

# Why Called Whitestown And Worth Township?

by Ralph W. Stark

One always treads on dangerous ground when one gets involved in a community controversy, but in this case the writer feels justified in doing so in the interest of historical accuracy, viz., naming Boone County's Whitestown, for some 126 years the business center of Worth Township, with a plausible suggestion that is most likely a fact as to why the latter came to be so named.

In 1951, Whitestown celebrated its centennial of founding, and at the time there were some citizens who urged that the village got its name from Lemuel White, a farmer who owned and lived on a sizeable acreage located just northeast of the new townsite. Others claimed it was named in honor of the Hon. Albert S. White of Lafayette, a member of Congress at the time and the first president of the I.C. & L. railroad (later the Big Four,) completed through the new town in 1852.

This writer is of the firm belief that it was christened for the congressman and railroad president, as cited in the Kingman Brothers "Combination Atlas Map of Boone County, Indiana," published in 1878, which includes in a brief history of Worth Township, these statements: "Whitestown was laid out on Section 19, by Ambrose Nease, in 1851. The name originally conferred upon the village was New Germantown; but some difficulty was experienced in securing a post office under that name, and, after some discussion, it was changed to Whitestown, in honor of Hon. Albert S. White, the first president of the I.C. & L. R.R., and Member of Congress from this district."

The Kingman Brothers were most zealous in getting the facts regarding the history and statistics for the articles on villages, towns, and townships in their several published

atlases. This meticulous search for the truth was most certainly employed when they collected material for their Boone County book. Ambrose Nease, the founder of Whitestown, was still living in the village in good health in body and mind, and without a doubt the atlas representative interviewed Nease to get the factual story of the founding of the Worth Township metropolis.

Furthermore, in so far as is known, Lemuel White had nothing to do with the platting and founding of Whites-town and there would have been no justifiable reason for naming the place in his honor. In addition to Mr. Nease, there were other villagers who surely were aware of the truth in the matter of naming their town, which christening occurred a mere 27 years prior to the publication of the Kingman atlas. So this writer will hold steadfast in the belief that Whitestown was named after the Hon. Albert S. White.

Until now, there have been no data available as to for whom Worth Township was named, but some time ago, Mrs. O.D. (Jewell Hine) Funkhouser, a native of Whitestown, and an avid local history researcher, came upon two sheets of legal size paper on which was written in script, a brief biography of Alexander Worth of Mooresville. Mrs. Funkhouser gave a Xeroxed copy to Mrs. Janice West of Whites-town, the Worth Township historian, who in turn, gave a copy to this writer.

From the short biography, which may have been read at Alexander Worth's funeral, it is learned that he was the secretary of the I.C. & L. railroad for eighteen years, from 1851 until 1869. The biography unearthed by Mrs. Funkhouser, reads as follows:

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"Alexander Worth was a member of the House in the session of 1830-1, from Morgan, Hendricks, and all the country north of the last named county to the Wabash River."

"He was born in Hudson, Columbia County, New York, July 21, 1803, and removed to Cincinnati in 1817. There he was employed in the banking business with an uncle where he remained until he married.

"He then moved to Mooresville, Indiana, in 1826, and engaged in selling goods, which business he followed for about twenty-seven years. He was then employed as secretary of the I. C. & L. R. R., for eighteen years, during which service he resided twelve years in Indianapolis, and six in Cincinnati, Ohio.

"In April, 1869, he returned to his home in Mooresville where he again engaged in a bank and was cashier of the Farmer's Bank at Mooresville until his death which occurred February 10, 1875, in Mooresville, where he was buried.

"His widow resides (1886) in Mooresville, and a daughter, Mrs. D. E. Gregory, lives in Indianapolis, and a brother, Thomas T. Worth, seventy-eight years old and well informed, lives at Plainfield.

"Alexander Worth was a Republican in politics, and a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was affable, intelligent, active and accurate in business, being unexcelled as an accountant, and of strict honesty and integrity."

It is reasonable to believe that in 1851, Albert S. White busied himself urging and helping Ambrose Nease plat the new town, and in the same year Worth did what was

necessary to create a new township of sections taken from the four surrounding townships and, perhaps, persuaded the Boone County Board of Commissioners to name the new unit as Worth Township.

The railroad people were anxious to have a town, or at least a station, located every eight or ten miles along the right-of-way, occasioning the founding in addition of Whitestown, of the hamlet of Hazelrigg Station in or around 1851, and the more populous village of Zionsville in 1852. In the early years of its existence, the first named village was always referred to as Hazelrigg Station. It was founded on land owned by Harvey G. Hazelrigg and named for him. Zionsville was platted on land owned by Elijah Cross with Cross and William Zion of Lebanon, doing the platting. The new town was named in Zion's honor.

Should the new town founded by Ambrose Nease have been named for someone in the immediate neighborhood, it would probably be known today as Neaseville, or Neasetown, or (heaven forbid!) Ambrosia.

In the meantime, this writer will maintain until documentary proof shows him wrong, that Whitestown was, indeed, named in honor of Albert S. White, congressman and railroad president, and that Worth Township was named in honor of Alexander Worth, and railroad company's secretary, who, in all likelihood, did most of the work in the surrounding rural area in getting the new township organized, and at last, accepted by Boone County's Board of Commissioners.



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