

CANAWLERS AT REST

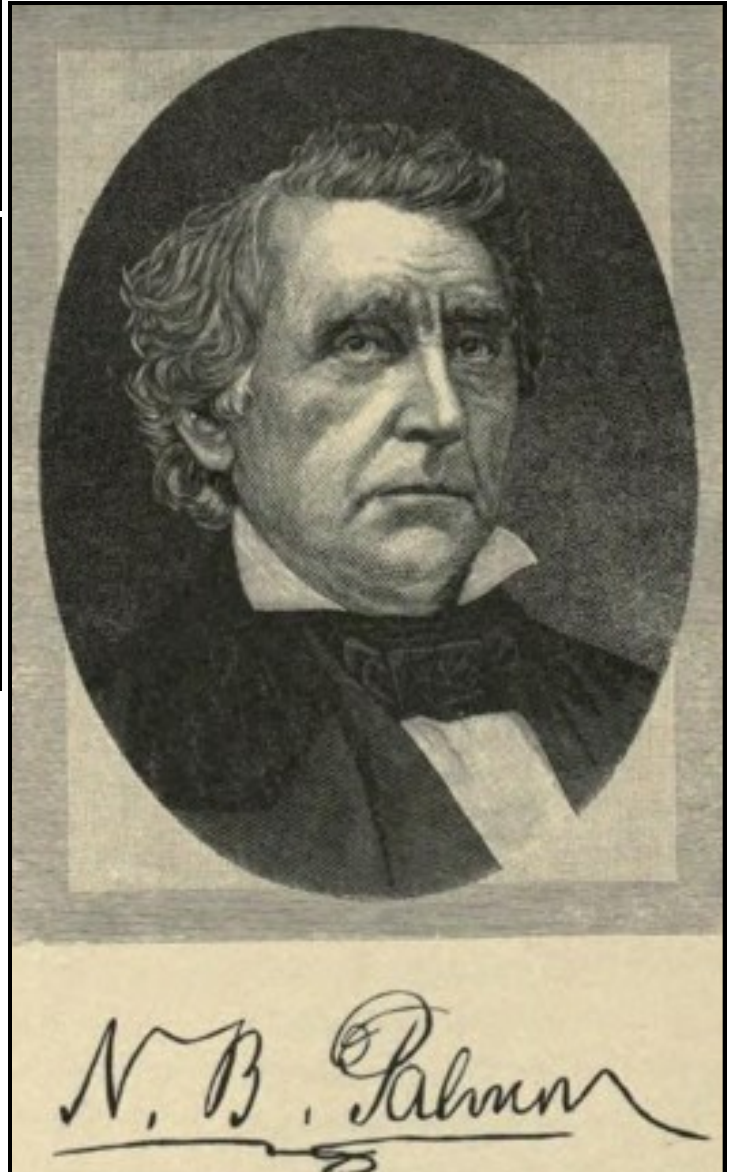
NATHAN BILLINGS PALMER

Find-A-Grave #10402874

b. August 27, 1790

d. April 13, 1875

By Carolyn I. Schmidt



The Palmer family was founded in America in colonial days. Representatives of the family enrolled and served on the Continental line during the Revolutionary War.

Nathan Billings Palmer was born in Stonington, Connecticut, on August 27, 1790 to Nathan and Salome (Smith) Palmer. They had an older daughter named Bolsey. Nathan's father died the following year leaving Salome a widow with two young children.

In 1880, when Nathan was 10 years old, he and his mother moved to New York. His mother remarried a Mr. Gillett and they had 5 children, giving Nathan five half siblings. While growing up in New York, Nathan met Chloe Sacket and they were married there in 1811. In 1812 their first son was born. That year Nathan and his family emigrated to Pennsylvania where he soon took part in public life. He held many offices of trust, which he fulfilled to the benefit of the State.

In 1819 Nathan, Chloe and children Charles Clinton, Amelia Eliza, William Sacket, and perhaps Jane C. moved to Jefferson county, Indiana. They resided there for fourteen years during which time their other children Jerome, Louisa Salome, Jane Marie, Minerva A., Trumbull G., Blackford M., Marshal Edward, and Edward Livingston were born.

Nathan held many important offices in Jefferson county. He was a Representative of the county in the State Legislature and was elected Speaker of the Indiana House of Representatives from December 2, 1833—February 3, 1834. He was said to be a prompt and efficient presiding officer, who was knowledgeable of parliamentary rules and impartially applied them to cases that arose.

The 1834-35 Indiana's Legislature elected Nathan Treasurer of State for three years. He served for seven years from February 13, 1834 to February 9, 1841. His salary was \$400 a year plus prerequisites.

A new court-house was built and taken over by the Legislature before it was completed. The House of Representatives sat in the lower room and the Senate in the upper. Nathan occupied the building especially erected for him. All other State officers found offices wherever they could.

This new office caused Nathan to spend even more time in the state capitol carrying out his duties. He decided to move his family to Indianapolis in the spring of 1835 and they became permanent residents. There his children Nathan B. Jr., and Mary Love were born making a total of 14 children.

After the State Board of Agriculture was chartered in February 1835, a County Agriculture Society was formed that June. Even though Nathan had just taken up residence, he was elected its president and Douglass Maguire was elected secretary. The society collected subscriptions for a premium fund. The board of justices also contributed fifty dollars to the fund. The fair was held that October at the Marion county courthouse in Indianapolis with exhibitions set out on its yard. On October 31 a total of one hundred and eighty-four dollars in premiums was disbursed. The next year four hundred dollars was collected for premiums. It looked like the fair would be an ongoing event. However, the Panic of 1837 ruined it.

While Nathan was in charge of the State finances, the Panic of 1837 and the Depression of 1839 took place. Indiana was deeply in debt. The State Legislature authorized Nathan as State Treasurer to issue large amounts of State scrip as a circulating medium in payment of its indebtedness to contractors on the public works of roads, canals, and railroads created through the Mammoth Internal Improvement Act of 1836. Nathan's signature, "N. B. Palmer," was affixed to two classes of scrip. The first, or oldest class, was dated 1840 and bore six per cent interest. The second, new or "green," as it was called, class was dated 1841 and bore the fourth of one per cent interest. These two kinds of scrip representing money formed the principal circulating medium of Indiana for several years. Although he had much to deal with at this time, he retired after several years without any slander over his public acts, which is very uncommon when someone has

charge of large amounts of public moneys.

When the old board of canal fund commissioners was dissolved on February 24, 1840, a new two person board was created. Nathan Palmer and Milton Stapp made up this board. Nathan's service began on February 24, 1840, but, before the end of the year, he resigned. Perhaps he was too busy with his duties as State Treasurer and his construction of a hotel.

In 1840 Nathan started building a hotel at the southeast corner of Illinois and Washington Streets in Indianapolis. It was a two-story brick building that had a wooden story on top of it. The "Palmer House," as it was called, was opened in the summer of 1841 by John C. Parker of Charleston, Clarke county, Indiana. Nathan kept this house from 1841 to 1851.

The Palmer House became the Democratic headquarters and housed dignitaries. On June 11, 1842 President Martin Van Buren was accompanied from the bridge at Pogue's creek by four military companies, the fire companies and general citizens to the Palmer House where he stayed. On August 25, 1844 a reception for General Cass, who was on his way to Dayton, was held at the hotel. In January 1848, Andrew Kennedy, an ex-member of Congress and, at the time, a member of the Legislature, died there of small pox. This caused a panic among the members of the Legislature, and they adjourned. The U. S. Federal Census of 1850 shows Nathan, Chloe, Blackford, Edward, Nathan Jr., Mary, Chas. and Marshall Palmer living at the Palmer House with fifty-two other residents some of which were servants. Nathan was listed as hotel keeper with real estate valued at \$23,000.

John Nowland in his *Early Reminiscences of Indianapolis* writes about Nathan and the Palmer House saying, "none that ever sat at its hospitable board can forget the superabundance of every thing upon it, and the superior style in which it was gotten up; without ostentatious display of fine table furniture that could not be consumed, the eye met on every hand something far more interesting in the empty stomach of the weary traveler. Very little ever went on the table but had been subjected to the strict scrutiny of Mrs. Palmer."



PALMER HOUSE
INDIANAPOLIS, IND.

S. BARBOUR, - - - Proprietor.

THIS OLD AND POPULAR HOTEL
HAB BEEN
RE-BUILT THIS SEASON
And Furnished in the Latest Style,
WITH ENTIRE NEW FURNITURE

AND CONTAINS ABOUT 110 ROOMS, WELL VENTILATED
And lighted, and is now open for the reception of Guests.
It is three squares from the Union Depot, one from the State House, and in the immediate neighborhood of most of the Business Houses of the City.

**PALMER HOUSE INDIANAPOLIS, IND.
S. BARBOUR PROPRIETOR**

This old and popular hotel has been re-built this season and furnished in the latest style, with entire new furniture and contains about 110 rooms, well ventilated and lighted, and is now open for the reception of Guests.

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and improved. Its name was changed to the "Occidental."

After his retirement as State Treasurer in 1841, Nathan was made examiner of the State Bank and its branches. He was to report their financial condition to the next annual session of the State Legislature. This was a position in which bribery and corruption could easily have been accomplished, but Nathan would have no part of it.

While examining the books of the Terre Haute branch, and counting the business paper and bank notes on hand, he found a deficit of about twenty thousand dollars. The cashier said this would be accounted for in the retired paper, or bills that were too worn for circulation tied up in five hundred dollar packages and placed in the bank vault to be exchanged for new paper from the mother bank. He handed Nathan about ten thousand dollars of retired money, which Nathan counted and returned to the cashier. The bank vault was so damp that the notes had adhered to each other and as they were counted the ends were loosened.

The cashier asked to be excused from further counting that day saying he had company at his home. He invited Nathan to join them at tea. Although Nathan declined the invitation, he let the cashier return home.

On the next day as the counting continued, Nathan was surprised when he was presented the same packages of notes he had counted the day before. An attempt had been made to disguise them by changing the colored ribbons that bound them together. Nathan saw other marks on the notes that he had seen the day before and realized the deception. He did not mention his discovery to the cashier. He just asked him to have the directors assembled.

Nathan told the directors that "he had been received and treated very kindly by the cashier, for which he felt grateful to that gentleman, but that he relied too much upon his credulity or want of business capacity, by presenting him those (pointing to the packages) retired bills to be counted again and credited to the bank."

Dr. Barbour, who leased the Palmer House, made a four-story brick of it in 1856 and extended it southward to the alley. Years later it was rearranged

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Immediately the cashier admitted his attempted deception and Nathan rebuked him in such a way that he never attempted anything of the kind again, at least with Nathan. The directors dismissed him and he left the State. The directors probably knew the true amount, but the cashier took the fall for them.

On July 31, 1847 Nathan Palmer was appointed by James Whitcomb, the governor of Indiana, to a three-year-term on the Board of Trustees of the Wabash & Erie Canal. This was when the State of Indiana turned the canal over to the bond holders to solve the debt issue. The Board of Trustees consisted of a 3-person board. Two members were selected by the bondholders and one person was selected by the State of Indiana (governor or the legislature). Nathan resigned a few months later in December 1847 and in January 1848 Austin M. Puett of Parke county, Indiana took over the position.

When Nathan concluded that railroads would eventually supplant canals, he became a mover in constructing railroads throughout the state of Indiana. The Madison and Indianapolis Railroad, the first railroad in the state, “was in no small degree the result of Mr. Palmer’s exertions, and the company for a number of years had the benefit of his services as president and chief executive officer to the line,” according to Sulgrove.

On May 17, 1854 Nicholas McCarty passed away. See the August 2002 “Canawlers At Rest: Nicholas McCarty” by Chuck Huppert in *The Hoosier Packet*. At that time a committee consisting of James M. Ray, Robert Hanna, Bethuel F. Morris, Calvin Fletcher, John D. Defrees, John M. Talbott, and Nathan B. Palmer prepared a resolution honoring McCarty that was adopted by a meeting of citizens. A portion of it said, “In the important public trusts committed to him (McCarty)—as commissioner of the canal fund in effecting the first loan of the State, as senator of this county, and in other engagements—he manifested remarkable judiciousness and ability.”

The U. S. Federal Census of 1860 shows Nathan, Chloe, and Charles Palmer living in Ward 5 of Indianapolis. Also living with them are Louisa, Ella, George, and Frank McDougal, Mary C. Morrison and

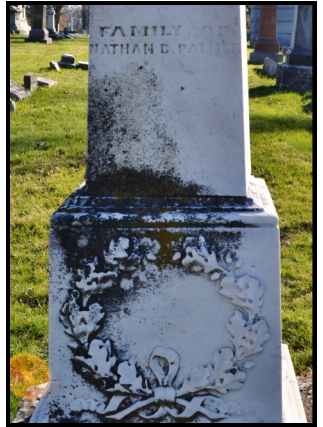
Anne Gumert. Nathan’s real estate was valued at \$8,672 and his personal estate at \$1,000. The 1870 Census shows Nathan’s real estate value at \$300,000 and personal estate at \$1,000. Living with him are Chloe, Charles C., Edward, Hannah, and George B. Palmer, Estella Elizabeth (a servant) and William McDougal. Nathan and wife are retired with no occupation.

On June 10, 1871 Nathan’s wife, Chloe, passed away. Sometime thereafter he married Julia A. Martindale according to his will published in the *Indianapolis Sentinel*.

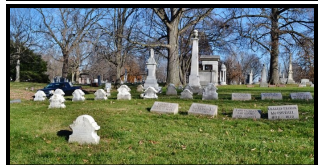
Nathan was a member of the Democratic party. He commanded the support of others for the party and at one time was the national chairman. He was also a councilman from the 5th ward in 1835 and held several other minor offices.

On April 13, 1875 Nathan Billings Palmer passed away. He was buried in Section 25, Lot 232 of Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis, Marion county, Indiana. A large family marker carries the birth and death dates of Nathan and his wife Chole. He and other family members also have head stones.

“As a public servant, having large and important trusts in his hands, his ca-



FAMILY OF
NATHAN B. PALMER
NATHAN B. PALMER
BORN
Aug. 27, 1790
Died Apr. 13, 1875
CHLOE S. PALMER
BORN
Oct. 28, 1794
Died Jun. 10, 1871



N. B. PALMER
Photo by Marc Dotz
Sec. 25, Lot 232
Crown Hill Cemetery
Indianapolis, Indiana
Photo by Colleen Sanders Brovies

**A FULL SYNOPSIS OF THE WILL OF THE LATE NATHAN B. PALMER-
WHO THE HEIRS ARE-
DISPOSITION OF OVER \$300,000 IN MONEY AND VALUABLE REAL ESTATE**

Published in the *Indianapolis Sentinel* in 1875

The last Will and testament of Nathan B. Palmer, probated on Thursday, makes the following disposition of his property:

The valuable property located on the west side of Illinois Street between Maryland Street and the first alley south contains 12 lots. Of these his daughter, Louisa S. McDougal gets three, on condition that at her death they are to go to her sons George P. and Frank McDougal; two are given to his son Edward L. Palmer; one to Sophronia Duvell daughter of Boisey (Beisey? Bolsey) Nelson, his "only sister"; two are given, jointly, to his children Louisa S. McDougal, Blackford M. Palmer, Marshall E. Palmer, and Edward L. Palmer; one to his granddaughter Carrie Lack, daughter of Jennie (Jane) McDougal. One lot was given to James W. Dunn of Logansport, husband of Amelia, the testor's oldest daughter, but as both died before the testor, this lot falls to the general estate.

Of this subdivision known as Palmer's addition, which lies in the south part of the city near the Jeffersonville railroad, the following disposition is made: Louisa S. McDougal, seven lots; Henrietta Horn, (daughter of Minera), two lots; Emma Anderson, (another daughter of Minera's), three lots; Latham McDougal, William McDougal, Lillie McDougal (children of Jennie M. McDougal), three lots each; William Palmer, 3 lots; Frank Palmer, 3 lots; Williamson Dunn, 3 lots; six other lots were bequeathed to two grandchildren, who are now deceased, and these lots belong to the general estate.

Of the lands west of White River and adjoining West Indianapolis a strip 20 rods wide is given to his grandchildren, Susan Tilghman, Latham McDougal, Carrie Lack, William McDougal, jointly except that Blackford M. Palmer is to have the use and occupancy of the same for four years; another portion of the same size is given to William S. Palmer, Frank Palmer, Catherine Hunter (daughter of his oldest son, William S. Palmer), and Chloe Palmer (daughter of his son, Marshall E.) jointly. Some lands in Taylor County, Iowa are bequeathed to James W. Dunn, but as he died before the death of the testator the request is a nullity. The following bequest of money and personal effects are made: George P. McDougal, \$500; Carrie Lack, \$1000; Chloe Palmer, \$1000; Simon S. Gillett of Iowa (half brother), \$1000; Howard Palmer, \$50; Wm. Alex Morrison, \$50; doorplate to Blackford M. Palmer; Mary H. Palmer (daughter of Edward L. Palmer), \$1500; his second wife Julia A. Palmer, all the household furniture except such articles as are otherwise specially bequested to others, and also the occupancy and use of the homestead for one year from his death. The Will further provides that, having disposed of the Palmer House property, the testator directs that all money of his estate, after paying all legacies provided for in the will and all of his just debts, shall be equally portioned among my children then living, except an amount of \$8,000, to be deducted from Blackford M. Palmer's portion and to be divided equally among the following grandchildren: Susan Tilghman, Carrie Lack, Latham McDougal, Willie McDougal, and Lillie McDougal. The testator in one of the codicils to his will bequeathed to his heirs all of his stock in the First National Bank of Indianapolis, amounting to 100 shares, but this he subsequently revoked by an item in a later codicil. The Rev. Samuel T. Gillett, a half brother of the testator, is made the sole executor. The document contains no less than 28,000 words. Two sons of the testator's and one daughter died since the making of the Will in September of 1870 and according to the law the bequest to these lapse and become part of the general fund of the estate. It is thought that an attempt will be made to break the will, because certain provisions are not satisfactory to some of the heirs. The first wife of the testator died after the making of the will, and this together with the death of the three children, necessitates the additional number of codicils. Mr. Palmer's second wife, now his widow, is provided for by a marriage contract.

reer was marked by the most scrupulous intergrity and exactness," according to Sulgrove's *History of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana*. Nowland, in his *Early Reminiscences of Indianapolis* says, "Mr Palmer's whole public life, as well as his private, seemed to be without reproach or fault; and while he was highly appreciated as a public man, he was no less esteemed as a gentleman and a citizen."

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NATHAN BILLINGS PALMER'S FAMILY

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Death</u>	<u>Cemetery</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Marriage</u>	<u>Place</u>
Palmer, Nathan	1740		1791				
m. Smith, Salome (Gillet)*	1770		1850				
Palmer, Boisey							
m. Nelson							
Nelson, Sophronia							
m. Duveil							
Palmer, Nathan Billings							
m1 Sacket, Chloe	8-27-1790	Stonington CN	4-13-1875	Crown Hill	Indianapolis IN	1811	New York NY
Palmer, Charles Clinton	1794		6-10-1871				
Palmer, Amelia Eliza	1812		1872				
m. Dunn, James Wilson	1814		1874				
Dunn, Williamson	1807						
Palmer, William Sacket	6-33-1816	Potter Co PA	11-10-1863		Princeton IN		
Palmer, Catherine							
m. Hunter							
Palmer, Jane C							
Palmer, Jerome							
Palmer, Louisa Salome	4-26-1822	IN	1907				
m. McDougal							
McDougal, George P							
McDougal, Frank							
McDougal, Jennie (Jane)							
McDougal, Carrie							
m. Lack							
McDougal, Latham							
McDougal, William	1848						
McDougal, Lillie							
Palmer, Jane Marie	5-16-1824	IN	5-26-1862				
Palmer, Minerva A	10-21-1826		7-10-1859				
m. Horn, Henry Jonah							
Horn, Henry Jonah							
Horn, Emma							
m. Anderson							
Palmer, Trumbull G	1830	IN	1876				
Palmer, Blackford M	1832	IN	6-13-1890		Indianapolis IN		
Palmer, Marshal Edward							
Palmer, Chloe							
Palmer, Edward Livingston	1-12-1834	Madison IN	10-25-1882				
m. Stephens, Elizabeth E	1842		1925		Indianapolis IN	4-03-	1872
Palmer, Mary Hoicomb	1873		1883				
Palmer, Susan Elizabeth	1875		1880				

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Death</u>	<u>Cemetery</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Marriage</u>	<u>Place</u>
Palmer, Edna Louise	1877		1880				
Palmer, Isabella Stephens	1880		1937				
m. Korbly, Charles A	3-??-1871						
Palmer, Mary H							
Palmer, Lucy May	1883		1857				
Palmer, Nathan B	1836						
Palmer, Mary Love	1-??-1839		9-18-1859				
m. Morrison, Wm. Alex							
m. Martindale, Julia A**							
Gillet, Salome	1801						
Gillet, Simon S	1802		1880				
Gillet, Polly	1804		1818				
Gillet, Edgar P	1807						
Gillet, Rev.Samuel Trumbull	1809		1890				

* After Nathan Palmer died, his wife Julia married Gillett. This made Bolsey and Nathan B. Palmer half siblings of Salome, Simon S, Polly, Edgar P. and Rev. Samuel Trumbull Gillett.

**According to the Will published in the Indianapolis Sentinel, Nathan B's second marriage was to Julia A. Martindale.

Sources:

Ancestry.com

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 A Full Synopsis of the Will of the Late Nathan B. Palmer –Who the Heirs Are—Disposition of Over \$300,000 in Money and Valuable Real Estate

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 Duncan Family
 Henselmeier Family
 Lizzie's Tree

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