

HISTORIC DRIVING TOUR SOUTHERN DARKE COUNTY ITHACA

Arcanum Wayne Trail Historical Society, Inc. has planned this scenic drive through the southern part of Darke County focusing on the Ithaca area.

When platted in 1832 by John Colville, Ithaca was known as Twinsborough. Rt. 503 was called the Ithaca Pike and prior to that it was the route Gen. Anthony Wayne took through Beech Grove to Ft. Jefferson and on to Greenville.

Please have a safe trip using caution on these busy and sometimes narrow roads. Some locations featured on the tour are private property so please respect their privacy.

Enjoy a beautiful drive through the southern part of Darke County through the Ithaca area.

Begin your tour by going west out of Arcanum on Arcanum-Hollansburg Rd. to the intersection of Rt. 503. This is the location of the Beech Grove settlement. The Beech Grove Cemetery is

to the right and a church converted to a home is on the northeast corner of the intersection. A home is on the southeast corner across from the church where the Karn School # 6 was located. At one time a large Victorian 1800s home was on the northwest corner. Turn left on Rt. 503.

Drive south toward Ithaca. As you come to the Beechwood Golf Course notice the small house to the left at the intersection of Rt. 503 and Grubbs Rex Road. This is a private residence but was the Sockum School # 2 at one time.

Continuing south, Ithaca Cemetery is on your right. John Stoner was slain by Indians in the time of the War of 1812 and was buried here later in 1836.

William Gunder who founded Arcanum in 1849 and his wife Nancy are buried in the back of the cemetery. Their monuments are tall white pointed stones located at the top of the hill and were restored several years ago by a grant to the AWTHS by his descendants.

Sgt. William Ashley served in many military capacities during the Revolutionary

War. He died in 1828 and according to **The Arcanum Times** was buried on his farm outside of Ithaca. His marker was placed in the Ithaca Cemetery near the end of the south drive after the owner of the farm where he was buried refused public access to his grave.

John Coville, who founded Ithaca in 1832 and his wife, Dicea, are also buried just west of the rear drive in this cemetery.

Turn right out of the cemetery and go south on Rt. 503. A large white house is on the left that belonged to Peter Wert. Just south of this point was the Watson Wert Mill and the family also owned a tannery across the road near the bridge. Sharp's steam grist mill first stood here in 1857. Rt. 722 west to the right was known as New Garden Road and goes into Castine or "New Castine" as it was once called. This road was named after the many Friends or Quakers who traveled this road going to New Garden, IN for meetings.

John Colville, the founder of Ithaca, probably lived near this northwest corner in 1831.

Continue into Ithaca to the intersection of Rt. 722, from the east, and Rt. 503. Turn right and follow Clark Road out of Ithaca to a sharp right.

*At the top of the hill is #7 Ithaca two room school house built in 1883 which is a private residence today.

Turn left on Friday Rd. and continue to the Darke-Preble County Line Rd. Turn left at this intersection. You will see a tree line winding on the left. This is Miller's Fork and is the speculated location of the first settlement of white people in southern Darke County. Cross the bridge and continue to the stop sign at Rt. 503. On the right, in Preble County, was the location of a toll house. On the opposite corner was the one room Zenger School # 10. *At this corner was in the 1920's, when the Frazee's owned the farm, Sgt. Ashley's remains rest. At that time a large boulder marked the location. It was known as the Ashley Family Cemetery with Phoebe Ashley, wife of William, also buried there.

Turn left and head back into Ithaca.

As you enter Ithaca on the left is where the newer

Ithaca School #7 was located. It is now converted to a private residence and features the front view.

At the intersection of Rt. 722 on the northeast corner is the large three-story brick building. Built in 1900 for the Ithaca IOOF, it has hosted many different businesses and organizations. When the Arcanum Encampment No. 206 IOOF disbanded in 1947, their members joined with Ithaca. Across the street is the vacant lot of the Thomas store that was in the family beginning in 1859. The building was taken down in 1996 and the store front was moved to Clifton Mills. Turn right at this stop sign.

At the next stop sign look right on Pearl Street. This is where the old Evangelical United Brethren Church stood that was destroyed in 1954 by a wing tank falling from an Air National Guard Plane.

Turn left to go back into Arcanum by Arcanum-Ithaca Road. This will take you to the jog where the first one room School # 7 stood. The Grace United Methodist Church is presently located here. Across from the

Church was the Cromwell Greenhouse.

Continue north on Arcanum-Ithaca Road. At the intersection of Grubbs Rex Road about a quarter of a mile to the right is the one room school # 4. This is private property and some restoration work has been done to the building.

AWTHS is not responsible for accidents.

We hope you have enjoyed this driving tour. Summaries of these locations are on file in our reference library.

Thank you for participating!

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***Addendum notes added
Updated:
December 2018 after
further research on William
Ashley and his resting place
surfaced.
March 2022 after further
research on Thomas Store.**