
Unmarried lived at Terre Haute, Indiana..

On 16 March 1999 I went to Terre Haute Indiana to look at the papers that Sheldon Swope left when he passed away. These papers are in the possession of the Swope Museum in Terre Haute. The Director of the Museum, David Butler, was kind enough to give me access to these papers. My goal was to increase my information on Michael S. Swope and to further confirm that he was in fact one and the same with Sheldon Swope of Terre Haute. In reviewing these papers I have come across some interesting things.

Michael S. Swope and Sheldon Swope have the same birth date listed, 3 November 1842.

I have the Bloomers of Terre Haute listed as relatives and they are listed as such in Sheldon's papers.

My grandfather, A. E. Swope of Evansville, I have him as Nephew of Michael S., is listed as a visiting relative at Sheldon's funeral.

In a transfer of property agreement the signature was "Michael S. Swope". This was a purchase of property in Vanderburgh County. (The old home place?) (Confirmed, it was the old home place which is partly on the present airport. See photos for James Asbury.) The Seller was James W. Swope and wife Merrimisa F. (I can't read this well) of Montgomery County Ohio.

In a news release for the opening of the Museum, (in 1942 13 years after Sheldon death) James Swope was listed as a half brother. The release said that upon returning from the Civil War (1861-1865), Sheldon worked for and learned the jewelry business from his half brother James Swope in Dayton Ohio.

In the same news release it listed Shelton as being born in Attica Indiana. In the funeral program Sheldon was listed as being born in La Porte Indiana. There is an Attica Indiana about 88 miles from La Port, south west of Lafayette, 57 miles north of Terre Haute. There is a La Porte county, could Attica be an extinct town in that county? Michael S. Father and Mother lived in Vanderburgh County, and therefore I thought he was born in Vanderburgh County.

In a picture passed down to me as being Michael S. Swope, he is in his late years and has a very long full beard. Pictures amongst the papers show Shelton with a full mustache, no beard. Even in pictures in later years during his retirement in Florida, no beard.

I did not take as much time as I should have with these papers. I need to make time and go back and take another look.

Paul Swope

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DATA PRESENTED TO PUBLICATIONS ON OPENING OF
SHELDON SWOPE ART GALLERY

Notes:

This was written in 1942 for release to the media when the Swope Museum opened.

Sheldon Swope was born in Attica, Indiana on November 3, 1843. When the Civil War broke out he was living on a farm near Evansville, Indiana, and he enlisted in Company I of the 14th Indiana Volunteers when he was not quite 18 years old.

He trained at Camp Dick Thompson near Fort Harrison and served four years. He was in the battles of Gettysburg, Antietam, and the Shendoah valley campaign. His regiment was the first to leave the state for the war under Governor Oliver B. Morton. Returning from the war, he entered the jewelry business under his half brother, James Swope in Dayton Ohio. Finishing his apprenticeship, he came to Terre Haute in 1867, the year the state fair was held in Terre Haute, and secured a position with S. P. Freeman Jeweler. Swope was made a partner, and then he bought the other half interest in the firm and continued in the business until his death as the firm of Swope and Nehf, although he was inactive in his later years.

He at one time served as a director in the Terre Haute Vigo National Bank. He was a Mason of high rank, an Oddfellow, and a member of the Elks Lodge No. 86.

He traveled considerably, one trip being one around the world. It is known that he was one of the best read men in the city and was considered a connoisseur of art and fine china.

Mr. Swope was a shrewd businessman and in time accumulated a large fortune. His jewelry business was without question one of the finest businesses of its kind in its day. Swope was an excellent diamond merchant.

During his later years he lived in Florida most of the year, fishing at Punta Gorda and occasionally coming North to hunt. During his life in Florida he lived in a small cottage and ate his meals at a boarding house. At his death he had in his possession over a years accumulation of Civil War pension checks left uncashed. He lived for the most part on the income from rents on property in Terre Haute and reinvested the income from the bulk of his securities. He was never married and at the time of his death had no surviving relative except nephews and nieces.

The will bequeathing the art gallery was written in 1903 and it is quite apparent from this fact, and is confirmed from several reliable sources, that he thought about and planned for the gallery long before his death on July 9, 1929. Putting two and two together, it would seem from the fact that the Will was written so early and never changed, and from the fact that he lived so frugally, that the idea of establishing an art gallery not only meant a great deal to him, but that he molded his fortune for that purpose.

The Will provided that an art gallery be established and called the Sheldon Swope Art Gallery. Ten years following his death, the accumulated income from the estate was to be used to alter the Swope Block, a building he owned in downtown Terre Haute, into suitable form for an art gallery and to purchase and accumulate works of art. These works, and whatever else would be purchased from the income of the estate from time to time, were then to "displayed publicly and free of charge to residents of Terre Haute and Vigo County." A bank is trustee of the estate. Upon application of this trustee to the judge of the Circuit Court of Vigo County, he was to appoint three "Board Managers." These Board Managers are to serve without compensation for life. It is provided that one must be a woman.

As Director of the gallery I believe the best investment for this gallery is, without question, in contemporary American art. In this, we shall devote the major portion of our income to the purchase of contemporary American painting and sculpture. By concentrating our fund we will be able to do a better job than by spreading it to thin over many fields. It is also a fact that our so-called Old Masters would only bring about a financial impasse at the risk of obtaining third or fourth examples (and only one or two at that). Our policy will be to continue to purchase Contemporary American painting and sculpture and exhibit them. We will also have exhibitions of other periods of art to back up a good comparative understanding of the work done today.

Information from the history page of the Swope Art Museum web site.

Terre Haute jeweler Sheldon Swope (1843-1929) left his fortune to establish an art gallery in his adopted hometown. Ten years after his death, with claims against the estate settled and sufficient interest accumulated, planning began for the new gallery and the collection to be housed there. The second floor of the Swope Block, a commercial building constructed in 1901, was gutted and rebuilt as a modern exhibition space in the streamlined Art Deco style. Galleries stylishly decorated in grays, golds, reds, and greens were prepared to receive the contemporary American paintings and sculptures being

purchased by the first director, John Rogers Cox. The new Sheldon Swope Art Gallery opened to the public in 1942 to national acclaim. Plans now (1999) in development call for the restoration of the second floor galleries to their original appearance, as well as refurbishment and modernization of the exhibition spaces on the first floor.

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Source: Greater Terre Haute and Vigo County, Oakey, Vol. I (1908), pp. 406-408.

(I believe this was written by Sheldon Swope himself. Paul Swope)

GREATER TERRE HAUTE AND VIGO COUNTY

SHELDON SWOPE, head of the large jewelry house of the Swope-Nehf Jewelry Company, is also one of the large property owners and leading citizens of Terre Haute. He is a native of Indiana, born at Laporte, on the 3d of November, 1843, and is the son of Asbury and Jane (Patterson) Swope. The ancestors of the American branch of the Swope family are traced to a locality near Heidelberg, Germany, whence in 1676, they emigrated to Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, and there obtained a grant of one thousand acres of land, a portion of which still remains in possession of the family. The grandfather of Sheldon Swope was Michael Swope, who married in Pennsylvania at an early date, and then settled near Jacksonville [Jacksonburg], Wayne county, Indiana. Asbury Swope, the father, was born in Lancaster county, and came with his parents to Indiana. He was educated for the medical profession, but never practiced, and in 1849 he started with his family for the western plains, on the way, to California. At Evansville he was to meet a companion, who was to accompany him on his long and hazardous overland journey; but the death of his friend at that point induced him to abandon his California plans and instead to buy a farm near Evansville, where he located and died in 1852. The mother was a native of Preble county, Ohio, and she was born in 1818, the daughter of Joseph and Isabella (Caldwell) Patterson. She died at Evansville in 1894. The Patterson family is descended from the Pilgrims of Plymouth Rock, and James Patterson removed from Massachusetts to Philadelphia, but after a short time in that city went to York, Pennsylvania, where his son James (the great-grandfather of Mrs. Asbury Swope) was born in 1760. The latter migrated to Pendleton county, Virginia, there he married Anna Elizabeth Hull, cousin of Commodore Hull, of the, United States navy, in 1784. He was a lawyer and surveyor, laid out the town of Staunton, Virginia, and after selling his property there removed to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, of which place he is said to have been the first practicing, attorney. In that city he acquired a large estate, then known as Springfield farm and which now embraces the Twelfth, Thirteenth and fourteenth wards of Pittsburg. Joseph, the son of the second James Patterson, was born in Pendleton county, Virginia, on June 6, 1789; married Isabella Caldwell in Pittsburg, in 1816,

and died in the west in 1855. He was the maternal grandfather of Sheldon Swope. Mr. Swope was reared in Vanderburg county, Indiana, and obtained his education in its common schools. On June 6, 1861, before he had reached his eighteenth year, he enlisted at Evansville, in Company I, of the Fourteenth Indiana Volunteer Infantry, which was the first regiment from the state to enlist for a three years' term, and of which he was the youngest member. The Fourteenth was mustered in at old Camp Vigo, Terre Haute, and Mr. Swope faithfully followed its fortunes, good and bad, for the entire term of enlistment. At the conclusion of this period he shared, with his fellow soldiers, the pleasure of listening to these words from Indiana's illustrious war governor, Oliver P. Morton: "Bad as we need soldiers at this time, we cannot call on the Fourteenth for further service and ask it to return to the front, after its three years of hard campaigning and severe fighting, and having been in more skirmishes and battles than the Old Guard of Napoleon."

After leaving the service Mr. Swope located in Dayton, Ohio, where he learned the jewelry business, and in September, 1867, settled in Terre Haute. In the latter city he entered the employ of S. R. Freeman, jeweler, then located on Main street, between Third and Fourth, and six months later his employer removed his main store further east, leaving Mr. Swope in charge of a portion of the stock at the old stand. Within a year he was proprietor of the branch, and established himself in the Naylor Opera House building. In 1884 he received Charles T. Nehf into Partnership, and in 1890 the firm removed to No. 522 Main street. In, 1895 Mr. Swope purchased the large three-story brick building at No. 524, where the business is at present located and represents one of the largest establishments of the kind in the state. In 1904 an incorporation was effected under the style of the Swope-Nehf Jewelry Company, with Mr. Swope as president; C. T. Nehf, vice president and general manager; William E. Bloomer, treasurer, and Anna M. Bloomer, secretary. Besides founding and organizing the extensive business which he still controls, Mr. Swope has done much for the up-building and general advancement of Terre Haute, several business buildings standing as evidences of his thrift, progressiveness and enterprise. As early as 1878 he erected the first structure of this character, when he built the three-story brick store for the Harvey Furniture Company. In 1893, with Max Hoberg, he erected the fine stone-front building occupied by the Albrecht Dry Goods Company, and in the spring of 1902 he built the Swope Block, corner of Seventh and Ohio streets. The latter is one of the largest and finest office buildings in the city, and was the first modern structure of the kind erected in Terre Haute. Mr. Swope also owns a fine farm of one thousand one hundred acres in Otter Creek township, Vigo county, and is altogether one of the largest tax payers in this section. As one of the strongest business factors of the city, he is identified with the Retail Merchants' Association and the Commercial Club, and his fraternal activities center in the orders of the Scottish Rite in Masonry and the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks.