

A Forgotten Man of Indianapolis*

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In the Spring of 1937, it was the writer's good fortune to be appointed to investigate the rumor that there was a lot for destitute teachers in Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis. After checking a single reference, he was quite sure that such a burial ground had at one time existed. On arriving at the cemetery office he presented the following inquiry: "Can you tell me, Mr. Myers, whether you have a lot, a very old one, perhaps, called a lot for destitute teachers and designated on the books as 'Lot 30, Section 3?'" Mr. Myers replied that he did not know personally of such a lot, but evidently the old records would give the desired information.

There it was, top the page, "A Lot for the Destitute Teachers of the Public Schools." Below the title was a diagram of the plot, with the graves outlined and numbered. Spaces were provided for twelve graves, seven of which were occupied. Below the diagram on the same page was a list of those who were buried there:

Ella P. Coffin, 1874.
Anna M. Tyler (sister), 1874
Alexander Ralston, 1874.
John B. Dillon, 1879.
George McKinney, 1889.
William Lentz, 1889.
Catherine Messing, 1891.

"Alexander Ralston," exclaimed the author, "what is he doing on a lot for destitute teachers? The man who designed and surveyed the downtown district of Indianapolis. He was neither a teacher nor was he destitute. And neither was John B. Dillon, one of the city's early attorneys and a worthy historian." Mr. Myers was as nonplussed as the questioner and rapidly became equally interested. He proposed a drive to the location. There were the graves, all marked with a variety of stones, bearing names and dates, except one, the grave of Alexander Ralston. No stick or stone marked his resting place—there was only the outline of a grave in the green sod.

John B. Dillon has a large stone monument which is ten feet high and six feet square at the base. Such a marker on a lot for the destitute adds a bit of incongruity to the scene. Question after question came to mind. "How does the designer

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of a great city happen to be here? Why has he no head stone to mark his grave? And John B. Dillon, attorney, historian, poet, editor of *Farm and Shop*, five years Secretary of the State Board of Agriculture, Assistant Secretary of State, clerk in the Department of the Interior at Washington, D. C., etc.—how does he happen to be here? And last but not least, who are these other people? How does there happen to be a lot for destitute teachers? When was there such need? Who, if anyone, beside the cemetery association, furnished the ground?"

The writer took up the question of the identity of each of the persons buried on the lot. This work required a study of the Crown Hill records, the city papers in the state library, teachers' directories at the main school office, the city directories at the city library, the funeral records at the Kregelo-Bailey undertaking establishment, and the proceedings of the Common Council of Indianapolis. The cemetery records show that Ella P. Coffin died May 30, 1870, at the age of twenty-three. The date of her burial in Crown Hill was April 18, 1874. On that same date her sister, Anna M. Tyler, was laid beside her. She too had been dead for quite a period—since August 11, 1870. She was twenty-seven years of age at the time of her death. An examination of the *Indianapolis Journal* for the dates of these deaths revealed the following item:

Ella P. Coffin, a principle [*sic*] teacher of the 4th ward, died yesterday at 10:00 o'clock. Funeral services at home Wednesday, 262 North East Street.

Though this was a meager bit of information, it was very significant, because Ella Coffin and her sister were the first to be placed on the lot, and the former, was a teacher in the city schools. The fact that she was not buried there until four years after her death would indicate that she and her relatives were without the means to be independent in the matter of burial. Furthermore, a note on the funeral record at Crown Hill showed that Mr. A. C. Shortridge, then Superintendent of the Indianapolis Schools, paid \$16.00 for the burial of the two sisters.

Work on the identification of the others continued. The cemetery records and the books of the Kregelo-Bailey undertaking establishment showed that George McKinney died on September 3, 1889; was buried September 5, 1889; died at

the age of thirty of liver trouble; and that a Dr. Woodburn was the attending physician. Mr. Kregelo, as undertaker, paid the cemetery \$15.00, and was reimbursed by an equal amount by Mrs. McKinney and a C. J. Linton. The vital statistics of the Indianapolis *Sentinel* confirmed these dates, but no further mention was made of the death in the papers. The name of George McKinney was not found in the teachers' directory for any year of the 1880's.

Records showed that William Lentz, a bachelor, died of tuberculosis October 4, 1889, and was buried two days later in the lot for destitute teachers. He was thirty-three at the time of his death. His name did not appear in the teachers' directories.

The other occupant unknown to the investigator was Catherine Messing. Records revealed that Mrs. Messing died January 23, 1891, and was buried on January 26. As in the cases above, Dr. Woodburn was the physician, Kregelo the undertaker. In each case the undertaker paid the cemetery association \$15 and was reimbursed by friends or relatives. As in the case of the foregoing, Catherine Messing's name was not to be found in the directory of teachers.

The city directories for the 1880's settled the question of the occupations of George McKinney, William Lentz, and Catherine Messing. All were listed as mechanics or laborers. No record was found which might explain why they were buried in the lot for destitute teachers.

Beginning the study of the life of John B. Dillon, the father of Indiana history, an abundance of information was found.¹ Mr. Dillon was born in western Virginia in 1807 and moved to Cincinnati in 1824. He soon secured employment on the *Cincinnati Gazette*, and it was there that his literary ventures began. In 1834, he moved to Logansport where he read law, and where he was admitted to the bar. His retiring and shy disposition made him entirely unfitted for that profession; and he devoted himself to historical research and literary pursuits, while at the same time trying to maintain, half heartedly, a law practice. No man was ever better suited to the work for which he is best remembered, namely painstaking research. He was always embarrassed at social func-

¹ George S. Cottman, "John Brown Dillon," *Indiana Magazine of History* (March, 1905), I, 4-8; General John Coburn, "Life and Services of John B. Dillon," *Indiana Historical Society Publications*, II (Indianapolis, 1886), 39-56; Horace P. Biddle, "Notes on John B. Dillon," *ibid.*, 56.

tions, and preferred the dryest book to the company of men and women. Mr. Dillon never married and had no relatives in this part of the country.

From original manuscripts, letters, state papers, and the reminiscences of old settlers, he pieced together the history of early Indiana. It is fortunate for the later historians that he did so, while the information was still to be obtained. However, as Logan Esarey has expressed it,² he was such an antiquarian that he never got beyond the territorial times.

Mr. Dillon's books had no sale value, and he was always faced with poverty. His friends managed to keep him in minor political offices from which he received some remuneration. He lived in a poorly furnished room near the top of the old Johnson Block (Indianapolis), in the vicinity of which he was a familiar figure. He wore a silk hat, frock coat, and thick dark glasses in six-sided frames.

John B. Dillon died January 27, 1879. The *Indiana State Sentinel* and the *Indianapolis Journal* of January 30, 1879, bear accounts of the funeral arrangements which record the removal of the remains from the Kregelo establishment to the home of the Hon. John Coburn and from there to the Second Presbyterian Church of which Mr. Dillon was a staunch member.

Mr. Dillon's remains were interred in the lot for destitute teachers in Crown Hill Cemetery. In later years his friends remembered his sterling worth and erected a monument to his memory. George S. Cottman epitomizes the life of this man as follows. "Forty years of honest conscientious devotion; four books that people would not buy, and death in a lonely garret, face to face with grim poverty, because he wrought for the love of truth and not for dollars—this is the life story of John B. Dillon."³

Seeing in the long unmarked grave of Alexander Ralston an opportunity for civic service, the writer was pleased to be able to interest the Indianapolis Teachers' Federation in the proposal that they mark the grave of the designer of downtown Indianapolis. Wishing to know more of the life of Ralston before any definite action should be taken, the following story was pieced together.

Alexander Ralston, a young Scotch engineer, migrated

² Logan Esarey, *History of Indiana from its Exploration to 1922*, II, 1130.

³ Cottman, "John Brown Dillon," *loc. cit.*, 8.

to America in time to assist eccentric Pierre Charles L'Enfant in the laying out of the new capital, Washington, D. C. Mindful of the beauties of the royal city of Versailles, France, L'Enfant incorporated its radiating avenues in his plans for the new national city on the Potomac. The work of turning the farm lands into a capital began in 1791. Because of L'Enfant's quarrels with the commissioners, President Washington relieved him of his duties in February, 1792, but records show that Ralston was a member of the engineering and survey staff as late as 1794.⁴

After his work at Washington was completed, Ralston was attracted to the Ohio River Valley because of its rapid and promising development. He was living in Kentucky in 1806 at the time when the little understood schemes of Aaron Burr were in the air. While Burr was president of the Senate, in the fall of 1804, one General Benjamin Hovey of New York, appeared to petition congress for the construction of a canal around the Falls of the Ohio near Louisville. Burr became quite interested in the project and at the close of the session came to the West, presumably to inspect the canal site.

Governor William Henry Harrison called a meeting of the legislative assembly of Indiana Territory at Vincennes on June 29, 1805. In this session a law was passed creating the Indiana Canal Company, the purpose of which was to construct the much discussed canal around the Ohio River Falls. The company was capitalized at 20,000 shares of \$50 each and was to have a board of twelve directors. The first list of directors included the names of George Clark, Aaron Burr, Benjamin Hovey, and Davis Floyd.⁵ The waterway was never built, but a bank of issue to finance the undertaking was established which had possibilities of financial gain to its directors and also opened ways and means of swindling the public.

Two of the directors, Davis Floyd and Aaron Burr, saw much of each other and Burr disclosed to Floyd his plan for the invasion of Mexico. In fact he secured the services of the latter as manager of the project of the settlement of the valley of the Washita (Ouachita) River in Arkansas.

Floyd enlisted about thirty men as colonists or for what-

⁴ Wilhelmus B. Bryan, *A History of the National Capital from its Foundation Through The Period of the Adoption of the Organic Act* (New York 1914), I, 240.

⁵ Isaac J. Cox, "The Burr Conspiracy in Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History* (December, 1929), XXV, 265.

ever work Burr had in mind. One Robert Pryor⁶ of Sheppardsville, Kentucky, said that Floyd hired him and others for \$12.50 per month and a promise of 150 acres of land at the end of a year's service. Pryor said further that he left Louisville on December 12, 1806, in Floyd's boat, and that the boat's company included Alexander Ralston and about twenty others.⁷

It was not safe for the expedition to come too near Natchez, so the flotilla stopped about thirty miles above that settlement. Burr selected Davis Floyd and Alexander Ralston to proceed down the river in a light boat so that he might learn exactly what had happened. These two scouts spent the night of January 11, 1807, with a Dr. John F. Carmichael⁸ near Fort Adams. Dr. Carmichael later testified that Ralston revealed to him that the expedition was directed against Spanish possessions, but Ralston later denied giving such information.

Floyd and Ralston learned from Dr. Carmichael that General Wilkinson was preparing to resist any military expedition coming near New Orleans. The two scouts returned to their discouraged leader. Burr held a series of conferences with the territorial authorities and was given a grand jury hearing. He and his lieutenants testified that they were concerned only with the colonization of the Washita River district, and were not indicted.⁹ However, Judge Harry Toulmin, of the Circuit Court of Washington County, Mississippi, was not satisfied with the proceedings and issued a warrant for the arrest of Burr, Blennerhassett, Floyd, and Ralston.¹⁰ Fearing abduction by Wilkinson's men, Burr ordered his associates to dispose of the boats and provisions and divide the proceeds among themselves. Burr fled in disguise, but was arrested as he sought to escape into West Florida and was sent to Richmond, Virginia, for trial. Blennerhassett was committed to the same court for a hearing. Ralston wanted to be tried in Kentucky and Floyd in Indiana Territory. Judge Toulmin, however, committed them for trial in

⁶ *Ibid.*, 271-272.

⁷ Alexander Ralston's part in the Burr expedition may be traced in the "Trial of Aaron Burr," *American State Papers*, I, Misc., 520, 522, 524, 564, 568, 593.

⁸ Gen. James E. Wilkinson, *Memoirs of My Own Times* (Philadelphia, 1816). See for Deposition of Dr. Carmichael, II, Appendix, lxxxv.

⁹ Charles B. Galloway, "Aaron Burr in Mississippi," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, X, 242.

¹⁰ Samuel H. Wandell and Meade Minnigerode, *Aaron Burr* (New York, 1925), I, 167.

Mississippi because of the fact that the chief evidence against them was the testimony that might be given by Dr. Carmichael. General Wilkinson was anxious that they should not go free and urged that they be tried by a federal court.

Indictments were returned against Floyd and Ralston in Mississippi.¹¹ Trial was to take place in the fall of 1807. Before that time, Floyd and Ralston had left the jurisdiction of the court. By the time of the trial of Burr, his lieutenants were listed as witnesses against him with the understanding that they themselves were not to be placed on trial. However, the subpoenas reached them too late to attend, had they cared to do so.¹² The absence of Floyd and Ralston as witnesses for the United States no doubt made it easier to secure an acquittal for the chief conspirator.

Davis Floyd was tried in the territorial court of Indiana for his part in the fiasco, was convicted, sentenced to three hours in jail, and given a fine of twenty dollars.¹³ He was convicted on his own confession, the evidence in which showed that the expedition was against Mexico and Baton Rouge, and that he believed it had the approval of the government. Floyd was the only person connected with the Burr affair who was tried and convicted of conspiracy against the welfare of the nation.

When historians who have studied the Burr conspiracy disagree so thoroughly concerning the objectives of his expedition, the question of the motives behind Ralston's participation presents even greater difficulties. Admirers of Alexander Ralston have said that his connection with the Burr fiasco was merely that of a surveyor, employed for the purpose of surveying the Bastrop Lands on the Washita River.¹⁴ At any rate, neither Ralston nor any other colleague of Burr experienced much embarrassment later as a result of participation in his venture. The court records at Corydon show that Alexander Ralston served on a jury in a dueling case in Harrison County, Indiana, in 1814, and records at Salem show that he was a citizen of Washington County in 1818.

By the act of the Indiana Legislature of January 11, 1820, ten commissioners were appointed to select a site for the new

¹¹ Walter Flavius McCaleb, *The Aaron Burr Conspiracy* (New York, 1903), 282.

¹² *Trial of Aaron Burr for Treason* (printed from Shorthand report of the trial, New York 1875), I, 397.

¹³ Isaac J. Cox, "The Burr Conspiracy in Indiana," *loc. cit.*, 277.

¹⁴ *Indianapolis News*, August 13, 1904.

capital of Indiana. After some investigation, on May 27, 1820, they chose the site at the junction of Fall Creek and the West Fork of the White River. The legislature ratified their selection on January 6, 1821, and appointed three commissioners to lay out the city. The appointees were James W. Jones, Samuel P. Booker and Christopher Harrison. The resolution provided that the commissioners should meet on the site the first Monday in April and plan the town on "such lines as they conceive will be advantageous to the state and to the prosperity of such town, having specially in view the health, utility, and beauty of the place." Christopher Harrison of Salem came alone to the appointed place and selected Alexander Ralston, his fellow townsman, and Elias Pym Fordham, of Illinois, to survey and plan the new city.

Statements made by contemporaries of Ralston indicate that he was largely responsible for the plan of present downtown Indianapolis. There is considerable evidence to support this view and careful historians refer to the plan as the "Ralston plat".¹⁵ The perfect geometric symmetry of his "mile square" with its circle and radiating avenues show the influence of his experience in surveying the capital of the United States.

Ralston thought that to plat an area of one square mile would be sufficient for the time. This area was bounded by East, West, North and South Streets, although he did not name these streets on his plan. With few exceptions the interior of the "mile square" is exactly as it was on the Ralston plat of 1821. This plat provided for a municipal recreation park along Pogue's Run, bounded on the north by North Carolina Street and on the south by South Carolina Street. It is apparent that the growing metropolis could not long permit a park of that size to stand in the way of its industrial development, and it was soon intersected by streets and railroads. In 1894, the city council changed Ralston's names for Mississippi and Tennessee Streets to Senate Avenue and Capitol Avenue, respectively.

Great credit is due the foresight of the designer of the "mile square" that he platted the streets ninety feet wide with the exception of Washington which is one hundred twenty feet wide. Credit is due the contemporaries who per-

¹⁵ Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis* (Chicago, 1910), 1, 30. See for reproduction of original plat.

mitted him to plan such wide streets in view of the mud and stumps through which they would have to find their way at the crossings. It is only outside the area designed by Ralston that one finds narrow streets, "one side" parking and dangerous jogs. Ralston provided that each block not intersected by an avenue should be cut by alleys, fifteen to thirty feet wide. These alleys are of course indispensable to the delivery service of the commercial center of the city.

Ralston lived on the north side of Maryland Street near Tennessee almost continuously until his death on January 5, 1827. His obituary was printed in the *Indiana Journal* of January 9:

Died—In this place, on Friday the 5th inst. *Alexander Ralston, Esq.*, aged 56 years. Mr. R. was a native of Scotland, but emigrated early in life to America. He lived many years at the city of Washington, then at Louisville, Ky., afterwards near Salem in this state, and for the last five years in this place. His earliest and latest occupation in the United States was surveying, in which he was long employed by the Government, at Washington, and his removal to this place was occasioned by his appointment to make the original survey of it. In the latter part of his life he was our county surveyor, and his leisure time was employed in attending to a neat garden, in which various useful and ornamental plants, fruits, etc., were carefully cultivated. Mr. Ralston was skilful in his profession, honest in his dealings, gentlemanly in his deportment, a liberal and hospitable citizen, a sincere and ardent friend. The respect and esteem of the generous and the good were always awarded to him, and he found constant satisfaction in conferring favors not only on his own species, but even on the humblest of the brute creation. "He would not willingly set foot upon a worm." But his unsuspecting nature made him liable to imposition; his sanguine expectations were often disappointed, his independent spirit sometimes provoked opposition, and his extreme sensibility was frequently put to the severest trials. Though he stood alone amongst us, as it respects family, his loss will be long lamented.

As to Mr. Ralston's character and personality, Mrs. Jane Merrill Ketcham, writing for an Indianapolis paper in 1907, said:

The house for the Treasurer of State, occupied by my father, Samuel Merrill, was on the corner of Washington and Tennessee streets (so-called in the city's plan) the front facing where the State House was to be. Mr. Ralston's house was in Maryland street, southwest of ours. His was purely Scotch style. I should say, a light slate in color. The main room was high above the wings on each side. There were six or eight steps up to a small platform before the door of the center room. Mr. Ralston was here some time before we were. I saw him often. He was so slender that he looked rather tall to a child of six years. He

was always dressed in taste, I should say, as a gentleman should be. One day, taking me by the hand, he said: "You must have a pole for your martin box. We will go and find one." So we took a long walk down the road to the thick woods and picked out one. When we were coming home he said: "You must be very tired. Come in and rest while I read you a story." While I rested he sat in an old-fashioned chair, a rest for his Bible at his right hand. From this he read the story of Joseph and his brethren.

I love to think of Mr. Ralston. I love anything that brings back his memory. But it would be difficult to get a likeness. I do not suppose I have given much help to those who propose a monument to his memory, but perhaps I have given an idea of what kind of man he was.¹⁶

Alexander Ralston's remains were interred near the bank of White River in the Green Lawn Cemetery. Having no relatives and leaving no estate of any consequence, his grave received no head stone.¹⁷ George Norwood, a friend, is said to have kept the location of the grave marked by means of wooden stakes.

Samuel Merrill, editor of the *Indiana Journal*, reminded the citizens in 1827 that Ralston had planned a park for the city and urged them to make provision for one before it was too late. Had they done so at this time it would doubtless have received Ralston's name.

There is no way of knowing how many times and how many citizens in the last hundred ten years expressed the idea that Alexander Ralston deserved an expression of honor on the part of the citizens of Indianapolis.

When the time came to abandon Green Lawn Cemetery as a burial ground the following resolution was entered in the minutes of the meeting of the board of trustees of Crown Hill Cemetery, May 11, 1874: "On motion of Mr. New, it was resolved; that this board will donate to the city a suitable lot for the burial of Alexander Ralston, the surveyor of the original town plat of Indianapolis, 1821, on condition that an appropriate monument be erected by the city to mark the spot. The secretary was directed to notify the city of the same."

The following motion was made in a meeting of the City Council on September 24, 1874: "Moved: that a committee of three be appointed by the chair to attend to the removal of

¹⁶ *Indianapolis News*, November 30, 1907.

¹⁷ Report of the administrator, Samuel Merrill. Records of Marion County.

Alexander Ralston's remains from the old cemetery to Crown Hill and also to ascertain what a suitable monument will cost, and to report the same to this council. Motion adopted and Mayor James L. Mitchell appointed Councilmen Darnell, Gimber and Bollman."

The Indianapolis *Journal* of October 1, 1874, printed this story of the removal of the remains of Alexander Ralston from Green Lawn to Crown Hill:

Yesterday afternoon at 3 o'clock, the committee appointed by the Common Council to superintend the removal of the remains of Alexander Ralston, the surveyor of the original plat of Indianapolis, from Greenlawn Cemetery to Crown Hill, consisting of Messrs. C. F. Darnell, Henry Gimber, and Fred Bollman, gathered at Greenlawn to carry out the order of Council. The work of exhuming the remains, conveying them to Crown Hill, and reinterring them, was done by David Kregelo. There were present during the afternoon, Mr. J. H. B. Nowland, wife and daughter, Mrs. P. B. L. Nowland, Mary S. Cowger, Isaac N. Phipps and wife, Mrs. White, Edward Davis, and David W. Brouse.

The remains were found on the spot designated last spring by the venerable George Norwood, on the river bank near the southwest corner of the cemetery. The burial of Mr. Ralston took place nearly forty-eight years ago, in the year 1827, and at that time graves were dug much deeper than they are now. Yesterday afternoon the laborers became well nigh discouraged, as did also several of the spectators, before they came to the level upon which the coffin was laid. As Mr. Nowland remembered General Ralston, he was a man six feet in height or more, and when the grave diggers came upon a human thigh-bone it was decided, from its length, to be that of Mr. Ralston. The rest of the bones were exhumed (all vestiges of a coffin had long ago disappeared) and were placed in a casket. The company then repaired to Crown Hill, where the casket was buried in a grave on a beautiful sloping bank, just west of the soldiers' graves, donated for the purpose by the Crown Hill Cemetery authorities. There were no formal ceremonies, and when the last clod fell into the newly made grave the company retired.

The work of the committee is but half done. They will now inquire into and report upon the probable cost of erecting a suitable monument over the spot, and also have prepared a sketch of Mr. Ralston's life, by George Norwood and J. H. B. Nowland, and a suitable memorial to place upon the monument. The committee will proceed in this matter with the same dispatch that has already characterized their movements."

At the next meeting of the city council, Mr. Darnell proposed an amendment to the list of claims under consideration to provide for an appropriation of \$10.50 to pay for the removal of Ralston's body.

Mr. Ralston's remains were interred in a plot of ground

set aside as the "Lot for Destitute Teachers of the Public Schools"—Lot 30-Section 3. This site was chosen both because of its beautiful location and because of the probability that few of the twelve graves provided would be needed for the purpose originally intended.

In a meeting of the City Council of January 4, 1875, Councilman Darnell reported as follows:

As chairman of the special committee appointed by his honor to ascertain the cost of a monument to be erected to the memory of Alexander Ralston I herewith submit designs and prices of the same for your consideration. Also in reference to the identity of the remains of Mr. Ralston I called upon Mr. George Norwood and he gave me the following statement. "I verily believe the place I showed Mr. Kregelo is where Mr. Ralston was buried—I selected the place to bury the remains, helped to prepare him for burial and attended the funeral. With the exception of a short time I visited the grave quite often, where Ralston's remains were deposited." Signed George Norwood.

In spite of these apparently good intentions the Council did not erect a monument, and as to a memorial sketch of Ralston's life, none was printed.

Five years after the removal of Ralston's remains to Crown Hill Cemetery, James Cooley Fletcher, writing in one of the city papers,¹⁸ said that he had just visited George Norwood who would be ninety-two years old in five months. He said that he found Mr. Norwood's memory of the early years of Indianapolis vivid and accurate. Mr. Fletcher had at that time in his possession a copy of an Indianapolis newspaper dated July, 1822, which contained an advertisement inserted by Mr. Norwood who was then the city's wheelwright. Mr. Fletcher closed his article by saying "Why not have a monument to Ralston? Instead of the unmeaning name given to the old seminary square [University Square], which has no significance whatever, why not call it Ralston Park? This would be a monumental and graceful tribute to the man who designed the plan of Indianapolis."

Judge E. B. Martindale, Mr. E. P. Claypool and other prominent citizens headed a movement about 1890 to raise funds by public subscription for the purpose of erecting a monument in honor of Alexander Ralston.¹⁹ A total of three hundred fifty dollars was obtained, of which about twenty-

¹⁸ *Indianapolis News*, August 2, 1879.

¹⁹ Dunn, *op. cit.*, I, 34.

five was spent in the process of collection. Nothing more concrete than raising the money and depositing it in the Fletcher Bank came from this effort and the grave remained unmarked.

The obligation of the citizens to Mr. Ralston was presented again in 1904, when an article appeared stating that "his grave is unmarked by any stone. There is nothing above it but the green sward and yet his name is one that well deserves to be remembered in Indianapolis."²⁰

In 1907, Judge Martindale, mindful of the funds intrusted to him and to others during the past seventeen years, attempted once more to secure for Alexander Ralston his long belated honor. The local papers of November 22 and 23, 1907, carried the following information to the readers:

A little greenish clay model of Alexander Ralston as he should have looked, according to Rudolph Schwartz, the local sculptor, occupied a point of vantage on the table of the City Park Board this morning. The clay man is the model of a statue which it is proposed to erect in University Square, probably in the center, surmounting a fountain replacing the one that now plays there all summer long.

Mr. Martindale, before the Park Board, explained that the Schwartz model was a suggestion of what could be done. The Indianapolis sculptor agrees to make the figure in bronze, life size, for \$1,000, and this, Mr. Martindale assured the board, was not more than half what a similar statue would cost elsewhere. If the Park Board will decide to make up the remainder of the necessary sum by giving \$675 for the purpose, Mr. Martindale will turn the fund now in the Fletcher Bank over to the board he said.

The matter was discussed, but no decision was reached. At Mr. Martindale's suggestion the board decided to refer the subject to a committee, composed of Dr. Henry Jameson and J. Clyde Power, to report probably at the next meeting.

As far as known, there is no picture or likeness of Mr. Ralston of any sort in existence, so that the model made by Mr. Schwartz is, as was said, the sculptor's idea of what the engineer should have looked like, if he didn't.

The little figure is clothed in an old-fashioned double-breasted, swallow-tailed Quaker coat, with a tall hat of the period in which the engineer worked. The queer costume, when compared with modern out-of-doors work clothes, led Dr. Jameson to inquire why Ralston did his work in a dress suit. Mr. Martindale assured the board that the sculptor made very careful inquiries as to the clothes of the period before he dressed his model.

The cost of a suitable granite base for the Schwarz statue would probably be not less than \$1,000, so that the cost of a fountain with this statue as a center would probably be \$2,500 or \$3,000. **Members**

²⁰ *Indianapolis News*, August 18, 1904.

of the board are doubtful if they have the power to make this expenditure, and, even so, if the funds can be found.²¹

On November 30, the Ralston committee of the park board reported unfavorably on the plan because of the fact that the proposed statue was not a likeness. They offered the recommendation, however, that the funds be held until a larger sum could be raised and then erect a fountain in University Park and place a plaque on it commemorating Ralston's work.

The erection of the beautiful Depew Memorial Fountain in University Park obliterated the possibility of carrying out the above plan. However, the passing of this opportunity gave rise to newspaper articles recalling the fact that it was once intended to use the fountain site for that purpose and to the fact that much had been said and that little had been done by way of honoring the designer of the "mile square."²²

The archives room of the Indiana State Library was very hot. It was midsummer of the year 1937. The old newspapers of 1907 were yellow and fragile. The papers were bound and it was hard to see the tops of the columns without standing up and bending over them. In a moment of relaxation certain questions came to the mind of the writer: "What has become of this money raised by Mr. Martindale and Mr. Claypool and others in 1890, as reported in this paper? Deposited in the Fletcher Bank; but that institution has gone through reorganization several times. This fund is certainly no longer in existence. But what became of it? The solicitors would not have returned it to the contributors; no honor has been shown Alexander Ralston through its expenditure. If there is money to be spent in his honor this is the fund to be used." The writer left the room principally to get his lunch, secondly to visit the Fletcher National Bank.

Arriving at the trust department the writer said, "I would like to talk to the oldest member of the firm about an old trust fund left here over forty years ago." He was introduced to a comparatively young man. "The newspapers show," the inquirer began, "that there was deposited in this bank a sum to be used for the purpose of erecting a monument to the designer of the mile square." After further explanation as

²¹ *Ibid.*, November 22, 1907.

²² *Ibid.*, November 13, 1924.

to who Mr. Ralston was, the young man shook his head and said he had never heard of such a trust fund, and was positive it did not exist.

"Where in the bank might this money be? It is obvious that it has never been spent for the purpose for which it was collected," pursued the writer. By this time the young banker's interest was fully aroused and he suggested a visit to the checking accounts department.

Introduced to the proper official, the story of Alexander Ralston, the intention of the Teachers' Federation to mark his grave, and the newspaper account of the lost fund was narrated once more. "What account do you think it would be in? If you don't know the name of the account, it would be like hunting a needle in a hay stack," replied the official. "It should have been deposited in the name of the Alexander Ralston Memorial Fund." The banker telephoned to the inactive accounts department and asked if such an account existed—a long suspense, and the return call came back: "Yes we have an account entitled the Alexander Ralston Monument Fund."

The Alexander Ralston Memorial Committee of the Indianapolis Teachers' Federation was appointed to carry out the project of erecting a suitable marker at the grave of the designer of downtown Indianapolis. After proper legal papers were presented to the bank, the funds were kindly turned over to the committee.

At last, on November 9, 1937, there was unveiled at the grave of Alexander Ralston, the most thoroughly forgotten man of Indianapolis, a modest but enduring monument. His name and his 1821 map of Indianapolis are deeply engraved in imperishable granite and credit is given to those interested citizens who contributed the funds more than four decades ago.

²⁸ A picture of the monument appeared in the *Indianapolis News* of Nov. 9, 1937. See also *Indianapolis Sunday Star* of Oct. 31, 1937, for an illustrated article by the author dealing with Alexander Ralston.