

CANAWLERS AT REST

GEORGE HEDFORD DUNN

b. Nov. 15, 1796

d. Jan. 12, 1854

By Charles Whiting Jr.

On the morning of September 13, 1836, "the committee of arrangements selected Gov. (Noah) Noble, Ex-Governor Jas. B. Ray, Dr. Drake of Cincinnati, and George H. Dunn, Esq. of Lawrenceburg, as the individuals to perform the Ceremony of "breaking ground" on the Whitewater Canal." The celebration took place at Brookville and was attended by 3000 to 4000 people. *Brookville American*

Before dinner there were 33 toasts. The 20th toast was given to "George H. Dunn - The able Lawyer, the enlightened statesman, the gentleman and man of integrity: whether in the Legislature or in private life, the public good has been his great object; the welfare of the state his first and highest motive: Whilst gratitude inspires our hearts, the name of George H. Dunn will be remembered by the people of Indiana." Mr. Dunn replied in a speech of 20 or 25 minutes. *Independent Press*

Several years later in April of 1848 the *Lawrenceburg Indiana Register* reports George H. Dunn among those seeking immediate action to restore the canal to Lawrenceburg from Harrison, (OH). The canal was severely damaged in a flood in November, 1847. The Canal Company requested a \$10,000 loan so they could make repairs.

Mr. Dunn was born in New York City and moved to Lawrenceburg, Dearborn Co., Indiana about 1817. He studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1822. He was married and had one child. His wife Mary was born the first day of the century, January 1, 1800. "An active young man of pleasant manners and good

appearance, he possessed the qualities which enabled him to secure the confidence and respect of the people. As a lawyer he was faithful to his clients; his pleadings were exact; his language chaste, and his manner in argument kindly and conciliating but his well rounded sentences were less effective before a jury of plain men than the sledge-hammer manners of some of his opponents, yet he was a lawyer of influence and few men had stronger and more lasting friends." He was elected to the State House of Representative in 1828, 1832, and 1833. An unsuccessful candidate to the Twenty-third Congress, he was elected as an anti-Jackson Whig to the Twenty-fifth Congress (March 4, 1837-March 3, 1839). *History of Dearborn & Ohio Counties*

"While treasurer of the State from 1841 to 1844 he together with Governor (Samuel) Bigger was appointed by the Legislature to revise the laws. The revised Code of 1843 is a monument to the labor and skill he brought to that work. By far the greater portion of the labor of the Revision fell upon him: and when the amount of his duties both as Treasurer and as Reviser is considered, and the great mass of Legislation which had to be collated, and the irreconcilable and contradictory character of a great portion of it, the success which attended his efforts is wonderful." *History of Dearborn & Ohio Counties*

Returning home, he was elected President of the Lawrenceburg Branch Bank. After leaving the bank, he was elected by the State Legislature as President Judge of the Judicial Circuit composed of Dearborn, Ripley, Decatur and Franklin counties.

"While he was in the Legislature the charter of the State bank and its branches and of the railroad from Indianapolis to Lawrenceburg were passed, both of which were principally the work of Mr. Dunn. On July 4, 1833 the completion of the first mile of railroad in Indiana was celebrated at Shelbyville by thousands from all parts of the State, and George H. Dunn was the hero of the day. Though disappointment followed disappointment he never gave up the enterprise of a railroad from Lawrenceburg to the State capital. To his untiring zeal under every possible discouragement is to be attributed the final success of that road, completed twenty-one years after it was started." *History of Dearborn & Ohio Counties*

"His aid in forwarding the extension and partial completion of the Turnpike road towards Napoleon, was by no means unimportant. It would be a pleasant task to advert to the many improvements of minor importance in and about Lawrenceburg which were forwarded by Judge Dunn. It will suffice to say that from the time when the Wharf was first paved and High street filled up to its present grade, he was perhaps the foremost man with his voice, his pen and his purse in promoting

whatever promised aught of good for this town." The Register

Judge Dunn was president of the Cincinnati and Indianapolis railroad at the time of his death in Lawrenceburg, Indiana. He was interred in the New Town Cemetery. In the early 1940s all the residents of that cemetery were moved to the Greendale, Indiana cemetery to facilitate construction of the flood protection levee in front of Lawrenceburg. On the monument over his grave is appropriately placed the representation of a railroad train.

Sources:

A Biographical Directory of the Indiana General Assembly. The Select Committee on the Centennial History of the Indiana General Assembly: Indianapolis. 1980.

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress. <http://bioguide.congress.gov/>

Brookville American. Brookville, IN. Sept. 16, 1836.

History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties Indiana. F. E. Weakley & Co., Publishers: Chicago, IL. 1885.

Independent Press. Lawrenceburgh. Jan. 18, 1854.

The Register Lawrenceburg, IN. April 15, 1848, Jan. 18, 1854 and April 27, 1855



The following action was had, in reference to the death of Hon. Geo. H. Dunn, by the passengers coming in on board the cars of the Indianapolis and Cincinnati Railroad, January 13th, 1854:

It having been announced that Hon. Geo. H. Dunn, President of the road, had died the day previous, at his residence in Lawrenceburgh. On motion of B. F. Morris of Rising Sun, J. G. Monfort of Greensburgh was called to the chair and F. C. Holliday of Lawrenceburgh appointed secretary.

The object of the proceedings being stated by the Chairman,

On motion, a committee consisting of F. C. Holliday, E. P. Bond and W. Cumback was appointed to prepare resolutions expressive of the sense of the passengers.

The committee presented the following which were unanimously adopted by the passengers in each of the cars.

Resolved, That it is with feelings of profound regret that we have heard of the death of Hon. Geo. H. Dunn, President of the Indianapolis and Cincinnati Railroad Company.

Resolved, That we recognized in the deceased a good citizen, an enterprising and public spirited man, and a consistent Christian, and that we regard his death as a public calamity.

Resolved, That we tender to the family and friends of the deceased our sincere condolence and sympathy,

Resolved, That a copy these proceedings be furnished for publication in each of the papers in Dearborn county, and also in the Greensburgh, Shelbyville and Indianapolis papers. J. G. Monfort, Chr. Independent Press

George H. Dunn (57) died at McCormick House in Lawrenceburgh at half-past ten o'clock on Thursday morning January 12, 1854. He resided in Lawrenceburgh from 1817-1854 except for three years spent in Indianapolis. Funeral services were conducted by the Rt. Rev. George Upfold, Bishop of the Diocese. His remains were followed to the New Town Cemetery by a large concourse of people. His remains were later moved to the cemetery in Glendale, IN. His tombstone has a railroad engine at the top. His wife's stone is to the left of his stone in the photo on the left.

Photos by Chuck Whiting