & Forster.
With section maps from *The Family Maps of Kosciusko County* inserted by Robert F. Schmidt, 2008.

Notice.

A MEETING of the Stockholders of the Peru and Wabash Bridge Company will be held at the Clerk's Office on Saturday, the 12th day of August next, for the purpose of electing Directors for said Company.

By order of the Commissioners,

R. L. BRITTON,
W. N., HOOD,
D. R. BEARSS,
ALFRED KEISER,
ALEX. WILSON.

Peru, July 7, 1837

The meeting was held. However, the construction of the bridge was not started at that time.

In 1838 Richard paid off one of the Canal Land certificates as noted:

"Whereas **Richard L. Britton**, assignee of Samuel Harris, assignee of Eli Dorsey, did, on the seventh day of February, 1838, pay to the Commissioners of the Wabash & Erie Canal, at Fort Wayne, the remaining balance due on canal land certificate number seven hundred & forty, for the north half of the southwest quarter of ___ of state to forward said patent to the Canal Land office in Peru."

Sells Land

Following the death of William Nesbit Hood on July 9, 1838, Britton announced the sale of Canal Lands owned jointly by himself and Hood in the Peru paper as follows:

STATE OF INDIANA, S.S.
MIAMI COUNTY

In the Miami Circuit Court, of the Term
Of March, A. D. 1841,
ON PETITION FOR PARTITION,
Richard L. Britton,

vs.

Andrew Hood, William E. Hood, David B. Hood, and Susan W. Hood, minor children and heirs of William N. Hood, deceased, and Sophia C. Hood, widow of said William N. Hood; Executrix of the last will and testament and guardian of the persons and estates of said minor children.

THE above named defendants and the Commissioners of the Wabash and Erie Canal, and all others concerned, are hereby notified that on the second day of the next term of said Miami Circuit Court, to be holden at the court house in the town of Peru in said county, on the first Monday in March, 1841, I shall move said court to appoint three disinterested freeholder residents of said county, not related to either of the parties hereto, as commissioners for dividing the following described real estate, situate in said county of Miami, purchased by myself and the said William N. Hood in his life time, jointly and held by us at the time of his death as joint proprietors; the same being canal lands on which are jointly of the purchase money, and the interest on the residue for every year in advance have been paid the said State, and which are held by nine several certificates of purchase issued by the Commissioners of the Wabash and Erie Canal, wit:

	Sec	T	E	Acres	Con'g	No. of Certificates
½ N W qr	21	27	4	80		1137
½ N W qr	21	27	4	80		999
½ N E qr	21	27	4	80		1081
½ S W qr	21	27	4	80		1210
½ S E qr	21	27	4	80		1209
½ S W qr	21	27	4	80		1250
½ N E qr	28	27	4	80		1013
½ N W qr	28	27	4	80		995
The lot on						
ac. S E qr	28	27	4	53		763

At which time and place you can attend and oppose said proceedings if you see proper.

RICHARD L. BRITTON,

By PRATT & PALMER his Att'ys.

Dated Peru, January 27, 1841.

Peru Bridge

In an amended act of incorporation for the Peru and Wabash Bridge Company that was passed on January 21, 1842, Albert Cole, Richard L. Britton, Benjamin Henton, Z. W. Pendleton, C. R. Tracy, and Jno. S. Twells were appointed commissioners. On October 10 of that year the stockholders met at the home of Z. W. Pendleton in Peru and elected the following board of directors: David Baggs, D. R. Bearss, R. L. Britton, Albert Cole, G. S. Fenimore, W. Z. Pendleton, and Alexander Wilson.

The bridge was to be across the Wabash River at the end of Broadway. There was much opposition to the bridge, which resulted in the court case Peru Bridge Company vs. Richard L. Britton, et al. A petition was brought before the court by the attorney for the heirs of Francis Godfroy [a Miami Indian chief] asking, "That a jury of twelve fit persons meet on the fourth Monday in October, 1843, to view the lands proposed for the abutments, toll house and causeways, and to locate and circumscribe by metes and bounds the quantity of grounds necessary for the said abutments, toll house and causeways, having due regards therein to the interests of both parties and to appraise the same according to its true value, to examine the lands above and below, the property of others, which may probably overflow, and say what damage it will be to the several proprietors and whether the mansion house of such proprietors, or the offices and gardens thereunto immediately belonging, will be overflowed, to inquire whether in what degree fish of passage and ordinary navigation will be obstructed, whether by any or what means such obstruction may be prevented, and whether in their opinion the health of the neighborhood will be annoyed by the stagnation of the waters."

The court appointed a commission (jury) to view the site and adjoining property and presented a report at the March 1844 term. Their report found, "That it will

PERU BRIDGE

The *Miami County Sentinel* carried this letter from Peru ferry owner, John Bush, in November 1851 regarding his court case against the Peru Bridge Company of which Richard Britton was a commissioner.

FOR THE SENTINEL.

MR. GRAHAM: In looking over your paper of the 18th instant, we find the following synopsis of the decision of our case:

Supreme Court.

TUESDAY

Nov. 25

Bush vs. The Peru Bridge Company. Appeal from the Miami C. C.

This was a bill in chancery praying a perpetual injunction restraining said company from the use of their bridge, and asking an account of receipts, &c.

The circuit court dismissed the bill.

Under the statute of 1831, authorizing boards doing county business to establish public ferries, *Hood, Britton and Williams*, proprietors of the town of Peru, by authority from the commissioners of Miami county, established a ferry across the Wabash River at Broadway street in said town. In 1842, the Legislature incorporated the Peru Bridge Company, authorizing them to erect a bridge across the Wabash River, at the southern termination of said Broadway street, and to use the writ of *ad quo damnum* to condemn the necessary ground, &c.

The bridge being erected, Bush, who had become the purchaser of the ferry, withdrew his ferry boats, and filed his bill upon the principle that the grant to Hood, Britton and Williams, conveyed the exclusive privilege of transportation across the Wabash at Peru.

The act of 1831 contains this proviso: "Provided, That no ferry shall be established within one mile immediately below or above a regularly established ferry, unless they (the commissioners) shall deem it important for the public convenience, or where the situation of a town or village, the crossing of a public highway or the intervention of some creek or river shall render it necessary.

Judge PERKINS held:

1. That there was nothing in this act authorizing county com-

missioners to confer an exclusive privilege, but, on the contrary, reserved to them the right to establish additional ferries if the public convenience demands them.

2. That the Legislature could itself exercise the right at any time it pleased — the commissioners being but its agent.

3. That there was no difference between the establishment of a ferry and a bridge, for the same purpose is accomplished by both.

4. That if the proceedings under the writ of *ad pro damnum* were irregular, as alleged, it is a matter between the owners of the soil appropriated, and those appropriating it.

Decree affirmed. —*State Sentinel*.

That decision seems to strike at the very foundation of our rights, as well as other vested rights, leaving me but a single loop hole to slide out at, — that is slope to California. [Gold Rush]

But inasmuch as our rights have been sacrificed, and our property confiscated, (not for crime, but *pro bono publico*.) in justice to myself, we shall endeavor, in brief, to notice that decision, though it will not be expected that in newspaper publication the case can be amply criticized, were I capable of doing it justice.

And although our rights are finally determined by the highest tribunal known to the State, from which there is no appeal, yet we hold, that men occupying the exalted station of Judges, are amenable to public censure for the errors of their decisions, whether through inadvertence or inattention. But to the points, which we review upon our own responsibility.

"Judge Perkins held

"1. There is nothing in this act authorizing County Commissioners to confer an exclusive privilege," &c.

This decision is contrary to 1st Blackford, 405, there it was held to be an exclusive privilege, and see 2nd McLean Rep. 382.

"But," says the decision, "on the contrary, reserved to them the right to establish additional ferries if the public convenience demands them."

Does it argue that because additional ferries may be established for public convenience, that the one already established should be vacated, and give place to a subsequent one?

"2nd. That the Legislature

could itself exercise this right at any time it pleased, the commissioners being but its agents."

This we deny to be the doctrine on the law. We hold that the State parted with that right by the act of its agents, (the commissioners,) that their act was a contract and a vested right, they made a grant, we gave bond for the performance of our duty, and was subject to indictment for a neglect of that duty, — we hold that that grant was a contract based upon reciprocal obligations, and is protected by the clause in the Constitution of the United States wherein it is provided "that no law shall be passed impairing the obligation of contracts." And we cited abundance of authorities in support of that right, and none have been shown to the contrary.

"3. That there was no difference between the establishment of a ferry and a bridge, for the same purpose is accomplished by both."

Why then, if there is no difference between the establishment of a ferry and a bridge, should the ferry first established be vacated and give place to a bridge? Or why, if the same purpose is accomplished by both, should the ferryman be deprived of his rights? And why, upon the same parity of reasoning, should not the bridge be vacated and give place to a ferry? I don't see the point, Judge Perkins.

As to the 4th point we shall only say there is no point to it, we being fully substituted to the rights of Hood and others. See 2d McLean's Rep. 382.

There are the points upon which our rights have been disposed, points unsupported by precedents or authority, and against all principles of law or universal justice, but based upon flimsy argument without foundation in ethics, and is repugnant to the sense of any ordinary mind.

There are other points in the case that have not been mooted by the court, we claimed a recompense under the law of appropriation, which we were entitled to under the general prayer of relief, if our property could be taken to public use.

Another point is that we were obstructed some months during which time we had paid the ferry tax, and during which time the company could claim no color of right before they obtained their decree under their writ of *ad quo damnum*, and we have been

barred of that right by the sweeping decision made in the case without that point being at all noticed.

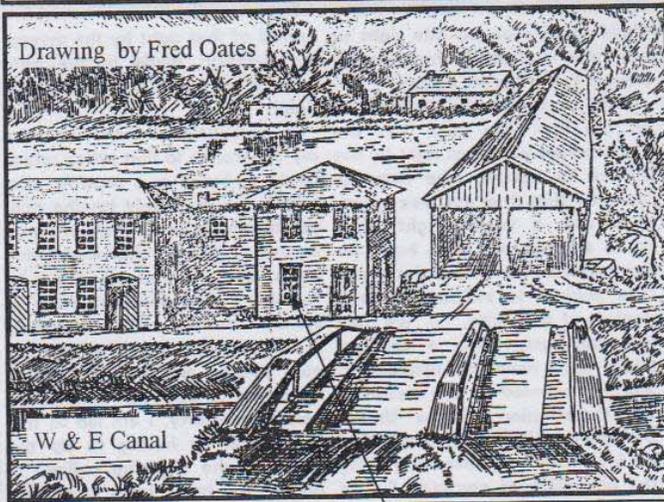
In conclusion I here renounce my adherence to that policy which tends to build up a wealthy aristocracy or monopoly for the rich, whether it be in the form of a protective tariff or chartered privileges, although that policy may be for the public weal at large in some instances, but its tendency is to make the rich richer and the poor poorer, and is dangerous to the rights of the poor, and is dangerous to liberty. I am led to this convention by having to sip the dregs of the damning policy. — my rights have been sacrificed upon the altar of exclusive privileges — and my property taken by a heartless corporation without soul or breeches, or accountability to God or man. It is a thing in name, but in reality a non-entity. Yet if there were honorable men of the company they might have had the magnanimity to offer me some compensation before we incurred so much expense in litigation. But as it is I ask nothing but that each stockholder may console himself and ease his mind and conscience by the happy reflection that it is not his fault individually, but the corporation, and that being only a thing in name is under no accountability.

This, friend Graham, is in no unfriendly feeling towards you, I am aware that you are a shareholder to a small amount. But I am aware of your sentiments in this matter, and I know that as an individual you would have done me justice.

Nor is this announcement made in any unfriendly feeling towards my Whig friends, but I owe them no sacrifice of principles, I have no ambitious purpose to subservise, and they are the sentiments of my heart.

I go to California with a view to recuperate my means, which I do from the necessity of the thing. I could never expect to do it here, and I go without the ability of paying the honest debts that I owe here, but in the hope that by the blessing of God and my own industry, I may do so at some future time.

Respectfully yours, JOHN BUSH



A portion of this Peru bridge toll house still stands.

be of no damage to the mansion houses of none of the several proprietors along the river, nor the offices or gardens thereunto immediately belonging, will be overflowed by the erection of said bridge, nor the abutments, toll house nor causeways thereof; and it appearing further to the satisfaction of the jury that ordinary navigation or fish of passage will not thereby be obstructed, and that the health of the neighborhood will not be annoyed by the stagnation of water occasioned by the construction of said bridge abutments, toll house and causeways." The court then ordered construction of the bridge to begin.

James Douglass was the contractor who built this, the first bridge across the Wabash River at Peru, in 1843. He agreed to take stock as part of his pay and, when the board found fault with his work and refused to pay, he had to finish the bridge to protect the stock, which he held in the company. The toll buildings were on the east side of the double track covered bridge at the south end of Broadway. To reach the toll bridge a lower bridge was built across the Wabash & Erie Canal for buggies, wagons and animals.

The toll bridge, a controversy from its beginning, had many cases filed against it as it replaced the previous contract for a ferry. It eventually ended up in the Indiana Supreme Court. In 1851 the *Miami County Sentinel* published a letter from John Bush with a synopsis of the court's decision and his rebuttal as seen on the previous page.

R. L. Britton's name was mentioned in the business directory of the Peru *Forester* in 1838. An article in that paper said: "This was in the days of the canal. News was scarce and only obtained by means of newspapers carried on horseback through the woods between Indianapolis and then a small village of Peru

news from three to six months old."

As Peru grew, Miamisport residents requested the commissioners vacate the Miamisport plat. They did on June 9, 1841, and Miamisport became a part of Peru.

Law Suits

Things did not always go well for Richard. Some of his property was sold by the Miami County Sheriff to satisfy claims against him as seen in the following two notices, which appeared in the Peru paper.

Sheriff's Sale.

By virtue of a writ of alias Fieri Facias, issued from the Miami Circuit court, and to be directed, I will offer a public outcry, at the door of the Court House in Peru, on the 4th day of December, 1841, between the hours of 10 o'clock A.M. and 4 o'clock P.M. The rents and profits for a term of seven years of the S. E. fractional qr. of Section No. 29, Township No. 28 North, of range No. 5 east, containing 109 acres and twenty-six hundredths, more or less: Should the rents and profits not bring enough to satisfy the demand, I will then offer the Fee Simple of the same. Given up as the property of Henry Zern, to satisfy an Execution in favor of Joseph Banfill and others, against **Richard L. Brittain** [sic] and Henry Zern.

JNO. A. GRAHAM, Shff. M. C.

Nov. 13, 1841

Sheriff's Sale.

By virtue of a writ of Vendicioni exponas, issued from the Miami Circuit court, and to me directed, I will offer at public outcry, at door of the Court House in Peru, on the fourth day of December, 1841, between the hours of 10 o'clock A.M. and 4 o'clock P.M. The rents and profits for a term of seven years of Lot number 10 (Basin lot in Peru,) and lots No. 33 and 36 in Perrysburg. Should the rents and profits not bring enough to satisfy the demand, I will then offer the Fee Simple of the same. Taken as the property of **Richard L. Brittain** [sic] to satisfy an execution in favor of Robert and Samuel McClure, against **Richard L. Brittain** [sic] and Jesse L. Williams.

JNO. A. GRAHAM, Shff. M. C.

Peru, Nov. 13, 1841

The Peru brick courthouse promised by Hood, Britton and Williams was finally completed. However, only one term of court was held in it before it was destroyed by fire in 1843. The double log jail was also destroyed by fire in 1852.

Gives Testimony

In the early 1840s Col. John Spencer, who had been the receiver on monies for the sale of land at the land office in Fort Wayne, had rumors spread by the press and others about his transactions while in office. He asked for affidavits proving he had acted correctly to vindicate his good name and to be reimbursed for funds he had spent. On January 23, 1844 Richard L. Britton

swore under oath the following:

State of Indiana. Allen County, ss. — Be it remembered that on this the 23d day of January 1844, personally appeared before me the subscriber, a Notary Public in and for said county, **Richard L. Britton**, Esq. Of Miami County in said State, who after having been duly sworn on his oath says that it would in his estimate be unsafe and improper to transport large sums of the public money whether in specie or paper to any bank of deposit from Fort Wayne without a guard at the time of the great pressure of the land sales, that the affiant is well acquainted from actual observation with the whole region of country about said place and a hundred miles distant, that apart from being attacked by lawless men, there was great danger oftentimes from crossing the streams, as the settlements were then thin and the traveler could have no assistance and ran great risks that way, and that said Spencer, the late Receiver of Public Moneys at Fort Wayne, richly deserves one per cent, on the money he received in his said office for the varied and numerous risks he ran in securing and depositing said money, as well as for clerk hire during the period of making his said extensive sales. He risked his interest for his country — he paid clerks out of his own pocket to accommodate pressing demands of the people, and saved the coffers of the Government, relying on the justice of his country for remuneration. And that remuneration ought not to be withheld from him, that he has been acquainted intimately for twelve years with the said Spencer, and that he bore and sustained an excellent character, that he verily believes that said defalcation to the Government was not the result of any want of honor or integrity in him, but on account of the excessive extent of the said land sales.

R. L. Britton.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 23d day of January, A. D. 1844. E. F. Colerick, N. P.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto subscribed my name and affixed the seal of my office this 25th day of January, A. D. 1844

E. F. COLERICK,
Notary Public

Relatives Arrive

In 1844 Richard L. Britton influenced his nephew, Richard B. Runyan, age 20, to move to Peru. Richard B. Runyan was born at Trenton, New Jersey to Mary (Britton) Runyan and Lewis Runyan. Young Runyan brought his mother, his brother Nathaniel and his sister Mary with him to Peru.

Richard B. Runyan was married on November 11, 1853 to Maria McGregor, who was the first white child born in Miamisport. He laid out an addition to Peru and Runyan street was named for him. His only son, Britton L. Runyan, who was born on August 18, 1862, was named in honor of his uncle, Richard L. Britton. Both Britton L. Runyan and his father, Richard B. Runyan, were elected lay delegates to the fiftieth Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church held in Indianapolis in 1887. Although they had both been delegates at various times to other of this church's conventions, they did not attend this one.

Juror

In March 1844 the Peru court convened on the 4th. The jurors for this term had been drawn in June, 1843. Richard L. Britton's name was drawn to serve as a petit juror.

Peru Lodge

In June or July of 1844 a Masonic lodge was organized in Peru that met in the upper story of the toll house for the Broadway bridge across the Wabash river. This was Miami Lodge No. 67, Free and Accepted Masons. Its first officers were: William M. Reyburn, worshipful master; Isaac Marquiss, senior warden; Richard L. Britton, junior warden; George L. Cart, secretary; John M. Jackson, treasurer. It received a charter from the grand lodge May 29, 1848.

Canal Water

Surplus water in the Wabash & Erie Canal was leased to individuals to power industry. The 1845 Wabash & Erie Canal report states:

At lock No. 16, near Peru, Rhodes & Jackson are the lessees, for 65 dollars per year, with the privilege of only using the waste water that passes round the lock, and to be applied to any machinery that may suit the lessees. The rent to commence on the 1st day of May, 1845 — all paid.

There has been heretofore the surplus water at the lock opposite the dam at Peru, and since been transferred to **R. L. Britton**, who has paid up all the rents up to November 1, 1845. It has been used for various purposes, such as shingle factory, &c. Subject to be discontinued at any time; 30 dollars per annum is as much as it has been rented for.

Peru Cemetery

As settlers in the Peru vicinity passed away, they had been buried somewhat helter-skelter on some ground. On June 15, 1845, a meeting was held in which participants wanted to establish a regular cemetery with laid out lots for Peru. A committee composed of A. H. Cole, G. W. Goodrich and N.O. Ross was appointed to locate a suitable ground and determine the terms of its purchase. Two days later they reported that D. R. Bearss and R. L. Britton would sell them three acres on a public road that was "suitable in every respect for a burial ground and at a proper distance from town, at \$60 an acre." The land was purchased and the cemetery named Mount Hope. This was around the time the War with Mexico broke out and troops left Peru on a flat boat on the canal in 1846.

Railroad

The Indianapolis & Peru Railroad Company was incorporated on January 11, 1846. Richard L. Britton, G. S. Fennimore, W. J. Holman, William Kessler, J. T. Miller and N. O. Ross represented Miami county on its

board of directors. They asked for a subscription of \$20,000 in 1849 to build the railroad and it was voted in by the people. The directors were given \$10,000 that had been borrowed. They soon discovered this was not enough and had to make further appeals. The railroad was completed to Peru in the spring of 1851. Peru became home to its headquarters and rolling stock and its round-house and shops were built in 1853 on the southwest side of Peru. In 1873 when it was taken over by the I. P. & C., the old shops were torn down and new ones built on the northwest side of town. It again changed hands in 1878 becoming the Lake Erie & Western.

Warsaw Cemetery

On March 9, 1848, Richard L. Britton gave a deed for two acres of land at the northeast corner of Smith and Hickory Streets to the Kosciusko County, Indiana commissioners "for the purpose of providing a public burying ground near the town of Warsaw, in said county of Kosciusko, for the accommodation of the citizens of said town and county." Prior to the deed Mrs. Vica Webb had been buried there on June 12, 1837. Later on December 29, 1866, her husband, Daniel Webb, was laid to rest there. The deed was recorded in 1857. The cemetery was used by both the citizens of Warsaw and others from remote parts of the county. The Big Four Railroad was built along the west side of the cemetery in the early 1870s.

As the small cemetery became overcrowded, it was decided to purchase what is now known as Oakwood Cemetery on the east shore of Pike Lake from Dr. Jacob Boss in 1874. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Boss died and was buried in Oakwood on August 6, 1874. Bodies interred at the first cemetery were transferred to the new one and the old cemetery was destroyed.

Law Suits

Richard not only had law suits filed against him, he also filed against others as seen below:

State of Indiana Miami county.
In the Miami Circuit Court, to March
Term, 1849

Notice is hereby given that a writ of domestic attachment was this day issued by the Clerk of said court in the above cause, at the instance, and upon the affidavit of **Richard L. Britton**, against the lands, tenements, goods, chattels, rights, credits, monies and effects, of said Jay Dibra, by virtue of which said writ the sheriff of said county has attached the following property, to wit: The interest of said Jay Dibra in and to in-lot number 55, in Godfroy's Addition to the town of Peru, in said county, and which said writ is now pending. The said defendant, Jay Dibra, is required to appear in said court at the next term thereof, on or before the calling of the cause and defend said writ, or the same will be heard and determined in his absence.

Witness, JAMES B. FULWILER, clerk.

J. Hartman, Att'f for Pl'ff.
Peru, Jan. 23, 1849

SHERIFF'S SALE.

By virtue of a writ of Fe. Fa. Issued from the Miami circuit court, and to me directed, I will offer at public outcry, at the door of the Presbyterian church, the same being now used as a court house in Peru, on the 14th day of April, 1849, between the hours of 10 o'clock A.M. and 5 o'clock P.M., the right, title, interest and claim of Jay Dibra in and to the rents and profits for a term of seven years, of Lot No. fifty five (55) of Godfroy's addition to the town of Peru, Miami county, Indiana.

Should the rents and profits not bring enoguh to satisfy the demand, I will then offer the right, title, interest and claim of the said Jay Dibra in and to the Fee Simple of the same. Taken as the property of Jay Dibra at the suit of **Richard L. Britton**.

COLEMAN HENTON, Sh'ff. M.C.

Peru, March 20, 1849.

SHERIFF'S SALE.

By virtue of a writ of Fi. Fa. Issued from the Miami circuit court, and to me directed, I will offer at public outcry, at the door of the Presbyterian church, the same being now used as a court house in Peru, on the 12th day of May, 1849, between the hours of 10 o'clock A.M. and 5 o'clock P.M., the rents and profits for a term of seven years, of Lot No. one hundred and ninety-two and one hundred and ninety-three and appurtenances, of Godfroy's Addition to the town of Peru.

Should the rents and profits not bring enough to satisfy the demand, I will then offer the Fee Simple of the same. Taken as the property of Ann L. Alter, Executrix, at the suit of **Richard L. Britton**.

COLEMAN HENTON, Sh'ff, M. C.

Peru, April 18, 1849.

Turnpike

A turnpike was to be built between Peru and Rochester, Indiana. The *Miami County Sentinel* of November 22, 1849 shows that R. L. Britton was a director of the Peru and Rochester Turnpike company as follows:

Peru and Rochester Turnpike

The Directors of the Peru and Rochester Turnpike company, met on the 17th of November, at the house of H. W. Mason in Mexico, pursuant to previous notice. A majority of the Directors being present, to wit: D. R. Bearss, Benj. Henton, **R. L. Britton**, H. W. Mason, Jacob Wilkinson, William Conner, and H. P. Howes, the meeting was organized by electing Judge Wilkinson, President, and H. P. Howes, Secretary.

The act incorporating said company was then read, after which, it was

Resolved, That four persons be appointed agents to open books for the purpose of receiving subscriptions for stock.

Resolved, That N. O. Ross, of Peru, H. W. Mason, of Mexico, Hamilton Simonton of Perrysburgh, and K. G. Shryock of Rochester, be and are hereby appointed said agents.

Resolved, That N. O. Ross be authorized to purchase the necessary books, &c. for the purpose of receiving subscription for

stock, and furnish the different agents with the same.

Resolved, That one dollar on each share of stock subscribed be required at the time of subscribing.

Resolved, That the proceedings of this meeting be published in the Peru Sentinel.

The meeting then adjourned to meet at the same place on the 22d of December, next. JACOB WILKINSON, Pres.

H. P. HOWES, Secretary.

The *Miami County Sentinel* of January 24, 1850 carried this synopsis of the Peru and Rochester Turnpike Company charter:

Peru and Rochester Turnpike Company.

At the request of those interested we give below a synopsis of the Charter of this company:

Act approved January 15, 1849.

SEC. 1. Constitutes Wm. Conner, H. P. Howes, Jacob Brewer, William Moss, Jacob Wilkinson, H. W. Mason, D. R. Bearss, B. Henton, and **R. L. Britton** of Miami county, and J. I. Shryock, William Rannels and A. Smith of Fulton county, and their successors in office duly elected and qualified, a body corporate and politic under the name and style of the Peru and Rochester Turnpike company, and invests them with the usual corporate powers.

Democatic Convention

At a meeting of Democats held in Peru township on Saturday, April 20th, 1850, it was resolved that several townships in Miami county should meet in a county convention on Saturday May 25, 1850 at 1 P. M. and that fifteen delegates from Peru township be sent to the convention. Those then chosen were: John W. Miller, John A. Graham, James Tillett, George Wilson, James Reed, Isaac Marques, Jos. Shryock, N. O. Ross, Zidok Hurt, R. L. Britton, George Townsend, Samuel Coulter, John Hoover, Wm. Ream, and John B. Wallace.

Dies

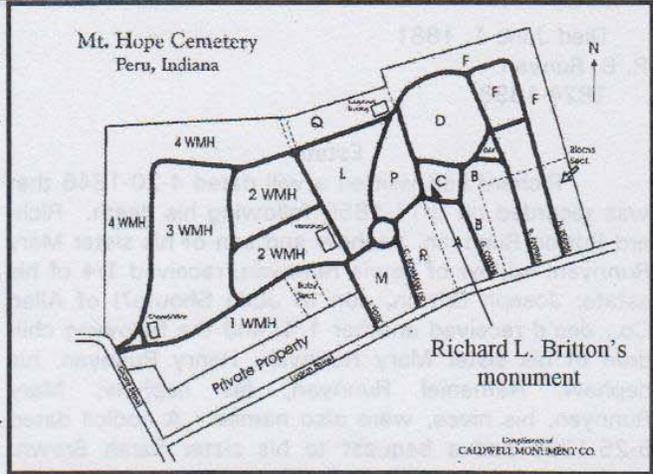
Richard L. Britton died on May 26, 1850. His sketchy obituary appeared in the following papers:

Miami County Sentinel May 30, 1850

DIED.

On Sunday evening last, Mr. **RICHARD L. BRITTON**, aged 60 years and 24 days.

Thus, after a brief illness, has passed away, another of the early pioneers of the Wabash, who has been for many years, a citizen of our town. He was one of its proprietors, and lived to witness a flourishing village spring into existence, on a spot he had often traversed when a wilderness. He possessed many noble qualities, and was endowed with a firmness and resolution which enabled him to bear up under reverses and misfortunes which would overwhelm other men. But he is gone, and the fear of sorrow will dim the eye of many who shared his friendship. — His funeral obsequies were performed by the Masonic Fraternity, of which order he had long been a faithful and worthy member. A large concourse of citizens generally, assisted in paying the last sad rites to one whom they had long known.



Fort Wayne News Sentinel May 30, 1850

DIED.—**Richard Britton**, a well-known citizen — an old resident — of this portion of Indiana, died at Peru on Sunday last.

Richard L. Britton was laid to rest in Mount Hope Cemetery located on Logan street in Peru, Indiana. Cemetery records on the internet say he is buried in B1. However, his monument was found in section C. The large obelisk stands in memory of several families.

The monument's base reads:

East side: Britton West side: Runyan.

The monument's obelisk reads:

East side:

R. L. Britton

May 26, 1850
Aged 60 yrs 24 ds

Sarah

Wife of Charles Brown
Died Mar 17, 1876
Aged 79 yrs 10 mos 27 ds

South side:

Henry Funk

June 4, 1847
Jan. 14, 1917

West side:

Runyan

Mary
Wife of Louis Runyan
Died Dec 9, 1874
Aged 81 yrs 1 mo 17 ds

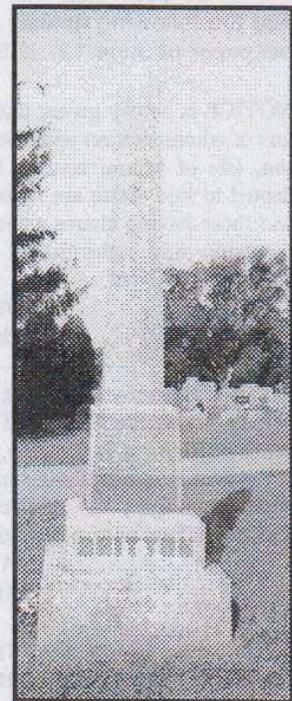
Julia Runyan
Died Aug 22, 1870
Aged 54 yrs 9 mo 21 ds

India W. Runyan
Wife of Henry Funk
Born June 1, 1856
Died April 29, 1881

North side:

Maria

Wife of R. B. Runyan
Born May 1, 1833



BRITTON

Died June 1, 1881
 R. B. Runyan
 1824-1898

Estate

Richard had written a will dated 4-20-1846 that was recorded on 6-11-1850 following his death. Richard Britton Runnyan, nephew and son of his sister Mary Runnyan, widow of Lewis Runnyan, received 1/4 of his estate; Joseph Britton, son of Juda Shou(p?) of Allen Co., dec'd received another 1/4; and the following children of his sister Mary Runnyan: Henry Runnyan, his nephew, Nathaniel Runnyan, his nephew; Mary Runnyan, his niece, were also named. A codicil dated 5-25-1850 had a bequest to his sister Sarah Brown. His executor was William Smith and it was witnessed by M. R. Miller, W. M. Reyburn, A. O. Rose and Asa Johnson. [The will had Runyan spelled with two n's.]

A partition of the estate of Richard L. Britton found in the Miami County Museum/Historical Society was furnished by Nancy Masten of the Hal C. Phelps archives. It named the following:

Runyan -Richard B., Henry, Nathaniel, Mary - all children of
 Richard's sister Mary, widow of Lewis
 Smith -Mary, William
 Britton -Joseph son of Juda [Shoup?]
 Zern -Henry
 Ross -Nathan O.

A year after Richard's death his administrator had the following notices put in the *Miami County Sentinel* paper of June 12, 1851:

NOTICE is hereby given: that the undersigned has taken out letters of administration with the will annexed, of **Richard L. Britton**, late of Miami county, Indiana, deceased. All persons indebted to said estate are requested to make immediate payment, and those having claims against the same are notified to present the same duly authenticated for settlement. The estate is supposed to be solvent.

NATHAN O. ROSS,
 Administrator

NOTICE is hereby given that I will expose to sale at public auction on Friday the 5th day of July 1850 [1851], at the late residence of **Richard L. Britton**, deceased, all the personal property of the deceased; a credit of nine months will be given on all sums over three dollars, the purchaser giving his note waiving the appraisement law, with approved security.

NATHAN O. ROSS
 Administrator &c

The *Miami County Sentinel* of June 22, 1850 carried a notice of a petition for divorce, dower, alimony, &c filed by Rhoda Pendleton vs. Zachariah W. Pendleton. Even through Richard had died, he, Alphonso

A. Cole, and Benjamin Rector were named under Zachariah the defendant.

To settle Richard's estate took several years since he had so much property on which others owned him money or he had failed to pay the bills. On January 24, 1851 there was a foreclosure on a mortgage/deed made by Alexander Wilson and Richard L. Britton on March 8, 1846, for the north east quarter of section number 3 in township number 26 north of range 4 east, containing 160 acres, also the south east fractional quarter of section number 34, in township number 27 north of range 4 east containing 69 80-100 acres saying that Wilson and Britton had failed to pay bills of six hundred and fifty dollars and since both of their deaths the bills had not been paid by their heirs. The land was to be sold to pay the bills.

A Corporation Delinquent List for 1852 found in the Peru newspaper showed that Richard's heirs had not paid the following taxes for in-lots in Godfroy's addition:

	In Lots.	Amt. Of Tax
	304	14
	110½	10
	114	12
	134	4
3/4 of	135	3
	136	5
	171	23

Then on May 12, 1853 the following lots of the Godfroy Addition were filed for the partitioners of his estate to be sold on January 26, 1854: lots 69, 116, 172, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 191, 220, 221, 222, 223.

Although no record has been found that Richard was married, the 1840 Federal Census of the United States shows him as the head of the household with males: 1 male between the ages of 10-15, 2 between 20-30, 1 between 30-40, and 1 between 50-60, the latter being himself, and females: 2 between 20-30. If his sister Mary Runyan and the Runyan children did not come until 1844, they would not have been those listed in the census. Also there were no Britton children listed as his heirs. We do not know who made up this household.

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<http://02adf28.netsohost.com/dotnetnuke/HistoryofWarsaw/tabid/129/Default.aspx>

Special thanks to Nancy Masten of the Hal C. Phelps archives of the Miami County Museum for copies of the Britton file.

NEWS FROM THE PAST Floods of 1847

Fort Wayne Times & Press November 11, 1847

Heavy Rain. — On Sunday night last this place [Ft. Wayne] was visited by a most severe rain, accompanied by vivid flashes of lightning and tremendous peals of thunder. The approach of the storm was sudden and quite unexpected. At half past nine in the evening, the sky was clear and the atmosphere serene; and at one in the morning the cellars and cellar-kitchens of those citizens living in low places along Tan Yard Run, were filling with water. The culvert under the canal, and those under Main and Berry streets were totally inadequate to discharge the immense rush of water, and each operated partially as a dam, flooding the lots above it. We have never seen the water in the run so high but once before in eleven years. It soon ran off, however, leaving the citizens to clear out their basements at their leisure.

Fort Wayne Times & Press November 15, 1847

Canal Freshet.

A Dayton paper of Thursday, says:
Break in the Canal. We understand that the [Miami and Erie] canal is badly broken near Troy [Ohio]. It is said it will take a week to repair the breach.

The Miami [river] continued rising the whole of Tuesday night. At daylight it was at a stand, and slowly receded during yesterday. Persons crossed from the old bridge to the new levee in a skiff, as the water was too deep to ride.

At the Third street bridge, between the embankment and the levee, the water was three feet deep.

This sudden and unexpected swell in the river, was within about four feet of the great rise on the first of January last.

Much damage has been done to the corn in the bottoms, as large quantities remained in the fields.

The *Hamilton Telegraph* of the 11th says:

On Monday night and Tuesday forenoon, the Miami river at this place rose very high. The damage to farmers on the bottom lands along the rivers is very great. An immense amount of corn, and a great number of hogs, have been swept off. Many farmers, on Four and Seven Mile Creeks, have sustained very considerable losses. The damage in the immediate vicinity of Hamilton, is very little. The Miami canal has sustained some injury, but not enough to impede navigation.

The White Water canal sustained great injury, and the losses to farmers below have been greater than above this place. The White Water streams rose higher than ever before known, and the damage to millers, farmers, &c. is greater than ever sustained by any previous floods.

We have not heard whether the flood has been so great on the Little Miami [river], but we presume it has, and the damage very great.

The *Hamilton and Rossville News* says:

Since Sunday night we have had an unusually heavy rain for the season, and the waters have risen to an uncommon height, with great rapidity. The Miami, at this place, rose within four feet five inches of January last, which stand above all others. It has subsided since, but very slowly. For to great a time at this season, the damage done seems to be small. The greatest loss we hear of, is the new bridge at Enoch's above Middletown, which was only partly raised, one span being on the trestles, and the other timber within reach of the water. Still there must be great injury done to the corn crops in the low lands. Some hogs have been seen passing.