

CANAWLERS AT REST

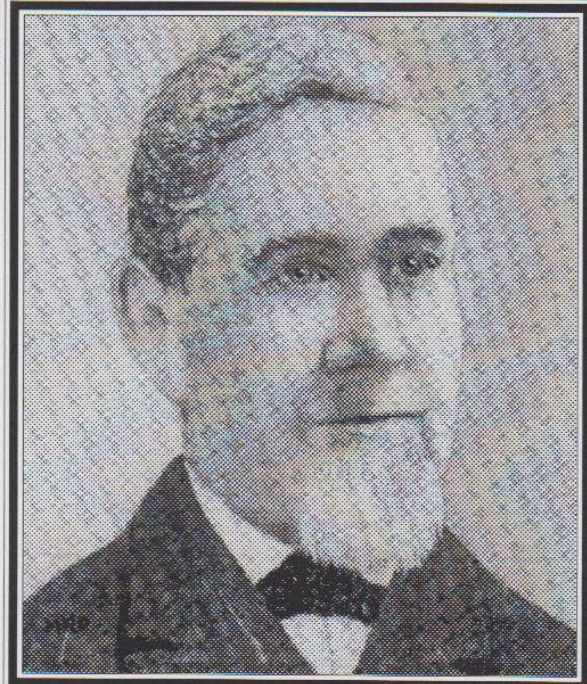
DAVID FRANCIS COMPARET

b. Mar. 6, 1826

d. Oct. 11, 1903

By Cynthia Powers

**Painting by Morris R. Perry from "Pioneers
Resting in Historic Lindenwood"**



Six years after his father, Francis, arrived in Fort Wayne, David Comparet was born (March 6, 1826). His connection with the Wabash and Erie Canal followed in the footsteps of his father. In 1843, when David was only 17, he was on the committee for the grand celebration held on July 4 when the canal opened from Toledo, OH to Lafayette, IN.

David was educated in Fort Wayne and at St. Mary's College in Kentucky. A few years later (1847) he and his brother built a warehouse at Columbia and Lafayette Streets in Fort Wayne. He also worked with his father in building various mills and dams. David remembered his father's involvement with the "construction of the dam at Rome City, which formed the reservoir....known as Sylan Lake," which was to supply water for a canal connecting the Wabash and Erie Canal to Lake Michigan. At one point David operated 6 canal boats and 2 steamers. From Fort Wayne you could travel to Toledo by packet boat for \$3.25; to Lafayette for \$3.75.

David's marriage in 1846 to Sarah Henrietta Columbia, daughter of Capt. Dana Columbia, a pioneer businessman and canal boat captain, took place at the Catholic Church. The ceremony was performed by Father Julian Benoit, the bridal party having been accompanied to the church by a military band.

In 1850 David and his brother admitted C.H. Hubbell into their firm thus becoming Comparet, Hubbell & Company. This firm operated until after the close of

D. F. COMPARET,

FORK PACKER,

MILLER & COMMISSION

MERCHANT,

FORT WAYNE, Ind.

General dealer in all kinds of Grain, Seed, Fish, Salt, Produce, Agricultural Implements, &c.

BEST BRANDS OF FAMILY FLOUR,

☞ Liberal Advance made on Produce in Store ☞

Agent for Fairbank's Scales.

Lower end of Columbia and Lafayette Streets.

FORT WAYNE, Ind.

the Civil War.

In January 1856, when the temperature had fallen to -21 degrees, the "church ladies" of Fort Wayne held a benefit supper to help the poor. More funds were needed, so the ladies announced they would hold a "Calico Dress Ball" to raise the rest. It was scheduled to be held at the Rockhill House. This led to a squabble; some were not comfortable with the perceived elegance of the Rockhill House, and some objected to dancing and drinking. So a competing event was organized called "the People's Calico Dress Ball." David Comparet was among those promoting the latter event. Ladies were to wear "Plain calico dress," and then the next day donate the dress to the poor. After both events had taken place, it turned out that the People's Ball had raised more money, even though attendance had been about equal. Altogether over \$400 was distributed to 92 families in the form of fuel and groceries. (The ladies concluded that many of the recipients were foreigners and Catholic, and that much of their distress had been caused by intemperance.)

In 1859, David was among those who purchased 153 acres, to be developed as Lindenwood Cemetery. He was also a Mason and an Odd Fellow until later in life when he resigned from both.

In 1865 he was one of the first officers of the Merchants National Bank, located at Berry and Calhoun Sts. Although it was "considered safe, conservative, and well managed," it went out of business in 1874.

About 1888 David opened a commission house on East Columbia street. He was forced to retire from it by his last illness.

Mr. Comparet died at his home, 931 Liberty St., at noon on Sunday Oct. 11, 1903. His obituary was published in the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette the next

day. Part of it follows.

"Mr. Comparet had been ill for three months and at no time during his sickness was his recovery looked for. It was the first illness of his long life, but its seriousness was recognized at once. The disease was tumor of the bowels, which led to slow blood poisoning. He became ill in July and was compelled to take to his bed immediately. Several days ago, the disease reached a crisis and his decline since then had been rapid. Realizing that his end was approaching, Mr. Comparet, from his bed chamber, directed the sale of his commission business.

"Mr. Comparet retained all his faculties up to within a few hours of his death. He had a remarkably retentive memory, and his recollection of men and affairs of early days was perfect. He was a good conversationalist, and knew the history of Fort Wayne for the past century in every detail....He retained perfect health up to three months ago.....he liked to boast that he had never spent a day in bed except when he was disabled in an accident in his mill, many years ago. The accident permanently crippled his left hand, and he never regained the use of it."

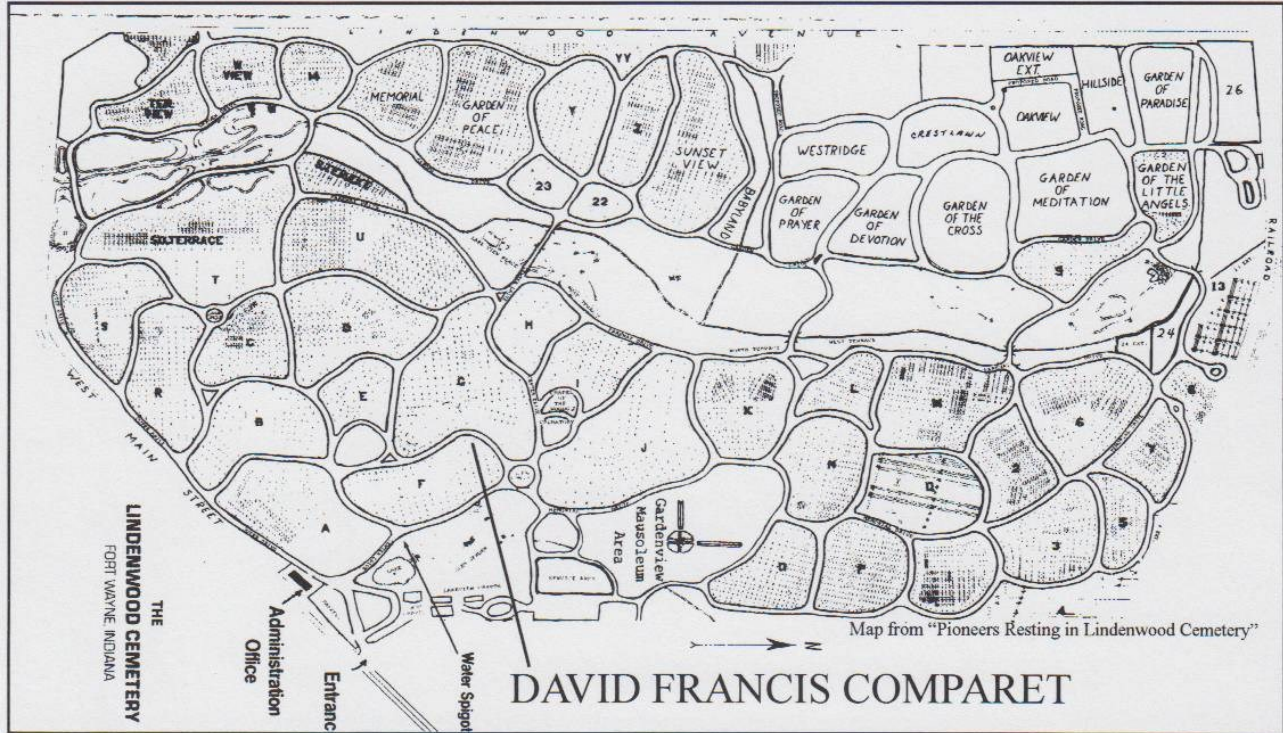
His funeral arrangements were delayed until the arrival of his son William from North Carolina. His other surviving children all lived in Fort Wayne: Thomas L., Charles, and Addie H. Matson. Another daughter Francis A. (Fannie) had died of typhoid fever at age 37, in 1885. Mrs. Comparet also survived.

David is buried next to his wife, Sarah Henrietta Columbia, in Lindenwood Cemetery, section F. Lot 4. To the left of their markers is one for Fannie, and nearby is one for C.M. Comparet, 1848-1930, (their son Charles).

Left: Gravestone of Francis (Fannie) A. Comparet in Sec. F of Lindenwood Cemetery, Ft. Wayne, IN.

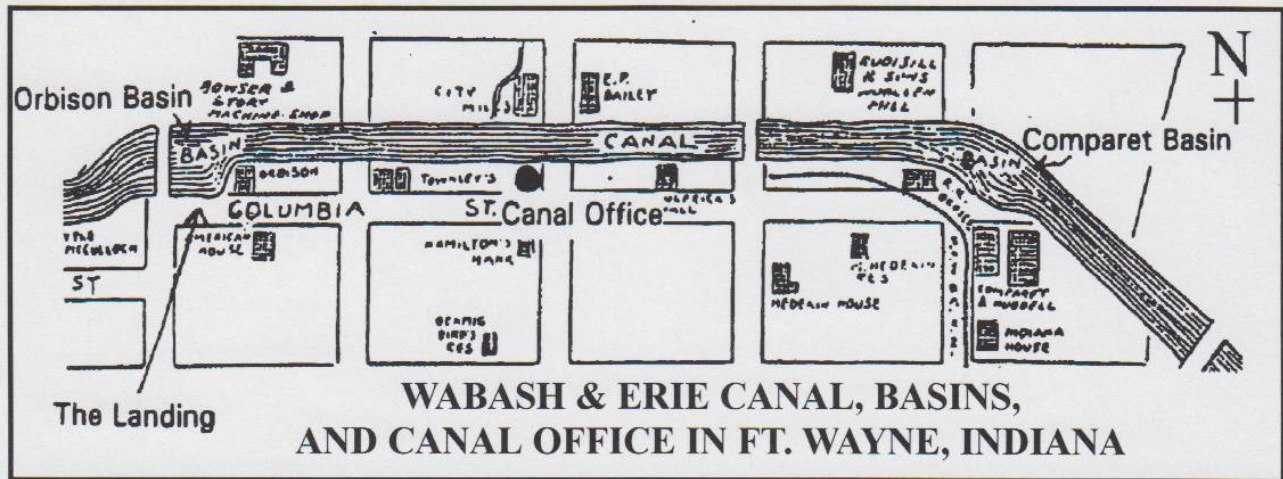
Right: Stone of David F. Comparet (1826-1903) and Sarah Henrietta Columbia Comparet (1827-1909) is to the right of their daughter Fannie's stone.





Sources:

<p>Fort Wayne Journal Gazette for Oct. 12, 1903; located by the helpful staff of the Allen Co. Public Library periodicals dept.</p> <p>Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel. Nov. 25, 1885. p. 1.</p> <p>Griswold, B.J. Pictorial History of Fort Wayne.</p>	<p>Indiana. Robert O Law Co./Chicago, IL. 1917.</p> <p>Mather, George. Frontier Faith. Allen County Fort Wayne Historical Society/Fort Wayne, IN. 1992.</p> <p>Old Fort News. Vol. 54 No. 2. Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society/Fort Wayne, IN. 1991.</p>	<p>Pioneers Resting in Historic Lindenwood. Lindenwood Historical Foundation/Ft. Wayne, IN. 1989; also directions to grave site given by Lindenwood Cemetery staff.</p> <p>Poinsatte, Charles. Fort Wayne During the Canal Era 1828-1855. Indiana Historical Bureau /Indianapolis, IN. 1969.</p>
--	---	--



The Comparet Canal Basin was built on the flood plain where the three rivers meet in Fort Wayne, IN. It became a turnaround basin for canal boats. On its north side were two mills that used falling canal water to drive their wheels. Four mills on the south side did not have enough fall and converted the canal water to steam power. The three elevators could process 8,000 bushels of grain each day. The corn-sheller warehouse could deliver 2,500 bushels daily. This became the country's largest milling complex. David and Joseph Comparet had a fleet of grain boats that ran from Ft. Wayne to Toledo and a rail spur to transport their grain.