Snake report 168
Reported by James Mahaffy

I found a book of biographies [see paragraph below] of Jasper County that talks about an early settler RB Couch who moved to the Newton area who had a son, James B. who died in 1869 of a rattlesnake bite. The Newton Union Cemetery lists.

Couch James B. 8 [years] 07/02/1868  son of RB & M Couch

Since the town and name of the parents is the same I went with the cemetery records and assume that he died in 1868.

Weaver’s 1912 history of Jasper County indicates that there were both massasauga and has a description of rattlesnakes hibernating along the Des Moines river that are obviously timber rattlesnakes. The account says:

Of snakes, it should be said that rattlesnakes were never very numerous in Jasper county, as compared to other sections of the West. It is stated that Calvin Wolf, while walking on the open prairie, barefooted, encountered a massasauga, which he stamped to death with his heels, a very imprudent, rash deed, too. In the southern part of Jasper county, however, the reptiles were more numerous. At a ledge of rocks on the Des Moines river the rattlesnakes hibernated during the winter, and for miles around their den they were liable to be encountered in the summer months. About 1849 a party visited the ledge, on a warm spring day, and managed to kill over three hundred and would have killed many more only for the sickening smell caused by the act, which turned their stomachs.

See the last paragraph of this biography.

From Jasper County, Iowa Biographies Portrait and Biographical Record, Jasper. Marshall and Grundy Counties, IA Biographical Publishing Co., Chicago, IL. 1894

R. B. Couch was educated in the country schools of Ohio, and while still young learned the shoemaker's trade, which he worked at in Ohio for four years. August 12, 1862, he enlisted in Company K, One Hundred and First Ohio Infantry, under Capt. Montgomery Noble and Col. Leander Stemm. This regiment was composed of the following companies: Erie, Crawford, Wyandott, Seneca and Huron, and was mustered into service at Monroeville August 3, 1862. Our subject participated in the following battles: Perryville, Ky.; Knox Gap, Stone River, Tullahoma and Liberty Gap, Tenn.; Chickamauga, Rocky Face Ridge, Tunnel Hill, Buzzard's Roost, Resaca, Kingston, Kennesaw Mountain, Chattanooga, Atlanta, Jonesboro, Lovejoy Station, Franklin and Nashville, besides numerous skirmishes. Of his regiment, seventy-seven were killed, one
hundred and sixty-nine wounded in action, and one hundred and sixty died of disease and wounds, making four hundred and six in all out of one thousand and eighty-eight men and officers. Mr. Couch was never wounded, never taken prisoner and was never in the hospital. He enlisted and served as a private.

Returning to Ohio after the war, he remained in that state until 1867, when he came to Jasper County, Iowa. For two years he resided near Newton and rented land from that time until 1877, for he came to the county with little means. He is now the owner of nearly three hundred and three acres in one body, and sixty acres of timber, for which he paid $25 per acre. Of this he now has two hundred and forty-five acres under a fine state of cultivation, and his buildings are all in first-class condition. In connection with farming he raises a fine grade of stock, and all his farming operations are conducted in a thorough and systematic manner. In his political views Mr. Couch has always been a firm Democrat.

In 1852 our subject was married to Miss Mary Mallow, of Ohio, daughter of James and Elizabeth (Doukman) Mallow, who were the parents of eight children. George lives in Ohio; Mary is the wife of our subject; Stephen and Martha are deceased; Robert resides in Ohio; Jane is the wife of Jacob Everhart; Malinda, who is deceased, was the wife of John Miller; and Arramena completes the list. The parents of these children died in the Buckeye State. To Mr. and Mrs. Couch were born nine children. D. H. was born in Ohio, on the 18th of May 1853, and resides in this county; Clara E., the wife of R. E. Topper, of Colfax, was born on the 14th of May 1855; Amanda, born in Ohio September 13, 1857, married Orville Wheeler, and is a resident of this county; James B. was born in Ohio in 1859, and died in 1869 from a rattlesnake bite; Charles W. was born in Ohio in 1861; Andrew was born in Ohio in 1866; Frank and Morren (twins), were born in this county in 1868; and W. A. was born in this county in 1872. Page 622.

Reference:

Weaver, James B. 1912. The Past and Present of Jasper County, Vol. 1, B.F. Bowen Co., Indianapolis, IN