

CANAWLERS AT REST

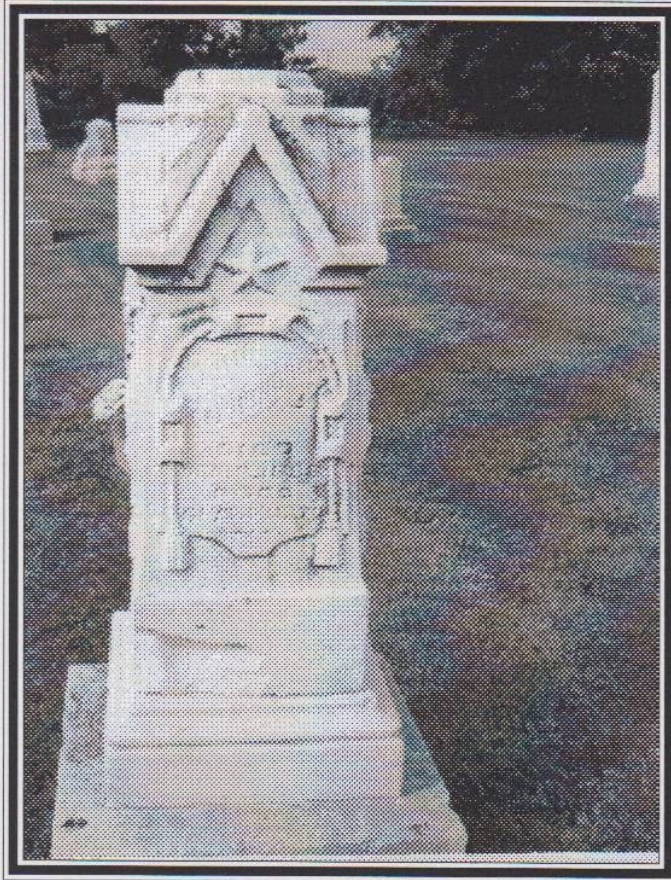
**JOHN R.
CUNNINGHAM**

**b. ?
d. 1858**

**JOHN
CUNNINGHAM**

**b. April 1, 1826
d. January 8, 1888**

**By Carolyn I. Schmidt
Photo by Bob Schmidt**



JOHN CUNNINGHAM

This marker is found in Battle Ground Cemetery and reads:
Front: John Cunningham
Died Jan. 8, 1888 aged 61 yrs. 9 mos. 7 d.
Right: Salome, wife of John Cunningham
Was born in London Co., Virginia Sept. 8, 1822
Died Jan. 30, 1878
Back: Emma S. Cunningham
Born July 24, 1858
Died Aug. 27, 1878
Left: Nothing

John R. Cunningham

John R. Cunningham was of Irish descent. He married Sarah McKinley and settled in Clermont County, Ohio. He made his living by farming in the wild and sparsely settled county. During the War of 1812, he enlisted in one of the military companies and was a part of the army of the ill-fated General Hull. After Hull's surrender at Detroit, John escaped and fled to the forest, where he was nearly starved during his wanderings. He and his companions finally reached a friendly neighborhood where they were fed and cared for until they recuperated. He returned to his home and resumed farming.

On April 1, 1826, John and his family moved to Aurora, Dearborn County, Indiana. There their son John was born on April 1, 1826. In 1831 the family moved to Tippecanoe County, Indiana and was one of the earliest settlers in Washington Township. He remained there until his death.

John and Sarah had nine children and were very poor. He cleared a small patch of ground and was barely able to sustain his family upon its scanty products.

When the first township election was held at Philip Stair's saw-mill in April 1832, John Cunningham

was elected Justice of the Peace. He continued in that capacity for ten years.

In the early 1840s the construction of the Wabash & Erie Canal gave him relief from his embarrassed position. He became a contractor in the construction of the canal. With the money he earned, he fitted out a flat-boat, loaded it with produce, and floated it by way of the Wabash and Ohio Rivers to southern ports. He sold the cargo for a handsome profit. This venture proved to be so successful that he continued the shipments for ten years.

John wisely invested his money. It increased rapidly in value. At the time of his death in 1858, he left

an estate valued at \$50,000. He was known to always command respect and had a good influence over all of his surroundings. No grave marker was found.

John Cunningham

John R.'s son John and his other children were educated in a rude log school house near Americus, which was on the Wabash & Erie Canal. It had a puncheon floor and puncheon seats. One log, nearly the length of the structure, was removed and greased paper was placed over the opening to admit light. They were taught reading, writing and "ciphering."

Although very rudimentary, this education proved to lead to a good life for son John. He married Salome Bemenderfer on October 25, 1849. They settled on the Wea Plain for one year, then moved to White County, Indiana, for a year and then returned to Tippecanoe County to farm. There he reared four children: Mary Ellen, born November 27, 1851; John Randolph, born February 8, 1854; Douglas Andrew, born March 15, 1856; and Emma Sarah, born July 24, 1858.

Like his father, John built a flat-boat in association with Dr. Garret at Americus. They loaded it with corn and floated from Americus to New Orleans by way of the Ohio and Wabash Rivers. They arrived after two months, disposed of their cargo, and realized a handsome profit on their investment.

For a while John lived at Battle Ground, Indiana. He was a member of the Christian Church. He was a Democrat in politics. He died on January 8, 1888, at the age of 61 years, 9 months, and 7 days. He is buried in the Battle Ground cemetery on Pretty Prairie Road. To reach the cemetery take Main Street and go east. Main Street becomes Pretty Prairie. The cemetery will be on your right about 3/4 of a mile from the center of town.

Sources:

Battle Ground Cemetery, Grave marker of John Cunningham.

Biographical Record and Portrait Album of Tippecanoe County, Indiana. Chicago, IL/The Lewis Publishing Company. 1888.

Combined Atlas Map of Tippecanoe County, Indiana. Kingman Bros. 1870.

Past and Present of Tippecanoe County, Indiana Vol. II. Indianapolis, IN./ B. F. Bowen & Co. Publishers. 1909.

Tippecanoe County, Indiana, Cemeteries Part III. Lafayette, IN/ Gen. deLafayette Chapter, DAR.

HENNEPIN CANAL TOUR

Unfortunately, due to the loss of the Canal Society of Indiana's reservation for the Emita II tour of the Erie Canal by Mid-lakes Navigation, who booked an Elderhostel in our place, that trip had to be cancelled. Fortunately, CSI member Gerald Hulslander of Marseilles, IL had agreed to lead an alternate tour of the **Hennepin Canal** in Illinois on **September 16-18, 2005**. So far a bus and motel rooms have been secured. More tour details will be forth coming in the next months. You may wish to book your motel room now.

Mention the Canal Society of Indiana block of rooms when booking your room at:

Days Inn
Princeton, Illinois
(815) 875-3371

Room rates are \$45 single, \$55 double and include a continental breakfast.

2005 CSI CONTRIBUTIONS

(Continued from last month's list)

CONTRIBUTOR \$30

- Brian Banta
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- Ernest & Helen Ellis
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Any amount contributed above the \$22 single/family membership level is tax deductible.

