

# CANAWLERS AT REST

## ARCHIBALD STITT

b. December 1801  
d. October 13, 1867

By Carolyn I. Schmidt



Archibald Stitt's father, James Stitt I, is believed to be descended from a Scottish Covenanter family that had fled to Ireland during the early 1700s. Family records show that he was probably born in Northern Ireland in 1770. It is likely that he was a textile weaver since that was the most prevalent occupation in the Ulster-Province, Scotch-Irish community at the time. Mary Newell, Archibald's mother, was also born in Ireland around 1770. James and Mary were married in 1796 in County Down, Ireland. They were Presbyterians. Their children were:

### Nancy Stitt

b. September 28, 1798 County Down  
m. Webb  
Farmer's wife in Kansas  
Many children

### James Stitt II

b. December 22, 1799 County Down  
d. August 28, m 1873 Verona, IL  
m. Margaret Marshall  
b. February 10, 1806  
d. April 29, 1884)  
Landowner, farmer, carpenter  
Nine children

### Archibald Stitt, our subject

b. December 1801 County Down [Some say 1800 or 1802]  
d. October 13, 1867  
m. Catherine Simpson 1827 Huntingdon, Pennsylvania  
b. March 23, 1811  
d. November 23, 1893 interred Nov. 25  
Canal builder & superintendent, hotel owner  
6 children

### Thomas Stitt

b. June 24, 1804 County Down  
m. Never married  
Shoemaker for prisoners at Columbus, Ohio state penitentiary

### Alexander Stitt

b. December 1806 County Down  
d. California  
m. Never married  
Ran away from home at an early age probably to California

### William Stitt

b. September 26, 1808 Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania  
d. April 30, 1899  
m. Elizabeth Lostetter December 5, 1835,  
d. About 1845 after birth child  
Tailor, farmer  
Eight children  
m. Jane Somerville Robinson 5 years later  
Five children

James I and his family with the exception of William, who had not been born, sailed to America in 1808 accompanied by his brothers, Archibald and Robert, and their families. James I and Archibald settled in New Dublin Township, Alexandria, Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania about June 1808. Robert moved to the south. [Sources disagree on the year they came to America. Some say 1806, some 1808, some 1809]

Not long after settling in Huntingdon County

James I's last child, William, was born on September 26, 1808. The following February 1809 James I passed away, cause unknown.

Our subject, Archibald Stitt, was born in County Down, Ireland, in December, 1801. [Sources disagree -some say 1800 and some 1802] and came to the United States with his parents in 1808. [One source said he was 7 or 8 years old at the time, another 4 years old] They settled in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, which is located along the Juniata River, west of Harrisburg and near Altoona. It is the county seat of Huntingdon County, an agricultural and fruit-growing region, with valuable forests and deposits of iron, coal, fire clay, and limestone. There Archibald grew up and learned the trade of shoemaker. He was also employed for a time in an iron foundry running a blast furnace.

In 1827 Archibald married Catherine Simpson (b. March 23, 1811 in Huntingdon, PA, d. November 19, 1893 in Wabash, IN). Their son Alexander was born in Huntingdon.



Catherine Stitt

In 1832-33 he left his family and came to Indiana and secured the contract for building the Wabash and Erie Canal from Lagro to Lafayette. He built locks. He worked on the canal in Tippecanoe County, Carroll County, Miami County and Wabash County.

Archibald returned to Pennsylvania in 1834 to get Catherine and Alexander and then brought them to Lagro, Indiana, to establish a home. The date given for this settlement was May 29, 1834. Upon completing his canal work in 1840 he returned to Pennsylvania for a short time.

Archibald and Catherine had more children born in Indiana. Four of them lived to maturity. Their children were:

Alexander Stitt  
 b. October 5, 1828 in Pennsylvania  
 d. February 9, 1901 in Columbus, Ohio  
 m. Mahala Miles January 20, 1853  
 Three children

Jane Dean Stitt  
 b. November 27, 1836 in Wabash County, Indiana  
 d. December 28, 1919 in Wabash County, Indiana  
 m. Thomas W. King October 22, 1857

Two children

James E. Stitt  
 b. April 11, 1840 (19 in 1860 Census) in Delphi, Indiana  
 d. June 1, 1915  
 m. Nancy J. Dicken June 20, 1867  
 b. Rush County  
 Tinner  
 Four children

William S. Stitt  
 b. September 5, 1843 (16 in 1860) in Indiana  
 d.  
 m. Mary A. Lutz September 1887  
 b. Ohio  
 First Lieutenant Company A, Seventy-fifth Indiana Infantry during Civil War with left hip shattered at the Battle of Chickamauga.  
 Organizer and director of Wabash County Loan & Trust Company  
 Organizer of Wabash City Water Works  
 Secretary and general manager of Home Telephone Company  
 Trustee for Wabash city schools  
 County auditor 1874-83  
 Three children



William S. Stitt

Archibald N. Stitt  
 b. Around 1848 (12 in 1860 Census) in Indiana

George E. Stitt  
 b. March 1852 in Indiana  
 d. May 24, 1855 aged 3 years, 2 months, 2 days

Archibald moved back to Wabash County in 1839-40. He purchased a tract of land south of Rich valley in Noble township situated between the canal and the Wabash River. It was heavily covered with walnut, hard maple and other fine trees. This timber was cleared with some it converted to rails or firewood, but unfortunately great quantities were piled high and burned.

Jonathan Keller deeded Archibald part of SW¼ and part of SE¼ of Sections 14 and 13 Township 27 Range 5 on May 7 1843. The 90.62 acres were purchased for \$1,550.

While in Wabash County Archibald became the superintendent of the division of the Wabash & Erie Canal between Fort Wayne and Logansport. He held that position until 1850.

Archibald was among the petitioners for establishing an International Order of Odd Fellows lodge in

the town of Wabash. On August 27, 1847, St. Anastasia Mesnil Lodge No. 46 was instituted. He was its first treasurer.

In 1850 Archibald was elected treasurer of Wabash County. At that time he moved from his Rich Valley home into the town of Wabash to be closer to his work. He served in this capacity for 2 terms retiring in 1854. He was a democrat until James Buchanan was nominated for president in 1856.

One of the most interesting events in Richvalley during canal times was the most puzzling deaths of the French family in October 1854. A Cincinnati business man, Aaron French, his wife and five children, settled in a cabin at the foot of a hill along the edge of the Wabash River bottom land northeast of Richvalley. Mr. French became ill and could barely support his family. Another family, John and Sarah Hubbard, began living with the French family to "Help Out" as other neighbors had in the past.

One Saturday evening neighbors stopped by the cabin to inquire about Mr. French's health. The town folk noticed Mrs. Hubbard wearing Mrs. French's clothing. They hadn't seen any of the French family for about a year. The next morning Mrs. Hubbard met Mr. James Lewis, the owner of the farm on which the cabin was located, at the gate to the yard. She said the family had moved west to Iowa since their father had died and left land to his children and that she and her husband had bought their belongings for \$40.

Later Mr. Hubbard invited a canal worker, Mr. Edward Boyle, to live with them at the cabin. Boyle was supposedly carrying several hundred dollars. In December Boyle also just seemed to disappear. It was assumed that he had left the community until March 1855 when boys, seining in the canal while the water was lowered for repairs, found Boyle's marked body. It looked like murder.

At the same time, Hubbard suddenly appeared to have lots of money. He was accused of the murder and put in jail. He denied it. When his wife came to visit him at the jail, their conversation concerning the French family was overheard. Mrs. Hubbard was immediately arrested and an investigation begun.

The sheriff and his deputy went to the old French farm. Upon arriving they noticed a 'stagnating' smell coming from the Hubbard house. The floor boards of the home were loosened and eighteen inches below them were found seven bodies. At the bottom of the shallow grave were Mr. and Mrs. French, then the four children, and finally the tiny baby at the top. A hammer or ax had crushed each skull and Mrs. French had a bro-

ken neck and leg. The Frenchs' bodies were removed and buried in the Richvalley cemetery.

During his trial Hubbard claimed innocence. Archibald Stitt testified for the defense along with others who were acquainted with Hubbard. However, Hubbard was found guilty and hanged on the Wabash County Courthouse lawn at 3 o'clock on Thursday, December 13, 1855.

In 1856 Archibald purchased the Indiana House, a popular public center of entertainment. He ran the old hotel until he died.

The Federal Census of 1860 shows Archibald being the hotel keeper at 58 years of age. He has real estate valued at \$2,500 and a personal estate valued at \$1,500. His wife, Catherine, at age 50 is the landlady. His children James, age 19, is a tinner; William, age 16, is at school; and Archibald is age 12. Also living at the hotel at the time of the census were:

- David Johnson, age 24, teamster from Ohio
- John Alna, age 17, hostler from New York
- John Drury, age 10 from Indiana
- John Sichler, age 24, a cook from Germany
- George Kinkle, age 35 an attorney at law from Kentucky
- Frederick Shutz, age 33 woolen manufacturer from Pennsylvania with real estate valued at \$2,000
- Jacob Lapp, age 43 a miller from Pennsylvania
- John Stickland, age 24 a shoemaker from Bavaria
- Leopold Levi, age 21 a clerk from Millersburg
- William Henley, age 23 a clerk from Ohio
- Eli H Dayen, age 22 a clerk from Indiana with \$100 real estate
- Daniel Thurston, age 23 a clerk from Indiana
- Matthias Wolf, age 30 a butcher from Prussia
- Lewis Twenivy, age 28 a bu peddler from New York
- Jacob Ulman, age 28 a clerk from Hessie (Darmstadt ?)
- John Tank, age 16 a boat driver from New York
- Benjamin Kersteter, age 49 a saddler from Pennsylvania
- Cyrus H. McPherron, age 32 a wagon maker from Mississippi
- Albert H. Clough, age 27 a railroad agent from New Hampshire

Although the town of Wabash had been incorporated in 1849, it was in the class of laws designed as "Local" and the State abandoned these "Special Laws." To re-organize the town had to be re-incorporated. Meetings ensued that led to an election held on Tuesday, May 16, 1854, at the courthouse creating 5 wards and on July 24, 1854 an election was held to select a trustee for each ward. Elections were held again in 1855 and in May 1856 Archibald Stitt was elected as a trustee of the Second Ward, which comprised all territory between Huntington and Wabash streets, extending

from south to north.

On July 6, 1863 John Hunt Morgan's Raiders crossed the Ohio River at Brandenburg, Kentucky, and entered Indiana. On July 9 Indiana's Governor Oliver P. Morton called for citizens to organize into military companies and be subject to orders. This Civil War group was known as the Indiana Legion.

In Wabash a war meeting was held on July 11 at the court house to organize into the military those over 45 years of age. A roll of paper was presented for signatures under the following terms:

**ROLL OF WABASH PIONEERS.**

ARTICLE I. The undersigned associate themselves into a military company, the persons composing it being over forty-five years of age and exempt from military duty.

ART. II. We do hereby —each member for himself — voluntarily waive all right of exemption as set on in the foregoing article, and tender our services, and present a company that shall be held and holds itself, as a part of the Indiana Legion subject to the orders of the Governor for all military purposes.

ART. III. This company pledges itself to loyalty, and hearty supports the Union and the Government. This article is fundamental, and shall not be changed.

Archibald Stitt was among the 86 signatures joining in this effort. They met every evening at 7 p.m. at the courthouse for roll call and drill awaiting further orders. They were relieved from duty on July 15, 1863 in an address by Governor Morton stating that the duties of these "minute men" were no longer needed.

A strong supporter Union troops, Archibald was "a warm friend to the soldiers of the late Civil war, no needy veteran ever having applied to him in vain for relief, and he would have given his last dollar to any one wearing the blue, providing such a one required assistance." He would not accept payment for food or lodging if they stayed in his hotel.

Throughout his life Archibald contracted for bridge and road work. He was the first appointee to the position of street commissioner under the city government of Wabash and while acting in this capacity died of sunstroke.

The Wabash histories describe Archibald as being of "average size...quick in action and in decision...generous to a fault." He had an ordinary education, "but possessed an unusual fund of good, practical sense, and the intelligence and quickness which made him a big factor in days when condition of living required just those qualities." He was "one of the most popular men of the time."

Archibald died on October 13, 1867 and was buried in the old portion of Falls Cemetery then known as the new Wabash cemetery. His obituary appeared in the local paper as follows:

**Wabash Plain Dealer October 17, 1867**

Mr. Archibald Stitt, one of the earliest settlers of the County of Wabash, and one of her best esteemed citizens, died at his residence in this city, on Sunday, the 13th inst. His death was sudden and unexpected, and he is sincerely mourned by all who knew him. The rich loved him for his excellent social qualities, and the poor because he was their best friend. He was one of the most genial and kind-hearted men we ever knew. His friends may mourn his loss, but they cannot be sorry for any thing he ever did.

He was buried by his brethren of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, and he was followed to his resting place in the New Cemetery, by the largest procession of deeply sympathizing citizens we ever saw in this city.

A more extended notice will appear next week.

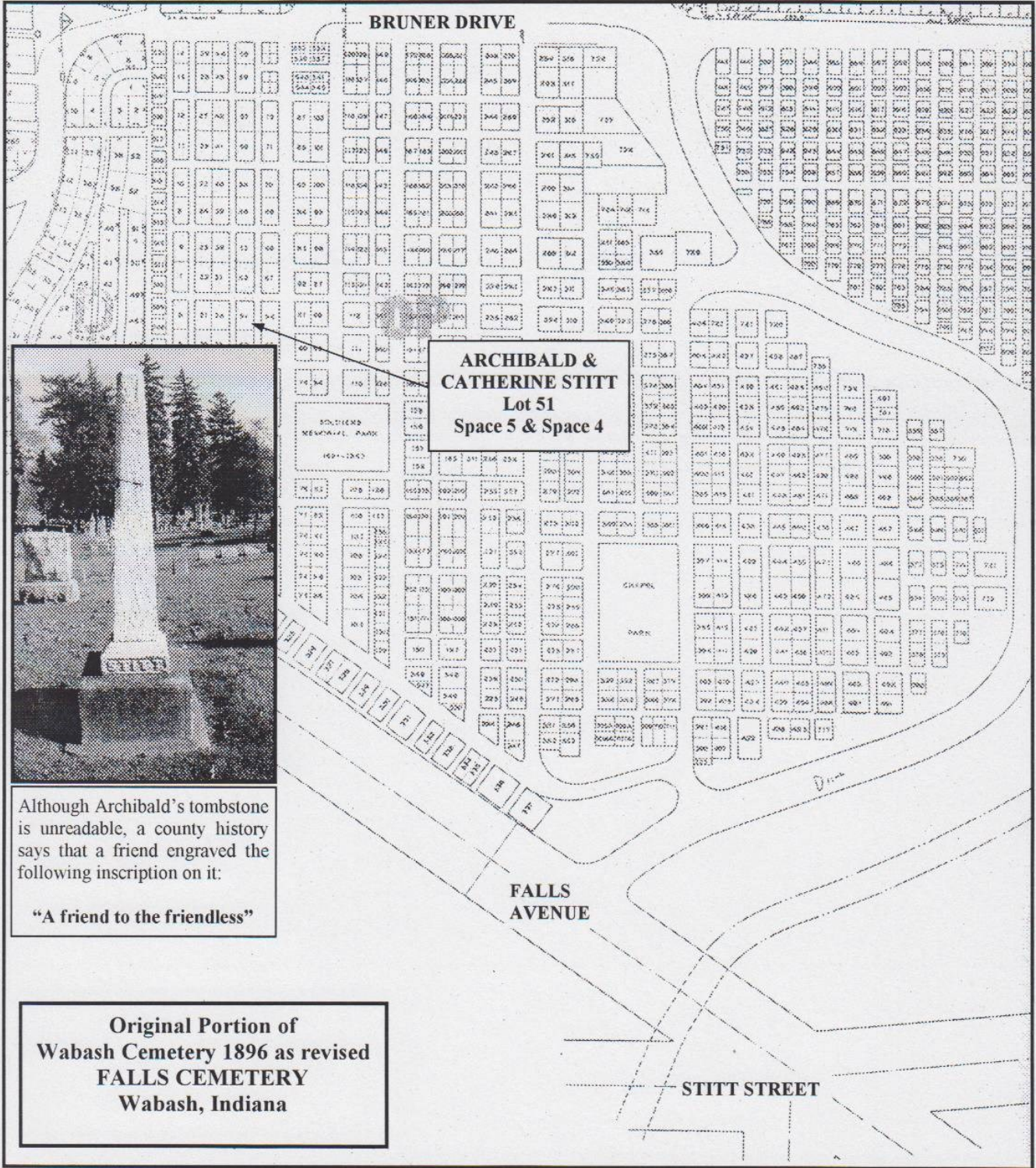
**Wabash Plain Dealer October 24, 1867**

ARCHIBALD STITT. — The subject of this notice was born in Ireland in 1802 [1801], and was, at the time of his death, in the 66th year of his age. About the year 1806 his father and family emigrated to this country and settled in Alexandria, Penn., where he resided until his death, when Archibald was about twelve years old. — from that time the care of the family, consisting of his mother, and several brothers younger than himself, to a great extent devolved upon him. After learning his trade (that of Boot and Shoemaker) he removed to Huntingdon, Penn., and established himself in the business of Boot and Shoemaking, which he continued successfully for some years.

In the meantime he was married to Catherine Simpson, who survives him.

At a later period he purchased an interest in a furnace and engaged in the manufacture of iron, but the general crash of the iron manufacturing interest in Pennsylvania, in 1834 and 1835, he failed.

He removed to Lagro, in this County, in 1835. In 1836, having obtained a large contract on the Wabash & Erie Canal, at the "Falling Springs" Bluff, he removed to Carroll County, where he remained until 1842, when he bought a farm in this County, near what is now the town of Rich Valley. While residing on this farm he was appointed Superintendent of Repairs on the Wabash & Erie Canal, which position he held until the Canal passed



Although Archibald's tombstone is unreadable, a county history says that a friend engraved the following inscription on it:

**"A friend to the friendless"**

**Original Portion of  
Wabash Cemetery 1896 as revised  
FALLS CEMETERY  
Wabash, Indiana**

into the hands of the creditors of the State on July, 1847. In 1850 he was elected Treasurer of Wabash County, and removed to this town. After serving out his term as Treasurer, he engaged in Hotel keeping and continued it until his death.

In all the relations of life was a son, brother, husband, father, or neighbor — he was all that could be desired. In business he was energetic, persevering and upright. Whether in public or private, all his transactions were guided by strict integrity of purpose, and it is believed that no one who knew him well, ever doubted his

entire honesty.

His heart was ever open to those in distress, and his hand ever ready to relieve them in the extent of his ability. During the recent rebellion, sick and destitute soldiers, returning from the army, always found his door upon to them, and his hand ready to supply their wants, and aid in reaching their homes, without hope of other reward than the consciousness of doing good to his fellow man. Few men would be more missed from among us. His acts of kindness and generosity were strewn all along his pathway through life. It was not with him spasmodic, but an every day matter. The writer of this knew him intimately for thirty-two years and believes it no exaggeration to say of him, that he was the "noblest work of God, an honest man."

Mrs. Archibald (Catherine) Stitt passed away on November 23, 1893. [Another source says November 19] Although her obituary was listed as being in a local newspaper, the newspaper for that month was unavailable on microfilm at the Wabash Carnegie Public Library. She was interred in Falls Cemetery in Wabash, Indiana, on November 25, 1893.

Although county histories, obituaries and genealogical researchers do not always agree on the exact year of Archibald's birth or arrival in America and his

tombstone is in such a bad condition that it is impossible to read, it is more important to note what this man accomplished during his lifetime. His work on the Wabash & Erie Canal in four counties in Indiana greatly helped to complete this great work in opening a route west from the east.

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**CANAL ARTIFACTS**

When donating books or artifacts to a museum one can not always depend on them being kept by the institution. William Shive, CSI member from Belleville, Illinois, tells of his personal experience in a letter to CSI headquarters below:

"In *The Hoosier Packet* January 2008 issue there was an article about a family vacation. It included a guided tour of the C. Howard Hiester Canal Center in Reading, PA. (CHHCC)

"In 1949, with my parents, I attended the Pennsylvania Canal Boatmen's Association meeting at Port Treverton, PA. My father's maternal grandfather was Joseph Burk, lockmaster for both the West Branch and the North Branch of the Pennsylvania Canal at Northumberland, PA. My father wanted to buy a canal boat model or pay someone to make one. Leads there led to Henry Sanders in Rochester, NY, son of Abe Sanders, a deceased employee of the Pennsylvania Canal. Henry had made two sets of two 24 inch Pennsylvania Canal Company boat models, one going to the C. Howard Hiester Canal Center. He kept a set, which my father purchased in 1950 after Henry's death.

"After my retirement in 1982, I did genealogy research in Pennsylvania and saw some of the sights. I visited the CHHCC in the 1990s to see their canal boat models like my father's models. I was advised that the models had been declared surplus and given to the State Historical Society in Harrisburg,

PA. Later they were again declared surplus and were moved to a restaurant in a hotel in Harrisburg. That was many years ago. Where are they now? If any one knows, it would help to advise the American Canal Society for record purposes.

"In October 2006, I delivered my father's models PENNA CANAL CO. NO. 361 & 362 to the Berwick Historical Society, Berwick, PA. That was my father's hometown and the North Branch passed through it.

"It is interesting to note that in *Canal Currents*, bulletin of the PA Canal Society, Fall 2007 issue, Glenn Wenrich has a lifelong hobby of model boat building. He has given or loaned more than half a dozen models to CHHCC.

"PENNA CANAL CO. No. 347 & 348 models were each 10 feet long and were floatable as I saw them at a PA Canal Boatmen's Assn. Meeting in Selingsgrove in the 1930s. In the 1980s they were at the Coal Mine Museum in Scranton. In the 1990s they were at the Hugh Moore Canal Park warehouse."

**Canal Boat Models 361 & 362 made by Henry Sanders**

