

6 Great Grandparents
John Cowan of Indiana
1768-1832
Margaret Weir
abt.1778-abt.1813

Our evidence for **John Cowan of Indiana** being the father of our ancestor **Esther Cowan** [1803-1865] is compelling but circumstantial. His was the only Cowan family in Indiana during Esther's childhood. Records show that **John Cowan** lost his wife **Margaret Weir** in Clark County, Indiana, about the time that Esther was nine or ten years old. **Isaiah** and **Elizabeth Cooper** were the adoptive parents of Esther. The county history of Pike County, Illinois, shows that **Enoch Cooper** married "**Esther Cooper**, adopted daughter of **Isaiah Cooper**," in November of 1829. She was probably adopted in Clark County, Indiana, where the Coopers lived from abt. 1802-1817. It was common to give children to relatives or friends to rear after a frontiersman lost his wife. Military records show that **John Cowan** and his son **James Cowan** served in the same company of roving rangers during the War of 1812 as did **Isaiah Cooper**, and so the Coopers and Cowans were well acquainted with each other. **Rose Cooper Goodrich** testified to her grandmother's maiden name being **Esther Cowan**. Genealogy records of **John Cowan** in a book co-written by his granddaughter, **Laura Cowan Blaine**, show a four-year gap between the births of the children of **John** and **Margaret Weir Cowan** where Esther would fit in. **Esther Cowan** named a daughter **Rosanna Margaret Cooper**, probably for her mother. **Isaiah** and **Elizabeth Cooper** named a daughter **Margaret Cooper** in 1808, probably for their friend **Margaret Weir Cowan**. Census records show that Esther was born in Tennessee, where **John** and **Margaret Weir Cowan** were living in 1803.

John Cowan was born December 14, 1768, in what is now Rockbridge County, Virginia, the son of **Samuel Cowan** and **Ann Walker**. Rockbridge County, which is nestled between the Blue Ridge and the Allegheny Mountains at the southern end of the Valley of Virginia, was then on the Virginia frontier. Rockbridge County was formed from part of Augusta County in 1778. The Cowans probably lived near other family members along Hays and Walker creeks near the present-day Augusta-Rockbridge county line. There were many other Scotch-Irish families in the area, and kinsmen of the **Cowans** and **Walkers**: the **Moores**, **Campbells**, **Weirs**, and **Houstons**. Several famous persons emerged from this branch of our family: **Joseph Reddeford Walker**, the mountain man for whom several geographical locations are named; **Mary Ann Montgomery [Mrs. Nathan Bedford Forest]** wife of the Civil War cavalry leader; and **Jeb Stuart**, also

a Civil War cavalry leader. The two presidents **Bush** are also descended from our ancestor, **Hugh Weir**, of Rockbridge County.

In the 1750's, the French and Indian alliance against the British brought increasing violent attacks on the frontier settlers of Virginia. John's grandparents, **John Walker III** [1705-1778] and **Ann Houston Walker**, moved from the Valley of Virginia to present-day Caswell County, North Carolina [then Orange County] in 1756. His Cowan grandparents settled in what became Rowan County, North Carolina.

Beginning in 1769 members of **John Cowan's** family began moving to the Clinch River Valley in southwest Virginia, in present-day Scott and Russell counties a short distance east of Cumberland Gap, which was to be where the Wilderness Road led pioneers through the Appalachian Mountains into Tennessee and Kentucky. The area where they settled was then part of Washington County, Virginia. The extended family included the families of **Samuel, Andrew, William, and David Cowan**, three of whom were married to daughters of **John Walker III** and his wife, **Ann Houston Walker**, young John's grandparents. The Walker grandparents and most of their children also moved to the Clinch: **Samuel Walker, John Walker IV**, and the wives of **John Snoddy, Patrick Porter, Alexander Montgomery, Joseph Moore, and William Moore**. This was quite a large extended family surrounding the young John when he left North Carolina to move to the Clinch Valley. There were many cousins, who were undoubtedly his playmates because few other people lived in the area. John was about four when the family made the move.

Samuel and Ann Walker Cowan settled on both sides of McKinney's Run [now called Cowan's Creek]. This lies in present-day Scott County near the Russell County line. Uncle **William Cowan** lived adjacent to his brother Samuel's family. For that reason, young John was close to this uncle. This area along the Clinch River was called Castle's Woods. Cowan Creek, where the Cowans lived, lies on the slopes of Copper Ridge in Scott County, but the present-day town of Castlewood lies in Russell County. John's grandparents, **John Walker III** and his wife **Ann Houston**, settled near the Cowans on a 300 acre tract of land he named *Broadmeadows* at the "sink" of Sinking Creek.

There were two forts in Castle's Woods. The one on **David Cowan's** land was called Cowan's Fort but in official correspondences it was referred to as Fort Russell because the commander of the militia there was Capt. William Russell. It was located behind the present-day Masonic Lodge Hall in Castlewood, Russell County, Virginia. The other fort, Moore's Fort, about two miles away, was the home and fort of two aunts of young John, the wives of brothers **William and Joseph Moore**. It was a larger and more substantial fort. It was to these forts that area settlers would flee in times of Indian peril, and they lived inside the forts for long periods of time until the danger subsided. This was called being "forted up." Moore's Fort generally had about twenty families living there and about twenty or twenty-five militia soldiers stationed there during the dangerous times of the 1770's. During Dunmore's War in 1774, Capt. Russell and

the settlers of Castle's Woods worked together to expand the forts to make them large enough to accommodate the area's families in case of Indian attack. Houston's Fort [aka Houston's Station], on Big Moccasin Creek was the home and fort of **William Houston**, perhaps a kinsman of John's grandmother, **Ann Houston Walker**.

The Castle's Woods settlers also worked together to support a teacher for their children. James Russell, a son of Capt. William Russell, was the teacher. For a number of years he taught the children in the area and was **John Cowan's** teacher. When a militia officer accused Russell of being a deserter, he was able to clear himself of the charges, but to save his good name, he joined up for service in Kentucky and left the community in 1778. That was to be a year of great loss in young John's life as will be seen.

John was not yet five when Daniel Boone, a man of future fame from the Yadkin Valley, North Carolina, arrived at Castles' Woods in 1773 on his way with a band of North Carolina emigrants to settle in Kentucky, then unsettled land. They were enroute to Cumberland Gap, just west of Castle's Woods. It was a natural pass through the Allegheny Mountains into Kentucky and Tennessee, through which thousands of settlers would soon pass on their way west. The trail to the gap would be called the " Wilderness Road," and it passed right through the Clinch Valley.

Having been to Kentucky, Boone gave it high praise to the residents of the Clinch Valley and had the settlers of the valley and Capt. Russell ready to join Boone's party and head west. All of the Walkers and Cowans began to prepare for the move. Boone's group, already packed, planned to go ahead and wait for the Clinch residents near Cumberland Gap. Camped near the gap, Boone sent his eldest son, James, sixteen back to the fort to get some supplies the emigrants needed right away. Young James arrived at Fort Russell, got the needed supplies, and headed back to his father's party with a son of Capt. Russell and four other men. Before they could reach Boone's camp, Indians attacked, torturing and mutilating before killing the entire party accompanying young Boone. Only a slave, who had hidden under a log, survived to tell the story. This tragedy caused the Boone party to disintegrate, most emigrants returning to North Carolina, and, of course, the Clinch Valley residents changed their plans to move to Kentucky. Boone, in his grief, brought his family to the Clinch and remained there for the present, united in grief with the Russell family.

In 1774 "Lord Dunmore's War" with the Shawnee Indians broke out on the frontier. Captain William Russell and his Clinch Valley militia members were ordered to join the campaign. Almost every man in young John's extended family left to do battle. Daniel Boone agreed to remain in the Clinch and command the militia members in forts Moore and Russell [aka Cowan's Fort]. All the women and children of the family were fortified up with Boone. No doubt in his later years **John Cowan** would reminisce about this close relationship with the great Daniel Boone. Then Capt. Russell and the men of the family returned

victorious and life began to normalize. Boone would organize another group of emigrants in 1775 and finally achieve his goal of settling in Kentucky.

Just then, the long-simmering dispute between the British colonies and the mother country broke out into war with the shots fired at Lexington and Concord. The British were quick to make alliances with the frontier Indians, and so it was that while the Declaration of Independence was being signed in Philadelphia, Indian tribes allied with the British were approaching Castle's Woods, then the westernmost settlement on Virginia's frontier. Learning of some 300 Indians' presence in the Clinch Valley, John's father, **Samuel Cowan**, went to warn those fortified up at nearby Houston's Station [a.k.a. Houston's Fort] that the Indians were in the Clinch. His journey would have taken him southeast over Copper Ridge into Copper Creek Valley and then over Moccasin Ridge into Big Moccasin Creek Valley to Houston's Station.

Cowan spent the night at the Houston Station, and in the morning a militia company arrived, reporting that the residents at Fort Russell [a.k.a. Cowan's Fort] were being menaced by the Indians. Hearing that his own family was in danger at Fort Russell, Samuel left the safety of Houston's Station despite warnings as to the danger. He was determined to go to his endangered family. Just outside the Houston's Station palisade, within earshot of the fort, he was shot and scalped by the Indians. He was brought into the fort and died that evening. His bloody horse, spooked by the shooting, had returned home to Fort Russell where Samuel's family saw a profusion of blood on the saddle of the riderless horse and knew that Samuel had met his end. Young John's mother fainted away upon seeing her husband's blood-spattered horse. The seven-year-old boy would have witnessed this event.

The Widow Cowan and her three or four children would have had a lot of support from the family members in the valley, especially from **William Cowan** on the adjacent farm. William's wife was **Ann Cowan's** sister **Jane Walker Cowan**. From later events, it appears as if his **Uncle William Cowan** became a father figure for John.

In the spring of 1778 a coalition of northern and southern Indians again stealthily entered the Clinch Valley through Cumberland Gap and attacked Castle's Woods. **Ann Walker Cowan** had just begun walking the two miles from Fort Russell to Moore's Fort with her brother **Samuel Walker** and another man. The families were fortified up due to the Indian danger. Her children were likely with her. The group was crossing a field planted in rye not far from Fort Russell when they were attacked by Shawnee Indians. The Indians shot and scalped John's uncle, **Samuel Walker**, and took **Ann Cowan** and her daughter **Jane Cowan** captive. Ann Cowan's two sons began running for safety. We are told in the *Maxwell History and Genealogy* that nine-year-old **John Cowan** ran for his life with the Indians right behind him in pursuit. He just made it inside the gate of the Fort Russell as an Indian raised his tomahawk to dispatch him. In a nearby field, eleven-year-old **William Walker**, **John Cowan's** first cousin, a year older than John, was riding the plow horse while their uncle, **Andrew Cowan**,

plowed his field. From the forest rim, Delaware Indians shot the uncle in both arms before storming out to finish him off. Andrew began running toward his cabin, but he was downed just as he approached his cabin. They quickly tomahawked and scalped him. Young William attempted to reach the cabin as well, but the Indians quickly overcame him and took him captive. John's brother, Jim [**James Benjamin Cowan**], who was about eight years old at the time, was captured by the Chickamauga Cherokees of the alliance and taken away to their nation and adopted into their tribe.

John's grandfather, **John Walker III**, was greatly grieved at the loss of so many of his family: two of his children, two sons-in-law, and at least three grandchildren. He died later that year. Following the massacre, because he was not a soldier, John's teacher, James Russell, was abused as a coward, so he went away to join in the fight. With no one to teach, John's schooling ended as well. These were massive losses to the boy, who turned ten that December of 1778—a bleak tenth birthday. The Indian attacks continued in the Clinch with other families suffering as had the Cowans and Walkers. This was the frontier aspect of the Revolutionary War that is not as familiar as the large battles with the British army fought in the well-settled regions of the colonies.

With the Revolution over, it was about 1785 that **John Cowan**, with his Uncle **William Cowan's** family, moved to what was then Greene County, Tennessee [later Blount County]. It was preparatory for this move that John had his father's land surveyed. On August 20, 1784, the Washington County, VA, Book #1 of the Record of Surveys and Entries, page 153, this survey, done more than a year earlier, is entered:

*Surveyed for **John Cowan**, 230 acres of land in Washington County, by virtue of a certificate [some kind of deed], lying on both sides of McKinney's Run [Cowan Creek], a south branch of Clinch River, and beginning at the foot of Copper Creek Ridge at a poplar corner to **William Cowan's** land he now lives on and with the lines thereof etc. March 25, 1783.*

*We the Commissioners for the District of Washington and Montgomery Counties do certify that **John Cowan**, heir at law of **Samuel Cowan** deceased, is entitled to 284 acres of land by settlement in the year 1772, lying in Washington County on a branch known by the name of McKenney's Run, and adjoining **William Cowan**. As witness our hands the 8th day of August 1781. Teste James Reid, C. C. Jos. Cabell, Harry Innes, M. Cabell, Commissioners*

On the same page in the Book of Surveys is an entry for John's uncle **David Cowan's** land. He, too, was leaving the Clinch, but ended up in Kentucky, not Tennessee as did his brother William. With the Revolution ended, emigrants were streaming through the Wilderness Trail into Kentucky and Tennessee.

It was about 1785 when John's brother, **Jim Cowan**, then about age fifteen, found his way to where his brother was in Tennessee after leaving his captors, the Chickamauga Cherokees. One can only imagine how the reunion occurred and how Jim reacculturated into the white world. **John Cowan** was then about sixteen or seventeen years old.

[The next story was extracted from a version told by Dr. James Benjamin Cowan of Tullahoma, TN, a grandson of James Benjamin Cowan, as written by P. D. Cowan. P. D. Cowan had so many errors in his story that I have had to retell the story as I believe it happened, based upon MY research. Some details of the story may not be accurate, but it is believed that the essence is correct.][If you ever come across P. D. Cowan's *The Shadow of Chilhowee*, don't bother to read it. It is not history, but fantasy.]

About the same time than **Jim Cowan** return to his family, John's mother resurfaced in a rather dramatic way about 1785. A half-breed French-Indian and his Indian wife arrived at the Shawnee village in Ohio where **Ann Walker Cowan** was captive. She convinced them to help her escape. They buried her under a pile of furs in their canoe and headed to a French trading post somewhere in Kentucky. Arriving at the trading post and knowing that the Indians would follow after discovering Ann's absence, the half-breed and the owner of the trading post hid Ann in a small cellar under the trading post floor and sent a rider to seek help among Ann's people.

The rider rode day and night to what is now Blount County, Tennessee, where Ann somehow had learned that her Scotch-Irish community had moved. The Blount County settlers were assembled outdoors at meeting [religious services] listening to a sermon. He rode to a stump, which served as the podium, and called out, "Is there a man here named Russell, Major Russell? Or Colonel Walker or any man named Cowan?"

Major Russell spoke up. "I'm Major Russell. What is it you want?"

The rider spoke excitedly, "There is a woman at the French trading post making her escape. Her name is **Ann Cowan** and the Indians are in pursuit to recapture her, and I am to come here and tell her friends to come quickly as possible to rescue her. Within an hour a well-provisioned army of one hundred men was on a forced march northward toward the trading post, among them **Ann Cowan's** teenaged sons.

It was dark when the small army reached the trading post. The Indians had been loitering around the trading post asking questions about their missing slave and probably buying whisky at the post. Hearing the approaching hoofbeats, the Indians fled as Major Russell and his men arrived. And from the dark depths of the cellar, still in the dress of the Shawnees, **Ann Cowan** emerged and was reunited with her now-grown sons.

John's mother joined her sons and her sister, **Jane Walker Cowan** and Jane's husband **William Cowan** in present-day Blount County, Tennessee, and attempted to readapt to family life in this much-changed world. Certainly she suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder; the adjustment had to have been

difficult. Worse was to come. She had only escaped from captivity a short while when she was again taken captive, by what Indian tribe we do not know. This time she was ransomed after about six months. Upon her return to her family, it appears that she resolved never to live on the frontier again. She returned to a safer area to live out her life, probably Rockbridge County, Virginia, where she had grown up. [There is an account of her being an elderly woman about 1810.]

On 18 November 1788, the following document was recorded in the new Russell County, Virginia, clearly a sale of the land **Samuel Cowan** had settled upon arriving in the Clinch Valley, the same land that had been surveyed in 1783:

*THIS INDENTURE made the eighteenth day of November in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-eight between James McKinney, of the County of Russell, in the State of Virginia of the one part and **John Cowan**, of Green County and state of North Carolina [Tennessee was still officially part of North Carolina at this time.] , of the other part witnesseth that the said **John Cowan** for and in consideration of the sum of sixty-six pounds of current money of Virginia to him in hand paid by the said James McKinney doth grant, bargain and sell unto the said James McKinney and his heirs a certain tract or parcel of land in the County of Russell containing two hundred and thirty-five acres by survey bearing date the twenty-fifth day of March, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-three, lying and being in the County of Russell, on both sides of McKinney's Run a south branch of Clinch River and bounded as followeth, to wit: Beginning at the foot of Copper Creek Ridge at a poplar corner to William Cowan's land and with a line thereof north fifty-one degrees west one hundred and fifty-three poles to a white oak and ash sapling on the east side of the ridge, North thirty degrees east one hundred and fifty-five poles to a black oak and a white oak at the foot of a rocky ridge thence, leaving said line, North forty-seven degrees East, one hundred and forty-nine poles crossing the branch to two white oaks at the foot of a ridge South thirty-two degrees east forty poles to a black and white oak of the side of a ridge south forty-three degrees west forty-five poles to three white oak saplings on the west side of a ridge south Twenty-five degrees east eighty poles to a beech near a branch south four degrees west one hundred poles crossing the branch to a white oak and ridge at the foot of Copper Creek ridge and along thereon south forty four degrees west one hundred and twenty-six poles to the BEGINNING, together with all its appurtenances to have and to hold the said tract or parcel of land with its appurtenances unto the said James McKinney and his heirs to the sole use and behoof of him the said James McKinney and his heirs forever and the said **John Cowen** for himself and his heirs doth covenant with the said James McKinney and his heirs that the said John Cowen and his heirs the said land with the appurtenances unto the said James McKinney and his heirs against all persons what so ever will forever warrant and defend. In Witness whereof the said **John Cowen***

*hath hereunto subscribed his name and affix3ed his seal the day and year avove written. **John Cowen**. [seal] At a Court held for Russell County the 18th day of November 1788. This indenture of Bargain and sale of land from **John Cowen** to James McKinney was acknowledged in court and ordered to be recorded. Teste: Henry Dickenson, C. R. C. A copy, Teste: E. R. Combs, Clerk Circuit Court, Russell County, Va.*

From the book *American Militia in the Frontier Wars, 1790-1796*, page 102, we learn that **John Cowan** served in Captain Hugh Beard's Company of Guards at the treaty on the Holston River near the mouth of the French Broad River, May 28 to July 11, 1791.

On September 24, 1799, in Deed Book 1, page 298, a transaction was recorded between **John Cowan** of Knox County, Southwest Territory and James McKinney of Russell County. It is probably a lease or a deed of sale.

On June 23, 1796, **John Cowan**, his uncle **William Cowan**, and Robert Wood were among the registered surveyors of the Powell Valley Tract in Southwest Virginia and Tennessee. John was a newlywed at the time. [p.66 *Calendar of the Tennessee and King's Mountain Papers of the Draper Collection of Manuscript*, Wisconsin Historical Society Publications, Madison, WS, 1929]

John's mother had retreated to Rockbridge County after her captivity among the Indians. On May 9, 1796, John paid a \$150 marriage bond there to marry **Margaret Weir** [c.1778-c.1811], daughter of **James Weir** of Rockbridge County. The brother of **James Weir**, **Jonathan Weir**, is the ancestor of both presidents Bush.

About 1800 many of the residents of Blount County were moving southwestward into the Sewanee Valley in what was to become Franklin County, Tennessee, which abuts the Alabama state line. John's brother Jim moved there and John moved there briefly, but we are not sure when. There was another **John Cowan** there, a cousin of our John's no doubt, so it is impossible to discern which of the records are our **John Cowan**. The other **John Cowan**, probably a son of our **John Cowan's** uncle, **Robert Cowan**, was elected as one of the first county commissioners of Franklin County in December of 1807. The first court met at the home of Major William Russell, the man who had lived at Castle's Woods with the Cowans in Virginia, and then in Blount County with them. Later in Franklin County a town would spring up that would be named *Cowan*, Tennessee, named for a family member.

We know that our subject **John Cowan** moved his family to Mercer County, Kentucky about 1804. In Beckwith's History of Montgomery County, Indiana, in John's son's biography, it states that John had lived in Tennessee for twenty years, so our dates are about correct here. It was in Mercer County that John and Margaret's daughter **Sarah "Sally" Cowan** was born in 1805. There were probably Cowan relatives already living in Mercer County. Another John

Cowan had taken the census of that county in 1777. That John was likely a brother to the subject **John Cowan's** father, **Samuel Cowan**.



Mercer County, Kentucky

About 1807 the Cowans moved again, to what is now Charlestown, Clark County, Indiana. John had purchased the land grant of one of George Rogers Clark's soldiers there. The grant contained 8 acres in the settlement and 100 acres outside for farming.

Margaret Weir Cowan died about 1811, leaving John alone with their seven or more children. It is believed that John turned over the care of his daughter Esther and an infant daughter to **Isaiah** and **Elizabeth Montier Cooper** at this time. This was a common occurrence on the frontier. The men had to work and had no one to care for an infant. Why Esther also was let go may have been because Esther was attached to **Rachel Cooper**, who was her own age, or perhaps because she was very attached to the baby. This can only be speculation, but it was a common occurrence. Perhaps the situation was only temporary at first but gradually became accepted as permanent.

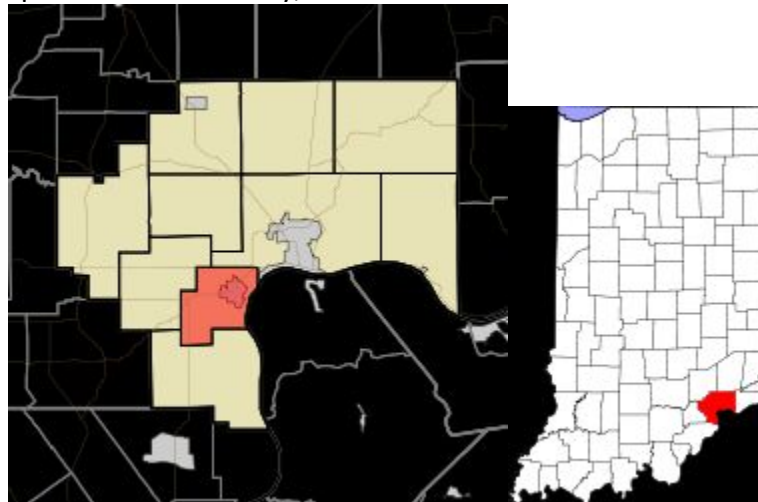
Margaret may have already been dead when John served under General William Henry Harrison at the Battle of Tippecanoe on 7 November 1811, in Captain Charles Beggs' Company of Light Dragoons of the Indiana Militia. In this battle the Shawnees, fighting under the leadership of "The Prophet," brother of Tecumseh, were defeated. Shortly thereafter, the War of 1812 began and the Indians allied themselves with the British.

On 1 April 1813, at Charlestown, Clark County, IN, John joined Captain James Bigger's company of mounted rangers who roamed throughout Indiana to prevent Indian attack. The company was mostly made up of men from Clark County, but there were also about eleven men from Vallonia. John's fifteen year old son, **James Weir Cowan**, also enlisted in the company. **Isaiah Cooper**, whose son **Enoch** would one day marry John's daughter, **Esther Cowan**, was also a member. Also among the company of rangers were brothers **John Maxwell** and **David Maxwell**, who would become John's brothers-in-law in the future. Each ranger received a dollar a day and had to furnish his own horse, arms, provisions, and ammunition. John and James were privates. Their company was in the regiment of Colonel William Russell, the man who had commanded Fort Russell at Castle's Woods. The soldiers were fighting against the famed Shawnee Indian Tecumseh and his allies.

Captain Bigger's company took part on June 11, 1813, in a deployment commanded by General Joseph Bartholemew. They attacked the Delaware Indians' upper towns on the west fork of the White River. When the force

reached the Indian towns, they found that they had mostly been destroyed already, probably by a company from White Water settlement. They did find one band of Indians near Strawtown and surrounded them. The Indians were boiling deer heads in a large copper kettle. The Indians fled with but one casualty to the whites: David Hays was wounded. **David Maxwell** [one day to be **John Cowan's** brother-in-law] dressed Hays' wounds. The patient was then carried on a horse litter to the mouth of Flat Rock, now Columbus, Indiana, where two canoes were made. With a guard, Hays was sent back to his family in Vallonia, but he died shortly afterward from his wounds at the fort. The captured Indian horses and kettle were sold to the highest bidder in the expedition.

John remained unmarried through most of the decade. His daughter **Mary Ann Cowan**, about twelve when her mother died, probably assumed the household duties. Mary Ann died in August of 1819, and this probably prompted John to remarry. Four months later, on 30 December 1819, he married **Anna Maxwell**, 37, a spinster woman who was the sister of **John** and **David Maxwell**, who had served with **John Cowan** and **Isaiah Cooper** in the same company during the War of 1812. Their marriage was performed by Rev. John McClung, who was a minister in the Reformed Presbyterian or Newlight Church in Bellevue, Jefferson County, Indiana. They are believed to have lived in Hanover Township in Jefferson County, which abuts the Ohio River.



Hanover Township in Jefferson County, Indiana

Apparently John was feeling that it was a time for some changes in his life. Not only did he take a new wife, but, in 1820, soon after their marriage, he moved his family to the newly-created capital of Indiana, the village of Indianapolis. In *Indianapolis: A Historical and Statistical Sketch of the City*, by W. R. Holloway, 1870, p.9, mention is made of the Cowans' early settlement of Indianapolis:

If Pogue really arrived in March, 1819, he lived for nearly a year alone with no neighbors except the Whetzels on the south at the Bluffs,

*and William Conner on the north, sixteen miles away. But on the twenty-seventh of February, 1820, he was followed by James and John McCormich, who built themselves a house on the river near the present position of the National Road bridge. Within a few days they were joined by **John Maxwell** and **John Cowan**, who built on Fall Creek near the crossing of the Crawfordsville Road...*

Another mention of **John Cowan** as a founder of Indianapolis was in *Greater Indianapolis*, by Jacob Piatt Dunn, p.163:

*The election of 1858 [for mayor of Indianapolis] was warmly contested, both parties making special efforts to secure the German vote. The republicans nominated [the widower of John Cowan's daughter Sarah] **Samuel D. Maxwell**. The election result was practically on party lines throughout, Maxwell winning by a vote of 1,984 to 1,696. **Samuel Dunn Maxwell** was one of the first settlers, coming here in March 1820. He was born in Garrard County, Kentucky, February 19, 1803. In 1809, his father, **John Maxwell**, removed to Hanover, Indiana, and in 1813-1814 served as a "ranger" in the militia organization. [with our ancestors **Isaiah Cooper** and **John Cowan**] On one expedition his command penetrated to the Delaware towns on the White River, and on the knowledge of the country he then obtained, he determined to settle it as soon as it was open. [as did **Isaiah Cooper**] The immigration party [to Indianapolis] consisted of **John Maxwell** and his two sons; **John Cowan** and his two sons; and two negro men, Aaron Wallace and Richard Morland. They located on Fall Creek near the present City Hospital at the head of a bayou that was later made into a mill race; and each family cleared about seven acres of land and put it in corn. All then returned to Hanover except **Samuel D. [Maxwell]** and one of the **Cowan** boys [**James Weir Cowan**, John's eldest son]. When the crop was "laid by," they also returned to Hanover, and in August came back with a wagonload of goods, the family following in November. Their residence was a cabin on Fall Creek near Indianapolis Avenue and Maxwell Street, named for Samuel D. He is also remembered as a leader of the singing at the first Presbyterian preaching held in Indianapolis. In 1822 he moved to Montgomery County [Indiana], of which he was appointed sheriff by Governor Hendricks in April, 1823. On December 15, 1822, he married **Sarah Cowan** [John's daughter] of Crawfordsville. Later he removed to Clinton County, where he was the first clerk in 1830. In 1855 he returned to Indianapolis, where he practiced law....*

The Cowans lived in Indianapolis only about two years; during that time a son, **John Maxwell Cowan**, was born on 6 December 1821. Because Anna was

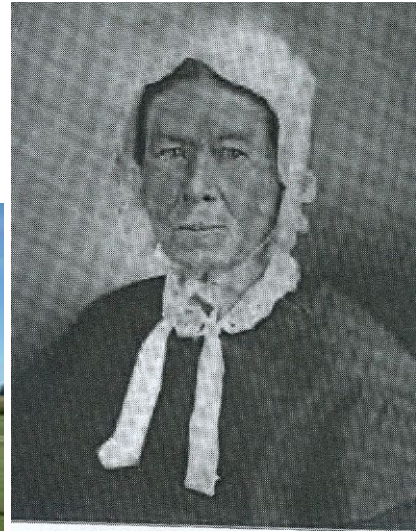
along in years, this was to be John and her only child. The child was named for Anna's brother, **John Maxwell**, **John Cowan's** closest friend.

The following year, 1822, the Cowans moved to Montgomery County, Indiana. There they purchased land 2 ½ miles southwest of the town of Crawfordsville on Oldfield's Creek John was fifty-four at the time. The land would have needed clearing. John had two grown sons at home, Jim, 23, and Walker, 20. The three men would have worked together to make a cabin and farm out of the virgin land. Original land patent entries of Montgomery County show that on 4 July 1822 John purchased or claimed 80 acres that were the east one half of the southeast one quarter of Township 18, Section 11, Range 5. It was patent #135496.

From *A Brief History of Wabash Avenue Presbyterian Church* [of Crawfordsville, Montgomery County, Indiana] we learn

*We cannot be certain just when that local church of Presbyterian label was formed. It may have been December of 1821 or 1822. Accounts differ; but southwest of Crawfordsville about two miles, in an unfinished cabin built by **Mr. John Cowan**, a simple religious service was held on a Sunday morning. The preacher was Rev. Charles Beatty. That same afternoon the group met again to witness the wedding of one of Mr. Cowan's daughters [**Sarah "Sally" Cowan**] to **Samuel D. Maxwell**. Both family names have since been significant in city, county, and state history.*

For the next ten years John and Anna lived on this land, but in 1832 John became ill. He was either visiting at or was taken to the home of his daughter **Sarah "Sally" Cowan Maxwell** in nearby Frankfort, in Clinton County. Sally was married to Anna's nephew **Samuel Dunn Maxwell**. John's sons probably took care of the farm in his absence. It was in Sally's home that John died on 17 August 1832, at the age of sixty-three. He was buried in the Old Town Cemetery in Crawfordsville.



Anna (Maxwell) Cowan.

Old Town Cemetery, Crawfordsville, where John and Anna are buried.

By then John's daughter, **Esther Cowan**, had married **Enoch Cooper** and was living in Pike County, Illinois. Only the previous month she had given birth to their first child, and Enoch was just returning from having served in the Black Hawk War. Whether or not Esther had maintained contact with her natural father is lost to us. She is not mentioned in his will.

James Montgomery was the executor of John's will, which was filed for probate on 13 May 1833, in Montgomery County, IN. It stated as follows:

*In the name of God, Amen. I, **John Cowan**, of Montgomery county of the State of Indiana, considering the frailty of my body and the uncertainty of this mortal life, and being of sound mind to make this my last will and testament, in the manner & form following, that is to say, I give & bequeath to my beloved wife **Anna** all of my personal property to have the use of while she lives single: after my death I also give & bequeath to my two sons, **James W. Cowan** and **John M. Cowan**, my land with all the apurtenances [sic]_thereon & belonging; situate in Montgomery county & state above written to belong to them and their heirs forever, and at the death of either of them, if he died having no issue, then his part to descend to the other, and also that my beloved wife **Anny** is to have her part support off the plantation while she does live single, after my death, and at ther death all my personal property to descend [sic] to my two sons above named, each to possess an equal part; I also give and bequeath to my son **Samuel W. Cowan**, ten dollars to be paid to him in twelve months after my death; I also give & bequeath to my daughter **Sally Maxwell** ten dollars to be paid to her in twelve months after my death. I hereby appoint James Montgomery of Parke county, and state aforesaid executor of this my last will and testament. In*

witness whereof I do here unto set my hand and seal this first day of November, in the year of our Lord 1828. Signed, sealed, and delivered by the above named **John Cowan** to be his last will and testament in the presence of us who have hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses in the presence of the testator.

Michael Montgomery
James Montgomery

John Cowan

This was an inventory filed 10 July 1833 of the personal property of John Cowan:

1 sythe [sic] and findings-----	2.00
2 hoes-----	.75
1 shovel-----	.37 ½
1 log chain-----	4.50
1 falling axe-----	1.50
1 iron wedge-----	.37 ½
horse geers-----	8.50
1 set brest chains-----	1.00
4 augers-----	2.25
1 pot rack-----	1.00
1 man saddle-----	1.00
1 side saddle-----	2.00
1 cory [?] plow-----	3.50
1 double tree-----	.75
1 shovel plow-----	1.00
1 drawing knife & sundries-----	.25
1 kettle & bales-----	3.00
10 kettle & hooks-----	2.00
1 sythe & cradle-----	2.50
1 old tea kettle-----	.25
1 waffle iron-----	1.25
1 little skillet & lid-----	.50
1 ovin & hooks-----	.75
1 ovin [sic] and lid [probably a Dutch oven]---	2.00
1 smoothing iron-----	.50
1 Bible-----	.18
Some old tin ware-----	.37 ½
Shovel tongs and hand irons-----	1.37 ½
1 set of hand irons-----	1.00
9 chairs-----	2.50
1 cotton wheel-----	1.00
1 check [?] reel-----	1.00
cupboard furnature [sic]-----	2.50
1 table-----	.75

1 umbrella-----	.75
1 clock-----	15.00
1 old gray horse-----	1.00
1 Reep [?] Hook-----	.37 ½
1 waggon [sic]-----	5.00
1 bed and furnature-----	16.00
1 ash bedsted bed & bedding-----	12.00
1 lot of books-----	2.00
1 candle stand-----	1.25
1 lot of hogs-----	7.50
2 cows & calves-----	15.00
Total Amount-----	\$141.68 ¾
One Note of hand on John Hughes	50.00
And William Galloway for	
Total-----	\$191.68 ¾

John's second wife **Anna Maxwell Cowan** had been born 11 December 1781, in Virginia, and died 9 January 1854, in Frankfort, Clinton County, Indiana. She was also buried in the Old Town Cemetery in Frankfort. Anna received a 160-acre land grant in the early 1850's for her husband's military services in the War of 1812. She was the daughter of **Bezaleel Maxwell II** [1751-1829] and **Margaret Anderson** [1755-1834]. Her grandfather, **Bezaleel Maxwell I** had emigrated from Scotland to Philadelphia then to Albemarle County, VA. Her father was born in Albemarle and died in Jefferson County, IN. Her brother **John Maxwell** was the father of her nephew **Samuel Dunn Maxwell**, who married **Sally Cowan**. Her brother **Dr. David Hervey Maxwell**, later of Bloomington, IN, was in the same military company as **John Cowan** and **Isaiah Cooper** in the War of 1812.

CHILDREN OF JOHN COWAN AND MARGARET WEIR

[1] **James Weir Cowan** was born 30 June 1797. He was married to **Isabel Hunter** [21 January 1810-?] on 2 August 1831. He was living in Clinton County, Indiana, as late as 1851. Two of his known children were **Samuel Walker Cowan**, born 25 Sept. 1833, Company B Seventy-Second Indian Volunteers, U.S. Army during Civil War from 9 Aug. 1862 to 24 July 1865, married **Mary Richards** Sept 1865, died 4 February 1900, buried in the Masonic Cemetery in Crawfordsville, IN; and **Margaret Ann Cowan**, born 6 October 1835, married **Issac N. Reath** 18 Feb. 1857, died 3 June 1904. James obtained 160 acres of bounty land in the early 1850's for his service in the War of 1812. He was in the same company as his father and **Isaiah Cooper** when he was just fifteen years old. He had a horse stolen, killed, or lost during the war on March 1, 1814. [See *Maxwell History and Genealogy* for more descendants.]

[2] **Mary Ann Cowan** was born 18 April 1799 and died in August of 1819. She is not known to have married. She was no doubt the woman of the house after her mother's death. It was probably because Mary Ann died that **John Cowan** decided to marry a second time, to **Anna Maxwell**, which he did four months after Mary Ann's death.

[3] **Samuel Walker Cowan ["Walker"]** was born 2 December 1801. He died 30 August 1834 in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Nothing else is known about him at this time. His obituary, which gives the impression that he was not married, says:

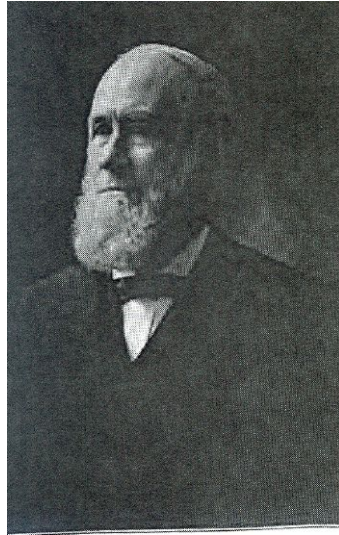
He was a vigilant and faithful public officer, an ardent friend to human nature; one who wept with, and soothed those who wept, and aided and lifted up those who were bowed down. Those who were allied to him by ties of blood have felt the parting pang, and while they have loved to remember that he was an honor to the name which he bore, they also remembered the presence of the Diety; their murmurings have been repressed. Oh! They know that God has taken one of his noblest works.
C.

[4] **Esther Cowan** 1803-1865. Because Esther is our direct ancestor, her biography is more lengthy and is placed elsewhere in this work.

[5] **Sarah "Sally" Tilford Cowan** was born 30 October 1805, in Mercer County, Kentucky. She married **Samuel Dunn Maxwell** [19 Feb. 1803 – 3 July 1873], the nephew of her stepmother **Anna Maxwell Cowan** [1782-1854]. He was the son of **John Maxwell** [1775—1824] and **Sarah Dunn** [1780-1817] and grandson of **Bezaleel Maxwell** [1751-1824] and **Margaret Anderson** [1755-1834]. They married on 15 December 1822. Sally died 1 January 1856, in Pisgah, Kentucky. John Cowan died in his daughter Sally's home in Frankfurt, Clinton County, Indiana. **Samuel Maxwell** was a lawyer and the justice of the peace in Frankfurt in 1851 and twice mayor of Indianapolis [1860-1864]. One of Sally's children was **Margaret Maxwell Allen**. Sally's narrative about her family was written by Margaret:

My grandfather Cowan [Samuel Cowan] was killed by the Indians, and his wife [Ann Walker Cowan] taken prisoner at the same time, and was with them six years before she was rescued. Later, was taken the second time as was with them six months. They lived at the Fort at this time. The son [John Cowan] just escaped by fleetness of foot, and got inside the gate of the fort as the Indian's tomahawk was uplifted to kill him.

Sally had the following children: **Sarah Jane Maxwell**, 11 Sept. 1823-21 Oct. 1823; **John Cowan Maxwell** born 21 Nov. 1824, married **Julia Ann Firestone** 11 March 1851, died 12 January 1888; **Irwin Maxwell**, born 29 Sept. 1826-died 26 Nov. 1826; **Margaret Ann Maxwell**, born 23 Oct. 1827, married **Rev. Dr. Robert Welch Allen** 6 April 1846, died 15 April 1905, Los Angeles, CA; **James Maxwell**, born 13 March 1831-died 9 March 1832; **Sarah Maxwell**, born 30 April 1834, died 10 Oct. 1834; **Martha Ellen Maxwell**, born 27 Sept. 1837, married **Lewis Jordan**; **Samuel Howard Maxwell**, no information; **Williamson Dunn Maxwell**, born 11 May 1842-died 26 June 1873; **David Maxwell**, died 1845; **Emma Turpin Maxwell**, married first **Elisha Brown**, married second **Mr. Lemist**. [See *Maxwell History and Genealogy* for more descendants]



Judge John Maxwell Cowan.

[6] **John Maxwell Cowan** was the only child of the second marriage of **John Cowan**. His mother was **Anna Maxwell**. He was born in the new town of Indianapolis on 6 December 1821, being the first white child born in that town. John was born when his father was fifty-three years old and his mother, forty. He was his mother's only child. In 1822 the family moved to a farm near Crawfordsville, Montgomery County, Indiana.

When young John was ten, his father died, and hard times fell on the boy and his mother.

He entered the preparatory school of Wabash College in 1836 and graduated in 1842 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Soon after his graduation he was appointed Deputy Clerk of Clinton County and moved to Frankfort, where his sister Sally and her husband Sam Maxwell lived. There he studied law in his spare time and was soon able to attend the University of Indiana Law School at Bloomington. Graduating after one year, he returned to Frankfort and began practicing law.

On 13 November 1845 he married **Harriet Doubleday Janney** in Stockwell, Indiana, with whom he had four children. Harriet was born 29 July 1826 and died 28 June 1905, in Springfield, MO.

In politics, John was a strong Whig and later a strong Republican after the rise of that new party. Like most Scotch-Irish of the time, he was Presbyterian. He was also a member of the Society of Colonial Wars. He was of medium height, slender build, and erect carriage.

In 1858 he was elected judge of the Eighth Judicial Circuit and reelected in 1864. In 1870, after finishing his second term on the bench, he moved his family to Crawfordsville, where he had grown up, forming a law partnership with Thomas M. Patterson, who would later become a United States Senator in Colorado. He afterward went into law practice with M. D. White and his second son, **James P. E. Cowan**. After three years he retired from practice and began working for the First National Bank of Crawfordsville as assistant cashier and legal advisor. He was for a number of years a trustee of Wabash College.

In 1881 his wife became ill. A friend of John's had moved to the Ozark Mountains near Springfield, MO, and recommended the climate as highly healthful. This influenced the Cowans to move to Springfield, Missouri, where he purchased a farm two miles south of town, where they farmed and raised stock. In 1889 the Cowans sold the farm and moved into a new home they had built on South Jefferson Street in Springfield. John was a pioneer in the development of Walnut Street as a business center.

John purchased the *Springfield Republican*, which his two sons, **James Cowan** and **William Cowan**, ran.

John lived to an advanced age, dying at the age of ninety-eight on 3 June 1920. He was buried in Crawfordsville, IN, in the Oak Hill Cemetery (Union).

The oldest child of **John Maxwell Cowan** and **Harriet Janney** was **Edward Howard Cowan**. He was born 21 December 1846 and was still alive in 1915, living in Crawfordsville, IN. In the spring of 1864 he graduated from the Preparatory Department of Wabash College in Crawfordsville, IN, and joined Company H of 135th Indiana Infantry and was discharged September 29, 1864. He reentered Wabash College and received a Bachelor of Arts degree and a M.D. in 1873 from Miami Medical College in Cincinnati, OH. He started a medical practice in Crawfordsville at that time and remained there for the rest of his life. He married **Lucy L. Ayars** on 13 Nov. 1877. They had two children: **John Ayars Cowan** [1880-1891] and **Elizabeth L. Cowan**, born 21 June 1884, who was a home economics teacher at Crawfordsville High School in 1915. This line probably died out. He died in 1942 and was buried in Oak Hill Cemetery in Crawfordsville, IN.

The second child of **John Maxwell Cowan** was **James Porter Ellis Cowan**, born 1848. He was a special pension examiner for the federal government in Washington, D.C. in 1915. On 30 January 1873 he married **Louana Burnett**. They had one child: **Harriet Janney Cowan**, born 12 Nov. 1873. She married **Lewis T. Gilliland** and lived in Portland, OR, in 1915. They had one child **Maxwell Porter Gilliland** born 15 August 1901. James married a second time, to **Lalula R. Bennett** on 31 Dec. 1883, and had **Janet L. Cowan** on 7 July 1885; **Mary**

Bennett Cowan on July 20, 1888, and **Anna J. Cowan**. All three lived in Marietta, OH, while their father worked in Washington. In 1914 James and his family were living in Springfield, MO, where he was an editor of the *Springfield Republican*, of which his father was the owner.

The third child of **John Maxwell Cowan** was his only daughter, **Laura Ann Cowan**, born 14 March 1851, in Frankfort, Clinton County, IN. Laura graduated from Glendale Female Academy in Ohio. She married **Allen Trimble Blaine** [1846-1880] on 16 Feb. 1876, a Civil War veteran, and was widowed at age twenty-nine. Laura was living in Springfield, MO, as late as 1920. She co-authored *Maxwell History and Genealogy* about 1915. She never remarried. Her only child from her four-year marriage was **Mary Maxwell Blaine**, born 3 October 1877. Mary graduated from Drury College with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1898. She obtained a Master of Arts degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1900. She married **Rudyard S. Uzzell** on 14 Feb. 1906. As of 1914 she had two sons: **William Cowan Uzzell**, born 14 January 1910; and **Rudyard S. Uzzell, Jr.**, born 26 June 1912. He died in 1927 and was buried at Oak Hill Cemetery in Crawfordsville, Indiana.

The youngest of the four children of **John Maxwell Cowan** was his son **John William Cowan**, born 6 October 1853 in Frankfort, Clinton County, Indiana. John William never married. He was living in Springfield in 1915, running the *Springfield Republican* with his brother James. He died in 1922 and was buried at Oak Hill Cemetery in Crawfordsville, Indiana.

[Sources: History of Clinton County, IN, pp.197-198; written in 1912, sent to me by the Clinton County Historical Society; U.S. Census Clinton County 1850 page 625; *Beckwith's History of Montgomery County Indiana* pp. 160-161; *Bowen's History of Montgomery County, IN* pp. 707-710; *Beckwourth's History of Montgomery County, IN*, pp.160-161; *The Cowans from County Down*, by John K. Fleming, Derreth Printing Company, Raleigh, NC, 1971, pp.363-364; *History of Greene County, MO*, pp.992-995,1915; Death cert. of John M. Cowan, 1920; *Maxwell History and Genealogy*, by Florence Wilson Houston, Laura Cowan Blaine, and Ella Dunn Mellette, C. E. Pauley & Co., Indianapolis, IN, 1915; *Baird's History of Clark County, Indiana*, pp.37-38; Will E. Parham Papers, McClung Collection, Knox County Library, 301 McGhee St., Knoxville, TN; *Tennessee Cousins*, by Worth S. Ray;]

[John Cowan and Margaret Weir > Esther Cowan > John Shepherd Cooper > Rose Ella Cooper > Lois Belle Hodgson > Mildred Doreen Serrano > Donald L. Rivara > Rainie A. Rivara > Salman and Rehan Saeed]