

# JOSEPHUS W. "SEPH" LAKE AND HIS WABASH & ERIE CANAL CONNECTIONS

By Charles Davis

Josephus W. Lake was born August 19, 1843, in Bellaire, Belmont county, Ohio. His parents were Evan and Malinda Brandon Lake.

Evan Lake, emigrated from Wales when he was about nineteen years of age, and settled in Bellaire where he was engaged in mining and at the same time boating his coal from Wheeling, Virginia (West Virginia, June 20, 1863) to Memphis, Tennessee. On January 1, 1840, he was married to Miss Malinda Brandon, in Bellaire, where she died in 1858. In the fall of 1859, after Malinda's death, Evan and his family moved to Clinton Locks, Indiana where he continued to be engaged in mining until his death in October 1862.

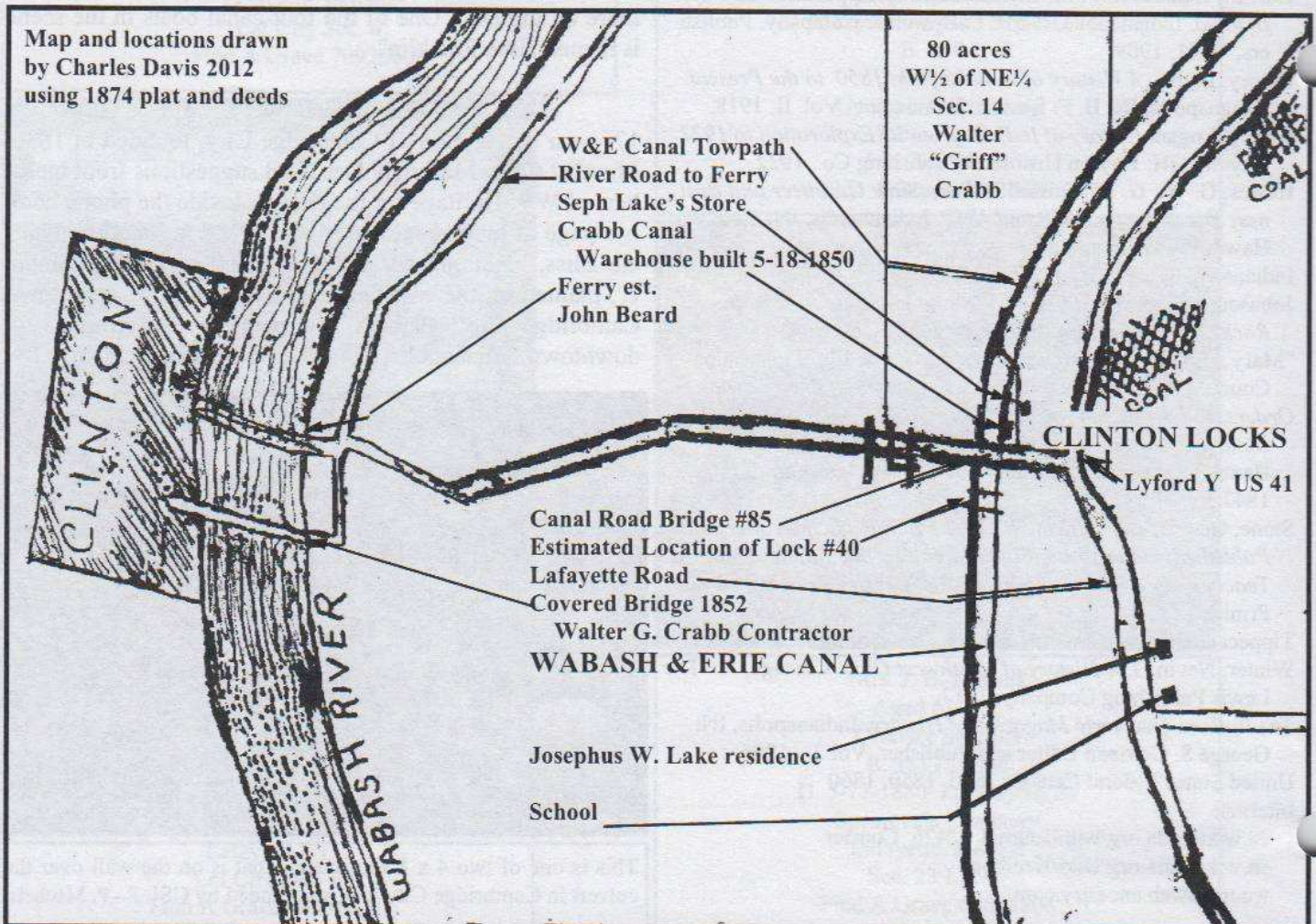
Clinton Locks was located across the Wabash River from the town of Clinton, Indiana. It was located at Lock #40 of the Wabash & Erie Canal. In 1880 it was platted and named Hudnut in honor of Hudnut & Company of Terre Haute. It later became known as Lyford.

Josephus W., our subject, was the 3rd of seven children. His education was such as might be obtained by faithful student while attending the schools of Bellaire prior to moving to Indiana at the age of 17. He arrived in Parke county on April 8, 1860 and until the spring of 1862 was engaged in mining. On June 22 of that year he enlisted at Terre Haute in Company B, 54th Indiana Infantry and was mustered out on September 22, 1862 at Indianapolis.

Returning home "Seph," as he was commonly known, returned to mining until the spring of 1863 when for a short time he took a job as a driver on the Wabash and Erie Canal until his second enlistment on November 1863 at Clinton Locks in Company C, 123rd Indiana Infantry. He was mustered out on May 22, 1865 at Madison, Indiana.

During his military service Seph was captured at Red River Bridge, Tennessee, but was soon paroled. He was also in the engagements at Resaca, Buzzard Roost, Decatur, Chattahoochie, Atlanta and others.

After the Civil War, Seph clerked for some time in the Canal Warehouse for Jesse Youmans and Robert Smith and was engaged three times as a school teacher.



Sometime in 1865 the canal ceased to operate in this area., It was closed from Armiesburg to the south, but it continued to operate to the north until 1873. A couple of years after that, in 1875, Scot Russell ran the last boat from Armiesburg.

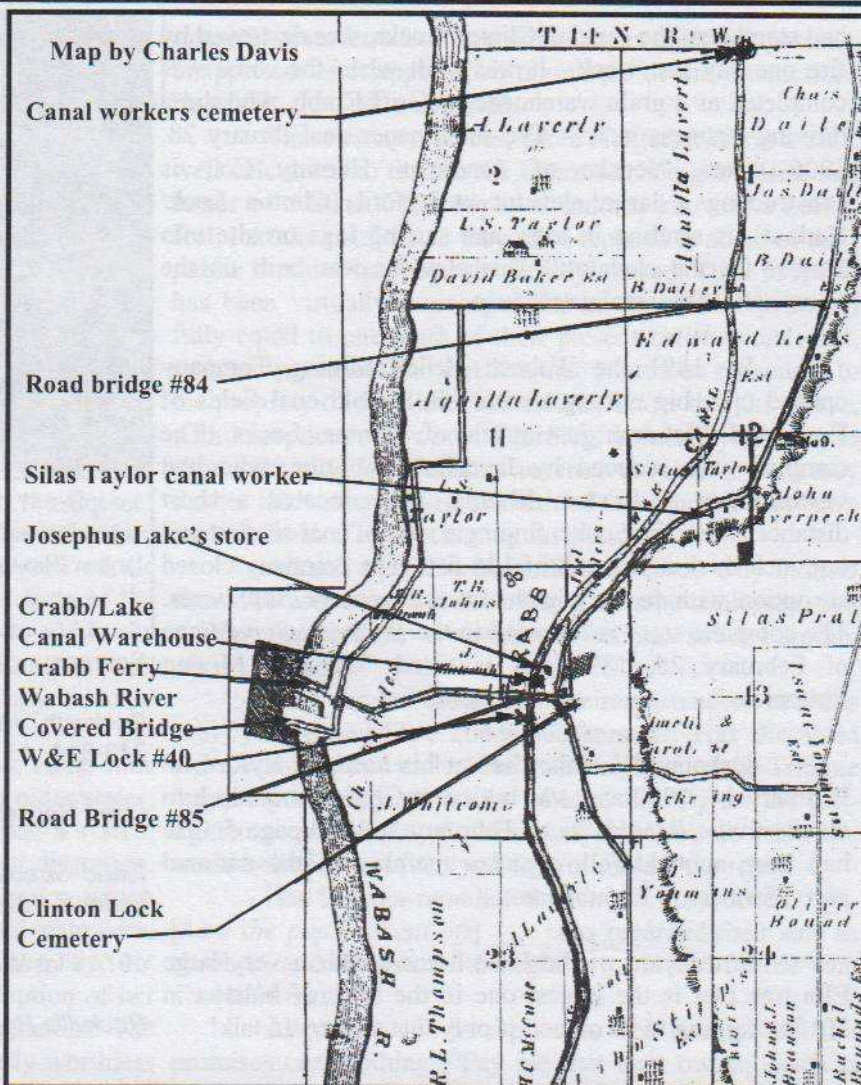
Josephus Lake married Mary F. Roberts on June 4, 1871. She was the daughter of James Roberts. They had four children: James E. Lake, Carrie I. Lake, Lata M. Lake and Roy Lake. At the time Beadle's *Parke County History* was published in 1880, only three children were still living.

Clinton Locks was dying on the vine at this time due to the canal being abandoned. It didn't perk up until later when the Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad ran a switch up to the canal warehouse and up to the coal mines of Asa Fitch. Therefore Seph began to farm, which was his principle business until February 1877 when he commenced life as a merchant. In 1878 Seph was elected justice of the peace.

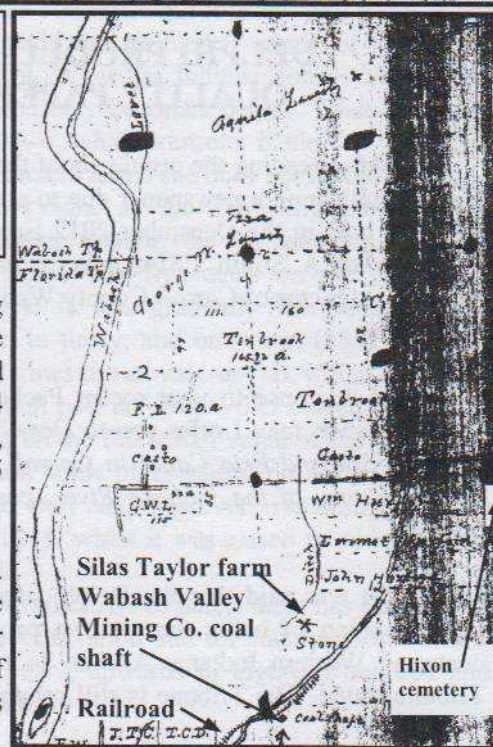
After a short period Seph purchased interest in the stock of Mr. Bowens store and became permanently settled in the mercantile business. The store was the only one in the village at this time. It had been built in 1851 by A. and J. M. Lyons. It was located about fifty feet north of the canal warehouse. Seph became the sole proprietor when he bought it from Joseph W. Morey on May 5, 1880. Deed Record 39/554 This is the same year that the village of Hudnut was platted and the store was on Lot #2 of the plat.

Hudnut & Company had purchased 2.24 acres from John W. Lowry containing the canal warehouse on April 24, 1880. They used the warehouse for making hominy meal. Their deed stated that "warehouse, wagon scales, small engine and all fixtures" went with the land. DR 39/342 This lot of land was separated from the original 80 acre tract, "Being 210 feet east of center of section 14 running east 251 feet to center of railroad, thence north 17° east 450 feet, thence nth 71° wst 79.5 feet to center of towpath, thence sth 34° wst 548.5 feet to place of beginning, containing 2.24 acres."

The canal warehouse was originally built by Walter G. "Griff" Crabb. In interviews several years ago, I, Charles Davis, was led to believe the warehouse was torn down and was used to build Aquilla Laverty's elevator near Armiesburg in 1896. That was not accurate. The *Rockville Tribune* of November 21, 1900 page five states, "The old warehouse, which for 50 years



**John C. Campbell survey finished 10-9-1897 shows Florida Township Railroad Switch from Clinton Locks to Wabash Valley Mining Company Coal Shaft. 2012 site of Mikes Motors Lodge on US 41**



had stood near the canal at Clinton Locks, was destroyed by fire one day last week. It was built when the canal was completed as a grain warehouse by Griff Crabb, who did a thriving business in it." The same paper on February 28, 1906 states, "Jencks of American Hominy Co., is constructing a large elevator at Lyford (Clinton Lock/Hudnut), is sending in logs, and sawing logs on site into lumber for the elevator." This elevator was built on the same site as the canal warehouse.

By 1891 the Wabash Valley Mining Company opened up a big mining territory in the old coal fields of Fitch and McLaren just north of Clinton Locks. The company was induced by Josephus W. Lake, who had visited them at Paxton, Illinois. They located a short distance above the Locks, finding a vein of coal six feet and one inch thick at a depth of 146 feet. The company closed an option with farmers in the area for nearly 2000 acres. The complete story is recorded in the *Rockville Republican* of February 25, 1891 and is titled "Gigantic Mining Enterprise."

Josephus W. Lake died at his home in Lyford on February 14, 1900 and was buried at Clinton according to the *Rockville Republican* of February 7, 1900 page 5. He had been an Odd-Fellow and a member of the national party, formerly a Republican.

In the yard of the Lake home stands a very large Elm tree that is the largest one in the state of Indiana in 2012 according to its owner. If only that tree could talk!



Josephus W. and Mary F. (Roberts) Lake's home during the canal era and after it near Clinton Locks (Lyford), Indiana with the largest Elm tree in Indiana in 2012 shown on the left.

Photo by Charles Davis 2012

Sources:

Beckwith. *History of Parke County*, "John H. Beadle" pp. 313-314, "J. W. Lake" 328-329.

Deed Records, Rockville Court House Recorder's office

*Isaac Straus Memorial Combined Atlas of Parke County Indiana. 1874-1908-1916.*

1974 Plat Maps

*Rockville Republican* found in Rockville Library