

Canawlers At Rest
NORMAN S. BROWN
 May 18, 1811—June 8, 1886
 Find-A-Grave #41412578

By Carolyn I. Schmidt

Norman S. Brown was born in Ellisburg, Jefferson county, New York, on May 18, 1811 to Avery and Laura McKee Brown, who were married on February 13, 1805. His father, Avery, was born in Stonington, Rhode Island on March 4, 1785 to Thomas Brown and drowned on September 14, 1811 in Pulaski, Oswego county, New York at age 25 when Norman was only four months old. His mother, Laura, was born on May 8, 1787 in Middlebury, Addison county Vermont to Joseph McKee Jr. (1758-1829) and Irene Marsh McKee (1765-1828). Norman lived with his mother and siblings, Laura A. Brown (1807-??) and Avery O. Brown (1809-??). His mother then married John C. Otis (1787-1870) on July 11, 1813.

In 1822 at age eleven Norman left home. When age fourteen in 1826 he apprenticed himself to the hatter's trade, but at the end of two years his employer went out of business and he never finished it. He then became a cabin-boy on a steamboat on Lake Ontario, but he did not stay in this place long. The following winter he went to school. In the spring he was hired as a steward on an Erie Canal packet/passenger boat and after a time became a bowsman, a crew member whose duties included snubbing the boat to a stop in the lock or alongside a dock. Norman was on the Erie Canal from the fall of 1828 to the spring of 1831 when he went to Cleveland, Ohio to work on the Ohio & Erie Canal.

While working on the Ohio & Erie Norman met Maria E. Carter, of Summit county, Ohio. Maria, who was 17 years old, was born on May 30, 1815 in Ohio. Norman and Maria were married on January 6, 1833. On December 25, 1833 their first child, William A. was born. Then in December 27, 1835, Laura Amelia was born. She died in Attica in 1912. Their last child, Harley, was born January 13, 1838 and died in infancy.

Norman worked on the Ohio & Erie Canal from 1831 until 1844 except for the years 1837 and 1838. Those years he worked for a paper-mill and ran a livery stable.

In the spring of 1843 at age 32 Norman came to Indiana via the Wabash & Erie Canal. He must have liked what he found in Indiana for early during the following winter he came down the Wabash river on a keel-boat and arrived at Attica. At once he set up a grocery and dry goods trade, which he continued for fourteen years.

In 1849 and 1850 he was the inn keeper for the Exchange Hotel in Attica. Those residing in the hotel in 1850 can be seen on the Federal Census. From 1866 to 1877, he was an express agent. He owned a farm of 320 acres that was situated on the opposite side of the Wabash river. For over twenty-five years,

1850 Federal Census	
Shows those living in the Exchange Hotel	
Norman S. Brown	39 Grocer
Maria E. Brown	35
William A. Brown	16 Clerk
Laura A. Brown	14
Ruben Robins	55 Distiller
Mary Robins	51
David Robins	18 Clerk
John Weston	40 Trader
Dewit E. Weston	19 Clerk
Peter Vider	33 Warehouseman
George L. Gibbs	20 Warehouseman
Nelson S. Stewart	28 Wagonmaker
John Zapp	21 Wagonmaker
Daniel Buck	19 Clerk
Joseph Fisher	27 Blacksmith
Philip Lutz	56 Plasterer
John Daily	54 Livery Stable
George Fely	35 Moulder
Stephen Clark	19 Lather
David Williams	26 L. Maker
William Richason	26 L. Maker
James Smith	40 House Joiner
Christopher Stoker	90 Laborer
Mena Stoker	22
William Pixley	27 Cooper
Margaret Pixley	23
Henry McElroy	33 Book Keeper
Emily McElroy	27
William Mc Coach	12
William Shochart	27 Book Binder
John Mass	20 Taylor
Holly B. Bears	40 Minister
Bears	38
Mariam Bears	3
Allis Bears	1

he rented out the farm and then took over its cultivation.

At first Norman was associated with the Whig, and later the Republican, party. But he soon lost the strength of those ties and decided to vote “for the best man.”

Norman S. Brown passed away on June 8, 1886. He was laid to rest in Attica’s Riverside Cemetery. His wife, Maria E. Carter Brown, died on May 8, 1894 in Attica and lies beside him.

In 1987, John Cottrell, who was born and reared in Indiana and graduated from Attica High, began renovation of the Old Church through the John Cottrell Foundation. He then acquired the area adjoining the Old Church and restored the Norman S. Brown house, the William Brown house and a variety of other out buildings. In 1995 the Canal Society of Indiana visited this restored village.

Norman’s home was originally built in the early 1850s when he and his wife moved to Attica. It was located in a key area of the city because the water system originating from the Ravine Park springs came to this corner through hollow logs. Of Federal style, it originally was a rectangle with detached kitchen. At one time it had a smokehouse and barn. It was remodeled in the 1880s. When restored by Cottrell it was taken back to its original style.

William’s home is believed to have been built in the mid-1850s. Norman and Maria had it built as a wedding gift for William and his new wife. It originally sat two blocks away but was moved to its present location when a grocery was erected at its original site. It was restored as it was built.

Sources:

Ancestry.com

Public member trees:

Avery Brown, Laura McKee Brown Otis, Norman S. Brown, Maria E. Carter, William A. Brown, Laura Amelia Brown, Harley Brown

U.S. Federal Census: 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880

Beckwith, Hiram William. *History of Fountain County, Indiana*. Chicago, IL: H. H. Hill and N. Iddings, Publishers, 1881.

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BROWN
MARIA E. BROWN 1815-1894 NORMAN S. BROWN 1811-1886
Riverside Cemetery, Attica,
Fountain County, Indiana



Cottrell Village

Norman S. Brown house with Old Church on the left and William Brown house on back right.

William A. Brown house built by his parents Norman and Maria Brown.

Photos by Bob Schmidt 1995