

Population center goes west

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the residents of the Owen County town were relatively unimpressed by being the center of national attention by being the center of population.

According to the *Star* account, least of all impressed was Ben Ranard, a blacksmith, who for \$5 a month rented the house which stood about 200 yards from the very important beech tree. He declared that the house was "a poor place for a rent profiteer" and removed himself to another farm a couple of miles down the road.

pasture, heavily-laden walnut trees, a big persimmon patch, paw-paws, squirrels within gunshot and fish in Little Raccoon Creek nearby. It was also only two miles away from where a white lightning still had recently been raided by government agents.

Despite its obvious advantages, the farm housing the center of population wasn't exactly a real estate bonanza. Meanwhile, Ranard was urged by his neighbors to capitalize on the importance of Whitehall by putting a soft drink stand in front of his blacksmith

shop in town. After all, they said, tourists from east and west were expected to want to view the very special site.

Renard, according to the *Star*, was not only not impressed, he sounded down-right hostile. He declared that the 1920 census would bring no good to the people of Owen County until they took the center of population away from that "consarned" old beech tree, and put it back in Whitehall, where it "would be convenient, and where it ought to have been left in the first place."

