

CANAWILERS AT REST

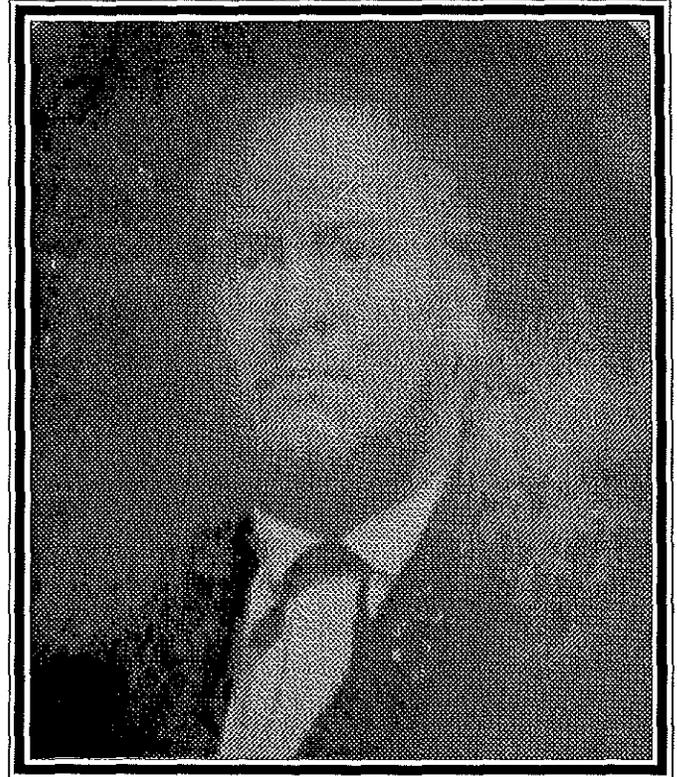
REED CASE

b. Jan. 9, 1808

d. Oct. 23, 1871

By Mark A. Smith

Photo of oil portrait by Bob Schmidt



Reed Case's life was characterized by the three F's—fatherhood, future, and faith. His fatherhood was seen in his five children, all of whom followed their father in service to their native area and state.

Reed Case had humble roots, but rose above them in his service to the Delphi community and the surrounding area. He was born in Nelson County, Kentucky on January 9, 1808 (just one year prior to Abraham Lincoln's birth) to William Case. Reed's grandfather willed thirty-six acres he owned to William, and, in turn, William named his son Reed as a tribute to his wife's maiden name.

In the summer of the year Reed was born, William moved his family to Orange County, Indiana, which would later become the location of the French Lick Sheraton Hotel. The family temporarily retreated to Shelby County, Kentucky due to Indian hostility. They returned to southern Indiana in 1810, and lived in Harrison County, then Washington County, then returned to Orange County.

At age sixteen, Reed formally entered the business world as a brick mason. He formed a construction company and moved to Danville, IN, to build the Hendricks County courthouse. In 1824, nineteen-year-old Reed married seventeen-year-old Mariah Glover, whose parents lived in Orange County, then in Greene County, the site of present-day Bloomfield. Three sons and a daughter were the fruits of

this first union: Josephine, John Stilwell, James S. and Reed Jr.

Reed contracted to construct the National Road in Hendricks and Putnam counties in 1832, when he was twenty-four. At twenty-eight, he began his life-long association with the Wabash and Erie Canal, first as contractor for the Miami County Segment (1836), and then on the segment from Delphi to Lafayette (1838). The death of Valerius Armitage created an opportunity for completion of a construction contract of the Wabash and Erie Canal in the Falling Springs vicinity, where, by the way, his daughter Josephine was born, then in Delphi proper, with the construction of the sidecut or "slip" to the foot of Main Street. This was done with the help of several other area merchants who formed a holding company for the purpose of selling stock to finance this sidecut, which eventually served a packing house, capably administered by his partners James Spears and James Dugan, and a grain handling warehouse. This tri-partite partnership oversaw interests in packing houses, grain operations, banking, and land ownership which extended as far away as Pulaski and White Counties in the Brookston and Winamac area.

Reed administered a very diversified concern, venturing into the pork packing business, which by the Civil War era had been processing as many as three thousand head of hogs daily, which were originally shipped on the Canal as "Delphi Canvas Hams," so called because they were wrapped in a canvas enclosure. Those livestock were nurtured by the three to four

thousand acres of land in the mid-north area.

Canals weren't the only medium of transportation shown an interest by Reed, as he was chosen to be stock solicitor for the nascent Wabash Railroad as it was making an appearance in the Delphi area. Reed and several other prominent Delphi area merchants were instrumental in bringing that mode of transport to the Delphi vicinity. He was also paid the grand sum of \$53,000 to oversee the construction of the Rossville-Delphi Plank Road, the predecessor of US Highway 421.

Reed also saw service to the Union case for one year, in hot pursuit of John Hunt Morgan. Morgan was the Rebel guerilla fighter from Kentucky who struck fear and terror in the hearts of many in the southern part of this state.

Reed's faith was shown as he held a position of Vestryman at Saint Mary's Episcopal Church, a body of believers of which his partners Spears and Dugan were a part, and his activity in the Underground Railroad in the Delphi area. The Case family held a rich heritage in the Episcopalian faith, which stretched over several generations.

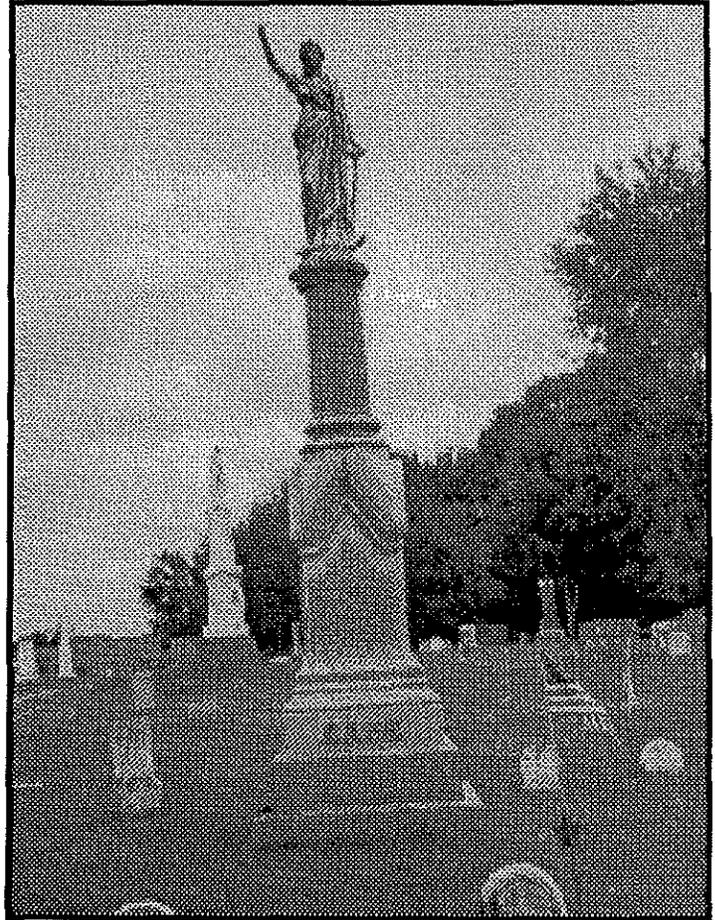
Following Mariah's death in 1847, thirty-nine year old Reed married Mariah's widowed sister, Huldah Glover William, who was twenty-eight. Their marriage was performed by Judge I. B. Edwards in Bloomfield, Indiana on October 15, 1847. One issue, Charles G., was born of their marriage.

Death of Captain Reed Case.

It is our painful duty this week to chronicle the death of one of Carroll County's oldest and best citizens. At eleven o'clock last Monday night, Captain Reed Case, after an illness of several months, quietly passed away. His death was not altogether unexpected, as he had been in ill health for some time. Mr. Case was about sixty-four years old. We cannot at this writing give as extended a sketch of the deceased as we should like to, for the want of time, and can only say that he came to this county in the year of 1835, as a contractor on the Wabash and Erie Canal, and has resided here ever since. For the past twenty-five or thirty years he has been in the produce and packing business, in the firm of Spears, Case & Co. Many will regret to hear of his death, as he was esteemed by all who had intercourse with him in the relations of life. The funeral will take place to-day at 2 o'clock, from his late residence.

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October 1871

Reed Case's soul quietly fled this earth at the age of sixty-three on October 23, 1971, following two months of ill health due to a stroke. His grave is located at the Odd Fellows' Cemetery, just off Carrollton Road near Delphi, and his stone is topped off with a sculpted rendition of a lady with an anchor, representing Faith. Ironically enough, his partner James Spears' gravesite is marked in a similar fashion at Springvale Cemetery near Lafayette, Indiana, just off SR 25.



The lady with an anchor on top of the Reed Case monument represents Faith. Photo by Mark Smith

The home of Reed Case was moved to Canal Park from a city street in Delphi and is undergoing renovation. Photo Bob Schmidt

