

Who is Asa Bales?

Asa Bales (1795-1845) was born and raised in North Carolina in 1795. He later met his wife, Suzanna, and they both moved to Indiana in 1822 and settled in Mooresville, where he became a teacher. He and his wife did not have children of their own, so in their home they raised children who had become orphaned and gave money to build a school. Ten years later, in 1832, they moved to what is now Westfield, Indiana and opened the first business in town, a general store that was located near Union and Main Street. This was before Westfield was actually plotted for a town, and Asa's pioneering efforts helped settle this blossoming new land.

In 1833, a meeting was held in his home where the first public elections of any kind were established. This was the election of two justices of the peace and other officers. His home in a way served as one of the places of trust where the local people could conduct the business of efforts to establish local government.

In May 1834, Asa, along with Simon Moon and Ambrose Osborne platted the streets and founded Westfield. The original plat contained forty-eight lots located in and around what is now the center of the city. Asa is credited for naming Westfield after the "Westfield Friends Monthly Meeting," a Quaker anti-slavery group in North Carolina.

When the Westfield Society of Friends split over anti-slavery issues, he was instrumental in establishing the new congregation. This effort clearly indicated his deep personal convictions and moral beliefs. Asa and other settlers in the area offered a haven for the slaves that were en route to Canada on the Underground Railroad. Often the men would take the runaway slaves into their homes and barns and place them in cleverly designed hiding places, while the women cooked and provided clothing for the runaways.

Asa provided land on North Union Street for the Anti-Slavery Friends Meeting House and Cemetery. He and his wife both died in the fall of 1845 during the cholera epidemic and are buried in the cemetery, which can be seen from the Asa Bales Park trail.

A Farewell

By: Asa Bales

*Farewell, farewell, my native ground, Where oft I used to roam,
Farewell to friends and neighbors round, Farewell to house and home.
I bid you all a long adieu, Adieu, adieu I tell,
And if I should no more see you, I wish you very well.
To Indiana State I'm bound, Out to the western plain,
No more to see my native ground, Nor be with you again.
And if we here should meet no more, Our talents let's improve,
That we may meet on Canaan's shore, And dwell in peace and love.
So now farewell a long farewell, My parting leave I take,
And while these words my tongue doth tell, My heart within doth ache
Farewell, farewell, my friends and all, Farewell my parents too, For now on you no more I call, I bid you all Adieu*