

CANAWLERS AT REST

SAMUEL FORRER

Find-A-Grave #98766074

b. January 6, 1793

d. March 25, 1874

By Lisa P. Rickey

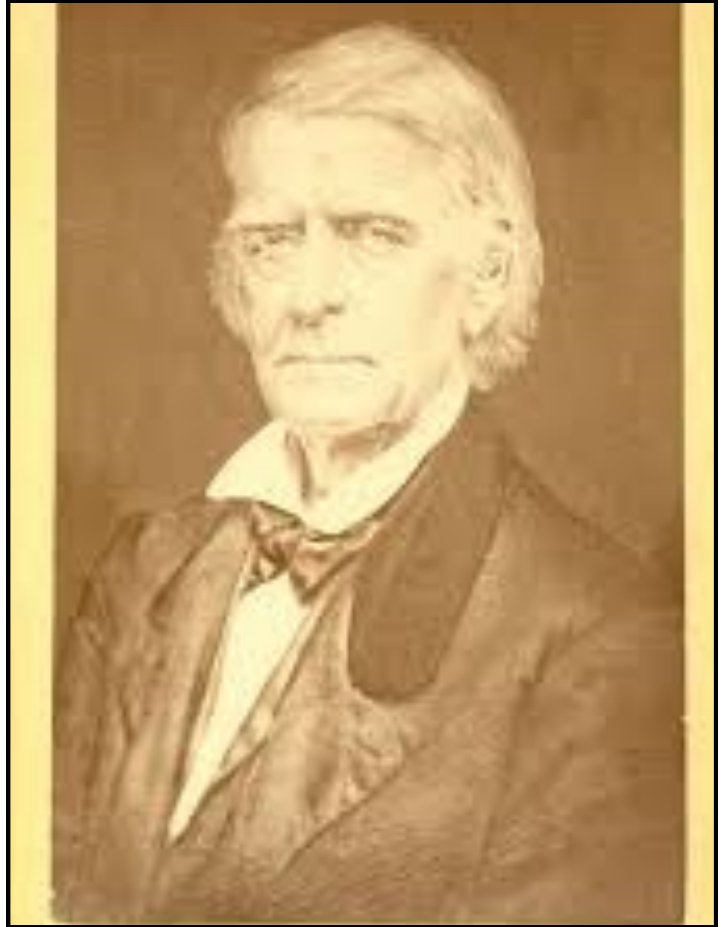
Used with permission from Lisa P. Rickey, Bio. Sketch: Samuel Forrer (1793-1874), Miami-Erie Canal engineer," *Glancing Backwards* (blog), July 19, 2012
<http://lisarickey.wordpress.com/2012/07/19/bio-sketch-samuel-forrer-1793-1874-miami-erie-canal->

Samuel Forrer was born January 6, 1793, on his father's farm in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania (near Harrisburg), the eldest surviving son of J. Christian Forrer (1765-1828) and Elizabeth Neidig (1770-1853).[\[1\]](#)

When Samuel was three years old, his father sold the farm in Pennsylvania and moved the family to a 700-acre farm in Luray, Page County, Virginia, in the Shenandoah Valley. This farm had a flour mill, tannery, and blacksmith shop, and using his father's many various tools, Samuel demonstrated a natural inclination towards and aptitude for mechanical pursuits and mill-work from a young age. As a young man, Samuel aspired to become a millwright but could not convince his parents to allow him to become an apprentice. In addition to working on his father's farm, Samuel received a typical country school education. One of Samuel's last teachers, Mr. Moderitt, had knowledge of plane trigonometry and basic surveying, which he shared with interested students, including 16-year-old Samuel.[\[2\]](#)

In 1814, at the age of 21, Samuel visited Ohio for the first time but returned to his father's home in Virginia soon afterward.[\[3\]](#)

In 1817, Samuel returned to Ohio to stay, traveling down river from Pittsburgh on a skiff, and settling first at Cincinnati. It had initially been his intention to apply for a position with the surveyor of public lands, but finding on his first day in town that there were many applicants for those



Samuel Forrer (1793-1874)

(Dayton Metro Library, Forrer-Peirce-Wood Collection, 3:10)

positions, he abandoned the idea and on the second day found employment as a journeyman carpenter, boarding at the home of his employer.[\[4\]](#)

In the evenings, Samuel studied mathematics through a night school in the city. The county surveyor, who was a frequent visitor to the house, had noticed these efforts and inquired of Samuel's employer about his habits and character.[\[5\]](#) Apparently receiving positive answers to his inquiries, he offered Samuel a position as deputy surveyor of Hamilton County, pending the completion of a satisfactory survey. Samuel gladly accepted the offer, completed the survey, and was confirmed in the position.[\[6\]](#)

In 1818 and 1819, Samuel was also deputy surveyor, under principal surveyor Robert C. Anderson, of the Virginia Military District of Ohio, surveying the areas north of Greenville.[\[7\]](#)

In 1820, William Steele hired Samuel to examine the

summit between the Scioto and Sandusky rivers, to determine whether Lake Erie and the Ohio River might be connected by means of a canal. This was Samuel's first canal-related civil engineering job.[\[8\]](#)

The results of Steele's survey were forwarded to the Ohio General Assembly, which had requested information pertaining to potential canals in Ohio. In January 1822, the Assembly authorized formation of a Board of Canal Commissioners, which had authority to employ surveyors who would examine several potential routes for a canal connecting the Ohio River and Lake Erie.[\[9\]](#)

There were few civil engineers in Ohio in those days. The Canal Commissioners appointed nationally prominent civil engineer [James Geddes](#), who had been instrumental in the construction of the Erie Canal in New York, as Chief Engineer, with Isaac Jerome as Assistant Engineer.[\[10\]](#)

Samuel had been working outside Ohio for about a year when the Ohio canal surveying project got underway. However, Ohio governor [Ethan A. Brown](#) encouraged Samuel to return and to seek any engineering position he could get on the Ohio canal project. As there was no other opening, Samuel accepted a position as a junior rodman. However, Samuel soon advanced, first to senior rodman, then to Assistant Engineer following the resignation of Jerome. These exploratory surveys continued from 1822 through 1824.[\[11\]](#)

In January 1825, the Canal Commission recommended construction. Although it had been hoped that a single route connecting Cincinnati to the Scioto River and finally Lake Erie would prove practical, this was not found to be the case. Taking into account politics and economics, as well as engineering, two routes were proposed: the Ohio-Erie Canal would connect the Ohio River at Portsmouth to Lake Erie, and the Miami Canal would connect Cincinnati to Dayton (and eventually Lake Erie, when it would become known as the Miami-Erie Canal). In February 1825, the Ohio General Assembly authorized the construction of canals along both routes.[\[12\]](#)

With construction on the two canals about to begin, the Canal Commission appointed Micajah Williams and Alfred Kelley as Acting Commissioners; David S. Bates (also known as Judge Bates) as Principal Engineer; and Samuel Forrer and William Price as Resident Engineers (Forrer on the Miami Canal; Price on the Ohio-Erie Canal). (Bates and Price, like Geddes, had also worked on the Erie Canal project.) On July 4, 1825, work began on the Ohio-Erie Canal; construction on the Miami Canal began a few weeks

later on July 21, 1825.[\[13\]](#)

Shortly after canal construction began, Samuel met the young woman who would soon become his wife: [Sarah Howard](#) (1807-1887).[\[14\]](#) Samuel and Sarah seem to have met through mutual friends while she was attending school in Cincinnati.[\[15\]](#) After an apparently brief courtship, Samuel and Sarah were married on the evening of February 8, 1826, at the home of Rev. William Burke in Cincinnati. Evidently, the two entered into this marriage without the consent of Sarah's parents, who were members of the Society of Friends, which strongly disapproves of members marrying non-Quakers; they seem to have accepted it eventually, however.[\[16\]](#)

[For more on Samuel and Sarah's courtship/marriage, check out the series "[A Little Quaker Love Story](#)" [here on my blog.](#)]

Samuel's career required frequent travel, as illustrated by the many letters he wrote over the years to his wife and children back in Dayton.[\[17\]](#) The Forrer family resided at the southeast corner of First and Ludlow Streets in Dayton until late summer 1863, when, due to some financial hardships, they sold their home downtown and moved into their son-in-law Luther Bruen's house, while they built a new home on a parcel of land adjacent to the property of their son-in-law Jeremiah H. Peirce in Harrison Township just west of present-day Forest Avenue. They moved into their new house in 1864.[\[18\]](#)

Samuel and Sarah had six children:

1. [Elizabeth Hannah Forrer](#) was born Feb. 28, 1827, and died Jan. 16, 1874; she married [Jeremiah H. Peirce](#).[\[19\]](#)
2. Edward was born Aug. 30, 1830, and died Dec. 28, 1838.[\[20\]](#)
3. [Augusta](#) was born Apr. 5, 1833, and died Oct. 18, 1907; she married Luther B. Bruen.[\[21\]](#)
4. Ann was born June 28, 1835, and died Jan. 11, 1837.[\[22\]](#)
5. [Mary](#) was born Aug. 24, 1838, and died Sept. 2, 1929; she also married [Jeremiah H. Peirce](#).[\[23\]](#)
6. [Howard](#) was born Nov. 11, 1841, and died July 22, 1864.[\[24\]](#)

Samuel served as Resident Engineer on the Miami Canal from 1825 to 1831. In that capacity, he had many general supervisory responsibilities, including making estimates and reporting to the Acting Commissioner on the

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quantity of work completed by the contractors.^[25] Furthermore, during his tenure as Resident Engineer, he “located the whole of the Miami and Erie canal and its branches, and a great portion of the Ohio canal.”^[26]

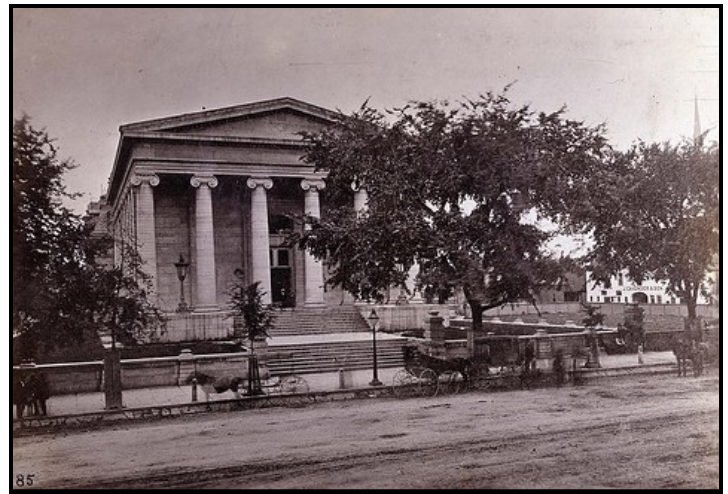
The Miami Canal was opened in Dayton on January 25, 1829. On that day, the second canal boat to arrive in Dayton from Cincinnati was called *The Forrer*. This clearly illustrates how important was Forrer’s role in the creation of the Miami Canal. *The Forrer* was second only to the *Gov. Brown*, which had arrived earlier that same day; the *Gov. Brown* was named after Ethan A. Brown, Ohio governor from 181-1822 and often called “Father of the Ohio

ton and Lebanon Turnpike, Dayton and Springfield Turnpike, and the Great Miami Turnpike.^[31]

Political changes came in 1839, and the Canal Board was once again replaced by a Board of Public Works. As the Board was then filled with Democrats, Samuel, a Whig, no longer wished to participate in it, wanting nothing to do with a political circus. For the next few years, he focused on consulting work. Samuel consulted on many public works projects throughout Ohio and the Midwest, including advising on the proposed Richmond and Brookville Canal in Indiana. His expertise was so well-respected in the profession that his advice was often the final word in decid-



Miami-Erie Canal looking north from Third Street, Dayton, Ohio (1900) (Dayton Metro Library, Montgomery County Picture File, photo #2411)



Montgomery County Court House in Dayton, 1864 (Dayton Metro Library, Lutzenberger Photograph Collection, photo #0085)

Canals.”^[27]

In 1832 or 1833, Samuel was appointed to the Board of Canal Commissioners and served in that position for three years. During that time, Samuel served as Acting Commissioner and managed the activities of the Miami Extension.^[28]

In 1836, the Board of Canal Commissioners was eliminated and replaced by a Board of Public Works. At that time, Samuel was appointed Principal Engineer of the Miami Canal, “to re-examine and resurvey the [Miami] Extension.”^[29]

In 1838, the Board of Public Works was disbanded and the Board of Canal Commissioners reinstated. Samuel was again appointed to the Canal Board.^[30]

In 1839, Samuel agreed to the position of Engineer and general superintendent of the turnpikes, including the Day-

ing a controversy.^[32]

In 1844 and 1845, Samuel participated in a special commission appointed for planning the construction of a new Montgomery County Courthouse. This “new” courthouse, the excellent example of Greek Revival style architecture now known as the Old Courthouse, was completed in 1850.^[33]

By 1845, the Whigs were back in power again, and Samuel consented to return to the Board of Public Works.^[34] Around that same time, the former members of the Board of Public Works and Board of Canal Commissioners (including Samuel) were investigated for possible financial misdeeds. Though fault was indeed found with some of them, “there could be no better testimony to Forrer’s character than the fact that the investigation showed the State owed him \$40.92.”^[35]

In 1846, Samuel traveled east in hopes of being hired as a

contractor on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. However, in the end, the canal company did not have the finances to continue the project.[\[36\]](#)

In 1847, Samuel was appointed as engineer and surveyor for the recently-incorporated Central Ohio Railroad, which ran from Wheeling to Zanesville. Samuel was engaged in this work, among his other duties, until at least 1849.[\[37\]](#) Samuel's role primarily consisted of surveying for the location of the railroad, a duty at which he "greatly excelled" and which was "more suited to his tastes and talents than the details of construction."[\[38\]](#)

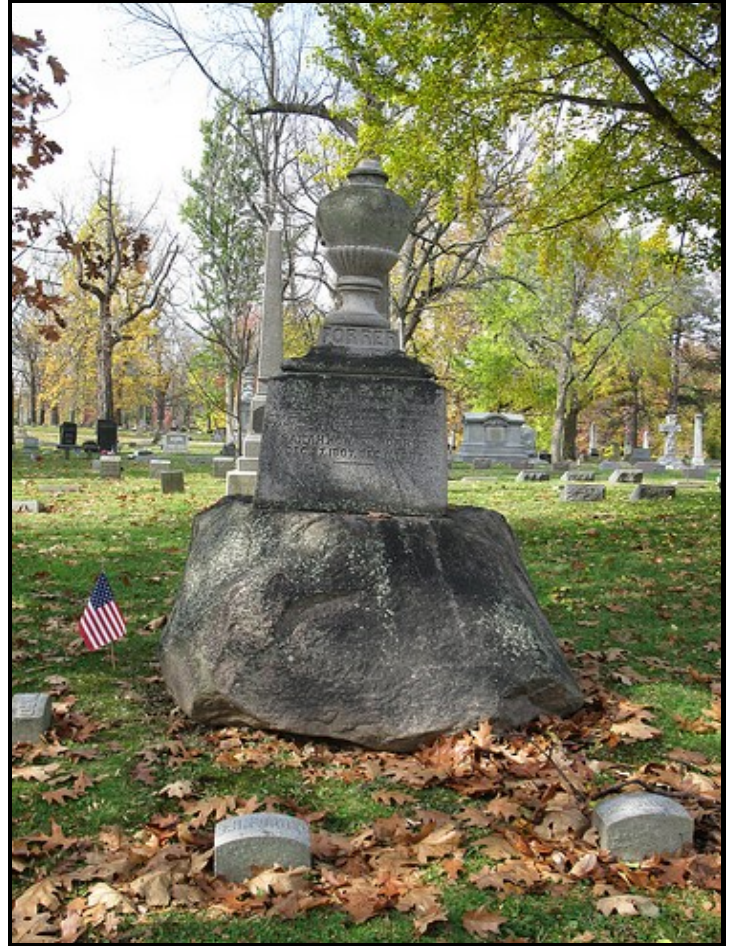
From 1850 to 1855, Samuel was primarily engaged in contracting jobs out of state. From 1850 to 1853, Samuel worked on a canal contract in Indiana. Then, from 1853 to 1855, he worked on a railroad contract in Missouri, with his family staying behind in Dayton.[\[39\]](#)

In 1855, the Board of Public Works began using the Contract System for Repairs. Samuel's company—Forrer, Burt, & Company (Samuel Forrer, with John S. G. Burt and John Howard)—successfully bid for the contract on Section 7, which included much of the Miami-Erie Canal. However, state politics brought all the contracts under scrutiny in 1856 and 1857. The contract for Section 7 was taken away from Forrer, Burt, & Co., on account of the fact that they had not provided the lowest bid. Samuel wrote and circulated a pamphlet that challenged the quality of the work proposed by the other lower bids. Unfortunately, the repudiation stood.[\[40\]](#)

In 1860, Samuel was appointed Resident Engineer of the Northern Division of the Miami-Erie Canal. In 1861, the Public Works were leased out to private contractors, and Samuel was given the contract for the entire Miami-Erie Canal, with his responsibilities primarily consisting of maintenance and repairs. He remained in this position until the early 1870s.[\[41\]](#)

Samuel retired on February 15, 1873, after having been stricken with paralysis.[\[42\]](#)

Samuel Forrer "holds the distinction of having had the longest association of any individual with the Ohio Canal System. For over fifty years, from the very beginning of Ohio's canals, he was variously engaged as rodman, surveyor, engineer, contractor, and Commissioner."[\[43\]](#) It is also of interest to note that Forrer Boulevard in Oakwood was named after Samuel Forrer.[\[44\]](#)



Tombstone of Samuel Forrer in Woodland Cemetery, Section 102 (photo by the author, 29 Oct. 2011)

Samuel Forrer died on March 25, 1874, at his home in Dayton, Ohio, apparently from old age; he was 81 years old.[\[45\]](#) He was buried on March 27, 1874, in Woodland Cemetery in Dayton, Ohio.[\[46\]](#)

Footnotes and Sources:

May be found at:

<http://lisarickey.wordpress.com/2012/07/19/bio-sketch-samuel-forrer-1793-1874-miami-erie-canal-engineer/>

Also:

Bio-Sketch of Sarah H. (Howard) Forrer (1807-1887) wife of Samuel Forrer

May be found at:

<http://lisarickey.wordpress.com/2012/07/20/bio-sketch-sarah-h-howard-forrer...>

Special thanks to Lisa P. Rickey for granting the Canal Society of Indiana permission to publish this article.

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SAMUEL FORRER

In Indiana

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b. January 6, 1793

d. March 25, 1874

By Robert F. Schmidt

**SAMUEL
FORRER
1793-1874**

**SARAH H.
(HOWARD)
FORRER
1807-1887**

(Dayton Metro
Library, FPW,
Box 6 Folder 6)



SARAH HOWARD FORRER

For over fifty years Samuel Forrer was associated with Ohio's canals. He was instrumental as a Resident Engineer in the early years surveying and laying out the route of the Miami Canal and later the extension northward which later became The Miami & Erie Canal. His role in these works is demonstrated by the fact that the first boat, *The Banner*, one of the best of Doyle & Dickey's packets that traveled from Cincinnati to Toledo in June 1845, had on board Samuel Forrer and other canal officials.

In 1817 when he first arrived in Ohio, Samuel Forrer soon established himself in Quaker and Whig circles and became acquainted with the Williams' family. Through his association with Micajah Williams, Samuel was invited to join the engineering staff of James Geddes in 1822. Geddes had come from the Erie Canal to work on Ohio canal surveys. With the passage of Ohio's Canal Bill of 1825 opportunities opened for canal surveying. In 1826 Samuel became a Resident Engineer on the Miami Canal. His assistant, Jesse Lynch Williams, was about 14 years younger.

In 1827 Jesse Williams took an assignment from near Licking Summit to Circleville, Ohio. Of course, Jesse went on to become Indiana's Chief Engineer on the Wabash & Erie Canal.

Samuel Forrer remained as Resident Engineer on the Miami & the Miami Extension until 1833 when he became an Ohio Canal Commissioner, replacing Micajah Williams, Jesse's brother, who had accepted an assignment as

Surveyor General of the Northwest Territory.

In 1836 the Ohio Board of Canal Commissioners was replaced by the Board of Public Works. Samuel Forrer was given the job of Principal Engineer of the Miami Canal. Then in 1837 contracts were let for the Ohio portion of the W & E Canal from the Indiana/Ohio state line to Manhattan/Toledo and he was made responsible for its route in Ohio. At this point he often communicated and negotiated with Jesse Williams to coordinate the works between Ohio and Indiana.

It was common practice at that time for Commis-

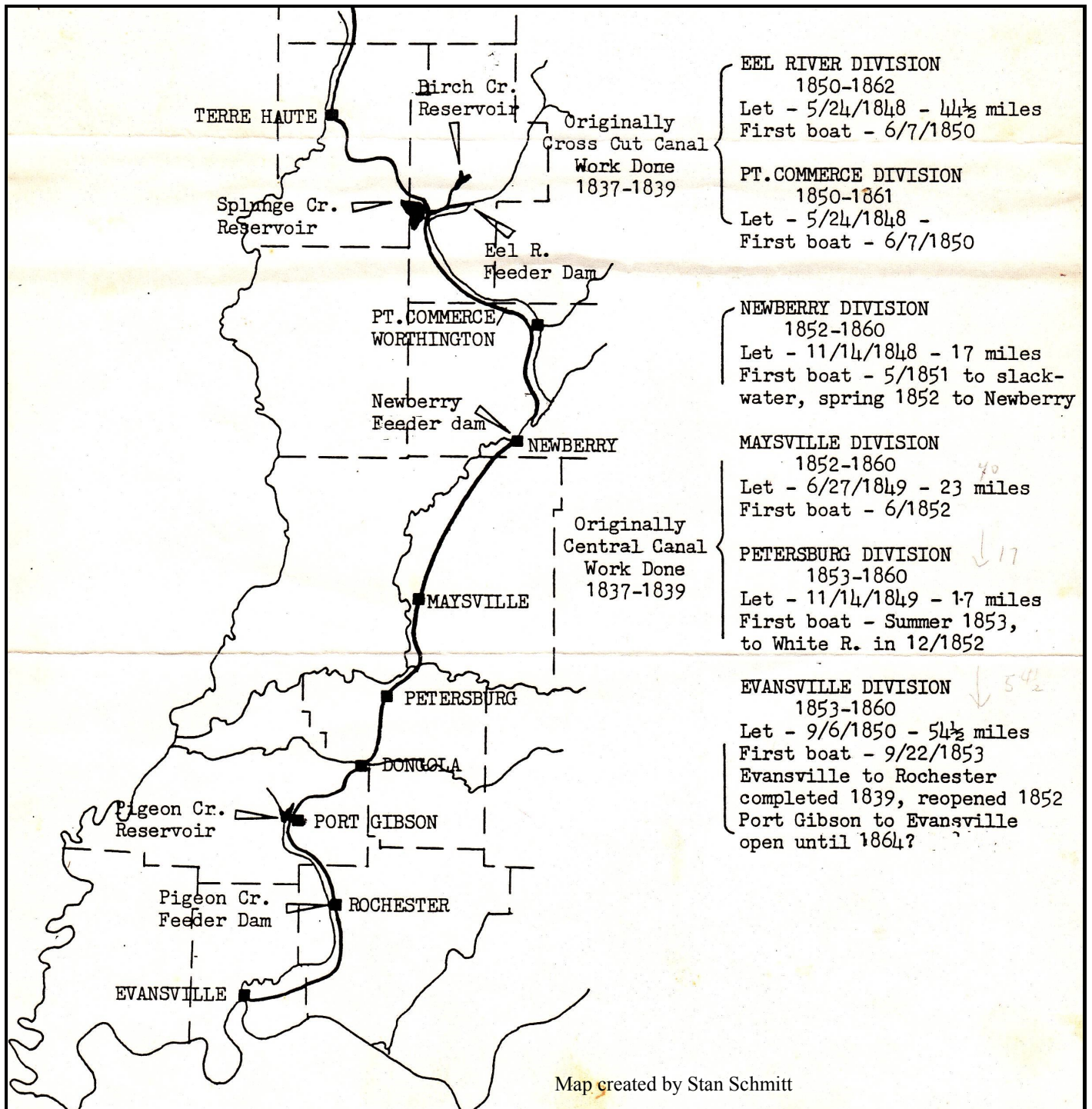
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WABASH & ERIE CANAL SOUTHERN DIVISION TERRE HAUTE-EVANSVILLE

LENGTH: 156 miles (including slack water and feeders)

LOCKAGE: 256 feet

STRUCTURES: 93 culverts, 76 road bridges, 33 lift locks, 13 waste weirs, 7 tow-path bridges, 6 aqueducts, 4 dams, 4 guard gates, 3 guard locks, 3 reservoirs, 2 river locks, 2 tumbles, 1 head gate



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sioners and engineers in the employ of the state of Ohio to engage with private companies provided that it did not conflict with their state duties. In July of 1839 Forrer was hired as an Engineer on the Richmond & Brookville Canal in Indiana. Accompanied by William Leeds, the president of the company, and several directors, Samuel traversed the valley on the east bank of the Whitewater River for the 33 miles between Richmond to Brookville, Indiana, determining the general route for a canal.

A hundred years later, a Richmond reporter, Louis Fleger, related in *The Palladium Item* of May 23, 1953:

“After the directors were elected, one of their first acts was to procure a suitable engineer to locate the canal. Their attention was at once turned to S. Forrer, of Ohio, a gentleman whose abilities and long experience eminently qualify him for such duties, and he was accordingly engaged. He could not, however, on account of previous engagements, attend to it as early as was desirable, and it was not till the 20th of July last (1839), after a previous examination of the ground along the contemplated line down to Brookville, that the location was commenced.”

For Forrer’s surveying and consulting work on this canal, he was paid \$500. After some very brief initial excavation work on six sections near Richmond in 1839-40, the project was abandoned due to a lack of financial support.

Forrer continued in a variety of canal projects and administrative roles for the next 10 years. Probably due to his association with Jesse Williams, Samuel learned that Indiana, after reorganization of its debt, had turned its Wabash & Erie Canal over to its bondholders. The Trustees for the bondholders were now committed to complete the canal to Evansville. Work had resumed in 1848 and by 1850 they were preparing to let a contract for the Evansville Division. Forrer got two of his Zanesville friends, Solomon Sturges and Steven R. Hosmer, to form a general contracting group with him. This was probably at the direction of Jesse Williams, who was a close family friend.

By 1850 the Wabash & Erie was continuing to proceed into southern Indiana. The 42 miles from Terre Haute to Point Commerce was filled with water in June of that year. The planned route to Evansville was still 111 ½ miles and was let out to contractors in four divisions.

Division Miles Area Covered

Newberry 17 miles Pt Commerce – Newberry Dam
Maysville 23 ¼ miles Newberry – Maysville
Petersburg 16 ¾ miles Maysville – Petersburg

Evansville 54 ½ miles Petersburg - Evansville

Although the first three divisions had been let to contractors in 1849, the Evansville Division wasn’t let until September 6, 1850 and was to be completed by November 1, 1852. The contract for this important division was awarded to Samuel Forrer, Solomon Sturges and Stephen R Hosmer. Forrer was from Dayton and the other two were his business associates from Zanesville, Ohio. The contracted price for this portion of the works was \$561,341. It was the most expensive of the four divisions. The surveying of the canal route was completed by William J. Ball of Terre Haute, Resident Engineer.

Evansville Journal September 26, 1850

“Wabash & Erie Canal

“We learn from good authority, that a contract for all the unlet portion of the Canal has been entered into with Messrs. Forrer & Hosmer, by the Trustees, and that active operations will be shortly commenced on the line South of Petersburg.”

As Forrer and his associates were the general contractor for the project, they in turn held their own sub-contract letting at Princeton Indiana

Evansville Journal October 30, 1850

“NOTICE TO CANAL CONTRACTORS
WABASH & ERIE CANAL, INDIANA

“Sealed Proposals will be received at Princeton, Ind. Until the 20th day of October next for the construction of thirty-five miles of the above named Canal. The work consists of sixty sections, embracing much variety of excavation, including considerable rock, a number of deep cuts and heavy embankments, **one aqueduct, eight locks,*** and many culverts. All mechanical structure to be timber, and will afford much work for carpenters.”

*Other records show:

2 Aqueducts (which of these is mentioned above?)

#17— Patoka River at Dongola

#18 — Big Creek SR 68

8 Locks

66 — Hosmer

67 & 68— Port Gibson

#69-73 — south of Port Gibson

“There will be no stone masonry of any description. Of the excavation and embankment there is much more heavy work than is common on an equal length of line. Bidders from Ohio will find it most convenient to reach this work by way of the Ohio River and Evansville as the south end of the work is only 18 miles north of Evansville – From the middle and north part of Indiana, it will be most convenient to reach the north end of the work at Petersburg, in

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Pike County. Bidders who are not known to the undersigned will be expected to furnish proper testimonials of character.

"Payments in money will be made at periods of about sixty days.

"Plans and specifications of the work will be exhibited at Princeton, by the Engineer in charge, 10 days before the letting. The line will be in readiness for inspection by the first of October. For further information, persons wishing to examine the work can address W.J. Ball, Resident Engineer, Terre Haute.

"Samuel Forrer, Solomon Sturges, S.R. Hosmer."

As can be derived from the above report in the *Evansville Journal* the approach of letting out contracts here was completely different than what had been done elsewhere in Indiana up to this point. In the early years of the Wabash & Erie Canal in northern Indiana, contracts were let by canal commissioners or officials of the State of Indiana to individual contractors and supervised by the state. After 1847 when the Wabash & Erie was turned over to private bond holders and trustees, contracts were let by trustees Charles Butler, Thomas Blake and Austin Puett. In the case of the Evansville Division many of the contracts were let by a general contractor (Forrer, Sturges & Hosmer), who in turn re-let them to sub-contractors on October 20, 1850 at Princeton.

Also 18 miles and 24 chains (80 chains = 1 mile) of the work along the 54 ½ miles of the Evansville Division had been completed out of Evansville as part of the Central Canal in 1836-37, which was a part of the Mammoth Improvement Bill of 1836. There were no locks on this section. The prism was watered and fed by a dam across Pigeon Creek at Rochester in Warrick county. Thus, the 54 ½ miles was reduced to about 35 miles of actual construction under this contract.

The Princeton Clarion of October 31, 1850

"Canal Lettings

"Our town has been quite lively with strangers – competitors for contracts on the Wabash and Erie Canal, at the Lettings during this past week, of all the unlet portions of the Canal. This is followed with a list of the successful contractors on the 23rd and the section they received."

In the December 30, 1850 Report to the Indiana General Assembly, William J. Ball makes the following statement:

"This Division will be 54.62 miles long, embracing all the work let to Messrs. Forrer & Co., including the fin-

ishing of the old line to Evansville, and is estimated to cost, at contract prices, \$561,341.59, including about 5 per cent for contingencies. ... The Evansville Division having been let to a highly responsible company, at liberal prices, there will be no re-lettings, nor is it apprehended there will be any difficulty in having every part of the work faithfully and promptly executed."

Forrer was optimistic when work began in the spring of 1851. On March 3, 1851 he wrote to his wife Sarah: "I have now traversed the whole line of our work in company with Mr. Ball and am well pleased with the prospect of finishing in time and for a sum which will leave as much profit as I had expected, perhaps not quite \$30,000 but very near it. The effective force on the work is fully equal to 1,000 men – it will require 1,300 men to finish within the time stipulated in our contracts with the subcontractors – We however have still 3 months more time in our agreement with the Trustees. I have just now prepared an English & German notice to laborers which we will circulate extensively, and will no doubt bring to the work all the laborers we shall need. Mr. Hosmer arrived here yesterday."

As the work proceeded into 1851–1852 some unforeseen events delayed the completion of the Evansville Division.

Evansville Journal October 1, 1852

"Proposals will be received, by mail, at Princeton until the 5th of October, to widen the Canal in Evansville between Main Street and the first Elbow, Eastward. The earth taken out is all to be placed in the canal banks, and bridge embankments on this division – Also until the 13th of October for widening that part of the canal West of Main street. This division contains nearly 18,000 cubic yards of excavation, about 10.0 ft. of which will be required in the ridge and canal banks – The remainder will be placed in the streets at such points as shall be named by the city authorities.

"The bids will be for excavation only, the price to cover the cost of placing the earth wherever it may be ordered by the Engineers.

"The first division (East) must be finished in 30 days after the work let. The other division (West) in three months."

Cholera Outbreak

The January 1853 Report to the Indiana General Assembly by Charles Butler and the Canal Trustees states:

"The work on the Evansville Division (the only

remaining unfinished part of the canal) has been prosecuted during the year with energy by the contractors; would have been entirely finished and delivered over to the trustees by the first day of November last, and within the time specified by the contract. The trustees regret much the delay, but the causes for it were insuperable, and such as could not, by any human foresight, be averted. By reference to the report of the Resident Engineer having charge of the work, it will be seen that more than a hundred of the laborers died of the cholera in a short time, causing a panic and dispersion of the force.”

In his letter to Jesse Lynch Williams on December 6, 1852, which is filed in the January 1853 Trustees Report to the Indiana General Assembly, William J Ball states:

“On the Evansville Division, the estimates of work done up to 1st November 1852, amount to \$500,332, leaving work yet to be done on the original contract, to the amount of \$36,029. But, since the work was let to Messrs. Forrer, Sturges and Hosmer, the Trustees have ordered the canal through Evansville, Lamasco, and the intervening addition, to be enlarged for nearly the whole of the distance, to 60 feet in width at top water line. A number of extra bridges have also been ordered, and of double width, which will add to the cost of the work about \$10,000, and increase the estimated value of the work to be done to about \$46,629. The contract of Messrs. Forrer, Sturges and Hosmer, require them to complete the entire work on the Evansville Division by the 1st day of November 1852, but it has been seen that at that date there remains work to be done in the amount of \$36,000. This result cannot be more regretted by the Trustees than by the contractors themselves; but it has arisen from a cause entirely beyond the control of either.

“I had, in the early part of the season, been apprehensive there would be a failure to complete the work by the contract time, and increased efforts were made by the contractors to augment the force and press the work forward, so that in the month of June last there was the most satisfactory prospect of the work being completed according to agreement. But on the 24th of that month the cholera made its appearance in one section; and in a few days after on another. Several deaths occurred suddenly, and the large forces on these sections were immediately dispersed. Between the 1st and 15th of July, cholera appeared with great malignity on three other sections, and not long thereafter one of the sub-contractors on another section was attacked and died. Cholera prevailed on the line from the 25th of June to about the 20th of July – one month – and the deaths were over one hundred. But the loss of time was much

more than one month. One hundred men died – the remainder, on a large portion of the line, dispersed, many of whom never returned. A new force, in the then condition of the work, was extremely hard to raise, and, although great exertions were made, both by the principal and the sub-contractors, the force has never been so large since, as immediately before the cholera broke out. At least two months of the best season of the year for work was lost by this terrible scourge. Although it was apparent, after disease had caused nearly a total suspension the work, that it would be impossible to finish the whole Division by the time stipulated in the contract, there was no relaxation of effort to get through as soon as possible. Agents were dispatched to various parts of the country, and extraordinary inducements held out to secure a large force. I have now the satisfaction to report that the work is progressing well at this time, and to say that it is expected to have the line completed from the Pigeon Creek Reservoir dam, early in January, and the whole line ready for water by the first of February next.”

At this point Samuel Forrer’s optimism had changed. As stated by William Ball, many of the canal laborers had fled the work with good reason since about 150 workers actually died. Shortage of labor, floods, and bad weather also prolonged the work so that there was no profit left for the Forrer group. Until the completion in the summer of 1853, Forrer directed the contract work from Princeton, Indiana. Despite assures from Forrer and the other contractors the first boat, the “Pennsylvania” under captain Sharra, didn’t actually arrive into Evansville until July 29, 1853. What delayed this event to July after the contractors had completed their works in early spring?

Evansville Journal June 14, 1853

“Our Canal At Last

“This great inland channel only now be said to be completed, and the water from the different feeders above Petersburg, has been ‘let in,’ is now ‘dragging in a slow length along’ towards our City. Mr. Forrer, who has just returned from a visit to Pike County, informed us that the heavy work at the ‘Summit’ was finished, and also at the ‘Bluffs below.’ The water will soon reach Evansville and our business community...”

Evansville Journal July 11 1853

“The Canal

“We understand the Canal has broken in two places, just below the (Pigeon) Reservoir and at the Summit. The P.G. Riley, expected down today, is lying at Petersburg in six inches of water, and at points the Canal is dry. These breaks may be expected at the first letting in of the water.

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The earth embankments are loose, and becoming thoroughly soaked, the immense weight of water bearing against them, breaks the weak parts. Time is always required to strengthen the work, but we hope ere long, the task will be accomplished. The contractors have large bodies of laborers at hand, and no unreasonable delay occurs in mending the breaks."

The Evansville newspaper did the best it could to provide some reasonable explanations as to why there wasn't water in the canal. It sounded like they were quoting a canal engineer.

Another possible reason for delay was the lack of sufficient water from the feeders and Pigeon Reservoir. This was always a problem on the southern portion of the Wabash & Erie Canal. The quantity of water varies greatly to initially fill a canal vs. the water required just to keep it full. Once filled, the only water required is that needed to replace evaporation, absorption and losses at the locks. Any seasonal deficiency in the supply of water can have a drastic impact, especially during the initial fill. Think of it like filling an empty swimming pool in the spring vs. the water required in the summer to keep it full.

three general contractors moved on. Then on February 28, 1854 Stephen R. Hosmer of Zanesville, OH purchased land and laid out the village of Hosmer, Indiana. The platting provided for nine 66 foot wide streets and 75 foot lots. A mill on the canal bank was operating in that year and a canal lock (#66) made the site a terminal for canal traffic until the railroad came in 1882 and put the canal out of business. Hosmer remained the village name until 1939 when it became Glezen. Mary Glezen, a successful business women of Petersburg, went to Hosmer every Sunday for many years to teach Sunday School. The folks of the town decided to change the name to Glezen in honor of her service to their community.

Even before the work on the canal was completed, Samuel Forrer moved on to Missouri in May 1853 to undertake a railroad construction project near St. Louis. He left Stephen Hosmer, who had arrived in November 1852 in Evansville, to finish up the project.

Sarah Forrer, Samuel's wife in Dayton, was becoming very unhappy and following her visit to St. Louis in late 1853 commented: "It (St Louis) seems to be much more troublesome than the Indiana job."

Once the construction work was completed the

In the fall of 1855, Samuel Forrer returned to Day-

FORRER GENEALOGY

	<u>Birth</u>	<u>Death</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Married</u>	
Forrer, Christian	6-03-1765	6-06-1828	Wheeling WV	9-21-1790	
m. Neidig, Elizabeth	6-07-1770	11-08-1852	Dayton OH		
Forrer, Abraham	10-24-1791	7-22-1792	Dauphin Co PA		
Forrer, Samuel	1-06-1793	3-25-1874	Dayton OH	2-8-1826	Canal Commissioner
m. Howard, Sarah Hastings	12-27-1807	12-11-1887	Dayton OH		
Forrer, Elizabeth Hannah	2-28-1827	1-16-1874	Dayton OH	6-09-1846	
m. Pierce, Jeremiah Hunt	9-08-1818	5-06-1989	Dayton OH		Engineer M& E Canal
Forrer, Edward	8-30-1830	12-28-1838	Dayton OH		
Forrer, Augusta	4-05-1833	10-18-1907	Bristol CT	12-08-1853	
m. Bruen, Luther Barnett	9-14-1822	6-21-1864	Washington DC	12 th OH Inf	- Wilderness
Forrer, Ann	6-28-1835	1-11-1837	Dayton OH		
Forrer, Mary	8-24-1838	9-02-1929	Dayton OH	10-05-1882	
m. Pierce, Jeremiah Hunt	9-08-1818	5-06-1989	Dayton OH		
Forrer, Howard	11-11-1841	7-22-1864	Decatur Ga	112 th OVI	- Battle of Atlanta
Forrer, Christian	12-20-1794	7-11-1867	Dayton OH		
Forrer, Elizabeth	9-23-1797	4-15-1884	Dayton OH		
Forrer, Mary	8-15-1799	2-12-1878	Dayton OH		
Forrer, John	2-07-1802	4-12-1827	Columbus OH		
Forrer, Rebecca	1-02-1804	9-20-1833	Middletown OH		
Forrer, Christiana	1-14-1806	8-26-1831	Middletown OH		
Forrer, Anna	12-26-1809	5-01-1902	Yazoo City MS		