

CANAWLERS AT REST

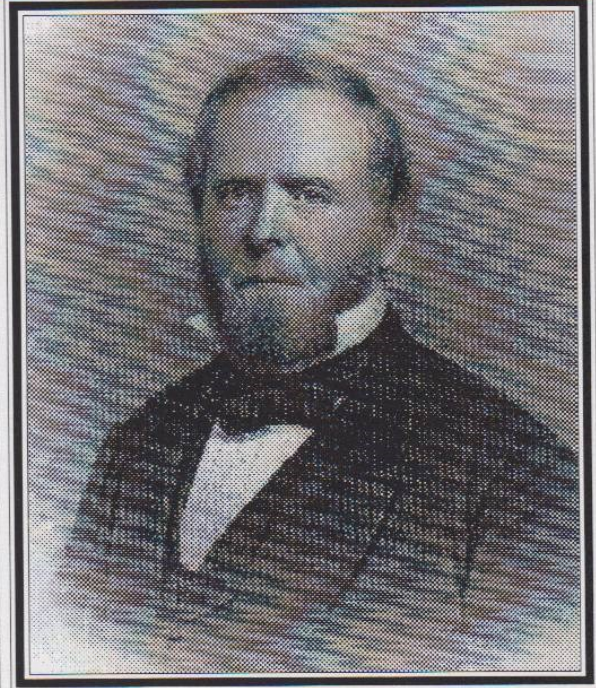
SAMUEL HANNA

b. Oct. 18, 1797

d. June 11, 1866

**By Michael Hawfield and
Thomas L. Castaldi**

Painting courtesy The History Center



Samuel Hanna was born October 18, 1797 in Scott County, Kentucky. It was three years after Anthony Wayne built the fort at the juncture of the Saint Joseph and Saint Mary's rivers in northeast Indiana that bears his name where Samuel Hanna would one day become its premier citizen. Hanna's father James moved his family to a spot near Dayton, Ohio, in 1804. Here as young Sam grew into manhood, he helped his father and several brothers clear the farm. He also took on the job of "post rider" to deliver the newspaper by horseback to outlying homesteads, and by age 19 he embarked on this first business venture.

Hanna held a job as clerk for the dry goods store in Piqua, Ohio, in 1816 when he and another young companion bought out the proprietor on a \$3,000 note. However, the sale turned out to be fraudulent. The store's inventory was seized by creditors, leaving Hanna with the debt and no merchandise to sell in order to satisfy the note. His partner was a minor and could not be held liable, but Hanna, though also a minor, was determined to pay off his debt. To do so he taught school for a while but was not cut out for the position since he himself had little or no schooling.

He continued to seek ways to earn money when he attended the 1818 Treaty with the Indians as a sutler, or supplier to the Indian Agent. It was this event that led Hanna to take up the opportunities offered by the Indian trade.

In 1819, at age 22, Hanna took his trading

venture to the primitive settlement at Fort Wayne, Indiana. Although the military had withdrawn that very year, the Indian Agency still was in full operation, especially at "annuity time" when the native peoples received their payments from the government for lands they had given up in various treaties. He built his log store on the spot that later became the northwest corner of Fort Wayne's Barr and Columbia streets, today just outside the west doors of the Performing Arts Center in Freimann Square. Despite the great difficulties getting trade goods up the St. Mary's River or overland, the business flourished and Sam Hanna began to make his mark in the building of the new town of Fort Wayne.

With the formation of Allen County Indiana, in 1823, Hanna was named the first postmaster, and shortly thereafter he was elected Associate Judge of the Circuit Court. He expanded his business to the South Bend, Indiana area, then newly developing, through a partnership with his son-in-law, Lathrop Taylor, one of the founders of that town. He also invested as quickly as he could in the lands opening up through the U.S. Land Office sales of former Indian territories. It was a sign of the success Hanna would experience. Later he would boast that he could travel to Indianapolis by way of Lafayette, return by Anderson and feed his horse in his own corncrib every night of the journey.

Although successful in his business ventures, it was as a promoter of the pioneer town that Sam Hanna made his biggest mark. Fearing that the swamp-locked village of Fort Wayne would have great difficulty in

attracting settlers – to shop in his store or to buy his parcels of land – Hanna took the lead in developing plank roads in and out of Fort Wayne.

These roads were early attempts to overcome the extensive marshy lands that surrounded the village. Tracts were laid out, drainage ditches dug and a log roadbed was built so that heavy wagons could make their way through the swamps. This was the beginning of the Lima Plank Road leading north, the Piqua Plank Road – today's Calhoun Street – leading southeast and the Goshen Plank Road to the northwest. Sam Hanna not only assumed the construction contract for the first plank road -- the Lima Plank Road – he also personally supervised the work and on more than one occasion was found by friends wielding an axe himself working on the roadbed.

But the plank roads were clearly not enough, and Hanna soon worked out a plan with a business colleague named David Burr that envisioned a canal connecting Lake Erie to the Ohio River. This man-made waterway would not only be the longest ever built in North America, but it would be critical for the survival of the town of Fort Wayne and its neighboring communities. Having been elected to the state legislature, Hanna worked tirelessly to introduce and see passed the necessary legislation what would provide for the canal.

Indiana secured a federal land grant equal to half of five sections on each side of the canal route as an inducement for the state to buy the remaining sections. The enabling legislation was adopted and financing authorized to be spent on a survey. During the winter of 1826 and 1827, Hanna was named to the Board of Canal Commissioners that included David Burr of Jackson County and Robert John of Franklin County. They were charged with the responsibility to examine the practicability of a canal route from between the Maumee River connecting with the Wabash. It was necessary to learn if there was water supply enough from the Saint Joseph, Saint Mary's, Maumee or Wabash rivers or a combination of them. For the effort, \$500 was appropriated, but it was a difficult time getting the Commissioners to a meeting, however, Governor James Brown Ray did so in Indianapolis on July 14, 1828. It was during this meeting that the Commissioners received the Corps of Engineers survey made from the mouth of the Little Wabash River and down the Wabash and from the Summit down the Maumee River.

Next the Board met in 1828 in Fort Wayne and discovered that they were without level or surveying tools and no engineer. The \$500 appropriation was not enough money and Hanna procured the necessary instruments. He promptly left for Detroit arriving there by horseback in two days before heading on to New York

where he purchased the surveying equipment. He is said to have made a remarkably fast trip to and from New York in just thirty days to acquire the necessary tools and instruments.

Hanna then helped hire a Miamisburg, Ohio, civil engineer by the name of John Smythe to gauge the Saint Joseph and Saint Mary's rivers along with the Wabash at the Forks near present-day Huntington, Indiana. The engineer was to lay a route for the "feeder canal" from the upper St. Joseph River to the St. Mary's, however, two days into the project Smythe became ill with a fever and died. So Hanna as the axe man and Burr as the rodman, assumed the responsibility themselves to complete the surveying job.

It took them from September 10th to 23rd causing Burr to collapse from exhaustion. What they had done was to find a site for a dam on the Saint Joseph River and a feeder route to the Summit through the wild country. Hanna, using their own numbers combined with Colonel Asa Moore's survey estimates from earlier surveys made down the Wabash to the Tippecanoe and then down the Maumee to the rapids. The work finished, Hanna at long last was able to report to the state legislature that a practical route had been found. After the legislature adopted the plan Sam Hanna served another three years on the Board of Canal Commissioners. Before ending his service he participated in locating and platting of the Wabash & Erie Canal lands authorized by the Act of January 25, 1829. By October 1830, land sales opened at Logansport, Indiana, and in October 1832 in Fort Wayne.

Hanna officiated at the groundbreaking ceremony on February 22, 1832, when after Jordan Vigus took the first spade full of earth, he took a turn at the shovel.

Eleven years later Hanna was among the proud participants in the grand opening celebration of the Wabash & Erie Canal held in Fort Wayne on July 4, 1843. Many speeches were made that day and we have a volunteer toast he made to the Toledo Guards who were on hand for the great occasion.

The Toledo Guards – "citizen soldiers, we thank you for your visit and for your able and efficient aid in the ceremonies of the day. We admire your gentlemanly deportment. May the god of battles long protect and guard you; and at the final muster call, may your tents be pitched on the right of the Commander."

While serving in the legislature Hanna served on the committee that provided for the creation of the first State Bank of Indiana, which was organized in the wake of President Andrew Jackson's destruction of the Second United States Bank. With Hanna as president of

the Fort Wayne branch, and the young Hugh McCulloch – later Secretary of the Treasury under Abraham Lincoln – appointed as Cashier, the branch remained a strong and solvent asset to the growth of the community.

It soon became clear in the early 1850s that the canal would not produce the levels of transportation that ports along the route would need to thrive. In addition, the new technology of the railroad threatened to bypass towns such as Fort Wayne unless aggressive action was taken by area leaders to insure that the steel lines making their way west from Pittsburgh to Chicago passed through the community. To see that it happened, Sam Hanna embarked on this most ambitious and important enterprise and became the founder of the great Fort Wayne railroading industry.

The last effort on Hanna's part to enrich the community came just before the outbreak of the Civil War when he persuaded the directors of the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne, and Chicago Railroad to build their all-important repair and construction facilities in Fort Wayne – the great Pennsy Shops that for a century dominated the Fort Wayne industrial world.

Thus, by the beginning of the Civil War, Sam Hanna had realized his dream of creating a safe and prosperous business. He had without a doubt the most important role in laying out the plank roads that began to conquer the swamps that surrounded Fort Wayne, exercised the leadership in creating the great Wabash and Erie Canal, served the local judicial system as a judge and the state legislative body as a committee chair, was one of the most influential persons behind the advent of the railroad to northern Indiana.

Samuel Hanna built his grand Greek revival home at 1002 East Lewis Street in 1845. For many years this was the center of social life on the east side of Fort Wayne. Hanna died on June 11, 1866, and the city carried out a public funeral. As the bells in every church tolled, a procession two miles long accompanied his remains to Lindenwood Cemetery and all the principal buildings in Fort Wayne were draped in black. His remains rest in Lindenwood's lots 60 and 61 in Section B.

His daughter, Eliza, and her husband Fred Hayden, a judge and prominent businessman, lived in the mansion after their marriage in 1873. In 1938, it was bequeathed to the Fort Wayne Community Schools, which used it as a school for physically handicapped children until 1962 when the school corporation tore the building down. It was replaced by the Hanna Homestead Park.

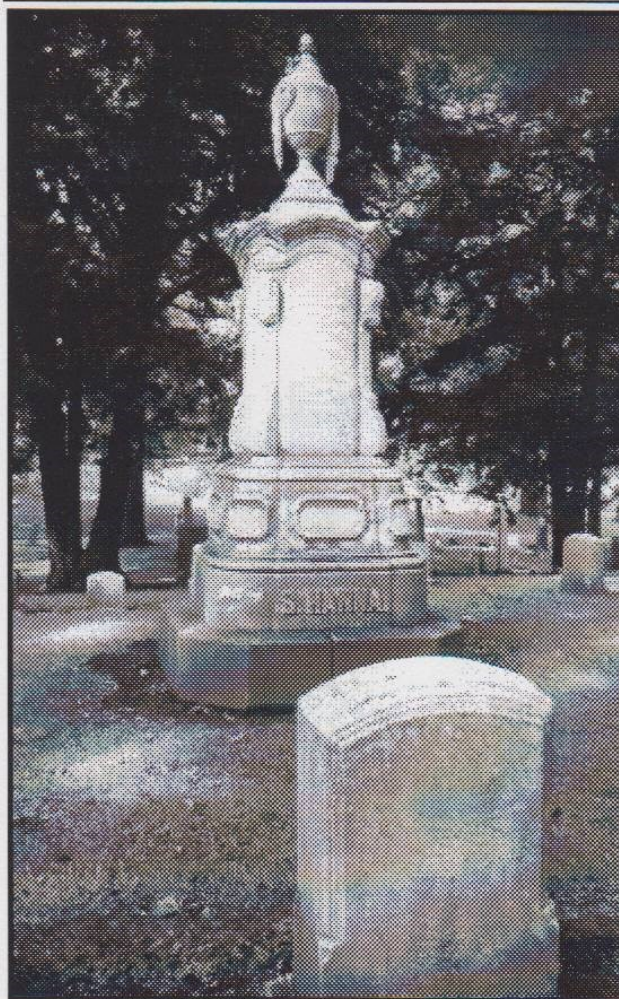
Much has been written about Sam Hanna and as

early as the day after his death, Joseph Edgerton eulogized Hanna saying: "He had the hope, the courage, the forethought, the fertility of resource, the unfaltering purpose and will that characterized planters of colonies and founders of cities."

Today Indiana celebrates the inestimable Samuel Hanna known to state history as the Founder of Fort Wayne. Of all those pioneers who devoted their lives to making the community of Fort Wayne viable and prosperous, the most outstanding was Samuel Hanna. He was the first ardent promoter of Fort Wayne, and in several important ways he was its real founder.

Now we remember Sam Hanna with a street and a park that bear his name, but this man was a giant in our region affecting our lives to this day because he established the base on which so many institutions were built.

Samuel Hanna is buried on Lots 60-61, Section B, Lindenwood Cemetery, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Photo by Tom Castaldi

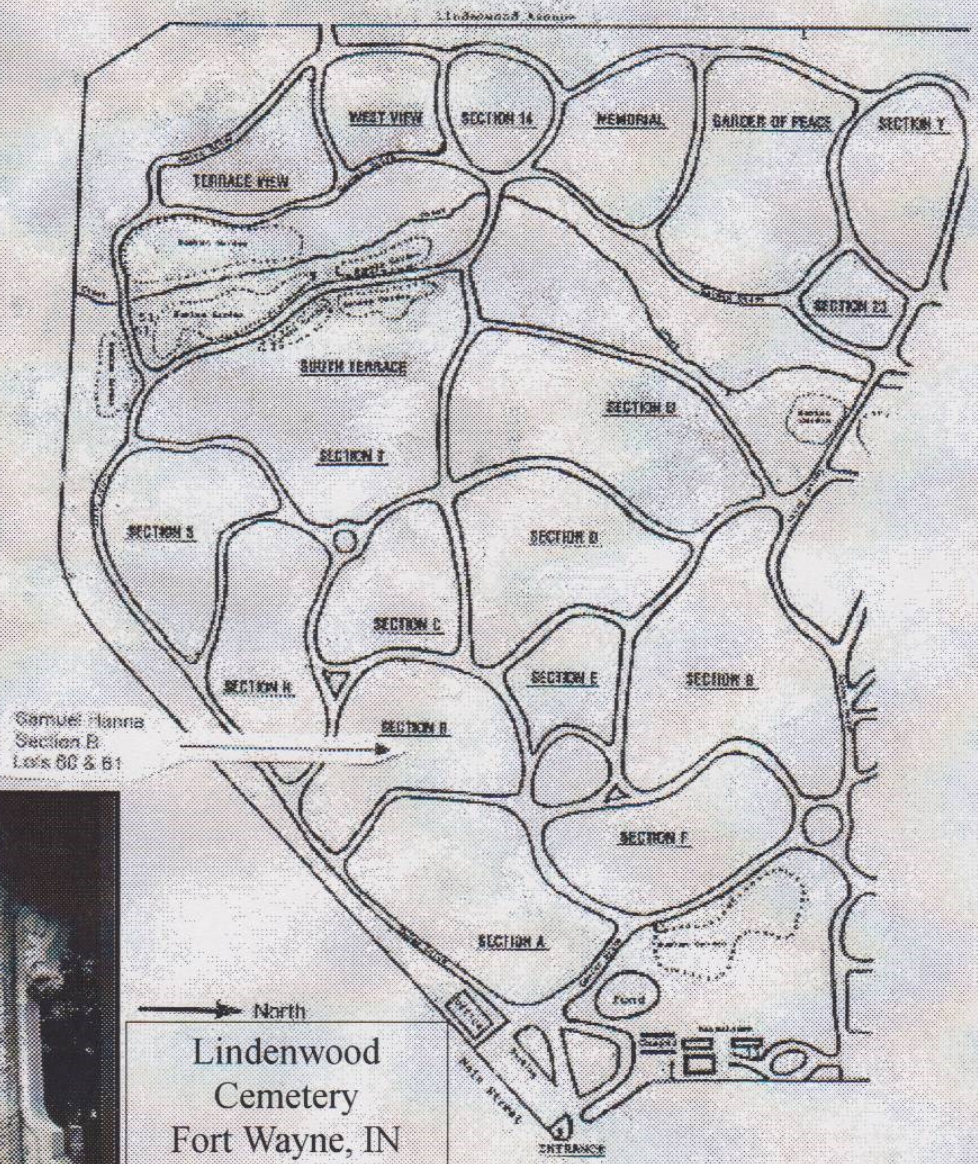


The biography of Samuel Hanna was taken from The Heritage Trail Guidebook written by Michael Hawfield and edited by Tom Castaldi, 1994. Also, Canal Celebrations in Fort Wayne 1953, Brice; History of Fort Wayne 1868, Griswold; Pictorial History of Fort Wayne 1917; and Allen County Fort Wayne The History Center, Resource Sheet On Samuel Hanna, Sketch No. 37.

Inscription on side of Hanna's Tombstone
Photo by Tom Castaldi



SAMUEL HANNA
DEPARTED JUNE 11, 1866,
AGED 68 Y^{rs}. 7 M^s. 24 D^s
ELIZ. HANNA
DEPARTED JAN. 12, 1888
AGED 84 Y^{rs} 11 M^s
FREDERICK J. HAYDEN
DIED DEC. 30, 1906
AGED 70 YRS. 10 MO.
ELIZ. HANNA HAYDEN
DIED MAR 21, 1937
AGED 91 Y^{rs} 3 M^s 10 D^s



"Judge Hanna belonged to the higher type of the pioneer class of men. He was a planter and builder, more than a legislator. He had the hope, the courage, the forethought, the fertility of resource, the unfaltering purpose and will that characterized planters of colonies and founders of cities. He was more than a statesman, for he had in him the elements and powers of the men who build cities and found states."

Joseph K. Edgerton 6-12-1866