

# ISAAC BOWMAN FAMILY PAPERS, 1816, 1850-1852

---

**Collection #**  
SC 2552

---

## Table of Contents

[User Information](#)  
[Historical Sketch](#)  
[Scope and Content Note](#)  
[Cataloguing Information](#)

Processed by  
Charles Latham  
26 April 1996

---

## USER INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 4 items

COLLECTION DATES: 1816, ca. 1850-1852

PROVENANCE: Charles Apfelbaum, Watchung, NJ, 6 April 1996

RESTRICTIONS: None

REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the Indiana Historical Society

ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

OTHER FINDING AIDS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS: M 98 William H. English-- Boxes 25-29 (Hite-Bowman papers)

ACCESSION NUMBER: 96.0396

---

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

Isaac Bowman (1757-1826) was born and lived most of his life in the Shenandoah valley of Virginia. He was a cousin by marriage of George Rogers Clark.

During the Revolutionary War, Isaac Bowman and his brother Joseph were among Clark's main lieutenants in his campaigns against Kaskaskia and Vincennes. (Other brothers were among the earliest settlers in Kentucky.) Isaac Bowman was captured by Indians in 1779, and there are conflicting stories of his escape. George Rogers Clark's soldiers were rewarded after the war with federal land grants, and Isaac Bowman received 2156 acres, including Tract #1 of Clark's Grant. In 1802 he deputized John Gwathmey to lay off a town in 150 acres and to sell lots. This became the center of the town of Jeffersonville. An unusual feature of the plan provided for numerous parks among the squares, somewhat like Savannah, Georgia.

Bowman was married twice, and had a total of thirteen children. One son was named Isaac.

Isaac Bowman, in selling off the town lots, reserved to himself the exclusive privilege of ferriage from the town across the river to Kentucky. However, he never claimed the right for himself, and in the course of time everyone with a river lot claimed the right to establish a ferry. A ferry license was granted as early as 1807. One company became well established; in 1850 it put two steam ferries in operation. At this time the heirs of the Bowman family sought to obtain some remuneration through the state legislature.

Sources: Materials in collection.

William H. English, *The conquest of the northwest* (1895) p. 979-985

*History of the Falls Cities* (1883), Vol. II, p. 436

Baird, *History of Clark County* (1909) p. 35, 43, 49

---

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection contains four items: two land certificates dated 1816; and two letters dated ca 1850 and 1852.

In the two certificates, William Bowman certifies that Nicholas Halley and William F. Murray have purchased lots in Jeffersonville in the name of Isaac Bowman.

In a mutilated letter dated 2 January [ca 1850] addressed to Isaac T. Bowman of Strassburg, Va., an agent discusses efforts to obtain remuneration for ferry rights from the Indiana legislature.

In a letter of 21 January 1852, Philip Bowman writes from Switzerland County, Indiana, to Isaac and George Bowman in Strassburg, Va. He and his brother Joseph have bought a piece of land with a mill on it, and are planning to build a sawmill. He also asks about settlement of an estate.

---

## CATALOGUING INFORMATION

MAIN ENTRY: Bowman, Isaac, 1757-1826

SUBJECT ENTRIES: Bowman, Isaac, 1757-1826

Land grants--Indiana--Jeffersonville

Ferries--Ohio River

Mills and mill-work--Indiana--Switzerland County

Jeffersonville (Ind.)--History--Sources

END