

The City of Lafayette

A History 1825-2025

by
Angie Klink

The City of Lafayette began as a riverfront town laid out on May 25, 1825. Through the foresight of countless visionaries, it has grown into a stunning hub of cultural, educational, commercial, and industrial offerings. The people of Lafayette revel in shaping the community as a vibrant place to live, work, and play. We do so with respect to the original caretakers of the land—the Potawatomi, Kickapoo, Peoria, Kaskaskia, and Miami Nations, while looking steadfastly to the future. To the dreamers, entrepreneurs, and artists of tomorrow.

The Wabash River Beckoned Founder William Digby

Adventurers like William Digby took advantage of land sales from the federal government after the War of 1812. Digby was a rough-and-tumble gambler and a trader who explored the Wabash River with an eye to making economic gain. He purchased land along the river, thinking that it would one day be the head of steamboat navigation. Digby laid out his new town and named it after the Marquis de Lafayette, the popular French Revolutionary War hero who was touring the country at the time. **Digby founded the City of Lafayette on May 25, 1825.**

Early Years of a Rivertown

In January of 1826, Tippecanoe County was formed and Lafayette became the county seat, marking the beginning of a symbiotic relationship between city and county. The Wabash River launched Tippecanoe County's early economic strength. Grist mills along several creeks attracted business. Retailing, wholesaling, the milling of lumber, tanning of animal skins, meat packing, paper making, and the manufacture of soap and candles provided jobs and opportunities for industrialists.

Lafayette's first school began inside a log cabin in 1827 at the foot of Salem Street. Religious heritage is an integral part of Lafayette's underpinning. Various ethnic groups arrived, started congregations, and built houses of worship. Log cabins gave way to soaring brick buildings, peeling church bells, and picturesque spires that still adorn the skyline.

Two entities began in 1829, **Wells Yeager Best Drug Store** and the city's first newspaper, *Free Press and Commercial Advertiser*. Wells Yeager Best Drug Store, Indiana's oldest pharmacy, traced its origin to 1829 when John Farmer opened a pharmacy on the west side of the courthouse square. It was later led by Dr. Albert A. Wells, Emery Yeager, and Frank Best. The drug store sold in 2007, having been owned by the John J. Klink family and then Steven and Angela Lipp Klink.

The owner of the *Free Press* later founded the *Tippecanoe Journal* that merged with the *Free Press*. The *Weekly Courier* began in 1845 and the *Daily Courier* in 1849. The *Couriers* merged with the *Journal* in 1920 to form the *Journal & Courier*.

John Purdue Advances Lafayette

John Purdue arrived from Ohio and quickly became involved in the community. He served on the first board of directors for the Lafayette branch of the State Bank of Indiana and donated to many organizations.

In 1839 he and Moses Fowler started Purdue & Fowler general merchandise store, which by 1840 was at Third and Main streets. He established the "Purdue Block" that became known as the largest business district outside of Wall Street. Purdue and others formed a company to build a Wabash River toll bridge between the foot of Brown Street in Lafayette and the west bank.

Purdue contributed to railroads and Lafayette's public schools. In 1852 he was appointed as a trustee to Lafayette's first public school and helped select sites for three new schools. He owned Lafayette's newspaper the *Journal* and served as the first president of Lafayette Savings Bank. Despite massive land holdings, he lived simply in Lafayette's Lahr House. Purdue gave money and land to establish Purdue University in 1869.

Evolution of Transportation

As early as the 1830s, Lafayette became known throughout the Midwest as a shipping hub, earning it the nickname of “Star City.” Indiana’s **Wabash & Erie Canal** project reached Lafayette in 1841, providing connections to the Great Lakes, canals in upstate New York, and the St. Lawrence River in Canada, facilitating the movement of goods and people to and from the city. Southward, it connected Lafayette to the Ohio River near Evansville in 1853.

Between 1852 and 1861, **Five rail lines** began to operate out of Lafayette, serving Chicago, St. Louis, Louisville, Indianapolis, and Toledo. On August 17, 1859, John Wise, an aeronaut considered the father of ballooning, launched his famous balloon “Jupiter” from Lafayette to carry the country’s first airmail.

High-speed, electric inter-urban train service opened between Lafayette and Indianapolis in 1903. Transportation to Fort Wayne began four years later. As the popularity of automobiles and other vehicles swept the nation, the Indiana State Highway Commission announced plans to build nearly 1,000 miles of numbered hard-surfaced public roads. Road 52 linking Lafayette, Indianapolis, and Fowler opened in 1927.

In response to local pressure, the State Highway Department opened a bypass in 1938 that carried **Road 52** (U.S. 52/Sagamore Parkway) around the outskirts of Lafayette, pulling traffic out of the downtown. It became the spine for Lafayette’s industrial development with early plants like Warren Paper Products, Brown Rubber Company, Rostone Inc., National Homes Corp., and Egyptian Lacquer.

Interstate 65 reached Lafayette in the 1970s and gave travelers and businesses a fast, new option for crossing Indiana. In 2010 the names of county roads 350 South, 475 East, and 500 East were changed to Veterans Memorial Parkway. The three interconnected roads create an 8-mile loop around Lafayette’s east and south sides. New banners honored the five branches of the U.S. military.

Initial Influencers

- **Henry T. and Sarah Sumwalt Sample** arrived in Lafayette the same year the first steamboat appeared on the Wabash—1826. Sample opened a tannery and packing house and eventually purchased and managed a stock farm in Benton County. He was known as one of the founding fathers of Trinity Church.
- **Judge Cyrus Ball** moved here in 1827. He and his brother Seneca started a general store. In 1828 he was admitted to the Indiana bar and in 1831 elected justice of the piece. He married Cornelia Smith in 1832 and she died within the year. Ball and others organized St. John’s Episcopal Church. He married **Rebecca Gordon Ball**, a writer, in 1838. In 1840 he was a toll collector for the Wabash and Erie Canal and elected as one of three associate judges for his district. From 1841-1859 he was a cashier for the Lafayette Branch of the Bank of the State of Indiana located at the corner of Sixth and Main Streets. The Ball residence was attached to the bank. In 1865 he and Rebecca built the renowned Ball Mansion on what was “Prospect Hill,” now named South Ninth Street.
- **Moses Fowler** arrived in 1839 with John Purdue. The two men partnered in a mercantile business at Main and Second Streets. He made his fortune in grocery wholesaling, banking, railroading, and agriculture and was considered the wealthiest man in Indiana. Fowler married Eliza Hawkins Fowler in 1843. They built their Gothic Revival home in 1852 on a hill where the railroad Moses brought to town ran just outside his door. Eliza, a Quaker, outlived Moses and was more philanthropic than her husband. She donated land for Central Presbyterian Church to be built at Seventh and Columbia Streets. She was Purdue University’s first major woman benefactor, giving funds to build the university’s first assembly hall, Eliza Fowler Hall (razed in 1954).

- **Henry L. Ellsworth and Nancy Allen Goodrich Ellsworth** came to Lafayette in 1845. A Yale graduate, he was the first Commissioner of the U.S. Patent Office and founder of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He bought extensive tracts and became the largest landowner and farmer in the West. He and likeminded friends strove to sell land and turn a large profit, leading to resentment by citizens who referred to the group derogatorily as the “Yale Crowd.” Lafayette’s Ellsworth Historic District is named in his honor.
- **Adams Earl**, brother-in-law of Moses Fowler, was a businessman and cattle breeder who did much for the city. In 1865 he went into business with Robert Stockwell Hatcher and built the Earl and Hatcher Block at Third and South Streets. He and his wife Martha Hawkins Earl owned Earlhurst, an elegant estate on Union Street. Earl Avenue is named in his honor.
- **Abel Fields** (1850-1928) was an African American and former slave from Kentucky who by 1883 had purchased property at 915 Spencer Street in the north side of Lafayette where he operated a grocery and lived for nearly forty years. Fields was well-known as the official and faithful winder of the Tippecanoe County Courthouse clock for more than twenty-five years.
- **Alice Earl Stuart and her mother Martha Hawkins Earl**, whose father owned the famous Shadeland Farm, were part of the group of Lafayette women who founded the Community House Association (CHA) to assist other women. The YWCA, Girl Scouts of America, Civic Theater, and other civic groups met at the Community House, eventually at Sixth and Ferry Streets. In 1895 the CHA established the Lafayette Free Kindergarten and Industrial School Association, the first of its kind. Stuart helped establish Home Hospital, served on the board of First Merchants National Bank, became the owner of the Shadeland Farm, and is credited with naming Columbian Park.

- **Roger Douglas Branigin** joined the Stuart Law Firm (named Stuart & Branigin in 1982) as a partner in 1938. He served as a trustee of Purdue University, director of Lafayette Life Insurance Company, president of the Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, president of Harrison Trails Council of the Boy Scouts of America, and trustee of the Tippecanoe County Historical Association. He was instrumental in establishing National Homes, Inc. in Lafayette in 1940, acting as the company's general counsel. He served as governor of Indiana from 1964 to 1969. In 2001, the U.S. 231 bridge was named in his honor.

The Underground Railroad

Violating the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act could lead to charges of treason. However, Lafayette's Underground Railroad system was unique because it included powerful and prominent people of the city such as Judge Cyrus and Rebecca Gordon Ball, Dr. Elizur Deming, and Lewis Falley, the deputy sheriff. They defied the law along with the African American community and shuttled freedom seekers to safety.

In the 1850s the Beetle (Beedle) family were African American station masters in the Underground Railroad along the Wabash River near the Wabash Avenue neighborhood where freedom seekers were greeted with food and money as they traveled to Lafayette from nearby towns.

Early Artists, Writers, and Supporters of the Arts:

- **George Winter** arrived in Lafayette in 1850. Despite little formal training in art, Winter's drawings and watercolors of native Americans, a vanishing culture, made him one of Indiana's best-known artists. He painted portraits of Lafayette founder William Digby and John Purdue. Winter produced over 700 drawings and paintings, many of which are in the Tippecanoe County Historical Association George Winter Collection.

- **Rebecca Gordon Ball**, wife of Cyrus, wrote anti-slavery stories for newspapers and magazines and addressed political controversies through poetry printed in various publications in the 1850s.
- **Helen Mar Jackson Gougar** was the first female principal in Lafayette, a nationally recognized leader of the temperance and suffrage movements. She was a speaker and writer who edited her own temperance and suffrage newspaper *Our Herald* in Lafayette from 1881-1885. She and her husband John, an attorney, lived at Tenth and Columbia in their home they named “Castle Cottage” (today Fisher Funeral Chapel). Gougar became the first woman to argue before the Indiana Supreme Court—a test case on women’s suffrage.
- **Evaleen Stein** (1863-1923) was a nationally-known author, poet and artist. Lafayette school children continue to recited and sing her poetry set to music across the country. Her father was John Stein, a senator, Purdue trustee, and friend of John Purdue who influenced the location of Purdue University in Tippecanoe County. Her mother Virginia Stein was the long-time director of the Lafayette Library.
- **Edna Browning Ruby**, born in Lafayette in 1879, earned world fame as an artist. Her stained glass work is found in churches: Trinity United Methodist, Stidham United Methodist, and Elston Presbyterian, along with churches in Indianapolis. When she died in 1937, Ruby was believed to be the only woman in the U.S. who designed, built, and installed stained glass. In 1925 Ruby designed the commemorative plate for the Lafayette Centennial celebration.
- **Evelyn Osterman Ball** (1906-2005) preserved the historic Ball Mansion on South Ninth Street. In the 1960s, Ball famously rescued valuable George Winter manuscripts and paintings from being thrown in a dumpster from a building she and her husband Cable, an attorney, owned on South Sixth Street (across from today’s Long Center) as it was being

demolished. Winter was Cable's great grandfather. It was not known until that day that at one time Winter had a studio in the building. The Balls named their daughter Winter.

Many of the saved works are preserved at Tippecanoe County Historical Association.

Advent of Electricity Powers Economy

The arrival of the telephone in 1879 along with electric power and lighting in the 1880s, fostered the city's growth. At various times, industries in Lafayette made agriculture implements, railroad cars and wheel assemblies, telephones and switchboards, boots and shoes. There were 17 cigar-making establishments and two breweries produced nearly 500,000 gallons of beer.

Businesses of the 1800s

- **Eli Lilly** began a pharmacy apprenticeship in 1854 with Henry Lawrence at the Good Samaritan Drugstore, 312 Main Street. In 1876 he started what would become Eli Lilly and Company, a wholesale drug manufacturing business in Indianapolis. In 1953 the company launched Tippecanoe Laboratories in Lafayette. It was purchased by Evonik in 2010.
- **Thieme & Wagner Brewing Company** was founded in 1863 at Fourth and Union Streets by Frederick August Thieme and John Wagner. Their operations ceased due to Prohibition. About 100 years later in 2018, the company was reopened by Thieme's great, great, great grandson and brewmaster David Thieme and his father Brian at 652 Main Street.
- A group of Catholic Sisters from Germany brought **the ministries of St. Francis of Assisi of health and education** to the Midwest in 1875 and opened a hospital at 1005 Cincinnati Street. Founded by Mother Maria Theresia Bonzel, the congregation became known as the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration. That hospital is now Franciscan Health.

- In 1876 **Joseph Mulhaupt**, a new immigrant, founded **Mulhaupts**. It operated as a fix-it shop, locksmith, and small parts machinist through the 1950s. The Mulhaupt family is still involved in the business today providing commercial doors, overhead doors, electronic security, and more. It is perhaps Lafayette's oldest continuous business with the same name.
- Adams Earl and other citizens formed the **Belt Railway Land and Improvement Company** in 1889. The company laid railroad tracks around the eastern edges of the city and encouraged commercial enterprises to locate along this spur railroad where land was plentiful and transportation was in place. Houses were built and streets developed. It was announced in 1891 that **Heinz Co.** would be the first plant to build in the Belt Railway.
- **Monon Shops** relocated here from New Albany, Indiana, in 1892 to construct boxcars passenger cars, and cabooses. Adams Earl worked to bring the shops here. The first major industry to locate in Lafayette became the area's largest employer. During the shops' heyday, 1,000 workers were employed and their various ethnic cultures left an indelible stamp on the city. The YMCA was constructed at Monon Avenue and Nineteenth Street to serve as a temporary shelter for train crew members and a hub for social activity in the north end.

Lincoln School and Hanna Community Center

From 1889-1951, **Lincoln School** served as the first Black public school in Lafayette. In 1923 a new \$54,000 brick Lincoln School opened at Fourteenth and Salem Streets with classrooms, a gymnasium, and an assembly hall, also serving as a community center.

The **Lafayette Negro Center (LNC)** incorporated in 1940. Leaders sought to purchase land and erect a facility that would "... be used and set apart for educational, literary, scientific and charitable purposes, for the uplift and betterment of the Negro race."

In 1943 **Lincoln Community Center** organized at Lincoln School. Money garnered through fundraising made possible land purchased at the corner of 18th and Hanna Streets. In 1978 it moved into houses at 1801-1813 Hanna Street. To take advantage of community development funds, LNC merged with Northside Neighborhood Council, and the Hanna Center was born. Today the **Hanna Community Center**, 2000 Elmwood Avenue, provides services for all diverse populations of Greater Lafayette.

Museums and Elegant Venues

Columbian Park opened on land that was formerly Erasmus Weaver's cow pasture in 1893. The lagoon had been dug in the shape of a "G" in 1875 to honor then Mayor Elias Glick. Alice Earl Stuart, daughter of Adams Earl and Martha Hawkins Earl, named Columbian Park after the Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

In 1940 the Columbian Park Recreational Center was built with a donation from Bert and June Loeb in memory of Solomon Loeb. It was renamed Loeb Stadium in 1971. In April 2021 the newly renovated **Loeb Stadium** at Columbian Park debuted with a Lafayette Jefferson vs. Central Catholic dedication game. Loeb Stadium is home to both the Lafayette Jefferson High School Bronchos and the Lafayette Aviators, a collegiate summer baseball team in the Prospect League.

In 1904 attorney William Potter purchased the Connecticut Building at the St. Louis World's Fair and shipped it by rail to 920 State Street as a gift to his wife Fannie. In 1984 Bob and Ellie Haan purchased the mansion as a personal residence. In 2015 they created the nonprofit **Haan Museum of Indiana Art**, moved out, and donated the building and grounds to the museum, along with much of the artwork.

The Lafayette Art Association was founded in 1909 by Purdue Art Professor and acclaimed potter Laura Ann Fry, Judge Henry Vinton, and others. Its present home, the **Greater Lafayette Museum of Art** on South Ninth Street, was built in 1960.

In 1925 Tippecanoe County and Lafayette held a join centennial pageant and the public was invited to lend family relics and documents for display. The enthusiasm for this exhibit and

the celebration's programs was overwhelming and inspired community leaders to author a constitution and by-laws for a county historical society. The **Tippecanoe County Historical Association (TCHA)** was chartered. In December 1928 a governing board was established and nearly 300 people purchased memberships.

Thomas Duncan Hall opened as a venue for civic gatherings on April 6, 1931. Construction was made possible through a posthumous monetary gift by Thomas Duncan of Duncan Electrical Manufacturing Company who wanted Lafayette to have a large community meeting place. His widow Sarah Ely Duncan fostered his bequest to fruition. One of the venue's most famous visitors was Senator John F. Kennedy, who spoke at Purdue University on April 13, 1959, and afterward attended a political reception at the hall.

The Tippecanoe Arts Federation was founded in 1997 to support artists and act as the umbrella organization for more than 200 different member arts organizations and individuals. In 2022 it changed its name to **The Arts Federation**, reflecting its position as a Regional Arts Partner of the Indiana Arts Commission serving a 14-county area. It is housed in the Wells Cultural Center at 638 North Street, the former Albert A. Wells Memorial Library made possible in 1927 through a donation by Dr. Albert A. and Ellen Powell Wells. He was a partner in Wells Yeager Best Drugs.

Businesses of the Early 1900s

- Thomas Duncan, inventor, electric meter pioneer, and Scottish immigrant, founded **Duncan Electric Manufacturing Company** at South and Third Street in 1902. Duncan's hobby was photography. He took over 800 photographs on an African trip in 1922. His desire to show the photos in a venue large enough to hold numerous Lafayette citizens, led to his bequeathing money for the construction of Thomas Duncan Hall at 619 Ferry Street.
- Charles Shambaugh established Lafayette's first automobile repair and dealership, the **Auto Inn**, at 210-212 Columbia Street in 1903 or 1905. It moved to a former coliseum at

Sixth and Alabama and was renamed **Shambaugh Garage** in 1909. After his death in 1940, Shambaugh's wife Gertrude took over the administration of the **Shambaugh Garage**, becoming one of the first women in the US to run a car dealership. She was an active member of many local civic organizations and won the 1968 *Journal and Courier* George Award for her charitable contributions.

- In 1906 David E. Ross started **Ross Gear and Tooling Company**, making parts for the automobile. Ross was elected to the Lafayette City Council in 1914. He owned the David E. Ross Building built in 1918 at 308 Main Street. In 1919 he started **Fairfield Manufacturing (became Dana)** to produce steering gears. He founded **Rostone Incorporated** in 1927 which developed Rostone, a new artificial building stone made of common earthen materials, such as limestone and shale. Several homes in Lafayette have Rostone exteriors. A generous Purdue benefactor, Ross served on the university's board of trustees from 1921-1943. He received 88 patents.
- J. Kirby Risk and Otto Keiffer established **Keiffer-Risk Battery Company** in 1926 on North Second Street. In 1934 it became **Kirby Risk Electric Company** with wholesale distribution of electrical supplies and motors. In 1940 it moved to the former Lafayette Milling Company, Third and Ferry Streets. Kirby and his wife Caroline built the business and were faithful community benefactors. Today Kirby Risk Supply Company headquartered on Sagamore Parkway North has locations throughout the Midwest, and the Risk family is still active in its operations.
- **National Homes Corporation** was founded in Lafayette in 1940 by brothers Jim and George Price. It became the nation's largest manufacturer of prefabricated housing, mass-producing homes in room-sized panels that were shipped by truck to the building site and assembled there. In 1984, National Homes closed its Lafayette operation and moved to a plant in Effingham, Illinois.

- **Caterpillar Inc.** opened in November of 1982 and began pre-assembly work on parts for the Series 3500 high-powered diesel engine at their location on State Road 26, playing an essential role in the economic growth of Greater Lafayette.
- **Wabash National Corporation (“Wabash”)** was created in Lafayette in 1985 when Donald J. “Jerry” Ehrlich and a small group of innovators from Monon Trailer shook up the transportation industry by manufacturing better-performing, higher-value semi-trailers. In 2024 for the second year, Forbes named Wabash one of America’s Most Successful Small-Cap Companies.
- **Subaru Isuzu Automotive Inc.(SIA)** assembly plant was dedicated on the eastern outskirts of the city in 1989. The first transplant assembly operation in Indiana, SIA became Subaru of Indiana Automotive, Inc. in 2003 and is Lafayette’s largest employer.

Renowned Athletes

In 1900 Lafayette native and Purdue graduate **Raymond “Ray” Clarence Ewry** became the first Big Ten athlete in history to win an Olympic championship. Ewry's Olympic career began at the Paris Games where he won three of his 10 gold medals in the standing long jump, the triple jump, and the standing high jump. His other Olympic medals were earned in 1904, 1906, and 1908.

As a child Ewry contracted crippling polio. After most physicians had given up, one prescribed a regimen of strengthening exercises and, remarkably, Ewry recovered. His distance in the standing long jump remains a world record because the event was abandoned in 1938. In 2014, the section of U.S. 231 between Martin Jischke Drive and Lindberg Road was named Ray Ewry Memorial Highway.

From 1987-1991 **Allison Bock**, a freestyle specialist, swam for Lafayette Jefferson High School, winning 10 state championships. She set state records in the 50, 100, and 200-yard

freestyle events. In 1991 Bock won the bronze medal for 50- meter freestyle at the Pan American Games in Cuba.

Lafayette native **Dustin Keller** was a three-sport standout in football, basketball, and track at Jefferson High School, graduating in 2003. During his senior year was the state's leading wide receiver in football, second-team All-State as a small forward in basketball, and was high jump state champion. He played football for Purdue University, named Most Valuable Player in 2007. Keller was a tight end in the National Football League (NFL), selected by the New York Jets in the first round of the 2008 NFL draft, and beginning in 2013 played for the Miami Dolphins. In 2019, he was inducted into the Indiana Football Hall of Fame.

Government

The city government offices were first housed in the basement of the Tippecanoe County Courthouse. **Catherine Dorner** became the first female candidate for public office when she ran for city clerk in 1921. When **Mary C. Kennedy** was elected to the Lafayette City Council in 1929, she was the first woman in Indiana elected to serve on a city council.

From 1940 to 1959, the **city government offices** were housed in Lafayette High School built in 1890 at the southwest corner of Sixth and Columbia Streets. A newly built City Hall was dedication in May 1959 on Sixth Street across from the former offices in the high school. This building was renovated in 1995, and in 2025 it under went another renovation to house the administrative offices of the Lafayette Fire Department.

In May 2023, Lafayette's \$51 million **Public Safety Center** was dedicated with increased space, advanced technologies for the police department, and innovative public spaces like the elevated second floor public park. The historical neo classical façade from the razed Horner Building, formerly the showroom of the Horner Motor Company that opened in 1924, was preserved and incorporated into the Public Safety Center as a retail incubator space.

Railroad Relocation

The idea of eliminating railroad tracks from running through the city of Lafayette actually began as far back as 1926. However, it was not until 1963 and again in 1973 that a series of engineering studies were commissioned by city officials to look at the possibility.

The idea moved forward in 1974 and was announced on July 11, 1975. Lafayette gained national attention because the Railroad Relocation project involved consolidating three railroad companies into one line through the city. In October 1984 the first construction phase started when Congress appropriated \$7 million.

Numerous spectators turned out in September 1994 to watch the Big Four Depot move down Second Street from its original location at Second and South to its current location at Second and Main. Now it is the focal point of Riehle Plaza, named after long-time Lafayette Mayor James Riehle who led the relocation project through most of his tenure.

The former Main Street Bridge was transformed into a pedestrian walkway in 1996 and named after U.S. Representative John T. Myers who advanced Railroad Relocation. After 29 years, the relocation was completed in 2003 at a grand total of \$186 million. A celebration “Last Train” ran through the city carrying dignitaries with stops along the way to greet citizens amid confetti and cheering.

Neighborhoods, Urban Living, and Preservation

In 1993 the Historic District Ordinance established the **Lafayette Historic Preservation Commission**. The commission designates Local Historic Districts and cultivate economic growth of those districts and all other parts of Lafayette through the encouragement of tourism, business, residential and commercial investment. It also fosters civic pride in the city’s historic areas. Lafayette’s downtown and Historic Ninth Street Hill Neighborhood are examples of flourishing historic districts.

From 2005-2025 Lafayette’s downtown prospered with transformative new development—apartments, condominiums, retail shops, and restaurants with the construction of: John Purdue Block, Renaissance Place, Marq, Nova Tower, The Ellsworth, Luna Flats, Pullman Station, and Press Apartments.

Caring for the Wabash River

The **Wabash River Enhancement Corporation (WREC)** formed in 2004 to protect and enhance the future of the Wabash River corridor through sustainable opportunities to improve health, recreation, education, economic development, and environmental management. Its ten-member board includes representatives from Lafayette, West Lafayette, Tippecanoe County, and Purdue University.

Businesses in 2000s

- **Nanshan America**, a Chinese aluminum extrusion facility, opened in Lafayette at U.S. 52 and Veterans Memorial Parkway in 2012. It was the company's first investment outside of China.
- **MatchBOX Coworking Studio** opened in 2014 at 17 S. Alabama Street in the building constructed in 1936 by Walter Gray for his Dodge dealership. It sits next door to the 1928 Spanish Revival-style Standard Oil station, formerly "Jonesy's" and later a walk-by vintage car museum. Today, the former gas station houses a 24-hour automated book lending vending machine.
- Boston-based **GE** opened a Lafayette engine facility in 2015 on State Road 38 where employees perform final assembly for engines used to power the Boeing 737 Max and Airbus A320neo aircraft.

Protecting Citizens' Health during a Pandemic

In 2020 the COVID-19 Pandemic presented a public health crisis, and Lafayette Mayor Tony Roswarski, West Lafayette Mayor John Dennis, health officials, and other leaders guided the community as the entire nation was in lockdown, hospitals were overflowing with patients infected with the coronavirus, and citizens were dying. Over the next year with restrictions to

protect the health of citizens, businesses, schools, and more were slowly opened as vaccines became available and the number of people infected with COVID-19 decreased.

A Grand Bicentennial Celebration

The City of Lafayette kicked off a year-long celebration of events for its Bicentennial on Memorial Day Weekend 2025. City Founder's Day was celebrated at Columbian Park on May 25, 2025, with free rides, movie night, and the Lafayette Citizens Band Bicentennial Concert.

The city has prospered mightily since founder William Digby walked the dirt paths of what was a sleepy river town. The rough-and-tumble adventurer did well selecting the site for the city. The meandering Wabash River drew forethinking merchants and industrialist, artists and innovators, educators, healers, and preservationists, proving that, above all, Lafayette's history is its people. Lafayette's history and future is you.

Sources:

- *Greater Lafayette, A Pictorial History* by Fern Honeywell Martin and Paula Alexander Woods, 1989, G. Bradley Publishing, Inc.
- *The Heritage 75-76 Commemorative Book of Tippecanoe County 1826-1976*, Allen Hayman, Editor, Published by Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, 1976.
- newspapers.com
- Various websites, including Tippecanoe County Historical Association, <https://tippecanoehistory.org/about-us/organization-history/>
- *The Road to Freedom Through Tippecanoe County*, a documentary script written by Diana Vice, 2018.
- "The David Ross-Purdue Connection," https://www.rostone.com/david_ross.htm
- "Ross, David, 1871-1943," <https://archives.lib.purdue.edu/agents/people/88>
- <https://mulhaupts.com/integrated-solutions-provider/>
- <https://onewabash.com/about-us/our-story>
- <https://www.in.gov/governorhistory/mitchdaniels/files/Press/lillybio.pdf>
- <https://indianahistory.org/stories/you-are-there-eli-lilly-at-the-beginning/>
- <https://greaterlafayetteind.com/2023/02/23/evonik/#:~:text=History%20of%20innovation,our%20bedrock%2C%E2%80%9D%20Giltmier%20says.>
- <https://www.insideindianabusiness.com/articles/ge-making-7m-investment-in-lafayette-engine-plant>

Author: Angie Klink

March 2025

writer@angieklink.com

www.angieklink.com

765-426-1164

- Inventory to John Purdue Artifact Collection, Purdue University Archives and Special Collections
- <https://indcanal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Ball-Cyrus.pdf>
- <https://www.franciscanhealth.org/about/who-we-are/history>
- <https://archives.lib.purdue.edu/agents/people/675>
- <https://www.nga.org/governor/roger-douglas-branigin/>
- https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/67501978/alice_jane-stuart
- <https://www.rostone.com/ShortROSTONEHISTORY.HTM>
- <https://www.rostone.com/RostoneHouses%20of%20today.HTM>
- <https://www.newspapers.com/article/journal-and-courier-thomas-duncan-dunc/31744982/>
- <https://greaterlafayetteind.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/GLM-Summer2021.pdf>
- <https://tippecanoehistory.org/finding-aids/the-first-official-air-mail-flight/>
- <https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-weekly-journal-death-of-henry-t-sam/163355716/>
- <https://www.uspto.gov/about-us/henry-l-ellsworth>
- <https://indianahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/henry-l-ellsworth-circular-1837.pdf>
- <https://www.jconline.com/story/news/history/2016/08/05/shambaugh-loved-machines-automobiles/87936240/>