

**JANE L. WILSON,
THE PHOENIX HOUSE**

AND THEIR WABASH AND ERIE CANAL CONNECTIONS

By Charles Davis

James Wilson Sr. was born in Scotland around 1800 and his wife, Jane L., was born in Ireland in 1803. They were married in Canada in 1824. Their children were all born at Quebeck in lower Canada. In September of 1835 the immigrated from Canada to Maine and from there to Armiesburg, Wabash township, Parke county, Indiana in 1839. James Sr. helped rebuild the grist mill in Armiesburg for General Arthur Patterson using his trade as a millwright.

James and Jane owned a small plot of land across the road from the town of Numa in Florida township south of Armiesburg, which they sold of February 23, 1844. After selling this property, James simply disappears. A study of the Circuit Court Book 5 pages 20 through 22 provided the answer as to what happened. Jane filed for divorce on August 2, 1844 with Wm. Perkins Bryant and Addison L. Roache as her attorneys. Joseph A. Wright was appointed the defense lawyer for James. Jane's petition says she was married about 20 years ago to James in the Province of Canada. Some years before their removal from Canada James indulged in drinking ardent spirits in excess and neglected to provide for the family. After their arrival in the U. S. he became a habitual drunkard, abandoned his family for a year, caroused over the country, then returned home promising to quit drinking. Then he continued to neglect his trade and family, threatened Jane's life by drawing a knife on her but was incapable of pursuing her. He allowed her to get away and she couldn't tolerate the abuse anymore. Four of their children are named Luke, James, John W. and Edmund. Jane is granted the divorce, gets everything of value and James is not to have control or supervision of their children. The court dissolves the marriage on September 2, 1845. After this no trace of James can be found.

James and Jane's son, James Wilson Jr., applied for and were granted U.S. citizenship and were duly sworn in, under oath, in open court at Rockville on June 7, 1847. This can be found in the Probate Record Book Vol. 4, pages 102-103, Term 1847 with Hon. John Marshall as Judge.

Lots #1 and #2 Block #1 went up for Sheriff's auction in Montezuma. They were part of an estate of the firm of Stevenson and Haworth, Stevenson dying in October of 1844. They were in the process of selling these lots to John and Ellen Springstead, but the Springsteads couldn't pay the mortgage after John died, thus the auction. Lot #1 was ap-

praised at \$30 and lot #2 at \$350. Lot #2 had a structure on it. James Jr. bid \$305 and got both lots on December 27, 1847. The deed was recorded on July 6, 1848.

The Wabash & Erie Canal was still being dug through Parke county in 1847 and these lots, at the head of Water Street facing the canal, were a smart buy. James and his mother began a hotel there for canal travelers called "Phoenix House." On June 13, 1849 James sold the lots and house to his mother Jane L. for \$305. Deed Record 11/290 No reason for this sale can be found unless James was ill. The 1851 Tax List shows Jane L. Wilson owner of these lots, value of lot #1 at \$300 and #2 at \$1200. James Jr. is listed by himself and was taxed only on his personal property. The 1850 census shows Jane's two sons with James as hotel keeper and John W. as a laborer.

In the Parke county *Whig* of July 7, 1854 it states "Phoenix House. We had the pleasure of giving our friends Mrs. Jane L. Wilson and son, (James) proprietors of this house a call when in Montezuma a day or two since. The house has recently been 'enlarged' and has also been repaired, painted, and refurnished. Indeed we know of no hotel in this part of the country that we would rather stop at, the Phoenix; for they keep a good table, good beds, and a very accommodating and attentive to their guests. See advertisement in today's paper. The advertisement states:

"Phoenix House
(it shows a canal boat at the heading)
Montezuma, Indiana
Jane L. and son, Proprietors.

"This house, located at the head of Water Street, has recently been repaired, painted, and furnished anew, and is ready for the accommodation of the traveling public.

"The proprietors having completed every arrangement to insure the proper accommodation and management of the 'Phoenix,'

A First Rate House,
respectfully solicit the patronage of a discerning public.
"Good and careful people will always be found in charge of the Stables and there persons honoring this establishment with their patronage, may implicitly rely upon ample justice being done to all animals placed in charge.

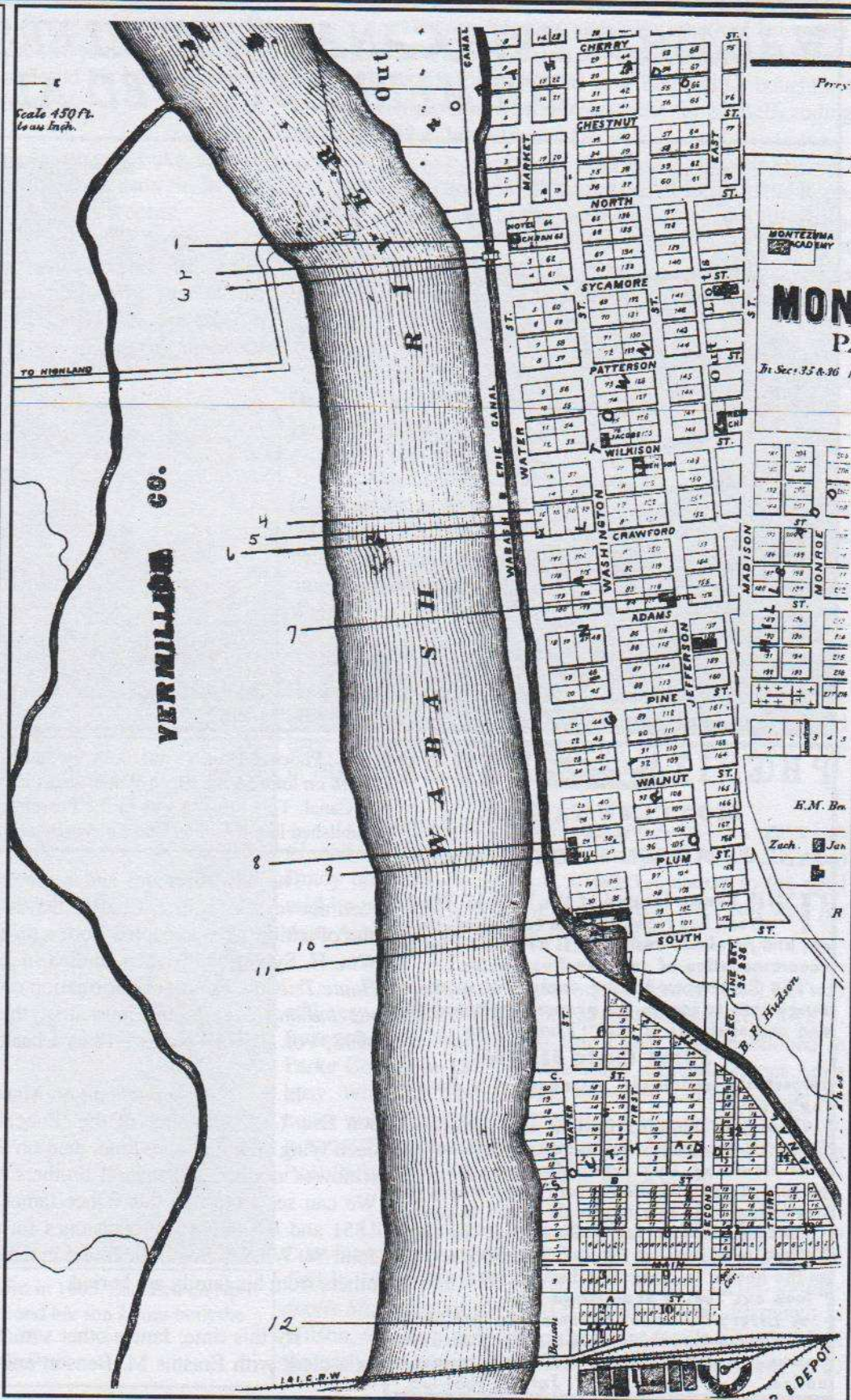
"Persons waiting for a Steamboat of Canal Packet, need have no fears of 'missing a Trip' as the house is near the landing and a strict 'look out' being at all times kept.

"A livery Stable is convenient to this house, where horses and vehicles, either for pleasure or business, may be procured at almost a moments notice. July 7 1854 Stf."

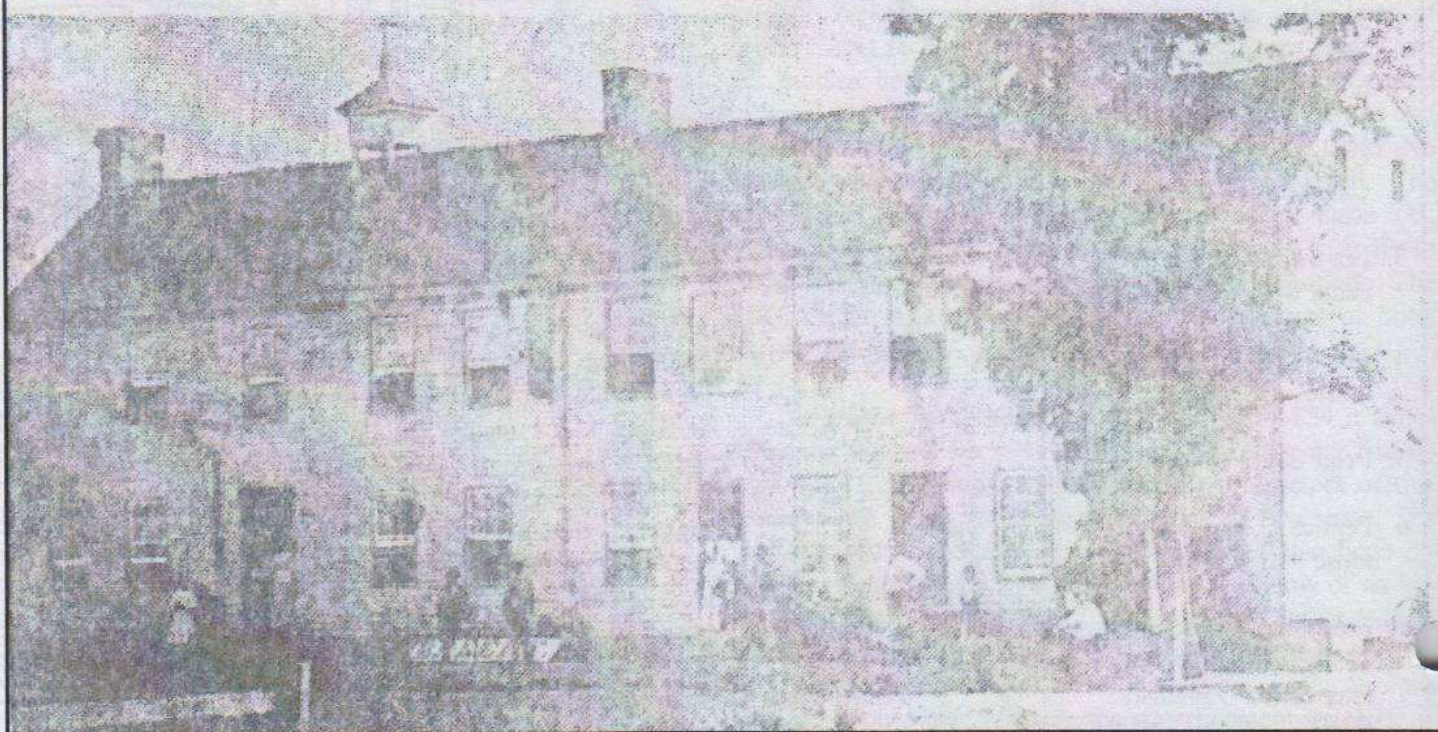
**MONTEZUMA
PARKE COUNTY
INDIANA**

1. James Jr. & Jane L. Wilson's "Phoenix House" hotel, 1848 lot 2
2. Upper Wabash & Erie Canal bridge No. 79
3. Lot 3 John S. Walter's canal warehouse
4. Morris Hughes' warehouse
5. Peter Sharp's store
6. Persius C. Harris' warehouse
7. Fred Arn's house built 1858 standing in 2013 later called Donaldson Hotel
8. Cooper shop
9. Joseph Bowsher's grist Mill, later Dr. George McCune's mill
10. Canal road bridge No. 80
11. Benson's Basin and warehouse on canal (Erastus M. Benson)
12. Benson's slaughter pork house

1874 Plat
Parke Co. Combined Atlas
1874-1908-1916
With additions by
Charles Davis



WABASH & ERIE CANAL TRAVELERS FORMERLY STOPPED AT THIS HOTEL



PHOENIX HOUSE MONTEZUMA, Ind.

JANE L. WILSON & SON, Proprietors.

THIS house, located at the head of Water street, has recently been repapered, painted, and furnished anew, and is now ready for the accommodation of the travelling public.

The Proprietors having completed every arrangement to insure the proper accommodation and management of the "Phoenix" as

A First Rate House,

respectfully solicit the patronage of a discerning public.

Good and careful Ostlers will always be found in charge of the stables, and those persons honoring this establishment with their patronage, may implicitly rely upon ample justice being done to all animals placed in charge.

Persons waiting for a Steamboat or Canal Packet, need have no fears of "missing a trip," as the house is near the landing and a strict "look out" being at all times kept,

A Livery Stable is convenient to this house, where horses and vehicles, either for pleasure or business, may be procured at almost a moment's notice.

July 7; 1854-51f

The "Phoenix House" was built by James Jr. and mother Jane L. Wilson in 1848 on lot #2 block #1 on Water Street in Montezuma, Indiana facing the W & E Canal. This tin-type was in the Possession of Wm. H. Sylvester Jr. and was published in the *Montezuma Enterprise* at the time of his death in 1950.

The advertisement and a picture of the Phoenix House can be seen above. As far as I, Charles Davis, know the picture of the hotel is one of a kind. It was copied from a tin-type that was in the possession of Wm. H. Sylvester Jr. when he died in 1950 and was printed in the *Terre Haute Tribune*. For more information on the Phoenix House/Brady Hotel, see *Indiana Canals*, the journal of the Canal Society of Indiana, Fall 1998, Vol. 9, No. 4 pages 1-18 by Charles Davis.

In the *True Republican* on March 20, 1855 it says, "James Wilson Esq. (Jr.) proprietor of the 'Phoenix House', Montezuma who has been lying sick for some time, died on Wednesday 21st inst. He leaved a widowed mother and several brothers to bewail his untimely decease." We can see from this, his father James Sr. had died sometime between 1851 and March 1855. Headstones for James Wilson Jr. or his brother, John W. Wilson, cannot be found in the Old Montezuma Cemetery where others from his family are buried.

By this time, Jane's other son, Edmund G. Wilson, was engaged as a clerk with Erastus M. Benson and John Given Davis, who ran the

THE HOOSIER PACKET - JUNE 2014

Canal Warehouse on Benson's Basin in Montezuma. Edmund became associated with the mercantile business there for seven years. In 1859 Edmund and his brother John W. embarked in the dry goods business.

Information about Jane's fourth son, Luke, seems to fade away after her divorce from James Wilson Sr. in 1844. He does not show up in any of the census records.

John W. Wilson lost his wife, Serepta Ann, to bilious fever in 1860 leaving him with a two year old son Charles W. Wilson. In 1863 Jane L. Wilson was taken by death at the age of 60 years. She was laid to rest in the Old Montezuma Cemetery.



JANE L. WILSON was born in 1803. She died on April 26, 1863 at the age of 60 years. She and her son James built the Phoenix House in Montezuma, Indiana.

Photo by Charles Davis

Jane's sons Edmund and John inherited her estate. They sold the Phoenix House to Nathan Pineger on August 31, 1863. D. R. 22/124 The same year Edmund G. bought out his brother John and went into business for himself, ending up on lot #49 as his permanent store.

In 1863 John W. Wilson married Leye Annis Rapp. Two girls were born to this marriage, Mary and Elizabeth. In 1864 John's son by his first marriage, Charles W. died at the age of six. On October 11, 1865, John passed away, thus ending the Wilson family's connections with the canal and the hotel.

Nathan Pineger renamed the hotel the "Montezuma House." On July 25, 1866 he sold it to Thomas and Saluda Hayth for \$1000. D. R. 25/252

After running the hotel for several years Thomas Hayth sold it to Alfred McDonald on April 26, 1872. It was called the "Cockran Hotel" after James H. Cockran and his wife, Margaret, who ran the hotel for McDonald during his time of ownership. McDonald sold the hotel to Robert Welch for \$1600 on May 1, 1874. D. R. 31/94

The Cockrans moved to Tacoma Washington. James H. Cockran was a printer and newspaper man. He died in 1888 at Tacoma. Margaret Cockran then moved back to Montezuma and died in her daughter's home there in 1934.

Robert Welch, with "Love and Affection," gave lots #1 and #2 with the hotel to his daughter Johanna (Anna) Brady on April 10, 1875. D. R. 34/525 A clause in the deed said he was to live the rest of his life at the hotel with his care. Anna honored the clause until he died.

Anna renamed the house the "Brady Hotel." It was still very popular through the railroad building era in 1873. Even after the Wabash and Erie Canal was abandoned in Parke County in 1875, travelers and railroaders kept Anna busy. When she died in 1917, her estate was settled and the house was deeded to Jay C. Payton on January 26, 1925. D. R. 93/246 The house was rented a few times until 1972 when Paul Bartlow, who then owned it, tore it down.

Of special note here, Edmund G. Wilson moved to Crawfordsville in 1887 and then to Indianapolis where he died in 1911. His wife Elizabeth's obituary in the *Indianapolis Star* on May 22, 1930 p. 2 states: "Mrs. Elizabeth S. Wilson, 90 years old, descendant of a family prominent in the early American life, died Tuesday at her home, 2310

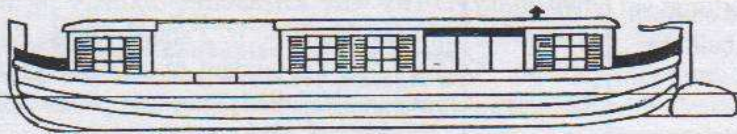
THE HOOSIER PACKET - JUNE 2014

Broadway. She was a granddaughter of Nathan Cox, who was at Valley Forge with Washington and a niece of Charles Skelton, former Governor of New Jersey. She had been a resident of Indiana eighty-six years. She was born in Morrisville, Pa., and when she was 4 years old the family came through the Wabash-Erie canal and settled at Eugene, later moving to Montezuma. She was married to Edmund G. Wilson at Montezuma almost seventy years ago. She had been a resident of Indianapolis thirty-five years. Mrs. Wilson was a member of the Anti-Liquor Crusaders, a predecessor of what is now called the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. She was the grandmother of Mark E. Nebeker, Fifth district Republican chairman, and was a member of the Memorial Presbyterian Church."

WILSON GENEALOGY

By Charles Davis

Name	Birth/Place	Death	Burial/Place	Marriage/Place
James Wilson	@1800 Scotland	Before 1855		1824
m. Jane L. (?) Wilson	1803	4-26-1864	Old Montezuma Cem.	1824
A. Luke Wilson	Before 1828	Quebec		
B. James	3-??-1828	Quebec	3-21-1855	Old Montezuma Cem.
C. John W. Wilson	1830	Quebec	10-11-1865	
m1. Serepta Ann Wade	11-27-1838		8-03-1860	Old Montezuma Cem. 5-06-1857 Parke Co. IN
1. Charles W. Wilson	1858	12-15-1864		Old Montezuma Cem. (same stone as mother)
m2. Leye Annis Rapp	1838			1864 Parke Co. IN
m.1 Gustav Schmidt	1816			(1910 living in Pickley Clay IL)
1. Elizabeth Wilson	1-30-1866	1905		Ingram Cem. Clay Co. IL
m. Ferdinand E. Webster	2-26-1862	8-28-1909	Clay Co. IL	
2. Mary I. Wilson	1864			
D. Henry Wilson	1832	Quebec	9-18-1840	Old Montezuma Cem.
E. Edmund G. Wilson	9-??-1835	Quebec	5-17-1911	Crown Hill Cem., Ind. IN 11-26-1856 Parke Co. IN
m. Elizabeth Skelton	9-??-1840		5-20-1930	Crown Hill Cem., Ind. IN 11-26-1856 Parke Co. IN
1. Mary Ida Wilson	12-27-1857		8-29-1939	Riverside Cem. Clinton, IN 9-06-1877 Parke Co. IN
m. Dr. Henry Nebeker	6-16-1854		5-25-1909	9-06-1877 Parke Co. IN
a. Ray Bassett Nebeker	6-28-1878		7-01-1890	Riverside Cem. Clinton, IN
b. (infant daughter)	4-26-1881		4-26-1881	Riverside Cem. Clinton, IN
c. Mark Edmond Nebeker	1-23-1885		6-17-1963	Riverside Cem. Clinton, IN
m. Ednal Ellen Newton	4-30-1887		5-03-1974	Riverside Cem. Clinton, IN
2. Robert H. Wilson	11-??-1859		6-??-1937	12-25-1888 Crawfordsville Mont. Co. IN
m. Gertrude Rosine Williams	4-??-1868		1953	12-25-1888 Crawfordsville Mont. Co. IN
a. Mary C. Wilson	9-??-1889			
b. Clara E. Wilson	3-??-1894			
3. Edmund G. Wilson, Jr.	1861			(1940 widowed, living with brother & sister)
m. ?				
4. James D. Wilson	3-??-1864			1897
m. Elizabeth	1872			(1940 Ward 24 Independent City, St. Louis, MO) 1897
5. Harry H. Wilson	1866			(1940 census, single, living with brother & sister)
6. William W. Wilson	1871			(1940 census, single, living with brother Ed, sister Caroline & husband, and brother Harry)
7. Elizabeth Wilson	3-??-1872		1-08-1912	Crown Hill Cem, Indianapolis IN
8. Caroline J. (Carrie) Wilson	2-16-1873			5-29-1912 Ind. IN
m. Francis J. Bechman	1871			5-29-1912 Ind. IN
a. Elizabeth A. Bechman	1916			12-18-1938
m. Kenneth Harker				12-18-1938
9. Leroy Wilson	@ 1880			



BROOKVILLE BELLE
Packet Boat Refitted For Light Freight

Drawing by Paul Baudendistel