

WABASH VALLEY

P R O F I L E S

A series of tributes to hometown heroes who have made a difference.

Job Freeman

An immigrant of humble origins, Job Freeman became one of Indiana's most successful pioneer coal operators.

Born in Henley, Staffordshire, England, Freeman emigrated with his family to Youngstown, Ohio, in 1850 when he was five years old. His father died in 1855, leaving his mother to raise six children. Job and his older brothers worked hard to support them but, in September 1864, after serving with the Ohio Guards during the Civil War, he headed west. In Washington, Ind., Freeman got a job working with a pickaxe in a coal mine.

In 1872 he accepted the opportunity to manage a mine near Edwardsport.



A few years later, he bought and opened the Indian Creek mine near Bicknell, making it extremely profitable. In 1886 he was elected Knox County Auditor and resided for seven years in Vincennes. That year he married Martha Jane Tranter of Washington, the mother of his four children. Soon he became interested in Greene County coal fields and relocated to Linton in 1893, constructing a palatial Victorian-style limestone residence at Fourth and Northeast A streets. Meanwhile, Job had developed a reputation as a fair operator and was an early proponent of collective bargaining. An active Elk and Mason, Freeman was deeply involved in Republican politics. He was the party's candidate for state auditor on one occasion, and in 1900 a delegate to the Republican national convention which nominated William McKinley.

Freeman expanded his interests to Vigo County, acquiring the Glen Ayr Coal Company, United Powder Co., Tecumseh Coal Co., and Green Valley Coal Co., among others. In 1912 the Freemans moved to Terre Haute, residing at 626 Walnut St. while building a home at 204 Potomac Ave. in Edgewood Grove. Upon departing Linton, the Freemans donated their home to be used as Linton's first public hospital, fully equipping it as a health care facility. Freeman City Hospital, established in June 1912, was expanded and used until Freeman-Greene County Hospital opened in 1972. The former Freeman residence was razed on Sept. 25, 1985.

By the time the Freemans moved to Terre Haute, their two sons, William J. and Clarence J. Freeman, were handling management responsibilities at the mines, allowing Job and Martha to travel extensively. In addition to their real estate interests in Vigo County, the Freemans owned property in New Smyrna Beach, Fla., and Lake Maxinkuckee, Ind.

While vacationing in Florida in 1917, Job collapsed. He was brought back to Terre Haute but rarely visited the office or mines thereafter. He died at his home in Edgewood Grove on Jan 3, 1919, at age 73. Martha J. Freeman passed away on New Years Day, 1923.

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