

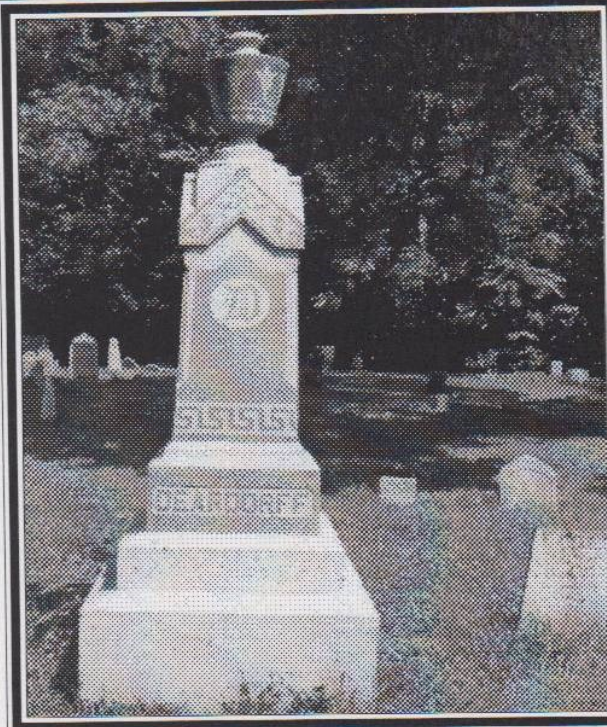
CANAWLERS AT REST

ROBERT DEARDORFF

b. November 10, 1808
d. July 5, 1891

By Carolyn I. Schmidt

Photos by Bob Schmidt



Robert Deardorff, was born in Bedford County, Virginia, to Samuel and Elizabeth Deardorff, natives of Virginia, on November 10, 1808. In 1817 the family moved to Ohio and settled in Montgomery County. Samuel was a farmer and brought up Robert to become one as well.

At the age of twenty years, Robert left his father's farm to work on the construction of the Ohio Canal. His wages were \$9 per month. By being a persevering and painstaking worker, he attained the position of superintendent of a construction gang at double his former pay in a short three months time. After seven months in this position he resigned and returned to his father's farm.

In the spring of 1829 Robert packed a few things and started on horseback for Indiana. He arrive at the home of his brother Peter on April 5. Peter had settled in the woods of Wayne Township, Tippecanoe County. Robert, an expert with an axe, worked for Peter in helping him clear the timber from his land. Shortly thereafter Peter moved to Michigan. Robert purchased the land and continued to clear it while living in a neighbor's home.

Wanting to learn the carpenter's trade, Robert apprenticed himself to a carpenter in Lafayette, IN. For his work he received \$6 per month. Through this apprenticeship he learned much practical knowledge of the trade and, combining it with knowledge he had learned on the farm, built a house for himself on his land.

On April 13, 1841, Robert married Lydia Dutton. They had six children: Elizabeth, born February 6, 1842, married Peter Kile, of Lafayette; Martha D., born February 26, 1844, wife of John G. Miller, of Lincoln, Nebraska; John D., born May 3, 1846, who resided in Union Township; Mary Ann and Eliza Jane (twins), born in June, 1850, the former married Benten Loutz, of Wabash Township, and the latter married John M. Loutz, of Jackson Township on February 27, 1880; and Samuel, the youngest child, was born on September 4, 1852, and married Agnes Strain on November 1, 1874. Agnes was the daughter of other early settlers to the county, James and Mary Jane Cash Strain. They had five children—Leroy, John O., Harry, Quincey and Florence. Although Samuel started by living on his own land, he was called back to Robert's farm to take over its management. Samuel still resided on the old homestead in Union Township in 1888.

Robert lived on the farm, which he first settled, until 1855. He then moved his family to a homestead in Union Township, which he purchased from James P. Ellis. His good crops and practical management helped him expand his fortune rapidly. Politically he was a Republican and religiously he was a Liberal, supporting the denominations surrounding him.

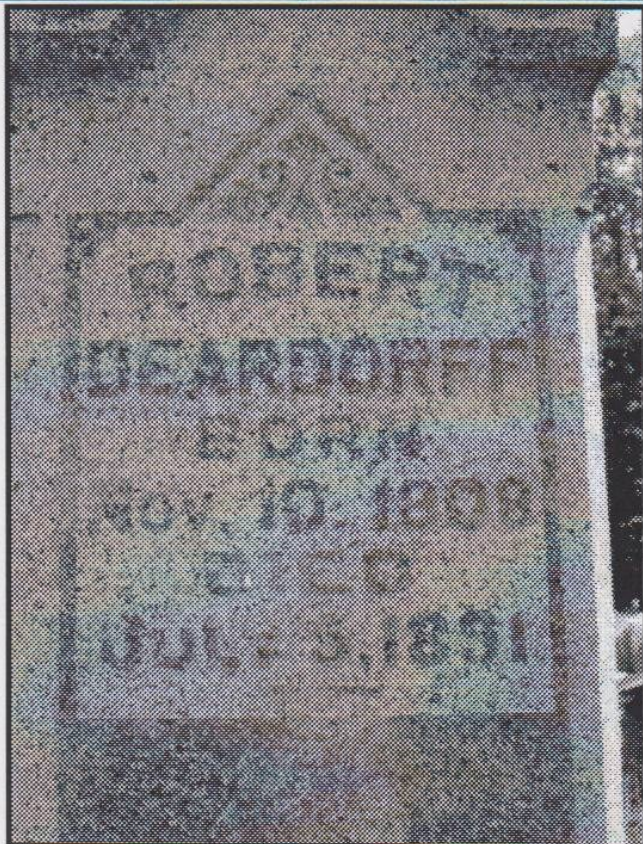
Lydia, Robert's wife, who was born on June 15, 1811, died on January 17, 1869, and was buried at the West Point Cemetery. She was a member of the United Brethren church where she and Robert had been among the early members of the church in that place.

Robert was very successful as an agriculturist. He acquired 1,010 acres of land, most of which was among the finest in the county.

The first mill in the county, the Foreman mill, was built by Robert. Many of the other early building improvements were done by him.

In an 1888 county history he said he witnessed many changes in the county over the past half century. He divided most of his possessions among his children retaining 350 acres for himself and started them well off in life. He attributes his accumulation of so much property because he never lost a friend. Instead he gained their confidence and was respected by them in business relations.

Robert Deardorff died on July 5, 1891. The Deardorff marker is located in West Point Cemetery, West Point, Tippecanoe County, Indiana. It can be reached from SR 25 turning into town on Washington Street, taking a left on Jefferson, passing Monroe, Madison and East Streets, turning right on Andrew Road, passing Main Street and entering West Point Cemetery. Proceed toward the back of the cemetery to the flag pole. The reddish-pink monument is to your right.



Sources:

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

Chessman, David R. Wayne Township Cemetery Index. Tippecanoe Co., IN/ 1994.

Combined Atlas Map of Tippecanoe County, Indiana. Kingman Bros. 1878.

Tippecanoe County Will Book 5. p. 456.

DEARDORFF MARKER

Front: D
 Right: Lydia
 Wife of Robert Deardorff
 Born Jun. 15, 1811
 Died Jan. 17, 1869
 Back:: No inscription
 Left: Robert Deardorff
 Born Nov. 10, 1808
 Died July 5, 1891

WEEDER ON THE CANAL DU MIDI

Weeds growing in a canal have always been a problem to navigation. Charles (Chuck) Huppert, CSI vice-president, recently found the following description of a weeder, which was developed by Garripuy, a great Canal engineer after Riquet, and used on France's Canal du Midi. The description is from Rolt's book on the canal.

"The resourceful M. Garripuy also tackled another trouble that has always bedevilled the long pound in summer — the prolific growth of water-weeds. He designed a special weed-cutting boat, probably the first of its kind. Beneath the stern of this boat three curved, horizontal scythe blades projected radially from a central boss attached to a vertical shaft having a pinion at its upper end. By means of a toothed sector linked by two connecting rods to a manually rotated crankshaft and flywheels, a rapid alternating motion was imparted to the scythe blades which prevented them from becoming fouled with weed. Two long screws enabled the frame on which the blades were mounted to be adjusted for depth."