



# LA PORTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

555 Michigan Avenue, Suite 202  
La Porte, IN 46350-3400  
(219) 326-6808 ext. 2229

**Connie Gramarossa**  
President

**Richard Mrozinski**  
Vice President

**Joseph Haney**  
Member

## **La Porte County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes** **Wednesday, March 6, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. County Complex Room 3 & via Zoom**

President **Connie Gramarossa** called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Clay Turner.

Deputy Auditor **Rhonda Graves** called the roll: **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski - Present via Zoom; Commissioner Connie Gramarossa - Present; and Commissioner Joe Haney - Present. Quorum present therefore meeting commenced.**

Considered the agenda. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve the agenda. Commissioner Haney seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Haney - Aye; Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye and Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered approval of the February 21, 2024 minutes. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye; Commissioner Haney - Aye and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

Deputy Auditor **Rhonda Graves** read the Claims with Payroll ending 2/23/2024 - \$1,510,317.24. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve payroll. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Haney - Aye; Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

Deputy Auditor **Rhonda Graves** read the Operating Expense Claims - \$3,934,225.29. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve the claims. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye; Commissioner Haney - Aye and Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

### **Public Comment**

**Steve Holifield**, 6782 E. 100 S., Mill Creek, asked about a missing generator, heard it was not hooked up to anything. Announced that next Wednesday, March 13, 2024, at the Fish Lake/Lincoln Township Community Building, 6:00 p.m., the group of people against the Solar Panels will be meeting. This is a public meeting, Commissioners are invited.

**Mike Ekovich, Jr.**, 2828 N. 500 E., Rolling Prairie, Solar Ordinance comments. He has looked at similar ordinances and would like to see ours amended, could there be a possible moratorium on solar until the ordinance is reviewed?

**Don Hufgard**, 10078 N. Halstead, La Porte, returned for information on the 'No Parking' signs that were posted in subdivisions a few weeks ago. **President Gramarossa**, Highway Superintendent will speak on that matter here in a bit.

**Pat Meaney**, 4078 W. Schultz Road, La Porte, Plan Commission voted to send a proposed subdivision to the Commissioners with 'no recommendation.' He asked the Commissioners to think why a man was offered mediation through the County and the lawsuit but refused it. Suggested sending it back to the Plan Commission with recommendations of resolving the issue, put restrictions on the subdivision plat and this should be done during the first hearing, not wait until the second hearing. The developer should be held to the restrictions. Nine years now and it has been a one-way street.

**Connie Lile**, thanked Bruce Johnson, the Bride Naming Committee, and the Commissioners for naming one of the bridges after her family's name.

**Tommy Kulavik**, 1316 Ohio Street, Michigan City, via Zoom, Public Service Announcement for youths 16 years of age and older, Michigan City is hiring lifeguards at Washington Park with starting pay at \$27.09 an hour. Congratulated Michigan City Marquette Girls' Basketball Team for being state runners-up in 1-A and the Marquette Boys' Basketball Team who won sectionals on Saturday, moving on to regionals. Recognized two big events the next two Saturdays as Michigan City High School hosts the IHSA Boys' Basketball Regional and Semi-State conferences. Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors save lives.

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### Department Reports/Comments

**Monique Thomas**, Human Resources Director, welcomed new staff member Pam Monaghan to her office, she is from Kansas City, Missouri and looks forward to having the assistance in her office.

**Eric Fenstermaker**, EMS Administrator and **Brian Beach**, Assistant Administrator, announced Jennifer Sabie as the new Captain after being promoted from Lieutenant.

**Charity Glaser**, Highway Superintendent, addressed the No Parking signs that were installed in subdivisions a few weeks ago. The County has had an ordinance since 1997 that prohibits parking on any county roads, including subdivisions because they are maintained by the County. To enforce the rule, the signs needed to be posted to avoid permanent parking on the roads. If any paving, maintenance, or snow removal needs to be done, the vehicles cannot be in the way. The posted signs give the authority to have the vehicles removed, not just for County Highway but for emergency vehicles, school buses, etc. Not telling the residents that they cannot have gatherings just no permanent parking is allowed. One incident during paving last year, a non-working vehicle had to be dragged off the road and put in the resident's driveway so paving could be completed. Only a few calls have come in to her office about the signs being posted but after explaining the reason for it, the callers understood.

**Rob Sabie**, EMA, Severe Weather Preparedness is scheduled next week in Indiana, on Tuesday, March 12<sup>th</sup> at 9:15 a.m., a statewide alert test will take place. If bad weather is happening on the 12<sup>th</sup>, then the 13<sup>th</sup> will be the alternate date.

**Jeremy Sobecki**, Parks Dept, a recent newsletter from his department went out with all upcoming events and activities. A new website as well, laportecountyparks.org, information on the upcoming eclipse in April. We are not going to be at 100% for the eclipse, possibly 96%, working with the library on events leading up to the eclipse. On the day of, at both Creek Ridge and Luhr Parks, people can use viewing glasses to see the eclipse. Staff will have information on how the eclipse happens. Lots of good events and activities are taking place and everyone is welcome.

### Requests

Considered 20 (twenty) sick days pay for Danial Turner who is retiring. **Charity Glaser**, Highway Superintendent. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Roll call: **Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye; Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Haney - Aye. Motion carries 3-0.**

### Old Business

None

### New Business

Considered bids for paving, bituminous material, signs and pavement markers, **Charity Glaser**. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Mrozinski** seconded. Roll call: **Commissioner Haney - Aye; Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye. Motion carried 3-0. \*\*\*Bids attached to minutes**

Considered Solid Waste Tire Amnesty Days, **Clay Turner**, Solid Waste Director. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Roll call: **Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye; Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Haney - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered 6 (six) nominations from Bridge Naming Committee, **Bruce Johnson**, Bridge Naming Committee. Roman Gruse, Lile Family, Daniel Low, Peter White, Michael Brennan and Henly Clyburn are the newest names to the bridges in our County. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Roll call: **Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye; Commissioner Haney - Aye and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye. Motion carried 3-0. \*\*\*Nominations attached to minutes**

Considered Quotes for Sewer Line Replacement Project, **Sean Fitzpatrick**, Director of Facilities. **Attorney Scott Pejic** opened and read the bids. D.A. Dodd, email bid of \$108,700. La Porte County Project Management, hand-delivered bid, \$81,880. **President Gramarossa**, are the bids for one project or two separate projects? The sewer line and the pit are two different projects. **Attorney Pejic**, D.A. Dodd bid does not include the pit work. LPCO Project Management does include the work on the pit. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to accept the quotes, give to Director of Facilities for review, and return with recommendation. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Roll call: **Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye; Commissioner Haney - Aye and Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye. Motion carried 3-0. President Gramarossa**, no occupancy in the Complex until the sewer pipe is repaired.

**Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to adjourn at 10:43 a.m. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

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## LAPORTE COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

1805 W 5<sup>th</sup> Street

LaPorte, IN 46350

Telephone: (219) 362-2051 Fax : (219) 362-4221

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March 11, 2024

RE: LaPorte County Highway Material Bid Recommendations Class 6, 11, 12 & 13

### **Class 6 – Signs**

#### Two Bidders

Osburn Associates, Inc.

Michael Todd Industrial Supply

We will accept both bids. Prices vary from product to product so we will use whoever is cheaper on the products purchased.

### **Class 11 – Bituminous Materials**

#### Two Bidders (Material Only)

Bit-Mat Products of Indiana

Asphalt Materials

We will accept both bids. Asphalt Materials will be used as our primary bidder and Bit-Mat Products of Indiana will be used as our secondary bidder.

*Alternate Bid for Application of Bituminous Material:*

#### Three Bidders

Bit-Mat Products of Indiana (Chip Seal)

Central Paving (Chip Seal)

Pavement Solutions, Inc. (Chip Seal)

Chip Seal Application:

Central Paving will be used as our primary bidder and Bit-Mat Products will be used as our secondary bidder. We will not accept Pavement Solutions bid for application because price is high.

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**Class 12 – Hot Asphalt Concrete**

Two Bidders

Rieth-Riley Construction Co., Inc.  
Milestone Contractors North, Inc.

We will accept both bids. Rieth-Riley Construction Co. will be our primary bidder and Milestone Contractors North, Inc. will be our secondary bidder.

**Class 13 – Pavement Markings**

Two Bidders

Avalanche Snow Removal & Maintenance, Inc.  
The Airmarking Company, Inc.

We will accept both bids.

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## **Roman Gruse**

Submitted by Sue Webster

Roman Gruse was the 11<sup>th</sup> child of 12 children born to Gottlieb Gruse and Romanus Gruse in Pesen Germany in 1854. He came to the United States and settled in Michigan City in 1873. In the fall of 1873, he moved to Wanatah and lived the rest of his life there. In 1880 he married Josephine Price who passed away September 26, 1888. He then married Appolonia (Pauline), widow of Gottlieb Gross on February 2, 1894 until her death February 18, 1922. Mr. Gruse passed away July 6, 1925, survived by three daughters and two stepsons. Mr. Gruse had become one of the most prominent leaders in the development of Wanatah.

In the early 1860's, there were two hotels in Wanatah. The McCurdy House was built in 1865. In January 1875, the hotel burned and was immediately rebuilt and opened in July 1875 under the name of Wanatah House. In 1877, Roman Gruse bought the business, and it was known as Hotel Wanatah. Mr. Gruse turned the building halfway around and faced it east along the grade crossing street just south of the Pennsylvania railroad. The hotel was known as the high-class hostelry. Under the management of Roman Gruse, it became popular, returned good profits, and at the same time furnishing to the public comfort and accommodations. One of the standards by which a city is judged is that it makes guests want to return or move to Wanatah. He continued in business until 1918 when he sold the hotel. In 1926, the hotel burned, and this time was not rebuilt. Wanatah was fortunate to have such a landlord as Roman Gruse.

He was also active in the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Wanatah, and on Dedication Day in 1887 Mr. Gruse donated land for the church's use. Mr. Gruse passed away in 1925.

I would like to name the County Bridge # 136 located in Wanatah the Roman Gruse Memorial Bridge.

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# The Lile Family Farm

By Bruce Johnson

Warner Ellsworth and Margrette (Maggie) Fredrick Lile were married in Wyandot County, Ohio on December 29, 1881. They had 5 children in Ohio. Joseph Franklin was born in 1883 and was a farmer. He was married to Hattie Roberts in 1906. He died in 1934 and is buried in Hanna Cemetery. Nellie was born in 1885, married Henry Evans, and died in Hammond in 1924. Ethel Modena was born in 1887. She married Marion Switzer from Hanna in 1907 and died in 1915 at age 27. Lizzie was born in 1892 and married Christie Arndt in La Porte in 1906, and Darl was born in 1894.

Warner and Maggie Lile later moved their family to La Porte County, Indiana. On June 27, 1913, the Liles purchased 170 acres of land on sections 24 and 34 west of the Kankakee River in Hanna Township. There the Liles and their children made their home and did farming for many years. Darl Warner Lile, the youngest child in the family, was born in Forest, Ohio on August 19, 1894. He married Elinora Zelpha Fosdyke from Hartford City, Indiana on January 21, 1917 in Chicago. Elinora was born to Charles and Angeline Stubblefield Fosdyke on November 12, 1897. After their marriage, Darl & Elinora moved in with his parents on the family farm near Hanna. When Warner Lile passed away on April 25, 1928 at the age of 67, Darl inherited the land from his father, and he and Elinora took control of the Lile family farm.

Over the years, Darl & Elinora had 8 children who were all born in Hamlet and all attended Hanna High School.

Richard Earl Lile was born September 21, 1917, was married to Jessie Riley, and had nine children. During WWII, Dick served in the Eighth Air Force in England from Oct. 7 1941 to Sept. 13, 1945.

Edith Marie Lile was born October 26, (July 27 on birth certificate) 1919 and married Harold Cunningham in 1945. While Edith was working at the Kingsbury Ordnance Plant during World War II, Harold was being held captive as a Prisoner of War in France for more than a year. They had 2 boys. Tragically, one son accidentally drowned in the Kankakee River when he was only 3 years old. Edith Lile Cunningham died in 2007.

Martha May Lile was born July 7, 1922 and died November 2, 1993 and is buried in Hanna Cemetery. Martha also worked with her sister Edith at K.O.P. during WWII. She married Lester Wagoner and had three children.

James Edward Lile was born October 21, 1924. He enlisted in the Army May 20, 1943 and served in Sicily, Salerno, and southern France. In Germany, he singlehandedly killed a gunner and assistant. Jim was wounded 3 times and captured three Germans making it possible for his company to continue its attack with the least possible casualties. He received numerous ribbons and medals including the Purple Heart and the Silver Star award for gallantry in action. Jim was

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discharged Sept. 24, 1945 and received a hero's welcome. Jim Lile was married 4 times and had 3 children. He died Feb. 28, 1992 and is buried in Hanna Cemetery.

Virgina Darlene Lile was born July 1, 1927. On July 7, 1930, 6 days after her third birthday, little Virginia was running to greet her father when she was accidentally kicked in the chest by a mule. Unfortunately, she died from internal injuries and is buried in Hanna Cemetery.

Leigh Francis Lile was born May 1, 1930 and served in Korea until 1954. Leigh was tragically killed by a train on September 2, 1992. He had a daughter, Kim, and was interred in Hanna Cemetery.

Virginia Norlene Lile was born August 17, 1933 and married Byron Bates in November 7, 1954. While her sisters, Edith and Martha, worked at K.O. P. during WWII, Virginia was babysitter for their children. She had eight children including her daughter, Connie Jean Lile who has a son, Steven Lile.

William Wallace Lile was born Mar 31, 1937, Bill served in the Marines during Peace Time. His first marriage was to Joyce Freeze in February 23, 1963, and his second was to Diana Jean Johnson in 1999. He has 4 children.

Grandfather Darl Warner Lile passed away at age 65 from lung cancer on November 1, 1958 and was buried in Hanna Cemetery. The farm property then was passed to his wife, Elinora. She was a practical nurse and faithful member of the neighborhoods Davis Wesleyan Church. Grandma Lile was always known by her neighbors as the "Lady in the Woods" and lived on the Lile farm for another 25 years. When Elinora Lile died at age 86 on Dec. 19, 1983, she left behind 4 sons, 3 daughters, 29 grandchildren, 25 great-grandchildren, and 3 great-great grandchildren.

Steven Lile is the son of Connie Lile, Great-Grandson of Elinora, and Grandson of Virginia Lile Bates who died in 2022. Steve attended South Central School and graduated from La Porte High School in 1987. He served 7 years in the U.S. Army Reserves and served in Desert Storm in 1991. After his service in Desert Storm, Steven Lile purchased the land from the Lile Estate in 1995. He is the 5<sup>th</sup> Generation of the family to reside in the Lile family house and own the Lile farm property near the Kankakee River in Hanna Township.

It is the request of the living members of the Lile family and the La Porte County Bridge Committee to name Bridge # 162 on 1500 S. that crosses the Kankakee River, the Lile Family Memorial Bridge.

Uncle Bill Lile is ill with cancer.

Bob Young, former Bridge Committee member, is a son-in-law.

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## **Daniel Low**

Submitted by Sue Webster

Daniel Low was born in Boxford Essex County Massachusetts in 1806. The son of Joseph and Sally Low and until he was 17 years old, he lived and worked on his father's farm. He received a common school education but after suffering sunstroke at the age of 14 he did not return to school. He learned the tanners and curriers trade and stayed in this field for 7 or 8 years. In May of 1835 he headed west and ended up in Michigan City bringing with him his wife Mary, a stock of dry goods, groceries, boots, shoes, and other similar items and he started a mercantile business. In 1842 he rented 160 acres of land in Section 13 in Coolspring Township and Section 18 in Center Township for five years with an option to purchase. There were no improvements on the land except for an enclosure of 15-20 acres. He bought the land, made it his own and made all the improvements including a large two-story brick residence which was built in 1858. Low also donated a large portion of his land as a public burial ground which is now known as Low Cemetery.

He dealt in the land business. Buying and selling probably more than 10,000 acres. He was one of the first elected Coolspring Township Trustees and served a total of 26 years in that office. Daniel passed away in 1882 and his wife Mary died in June 1890. They had three children, and all the family are buried in Low Cemetery. Their son Charles was a veteran of the Civil War.

The Low Home, which was located east of the cemetery was a station on the Underground Railroad. It was the last land station from which slaves were placed on grain boats at Michigan City for their escape to Windsor Canada by boats or by trains bound for Detroit, then to Windsor. If Michigan City was being watched the slaves would be taken to New Buffalo from Low's where they met boats for their escape. Candles were placed on widows walks as a signal that it was safe to move the slaves. Sometimes they worked in Low's fields while waiting for passage. It is believed that at least 150 s. slaves were transported from Low's Station. Two slaves became ill on their journey from the south and are buried in unmarked graves in the cemetery.

The Bridge Naming Committee would like to name LaPorte County Bridge Number 46-00014B on 400 North, east of Johnson Road, to be named the Daniel Low Memorial Bridge.

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## **Peter White by Bruce R. Johnson**

Peter White was born Pierre Le Blanc near Montreal, Canada on August 13, 1786. His father, Jean Le Blanc, had emigrated from France to Acadia in Nova Scotia. During the French and Indian War, the British banished the French from Acadia. This story became well-known in the very famous poem, "Evangeline" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. In 1802, Pierre Le Blanc went to Upper Canada for 3 years and to Niagara for 4 years before fighting with the British against the United States in the War of 1812. Following the war, in 1815, he decided to Anglicize his name to Peter White and began a new life in the U.S. After marrying Margaret Clement from New York, they migrated to Dearborn County, Indiana. In 1832, Peter White bought Michigan Road lands and settled his family on Section 21 in Scipio Township in La Porte County, Indiana. Their first shelter consisted of two trees that had fallen parallel to each other, and the space between them was roofed over with bark. When Captain A. P. Andrew, one of the founders of La Porte, wanted to build the first saw mill in La Porte County, Peter White and his sons did a great service by going all the way to Lafayette and transported the steam engine and mill to La Porte.

Soon after the White family was settled on Door Prairie, Chief Blackhawk and his tribesmen had crossed the Mississippi into Northern Illinois and began attacking settlers and their homes. John Coleman, who was from La Porte County, happened to be at Fort Dearborn when word was received about the Indian attacks. There was fear that Blackhawk would start heading east on the Sauk Trail through northern Indiana and La Porte County. Coleman left at 3:00 that afternoon on his Indian pony, Musquog, and arrived at Door Prairie 6 hours later, at 9:00 that night, in order to warn the settlers in the area. By the next morning on May 18, 1832, half the families had already packed their belongings and started heading south toward Cincinnati. The rest of the settlers decided to stay and defend their properties. Peter White, who had fought in the War of 1812, had experience in building fortifications. Lewis Shirley offered part of his land, and 42 men and boys helped build a stockade fort under the directions of Peter White. The structure was 125 feet square and built with a double wall of 12-foot logs, 12 inches in diameter, and sharpened to points at the top. There was a ditch around the outside, a firing step on the inside walls, and 2 blockhouse towers at opposite corners to command the sides. The project was completed in 3 days, and families went inside along with their oxen for protection at night. After a week, General Orr sent military troops to take control of the fort. However, it was learned that Blackhawk and his warriors had moved further north into Wisconsin instead of heading east and were captured in August by the Illinois militia.

In November 1832, the first La Porte County Circuit Court was assembled to solve several legal issues including a criminal case, a divorce case, and a naturalization. After several persons spoke highly of his qualifications, Peter White signed an oath with a mark and became the first naturalized citizen in La Porte County. He and Margaret had 8 children: John, Mary, Lovina, Robert, Joseph, Susanna, Paul, and Simon, and all lived to adulthood, married, and had children. Peter White spent his last years as a prominent and influential farmer in his community. He passed away on February 6, 1876 at age 81 and is buried near his family in Door Village Cemetery.

In 1910, the La Porte County Historical Society erected a large stone monument near the site of the original Door Village Fort in honor of Peter White and the 42 men and boys who built it to protect the settlers on Door Prairie and La Porte County in 1832. The Bridge Committee recommends **Bridge #36 in Scipio Township in memory of Peter White.**

## **Michael Brennan**

Submitted by Sue Webster

Michael Brennan was born in April 1941 and grew up along the shores of Lake Michigan in southwest Michigan. In 1965, in Michigan City, he married Kathleen Kenefick. They had two children and many grandchildren. He lived a distinguished life and improved the lives of thousands of residents of LaPorte County.

Mike received his bachelor's degree from Western Michigan University and his JD from John Marshall Law School in Chicago. From 1968 to 1980, he practiced law. He also served as chief deputy prosecutor of La Porte County.

He left private practice in 1980 to become chairman and CEO of Tyler Refrigeration Corp. in Niles, Michigan. He then served as president and CEO of RSB Corporation/Lighthouse Partners, the partnership responsible for developing Lighthouse Place Outlet Center in Michigan City. Later Mike became co-owner of and successfully repurposed the abandoned Joy Manufacturing Company property in Michigan City,

A community leader, Mike was a past board member of the Michigan City Area Chamber of Commerce, St. Anthony's Hospital, Planned Parenthood and the La Porte County Revolving Loan Fund. He was a co-founder and president of the La Porte County Bar Association.

He also served as a Junior Achievement Applied Economics Consultant, co-chairman of the Industrial Division for the United Way campaign, and authored the initial Michigan City Human Rights Ordinance.

Mike was a founding trustee and co-chairman of the Unity Foundation of La Porte County. He served for more than 30 years in a leadership role. Since its inception, the Unity Foundation has grown from zero to more than \$40 million in current assets, and made more than \$22 million in grants and scholarships to benefit La Porte County. At an anniversary event on October 1, 2022, he retired after 30 years of leadership involvement with the Unity Foundation. On that day County Commissioner Shiela Matias, Michigan City Mayor Duane Parry and LaPorte Mayor Tom Dermody declared the day "Mike Brennan Day" in LaPorte County.

Michael Brennan passed away in February 2023 in Michigan City.

The Bridge Naming Committee would like to name the Bridge on 1000 North crossing over I-94 in Memory of Michael Brennan.

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## **Henley Clyburn & Miriam Benedict: The First White Settlers in La Porte County**

**By Bruce R. Johnson**

Henley Clyburn was born the son of Jonas and Elizabeth McKenzie Clyburn on August 5, 1805 in Pearisburg, Giles County, Virginia. His father, Jonas Clyburn, served in the Virginia Regiment of the Virginia Militia in 1815. His mother, Elizabeth, was born in Virginia in 1770 to Murdock and Jemima Chapman McKenzie. One day in May 1788, Elizabeth's father and brother had gone into the woods to round up horses. While they were gone, their cabin was attacked by Shawnee Indians. Her mother, Jemima; brother, Henley; and sisters, Sallie and Mary Anne McKenzie were all killed. Elizabeth and her sister, Margaret, were kidnapped by the Shawnee and held captive in the Great Lakes area for many years. Finally, in 1795, the Treaty of Greenville was signed which called for the termination of hostilities and exchange of prisoners. After 18 years, Elizabeth and her sister were released from captivity. They were reunited with their father and returned to Virginia. There, Elizabeth McKenzie married Jonas Clyburn on November 18, 1801 and had two sons, Archibald and Henley Clyburn. When Archibald turned 20, his father gave him a horse and \$100. In May 1823, Archibald left Virginia, headed west crossing northern Indiana, and arrived at Fort Dearborn near what would become Chicago. Later, he returned to Virginia to bring his parents and his brother, Henley, to Illinois on August 23, 1824. In 1827, Archibald built the first slaughterhouse in Chicago. His parents and brother, Henley, became partners in a government contract to sell beef, pork, mutton, deer, bear, and other game animals for slaughter to Fort Dearborn and other midwestern forts.

Meanwhile, Stephen and Miriam Benedict and their family were planning a move to Illinois where Stephen purchased a soldier's claim on land. Stephen Benedict was born December 18, 1781 in Green County, New York and Miriam was born to the Waldron family on July 3, 1787 in Durham, Green County, New York. They had four sons, Joseph, Levi, James, and John, and two daughters, Sarah and Alpha Maria. In 1827, the Benedicts traveled on the Erie Canal to Buffalo, New York, and sailed on the Great Lakes to Chicago. Then, Stephen left his family at Fort Dearborn and went on horseback to find his land on Spoon River. After finding it in a remote area fifty miles from the nearest neighbor, he returned for his family and instead bought a claim in Ottawa, Illinois near eight other families. There, Henley Clyburn met and married Sarah Benedict on May 4, 1828. Unfortunately, Stephen Benedict died that year on December 24<sup>th</sup>. Apparently, Illinois had a law stating that the children of a pioneer widow would be sent to live with foster families. To avoid that happening, Henley Clyburn, her new son-in-law, recommended that Miriam Benedict and her family move east to Indiana. Previously, on

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their move to Illinois, Henley and his Clyburn family had passed through a natural opening through the forest with a beautiful prairie and lovely lakes and thought it would be a wonderful place to live. Although it was winter, Henley and Sarah Clyburn lead Miriam Benedict and her children into Indiana hoping to get settled in time to plant crops in the spring. With teams of oxen in blinding snowstorms, they began a treacherous journey through 15 inches of snow to what is now La Porte County. On March 15, 1829, the Benedict and Clyburn families set up camp by the Sauk Trail near Door Prairie. Henley and the Benedict boys began to build a cabin, and the Benedicts and Clyburn families became the first white settlers in La Porte County. Miriam Benedict went to Logansport and purchased 160 acres of land on Section 21 northeast of what is now Westville. Regular government prices were \$5.00 an acre, but being a widow, she paid the reduced fee of \$1.25. Four months later, on July 16, 1829, Elizabeth Miriam Clyburn was born to Henley and Sarah Benedict Clyburn and became the first white child born in La Porte County. The Clyburns had five more children before Sarah died December 31, 1844 at age 31 and was buried at Union Chapel Cemetery on what is now Highway 6.

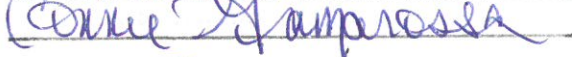
Henley Clyburn later married Mrs. Eliza Sherry and together had five more children. He prospered as a farmer and was held in the highest esteem in the county. Fellow citizens urged him to become a public official, and he served several terms as county commissioner. He died December 9, 1867 and is buried next to his second wife in Westville Cemetery. He is best remembered for being "a good friend to the poor and needy and the first white settler to cultivate the wild lands and begin building the first community in La Porte County".

When La Porte became an official county in 1832, the first County Commissioners gave permission for Miriam Benedict to name the new township in which she had settled. She chose "New Durham" in remembrance of Durham, New York where she was born. Miriam Benedict died February 20, 1854 at age 66. She was buried at Union Chapel Cemetery near her daughter, Sarah. In 1971, Union Chapel Cemetery was renamed Miriam Benedict Cemetery in honor of this strong, courageous, and brave woman and her family who started the first white settlement in La Porte County.

The La Porte County Bridge Committee recommends Bridge #258 in memory of Henley Clyburn.

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE  
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA

DATE 3-20-2024





ATTEST:  Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

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