

# delphi

## The Wason Home: Toledo in Delphi

BY MARK SMITH  
CARROLL COUNTY HISTORICAL  
MUSEUM CUREATOR

Immediately adjacent to the home of the Lyon family we encounter that of both the Eldridge and Wason families.



HISTORICALLY  
YOURS

MARK  
SMITH

Although the home was constructed in 1885, long past the usefulness of the local canal, the home has ties through the Wason families to that grand era in the Delphi area.

According to an internet source, (on-line White County History, by Thomas Hammele, James P. Wason was born September twenty-sixth in Toledo, Ohio. He was the son of Robert A. and Gertrude Wason (nee Freleigh) and came to Delphi, Indiana with his parents; attended the common schools at Toledo, including the eighth grade and graduated from the Delphi High School in May 1885; studied law for a short time with the firm of Applegate and Pollard and then entered the store of Bolles and Wason in 1887, where he was employed until the fall of 1894, when he went to Ann Arbor and entered the law department of the University of Michigan, graduating from there with the degree of LLB in June 1896, under the firm name of Cartwright and Wason, which lasted until his elevation to the bench. (He) Was attorney for the board of commissioners of Carroll County in 1903-1904. (He) was elected judge of



| Photo by MARK SMITH

the Thirty-ninth Judicial Circuit, composed of Carroll and White Counties in November, 1906, by a majority of forty-one and was re-elected in 1912, by a majority of 1,315; is a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church and also a member of Mt. Olive Lodge, F. and A.M., Delphi Chapter, R.A.M., No. 21, Monticello Council, No. 70, R and S.M., Delphi Commandery, K.T., No. 40, Delphi Lodge, K of P., No. 86, Delphi Company URK of P., No. 86 and Tippecanoe Tribe, I.O.R.M. No 505. In politics he is a democrat. His obituary from the Delphi Journal, dated February 22, 1951 states: "Ashes of Former Judge Brought Here/ Ashes of Judge James P. Wason were brought to Delphi Wednesday for burial in the Masonic Cemetery. Mr. Wason, Judge of the Carroll-White circuit court for 12 years, passed away at his

home in Indianapolis on October twenty-fifth, 1950, and the ashes were held at Indianapolis until his son, John could come home from Europe for a memorial service here. His widow, Susan Edson Wason, and members of the family met friends at the Delphi library at 2 o'clock Wednesday afternoon, after which the ashes were taken to the cemetery where graveside rites were conducted by Rev. Reese B. Thornton, pastor of St. John's Episcopal church in Lafayette." Another one of the family to make his home on Front Street was William B. Wason, whose wife was Clelia Newcomer of Tipton. His passing took place in June of 1951 at the Arzula Flora nursing home at Flora, Indiana at 2. a.m. Saturday. His son George was a citizen of Flora, Indiana. His birth occurred at Toledo, Ohio April twelfth, 1863. He was a member of

the Oracle Club. He was also a son of Robert A. and Gertrude Freleigh Paddock Wason. He assisted his father in the store. His offspring included two sons and a daughter; Robert N. Wason, Indianapolis; George M. Wason, Flora, and Mrs. Charles Bowen, Champaign, Illinois. His brother was Robert A. Wason, and his sister-in-law was Mrs. James Paddock Wason. He also left six grandchildren. The Wason family was known for owning a piece of prosperous real estate on the northwest quadrant of the square which had originally been owned by Attorney M.A. Ryan, but which was sold to W.B. Wason for the grand sum of \$18,500. Another more famous Wason sibling was Robert Alexander, who wrote novels with western themes such as Happy Hawkins, Friar Tuck, and a book about the contemporary

robber barons, The Knight Errant. Robert Alexander was an anomaly of sorts in the Wason family in that he adopted socialist tendencies in spite of his service in the military. The names of Wason and Bolles were closely allied to the Canal Era. According to a front page article in the Delphi Journal dated February twenty-fifth, 1937—"W.B. Wason Store Established ion 1836 Going Out of Business.---After 40 years of successful merchandising, W. B. Wason and Co have decided to close out their stock and discontinue business. Mr. Wason when interviewed as to his reason for retiring stated 'Since I was 12 years old I have been working at one job or another and have been here 40 years. After 62 years on the job I really believe one is entitled to a rest. That is the reason we are going to

close out. We have a stock of \$10,000 or more and have not bought any tras for our sale. All our merchandise is close sale at prices far below what it would cost to replace it. We expect to close out the entire stock in a short time as possible and at great savings to our customers.' The store was established by William Bolles in 1836. Later Mr. Wason's father became a partner of Bolles. It has had the reputation since its establishment for its flexibility. The fixtures and shelving along with the entire stock of merchandise will be sold at this closing out sale. Read the Journal for ads concerning the sale which starts Saturday February twenty-seventh at 9 o'clock A.M. I find it very fascinating that the afterglow of the Wabash and Erie Canal was evident nearly a century after its appearance on the Delphi scene.