

Meet Touissaint DuBois

Despite the fact that the Scots/Irish, English and later German immigrants settled what became Dubois County, Indiana, it's named for a Frenchman, although the pronunciation is quite different.

He was, however, a Hoosier as a transplant, although at the time there was no such thing as a Hoosier or even an Indiana.

According to that great oracle of the modern age (i.e. Wikipedia), along with other sources, Toussaint DuBois was born Oct. 8 1762 to Charles Quintin dit Dubois and Cecile (Couvret) in St-Laurent, near Montreal (Quebec), his parents having married there on Oct. 26 1753 (Charles' second marriage).

Early reports stated that DuBois fought alongside Lafayette in 1777 but more recent research seems to indicate that he only arrived in Vincennes after the war of Independence.

After settling near Vincennes, he became a fur trader.

Dubois entered into a commercial partnership with Pierre Menard, which would last for sixteen years. Dubois and Menard established stores and trading posts in Vincennes, Cahokia, and Kaskaskia, and between 1800 and 1805, Toussaint traveled much of the United States east of the Mississippi River for commercial and mercantile business. He also acquired large sections of land in the Indiana Territory.

He married twice: first to Jeanne Bonneau, by whom he had four sons and a daughter. Jeanne Bonneau was born in 1770 in Vincennes. Their four children were Suzanne (born 1789), Charles (born 1795), Francois (b. 1794) and Henry (b. 1792). They were married on October 6, 1788, in Indiana. In 1800, Janne Dubois died, leaving Toussaint the charge of five children under the age of twelve.

After the death of Jeannette, DuBois married Jane Baird in 1805. Jane was born in

1781 in Pennsylvania. The three sons born to Jane and Toussaint Dubois were: Thomas Baird (b. 1806 in Illinois), Jesse Kilgore (b. 1811 in Illinois) and James (born circa 1810 in Illinois).

As Native Americans under the leadership of Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh began to organize a confederation to resist encroachment on their lands in the Indiana Territory, Governor William Henry Harrison called on Toussaint, who had extensive experience trading with the Indians, to ascertain and resolve any outstanding grievances. When peace overtures failed, Toussaint joined Harrison's campaign against the Indians, commanding a company of spies and guides at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811.

During the War of 1812, he received a commission as major in charge of all spies in Indiana and commanded the Kentucky Mounted Spies.

Dubois continued to travel on behalf of his firm after the War. Sadly, while returning from a business trip, he met a tragic death. The accident occurred on March 11, 1816, as Dubois and an African American servant were returning along the Buffalo Trace from a visit to Pierre Menard at their Kaskaskia store. As they attempted to cross the flood-swollen Little Wabash River in Clay County, Illinois, Dubois and his horse were dragged under and drowned.

Depending on who you ask, Dubois may have been weighed down somewhat by valuables he was unwilling to part with, even at nature's insistence.

The Western Sun noted his passing in a tribute published a few days later, concluding that "in him the poor have lost a benefactor, his country, a friend. He was a kind husband, an indulgent father and an honest man."

Toussaint Dubois was interred in the French cemetery in Vincennes after Masonic burial rites.



What exactly was the Old Frontier

Caroline Ebert

Long before Indiana became the 19th state, and even the Indiana Territory, there was the Northwest Territory. The Northwest territories, formed from unorganized lands after the American Revolution, contained what would one day become parts of six U.S. States: Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, and the northeastern part of Minnesota. This would make it the first United States territory created after the revolution. Originally

occupied by Native American tribes, then by the French before it was passed to Great Britain's control after the French and Indian War. After the official end to the American Revolution with the Treaty of Paris in 1783 this land would change ownership again to be under the control of the newly formed United States. Lasting from its organization in 1787 to 1803 it was formed from lands from the border of the Ohio River to the Mississippi River. Many settlers moved to this area before they

reached statehood creating towns along the rivers. The rest of the land would become the Indiana territory in 1800. People who moved to this territory as settlers had to be entirely self sufficient, with only small towns nearby, and every major city in America at that time being across the Appalachian mountains. If you didn't live in a town along a major waterway like the Ohio or Mississippi rivers, you would be expected to live in small log cabins built by hand. Brick or stone buildings required

materials and manpower that would be hard to come by in the middle of the wilderness. Even in the middle of the wilderness it wasn't empty, even in the year of its founding the territory, over 45,000 Indigenous people were living here. These included many tribes across the Midwest, tribes in Indiana including the Shawnee, the Miami, and the Delaware. At the time of its disbanding in 1803 after the addition of Ohio as a state, an additional 4,000 settlers were living there.