

## First People to Live in St. Joseph County: Lathrop Taylor

Lathrop Taylor was born in 1805 and came from Clinton, New York, to South Bend in 1827. He was fur trader and came here to trade with the Native Americans. He represented Hanna and Company, a rival of the American Fur Trading Company represented by Coquillard and Navarre. Taylor could read, was an excellent writer, spoke French, English and the Miami and Potawatomi languages. He developed a close relationship with Native Americans, and they helped him clear a place in the woods for his trading post.

Along with Coquillard, Taylor worked to found the city of South Bend. They bought land from the government and on March 28, 1831, they plotted the town of South Bend. They planned wide streets, donated land for the county courthouse, schools and a cemetery.

In 1829 the government surveyed the lands. Mr. Taylor was appointed postmaster of what was then known as Southold, Allen County, Indiana. Monthly mail was received from Vincennes, Indiana. The deliveries of mail were not very heavy for a long time. The original post office was what we might consider a wooden cupboard divided into small sections with shelves. Mr. Taylor was also county clerk and county recorder. Early records in the county courthouse still show the beautiful handwriting of Lathrop Taylor.

In 1832 the town of South Bend received and sent mail twice a week to Fort Wayne, twice a week to Detroit via Niles, and once a week to Chicago. In the same year a fort was built in South Bend to protect the residents against the raids of Chief Black Hawk and his followers. Lathrop Taylor was appointed a Colonel and placed in charge of the fort, even though it never needed to be used. In 1833 Mr. Taylor married Mary Johnson, the daughter of Peter Johnson, the carpenter. Together they raised six children. Mr. Taylor lived in the community he helped found until 1892, when he died at the age of 87. He is buried in City Cemetery.