

HOOSIER SURVEYOR

OCTOBER 2026

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE INDIANA SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL LAND SURVEYORS



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SUBMIT CONTENT FOR THE HOOSIER SURVEYOR

If you have an article to share or a story to tell, we want to hear from you! Please submit content to our Senior Communications Coordinator via email (kanderson@ispls.org).

The Hoosier Surveyor is published quarterly by the Indiana Society of Professional Land Surveyors to inform land surveyors and related professions, government officials, educational institutions, libraries, contractors, suppliers and associated businesses and industries about land surveying affairs.

Articles and columns appearing in this publication do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of ISPLS or the Hoosier Surveyor staff, but are published as a service to its members, the general public and for the betterment of the surveying profession. No responsibility is assumed for errors, misquotes or deletions as to its content.

COVER IMAGE

On August 25, 2026, ISPLS represented the surveying profession at STEAM Night at Victory Field in Indianapolis, IN. Ryan Selby and Josh Betz pose for a photo at the ISPLS booth.



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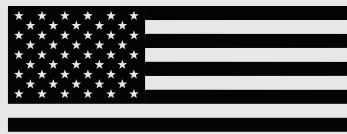
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



BY ZACH BEASLEY,
ISPLS PRESIDENT

As we enter the fall of 2026, it is hard to believe how quickly this year has passed. At the beginning of my term as President of the Indiana Society of Professional Land Surveyors, I outlined several priorities that I hoped we could advance together. As we move through the third quarter, I would like to provide an update on some of those efforts and share a few exciting developments as we look toward the remainder of the year and our State Convention in January.

Workforce development continues to be one of our priorities. ISPLS is always looking for members willing to attend career fairs, school programs, and other events around the state to represent our organization and introduce students to the profession of land surveying. Many young people simply do not know about the opportunities our profession can offer, and sometimes a conversation with a surveyor is all it takes to spark an interest.

If you would be interested in representing ISPLS at an event in your area, please reach out to the ISPLS Board. Even volunteering for one event can make a difference as we work to introduce the next generation to our profession.

Continuing with education and workforce development, the ISPLS Board will hold our annual October Board meeting at Vincennes University. This gives the Board an opportunity to visit and review the surveying program firsthand while also discussing other topics affecting our profession. Maintaining strong relationships with the educational programs preparing our future surveyors is important, and I look forward to our time at Vincennes.

At Purdue University, Cole Teany and Professor Jinha Jung continue working toward hosting a Geomatics Conference. Unfortunately, logistical challenges, including meeting-space availability, mean the conference will not be held this fall as we had originally hoped. The effort is still moving forward, however, and we hope to share more information as those plans develop.

There is also encouraging news coming from Purdue. Student chapter meetings have been seeing great participation, with approximately 20 students attending each meeting. I would also like to congratulate Purdue's ASCE surveying team, which recently placed 5th at the national competition. That is a tremendous accomplishment and a great reflection on the students and everyone supporting the program. Great work!

Our AI Committee also continues to move forward. The committee is currently working toward hosting a panel discussion at our January State Convention focused on artificial intelligence and its impact on the surveying profession.

Topics being considered include proprietary and intellectual property issues, business insurance and liability concerns, using AI to conduct research, and the potential use of AI in preparing legal descriptions.

AI is developing at an incredible pace, and I believe our profession needs to be part of the conversation about how these tools can be used responsibly and effectively. If there is an AI-related topic you would like the committee to consider for the January discussion, please email me at zbeasley@tippecanoe.in.gov. We want the panel to address the questions and concerns that are most relevant to our members.

President-Elect Jacob Hoffman also continues working his way around the state, attending local chapter meetings and connecting with ISPLS members. I appreciate Jacob's commitment to visiting our chapters and hearing directly from members throughout Indiana.

Jacob is also working with members of the ISPLS Board, the Indiana State Board of Registration, and the Indiana Professional Licensing Agency as discussions begin regarding possible changes to professional surveying licensure requirements in Indiana. This effort is still in its early stages, and there are many details yet to be considered. We will keep the membership informed as those conversations develop and there is more information to share.

Finally, I am excited to share that Pat Veraguth, outgoing President of the National Association of County Surveyors (NACS), recently reached out to the ISPLS Board.

NACS has expressed interest in joining us at our State Convention this January. We are excited about the opportunity to welcome NACS and its members to Indiana. Bringing surveyors together from different organizations provides another opportunity to exchange ideas, build professional relationships, and learn from one another.

As I look at everything happening within ISPLS, there is one common thread—involvement.

Whether it is volunteering at a career fair, participating in your local chapter, mentoring a young surveyor, contributing an idea to

the AI Committee, supporting our surveying students, or attending an ISPLS event, the strength of this organization comes from its members.

As we finish 2026 and begin looking toward January, I challenge each of you to find one way to become more involved. Our profession has a proud history, but its future will be shaped by what we are willing to do today to prepare those who will follow us.

Thank you for your continued support of ISPLS. I look forward to seeing many of you in January.

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SECTION CORNER PERPETUATION PROGRAMS

BY TERRY LIVINGSTON, PS, ISPLS
LIFE MEMBER

Is GIS the Right System of Record?

This article is not an argument against Geographic Information Systems (GIS). GIS plays an important role in county government and excels at many spatial and analytical tasks. Rather, this article examines whether GIS is the appropriate primary system for fulfilling the County Surveyor's statutory responsibility of Section Corner Perpetuation.

Any County Surveyor who is running — or even attempting to start — a Section Corner Perpetuation Program should be commended. I have assisted County Surveyors, as my time allowed, with the implementation of Section Corner Perpetuation Programs for over twenty years. During that time, I have seen these programs evolve from non-existent, to paper records, to spreadsheets, to computer databases, and finally to GIS-based systems.

With all of these tools now available, the question becomes: which tool is best suited for implementing and maintaining a Section Corner Perpetuation Program?

In my experience, the most effective solution has been a relational Database Management System serving as the authoritative system of record.

Modern GIS platforms often rely on relational databases internally. This distinction is consistent with the broader role of GIS as described by Esri, where GIS integrates, manages, analyzes, and visualizes geographically referenced information

while supporting a wide variety of operational workflows. [8]

This article is not questioning those underlying technologies. Rather, it questions whether the GIS application itself should serve as the authoritative records management system for Section Corner Perpetuation.

Before every GIS vendor, technician, or instructor turns the page, let me be clear — I have used GIS extensively throughout my career. GIS has given our profession capabilities we never had before and now could not imagine being without. However, GIS is not always the right tool for every job, and too often it is inserted at the wrong point in the workflow.

For a Section Corner Perpetuation Program, GIS should be a downstream recipient of information, not the system of record itself.

What the County Surveyor's Office Must Be Able to Do

Before comparing tools, we must first define what the County Surveyor's Office is required to accomplish. **Technology should follow function — not the other way around.**

To properly carry out the mandated duties of Section Corner Perpetuation, the County Surveyor's tools must be able to:

- Operate within realistic county budgets.
- Require minimal specialized training.
- Preserve a chain of title for each corner.
- Reliably archive records in digital

form.

- Allow fast retrieval and distribution of records.
- Support public-facing maps and websites.
- Integrate related survey records in one system.

While not all of these capabilities are strictly required under Indiana law, the first four are essential. Any system that cannot meet those minimum requirements is not an appropriate system of record.

Just what is a System of Record?

A Section Corner Perpetuation Program requires one authoritative source that preserves records, documents changes, maintains relationships among records, and serves as the official repository from which all other systems receive information. In enterprise information management, this concept is commonly referred to as a **System of Record (SOR)**—the authoritative source from which other systems obtain validated information. [9]

GIS can consume and display this information effectively; however, preserving and managing the authoritative record is fundamentally different from displaying it on a map.

DBMS and GIS: Which Tool Best Fits the Job?

Prior to the early 2000s, the only technology capable of meeting these requirements was a computer-based database. Today, counties also have GIS available. The question is not whether GIS is useful — it clearly is

— but whether it is the best primary tool for managing Section Corner Perpetuation records.

Many Indiana counties, particularly those with larger budgets, now use GIS for their section corner programs. In many cases, this sequence places the GIS in the role of system of record when a relational database may be better suited for that responsibility.

The section corner program should be the foundation, with GIS serving as a consumer of that data — not the system that controls it.

In counties without dedicated GIS staff, some County Surveyors have scanned tie cards and placed them on the county GIS. The location may be visible, but there is no structured data behind it and no practical way to update or maintain the record. Scanning documents into a GIS without structured indexing limits their long-term usefulness as records.

Even in well-funded counties, a GIS-centered approach often fails to meet several of the practical requirements of a Section Corner Program — particularly ease of use, continuity of records, rapid retrieval, portability, and County Surveyor control over the data.

At this point, it is useful to step back and compare the two systems based on how they actually function in the context of a Section Corner Perpetuation Program. The following table summarizes the practical differences between a Database Management System (DBMS) and a Geographic Information System (GIS), not in general terms, but as they specifically relate to the day-to-day requirements of managing, preserving, and dispensing section corner records.

Functional Comparison of a Database Management System and Geographic Information System		
Section Corner Perpetuation Programs		
Criteria	Database Management System (DBMS)	Geographic Information System (GIS)
Primary Purpose	● Record storage, organization and retrieval	● Spatial analysis and mapping
System of Record	● Authoritative system of record	● Consumes authoritative data
Chain of Title	● Native capability	● Possible with custom workflows
Historical Continuity	● Preserves historical relationships	● Often managed externally
Ease for Survey Staff	● Basic computer skills	● GIS training often required
Implementation Cost	● Often lower	● Often higher
Vendor Independence	● Surveyor retains control	● May depend on vendor ecosystem
Relationship Management	● Core strength	● Requires custom implementation
Record Retrieval	● Optimized for records	● Optimized for spatial search
Public Access	● Feeds websites & GIS	● Excellent mapping interface
Mapping & Visualization	● Basic	● Core strength
Spatial Analysis	● Limited by design	● Core strength
Recommended Role	● Primary system of record	● Visualization platform

Legend: Green = Primary strength • Yellow = Secondary capability / implementation dependent • Blue = Shared strength

Table 1. Functional comparison of DBMS and GIS when supporting a Section Corner Perpetuation Program.

Table 1. Functional comparison of a Database Management System (DBMS) and Geographic Information System (GIS) for Section Corner Perpetuation.

The comparison underscores that the question is not whether GIS is useful, but whether it is appropriately positioned. Section Corner Perpetuation depends on structured data, historical integrity, and administrative control — all functions that align naturally with a Database Management System. When GIS is used as the system of record, those priorities are often compromised. When it is used as a consumer of well-managed data, it becomes a powerful complement rather than a substitute.

Cost, Control, and Misalignment

There are section corner projects in Indiana that have incurred substantial costs simply to scan and host existing records in a GIS. These projects often provide limited or inefficient means of updating records and leave the County Surveyor without direct control of their own program.

Those same funds could have been used to employ surveyors in the field to actually locate and perpetuate corners — the very purpose of the program.

GIS excels at spatial analysis and visualization.

These are valuable capabilities, but they are not the questions surveyors are asking when researching section corners. Surveyors are looking for records, history, and documentation — and they need them quickly.

When County Surveyors relinquish control of their records to GIS staff, they are effectively outsourcing a core responsibility of their elected office, often at additional cost to the public.

Even if implementation costs were identical, one important distinction would remain: the historical integrity of the record itself.

A Section Corner record is never merely a coordinate on a map.

It represents an interconnected historical record consisting of:

- tie cards
- legal surveys
- original notes
- photos
- witness trees
- monument history

- restoration history
- adjoining surveys
- deeds
- perpetual relationships

This interconnected history is precisely the type of information relational databases were designed to manage. [4, 5]

A Working Example: Orange County, Indiana

The following example illustrates how these principles can be implemented in practice.

Recommended System Architecture

Figure 1 shows the recommended architecture in which the Database Management System serves as the authoritative system of record while GIS, the public website, and county users consume data from the database.

all organized and retrievable in seconds.

The County Surveyor maintains full control over the data. Regardless of which GIS vendor the county uses, the data can be exported for mapping or displayed on a public website using lower-cost solutions. The Orange County Surveyor's website (www.59Surveyor.com) demonstrates how the database serves as the engine that feeds both the public website and the county GIS.

Surveyors routinely receive records by email immediately upon request. The system is maintained by the deputy surveyor and requires only basic computer skills, ensuring continuity when officeholders change.

In addition to corner records, their DBMS houses legal surveys, plats, recorded and unrecorded surveys, and original notes — placing all of the Surveyor's records in one system.

the critical principle is that the authoritative records be maintained in a true Database Management System and shared with GIS — not managed by it.

Conclusion:

A Database Management System remains the most appropriate, defensible, and cost-effective tool for fulfilling the County Surveyor's Section Corner Perpetuation responsibilities. A DBMS preserves record continuity, minimizes cost, and ensures the Surveyor retains control over the data they are legally mandated to maintain.

This does not exclude GIS. It complements it.

The database is the system of record.

The map is the window.

A GIS can display and visualize information, but the underlying data — records, attributes, documents, and historical context — must exist in a structured database. Without that data, a GIS map is only a picture.

For Section Corner Perpetuation:

GIS answers the question:

"Where is the corner?"

A Database Management System answers the questions:

"What is the corner?"

"What records support it?"

"How has it changed over time?"

"Where is every document associated with it?"

Effective Section Corner Perpetuation Programs require both tools—but each must perform the role it was designed to fulfill.

Ultimately, the question is not whether counties should use GIS.

Section Corner Perpetuation Program – Recommended System Architecture
Database Management System as the System of Record

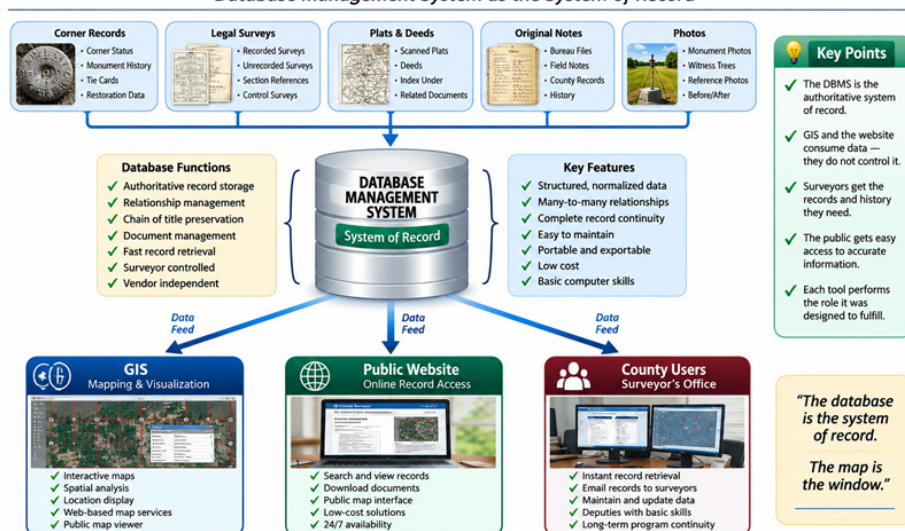


Figure 1. Recommended architecture for a Section Corner Perpetuation Program showing the Database Management System as the central system of record with GIS and the public website as downstream consumers of data.

Orange County, Indiana, provides one practical implementation of these principles. At the time of this writing, their system contains over 8,000 records,

The software platform itself is less important than the underlying architecture. Whether a county chooses Microsoft Access, SQL Server, PostgreSQL, Oracle, or another relational database,

They should.

The question is whether GIS should function as the authoritative repository for Section Corner records, or whether those records should originate in a true Database Management System and then be shared with GIS.

Choosing the proper architecture today will influence the accessibility, integrity, and continuity of Section Corner records for decades to come.

Terry Livingston, P.S., is a licensed Professional Surveyor, retired Survey Operations Manager for the Indiana Department of Transportation Southwest District, Life Member of the Indiana Society of Professional Land Surveyors (ISPLS), and member of the National Society of Professional Surveyors (NSPS). For more than two decades he has assisted Indiana County Surveyors with the implementation and advancement of Section Corner

Perpetuation Programs through education, database design, and public outreach.

The author welcomes constructive feedback from practicing surveyors and County Surveyors regarding how Section Corner Perpetuation Programs are being implemented in their counties, particularly where different system architectures have proven effective. Comments and correspondence may be directed to livingston@sectioncorners.com.

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LEGAL SURVEYS



BY JASON
McCORT, PS

The goal of this column is to provide brief summaries of recent Indiana Court of Appeals and Supreme Court opinions involving topics of interest to land surveyors but not to offer legal advice. I use Google Scholar to search for Indiana cases from the previous quarter and the Indiana Judicial branch website (www.in.gov/judiciary) to obtain a more conveniently formatted document. As this is only intended to be a summary of court opinions and I may have left out important information in my summary, I encourage you to look up the full opinion on either Google Scholar or the state of Indiana website for more detailed information. Comments or suggestions for future columns are welcome by email to: jmccort@hntb.com.

Olena Bahler and Robert T. Bahler v. Citizens Water of Westfield, LLC, Court of Appeals Case No. 25A-PL-1922, April 20, 2026.

This is an eminent domain case which serves as a reminder that the condemning agency must establish a need for property rights being acquired. Citizens Water of Westfield, LLC ("Citizens") filed a complaint, seeking an easement across the Olena Bahler and Robert T. Bahler ("Bahler") property

for a water line project. The easement described in the Complaint was not only for the water line extension but also for sewer, gas and other utilities. Robert Bahler filed objections. Citizens then filed a motion to overrule Robert Bahler's objections which the trial court did. Bahler appealed the decision.

Bahler did not dispute the need for the water line. However, they argued that the easement for the other utilities was granted without a need for those utilities being established. Citizens argued that the inclusion of the other utilities did not increase the size of the easement. Citizens also argued that Bahler benefited by the expanded easement use because they will receive additional compensation as a result of the increased damages.

The appellate court ruled that since the complaint established a need for the water line only and the easement description exceeded the need by including rights for sewer, gas and other utility services for which Citizens did not have a present or future need, the trial court should have sustained the Bahler's objections. The order overruling the objections was reversed and remanded.

Gordon S. Nesbit Revocable Trust v. Robert Jason Hendrickson, Court of Appeals Case No. 25A-PL-2274, April 7, 2026.

The Gordon S. Nesbit Revocable Trust ("the Trust") and Robert Jason Hendrickson ("Jason") own adjoining parcels in Monroe County, Indiana. The Trust owns the eastern parcel and Jason owns the western parcel.

This case involves a boundary dispute between the Trust and Jason regarding a strip of land adjoining both parcels. The strip is 71 feet wide at the north end and 36 feet wide at the south end.

The eastern parcel is located in the northeast quarter of Section 2, Township 9 North, Range 1 West and the western parcel is located in the northwest quarter of Section 2, Township 9 North, Range 1 West.

In 1938 and 1859, J.W. Spencer conducted surveys in or near Section 2, establishing the northwest corner and the northwest corner of the east half of the northwest quarter of Section 2. In 1975, Raymond Graham surveyed the eastern parcel. Graham set iron pipes marking what he believed to be the line dividing the northwest and northeast quarters of Section 2. On his survey, Graham noted a partial fence or corral near a barn approximately 70 feet to the east of the line he set at the north end and approximately 31 feet to the east at the south end. At some point, a fence was put up on the Graham line.

In 2023, a dispute came about between the Trust and Jason concerning the strip of land. Jason claimed the fence that was set on the Graham line was not on the property line. Jason hired a surveyor, Eric Deckard, to perform a retracement survey of the east half of the northwest quarter of Section 2. The surveyor determined the east line of the western parcel to be 71 feet east of the Graham line at the north end and 36 feet east at the south end.

The Trust hired another surveyor to review the survey of the western parcel. He determined that the line set by Graham was the property line between the two parcels as the Graham survey was the original survey.

The Trust filed a complaint against Jason and Jason responded with a counterclaim to quiet title in the disputed strip, claiming the line Deckard set was the true property line and that the Trust's predecessors-in-interest had treated the disputed strip as though Jason's predecessors had owned it. The trial court ruled in favor of Jason, stating that there was no evidence of an express agreement that the Graham line was the actual property line, thus determining that the line set by Deckard was the true property line.

Two topics of interest to land surveyors were discussed in the appellate court opinion, the first of which was that of acquiescence. The appellate court determined that the Trust failed to establish that the parties or their predecessors-in-interest had ever agreed that the line set by Graham was the true property line before the eastern parcel was sold to the Trust.

As both parcels were owned by the extended Hendrickson family from 1974 until 2021, it was all treated as being a part of the Hendrickson family property and were not treated as separate tracts.

The second topic of interest discussed in the opinion was the location of the true property line dividing the eastern and western parcels. The appellate court concluded that Deckard's retracement survey correctly identified the quarter-section line. The court discussed Deckard's reliance on and analysis of historical surveys, original monument evidence, county surveyor records and his field investigation. Surveyors interested in retracement methodology may find the opinion particularly worthwhile reading.

The appellate court affirmed the judgment of the trial court.

Jason McCort, PS, is a project manager for HNTB Corporation. He holds a B.S. Construction Technology degree from Purdue University. He is a professional land surveyor, licensed in the states of Indiana, Maine, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.



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COMPLETED CAREER



Edward Mahrous Mikhail

Sep 11, 1935 — Aug 24, 2026

Edward Mahrous Mikhail, 90, passed away August 24, 2026, at his home in Westminster Village in West Lafayette, Indiana. Edward was born on September 11, 1935, in Fayoum, Egypt, to Mahrous Mikhail and Lulu Khalil. In 1957, he graduated first in his class in civil engineering at Cairo University, then worked simultaneously as an instructor there by day and as a structural engineer at the largest consulting firm in the Middle East by evening. After a short time working in Egypt, he received a scholarship to attend Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, earning his master's degree in 1961 and his PhD in 1963. There he also met his future wife, LaVerne E. Lechner. LaVerne and Ed married on September 21, 1963.

The couple lived briefly in Philadelphia and Ottawa, Canada, before settling in West Lafayette, Indiana, in late 1965 and raising five children together. Ed joined the engineering faculty at Purdue University in 1965. Over the next five decades, he built what became

a nationally and internationally leading graduate program in geomatics engineering, supervising more than 250 master's and 30 PhD students in photogrammetry and geomatics, and advancing the field through research and extensive publications. After retirement, he became Professor Emeritus and continued mentoring younger faculty and PhD students. He also consulted for the U.S. government; his work led to the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency's Digital Point Positioning Database, still used by military and intelligence services today.

His dedication earned him numerous honors, including recognition from the U.S. Government Office of Research and Development and the National Reconnaissance Office; honorary membership in the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing; the USGIF Arthur C. Lundahl-Thomas C. Finnie Lifetime Achievement Award in 2018; the Fairchild Photogrammetric Award; and induction into the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency's Hall of Fame in 2023. In 2017, former students and colleagues honored him by establishing two endowments benefiting incoming Purdue graduate students. He often said of his career, "I've never worked a day in my life."

At home, Ed was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather who cherished family dinners, movie nights, trips abroad, and even early Saturday drives to dance recitals and piano competitions. Ever the educator, he was always ready to help his children—and later his grandchildren—with homework, and he loved making his family laugh with impersonations of the Cowardly Lion, Fagin, and Tevye. He also enjoyed puzzles, mystery

novels, BBC shows, classical music, and dining out, happiest simply surrounded by the people he loved.

Edward is survived by his children, their spouses, and his grandchildren: Lyree and Peter Marcus and their children, Maggie, Nathan, Bridget, and Marci; Nicole and Dave Hahn and their children, Aidan, Keaton, and Becan; Gavin and Barb Mikhail and their children, Fiona, Renn, and Raife; Monique and Beaudry Mikhail and their daughter, Tephra; and Yvette and Andrew Mikhail. He is also survived by his brother, Fr. Felimon, and wife Margaret, and sister Theresa; three brothers preceded him in death.

Ed built his life in service of others, offering friendship and guidance that will continue to shape countless lives. As Einstein said, "a life worth living is a life lived for others"—Ed embodied that ideal. His final resting place is Carmel Cemetery in Carmel, Indiana.

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