

“Uncle Archy Fires His Pistol or Why Am I Here?”

A small stream barely 11 miles long, sometimes just a trickle, at other times a flood, Pogue's Run is a part of much of the history of the city as well as my own. As I looked at this history anew, I found a wonderful stew of life, as interesting as when I turned over a stone in the water, flushing out a crawdad as a child.

We Hoosiers are hurtling toward the celebration of the state's bicentennial celebration. Moving at the remarkable rate of 67,000 miles per hour, we will have traveled almost 1.1 billion miles on planet earth between now and Dec 11, 2016. We will add an additional 3 billion miles when we mark the same anniversary of moving the capital to Indianapolis, This realization compelled me to look at the history that informs my own personal being. As a lifelong resident of the state and city, I have fond memories of the Sesquicentennial celebrations during my formative years. I learned to understand that unusual word. The to-do during the two hundredth birthday of the nation just a few years later added to the fervor. So with those events marking my life and joining this august group, my pondering of place and fit thus began. When our esteemed member and past president David Best read his paper not so long ago I learned that we shared an alma mater as I too am a product of Indianapolis Public Schools. Not Shortridge High as so many illustrious individuals but IPS nonetheless.

And why not Shortridge? It certainly has its place in history. It started as the first public high school in Indianapolis (although at that time named not surprisingly - Indianapolis High School). Opened in 1853 It closed in 1858. The Indiana Supreme Court in “*City of Lafayette vs. Jenner's*” ruled local taxation to fund schools to be unconstitutional. The school was reopened in 1863 when funding was restored by Superintendent Abram C Shortridge. This is the same Shortridge whose name was added to the institution in 1897. Certainly a home to a fine education (the school was ranked among the 38 high schools of merit in the US by Time and Newsweek in 1957¹) and a lovely school. Add an amazing alumni group represented by such individuals as former Senator Richard Lugar, Kurt Vonnegut, Dan Wakefield and numerous members of this group as well as my own mother and many of my aunts and uncles, the school has had a

¹ (Bodenhamer David J & Barrows 1994) p1259
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record of successes. Because of geography based school districts, though, it is not where I received my education. The effect being the now revealed as a fortuitous happenstance.

I am a graduate of Arsenal Technical High School, the third high school created in the city (Manual High School being the second). The large campus on the near eastside of the city we now know as Tech opened in 1904 as the "Winona Agricultural and Technical Institute, a private school dedicated to education through the mechanical and manual arts".² Winona went insolvent in 1909. It was not until 1916 – the centennial year of the state of Indiana – that the doors opened as part of the Indianapolis Public School system. Located on rising ground outside the city at that time the former federal arsenal grounds had been used by the Union Army during the war between the states. The campus has over 75 acres and many buildings as well as lovely grounds with a creek running through it. One of the more interesting features of the campus is the embankment around the old arsenal facility where the gunpowder and ammunition were kept during the war.

The enrollment at Arsenal Tech reached 7,000 students in 1937 making it one of the largest high schools in the country. The first principal, Milo Stuart was author of *The Organization of a Comprehensive High School* (1926) which extolled the virtues of the "exemplary modern high school that would be both academic and practical".³ Today his name graces one of those buildings on the campus.

At Tech classes were (and still are) offered in college preparatory as well as vocational interests. During my tenure a walk across campus could take you past a wide range of type of classes such as construction, aircraft and auto repair as well as the standard academic fair. I dare say I did not benefit as much as David but I feel the exposure to such a wide range of interests as well as a diverse student population had an immeasurable effect on my character.

I reflect today on what Kurt Vonnegut observes; that "when you get to our age you suddenly realize that you are being ruled by the people you went to high school with".⁴ For me it is not so much those I went to school

² (Bodenhamer David J & Barrows 1994) p265

³ (Bodenhamer David J & Barrows 1994) p 265

⁴ (Vonnegut 1976) p 123

with but those who preceded me. Tech graduates have served the city well as architects, lawyers and politicians and almost every other manner of occupation.

In visiting the campus today you will find buildings ranging from the Commander's Quarters and the Arsenal dating to the Civil War, Treadwell Hall which was a state of the art education building in 1922 and many buildings named for individuals associated with education at the institution. In addition you will come across the Legacy Center which was built as part of the 2012 Super Bowl activities. The center is open to the public and boasts one of the most modern buildings with excellent facilities serving the community

Running through the north part of the campus near the Legacy Center is a slow flow of water that carries the moniker "Pogue's Run". The name comes from an early settler, George Pogue. Pogue lived in a cabin along its banks. He and his family were said to be among the first permanent settlers in the area. For many years the Pogues were identified as *the* first settlers but historian Jacob Dunn argued in his book *Greater Indianapolis* (1910) that Pogue actually arrived March 2, 1820, one year later than family recollections indicated".⁵ Pogue took up residence in a cabin abandoned by an earlier settler. Soon after settling into the cabin Pogue lost some horses. Accusing the local Indian population, Pogue set out to find his livestock. Pogue was never seen again and the legend gives the small stream next to his cabin his name⁶. We now stand on the banks of Pogue's Run.

The Pogue interrupted the grid of the city as laid out by Alexander Ralston. However the stream was slow moving and the land around it swampy and mosquito infested in the warm months. It was such a source of pestilence that the state legislature appropriated \$50 to clean it out prior to their first meeting in Indianapolis in 1821.⁷

In addition to being a source of pestilence the Pogue is associated with another sort of ignominy. During the 1863 Democratic state convention, held shortly after the Emancipation Proclamation had been issued, some 10,000 Democrats assembled near the state house. Included in the group

⁵ (Bodenhamer David J & Barrows 1994) p 1121

⁶ (Bodenhamer David J & Barrows 1994) p 1121

⁷ (Bodenhamer David J & Barrows 1994) p 1121

were armed protesters who were very loud and unruly. As they rode out of the city their train was stopped Union soldiers. As the soldiers boarded the train the protesters discarded guns and knives, throwing them into the waters of the small stream next to the tracks. Some 500 to 2000 arms were collected from the waters of the Pogue. This event which took place on May 20, 1863 became known derisively as the Battle of Pogue's Run.⁸ Not a true battle of the Civil War in Indiana. (Every school boy knows of Morgan's Raiders and the only real civil war battle in the state.)

The Pogue as I have said is not a big body of water. It has a length that is some 3,734 miles shorter than the Missouri River. Beginning its flow just beyond the area known as Brightwood the little creek cuts through the northeast part of the city. Early settler and diarist Calvin Fletcher owned and farmed property along the banks. A great deal of the entries in his early volumes involve the clearing, draining and cultivation of those lands.

Today many of you have probably seen the "ghost boat" floating in the air at high tide along the side of I-70 near the Emerson exit. The body of water below it is the Pogue. What you are seeing is a retention pond created to prevent flooding in the downtown area. During the flood of 1913 the Pogue spilled over its banks and throughout most of downtown. That flood would have a significant impact on the downtown landscape. More about this later.

The boat is part of the art and sculpture park developed by the city in 2007. It consists of a 43 acre park that is a natural resource area following the waterway and has 2.3 miles of trails. Known to be a good bird watching area you may see Sparrows, Hawks, Falcons, Ducks, Geese, and Herons. During the breeding season you may add Red-tailed hawk, American Kestrel, Belted Kingfisher, Great Blue Heron, and Great Egret⁹.

When the city was planning Conseco Fieldhouse they discovered that the proposed lower levels would be flooded during that dreaded "100 year storm". The pond serves as a retention area. By holding rainfall in the basin and releasing it slowly at a rate that prevents flooding. This engineering feat (if it should work and it does rain like 1913 again someday) will prevent the Bankers Life Field House from having a flooded basement as well as keeping most of Downtown dry.

⁸ (Bodenhamer David J & Barrows 1994) p 1121

⁹ (anon 2015)

At the opening of the park a sculpture of George Pogue's horse was included in the art placed in the park. The sculpture was not capable of withstanding vandals who attacked it and has since been removed.

On the southeast edge of the basin near the Emerson exit bordering the Pogue is Public School #68. The Susan Roll Leach school is named for another early settler. A child of an early pioneer family Susan was born in 1830. She married and reared seven children and devoted her life to public education and civic causes. Mrs. Leach died in 1903 having been born, married and died on the same site. Her daughters donated the land to the school board on the condition that the school erected there should be named in her honor.¹⁰ This elementary school, on the banks of the Pogue is where I would receive my early education under long standing principals Miss Vera Craig and Miss Thelma Thompson. Both the very essence of "spinster" school teachers – enough said – I have since learned to fully appreciate what they sought to instill in me.

Follow the Pogue about 1 mile west and you will be standing near where I spent many a summer day tracking wildlife in mud, chasing crawdads, digging up industrial artifacts all in the water of that small creek. Our home was on a two block long street that dead ended owing to the lack of a bridge to cross the ravine. This wooded ramble was an ideal place to get lost in imaginary (and real) adventures. The Pogue was used as a dumping ground for manufacturing waste from several companies in the area that would eventually result in it being a superfund site. So, the Pogue a source of pestilence and mystery and hazardous waste.

So how was it that I came to live on the banks of the mighty Pogue? Surprisingly my bigamist grandfather had a strange sense of family and had done significant research in his family tree. Strange in that he would forget a wife but seek out his ancestors. His research was passed on to me by his daughter, my favorite aunt. Edwin Williams Lingenfelter – my grandfather - tracked the family line from my father – James Sr to the bigamist Edwin Williams to great grandfather Frank Copeland to William L to John (b1787 Fredericksburg MD, d 1840, Indianapolis). John being son of Michael (Fredericksburg MD) son of Johannes (of Germany more likely

¹⁰ (Gale 1965) npn
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the Pfalz, 1725 or 26).¹¹ Additional family records placed the family arriving in Indianapolis in 1826 from Kentucky via Rush County, IN.

In her book "*The Circle*" Ernestine Bradford Rose places my great great grandfather William as the owner a boarding house on the southeast quadrant of the Circle. This is the site where the Circle Tower building now stands. Records indicate that he bought the land in 1831 and owned it until 1873 It was then sold to make room for the Franklin Insurance Company – named for the town of Franklin first and probably for Ben second . The city directory continued to list William as living there until 1880. Records also show that they paid the state a total of \$100 for the land¹².

This land transaction has little to do with the Pogue. But as the city grew the Pogue began to have an impact on the growing business of the day. After the civil war the growth of the city followed the railroad and most everyone here knows the story of the Union Station. Freight moving by rail on the south edge of the city created an obstacle to commerce moving up Virginia Avenue. Add the messy swamp lands and the many railroad tracks made travel difficult between the emerging southside businesses and the growing hub of the capital city. Solutions were needed and a Civic Association became a guiding voice in seeking answers. Sometime after the turn of the century a young Purdue graduate engineer became part of a group that erected a viaduct for Virginia Avenue over the trains and swamp. That young engineer would be my great grandfather Frank C. Lingenfelter.¹³

This would not be the last time Frank C would touch the Pogue. Remember the flood of 1913 mentioned before? In all an estimated 650 people in the Midwest were killed by the flood caused by days of rain starting March 23 and continuing to March 26th. Damages in Indiana were estimated to be \$25 million in 1913 dollars¹⁴. In 1914 Frank C would be part of the team building the enclosed storm sewer that now carries the Pogue under the downtown area.

¹¹ (Lingenfelter 1987) npn

¹² . (Rose 1971) p 24

¹³ Family records

¹⁴ (Wikipedia 2015)

As a part of that engineering effort the railroad tracks serving Union Station were raised above the streets all along the southeast side of town. I can only imagine that this was not unlike building the interstates through downtown today.

Today an art project consisting of a thin blue line traces the original path of the Pogue showing where that meandering stream once flowed on the surface. With some diligence you can follow it from where the Pogue goes underground near New York Street on the near east side through downtown under both Bankers Life Fieldhouse and Lucas Oil Stadium, past Anthem headquarters, the Faris Building, old Manual High School and Young & Sons Automotive Rebuilders to its outlet south of McCarty into the White River.

Or you could do what fellow member Will Higgins did and mount your bicycle at the entry and with the aid of lamps ride your steed through the roughly 3 miles of tunnel. Either way it is an adventure that ties you back to George Pogue, that civil war "battle" and the other things mentioned.

I find that being able to walk out my front door traveling about 500 yards north and come across that blue line marking the Pogue gives me some comfort. And that serendipity plays in my head often when I cross that blue line. Making it more so is the fact that in 1996 I was named a "Sagamore of the Pogue". The award was in recognition of the work done by Indianapolis architects in assisting the Holy Cross Westminster Neighborhoods. This honor bestows upon me the right to dispose of one large appliance and up to three tires a week into the Pogue – a benefit I have yet to take advantage of.

So, in the time it has taken to present this paper we have traveled another 67,000 or so miles and yet I am still within sight of the Pogue. How has it informed me I dare not speculate much more. This tiny stream barely 11 miles long, source of pestilence and flood, spanning history and art, disrupting business and adding pleasure to the lives of citizens of the city.

On occasion I go to Crown Hill and stand in plot 2, the family plot. Many of the men mentioned tonight are there (along with a certain Lola Montez Lingenfelter – I want to know more about her) spending their eternity. I wonder about them because that pesky bigamist thing led to a disconnect with family and history. I did not know my great grandfather

until the last year of his life – he was 92 at the time. Yet our lives overlapped by almost 10. I only know the face that stares out at me from “Fellow Citizens of Indianapolis” published in 1926. This book lists him as a consulting engineer in practice in the Empire Life Building. Even at that time the book lists him as living in the house where I would know him for that one year almost 40 years later – 3025 North Park. Two doors away from him my grandmother (the forgotten one) still lived with her aging parents. My parents never spoke of this and I was too young to “get it”. Like the Pogue, family was never far away yet not quite there.

All of this then puts me in mind of the words that another German American eloquently created. In his novel “Cats Cradle” Kurt Vonnegut made up the following three words – Wampeters, Foma and Granfalloons. A Wampeter being “an object around which the lives of otherwise unrelated people revolve, e.g., the Holy Grail, Foma – Harmless, comforting untruths, e.g., “Prosperity is just around the corner” and Granfalloons – a proud and meaningless association of human beings, e.g. The Veterans of Future Wars - and wonder – are these the words (and conditions) that best describe my existence? In this context could the Pogue be my Wampeter, my Foma, my Granfalloon? I can only observe and speculate.

Now I cross the blue line on the ground marking the Pogue again and head uptown toward that boarding house on the circle, where the once and future legacy might have been and I reach the site of the old county courthouse. A grand edifice that was torn down in the early 1960's (about the time I was meeting my great grandfather) and come to Market Street along side the City Market. It is near here where my great grandfather Frank C's Uncle Archibald – Uncle Archy, rumored a civil war veteran would spend his time in good natured spirits. A story told of him concerned how little respect landlords of the taverns that stood for hotels in those days had for their customers. Uncle Archy would say that his landlady was a good provider. She always had “three types of meat, ram, sheep and mutton; three kinds of vegetables, boiled potatoes with skin on, boiled potatoes with skin off and mashed, two kinds of bread; corn bread baked in a skillet and corn bread baked on a griddle; two kinds of milk, buttermilk and sour but only one kind of fruit pie; pumpkin” this being duly noted in early tales of the city¹⁵. Another remembrance is after indulging too much he would issue out all manner of calls including his

¹⁵ (Nowland 1870, 186)
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assertion that he was commander in chief of the army.¹⁶ This would lead to him firing his pistol in public – sometimes to his arrest. He was also rumored to be James Whitcomb Riley's drinking buddy, too. These mentions seem to be the standard fare of notice of my family. In addition to being listed a few times in Calvin Fletcher Diaries as plasterers or listed as owning a boarding house in that small book my ancestors have stayed put for a long with little notice. Perhaps the quiet lives they led is why I go to the cemetery. Thoreau noted that "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them." Perhaps when at the cemetery I am listening for their song.

And just as we cannot take a break from the travels of the earth nor tire from traveling at 67,000 mph it seems I cannot escape the flow of this tiny body of water called the Pogue. It seems to be forever linked to and connected with my being.

I have promised my wife that someday we will set out to find the headwaters of the Pogue. Perhaps I will pack a rucksack to carry along. In it I shall place my copy of Fellow Citizens of Indianapolis with Frank C's picture, the newspaper clipping with a brief history of the creek and my Sagamore of the Pogue Certificate. And maybe just for good luck I will add a civil war pistol and a flask of spirits. Perhaps then my past present and future will be formed, shaped and revealed.

¹⁶ (Nowland 1870, 186)
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