

THE HOOSIER PACKET - JANUARY 2016

JOSEPH BOWSHER

AND HIS WABASH & ERIE CANAL CONNECTIONS

By Charles Davis

Joseph Bowsher was born September 6, 1816 in Ohio to Jacob and Margaret (Bloxom) Bowsher. His parents were born in Pennsylvania, probably at Albany, Berks county. They migrated to Pickaway county, Ohio and then to Montgomery county, Ohio residing at the latter for a few years. From there they, with their five children, moved to Liberty township, Parke county, Indiana in 1823 along with William Bloxom and his family.

Jacob bought two hundred forty acres in the east and west sections of the south part of section 25 from the government on January 14, 1824. Deed Record 86/33-39 land entry book Upon arrival they found Miami Chief John Cornstalk's village on this land with one hundred fifty wigwams. This village overlooked Sugar Creek and took on the name of "Cornstalk Village."

In June 2004 I, Charles Davis, took the great-great-grandson of Chief Christmas "Noel" Dagenet, Kenneth E. Dagenett, and his wife Cathy to see this site. In 2015 this is still an impressive site to see.

There Jacob built a home for his family. He covered the spring once used by the Miami Indians with a spring house.

Looking through the door of Jacob Bowsher's spring house is seen the spring once used by the Miami Indians.

Photos by
Charles Davis



Home site of Jacob Bowsher, who located here in 1824, on the SE⁴ of the SW⁴ of Sec. 25, Penn twp., Parke co., Indiana. Cornstalk Village was on his land SW⁴ of SW⁴ of Sec. 25 Liberty twp.



“On one occasion, while the men of Cornstalk Penn township.

Village were off hunting, a young man named Steever of that township set fire to and burned down their village. On their return they donned war-paint and marched on Jacob Bowsher’s house, demanding to know who had committed the outrage. Jacob in self-defense said it was Steever, but dispatched his son Joseph on horseback to give Steever warning and a head start. The Indians chased him cross-country for sixty miles before giving up the chase. Shortly afterward the Indians removed to the reservation. The Indians’ graveyard was a short distance from the village and contained over one hundred graves. One grave was more elaborate than the others and was thought to be that of a chief. Joseph Bowsher with others opened it up and found a string of gold beads, a butcher knife and other relics.”

Jacob knew the art of husbandry. His great grandson Dr. John P. Heath of Fishers, Indiana visited Jacob’s old homestead in 1930 and described the 108 year old apple tree he found there saying, “He planted an apple orchard, one of those trees is still bearing fruit. The tree is 13 feet 6 inches in circumference at the ground. At the height of seven feet it divides into east and west forks. The forks have different kinds of apples on them. It stand as a monument to the Bowsher family.” *Noblesville Daily Ledger*, Feb. 13, 1930 and *Rockville Republican* March 20, 1930



Jacob was prominent in the United Brethren church. His house was used as the place for holding the first meeting of the few members of that denomination who resided in Penn township.

In 1854 changes were made on the township lines of Liberty and Penn townships. Jacob’s entry of land on the south side half of section 25 was put into

By 1840 Joseph Bowsher, our subject, was a carpenter and a millwright by trade and also farmed. That year he built a gristmill on Sugar Creek on the Bowsher property. No mention of this mill can be found in any Parke county history, but it shows up in Bowsher deeds and in Jacob’s will in 1843. This mill was mentioned in a story Hugh F. Russell, whose family lived just east of Jacob Bowsher, submitted to the *Rockville Republican* on September 30, 1908 entitled “Reminiscences of Sugar Creek.” He said, “On the tenth day of May, 1845, David Rardin, James Rardin, Daniel Upp, Hamilton Weaver and I, Hugh F. Russell, with some others went fishing with a seine, commencing at the Russell farm and going down the creek to the Bowsher mill. Now the creek had washed around the dam and left a pool of water which may be described as follows: The water falling over the dam had dug out a kettle-shaped pool with no current whatever eight or ten feet deep in the middle with a sandy bottom. About four o’clock we became tired of fishing in the pool and were wallowing on the sand. James Rardin proposed that we wash the sand off of our clothes and then go home. So he ran into the water and began swimming and we supposed he took cramp when he called for help. This frightened his father, who dashed in to help him, but both drowned at once. I can yet see the last ripple in the water as the air passed out of the bodies, and one shoe floating upon the water. Now the head and shoulders were gone and all were in confusion, but in a short time we ran around the pool with the seine but without success. Then we got two poles and held down the lead line of the seine, and caught James Rardin by one leg which was crooked and never straightened. We failed to get the other with the seine, but by this time George Worman had come. He got a canoe and being a very tall man held to the side of it with his hands and felt over the bottom and located the body. After finding it we got a pole with a hook on the end and catching it in the clothes brought it to the top of the water. The first body was in the water half an hour and the other an hour or more. Now it was mere providence that I am living. I went into water up to my neck then turned to come out but the sand slipped under my feet and the current carried me on until Hamilton Weaver caught two of my fingers and stopped me.

I think the mill dam was never repaired after this catastrophe. Yours truly, Hugh F. Russell.”

Later, in 1867, Joseph abandoned the mill, sold it and the family homestead. He moved to Liberty township in section 28. His home was just a short distance north of the “Depot Church” that he and M. Shoup built in 1854. On April 15, 1867 he bought lots 27 and 28 for \$1,000 from Col. Erastus M. Benson, who owned the Canal Warehouse and Benson’s Basin in Montezuma. D.R. 25/535 These lots faced the Wabash and Erie Canal on Water street. Benson had had a canal warehouse and a cooper shop built on these lots. This was not the Benson warehouse that stood on the basin’s dry dock. Benson’s Basin was the business hub from the late 1840s through the early 1870s until the railroad arrived in 1873.

Joseph with the family moved to town and built the first mill in Montezuma on lot 28. It was considered a show place of the town. It was built at a convenient spot for canal trade and shipping. This large frame mill building stood three and a half stories high and was connected to the warehouse and cooper shop. The heart of the mill was operated by the old burr system. The miller’s name was Captain Kidd. The engineer’s name was Captain Andrew Brown, who was killed on duty when his clothes were caught in the flywheel. This was the first tragedy. Joseph also was a miller and his son, Peter, was a mill hand. The Parke county census of 1870 gives Joseph’s monetary value at \$9,000.

In 1875 when the Wabash & Erie Canal closed in Parke county, Joseph sold the mill and cooper shop to Dr. George McCune on September 14. D.R. 31/496 According to the biography of John N. Bowsher, Joseph’s son, Joseph had operated the mill at a considerable loss financially. Then Joseph moved to the village of West Union where he died in 1888 and was laid to rest in that town’s cemetery.

Under McCune’s management a Mr. Murphy from Paris, Illinois was head miller. Later the burr system was discarded and the roller process was installed. The mill burned down in the 1880s under the management of Frank and Edward Hill. “It was one of the saddest blows the town had, for that old mill was instru-

mental in bringing thousands of dollars to Montezuma, besides a very good payroll was handed out every Saturday night.”

The Bowsher family was Parke county’s earliest pioneers. The county is rich in their history of its improvements. In 2015 the Bowsher home stands as a monument to this family.

Now this land is in the hands of the Nature Conservancy, which is letting the home fall into ruins. The land is open however to the public for walking. It is worth a look to see this natural landscape where the Miami Indians once lived and roamed.



JOSEPH BOWSHER
DIED
SEPT. 3, 1888
AGED
72Y 11M 27 D

MARINDA BOWSHER
WIFE OF
J. BOWSHER
DIED
SEPT. 8, 1888
AGED
66Y 10M 5 D

Joseph and Marinda Bowsher are buried in West Union Cemetery, Parke county, Indiana. Joseph built the 1st great “steam” mill in Montezuma near Benson’s Basin on the W & E Canal.

Photos by Charles Davis

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BOWSHER GENEALOGY

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Death</u>	<u>Cemetery</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Marriage</u>	<u>Place</u>
Bowsher, Jacob	10-31-1763	PA	2-21-1842	Bowsher/DeBaun	Parke Co IN		
m. Bloxom, Margaret B	11-12-1783		1-22-1859	Bowsher/DeBaun	Parke Co IN		
Bowsher, John	12-26-1811		3-17-1871	Bowsher/DeBaun	Parke Co IN		
m. Kennedy, Sarah	9-06-1813		12-11-1855	Bowsher/DeBaun	Parke Co IN		
Bowsher, Elizabeth	1835		8-19-1836	Bowsher/DeBaun	Parke Co IN		
Bowsher, Thomas	1837		9-11-1842	Bowsher/DeBaun	Parke Co IN		
Bowsher, Tilman	1841		9-28-1841	Bowsher/DeBaun	Parke Co IN		
Bowsher, Martha	1843		6-16-1849	Bowsher/DeBaun	Parke Co IN		
Bowsher, Charles	1844		10-03-1846	Bowsher/DeBaun	Parke Co IN		
Bowsher, Samuel	1858		12-05-1859	Bowsher/DeBaun	Parke Co IN		
<u>Bowsher, Mary</u>	8-08-1812	Circleville OH	9-04-1901	Rush Creek		12-29-1831	Parke Co IN
m. Heath, Rev. John	9-15-1811		1-13-1861	Rush Creek		12-29-1831	Parke Co IN
Heath, Daniel	1-08-1833		9-24-1905	Bethany	Parke Co IN	3-29-1864	Parke Co IN
m. McPherson, Rachel T	4-??-1848		5-15-1938	Bethany	Parke Co IN	3-29-1864	Parke Co IN
Heath, Andis Elmer	3-??-1867		2-14-1904	Bethany	Parke Co IN		
Heath, Bertha Rondola	6-02-1871		1934	Bethany	Parke Co IN		
Heath, Odes Daniel	9-26-1881		1959	Bethany	Parke Co IN		
Heath, Martin	1-23-1835		3-08-1854	Rush Creek			
Heath, Jacob	7-13-1837		11-01-1918	Iola	Allen Co KS	11-06-1866	
m. Wright, Sarah E	8-20-1839	KY	3-28-1920	Iola	Allen Co KS	11-06-1866	
Heath; Alice	4-30-1873		10-11-1907	Iola	Allen Co KS		
m. Colglazier							
Heath, Samuel	1-04-1840		3-26-1916	Rush Creek	Parke Co IN		Montgomery Co
m. Marks, Margaret	3-21-1835		3-23-1877	Rush Creek	Parke Co IN		
Heath, John Goldsburry	2-12-1874		3-18-1938	Waynetown	Montgomery Co	9-11-1892	Parke Co IN
m. Towell, Ellen	8-22-1874		7-18-1950	Waynetown	Montgomery Co	9-11-1892	Parke Co IN
Heath, Samuel Horace	1876		1959	Waynetown	Montgomery Co		
Heath, infant			11-21-1877	Rush Creek	Parke Co IN		
Heath, Margaret	5-07-1846		8-12-1933	Rush Creek	Parke Co IN	4-16-1865	Parke Co IN
m. Mendenhall, John C	8-14-1836		2-05-1913	Rush Creek	Parke Co IN	4-16-1865	Parke Co IN
Mendenhall, Albanus	12-03-1866		1-15-1884	Rush Creek	Parke Co IN		
Mendenhall, John Perley	1-16-1871		8-??-1950	Rush Creek	Parke Co IN		
Mendenhall, William Otterbein	1-10-1876		3-07-1952	Rush Creek	Parke Co IN		
Heath, Josiah	2-04-1848		11-08-1920	Rush Creek	Parke Co IN	1-12-1871	
m. Wright, Lucy J	3-01-1842		5-25-1930	Rush Creek	Parke Co IN	1-12-1871	
Heath, Rev. Orris	12-14-1871		11-15-1907				

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Heath, Hugh F	1-17-1850		12-06-1894	Rush Creek	Parke Co IN		
m. Clark, Jennie	10-18-1850		5-11-1953	Rush Creek	Parke Co IN		
Heath, Dr. John P	2-14-1854		2-??-1938		Fishers IN		10-11-1879 Oaklandon IN
m. Mock, Etta	2-??-1860						10-11-1879 Oaklandon IN
Heath, Jennie M	4-??-1886		6-07-1917		Fishers IN		
m. Beaver, Alford Glen	10-29-1886		10-28-1984		Hamilton Co IN		9-29-1909 Hamilton Co IN
Bowsher, Joseph	9-06-1816	OH	9-03-1888	West Unionj	Parke Co IN		Parke Co IN
m1 Kennedy, Rebecca	2-28-1819	OH	6-03-1840	Harvey	Parke Co IN		11-18-1835 Parke Co IN
Bowsher, Russell William	1-01-1840		3-20-1923	Harvey	Parke Co IN		10-27-1859 Clay Co IN
m. McCulloch, Elizabeth C	1841						10-27-1859 Clay Co IN
Bowsher, Letha	1868		5-02-1888	Linebarger	Parke Co IN		
m2 Kennedy, Marinda	11-23-1822		9-08-1888	West Unionj	Parke Co IN		10-04-1842 Parke Co IN
Bowsher, John Nelson	8-13-1843		12-23-1920	West Unionj	Parke Co IN		9-17-1863 Parke Co IN
m. Huxford, Margaret	8-26-1848		3-31-1906	West Unionj	Parke Co IN		9-17-1863 Parke Co IN
Bowsher, Joseph H	9-??-1864		10-11-1888	West Unionj	Parke Co IN		
Bowsher, Marinda	1866		1-07-1946	West Unionj	Parke Co IN		12-10-1885
m. Garrard, Erastus	1864		1946				12-10-1885
Garrard, Pearl	2-16-1887		11-18-1897				
Garrard, Zoe	2-28-1889		12-01-1897				
Garrard, Della	2-??-1900		8-27-1900				
Garrard, Margaret	9-30-1906		7-14-1993				
m. Clemenz, George Frederick	3-03-1902		5-26-1967		Hammond IN		4-26-1925 Parke Co IN
Bowsher, Maggie	10-20-1870		6-12-1888	West Unionj	Parke Co IN		4-26-1925 Parke Co IN
m. Shoup, James Perly	12-06-1864		10-30-1923	West Unionj	Parke Co IN		9-08-1887 Parke Co IN
Shoup, Marrie	6-10-1888		6-24-1953	Memory Garden	Rockville IN		9-08-1887 Parke Co IN
m. Bugg, Lemuel	1-01-1883	KY	2-24-1976	Memory Garden	Rockville IN		
Bugg, Letha							
m. Dotson							
Bugg, Alpha							
m. Keller							
Bugg, Norma							
Bugg, Reatha F.							
m. Commons							
Bowsher, William A	10-20-1875		1956	Kingman	Fountain Co IN		10-14-1897 Parke Co IN
m. Kitchen, Clare E	10-29-1877		4-09-1942	Kingman	Fountain Co IN		10-14-1897 Parke Co IN
Bowsher, William Ward	7-06-1900		9-13-1986	Kingman	Fountain Co IN		9-29-1920 Fountain Co IN
m. Sowers, Ruth Marie	5-22-1899		4-24-1994	Kingman	Fountain Co IN		9-29-1920 Fountain Co IN

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Bowsher, Lillian	1-24-1922		6-12-2014	Kingman	Fountain Co IN	1940	
m. Commons, Joel B	7-12-1917		2-21-2001	Kingman	Fountain Co IN	1940	
Commons, Michael J							
m. ?, Kathleen							
Bowsher, Rebecca J	7-27-1846		12-06-1909	Edger	Paris IL	10-22-1865	Parke Co IN
m. Wright, Daniel*	9-06-1845	Luck Springs	5-16-1917	Edger	Paris IL	10-22-1865	Parke Co IN
Wright, Salmon B	7-30-1866	West Union	12-12-1941	Edger	Paris IL	3-14-1888	Parke Co IN
m. Linebarger, Emma O	6-12-1867		2-18-1919	Edger	Paris IL	3-14-1888	Parke Co IN
Bowsher, Peter A	9-??-1851		2-03-1928	Highland Lawn	Terre Haute IN	9-01-1881	Vigo Co IN
m. Burgan, Josephine R	10-??-1851		1937			9-01-1881	Vigo Co IN
Bowsher, May	4-??-1887		1968	Highland Lawn	Terre Haute IN		
m. Johnson, John	1880						
Bowsher, Daniel W	7-16-1859		6-06-1925	Mt Pleasant	Vigo Co IN	4-09-1890	Vigo Co IN
m. Thompson, Adah	1-20-1873		1-30-1958	Mt Pleasant	Vigo Co IN	4-09-1890	Vigo Co IN
Bowsher, Russell	12-03-1892		9-??-1968			12-07-1917	Vigo Co IN
m. Biven, Mabel Dean	4-12-1897		3-13-1978			12-07-1917	Vigo Co IN
Bowsher, Wayne R	9-03-1918		2-??-1975		Terre Haute IN		
Bowsher, Harold E	12-26-1919		1-26-1981	Roselawn	Paris IL	4-19-1881	Parke Co IN
Bowsher, Sallie	6-13-1861		12-21-1946	Edger	Paris IL	4-19-1881	Parke Co IN
m. Linebarger, Andrew J	4-??-1846		4-??-1937	Edger	Paris IL	8-27-1906	Paris IL
Linebarger, Ethel	4-02-1883		7-01-1970	Edger	Paris IL	8-27-1906	Paros IL
m. Holsapple, Guy	9-14-1880		1-21-1971	Edger	Paris IL	1944	
Holsapple, Leslie Levi	7-07-1921		5-08-1999	West Union	Parke Co IN	1944	
m. Garrard, Ruth							
Holsapple, Jerry							
Holsapple, Flora							
Holsapple, Carl							
Holsapple, Jean							
m. Gardner, ?							
Holsapple, Sandra							
m. Roberts, ?							
Linebarger, Dr. H. A.	9-04-1887		1979	Edger	Paris IL		
Bowsher, Jacob Jr	8-09-1818	OH	4-23-1883	Ephlin	Parke Co IN	11-09-1848	Fountain Co IN
m. Kennedy Melissa Ann	7-26-1826		7-11-1877	Ephlin	Parke Co IN	11-09-1848	Fountain Co IN
Bowsher, William Perry	1-22-1852	Bloomington IL	2-11-1900	Ephlin	Parke Co IN	3-25-1875	Fountain Co IN
m. Norris, Martha Elizabeth	1852		1-??-1929				
Bowsher, infant							
Bowsher, Sara	12-16-1856		4-08-1908	Harveysburg	Kingman IN	4-15-1875	Parke Co IN

4-15-1875 Parke Co IN
7-26-1896 Fountain Co IH
7-26-1896 Fountain Co IH

1-23-1919 Harveysburg Kingman IN
after 1919
1958
10-14-1926 Ephlin Parke Co IN
4-12-1843 Bowsher/DeBaun Parke Co IN

7-08-1856
1880
4-25-1878
1860
1-23-1822

m. Norris, George S
Norris, William Hardy
m. Moore, Josephine
Bowsher, Ira M
Bowsher, Peter

* Son of Prior Wright, who owned Rockport Mills/Devils Den

A PORTION OF PARKE COUNTY, INDIANA

1. Hugh Russell homestead—Liberty twp.
2. Miami Indian Cemetery—Sugar Creek twp.
3. Jacob Bowsher home
4. Prior Wright Cemetery—Penn twp.
5. Wrights Mill/Devils Den—Penn twp.
6. Bristleridge Church—Sugar Creek twp.
7. Joseph Bowsher Mill on Sugar Creek—Penn twp.
8. Cornstalk Village site—Penn twp.
9. Rardin homestead — Liberty twp.
10. Kennedy homestead—Penn twp.



Back row left to right:
Wm. A. "Willie" Bowsher
Wife: Clara E. Kitchen Bowsher
Ward Wm. Bowsher
Fred Kitchen

Front row left to right:
Jay Kitchen
Della Kitchen

