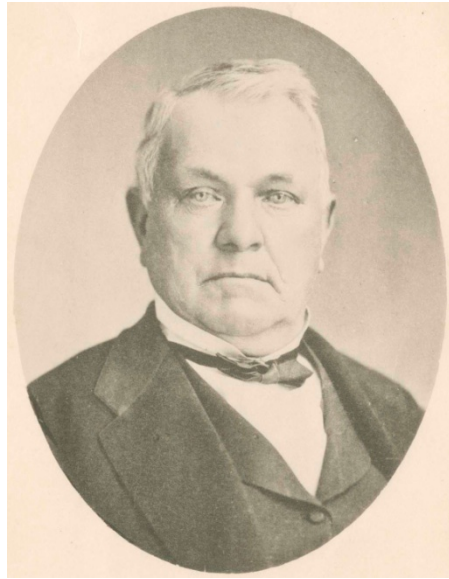


# PURDUE

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UNIVERSITY

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## INVENTORY TO THE JOHN PURDUE ARTIFACT COLLECTION, 1814-1988

**Purdue University Libraries  
Archives and Special Collections  
504 West State Street  
West Lafayette, Indiana 47907-2058  
(765) 494-6414**

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Compiled By: Amanda C. Grossman

## Descriptive Summary

<b>Creator Information</b>	Purdue, John, 1802-1876
<b>Title</b>	The John Purdue Artifacts Collection
<b>Collection Identifier</b>	MSR 00001
<b>Date Span</b>	1814-1988
<b>Abstract</b>	Various artifacts owned by, purchased by, or associated with John Purdue.
<b>Extent</b>	5.2 cubic feet (6 mss. boxes); 1 oversized box; 2 oversized items
<b>Finding Aid Author</b>	Amanda C. Grossman, 2008
<b>Languages</b>	English
<b>Repository</b>	Archives and Special Collections, Purdue University Libraries

## Administrative Information

<b>Location Information:</b>	Boxes 1-7 HRVT; Oversized Item 1 ASC Stacks; Oversized Item 2 Attic
<b>Access Restrictions:</b>	Collection is open for research. The collection is stored offsite; 24 hours notice is required to access the collection.
<b>Acquisition Information:</b>	Pocket watch donated by Lillian Dalman in 1995; resin mask donated by Donald B. Ingle in 1988; Havilland china set and washstand donated by Blanche Brown Johnson in 1923; Havilland soup tureen donated by Mrs. Arturo Curtis in 1926; 16-volume Humboldt library donated in 1948 by E.L. Kirk; <i>The Philosophy of a Future State</i> donated by A.C. Harvey in 1911?
<b>Custodial History:</b>	Gold pocket watch was originally purchased at an auction on December 30, 1876 by Fred H. Proper; it was later purchased in an Indiana pawn shop by Harry C. Guthrie and donated to the University by Lillian Dalman in 1995. Letter holders (two leather, one cardboard) possibly belonged to John Purdue or his associates. The 16-volume Humboldt library was originally purchased at an auction on December

30, 1876 by Thomas M. Parks, grandnephew of John Purdue and donated to the university by E.L. Kirk in 1948. The single volume entitled *The Philosophy of a Future State* was presented to Mrs. Amoranda Harvey by John Purdue in 1838. Havilland china set (originally 250 pieces) was purchased by John Purdue in New York in 1856 for Lazarus M. Brown as a wedding gift; china remained in Brown family until donated by Blanche Brown Johnson in 1923. Soup tureen presented to the parents of Mrs. Arturo Curtis by John Purdue was donated to the university by Mrs. Curtis circa 1926 and added to the existing china collection. Flag was presented to the Purdue Rifles militia group in May 1863 by the citizens of Lafayette and Earl & Hatcher, local grocers. The death mask was created by Anderson M. Moore, local dentist, upon the death of John Purdue in 1876.

**Accession Number:** 06252008

**Preferred Citation:** The John Purdue Artifacts Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Purdue University Libraries

**Related Materials Information:** The John Purdue Papers; The John Purdue Newspaper Collection; The John McCammon Family Papers; The John Purdue vertical file

## Subjects and Genres

### **Persons**

Purdue, John, 1802-1876

### **Organizations**

Purdue University

Purdue Rifles

### **Topics**

Retail trade—United States

Militias—Indiana

Gifts

Personal belongings

### **Form and Genre Types**

Artifacts

### **Occupations**

Merchants—United States

## Biography of John Purdue

John Purdue was born in a log cabin in Germany Valley (near Shirleysburg), Pennsylvania on October 31, 1802, although the exact date of his birth has been questioned. He was the only son of Charles and Mary Short Purdue and had four older sisters—Catherine (McCammon), Nancy, Susan (Thompson), Sarah (Prosser), and five younger sisters—Eliza, an unnamed sister who died as an infant, Margaret (Haymaker), Mary (Miller) and Hannah (Clark). The Purdues may have been descended from French Huguenots, although they lived in a German-speaking region of Pennsylvania and may have attended a Dunkard church (John Purdue was still noted to speak with a German accent years later). Charles Purdue worked at a nearby iron foundry, and the family endured extreme poverty. John began attending a local school at age eight, but had to drop out at age twelve to help support his family as a hired worker. He may have also taught school in Pennsylvania when he was a little older.

In the early 1820s, the Purdue family moved to Adelphi, Ohio (60 miles south of Columbus, Ohio). Charles Purdue died either right before or during the move, as did one of the Purdue daughters, Nancy. John Purdue took a job teaching in a one-room school house in Pickaway County, and may have also apprenticed with a local merchant during this time. After brief stints teaching in Michigan and purchasing and running a farm in Ohio, Purdue was persuaded by his neighbors to take their hogs to eastern markets and sell them, which he did, making a tidy profit of his own and broadening his experience in the business world. Purdue continued to sell crops and livestock for his neighbors on commission, and he began to save as much money as he could while still providing for his mother and sisters.

In 1833, Purdue opened a general merchandise store in Adelphi, with James Fowler. Fowler's brother, Moses, had been one of Purdue's students and began to work in the store, which prospered and did business with suppliers as far away as New York. Purdue was doing well enough to buy a farm for his mothers and sisters in Ohio, as well as land in Warren County, Illinois, and 240 acres in Tippecanoe County, Indiana (at the present-day intersection of McCarty and Creasy Lanes in Lafayette). During his travels in the 1830s, he bought and kept newspapers about politics, business, education, national affairs, philanthropy, and the abolishment of slavery.

Sometime around 1834, for reasons unknown, Purdue left his Adelphi store and moved to Lafayette, Indiana. The community welcomed him, and Purdue quickly became involved in several civic activities: he served on the first board of directors for the Lafayette branch of the State Bank of Indiana, and became a member of the Northwestern Freedmen's Aid Commission. Throughout his long stay in Lafayette, Purdue would donate generously to churches, libraries, schools, and other local organizations.

In 1839, Purdue convinced his old apprentice, Moses Fowler, to join him in Lafayette and start another Purdue & Fowler general merchandise store, which moved from its original location to Third and Main Streets in 1840. In addition to merchandise, Purdue also continued to sell items on commission, traveling extensively to various cities to buy and sell a variety of items. Business was good, but even more so when the Wabash & Erie Canal

opened north of Lafayette in 1843. Purdue purchased Lot 1 (the first lot in the first plat of Lafayette) from Eliza and James McCormick, original settlers of the area. Joining this lot to other surrounding lots as he bought them, Purdue established the “Purdue Block,” an area that would eventually become known as the largest business district outside of New York City’s Wall Street.

In 1844, Purdue and Fowler parted ways. It is unknown if the two friends had an argument, but relations between John Purdue and Moses Fowler would remain strained for the rest of their lives. However, they would occasionally collaborate on business dealings, although for the most part they would remain major business rivals. After Fowler’s death many years later, his wife Eliza donated \$70,000 to Purdue University, the largest single donation since John Purdue’s initial donation of \$100,000. Because of her gift, Eliza Fowler Hall was named after her, and the Fowler Courts complex, Duhme Residence Hall, Fowler House, and the Knoy Hall of Technology are all named for Fowler descendants.

In 1846, Indiana Governor James Whitcomb appointed Purdue to a panel of commissioners to sell stock for Lafayette’s first railroad, the Lafayette & Indianapolis. Purdue was elected to serve on the board of directors, and he also contributed toward a second railroad, the New Albany & Salem. By this time, Purdue had appointed another young business associate, William Stacy, to partner with him in his general merchandise business. Purdue helped contribute funds for the building of a bridge over the Wabash River, which was completed in 1847. In 1851, he established a second “Purdue Block” in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He also opened a commission house for the sale of “western” products in New York (Purdue, Ward & Company), and had another office in Chicago.

In 1852, Purdue was appointed as a trustee to Lafayette’s first public school, and helped select sites for three new schools. While the Indiana Supreme Court debated for a year over the legality of taxation and local schools went without funding, Purdue donated his own money to keep the schools running. Purdue also contributed to the Tippecanoe Battle Ground, Stockwell, and Purdue Institutes, and to the Waveland and Alamo Academies. In Ohio he donated to Otterbein and Oberlin Colleges, the University of Akron, and possibly others.

In the 1850s, Purdue bought Walnut Grove Farm in Warren County, Indiana, and employed several family members to help run it, including William and Lucinda Clark, John and Eunice Prosser and their three children, and John McCammon. Besides owning extensive property in Indiana, Purdue also owned real estate in Iowa, Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, Colorado, Minnesota, and California, and possibly Texas. Despite his massive land holdings, Purdue himself lived simply, spending roughly half of his time living in a hotel in New York and the other half living in the Lahr House in Lafayette.

Mary Short Purdue died in 1860 at the age of ninety. When the Civil War broke out, Purdue donated money to the Union cause and became the main pork supplier for the Union Army. When Confederate sympathizers in Lafayette started vandalizing local businesses, Purdue financed and armed a volunteer militia, the Purdue Rifles (possibly named after the Enfield rifles Purdue bought for the men). Besides guarding the home front, the Purdue Rifles also served as a state militia called the Indiana Legion. They guarded Confederate prisoners,

located deserters, saw action at Twelve Mile Island on the Ohio River, near Louisville, Kentucky, and guarded railroads in Tennessee and Alabama, freeing combat troops for General Sherman's march through Atlanta. Purdue donated ten percent of a "citizen bounty" to be paid to men who volunteered for the Union Army, funded war monuments, and lent Tippecanoe County \$10,000 to cover its war debts.

When William Stacy left, Samuel Curtis became partner in the Purdue merchandise business in Lafayette. In 1863, Curtis left, and Lazarus Brown became a full partner. The following year, Purdue ran for Congress as a Republican against incumbent Godlove Orth. Orth was a good speaker; Purdue was not. Purdue narrowly lost the election, but the bitter banter both campaigns had generated chipped some of the polish away from his pristine reputation. In 1866, Purdue ran once more against Orth, this time as an Independent. Orth favored strong disciplinary measures against the former Confederate States as they rejoined the Union, whereas Purdue espoused a more forgiving approach. William Lingle, owner of the Lafayette newspaper the *Courier*, was particularly harsh in his criticism of Purdue, so Purdue purchased the rival paper, the *Journal*, to meet Lingle's onslaught. Purdue again narrowly lost the election, as well as a bit more of his reputation.

Around this time, Purdue began to show signs of the physical and mental degeneration that would plague him later in life. When asked to provide funding for a lecture hall, reading room and library for the young people of Lafayette, Purdue agreed, but only if the proposed building would be named the Purdue Institute. The idea was rejected, and Purdue himself began to be perceived as egotistical and stubborn.

Despite his recent disappointments, Purdue's other ventures were as varied and prosperous as ever. In 1867, Purdue and a group of other men salvaged a factory that made mechanical reapers and other farm machinery, renaming it the Lafayette Agricultural Works. When another group of businessmen started Lafayette Savings Bank, Purdue served as the bank's first president. In 1869, he helped form the Lafayette, Muncie & Bloomington (LM&B) Railroad. Disputes over the use of the tracks by other railroads began almost immediately. Because the LM&B ran too far south of his Benton County land holdings to profit him, Purdue's old partner Moses Fowler helped found a rival railroad, the Cincinnati, Lafayette & Chicago. Although it eventually branched north, the CL&C had to share some track with the LM&B. A long and bitter court battle ensued over track ownership, upkeep and usage. When the LM&B finally opened in 1874, Purdue had actually paid for a portion of the track to be built himself, and had secured over \$600,000 in personal bank loans to keep the LM&B afloat.

The LM&B was not Purdue's only legal and financial worry during this time—in 1870 he invested money in a silver mine near Georgetown, Colorado and established the Purdue Gold and Silver Mining and Ore Reduction Company. Laborers from a nearby mine had been smuggling the silver out on Sundays to avoid detection, and by the time they were discovered and legal proceedings had run their course, much of the mine's profits were lost, or had gone to pay lawyers.

By 1869, Indiana had received funding through the Morrill Act to establish a land-grant college providing instruction in agriculture, mechanical arts, and military science. Although several cities had expressed interest in hosting the school, the process was still stalled, and no college had materialized. Purdue first offered \$100,000, then \$150,000, to the state, as well as one hundred acres of land that he had purchased on the west bank of the Wabash River for the establishment of the college. His only stipulations were that the college bear his name and that he be awarded a lifelong seat on the board of directors. With the help of Senator John Stein, the Indiana Legislature approved the establishment of Purdue University.

Purdue and the new university trustees clashed immediately. Purdue had been appointed as a one-man committee to oversee the building program, which he did with his usual take-charge attitude, serving as his own contractor and, sometimes, architect. Purdue was raring to go, but the trustees advised caution—so much so that they held twenty-three meetings before they could decide on the location of the first building. Purdue was frustrated by what he perceived as unnecessary delay, and skipped the 1871 groundbreaking ceremony in protest.

The next few years brought a constant power struggle between Purdue and the trustees as Purdue University staggered into fruition. Purdue stumped around the nearly-empty campus and used his walking stick to measure building foundations, saying “myself and my cane are all the architect I need.” In 1873, the trustees appointed Richard Owen as the first university President, a man with little appropriate experience for the job. President Owen and the trustees tried to begin classes on October 1<sup>st</sup>, but had to stop as most of the buildings on campus were unfinished, with no heating or lighting. Despite these setbacks, the trustees continued to hire more faculty and conducted a set of free, fifteen-week courses as a trial run for the real experience.

In March of 1874, Richard Owen resigned his post, and Abraham Shortridge became the next President. Shortridge was more qualified than Owen; he had been Superintendent of the Indianapolis public schools, and had made advances in procuring education for black children. Although he suffered from very poor eyesight, he was competent, worked well with the trustees, and quickly spoke out against John Purdue. Purdue, perhaps seeing him as a threat to his power, immediately bent his will on wearing Shortridge down, and then out.

Under Shortridge, the Schools of Engineering, Natural Sciences, Agriculture, and Military Science were created. Classes officially opened in September of 1874. Although 200 students were anticipated, only 39 showed up to enroll. Of those 39, only 13 could pass their entrance exams. The others were put into the hastily-created Preparatory Academy to gain some extra instruction.

Eventually, John Purdue’s constant antagonism drove Shortridge out, just as he’d hoped. Shortridge resigned, physically and emotionally ill, and bankrupt. Ironically, John Purdue himself gave Shortridge a small loan for his immediate expenses, and helped arrange short-term housing for him on campus.

The first Commencement took place on June 16, 1875, with one graduate, John Bradford Harper. Purdue gave an address, alluding to his struggles with the trustees by saying “we



don't get on very nicely." The dislike was reciprocal. The trustees chose not to appoint Purdue as board president that August, and worked steadily against him at every turn thereafter. Emerson White became the next University President in December.

The next year was filled with trouble for John Purdue. In addition to his ongoing clashes with the trustees, his other business ventures were rapidly depleting his fortune, especially the ongoing legal headaches connected with the LM&B railroad and the Colorado mine. Purdue was declining mentally and physically, prone to confusion and paranoia. His finances became so drained that he had to mortgage most of his beloved Walnut Grove Farm to ensure the final payment of the pledge that gave birth to Purdue University in the first place. That was in August of 1876. On September 12<sup>th</sup>, Purdue's nephew drove him to campus to take a walking tour of the grounds, then returned him to his room at the Hygienic Institute, a hospital-like facility he had been staying at off and on for a few months. A few hours later, staff members found Purdue face down on the floor, dead.

After Purdue's funeral, a local dentist and former mining associate, Anderson M. Moore, created a plaster death mask of Purdue's face, which is currently part of the John Purdue Artifact Collection in Archives and Special Collections. Purdue was interred on campus, and the following year a subdued headstone was placed at his grave. But the real monument to Purdue was the University that surrounded him, a living, breathing memorial that continues to grow and evolve to this day. Of the many legacies that John Purdue left behind for the city of Lafayette, the state of Indiana, and the world at large, Purdue University was his greatest.

Sources:

Scott, Irena McCammon. *Uncle: My Journey with John Purdue*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008.

Kriebel, Robert C. *The Midas of the Wabash: A Biography of John Purdue*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2002.

Topping, Robert W. *A Century and Beyond: The History of Purdue University*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1988.

## Collection Description

### Scope

The John Purdue Artifacts Collection [1814-1988; 5.2 cubic feet, 1 oversized box, 2 oversized items] consists of personal items, gifts purchased by, and items associated with John Purdue. Items of note include the death mask created by local dentist Anderson M. Moore upon the death of Purdue; a partial set of wedding china purchased by Purdue for his business partner Lazarus M. Brown; a flag used by the Purdue Rifles, a Civil War militia that Purdue founded; and personal items owned by John Purdue, such as a pocket watch, washstand, and library. The Collection is organized into three series:

### Arrangement

**1. Personal items, 1814-1835.** Items in this series consist of personal effects of John Purdue, including a washstand, pocket watch, three letter holders, and seventeen books. Items are arranged chronologically.

**2. Miscellaneous, 1856-1988.** Items in this series consist of things either purchased by or associated with John Purdue. Items of interest include a death mask created by local dentist Anderson M. Moore upon the death of Purdue; a partial set of Havilland wedding china purchased by Purdue for Lazarus M. Brown; a flag used by the Purdue Rifles, a Civil War militia that Purdue founded; and a miniature resin mask of Purdue created by local artist Donald B. Ingle. Items are arranged chronologically.

**3. Oversized, 1863-1876 [1 oversized box, 2 oversized items].** The series consists of oversized items removed from the main collection because of their awkward size.

### Descriptive Rules

Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition / Describing Archives: A Content Standard

### Additions

Soup tureen donated by Mrs. Aruto Curtis added to Purdue china collection circa 1926.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

### **Personal Items, 1814-1835**

[1 cubic ft.]

#### **Box 1, Personal Items, 1814-1835**

##### 1. Library

1. *Personal narrative of travels to the equinoctial regions of the new continent during the years 1799-1804, 1814-1829* [7 volumes]
2. *Researches, concerning the institutions & monuments of the ancient inhabitants of America, 1814* [2 volumes]
3. *Political essay on the kingdom of New Spain, 1822* [4 volumes]
4. *Selections from the works of the Baron de Humboldt, 1824*
5. *The philosophy of a future state, 1835*

##### 2. Letter holders

1. Black leather letter holder [2], undated
2. Purdue & Stacy cardboard letter holder, undated

##### 3. Pocket watch, undated

## **Miscellaneous, 1856-1988**

[4.2 cubic ft.]

### **Box 2, Wedding China, 1856**

1. Small finger dish/spoon rest? [painted blue and orange flowers]
2. Tea cup saucer
3. Coffee cup saucer
4. Tea cup
5. Coffee cup
6. Oval tureen with lid
7. Small round lid with pomegranate handle
8. Dessert plate [small]
9. Salad plate [medium]
10. Dinner plate [large]
11. Small cup/tumbler with no handles
12. Bowl
13. Oval platter [2]
14. Small one-handed sugar/condiment bowl with lid [4, 1 missing lid]
15. Vase/napkin holder? [4 legs, 1 leg broken]

### **Box 3, Wedding China, 1856**

1. Tea cup saucer [4]
2. Dinner plate [9]

### **Box 4, Wedding China, 1856**

1. Coffee cup [3]
2. Coffee cup saucer [5]
3. Dinner plate [2]
4. Tea cup saucer [10]

### **Box 5, Wedding China, 1856**

1. Small one-handed sugar/condiment bowl with lid [7]
2. Tea cup [8, 1 with broken handle]
3. Tea cup saucer [4]

### **Box 6, Purdue Rifles flag, 1863**

1. Purdue Rifles flag, 1863 [located in Oversized Box 1]

**Box 7, Resin mask, 1988**

1. Small resin mask of John Purdue, 1988

## **Oversized, 1863-1876**

[1 oversized box, 2 oversized items]

### **Oversized Box 1 [Box 6], 1863**

1. Purdue Rifles flag, 1863

### **Oversized Items, 1876**

1. Death mask of John Purdue, 1876 [located in ASC Stacks]
2. Washstand, undated [located in Attic]