

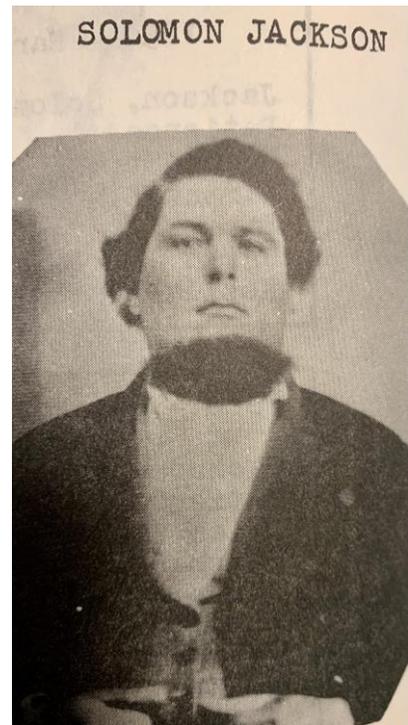
## THE RUSH COUNTY CONNECTIONS

By John D. Wilson  
Rush County Historian

This is the 30<sup>th</sup> and final article written to commemorate the Rush County Bicentennial. This article will present an example of how Rush County Connections have influenced my life and how the lives of others will be influenced in the future.

A couple of people have asked me why I'm so interested in Rush County History since I wasn't born and raised here. Well...I've lived in Rush County since 1969. Over the past 53 years my interest in history has included teaching U.S. History and Indiana/Rush County History. Involvement in the Rush County Historical Society and the Indiana Historical Society has helped keep me interested.

In addition, my Great Great Grandfather Solomon Jackson was raised in Rush County a couple of decades prior to the Civil War. The Jacksons that settled near Raleigh were from North Carolina. They were farmers, they believed in the Baptist faith, and they voted for Democrat officials. In 1845 Solomon married Patience Garris, and 18 days later he was able to buy 80 acres of farm ground farther west in Vernon Township, Hancock County. He paid \$200 for his farm just east of McCordsville. Several years later Solomon's youngest daughter Patia married my Great Grandfather, a Civil War orphan named Robert Wilson. A couple other members of the Jackson family also made the move to cheaper, available ground in Hancock County. But, there was still a lot of letter writing and visitation with their family in Rush County. One photograph shows over 100 Jacksons at a family reunion in Washington Township at the home of Benjamin Franklin Jackson. Solomon's father Benjamin, his mother Betsy and many other family members are buried in the East Fork Cemetery north of the Austill round barn in Washington Township.



A few weeks ago Mike Dora loaned me a book on the Rush County Jackson family and their descendants. It's called The Family of William and Abigail Jackson 1766-1974. Mike also has relatives in the Jackson family. The book traces the nine children of William and Abigail. It is a comprehensive volume containing 524 pages. Ancestors from 14 states and one Canadian province contributed information. Both Mike's family and mine are listed in the book. It makes me wonder how we became Republicans among hundreds of Democrats!

Robert Franklin Jackson from California compiled the family history. Scott Jackson from Rush County recently informed me he has a copy of the book too. He lamented that the original collection of information burned up in a fire in 1980.

But there were more Rush County connections for me. I grew up in Frankfort, Indiana. My dad, Eugene Wilson, worked as a fieldman for Indiana Farm Bureau. His boss was Paul Norris from Manilla. When Paul would visit our home, my mom, Anna Dell, always prepared a special meal. Paul and his wife Alice would host the fieldmens' families for a picnic at their home in Manilla each summer, and then we would play softball at Manilla School. Paul and Alice later opened a restaurant in the former Lower home in Homer. It was called the Country Fare.

We moved to the Fortville area in 1959. Dad had taken another position with Indiana Farm Bureau in Indianapolis. He became Assistant Editor of the Hoosier Farmer Magazine. We moved into a new home west of Fortville that was within ten minutes of the Wilson family farm near McCordsville. My basketball, track, and cross county coach at Vernon Township was Louis Mahin. Louis had played basketball at Rushville H.S. just prior to WWII. He coached a very successful Raleigh Sir Walters team prior to going to Fortville. Louis was the first Athletic Director of the newly consolidated Mt. Vernon H.S. during my senior year in 1964. His brother, Grayson Mahin, became Athletic Director for Rushville Consolidated H.S. Recently Grayson's grandson, Matt Vance, was RCHS Principal, then RCS Superintendent. I was on the RCS School Board during eight of those years. Matt is now the Superintendent at Shelbyville.

During the Fortville years my favorite race horse was Buddy Dale. Walter McCord owned Buddy, and he trained his harness horses at his track near Oaklandon. It turns out Buddy's family can be traced to Rush County's famous Blue Bull 75.

The year 1968 was a big year for us. Susan and I graduated from Ball State University in May, got married in June, and went to our first teaching jobs in Decatur County in August. Susan was a speech and hearing therapist, and I taught history and coached at Sand Creek Elementary. The Superintendent who hired us was Roger Anderson from Rush County. He was a former basketball coach, then Principal at Milroy High School..

We were in Greensburg for one year when we received a phone call from Jo Ellen (Thomas) Winkler, Jerry Winkler's wife. Jo Ellen was a speech and hearing therapist, and they lived near Arlington. She and I had gone to high school together at Mr. Vernon H.S., and she had been Susan's roommate at BSU. Jo Ellen told us that Rush County needed another speech and hearing therapist, and they might have a job for me too teaching history and coaching 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Manilla School. We made the move to north of Arlington in 1969. One year later Principal Cyral Turner brought me to RCHS to teach history and coach varsity track and freshmen basketball. Grayson Mahin was the Athletic Director. Grayson retired as A.D. in 1975, and then I held that position until 2001.

The Rush County connections have continued over the years. Both my daughter Carrie and my son Andy were born at Rush Memorial Hospital. Both are RCHS graduates, and both married RCHS graduates, Eric Billman (Carrie) and Brooke Harris (Andy). All of them have

family that live in Rush County, and they continue to have other connections here too. Also my sister Marianne (Wilson) Scott moved to Rush County ten years ago. She worked for Rush County Schools. My brother Ken married Chris Covalt from Gwynneville. Her family owns farm ground in Rush County. My wife Susan passed away in 2007. She is buried at East Hill Cemetery east of Rushville.

As the year 2022 ends, our county is about to embark on a major continuance of Rush County connections. At this writing, Diamond Pet Food is building a new facility in Rushville on 110 acres north of INTAT. The footprint for the factory is huge. Five thousand truckloads of dirt are being moved to make way for a building that will occupy 700,000 square feet, about the size of 14 football fields. Diamond Pet Food is making a 259 million dollar investment and plans to be ready for production by 2024.

Over the next two years hundreds of tradesmen will be in Rush County during the construction phase of Diamond. Then, once the building is complete, Diamond plans to hire about 170 employees. Rushville and Rush County are making plans to insure that these new connections to our community are positive and long-lasting. There will eventually be a positive effect on taxation. There may even be a few more people in the church pews on Sundays!

There will be a positive impact for our schools too. For example: When I came to RCHS in 1970, we had 1350 students. Today RCHS is down to about 600 students. For every student we lose, the state cuts our school funding by about \$8,000. If Rush County Schools could pick up 130 new students by 2025, that's over one million dollars (\$1,040,000) for Rush County Schools each year.

Yes, the Rush County Connections today and in the future will have far reaching influence on us, other communities, other states, and even other countries. Our positive Rush County example will be a model for rural communities. The next 100 years will be exciting. Our Tricentennial in 2122 will be a tribute to our success.

Thanks to Marianne Scott and Donna Downing for all of their help the last 30 months preparing these articles for the Bicentennial.