

CANAWLERS AT REST

ALBERT SMITH WHITE

b. October 24, 1803

d. September 4, 1864

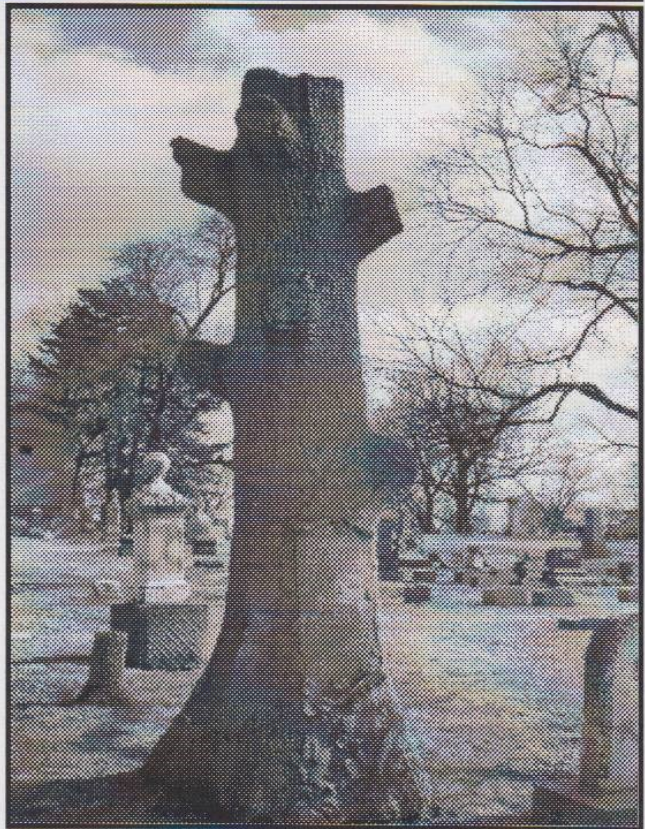
By Mark A. Smith

Portions of the article below are quoted from a sketch by Woolen, William Wesley. **Biographical and Historical Sketches of Early Indiana.** Indianapolis, IN: Hammond & Co. 1883, pp. 204-210. Much of it came from his obituary in the **Lafayette Daily Journal**, which is at the end of this article.

"Among the most scholarly men who have attained eminence in the politics of Indiana was Albert S. White. His writings were copiously embellished with classical allusions, and his speeches were rich in references and quotations from the most noted thinkers and publicists of the world.

"Albert S. White was born in Blooming Grove, New York, October 24, 1803. He graduated from Union College, New York in 1822...Mr. White studied law at Newburg, New York, and in 1825 was licensed to practice his profession. Soon after this he emigrated to Indiana and located at Rushville. After practicing law a year or so in that town, he removed to Paoli, where he remained but a short time, and then took up his abode in Lafayette. This was in March, 1829, and from that time until his death, Lafayette, and its near neighbor, Stockwell, was his home.

"During the session of 1828-29 Mr. White reported the proceedings of the Indiana Legislature for the **Indianapolis Journal**, the first work of the kind done in the State. He did it thoroughly and well, as the files of the paper will attest. In 1830 and 1831 he was the assistant clerk of the Indiana House Representatives, and from 1832-1835 he was its clerk. During these years of service in the House he was brought in close contact with the leading men of the State, a circumstance which was of great benefit to him in his future political career.



This monument to Albert Smith White stands in Greenbush Cemetery in Lafayette, IN. The first canal boat to travel from Lafayette to Toledo on the Wabash & Erie Canal was named in his honor.

Photo by Bob Schmidt

In 1833 he was a candidate for Congress against Edward A. Hannegan, and was defeated. He had neither the brilliancy nor eloquence of Hannegan, but he was the superior of that erratic man in education, culture, and in most of the qualities which go to make up the successful man. Four years after this he was elected to Congress from his district, defeating Nathan Jackson by a majority twice as large as the latter's vote. The year before he was on the Whig electoral ticket, and in the electoral college cast his vote for William Henry Harrison.

"On the expiration of the senatorial term of General John Tipton, in 1839, Mr. White was chosen to succeed him. A protracted struggle took place over this election, the candidates being Governor Noble, Colonel Thomas H. Blake and Mr. White. It was not until the thirty-sixth ballot was reached that an election took place; on the ballot Mr. White received a majority of the votes. He was then a young man, but his training had been such as to acquaint him with public business, and when he took his seat in the Senate he was no novice in the duties of the place. He actively opposed the annexation of Texas, as he did every measure which was calculated to extend the area of slavery. He was of a

conservative temperament, and usually voted with the moderate men of his party, but he was conscientiously an anti-slavery man, and always acted with those who strove to confine slavery to the territory it then polluted. He was active in securing grants of land to aid in the extension of the Wabash and Erie canal, and it was largely by his influence that such grants were obtained.

"On the expiration of his senatorial term in 1845, Mr. White resumed the practice of the law, but in a short time he abandoned it and entered actively into the business of railroading. He was president of the Indianapolis and Lafayette railroad from its organization until 1856, and during three years of the time was also at the head of the Wabash and Western railway. He performed the duties of these places with ability, and to the satisfaction of the public and the roads.

"In 1860, when the country had need of its strongest and most experienced men, Mr. White was again called into the public service. He was elected to Congress from his district, and having had experience both in the House and the Senate, he at once took high rank as a member. He was made chairman of a select committee raised to consider the question of compensated emancipation. Mr. White reported a bill appropriating \$180,000,000 to pay loyal owners for their slaves and \$30,000,000 to aid in the colonization of the freedmen. This measure was recommended by Mr. Lincoln, and supported by him with all the influence of his position, but the madness of the Southern people prevented its adoption. Had the men of the South been wise they would have accepted this proffer as a solution of the slavery question. Had they done so there would have been no war, and the devastations that swept over the Southern States would have been avoided. In presenting the bill, Mr. White accompanied it with a report in which the social and political influences of slavery were elaborately argued. He contended that the white and black races should be separated, and the latter colonized in the equatorial regions of America. In his speech supporting the bill, he told the Southern members that if they did not accept the olive branch it would be withdrawn, and their slaves would be taken from them without compensation. The result is known. The offer was rejected and the slaves freed by a proclamation by the President.

"On the death of Hon. Caleb B. Smith, January 7, 1864, President Lincoln appointed Mr. White United States Judge for the District of Indiana. He had been in law practice so long that many doubted the wisdom of the appointment, but it proved a good one. He soon adapted himself to his new position, and had he lived would have proven a worthy successor of the eminent man who preceded him. But his term was of short duration, for, on the 4th of the next September, eight

- 1803 - Born in Orange County, N.Y. on October 24
 - 1822 - Graduated Union College, Schenectady, N.Y.
 - 1825 - Admitted to bar and practiced law
 - 1829 - Moved to Lafayette, Indiana
 - 1830-31 - Assistant clerk State House of Representatives
 - 1832-35 - Clerk State House of Representatives
 - 1832 - Unsuccessful candidate to 23rd Congress
 - 1836 - Presidential elector on Whig ticket
 - 1837-39 - Elected Whig to 25th Congress
 - 1838 - Declined to run second Congressional term
 - 1839-45 - Elected Whig to U.S. Senate
Chairman to the Committee to Audit and Control the Contingent Expense 27th Congress
Chairman on Indian Affairs 27th & 28th Congress
 - 1845 - Declined reelection to U.S. Senate
Married Harriet Wilson Randolph
 - 1850-56 - President of several railroads
 - 1861-63 - Elected Republican to 37th Congress
Appointed by President A. Lincoln one of three commissioners to adjust the claims of citizens of Minnesota and Dakota against government for Indian depredations
 - 1862 - Declined nomination once again
 - 1864 - Appointed judge of U.S. Court for District of Indiana serving until his death
 - 1864 - Died September 4, interred in Greenbush Cemetery, Lafayette, Indiana
- Source: **Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress**

months from the time of his appointment, he died at his home in Stockwell, a town of which he was one of the founders. His death caused a gloom throughout the State, but its darkest shadows rested over Lafayette, where he had lived so long. A special train left there for Stockwell the Wednesday morning after his death, and soon returned with his remains. They were met at the Lafayette depot by an immense concourse of people headed by the mayor, the city council, and the members of the bar. The procession moved to the Fifth-street Methodist church, where an appropriate discourse was delivered by Rev. John L. Smith, after which all that was mortal of Albert S. White was taken to the Greenbush Cemetery, and there interred. Subsequently, William F. Reynolds, a wealthy citizen of Lafayette, and a great admirer of Mr. White, erected over his grave a monument which still stands to mark the resting place of the scholar and jurist. It is of Bedford stone, and represents an oak tree, thunder-riven, blasted, dismantled, its branches shattered by the storm, but enough of the trunk standing to show how loftily and nobly it towered toward the heaven. A pair of doves nestle on a broken limb, and an ivy vine clings and clambers around the root. On a scroll fastened to the tree is inscribed the name, date of birth

and death of Mr. White, and a simple tribute to his worth as a man, a legislator, judge, lawyer, citizen, friend. The inscription is as follows:

The grave of
Albert S. White
In all relation of life, admirable.
As a friend, sincere; as a citizen, public spirited; as a
lawyer, honest; as a legislator, wise; as a judge, without reproach.

"In the *Fayette Observer*, of July 22, 1826, is the full text of an address delivered by Mr. White, at Rushville, on the Fourth of July of that year...It could only have been prepared by a scholar of great erudition, one familiar with the classic authors.....

"Mr. White was then a young men, fresh from college, and his address was somewhat sophomoric, yet its diction is such as to stamp its author as one who had drunk deeply of the waters of classical lore.

"Mr. White had but little in common with the typical Western pioneer, and it is, therefore, somewhat strange that he should have reached the eminence he did. He never sunk his manhood nor lowered his self-respect by trying to get down to the level of every man who approached him. He was in no sense a demagogue, and never sought to carry favor by pretending to be what he was not. He was always dignified, was always a gentleman. The last speech made by Mr. White was delivered on the 1st of June, 1864, at the dedication of Crown Hill Cemetery.....

"While Mr. White was in Congress Mr. Lincoln promised him the Lafayette post office for a friend, but after he left Washington the President changed his mind, and appointed Mr. James P. Luse. Mr. Luse was not Mr. White's candidate, and when word came to Lafayette of the appointment, Mr. White at once went to Washington to remonstrate against it. As soon as Mr. Lincoln saw him he knew his business and sought to mollify him before he had time to speak. "I see how it is, White," said the President, "but before you proceed to business I want to tell you a story. In one of our large towns in Illinois a new hotel was opened to the public with a splendid entertainment to a large number of invited guests. Among these came a big, lean man, who was supposed to be a guest, and at the table he made a tremendous havoc among the viands, eating with a voracity that struck everybody with astonishment. After dinner the man approached the landlord and said: 'I was not invited to your dinner, but I was very hungry, and came of my own accord. I have nothing with which to pay you for your bountiful dinner, and all that you can do in the case is to kick me out of doors, and I shall be greatly obliged if you do kick me out! I shall feel in that case that I have paid the debt.'" "Now, White, I promised you the Lafayette appointment; I admit it. Just before I left Springfield an old friend, with whom I had often

fished and hunted and slept, came to see me, and I asked him if I could do anything for him, but he said there was no office he wanted. Well, the other day this good old friend of mine came in, and, of course, was my bust; and before he left he asked me for the Lafayette post office for some friend of his, and I had to give it to him. You see, White, I admit I had promised it to you, but what could I do but give it to him? Now, if you will kick me out of doors, and go quits, I shall feel greatly obliged to you," whereupon the President turned his back to Mr. White, drew aside his coat tail, and asked for the kick. Mr. White used to tell this story, and add: "Just think of it! The president of the United States asking to be kicked!"

"In person Mr. White was small and spare. He had a thin visage, a large Roman nose and a narrow chest. Physically he was weak; intellectually he was strong. Had his career in life depended along upon his body he would have been a failure, but depending, as it did, upon his mind and heart as well, he was a success. He was one of the first men of the Wabash country and of the State, and his name will not be forgotten while learning and scholarship are cherished, and honor and patriotism revered."

The first canal boat to travel all the way from Lafayette to Toledo was named the "Albert S. White" in his honor. On September 15, 1841 the *Tipppecanoe Journal* and *Lafayette Free Press* editor wrote:

The **ALBERT S. WHITE**, of Lafayette is a new and superb Canal Packet built at this place for the Wabash and Erie Canal Transportation Company. She was to leave port yesterday for Fort Wayne, there to receive her furniture, etc., and we venture the opinion, that when fitted out she will 'take the shine off' of any thing in her line to be met with 'in these diggings.' She is commodious, and her apartments so arranged as that there can be no danger of indiscriminate mingling up of male and female passengers and crew, as is sometimes necessarily the case in boats of bad construction.



In 1850 Albert S. White was president of the Lafayette & Indianapolis Railroad Company, which was in the process of laying tracks. As a railroad advocate, as was his Delphi counterpart, Reed Case, he appealed to the foes of progress through an essay he wrote for the *Lafayette Journal*.

Hon. A. S. White on the Influence of Railroads

Of what account is our fertile soil and to what end shall we labor if we remain in pastoral and primitive seclusion? The ascent of the steamboat up our river and the completion of our (Wabash & Erie) canal have marked successive years of improvement in our condition, and if all the world stood still around us might continue to sustain our growth.

But are we content with this? For ourselves and for our children our ambition as citizens aims much higher. Planted in the best part of the Mississippi Valley where all the comforts and luxuries of civilized life may be reached in their highest excellence, we desire to see all our resources unfolded and our society advance in all its various forms. This will not only be realized in an increase of our wealth, but in the heightening of our moral and intellectual condition. In these channels of commerce, arts and manufacture will follow. The world will bring to us its intelligence.

We shall be visited by the best classes of emigrants, and with the increase and improvement of our population, schools, lyceums, churches, agricultural and mechanical societies will be instituted and sustained, general intelligence will increase, social intercourse will be refined and promoted.

It is the glory of the railroad system that it had brought the city into the country. Selecting its own track speeding through a thousand harvest fields and past as many workshops in a single day, it scatters its favors with the quickness of thought, fearing neither frosts nor droughts nor tempests nor embargo nor blockade.

To my way of thinking, these were prophetic words, speaking into existence a way of life we know today in the year 2003. In an article that appeared in the *Lafayette Journal and Courier* by Bob Kriebel about the relocation of the Monon tracks in Lafayette, he refers to White's prediction saying, "By the end of 1852, two railroads served Lafayette and by 1856 three. The railroads played important roles in a number of landmark success stories that followed: Purdue University in 1869;

the Monon Shops in 1892; the Belt Railway in 1893; the Indiana Veterans' Home in 1896; Alcoa in 1937; the U.S. 52 bypass in 1938; the Eli Lilly Laboratories in 1952; Harrison Bridge in 1960; Interstate 65 in 1972; Riverfront Park and Golf Course in the 1970s; Caterpillar in 1980; Subaru-Isuzu Automotive in 1987."

**Proceedings of the Lafayette Bar
on the Death of Albert S. White**

At a meeting of the Lafayette Bar at the office of Major Mace, on Monday last, Judge Petit was appointed Chairman, and Godlove G. Behm, Secretary.

On motion of the chairman appointed Daniel Mace, John A. Stein and John S. Williams, a Committee to draft resolutions.

The Committee reported the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted, to wit:

Resolved, That in the death of Judge A. S. White, we have lost an eminent and worthy member of society, a man of profound learning, a courteous and elegant gentleman, and one who graced his judicial station with the highest order of legal ability, combined with a courtesy seldom equalled to the legal profession and that laying business of his court.

Resolved, That as a far-seeing business man, connected with our railroad interests in Indiana, the country is indebted to no one more than to Judge White; and especially was he the pioneer in the construction of the railroad system which has resulted in such important benefits to the Wabash Valley and the city of Lafayette.

Resolved, That we deeply mourn the death of Judge White, as a brother, friend and companion; that we sympathize with his bereaved family in their loss of a kind husband and father. *Resolved*, That out of respect to the memory of the deceased, we will attend his funeral in a body.

Resolved, That the Chairman of this meeting be requested to present a copy of these proceedings to the Tippecanoe Circuit Court, with a request that they be spread upon its records.

Resolved, That a copy of these proceedings be transmitted to the family of the deceased by the Secretary of this meeting.

Resolved, That the papers of this city be requested to publish the above proceedings.

On Monday Sept. 5, 1864 the *Lafayette Daily Journal* carried White's obituary. The microfilm was extremely blurry and difficult to read:

Death of Hon. Albert S. White

Honorable Albert S. White died at his residence near Stockwell on yesterday, September 4 (1864). The deceased had been sick but a few days and his condition was not considered critical until his immediate friends were astounded with the intelligence that he was already beyond hope. On Wednesday evening last he had a very severe attack of eldus morbus (?) during which he suffered intensely. Congestion of the bowels ensued and a stupor from which the deceased never rallied. The quiet which succeeded the first severe attack deceived many of his friends who saw not in it the stealthy approach of death. He expired ten minutes after 6 o'clock on Sunday morning.

Mr. White was in his sixty-first year of his age. He came to LaFayette in the spring of 1829. His life has been an active one. Much of it has been spent in public position and he has always been prominently connected with all enterprises for the public good. Ever since his settlement in the then young and almost unknown village of LaFayette, he has been one of the most influential and active citizens. His reputation is National. A brief notice of his life is due the memory of one who will today be

recollected for his many noble traits of character, his grand manners, his brilliant mind and the use he made of it.

A biographical sketch of Mr. White published some years ago in the *Eastern paper* informs us that his family was of English origin and emigrated to this country as early as the year 1683. The emigrating _____ was known as Captain Thomas White, of Weyworth, Massachusetts. His immediate decedents were educated at Cambridge, and furnished a long line of Presbyterian preachers; the great grandfather of the deceased, Sylvanius White, and his father Ebenezer, having between them preached over one hundred years in the same respective congregations at Southampton and Bridgehampton, on Long Island. The family removed to Long Island about the close of the 17th century. The father of the deceased—the late Judge White, of Orange County, New York, was at the time of his death in 1855, one of the oldest living graduates of Columbia College; having received his bachelor's degree in the year 1791.

Hon. Albert S. White was born at Blooming Grove, New York, in the year 1803, and, after the usual preparatory studies, entered Union College, from where he graduated in 1822. He adopted the legal profession and, having _____ finished the necessary studies at Newburgh, New York, determining to try the fair and fertile lands of the opening west, removed to

Indiana in 1828. He first settled in Rushville. From there he removed to Paoli in Orange County. While residing there (Lafayette) he was elected Clerk of the House of Representatives, a position which he held several terms, and in which he made, by his urbanity and courteousness, many friends who remained such during his whole subsequent life. He removed to LaFayette in the spring of 1829 and continued the practice of the law. Until his election to Congress he was in the employment of a large and lucrative practice and while engaged actively at the law was considered one of its brightest ornaments in the State. In 1836 he was one of the electors who cast the vote of Indiana in favor of raising General Harrison to the Presidential chair. In 1837 he was elected to the Congress of the United States, as a Whig. Always anti-slavery, he nevertheless voted with Henry Clay and the conservative Whigs in the 25th Congress. In 1839 he was elected a Senator of the United States by the Legislature of Indiana. His election was secured on the thirty-sixth ballot, after an excited contest between the proposed candidates, the late Governor Noble, and the late Colonel Thomas H. Blake, both like himself, Whigs, which party then had a large ascendancy in the Legislature. In the Senate, he always earnestly supported the measures of the party which had given him his seat therein: Bank, Internal Improvement, Reasonable Tariff, etc. During his term

the two land grants were made to Indiana for the extension of her canal (W & E): first to Terre Haute, and afterwards to Evansville.

He married Miss Randolph of Tuckahoe, Virginia, in 1845. From 1845 to 1856, not having resumed the practice of his profession, he was engaged in various railroad enterprises and was President successively of the LaFayette & Indianapolis Railroad, and the Toledo & Wabash Valley Railroad. Mr White was always a zealous supporter of public improvements, and in fact, improvements of every description. He entered into the railroad enterprise of his day with energy, and his talents were peculiarly fitted for that work. The State of Indiana and the West owe much of their present prosperity to the earnest and eloquent adversary of their Internal Improvements by Mr. White, at a day which just such ability as he possessed was requisite to secure that aid from the people and Eastern capitalists which resulted in their permanent establishment.

In the fall of 1860 Mr. White was nominated for Congress by the Republicans of this District. In place of the lamented Rice, who died shortly after commencing the canvass. Mr. White was elected by a large majority and took his seat with the first Congress of the present Administration. As Chairman of the select committee on gradual immigration and colonization he reported a bill intended to give practical offers to Presidential recommendation. It

appropriated \$100,000,000 for compensation to loyal owners, payable through a probable series of twenty years, in thirty years five per cent stocks of the United States and \$80,000,000 for colonization purposes, but in his remarks on the introduction of the bill he notified the border states that unless they showed very early a hearty and earnest acceptance of the measures so as to stop the waste and ravages of war, the motion could not continue the offer, so the condition on which it was made would have ceased to exist. The bill is accompanied by an elaborate report in which the political and social influence of slavery are reviewed and separation of the races ended. Colonization in the equatorial regions of America is proposed and the subject thoroughly discussed both in its political and constitutional bearings on the future of our country.

At the close of this term Mr. White was appointed by President Lincoln one of three Commissioners to adjust the claims of citizens of Minnesota and Dakota against the Government for Indian depredations. The position was one of great responsibility and its duties were discharged to the satisfaction of the Government. On the death of Judge Caleb B. Smith, Mr. White was appointed his successor, Judge of the United States Court for the District of Indiana, a position which he held at his death. It was feared by many of his friends that his long absence from the bar

would render his position onerous and uncomfortable to himself and that he would not be able to do himself that credit which he has in every other public position he had held. The same friends were surprised at the readiness with which he adapted himself to the duties of his new position and the energy with which he entered upon the discharge of them. His characteristic urbanity made him a favorite with all members of the law who came in contact with him, and it was the general opinion that he would have done better to the bench as he had to the bar and the house in other days. This position was one which pleased him and he had just made arrangements for devoting his entire time and talents to it for the remainder of his days before suddenly summoned himself to appear inside a higher court.

Such is a brief and review of the history of Albert S. White. A whole volume might be written on his biography that he was an active, intelligent man, who thought _____ to all the _____ which have others for the last thirty years (over one line unreadable). The sense of urbanity and the _____ of speech were his to a remarkable degree. As an _____ which submitted a proper display of his wonderful philological gifts, classical love and rhetorical elegancies, it is doubted if he had an equal in the land. He retained throughout life, and cultivated the laws of classical literature which distinguished him in his

college days. After spending years in active, out-door business, engaged briefly in public duties, having little connection with his library, if called upon, it was with no difficulty he addressed a literary society, without preparation, yet with all the readiness of scholarship and richness of reference which distinguishes the productions of the student whose days and nights are spent among his books. To the driest details of business he brought the richest gems of fancy and of thought. One who heard him converse or speak on a (two lines totally illegible) already and decidedly for literature, his library, and the quiet which the student affects, and yet his tastes, remarkable intellectual resources and fine _____ were meant to adorn and beautify the dull and laborious details of business and life. He was not a student but an active _____ enterprising business man, ever originating or perfecting some new plan for improvement.

The tongue from which but lately fell each noble sentiment, so elegantly perceived is still. The hand that passed so recently such graceful sentences so happily expressed is dead. It will be long before we know another we _____ of such expert _____, be ready ever to all his great powers for the public weal. It is but a few weeks since, at Indianapolis, on the dedication of a cemetery (Crown Hill) he delivered an address full of his characteristic elegancies of thought and expression, and yet indicating the full possession and mastery of his afore-time celebrated intellectual qualities and resources. Some of his sentiments read now over his remains, seem to fall with a yet sadder cadence than when they came from the lips of the speaker lending poignancy to the grief of relatives, sorrow to the sadness of friends.

GENEALOGY

Albert Smith White married Harriet Wilson Randolph
children:

Gabriella Randolph White married John Brokenbrough Randolph, Jr.
children:
Louise Randolph & Frances Howell Randolph

Albert S. White, Jr. married Julia Cox
children:
Albert S. White & Arthur Cox White

Randolph White married Nellie Rowe
children:
Randolph White, Jr., Harriot White, Charles Russell White & Herbert White

Frances Howell White married Silenus de Witt Parsons
children:
Charles Francis Parsons & John Randolph Parsons