

DAVID R. SHIRK
AND HIS WABASH & ERIE CANAL CONNECTIONS

By Charles Davis

David R. Shirk was born in Oxford, Ohio on June 5, 1832. He came with his parents to Montezuma in 1840. I, Charles Davis, do not know who his parents were. He married Maria Isabella Nesmith Holstead on February 18, 1852. In searching out his first wife's past, I found she was the daughter of Dr. John and Martha Holstead in Probate Book 4 pages 97 and 249. John died in 1846 and at that time [Maria] Isabella was age 14. Her mother was Martha Poteet, formerly the widow of John Holstead. Griffin Holstead was appointed guardian of Maria.

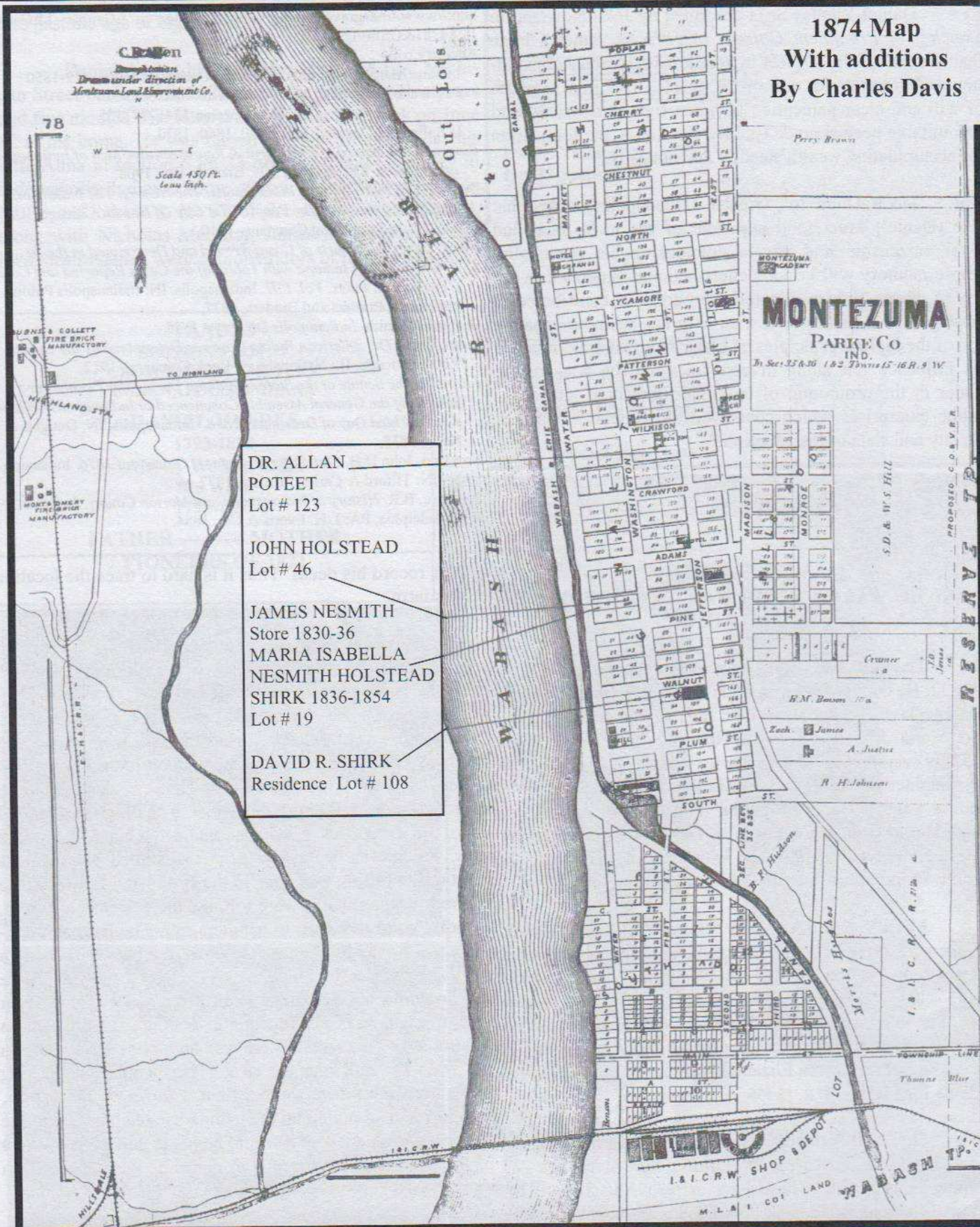
Maria was in some way related to James Nesmith, the second store owner in Montezuma around 1830. Before his death in 1837, he deeded lot 19, his store lot, to Maria on October 18, 1836. Deed Record 4/551. David and Maria kept this store until March 3, 1854, when they sold it to Conrad Lohrman of Vigo county for \$1,200. On March 17, 1855 Lohrman sold it to Elizabeth Stump of Marion county, Indiana for \$1,300. D.R. 15/536

The 1860 Parke county census of Reserve township shows David R. Shirk, age 28, farmer, wife Maria age 28, keeping house, with a farm hand named Abe Stipp. The value of the real estate is \$8,000. David, like many, did not

always record his deeds. Thus it is hard to trace the location of this farm.

Sometime between 1860 and 1870, David got into the sawmill lumber business with William "Daddy" Ricketts. Ricketts built a sawmill on the south side of Benson's Basin on the Wabash & Erie Canal in Montezuma. "The lumber yard extended from the mill to the road and south two blocks, where thousands upon thousands of feet of lumber were piled. He had the first circular saw to be operated in the neighborhood. Most of the logs were rafted down the river, some of which contained a hundred or more logs, and it was necessary to have a skilled navigator as most of the rafting was done in the spring and fall when the Wabash River's banks were full and the current very swift. It took two to five men to handle a raft. The hard and dangerous part was to keep it straight in the stream and when landing they used two long sweeps, one on each side of the raft, to guide and help them land. It was not an uncommon sight to see rafts lashed together extending from the bank to a third across the river. There was an incline track that ran out from the mill into the river. They would cut one log loose from the raft at a time, float it down on the carrier, which was then pulled up the incline by steam power to the sawyers carriage where it would be made into lumber. Most of the houses in Montezuma at that time were made from native wood that was cut into lumber at this mill."

1874 Map
With additions
By Charles Davis



DR. ALLAN
POTEET
Lot # 123

JOHN HOLSTEAD
Lot # 46

JAMES NESMITH
Store 1830-36
MARIA ISABELLA
NESMITH HOLSTEAD
SHIRK 1836-1854
Lot # 19

DAVID R. SHIRK
Residence Lot # 108

THE HOOSIER PACKET - NOVEMBER 2013

The 1970 census show David R. Shirk, age 38, owner of a saw mill, Maria, age 38, a nephew John T. Shirk, age 22, working in the saw mill, John Fitch, age 19, working in the saw mill and John Sipple, age 16, a day laborer. The value of his operation was \$10,000. This shows that David was doing well.

The *Rockville Republican* of September 17, 1870 ran the following advertisement:

DAVID R. SHIRK
(SUCCESSOR TO RICKETTS AND SHIRK)

Manufacture and dealer in all kinds of
LUMBER. All persons purchasing lumber,

Or having logs to dispose of, are
Requested to call on or address me,
Stating terms. Logs accessible to the
Canal or river, preferred.

D.R. Shirk, Box 8, Montezuma, Ind.
April 6, 1870.

In 1866 David bought woods and farmland north of Montezuma from Joseph Roberts of Butler county, Ohio. The land was on the canal and the Wabash river. D.R. 25/158. He logged and farmed this land until 1871 and 1874, selling out to John Ireland, James Johnson and John Scherer. D.R. 30/504, D.R. 31/125. By this time the canal was no longer in use.

David's wife, Maria Isabell, died in 1875. We do not know where she was buried. In 1876 he married Char-

lotte McDonald, who was born in Roseville to George and Lovilla Gookins McDonald in 1847. Her father, George, was born in Roseville, Park county, in 1823 and moved to Montezuma around 1850. He was a commercial traveler and was in the mercantile business there until the Civil War. He followed the troops as a "Sutler." After the war he was a traveling salesman and was considered "the best known in the west." He died April 6, 1885.

On June 4, 1877, David and Charlotte bought their last residence from James Stephenson, lot #108 for \$1,000. D.R. 36/405. Research indicates the house was built by Stephenson C. 1874. It stands in 2013 on the southwest corner of Jefferson and Walnut street. It is empty, for sale and is a beautiful example of that period.

From 1885 to 1899 David and Charlotte lived in Mississippi. They returned to Montezuma where David was in the grocery business until a year before his death. Charlotte died April 23, 1908. Her funeral was at their residence.

David R. Shirk died on August 16, 1912. His funeral was held in his residence. He and Charlotte were both of the Baptist faith. No children were born from either of his marriages. His obituary says that his nephew, John T. Shirk, of St. Louis, Missouri attended the funeral. No grave stones make their graves in Lot #50 of Oakland Cemetery.

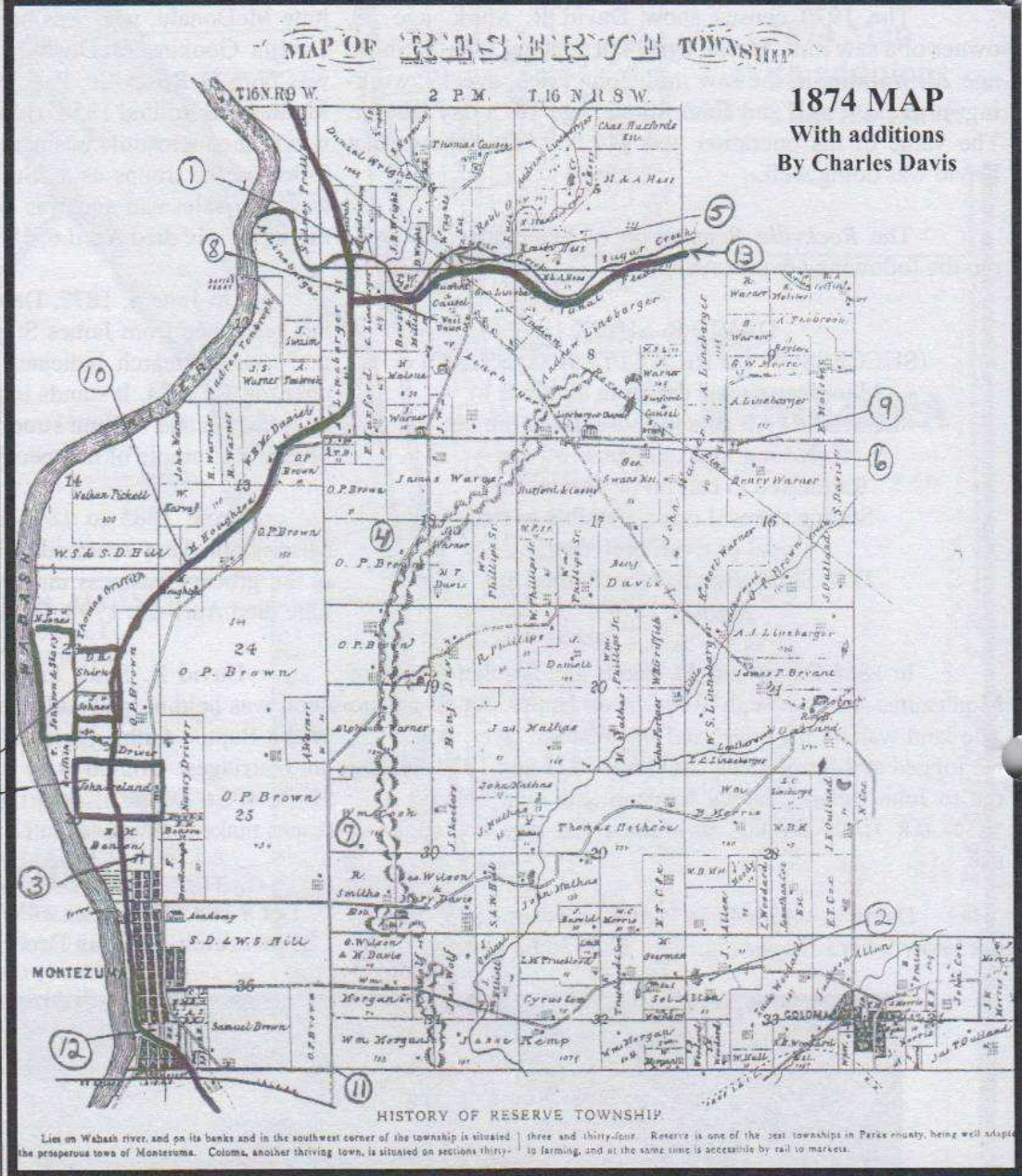
DAVID R. SHIRK

Lot # 108 SW corner of Walnut & Jefferson streets
Montezuma, Indiana Foundation of hand-cut sandstone

Photo by Charles Davis



1. Chief Stone Eater's village
2. Solomon Allan home
3. Oakland Cemetery/
Indian burials
4. Yankee Town
5. Beards/Manwarrings
Mills
6. Andrew TenBrook
7. Wm. Cook
Cooks lane site of
horse races during the
canal period. Cook
was father of Gov.
Wright's wife, Louisa
Cook Wright.
8. West Union
9. Warner Cemetery
10. Wabash & Eric Canal
11. Indian Crossing
12. Miami Village/Indian
Trace used by Miami
13. Sugar Creek canal
feeder
14. David R. Shirk farm/
woods Dark lines show
the land that he owned



ELISHA F. GOOKINS' FAMILY

Name	Birth/Place	Death	Burial/Place	Marriage
Elisha F. Gookins*	1798	1879	Mt. Pleasant Cemetery	
m. Gelana Loree				
Louvilla Gookins	4-06-1822 NY	3-26-1900	Oakland Cemetery	
m. George McDonald	1823	4-06-1885	Oakland Cem. Lot 50	
Charlotte Gookins	1824	1910	Mt. Pleasant Cemetery	
m. Ebenezer Challis	1808	1881		Parke Co. 9-05-1848

*Dr. Elisha F. Gookins was a doctor in Roseville, Parke county, Indiana from about 1854 to 1879, He lived on what was then called Yankee Street that ran through town.

THE HOOSIER PACKET - NOVEMBER 2013

DAVID R. SHIRK'S FAMILY

Name	Birth/Place	Death	Burial/Place	Marriage
(father) Shirk				
m. (mother)				
David R. Shirk	6-05-1832 Oxford, OH	11-??-1878	? Montezuma Oakland Cem.	
m1. Maria Isabella Nesmith Holstead*		8-16-1912	?	Parke county 2-18-1852
m2. Charlotte M. McDonald**	1847	9-24-1875	Oakland Cem. Lot 50	Parke county 12-24-1876
William Shirk		4-23-1908		
m. Jane Stephenson				Parke county 2-05-1846
John T. Shirk	1848 Parke Co.	1912	St. Louis, MO	

*Maria's father was John Holstead, who died 4-4-1846 at age 41 yr. 6 mo. and was buried in Montezuma Cemetery. Her mother was Alivia Beach, who was born in 1800. John's second marriage was to Martha A. Shook on 5-2-1844. After John died Martha married Dr. Allan Poteet on 3-8-1848. Allan Poteet died on 12-4-1852 and is buried in Rockville Cemetery. Nothing more could be found of Martha.

1840 Indiana Census show John Holstead in Franklin county, Indiana.

The Wabash Herald of November 12, 1831 shows that Maria was named after a deceased Nesmith child. The obituary reads: "MARIA ISABELLA NEWSMITH DIED September 21, 1831, infant and only child of James and Martha Nesmith of Montezuma."

**Charlotte's father was George McDonald, who was born in 1823 at Roseville, died 4-06-1885 and was buried in Oakland Cem. Lot 50. Her mother was Lovilla Gookins, who was born 4-6-1822 in New York, died 3-26-1900 and was buried in Oakland Cem. Lot 50. There are no grave stones.

DR. McDONALD'S FAMILY

Name	Birth/Place	Death	Burial/Place	Marriage
Dr. James G. McDonald		9-28-1847	Loree Cemetery	
m. ?				
George McDonald	1823 Roseville	4-06-1885	Oakland Lot 50	
m. Lovilla Gookins*	4-26-1822 NY	3-26-1900	Oakland Lot 50	Parke Co. 4-03-1844
Charlotte McDonald	10-08-1847 Roseville	4-23-1908	Oakland	
m. David R. Shirk	6-05-1832	8-16-1912	Oakland Lot 50 no stone	12-24-1876
Mary E. McDonald	1852			
m. Edwin S. Dills		3-??-1928	South Bend, IN	
Samuel McDonald	1855			
m. Annie Crompton				Parke Co. 190?
Rilla McDonald	1857			
m. Comodore F. Davis**	1862 Wabash twp.			9-11-1878
Pearl R. Davis	1880	1956		
Charles F. Davis	1884	1967		
Endora Davis	1891			
McDonald Davis	1896			
Chauncey P. McDonald	11-03-1859	9-20-1871	Old Montezuma	
Minnie E. McDonald	1862			
m. John Horn				Parke Co. 5-04-1894
Hannah B. McDonald	1864	9-15-1865	Old Montezuma	

*Lovilla's father was Dr. Elisha F. Gookins born 1791, died 1879, and was buried in Mt. Pleasant cemetery.

**Comodore's father was Rich Davis born 1824, died 1917, and buried in Arabia Cemetery. Rich sawed the timbers for the Raccoon Aqueduct on the W & E Canal at Armiesburg. His mother was Mary Hayworth born 1824, died 1887 and buried in Arabia Cemetery. See "Those Arabs and Their Wabash and Erie Canal Connections."