

JUDGE WALTER C. DONALDSON AND HIS W & E CANAL CONNECTIONS

Article and photos by Charles Davis

Judge Walter C. Donaldson was born in Clark County, Kentucky on August 22, 1802. He married Harriet Thomas, of Shelby County, Kentucky on July 24, 1827. Together they moved to Rockville, Indiana about 1834. Walter's first recorded purchase of land was $W\frac{1}{2}$ of lot 54 and lot 55 from General Arthur Patterson for \$375 on February 14, 1835. Deed Record 2/115 Then on June 6, he bought the undivided $\frac{1}{5}$ th of lot 57 from Johnson Puett for \$100. DR 2/113. This lot was on the site where Patterson and Silliman started the first store in Rockville, later called Steeles Corner on the town square.



Top: Part of this house on the corner of Elm and College Streets in Rockville, Indiana was built from Judge Walter C. Donaldson's former home after he moved to Montezuma, Indiana. It is now the Butler Funeral Home.

Bottom: This home of Alfred K. Stark, son of David W. Stark, on Elm Street in Rockville, Indiana, was built on the original site where Judge Walter C. Donaldson built his home.

Walter built a large home on land he bought on the west side of town, where the Butler Funeral home now is located on College Street. He was in partnership with a Mr. Lowe in the dry goods business. In 1836, Erastus M. Benson clerked for them and then bought out Mr. Lowe's interest, this lasting four years.

Four children were born to the Donaldsons while in Rockville. In 1839, they went to Shelby County, Kentucky for a visit, and while there in August Mrs. Harriet Donaldson took sick and died. Before Walter returned to Rockville, he united with the Christian church.

Returning to Parke County, Walter married Ellen M. Cook of Montezuma on November 21, 1839. He now changed his church relations uniting with the Methodist Episcopal Church until he died. Several children were born of this marriage.

In 1839 Walter was commissioned by Governor David Wallace into the Indiana Militia, 50th Regiment and the 16th Brigade. He continued his business in Rockville until about 1843, then he and his family moved into his father-in-law's residence with a legal "agreement" drawn up between the two dated March 1843. DR 10/156 This agreement states that Walter should work on the farm with said William Cook (father-in-law) after sale of property to belong to both, each one half of cash after expences connected to farm and family. Walter was to live on farm of Wm, Cook with

his family, work on the farm in the business of raising stock and grain and trade with Cook in produce. All to be in Cooks name until sold, then each received one half in cash. Walter could cease business at anytime. Cook was to control assets. Witness of agreement was signed March 2, 1847. Walter Donaldson made this move to take advantage of the Wabash & Erie Canal.

The canal project was started in Parke County in 1844 and completed to Montezuma in 1848. It was on this farm of Wm. Cook that "Cook's Lane" was located and where a famous horse race was held in 1847. Walter was probably a witness to this race. [The Hoosier Packet, May 2002 by Charles Davis] I could not determine when this "agreement" was ended. It might have been in 1847.

William Cook died in 1866 and divided his land and assets to his children and grandchildren. Deeds

show Mrs. Ellen Donaldson sold her part of the inheritance on August 15, 1868. Most of Judge Walter Donaldson's property was not recorded at the court house when purchased but was recorded at the time sold. 1851 tax records show his business was on lot 96. This is only one block north of Benson's Basin on the canal.

Again in 1870, the census shows he was a grocer with a value of \$3,000. He apparently was doing well.

In 1848 Walter was elected Associate Judge by the Whigs. He served for six years and then resigned. The celebrated Beauchamp was tried, convicted, and hung under Walter's jurisdiction. Such men as Governor Wright, Tilghman Howard, and Jos. A. Wright practiced in this court.

Walter served three terms as county commissioner and three terms as a member of the State Board of Agriculture. In 1865, he was elected by the

Republicans to represent Parke County in the Legislature and served his term in the winter of 1865-66.

Sometime after the "agreement" ceased, the Donaldsons were living on their farm one mile west of Wm. Cook. The description of it is Part W½ of the SW¼, Sec. 25. He sold this farm on April 9, 1873.

Mrs. Ellen Donaldson passed away on April 15, 1873 and was buried in the old Montezuma Cemetery near the Cook family plot. After her death Walter went to Kentucky for a visit.

When Walter returned to Parke County he married Julia Ann Russell on August 5, 1877. It is written that "This was a notable wedding, no building being able to near contain the friends of both who were present."

Julia was the widow of Matthew Russell and lived on the SW¼ of the SW½ of Sec. 32, Howard Township, Parke County. The wedding was held in a

Wives and Children of Judge Walter C. Donaldson

Walter C. Donaldson	B.	8-22-1802	D.	12-15-1892	Bur. Oakwood Cem. Montezuma, IN	
<u>Harriet Thomas</u>	B.		D.	8-??-1839		Married 7-24-1827
Henry Bruce Donaldson	B.		D.			
Ann Elizabeth Donaldson	B.	1836	D.	3-??-1911	Bur. Tuscola, IL	
Mar. Elisha B. Cannon*	B.		D.		Bur. Tuscola, IL	Married 7-04-1855
William Cannon	B.		D.			In Navy, Phillipines
Bessie Cannon Osborn	B.		D.			Of Washington, D. C.
Walter C. Cannon	B.		D.			Of Washington, D. C.
Mar. Joseph Burns	B.	1822	D.	12-17-1903		
No children						
<u>Ellen M. Cook</u>	B.	1818	D.	4-15-1873	Bur. Old Montezuma Cemetery	Married 11-21-1839
William Walter Donaldson	B.		D.			
Joseph A. Donaldson	B.	(4m16d)-D.	D.	5-24-1845	Bur. Old Montezuma Cemetery	
Josephine Donaldson	B.	9-20-1848	D.	8 23-1849	Bur. Old Montezuma Cemetery	
Edward Donaldson	B.		D.	7-08-1852		
Nancy E. Donaldson	B.	(2y3m9d)-D.	D.	2-02-1853	Bur. Old Montezuma Cemetery	
Frank C. Donaldson	B.		D.			
Barbara Donaldson	B.		D.	7-23-1908	Bur. Oakwood Cem., Montezuma, IN	
Mar. Lewis R. Young	B.		D.	8-??-1908		
Mrs. Dee Sappenfield	B.		D.			Of Terre Haute, IN
Sarah C. Donaldson	B.	4-05-1853	D.	10-05-1918	Bur. Oakwood Cem., Montezuma, IN	
Mar. Frank Smith	B.		D.			Married 7-18-1877
Capt. Raymond D. Smith	B.		D.			WWI in France
Eugene Smith	B.		D.			In Terre Haute
Walter Smith	B.		D.			English Royal Aviators
Ralph W. Smith	B.		D.			Los Angeles, CA
Mar. I. A. Sharp	B.		D.			Of Montezuma, IN
No children						
George Donaldson	B.	1-21-1866	D.	1-22-1866		
<u>Julia Sage Russell</u>	B.	8-05-1823	D.	2-14-1895	Bur. Oakwood Cem Montezuma, IN	Married 8-05-1877
No children						

* Elisha was a brother of Congressman Joseph Gurney Cannon 1836-1926 and was raised in Annapolis. Davis, Charles. "Annapolis and Its W&E Canal Connections." *The Hoosier Packet*. Vol. 2, No. 1, November 2003

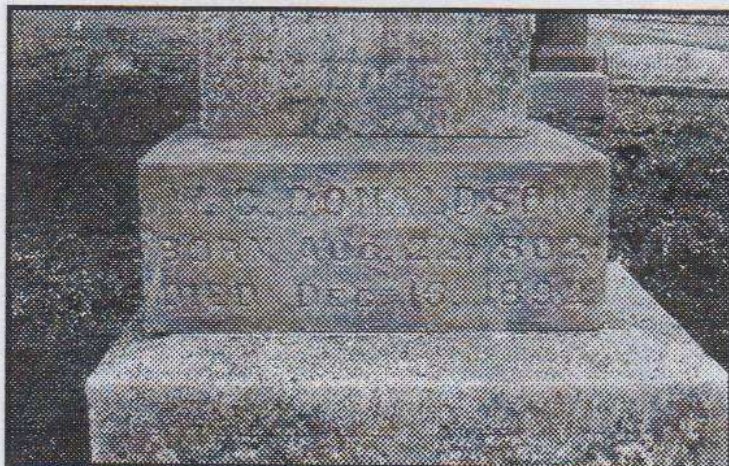
grove on the Russell farm. Soon thereafter they moved to Montezuma. Their home in Montezuma was on lot 18 that Walter bought on February 12, 1869. DR 26/498 This home no longer exists.

On July 11, 1887 Mrs. Julia Donaldson bought lot 117 DR 46/557 next to their home on the SE corner of Jefferson and Adams Streets through a sheriff's Administration sale. On it was the "Cockran Hotel," previously owned by James H. Cockran. They took it over and named it Hotel Donaldson. The large brick home on this lot was originally built by John Arn, Sr. in 1858 and was the home of the Arn family for many years. The Canal Society of Indiana tour in 2004 got to see this home/hotel.



Above: Built in 1858 by John Arn, Sr. this house became the Cockran Hotel and later Hotel Donaldson.

Judge Walter C. Donaldson passed away at his residence on December 15, 1892. His wife, Julia, passed away at her residence on February 14, 1895. Both were buried in Oakland Cemetery in Montezuma.



This stone in Oakland Cemetery in Montezuma, IN reads:

W. C. DONALDSON
BORN Aug. 22, 1802
DIED Dec. 15, 1892

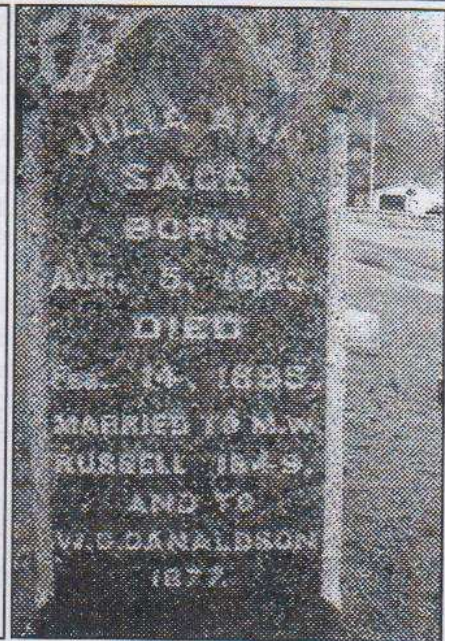
This stone in Oakwood Cemetery in Montezuma, IN reads:

JULIA ANN
SAGE

BORN
Aug. 5, 1823

DIED
Feb. 14, 1895

MARRIED TO M. W.
RUSSELL 1849
AND TO
W. C. DONALDSON
1877.



Walter and Julia were highly respected as seen in the following: "Uncle Walter, as a financier and spiritual advisor, and Aunt Julia's inexhaustible hospitality towards all ministers, made them almost indispensable to the church and leaves a void that will probably never be filled."

Sources:

Combined 1874 Atlas, 1916. Isaac Straus Centennial Memorial and Name Index of Parke County, Indiana.

Deed records and Will records in Parke County court house, Rockville

"Walter C. Donaldson obituary." *Rockville Tribune* 12-22-1892

"Walter C. Donaldson obituary." *Rockville Republican* 12-21-1892

"Julia Sage: obituary" *Rockville Republican* 2-27-1895

Parke County census records of 1850, 1860 and 1870

Parke County marriage and death records

1874 plat maps of Parke County

Parke County cemetery records.

DUES DUE

Your CSI dues for Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2012 were due on December 31, 2011. If you have not submitted them, please do so now so that you continue to receive *The Hoosier Packet*. They still remain \$25 single/family membership. Remit to:

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