

## The Washington Street Gateway Trail

### A Tale of Two Cases

Recently with the receipt of the much-acclaimed Stellar Grant monies there is a move to enhance the South Washington Street thoroughfare to direct potential visitors into the heart of the City for economic and historic reasons. Many are unaware of the fact that this area was created by two Cases: Reed and John. Let me explain.

In the dedicatory remarks prepared by Judge William C. Smith on the occasion of the opening of the then-new Washington Street Bridge in 1936, Smith remarked, and I quote: "The bridge across Deer Creek, in Delphi, shown in picture at left, taken about seventy years ago, was constructed sometime in the period between 1840 and 1850, it being a part of the plank road that was constructed of two inch thick oak plank laid upon and nailed to stringers of oak laid lengthwise of the road that ran from Pittsburg through Delphi to Frankfort.

It was one of the many wooden covered bridges erected in Carroll County in the early days, only three of which are now standing and in use.

At the time of its construction Frankfort had no canals or railroads, and about all the produce marketed from Clinton County was hauled in wagons or driven over this plank road, across this bridge, to Delphi for shipment via the canal then in operation through Delphi, or the large packing plant of Spears, Case and Dugan situated on the East side of Delphi."

The Plank Road was eventually known as the Prince William Road in 1867 due to its passing through the village of the same name. In 1882

it was eventually graveled due to the deteriorating condition of the original planks. It also served the settlement of Harley Switch, which was organized to ship logs for fuel to the lime kilns owned by Harley Lime. Today it is commemorated in a sign in the town of Rossville stating "Plank Street."

According to an article in the Delphi Journal concerning "Tearing Down the Covered Bridge", "This old covered bridge was built in 1848, the last payment on it being made at the March term, 1849. The superstructure was put up by Charles Naylor, a brother of Judge Naylor. The stone work was put in by William Givens, John Case, recently deceased, superintending the job."

John S. Case was recorded as doing repair on the bridge on November second, 1867, July twenty-first, 1875, and December eighteenth of 1868. John S. Case was born in 1809, and passed away in his home on Sunday, April twenty-sixth, 1891 in his home near Delphi at eighty-two years of age. In 1843 he came to Carroll County. In politics he was a Democrat. He served as sheriff, county treasurer, and deputy treasurer. His progeny included two sons; John O. Case and Harry Case. His funeral was held in his nephew's home, with burial at the IOOF Cemetery, Rev. J.A. Maxwell officiating.

The plank road was the legacy of his brother Reed, who, according to Dora Thomas Mayhill, "left Delphi for the purpose of proceeding east to purchase two steam sawmills. He will be absent about three weeks."

The Plank Road was partially completed in 1850 with a toll gate established somewhat where the new IFCU financial institution is today. Efforts to secure loans for the completion of this thoroughfare were unsuccessful and Attorney Charles Butler more or less threw the

officials on their own devices for securing monies for the completion of this road.

The road was eventually completed in 1853 with Reed Case serving as Superintendent.

Reed Case of course was the younger brother of John, and was born in 1808 on January ninth, also in Kentucky, and his career started at age sixteen as brick mason at Danville, Indiana building the second Hendricks County Courthouse. At age twenty-four, he was instrumental in building the National Road, then at twenty-eight became Superintendent of the Wabash and Erie Canal, first the Miami County segment, then the Carroll County section. In 1842 he oversaw the construction of the side-slip to the foot of Main Street, and the resultant pork packing and grain handling establishments. He was also known as a banker.

His death occurred on October twenty-third, 1871 following a stroke in March of that year.

The thoroughfare was reconstructed in its present form in 1908.

Thus we see that the Washington Street Gateway Trail is a legacy of two brothers whose construction skills bore long-lasting results and repercussions for the present age.