

## John Roche—Pioneer Irish Businessman

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The Wabash and Erie Canal was the leading project in Indiana's plans for internal improvements during the early 1830's. Opened to traffic from Fort Wayne to Huntington, Indiana, in 1835, amid anticipation of blessings from cheap transportation, it also brought problems of expensive maintenance, indebtedness, and an unassimilated group of people to add to the permanent population of Indiana. This new group consisted of Roman Catholic Irish immigrants, many of whom worked on the canal and then remained in the state after the route was completed.

The Irish were only a small element in the rapidly increasing population of the area along the Maumee-Wabash rivers between Toledo and Lafayette in the decade after 1830. At the time most of the Indiana portion of the area was included in Allen and Cass counties, which then had a combined population of 2,158. By 1840 these two counties had been divided to form Allen, Huntington, Cass, and Miami counties with a total population of 16,049.<sup>1</sup> The relatively small Irish segment in this section was distinguished by rowdiness in a period known for its lack of orderly and peaceful ways of life. Irish antics on paydays and distinctive features of their general habits were described by many witnesses, and the folklore of the upper Wabash valley contains stories and songs illustrating these peculiarities, as well as the Irish yearning for the Emerald Isle.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U.S., Bureau of the Census, *Fifth Census of the United States: 1830. Population Schedules, Indiana*, I, sheet 357; II, sheet 11. A microfilm copy of this census is on file in the Documents Division of the Indiana University Library, Bloomington, Ind. See also *Sixth Census of the United States: 1840. Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States*, 347, 349, 355, 359.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Wittke, *The Irish in America* (Baton Rouge, 1956), 40-51, gives a colorful picture of the impression made by the Irish immigrants on Americans. An incident of canal brawling is described in Sandford C. Cox, *Recollections of the Early Settlement of the Wabash Valley* (Lafayette, Ind., 1860), 145. Father Stephen Theodore Badin is quoted on the Irish and German Roman Catholic settlers along the canal in Thomas T. McAvoy, *The Catholic Church in Indiana, 1789-1834* (New York, 1946), 188-190.

Although the poverty and gregarious nature of the Irish seemed to draw them to towns and cities, a noticeable number eventually became farmers.<sup>3</sup> While this facet of Irish immigration has been inadequately explored, it can be illustrated by the career of John Roche of Huntington County. Though Roche worked several years as an unskilled canal laborer, he later became in succession a surveyor, Huntington County treasurer, partner of the Miami chieftain Francis Lafontaine, a banker, a director on the boards of two railroads, and both partner and agent of Hugh McCulloch of Fort Wayne before his death in 1894. Starting his business career as a poor immigrant, Roche became part or sole owner of ten thousand acres of land, the holder of shares of stock in a newspaper and other enterprises, and provider of all the funds for the construction of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Huntington. His career, though never spectacular, was so successful and well-known that many older residents of Allen, Wabash, Huntington, and Miami counties still remember local history in terms of John Roche's activities. Many of them were born on farms purchased from him or earned their first money for work performed on his land.<sup>4</sup>

John was the fifth of eight children and the oldest son in the Martin Roche family which migrated from Wexford County, Ireland, to Baltimore in 1830.<sup>5</sup> There is no evidence of the influences which prompted the Roche family to come to America. But the Emancipation Act of April 15, 1829, which permitted Irish Catholics to hold certain political offices, yet disfranchised many groups, and the Tithes War of 1830, resulting from continued tax support to the Irish Anglican Church, combined to increase emigration from Ireland. Both economic and political conditions in Ireland were so unsettled in this period that emigration offered an attractive solution to many people. A few farsighted men of the United Kingdom believed the Irish migration of the 1830's was a tragic loss to

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<sup>3</sup> Carl Wittke, *We Who Built America: The Saga of the Immigrant* (New York, 1939), 148, uses evidence primarily applicable to Illinois to support his conclusions that most counties of the Middle West contained a few Irish farmers.

<sup>4</sup> For Roche's role in the establishment of St. Mary's Church, see F. Sumner Bash, *History of Huntington County, Indiana* (2 vols., Chicago, 1914), I, 314. Short biographical sketches of Roche are in the obituary published in the *Huntington Democrat*, October 18, 1894, and in *The Catholic Universe* (Cleveland, O.), December 3, 1897. Huntington County histories hereafter cited follow these accounts.

<sup>5</sup> *Huntington Democrat*, October 18, 1894.

the Empire, which drained off the young, healthy members of the labor and small farmer classes and left behind the extremely poor and decrepit.<sup>6</sup>

Martin Roche remained in Baltimore two years, then moved to Zanesville, Ohio, for one year and thence to Huntington, Indiana, in 1834 when John was age seventeen.<sup>7</sup> Huntington was then a frontier village of only fourteen families<sup>8</sup> but its future seemed assured, for the Wabash and Erie Canal had been under construction since 1832; the first boat made the voyage from Huntington to Fort Wayne in 1835.<sup>9</sup>

After Martin Roche died in 1835, his son John became the principal support of the large family. John labored on the canal, and in 1841 he became a rodman or assistant surveyor; later he was a temporary superintendent of repairs on a section of the canal west of Huntington until 1843.<sup>10</sup> Roche resigned from his canal work to fill the county treasurer's position which had been left vacant by the death of the elected official.<sup>11</sup> When his term expired in 1844, he did not seek a political career but became a clerk in the Indian trading post at the Forks of the Big and Little Wabash rivers.<sup>12</sup>

The junction of these important water routes, three miles west of Huntington, was a favored site for the negotia-

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<sup>6</sup> Wittke, *The Irish in America*, 3-22, gives a useful summary of the conditions which encouraged Irish people to emigrate. Edith Abbott, *Historical Aspects of the Immigration Problem, Select Documents* (Chicago, 1926), 68-72, 79-84, describes the emigration problem before the potato famine in Ireland increased migration in the 1840's.

<sup>7</sup> Brant and Fuller (pubs.), *History of Huntington County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1887), 527-529.

<sup>8</sup> Memorandum in the Roche Real Estate Book. The Roche Papers cited in this article are in the author's possession. They were secured from Mrs. Elizabeth Dalton of Huntington, the heir of Patrick Gorman who was the Roche estate administrator, and are largely recorded deeds and receipts. The Real Estate Book contains twelve pages of detailed descriptions of Roche's transactions. All citations to the Roche Papers are from this collection unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>9</sup> An interesting account of the opening of the Huntington-Fort Wayne section of the canal is that by David Colerick in B. J. Griswold (ed.), *The Pictorial History of Fort Wayne, Indiana* (2 vols., Chicago, 1917), I, 332.

<sup>10</sup> *Huntington Democrat*, October 18, 1894; Indiana, General Assembly, *Documentary Journal*, 1839-1840 [Part 2], pp. 206, 208; see also *Documentary Journal*, 1841-1842 [Part 1], pp. 65-68. John Roche's name is spelled "Roach" in this document and appears with this spelling in a few other publications, though all his signatures are spelled "Roche."

<sup>11</sup> Brant and Fuller, *History of Huntington County, Indiana*, 331, 528.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 528.

tion of Indian treaties and the payment of annuities to the Miami tribesmen. Chief Jean Baptiste Richardville operated a store there preceding his death in 1841, when this site became the headquarters of the new chief, Francis Lafontaine, son-in-law of Richardville. Lafontaine needed a reliable and able man to assist him with the numerous financial and legal problems which went with tribal leadership. Roche had already demonstrated his ability as a canalman, and he was a devout member of the same church in Huntington that the predominantly Roman Catholic Miami attended.<sup>13</sup> Although Lafontaine might have found a clerk who was better acquainted with Indian affairs from among the traders of Fort Wayne or Logansport, unverified stories credit Roche with minor participation at some of the treaties and annual payments during the preceding ten years. An 1840 treaty had stipulated the removal of the Miami to land west of the Mississippi, but Richardville's death, the scramble of traders to liquidate or expand their claims, and the pressure of land-hungry settlers complicated its fulfillment.<sup>14</sup>

In this period the duties of the clerk of an Indian civil chief were very exacting, since he must combine the functions of secretary, bookkeeper, legal advisor, and interpreter. Roche served his apprenticeship under a clever businessman, for Lafontaine had managed to secure most of the individually held lands of his people through the white man's system of mortgage foreclosure during his six years as chief.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Letter from Father Stephen Theodore Badin, Huntington, Ind., to the Reverend John Purcell, Cincinnati, O., September 22, 1832. When commenting on the Catholic membership's characteristics, Badin inserted "— The Indians are our best Cong. —." Original letter in Notre Dame University Archives; photostat in the author's possession.

<sup>14</sup> John D. Barnhart and Donald F. Carmony, *Indiana: From Frontier to Industrial Commonwealth* (4 vols., New York, 1954), I, 211-219. A letter from George W. Ewing to Allen Hamilton, at the Forks of the Wabash, June 12, 1842, proposing a promise to secure a law permitting the Indians to remain in Indiana if certain claims against the Indians were acknowledged indicates the tactics used by some traders. The original letter is in the Allen Hamilton Papers in the Indiana State Historical Society Library, Indianapolis.

<sup>15</sup> Lafontaine secured the 320 acre farm of Mitchell and Margaret Richardville by a sheriff's sale after his claims against them were allowed at the March, 1845, term of the county court. Original documents are in the Roche Papers, as are the original indentures for numerous land transactions made at this time and noted as recorded in Book D of Huntington County. A power-of-attorney from Francis Lafontaine to John Roche dated March 29, 1844, included in the Roche Papers, is the first evidence of Roche's employment.

Before the Miami migration to the west in 1846, Roche was made a legal partner in the post at the Forks. When Chief Lafontaine died while returning from Kansas in 1847, Roche assumed the actual management of his estate, of which Father Julian Benoit, of Fort Wayne, and Lafontaine's widow, Catherine, were the legal administrators. His duties included the guardianship of the six minor Lafontaine children, administration of the estates of the Richardville heirs, certification of the annual payments to nearly two hundred Miami who remained in Indiana or returned from Kansas, and an interest in the settlement of a number of debts to individual Indians which had been acknowledged in the treaty of 1840.<sup>16</sup> In effect, John Roche was the acting chief of the Miami Indians. He also continued to operate Lafontaine's store, first at the Wabash Forks, and then in Huntington until 1859.

Roche's position in economic and Indian affairs in Huntington County during the forties was extremely important. Resources he controlled were sufficient to serve as a banking institution. In 1848 he held \$7,247.47 for the Richardville and Lafontaine heirs. There were five boxes of silver of \$1,000 each, \$1,375 in gold, and the remainder in German thalers, English sovereigns, and Dutch guilders.<sup>17</sup> Father Benoit's final report to the probate court of the county in 1852 for the firm of Roche and Lafontaine showed assets of \$39,373.23, including notes or loans of \$8,817.98 to individual white men. The report showed no division of assets to Roche as a partner, supporting the theory that this arrangement had been a legal convenience similar to the customary use of power-of-attorney to permit Roche to act for Lafontaine while the latter was in Kansas with his migrating people.<sup>18</sup>

The security of Roche's position was jeopardized by the marriage of Lafontaine's widow, Catherine, to the prominent

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<sup>16</sup> Letter of guardianship of the Lafontaine children from the Huntington County Probate Court, dated January 31, 1848; power-of-attorney from Julian Benoit, administrator, November 17, 1849; numerous notarized reports to the court concerning expenditures for the estate; memoranda of the annual treaty payments. Original documents in the Roche Papers.

<sup>17</sup> Memorandum of September 1, 1848, in the Roche Papers.

<sup>18</sup> Copy of the final report of Julian Benoit, administrator, to the Probate Court of Huntington County, November 20, 1852, in the Roche Papers.

merchant of Fort Wayne, Francis D. Lasselle, in 1847, followed by her death in 1849. Lasselle considered assuming direction of the estate and wrote to Allen Hamilton of Fort Wayne that he intended to investigate Roche's reliability while deciding whether he could safely leave the Miami affairs in another's hands.<sup>19</sup> Lasselle's decision to leave Roche in charge was an endorsement of the manner in which the estate was being supervised.

The management of the Lafontaine heirs' large farms included annual reports to the probate court, for even after reaching their majority the Indians appear to have been unwilling or unable to conduct their business affairs.<sup>20</sup> This work was successful and evidently congenial, for Roche soon began to acquire large holdings of his own. His first large purchase was apparently that of 560 acres in Huntington County from Robert English for \$1,800 in 1850. He bought twenty-one additional tracts of land in 1853 and 1854. In 1855 he bought 480 acres but mortgaged another tract for \$3,250, repaying the mortgage in 1859.<sup>21</sup>

About this time Roche began his association with Hugh McCulloch, of Fort Wayne, the most important relationship of his career. McCulloch was an important figure in Indian financial affairs because of his position as cashier of the Fort Wayne branch of the Second State Bank of Indiana. This placed McCulloch between the rival commercial and political factions led by Samuel Hanna, Allen Hamilton, the Ewing brothers, and the Edsall brothers. All were represented on the board of the branch bank, and McCulloch was adept at preserving harmony in the operation of the bank. McCulloch became president of the Third State Bank of Indiana when it was chartered in 1855, federal comptroller of the currency by appointment from Lincoln in 1863, and secretary of the treasury in Lincoln's second administration in 1865. He continued to serve as secretary of the treasury

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<sup>19</sup> Griswold, *Pictorial History of Fort Wayne, Indiana*, 381, tells of Catherine's marriage to Lasselle. Letter from Francis D. Lasselle to Allen Hamilton, Fort Wayne, Ind., October 23, 1848, in the Allen Hamilton Papers.

<sup>20</sup> Original reports to the Probate Court of Huntington County in the Roche Papers.

<sup>21</sup> Entries in the Real Estate Book; indenture from Roche to Augustus Sarageat, recorded March 21, 1855, in Book B, p. 403, of Mortgage Book, Allen County.

under Andrew Johnson until 1869, and was reappointed to the office by Chester A. Arthur in 1884. McCulloch became the resident partner in Jay Cooke, McCulloch and Company of London, but soon reorganized the bank as McCulloch and Company because of the panic of 1873.<sup>22</sup>

Although embarked on a career of national importance, McCulloch did not neglect his local interests. Roche would have been well known to him through their mutual connections with Miami affairs. The first evidence of their collaboration is Roche's memorandum of their joint purchase of 460 acres of land at Lagro in Wabash County in 1856. This village had failed to prosper from the Wabash and Erie Canal trade, but it was a station on the new Chicago and Atlantic Railroad, completed between Logansport and Fort Wayne in 1855, and therefore was again a speculative attraction. The partners continued their acquisitions of land with the purchase of 1,654 acres in other parts of Wabash County.<sup>23</sup>

When McCulloch began his Washington service in 1863, he gave Roche power-of-attorney to convey joint properties, a necessary legal step which gave Roche freedom to dispose of parcels of land whenever it was advantageous to do so. The accumulation of land by the partners was never rapid, but it continued until 1893 and totaled about 7,000 acres of the 10,776 acres in which Roche held an interest at various times. Since there were occasional sales, this amount was never owned at any one time. In addition to his rural purchases, Roche secured 87 lots in the city of Huntington and 168 in Largo. His real estate and that held jointly with McCulloch cost a total of about \$110,000 and required constant supervision, development, and improvement. The year 1870-1871 may be considered a typical one when the partners had expenses of \$13,045.19 for new purchases and improvements. A similar cost was the constant expenditure for

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<sup>22</sup> Hugh McCulloch, *Men and Measures of Half a Century* (New York, 1888); *Dictionary of American Biography* (22 vols., New York, 1928-1958), XII, 6-8.

<sup>23</sup> These totals are compiled from entries in the Real Estate Book, which give the date of purchase, legal description, acreage, price, seller, and date all transactions were recorded. The failure of Lagro to prosper equally with other Wabash valley canal towns had been a constant puzzle to such speculators as Elias Murray and John Tipton. Nellie A. Robertson and Dorothy Riker (eds.), *The John Tipton Papers* (3 vols., *Indiana Historical Collections*, Vols. XXIV, XXV, XXVI; Indianapolis, Ind., 1942), III, 156, 157-158, 198.

ditching and brush clearing, which amounted to \$4,108 for the period from 1873 to 1887.<sup>24</sup>

Though McCulloch authorized his son, Charles, to conduct his affairs in the United States, he instructed him to continue all existing arrangements.<sup>25</sup> The reasons for Roche's long association with McCulloch are not clear. His own business operations were large, and while the control of a portion of McCulloch's affairs proved profitable, the same business would have been doubly profitable if conducted with his own capital. Of course, there was always the advantage of sharing possible losses in such emergencies as the panics of 1857 and 1873. Furthermore, it was both flattering and impressive to represent a man of national and international importance.

Other fields of interest attracted Roche to take an active part in the development of Huntington County. He was a member of the eight man committee sent from Huntington to a convention at Logansport in June of 1852, to select the route for the present Wabash Railroad. The choice lay between a highland route north of the Wabash River from Logansport to Fort Wayne, and a valley route close to the river. Since citizens of the towns on each route believed the decision would assure or blight their futures, considerable rivalry had developed. The valley route was chosen when Roche produced subscriptions for \$22,000 to give practical support to the hopes of the towns along the river. He was then elected one of the twelve directors of the new company. The usual railroad construction problems were made more difficult by a cholera epidemic in 1854, but the line was completed in 1855.<sup>26</sup> Roche undoubtedly profited from this development since his Huntington lots were platted as additions

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<sup>24</sup> Power of attorney recorded November 10, 1863, in Huntington County. Memoranda of settlements of 1872 and 1887. Memorandum of authority recorded June 27, 1877. Original papers in the Roche Papers.

<sup>25</sup> Letters from Charles McCulloch, Fort Wayne, Ind., to John and Thomas Roche, May 5, 1882, and November 9, 1884, in the Roche Papers.

<sup>26</sup> Bash, *History of Huntington County, Indiana*, I, 223-226, gives details of the railroad's origins, including the original Articles of Association of the Lake Erie, Wabash and St. Louis Railroad Company. Brant and Fuller, *History of Huntington County, Indiana*, 414-415, 438-440. The *Proceedings* of the Lake Erie and St. Louis Railroad Convention held in Logansport beginning June 23, 1852, and the Articles of Association, signed June 24, 1852, are in the Indiana State Historical Society Library.

near the railroad in 1859 and 1861.<sup>27</sup> When a new railroad, the Erie, connecting Chicago with the Atlantic coast was proposed in 1870, Roche was again made a director and may have been its agent for the purchase of right-of-way land. The route passed through some of his farm lands where Roche Station was built east of Huntington, near the Roche prairie. The Erie Railroad was begun in 1873 and completed in 1890.<sup>28</sup>

Another important venture was Roche's part in the establishment of the first bank at Huntington in 1854. Called the Huntington County Bank, it was capitalized at \$50,000. Roche was president and his youngest brother, Thomas, was assistant cashier. This bank ended operations in 1857, but was able to meet all its obligations. In 1863 Roche became a director and large stockholder in the new First National Bank of Huntington.<sup>29</sup>

An interesting departure from the commercial matters in John Roche's papers and the only available documentation of his views on the Civil War is in the record of the trial of the leaders of the Knights of the Golden Circle, held at Indianapolis in 1864. Lambdin P. Milligan, one of the defendants, was a prominent Huntington lawyer who was often employed by Roche in legal matters. The defendants were tried by a military court at Indianapolis and sentenced to die for treason. The United States Supreme Court later set aside the conviction in one of the most important decisions on civil rights in American history when it ruled the defendants' rights to a civil trial had been violated.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Brant and Fuller, *History of Huntington County, Indiana*, 412.

<sup>28</sup> The present Erie Railroad was incorporated in December, 1871, as the Chicago, Continental, and Baltimore. In February, 1873, the name was changed to Chicago and Atlantic Railway; the Indiana State Historical Society Library has the official papers regarding its organization and consolidation. Earl Steele, *Building of the Chicago and Atlantic Railroad: A Review of Intimate Personalities and Accomplishments* (Huntington, Ind., 1926), and Bash, *History of Huntington County, Indiana*, I, 226-227, give brief accounts of the many reorganizations of the Erie.

<sup>29</sup> Brant and Fuller, *History of Huntington County, Indiana*, 431; Bash, *History of Huntington County, Indiana*, I, 234-235.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Eugene Cushman, *Leading Constitutional Decisions* (New York, 1946), 65-71, gives a clear exposition of the constitutional basis for the decision. Mayo Fesler, "Secret Political Societies in the North During the Civil War," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XIV (September, 1918), 183-286, is the best monograph on subversive societies in Indiana during the war. Florence L. Grayston, "Lambdin P. Milligan, A Knight of the Golden Circle," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XLII (December, 1947), 379-391, is detailed on Milligan's activities in the society.

During the trial Roche testified that Milligan was a "Peace Democrat" who had worked hard for peace at a time when some citizens believed anyone who did not vote Republican was disloyal. Roche was thus defending an unpopular position at a time of public hysteria when an attitude of moderation required courage. He further testified that he personally had been an active Democrat since 1854 but had supported needy soldier families, and though one of the largest taxpayers in the county, he had asked the county commissioners for increased appropriations for war purposes.<sup>31</sup>

After the war Roche became involved in extensive litigation as a result of his attempt to establish his lawyer brother, Thomas, in a machine and iron foundry company. The foundry, the first in the county, was built in 1859 by Morris and Avery Drummond. P. W. Moffitt purchased the company and operated it with various partners until 1870, when Thomas Roche became his sole partner. John Roche supplied a part of the working capital for the company. He tried to extricate his brother with a replevin suit in 1876, and finally secured a judgement against the firm in 1877 for the sum of \$14,219.22.<sup>32</sup>

Since Roche's major interest was in his large land operations, he took an active part in efforts to improve farming methods. He served as treasurer of the third Huntington County Agricultural Society which was organized in 1868. He maintained careful records of the selective breeding of his thoroughbred trotting horses, and his books on farming methods were as numerous as those on surveying or on Ireland and the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>33</sup>

Roche had maintained close relations with the Right Reverend Julian Benoit of Fort Wayne for years, and he was one of the distinguished laymen who attended the priest's

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<sup>31</sup> Ben Pittman (ed.), *The Trials for Treason at Indianapolis: Disclosing the Plans for Establishing a Northwestern Confederacy* (Cincinnati, 1865), 186.

<sup>32</sup> Brant and Fuller, *History of Huntington County, Indiana*, 435. Thirteen documents containing information used by the Roches's lawyer, Milligan, as evidence in the trial are in the Roche Papers. The court judgement was returned June 20, 1877.

<sup>33</sup> Bash, *History of Huntington County, Indiana*, I, 350-353; Real Estate Book descriptions of the Roche stables. The Roche library originally contained several hundred volumes and is in the possession of Mrs. Elizabeth Dalton of Huntington, Ind.

funeral in 1885.<sup>34</sup> He had also frequently expressed a desire to build a second Roman Catholic Church in Huntington where services could be given in English instead of in German, the language used in the existing church, SS. Peter and Paul. Plans for the new church were not complete when he died on October 15, 1894, but nevertheless they were to be finished and executed by his heirs.

John Roche had never married. His estate, estimated at \$500,000, was bequeathed to his unmarried sister, Bridget Roche. Since he had helped other members of his family for years, and they were all well established financially by this time, the only other bequests were for \$1,000 to the Huntington church and \$2,000 to Patrick Gorman, his foster son. Gorman, who had been reared from childhood by Roche, had become his business assistant and was made administrator of the estate.<sup>35</sup>

The plans for a new church were soon completed by the Roche heirs. The site next to Roche's home, where tradition says Father Stephen Theodore Badin celebrated the first mass in the county in 1834, was purchased. The structure was completed in 1897 at an estimated cost of \$90,000 and named St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church.<sup>36</sup>

After the fulfillment of her brother's plans, Miss Roche maintained the estate intact until her death in 1909, when Patrick Gorman became her principal beneficiary. Her will was more detailed than that of John Roche had been. At her death she owned at least nine farms; twelve city lots; mortgages and personal notes; bonds of the city and county of Huntington, of Indianapolis, and of Miami County; and stock in a laundry company, a newspaper, and a furnace manufacturing company. Substantial bequests were given to the Fort Wayne Roman Catholic Diocese, and to the Church's schools in Indianapolis and Terre Haute. Miss Roche's resi-

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<sup>34</sup> Charles Blanchard (ed.), *History of the Catholic Church in Indiana* (2 vols., Logansport, Ind., 1898), I, 203, mentions the "Honorable John Roach, of Huntington" in the account of this occasion.

<sup>35</sup> Roche's will was probated October 22, 1894. *The Catholic Universe*, December 3, 1877; Blanchard, *History of the Catholic Church in Indiana*, I, 190-212; Bash, *History of Huntington County, Indiana*, I, 312-314.

<sup>36</sup> Bash, *History of Huntington County, Indiana*, I, 298-300.

dence in Huntington was given to the new St. Mary's Church and School.<sup>37</sup>

The career of John Roche represents one instance of immigrant assimilation and business interests in nineteenth century Indiana. Roche devoted his life to the support of his church and to the acquisition of land. The path that led him to an influential position was unusual but effective. As the manager of the estate of the last Miami chief, Lafontaine, he was able to purchase valuable tracts of land and to control the use of considerable sums of money. To him, land located near a growing town, along a railway, or any other evidence of a developing or agricultural frontier promised the surest way to wealth, but such lands did not distract him from the gradual conversion of virgin timber lands to productive farms. Roche took a leading part in the development of important internal improvements when his support was needed and if such improvements would add materially to the growth of the area. Although not all of his commercial ventures were successful, he became one of Huntington's wealthiest men.

No personal record has been found of his attitude toward the men and events of his day, but the Milligan trial testimony suggests that his viewpoint was calm and moderate. This evaluation is supported by men who once worked for Roche, who tell of the short, stocky man who could be seen nearly every day riding horseback to supervise the workers on his farms, and who carefully fortified himself for the trip by one "after breakfast nip" of whiskey. Enough evidence exists to credit him with major roles in the final years of Miami occupation of Indiana, with a long and successful partnership with Hugh McCulloch, with the early days of the Wabash and Erie railroads, in the initiation and support of the first banking institutions and agricultural societies, and the St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church and School of Huntington can consider him their founder and principal benefactor.

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<sup>37</sup> Bridget Roche's will was probated in April, 1910. A copy is in the possession of Mrs. Dalton of Huntington.