

**CALEB M. RICHARDS
AND HIS WABASH & ERIE CANAL CONNECTIONS**

By Charles Davis

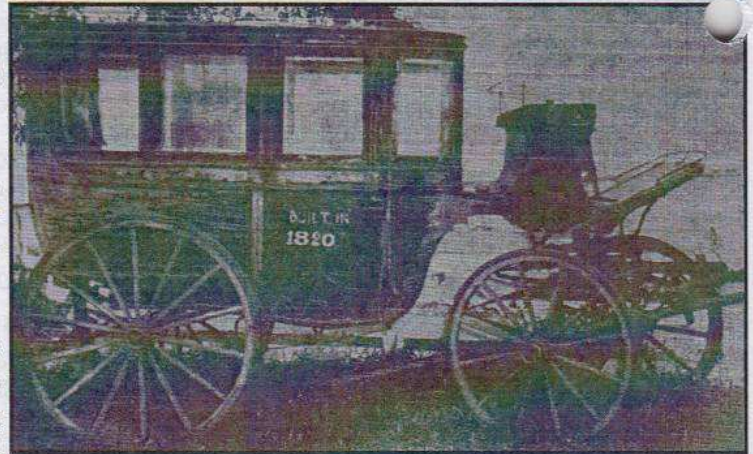
Since the last time I wrote about Mr. Richards, 2003, I have acquired new and additional information pertinent to this character. His story will be retold with additions to get "the rest of the story."

Caleb M. Richards was born November 11, 1819 near Blountsville, Sullivan county in east Tennessee to Richard and Jane (Root) Richards. Richard Richards was a veteran of the War of 1812. He moved with his wife and family of seven children to southern Illinois in 1833. The three week long trip was made overland in a wagon passing through the celebrated "Crabb Orchard" in Kentucky, made dangerous to travelers on account of desperadoes who inhabited the place. Mr. Richards crossed the Ohio River at Louisville; which was then a growing town. He settled on Elson's prairie, near Lawrenceville, Illinois. After his death in 1834, his daughter Sara moved to Rockville, Parke county, Indiana with James King Richards, her brother, and his family in January 1844. Her other brother Caleb, the subject of this sketch, went to Montezuma, Indiana. Caleb by trade was a drayman, a wagon hauler carrying heaving articles.

When the Wabash & Erie Canal opened up in Montezuma in 1848, James and Arvilla Jane (Slagle) Mushett were the first to arrive there on the canal boat, "Julia Dean." They first operated a grocery store in Armiesburg near Montezuma for several years and then moved to Montezuma where they lived until they passed away.

The *Montezuma Enterprise* of November 30, 1913 states that Caleb M. Richards was Montezuma's town constable in 1850. Around this time Caleb got into the business of stage coach driver. He eventually bought Lot #1 in Montezuma on August 6, 1856 that was located at the corner of Madison Street and the Strawberry Road. North and across the road from this lot is the Old Montezuma Cemetery where two of his infant children are buried.

In 1850 a stock company was organized in Parke

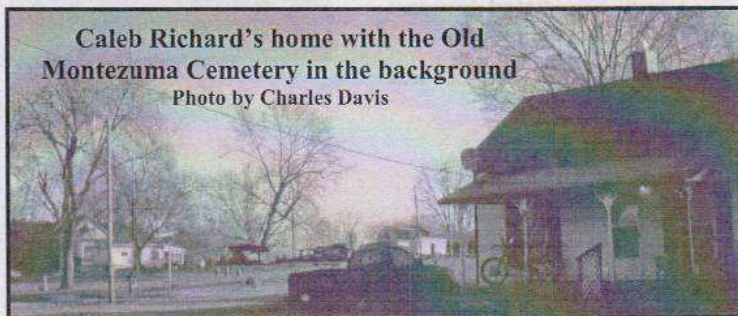


Caleb Richards may have driven this stagecoach or one like it that was found in a Rockville newspaper in the 1950s. It was owned by Bill Vance and purchased by Leroy Crow of Lyford.

county to construct a plank road from the Wabash River at Montezuma to the Putnam county line, 5 miles east of Bellmore, Indiana. Stock was principally taken by citizens of Rockville and Montezuma. The construction of the road required the removal of stumps and roots of trees. A grade was made by plowing the track and removing the ground to the center line of the road with hand shovels. Then a line of sawn streamers were placed on the grade. Oak planks two inches thick and 18 feet long were then placed crosswise and nailed to the streamers.

Several saw mills were set up along the route from Bellmore to Montezuma to supply the lumber. One of these mills was set up in my, Charles Davis', neighborhood at Glendale (Midway) by Rich Davis. It was from this saw mill that Davis cut the timbers for the Raccoon Creek Aqueduct for the Wabash & Erie Canal.

Toll gates were put up at various places along the plank road and all who used it were compelled to pay. The *Rockville Tribune* of January 11, 1916 states, "OLD PLANKED ROAD. Though plenty of jolts and bumps would be encountered, the road certainly was a vast improvement over the old mud road. The old stage driven by Caleb Richards made very much better time between Rockville, Montezuma and Terre Haute. A halfway house was established along the road, the terminus of the plank road, and was kept by a stage contractor named Beauchamp. This halfway house was situated in Putnam county not over a couple hundred yards east of the Portland Mills road on the Parke county line. Halfway houses were peculiar institutions of the old days. Railroads were almost unknown in the middle of the west at that time and most of the travel was done by stage. While the halfway house on the old plank road is now only an ordinary dwelling."



Caleb Richard's home with the Old Montezuma Cemetery in the background
Photo by Charles Davis

MONTEZUMA
PARKE COUNTY
INDIANA
With additions by
Charles Davis

Perry Brown.

MONTEZUMA
ACADEMY

MONTEZUMA
PARKE CO.
IND.
In Sec. 35 & 36 1 & 2 Towns 15-16 R.

S.D. & W.S. HILL

Old
Montezuma
Cemetery

Cramer

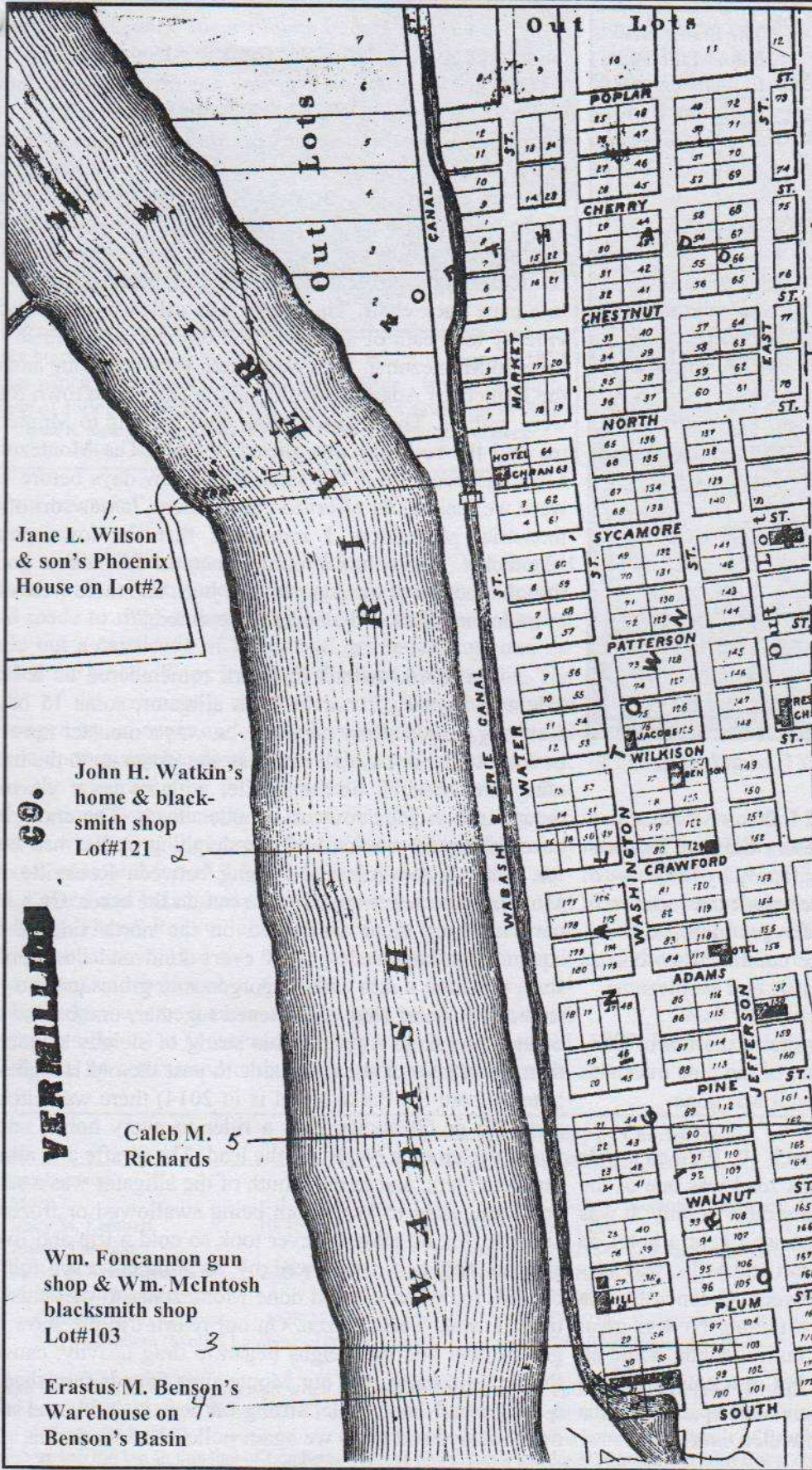
E.M. Benson 11a

Zuch. James

A. Justus

R. H. Johnson.

Plank
Road



Jane L. Wilson
& son's Phoenix
House on Lot#2

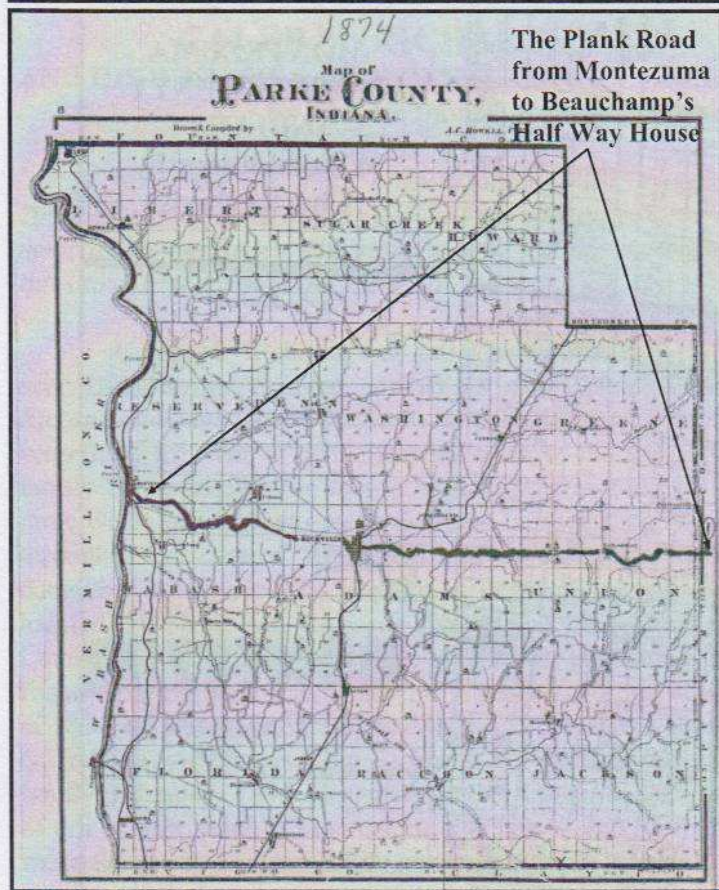
John H. Watkin's
home & black-
smith shop
Lot#121

Caleb M. Richards

Wm. Foncannon gun
shop & Wm. McIntosh
blacksmith shop
Lot#103

Erastus M. Benson's
Warehouse on
Benson's Basin

VERMILLION CO.



The *Rockville Republican* of May 2, 1900 gives one of the many stories of "The Big Sleigh Ride," saying "The biggest team that I ever saw was driven by Maj. Lucian Foote, in January, 1851," said Justice William Hanna. 'I was living in Rockville then and Major Foote, recently returned from driving big teams across the plains to California, then clerking in a store at Rockville, drove the team. There was something like 30 teams of horses hitched to a big flat boat and behind that was hooked on something like 50 sleds and sleighs and last of all a big, fat man was riding in a cane back chair. The Major was called back to Rockville by the death of a relative and did not get to finish the drive to Montezuma. That was where we were going and all the farmers of Adams township and many of the town folks were with us. There was a plank road running to Montezuma and the roadway was slicker'n glass. The Montezuma folks had come up in the same way a few days before and were we making an effort to out-do them. It was sort of an industrial procession. I remember that the town potter (Samuel N. Baker) had a force of men on the flatboat going thru the motion of turning pots and jugs, and there were other trades and lines of business represented.'"

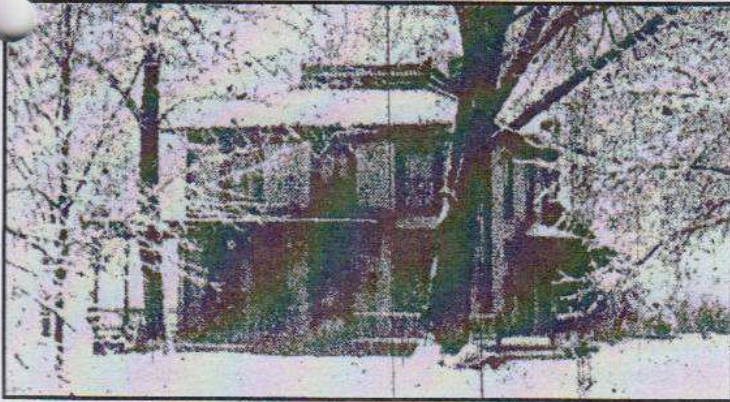
The Putnam County History, Indiana Sesquicentennial of 1966 states, "A part of the present Glatwyn Farms of U.S. 36 was once owned by an early family by the name of Beauchamp. Some very old pine trees mark the location of the house, which once served as an Inn for Mail and State-Coaches of early days. This practice continued as long as the Stage Route ran between Greencastle and Montezuma."

In 2003 I made a trip to the site of the Inn in Clinton township, Putnam county, and one of the pine trees was still alive. I returned again in 2013 and it was gone.

The *Rockville Tribune* of March 10, 1926 an article by Dr. Rufus Dooley said, "The plank road was one of the great frauds that ever struck this or any other county. It was built at a time when Mr. Beauchamp, who kept a hotel on his farm just a mile or two south of Portland Mills, was successfully operating a hack line between Greencastle via Rockville." The plank road proved a failure. "It was great when new to drive at a trot over its entire length, while all other roads were hub deep in mud: but in a comparatively short time the planks began to warp and curl up, making the plank road a nuisance to those who traveled over it."

In 1916, Alfred K. Stark remembered as a boy, "Here in January, I saw built an alligator, some 15 or 20 feet long, which to my boyish eyes, was a monster never to be forgotten. For days all business was given up to the modeling and building of the reptile, with its great yawning mouth and vicious rows of wooden teeth. The snow had been falling for weeks, and the sleighing parties had been for some days coming and going between Rockville and Montezuma, each town trying to out-do the other. On a January morning there assembled on the north side of the square, a string of sleighs of every kind and description, from the large sleigh with its gorgeous or grotesque fittings, to the little hand sled, all fastened together, one behind the other, by a large rope. To this string of sleighs extending from the center of the north side to past the old Houghman hotel (where the Parke Hotel is in 2014) there was hitched some 50 or 60 horses with a rider to every horse, and a mule, ridden by a Negro, in the lead. The giraffe and alligator were there, and in the mouth of the alligator was a small boy, struggling to keep from being swallowed or frozen. I am sure that no alligator ever took so cold a trip and lived, and no boy half swallowed by an alligator ever felt so chilled, for when we had done Montezuma to our satisfaction, 'I' was nearly frozen. On our return trip the snow began to melt and the sleighs began to drag heavily, causing the ropes to break, but our Montezuma friends furnished a long canal boat cable, strong enough to hold, and after many delays and trials we again pulled into Rockville, glad

THE HOOSIER PACKET - SEPTEMBER 2014



This house was owned by Judge Ared F. White in January 1851 from which he witnessed the Big Sleigh Ride. It was the birthplace of Juliet V. Strauss in 1863. Juliet helped save Turkey Run. Isaac R. Strauss, Editor of the *Rockville Tribune*, ran this picture along with a story about his wife, Juliet, in his paper in 1918.

of our triumph.”

In 1891 Judge Ared F. White stated, “The Baptist church bell solemn-toned as it was taken down, mounted, and made to ring, as happy bells do, “across the snow.” A mile out a cavalcade of ladies and gentlemen met and escorted the Rockvillians into the village of Montezuma. The bells of the town rang out a welcome. The streets were thronged by an eager and excited multitude from town and while upon every hand, mingled with words of good cheer, was the assurance of the undaunted Montezumians that preparations were already on foot for still another return visit at which time they proposed to ‘snow under’ the county seat once and for all.” Judge White closes the story saying, “Tired and belated and somehow very thankful for that “January Thaw” Rockville went to bed. It was too late for Montezuma now. Had the snow lasted ten days longer it was stated and believed at the time, that a fine new canal boat, lying at winter quarters in the upper basin of the canal (Benson’s Basin) at Montezuma would have been taken out of the ice by a thousand enthusiastic men and put on mon-

ster sleds and Rockville given such an exhibition of ship railroading as had never been dreamed of in her philosophy. In that varying contest for victory in the field of winter sport, that January thaw was to Rockville what night [time] and Blucher were to Wellington on the field of Waterloo.” Now folks, doesn’t that sound like the “good ole days?”

From the description of the Plank Road, one can see what it was like for Caleb and his stage coach. His stops in Montezuma would have been at Benson’s Basin landing, the steamboat landing near the ferry of Whitford and Davis, and the “Phoenix House” hotel run by Jane L. Wilson until her death in 1863.

In 1863 Caleb Richards left Montezuma for Tuscola, Illinois. His home lot, the stage stop in Montezuma, was put up for auction by the county court by the Sheriff to pay his debts. At Tuscola Caleb went back to his trade as a drayman. Proof of this can be found in the Tuscola census of 1870.

Caleb M. Richards is listed as one of the charter members of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Lodge No. 316, which was put into working order on June 6, 1865. In 1884 he was the only surviving charter member according to the *History and Biographical Record for the County of Douglas August*, 1884.

Caleb and Mary’s son, Wm. Wallace Richards, worked as a harness maker, then owned his own harness shop by the age of 35 in Tuscola. Their daughter Helen Richards never married and became a dressmaker in Tuscola, Decatur county, Illinois and later at Indianapolis, Indiana, the place of her death.

Caleb M. Richards passed away on February 13, 1887. He was buried in the family plot in the Tuscola Cemetery.

Lambert Genealogy by Charles Davis

Name	Birth	Place	Death	Place	Marriage	Place
Tobias Lambert						
m. Mary ?	1-4-1765		8-26-1844	Rockville Cemetery, IN		
Mary M. Lambert	10-15-1887		3-15-1854			
Joseph Lambert	1805	Saxony Germany	9-18-2864	Old Rockville Cem. IN	11-29-1854	Parke Co. IN
m. Sarah Ann Richards	2-09-1824	Sullivan Co. TN	3-10-1901		11-29-1854	Parke Co. IN
Wayland Lambert	1856		3-03-1857			
Charles Edwin Lambert	1-28-1858		3-23-1934	Rockville, IN		
Mary Elizabeth (Molly) Lambert	1861		3-27-1929	Rockville, IN		

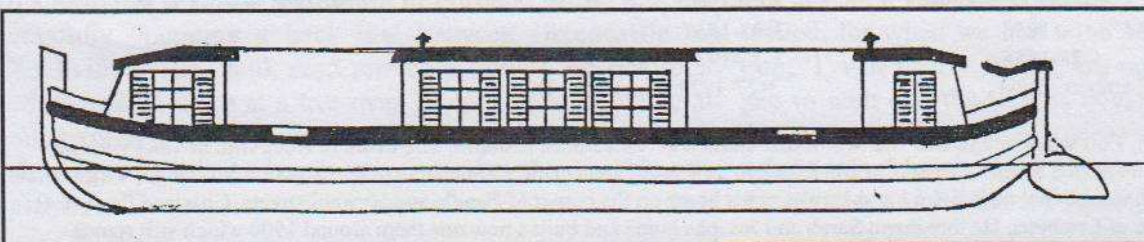
Sarah A. Richards was 12 years old when she joined the Methodist church at Vincennes, Indiana. She came to Rockville in 1844 with her brother Caleb M. Richards, then married Joseph Lambert in 1854. Joseph as a young man came from Saxony, Germany to Rockbridge, Virginia and then to Rockville in 1842. He was a cabinet maker and his shop was at his home on the corner of Beadle and Howard streets. Charles Edwin (Ed) Lambert was the last in this line of Lamberts. He tore down Sarah and Josephs home and built a new one there around 1900 which still stands.

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White Genealogy by Charles Davis

Name	Birth	Place	Death	Place	Marriage	Place
John White				IL		
m. Elizabeth Shedd						
Johnson Shedd White*	5-9-1815	Erie Co. OH	10-06-1878	Rockville IN	2-18-1838	Montezuma IN
m. Hannah Jones	1817		1868	Rockville Cem.	2-18-1838	Montezuma IN
<u>Charles Nathan White</u>	1-11-1839		2-1-7-1919	Rockville	6-08-1869	
m. Victoria S. Land					6-08-1869	
Hester White						
Dodimead White						
Earl White						
Clara White						
Wm. J. White						
Judge Ared Frasier White	5-27-1843		1-14-1972	Rockville IN	1-29-1869	
m. Sarah C. Strouse	11-29-1852		1915	Rockville IN	1-29-1869	
Fannie White	1871		1961			
Nellie D. White	1872		1959			
Ruth White						
Jacob White	1877		4-14-1972	Rockville IN	10-18-1892	
m. Bertha C. Stark			10-31-1928		10-18-1892	
Helen White	1885					
m. Walter C. Mand						
<u>Martha E. White</u>	1847		1912	Rockville IN		
<u>William Johnson White</u>	7-29-1850		3-27-1925	Rockville IN	11-12-1874	
m. Martha J. Miller	1-31-1854		12-31-1906	Prairieton IN	11-12-1874	
Mable White						
Hubert White						
Robert J. White						
<u>Mary E. White</u>	1852		6-08-1937	Rockville IN	7-28-1875	Rockville IN
m. Clinton Murphy	3-14-1846	Pomery OH	11-10-1919	Rockville IN	7-28-1875	Rockville IN
Olive Murphy	1876		2-05-1877	Rockville IN		
Louise Murphy	1889		7-10-1891	Rockville IN		
Maurice	5-01-1892		9-11-1930	Crown Hill Cem. Indianapolis IN	7-15-1929	
m. Ruby Claypool Bradford @1899			3-??-1981	no stones	7-15-1929	
Frank Caleb White	3-15-1855		11-23-1930		12-16-1886	Parke Co IN
m. Ella F. Coffin	1855		6-14-1922		12-16-1886	Parke Co IN
Madiline White		of Tomahawk WI				
m. William Mack		of Tomahawk WI				
Andrew White						
Nathan White						
Ared White	1819		1904			
Mary M. White	3-31-1824		7-08-1904	Tuscola IL Richard plot	3-12-1841	Laurence
m. Caleb M. Richards	11-11-1819	TN	2-13-1887	Tuscola IL Richard plot	3-12-1841	Laurence Co. IL

* John Shedd White moved his family to Vincennes, Indiana after his father died and worked there with his two brothers in a large factory. He married Hannah Jones in Montezuma in 1838 and moved to Rockville around 1844. He was a blacksmith and had a sawmill south of town.



BELLE OF THE WEST

Line boats transported both passengers & freight

Drawing by
Paul Baudendistel

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Richards Genealogy by Charles Davis

Name	Birth	Place	Death	Place	Marriage	Place
Richard Richards		Sullivan Co. TN	8-21-1834	Vet. War of 1812		
m. Jane Root		Hartford Co. MD	1840	McMinn TN		
<u>Caleb M. Richards</u>	11-11-1819	TN	2-13-1887	Tuscola IL	3-12-1841	Laurence Co. IL
m. Mary M. White	3-31-1824	Laurence Co. IL	7-08-1904	Tuscola IL	3-12-1841	Laurence Co. IL
Wm. Wallace Richards	10-22-1844		2-01-1918	Tuscola IL	6-27-1876	Tuscola IL
m. Emily Conner	7-??-1848				6-27-1876	Tuscola IL
Fred M. Richards	4-13-1877		4-18-1896	Tuscola IL		
Helen Richards	8-18-1847	Montezuma IN	11-23-1927	Tuscola IL		
Infant		Montezuma IN	1851	Old Montezuma Cem.		
Infant		Montezuma IN	10-23-1852	Old Montezuma Cem.		
Clara Richards	1862	Montezuma IN	8-10-1878	Tuscola IL		
<u>Sarah Ann Richards</u>	2-09-1824	Sullivan Co, TN	3-20-1901	Rockville Cem. IN	11-29-1854	Parke Co
m. Joseph Lambert	1805		9-18-1864	Rockville Cem.	11-29-1854	Parke Co
<u>James King Richards</u>	5-09-1828		1-19-1901	Marseline, Linn MO	7-15-1866	Salem IL
m. Martha Ann Osborn	2-10-1850		7-15-1893		7-15-1866	Salem IL
Ira Marcellus Richards	9-24-1873		9-04-1953	Mexico, Audrain, MO		

Caleb Richards was a constable in Montezuma in 1850. He was in the Draft Registration for the Civil War, Class 2, Congressional

District 7, July 1, 1863, but he didn't serve.

Mary M. White Richards was the sister of Johnson Shedd White.

Wm. Wallace Richards was a harness maker and died at Indianapolis, Indiana where he lived since 1898.

Emily Conner Richards was a school teacher.

Fred Richards died of rheumatic fever.

Helen Richards was a dressmaker and died at Carthage, IL while visiting relatives.