

Buskirk Cemetery
Bean Blossom Township, Monroe County, Indiana
(also known as the van Buskirk or Wampler or Abel Cemetery)



Patsy reading the stone of her ancestor Isaac van Buskirk, a veteran of the Revolutionary War. He was called "Revolutionary Ike" by family members.



Captain
David Van Buskirk

Aug '61-Apr '64

Biggest Soldier of the Civil War



Members of Van Buskirk Family of Monroe County, Indiana
Left to right: Second Lieutenant Isaac Van Buskirk ("Blue Ike"), Sergeant John ("Sandy");
David Campbell ("Big Dave") and Isaac ("Deal Ike").

Provided by Patsy Powell

The Buskirk Cemetery is located in the NE corner of Section 15 on Bean Blossom Rd; just across White River from Gosport, Owen County. Near, but not adjacent to or visible from, both Wampler Road and Sand College Road.. Coordinates: 86 37 11.4 W 39.13 06.9 N

Never connected with any particular church or governmental entity, this private family burial ground began with the interment of Revolutionary War veteran and Monroe County resident Isaac van Buskirk, called Revolutionary Ike by the family, in 1843. There are today approximately 70 headstones, markers or monuments, although there are almost assuredly a number of other graves which are now unmarked due to the loss of stones over the years. There are, by some estimates, over 100 graves total. No one knows for sure. Located on a beautiful hill overlooking the White River, it contains not just the one but two graves of Revolutionary War era residents, one of a veteran from the War of 1812 and many graves of veterans of the American Civil War, along with all their family members. The latest burial is from 1924 and the cemetery is technically still active, but has not been chosen as a final resting place by family members for many years, most likely due to its remoteness and inaccessibility for descendants to come and visit their loved ones' graves.

Other names associated with the cemetery are Wampler (it overlooks the westernmost extent of Monroe County's Wampler Road), Abel, Spicer, Leabo, Davis and Goble, although the latter names are derived from individuals who had married into, most often, either the Buskirk or Wampler families. Patsy Powell, a Buskirk descendant and current "volunteer" caretaker and historian of the cemetery, has always maintained that what you call it depends on which family you are descended from. If you are a Buskirk, it is the Buskirk (or van Buskirk...the two are interchangeable) Cemetery. if a Wampler, it is the Wampler Cemetery...and so on.

The "biggest" claim to fame of the cemetery is that it boasts the grave of the man who was known to be the largest soldier in the Union Army during the American Civil War, Captain David "Big Dave" van Buskirk, who stood almost 7 feet tall and weighed nearly 400 pounds when he was a member of Co. F, the "Monroe Grenadiers", of the 27th Indiana Infantry in the war. The 27th fought at Antietam, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Winchester and other engagements in the Eastern Theater of the war that are now legendary. He died in 1882 at age 60. Alongside him lie all three of his wives and at least one son. "Big Dave" is featured in the exhibit area at the Monroe County History Center. There are several other members of the 27th, mostly from "Big Dave's" family, along with members of

numerous other Indiana regiments and their families. Patsy Powell, mentioned earlier, who is a retired MCCSC elementary music teacher and former Monroe County History Center volunteer, is Big Dave's great-granddaughter. She still lives in an 1882 era renovated house near the cemetery.

In the early 1920s a tornado ripped through this part of the county and did a great deal of damage to the cemetery, knocking over or breaking many stones and monuments. It languished for many years until Patsy, realizing that this family heritage was being lost, took it upon herself alone (at first) to restore the plot. When it became obvious the job was too big for her to do by herself, she sought and got the help, financial and otherwise, of other descendants. Since 2000, she has arranged for the hiring of a company out of Connerville, Indiana, that specializes in cemetery restoration, to come three or four times and spend up to a week each time to unearth buried stones, locate unknown graves, repair broken markers, clean the stones and, most remarkably, rebuild a magnificent arched monument to the Byers family, a family line which now has no descendants. What resulted was, now twelve years later, a nearly finished and magnificent resurrection of a burial ground for family members and others to enjoy for years to come. As Patsy says, "...just one more trip by Graveyard Groomers and we might actually get it completely done!" The sad thing is that, however, some of the original work has already been re-damaged and stones that were cleaned ten years ago are getting dirty again. Time is relentless in its attack on such memorials, and Patsy's work goes on when she can.

For more information about Monroe County Cemeteries, consult the Cemetery Files at the Genealogy Library at the Monroe County History Center or contact the Cemetery Committee at genealogy@monroehistory.org.