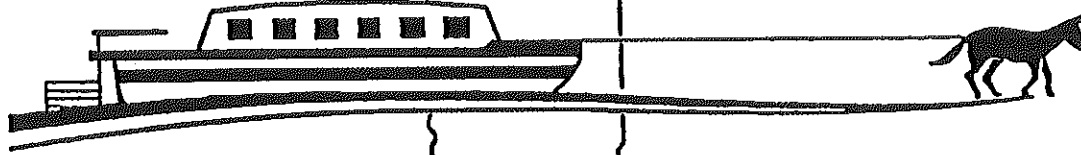


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## CANAL STUDIED FOR MURAL



Remnants of Lock 28, a composite lock of the Wabash & Erie Canal, still remain just east of Lockport, IN on Towpath Road adjacent to Burnett's Creek Arch, a cut stone culvert, which carried the canal over Burnett's Creek. One of the iron pins that held the Lock's plank lining can be see just right of center. Photo by Bob Schmidt

### *Features*

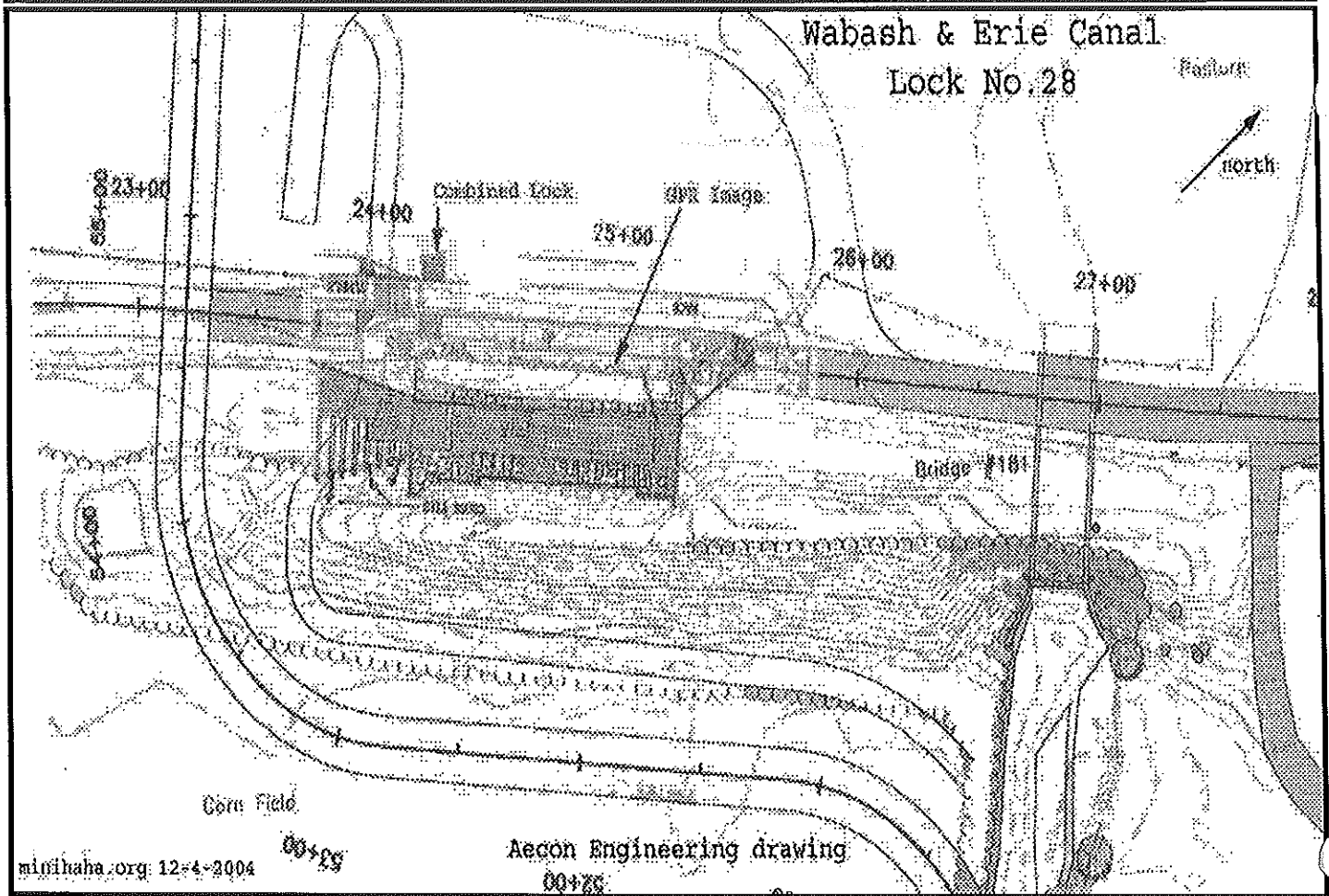
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### **FORGOTTEN LOCK NO. 28**

By Thomas Castaldi

For the last one hundred sixty years a workhorse of a canal lock has been passing its days in the shadow of Burnett's Creek Arch in Lockport, Indiana, on Carroll County's Towpath Road. Recently, the Carroll County Heritage Tourism Committee has established this road as the "Wabash & Erie Canal Trail" from Delphi northeast to Georgetown in southwestern Cass County.

About the time it was being constructed, it may have witnessed the infamous 1837 "Trail of Death" that recalls the forced march of the Potawatomi people being removed to territories west of the Mississippi River.



**LOCK 28 of the WABASH & ERIE CANAL at BURNETT'S CREEK in CARROLL COUNTY, IN**  
 John Weddell, CSI member from Fort Wayne, IN and director of the Minihaha Foundation, overlaid a diagram of Lock 28 onto this engineering drawing of the Burnett's Creek Arch area to be made into a park.

In 1839, the Chief Engineer in charge of building the Ohio Indiana state boundary to Lafayette. It is generally acknowledged that the arch was built during 1839 and 1840 and the canal opened to Delphi in August of 1840. When the canal closed in the mid 1870s, a wagon road replaced the canal route and was named the "Towpath Road." Burnett's Creek Arch has since been serving modern day traffic making it one of Indiana's great treasures.

Tucked in along the side of the road a few yards west of the arch, is a low stone wall that once was given an official designation of "Lock No. 28" by the Chief Engineer of the Wabash & Erie Canal. Presently, Towpath Road passes over the north half of the arch and along the north side of the lock's stone wall. Although the old lock is not nearly in as good condition as the arch, it too has survived the decades.

Delphi's Canal Interpretative Center has commissioned artist Terry Lacy to create a mural

depicting the Burnett's Creek Arch for its lobby. Since no photograph or written description is known to exist explaining how the arch and lock may have interacted, several questions arose. Were the two one structure or two distinct units? What did this combination of stone and timber look like all those years ago that could move an eighty feet long canal boat across Burnett's Creek and up and down the canal as the elevation changed? If a likeness is to hang in the Canal Center, both artist and museum planners want it to be as accurate a portrayal as possible. On November 19th, Dan McCain led a team of interested people that included John Weddell, Terry Lacy and Tom Castaldi to the site.

It has long been recognized that a lifting lock was constructed west of the arch but exactly how the two interconnected has been lost over one hundred and thirty years of history. Burnett's Creek Arch has been described as a viaduct built between 1839 and 1840 to carry the Wabash & Erie Canal over Burnett's Creek and when the canal was abandoned years later, the old structure was paved over and turned into a county road.

In 1847, Jesse Williams, was charged by the Trustees with the duty of describing the physical addition of the canal's structures along the 189 miles of canal built since 1832 from the Ohio state line to Coal Creek south of Covington, Indiana. The chief engineer wrote this about the arch: "Culvert No. 100, over Burnett's Creek, an arch of 20 feet chord, built of hammer-dressed stone - in good repair excepting the ring stone at each end, a part of which are of soft stone and are falling to pieces." Stone for the arch was taken from Cass County France Park, known to canal officials as "Georgetown Quarry." In its heyday, the arch must have been an awesome site. According to measurements, the height of the towpath above the water level in the creek below was at least two stories.

To this day, much of the arch is visible, and other than a modern cement cap to replace the south side of the old stone portal, it survives as a relic of the past. Although as a road bridge it has been slightly changed and improved throughout the years, it stands virtually the same as it did when it was built. Throughout the years, much of the towpath and virtually all the berm bank over the arch have been removed in its conversion to county road status. Interestingly, the south portion of the approximately 86 feet long arch surface is covered with soil fill. Today the towpath over the arch is noticeable, but not as prominent as it is to the east and west of the arch. There seems to be plenty of space for a 40 feet wide, 4 feet deep canal to pass across the arch, but what changes in width were made as it passed on to the entrance of the lock and race way?

A soil probe indicates that today there is three feet of fill atop the arch, and a layer of "puddle" was once laid in place to reduce seepage when water filled the canal's basin. Puddle was often a mixture of clay and gravel used to make the canal bed watertight. Wetted down, the mixture was packed by the hooves of cattle or iron rods until the air pockets were forced out of the mixture. Dennis K. McDaniel, director of the Peale Museum, who studied the arch, wrote [Indiana Magazine of History, Dec., 1982] that a minimum of two feet of puddle was used between the top of the arch stones and the bottom of the canal bed.

From the center of the arch it is one hundred and forty feet to the upstream lock gates. Here a long wall of rough cut stone has served as a reminder of the original structure. Other than a few scattered stones found here and there, underbrush conceals the old lock chamber and whatever may be buried in the towpath.

In 1847, Jesse Williams, observed that. "Lock No. 28, 10 feet lift, built upon the combined plan the plank facing renewed last winter - the gates also new." Lock 28 raised and lowered boats ten feet utilizing a

To support this supposition, definitions of "combined" and "composite" designs were re-examined. A "Combined Lock" is said to be: "Two locks constructed parallel to each other and close together. One lock is used for canal boats ascending and the other for boats descending." No place in the Chief Engineer's reporting or in local histories has this lock been described as such. It would have been a most unusual construction on the Wabash & Erie and worthy of notice. To better express Lock No. 28 the definition of a "Composite Lock" may be more suited: "An inexpensive lock constructed of dry stone or mortared walls made watertight by nailing thick wooden planks horizontally to vertical timbers (studs) bolted to the masonry wall. Each wall was then covered with a sheathing of vertical planks nailed closely together. To prolong the life of the lock, 'kyanized' wood was sometimes used. Some masonry was used in the gate recess area." To "kyanize" means to treat wood with a solution of mercuric chloride to inhibit decay, and was an invention that predated 1850.

Peter Bishop and John Hanna obtained a contract to clear the land for the canal right-of-way east of Lockport, and a contractor by the name of Munson built both locks 28 and 29. A Mr. Fitch forged the iron parts used on the locks between Logansport and Delphi.

Measurements were made by the team along the stone wall between gate openings. Quoin post with lock pockets in the wall can be observed at each end of the wall and are ninety feet apart. Such features clearly identify where gate "hinges" were set and spaces placed in the wall to accommodate gates in their fully opened position. The space between the north wall and the few stones found along the south chamber wall are twenty feet apart. A Wabash & Erie Canal lock chamber should measure fifteen feet across according to the Chief Engineer's written specifications. Wood facing the stone walls would have consumed some of the space; however, it may indicate that today the south wall is missing.

Without examining the silted in chamber floor the extent of stones now buried and out of sight that may have served as walls cannot be determined. The stone wall on the north side has been cleared of trees and preserved to retain the integrity of the roadway. On the south wall, trees over time displaced heavy objects such as building stones. So it may be assumed that the south

wall shifted, collapsed or its stones removed for building foundations on neighboring farms or in town. It is also likely that the original chamber space in the walls has been significantly altered. So where are the missing five feet? At present the distance of twenty feet across the chamber floor exists when it should measure fifteen feet. Perhaps the lost five feet could be accounted for considering the missing wall, its facing timber and the timber on the surface of its sister wall.

Along the north side of the chamber wall, towpath has replaced any evidence of a raceway and tumble. John Weddell, director of the Minehaha Foundation, provided ground penetrating radar images, elevation surveys, present-day and contemporary computer matching maps, probe and soil samples. His work revealed that the "Footprint" of the lock seems to match the mechanical drawings of a "Combined Lock" that appears in publications such as the Canal Society of Indiana's *Indiana Canals* [see Fall 1994/Winter 1994, p. 16]. Using a modern acon map of the lock drawing superimposed over a modern acon engineering map he has unraveled several mysteries. John's experience working on archaeological sites was very useful in his observation of disturbances in the Towpath Road. One half of the road's surface may be due to buried stone structures that later were revealed in the mechanical drawings as the raceway and tumble features. Later, he remarked, "This manmade peninsula jutted out into the ravine and had to be an extremely scenic part of the canal traveler's experience.

Farther to the west beyond Lock 28, the Chief Engineer reported the condition of a road bridge. He wrote, "Road bridge No. 42, will last two or three years." No clues of the appearance of this bridge is apparent from this report, however, it does confirm the existence of a bridge over the canal and is shown in the Carroll County Atlas Map of 1874. Before the days of the canal, a ford, which crossed the Wabash River nearby, extended north to a passage to Chicago. Known as the "Wabash Trail," it led from the Wabash River, through the flood plain, to a mill on Burnett's Creek. Over the years several mills were erected on this creek and its productivity as a water power was widely known.

Ben Stuart in his *History of Wabash and Valley*, 1924, wrote that the trail was first used by the French and was sometimes called the "Old French and Indian Trail." It left Lake Michigan near Fort Dearborn, which is now a part of the City of Chicago, and headed on a southwesterly course. At a ford between two sand dunes, the trail crossed the Kankakee River at which point the trail split. One route followed the west side of the Big Monon River and the other led to the north side of the Little Monon. Following one or the other of these two streams, the trails rejoined at their confluence near

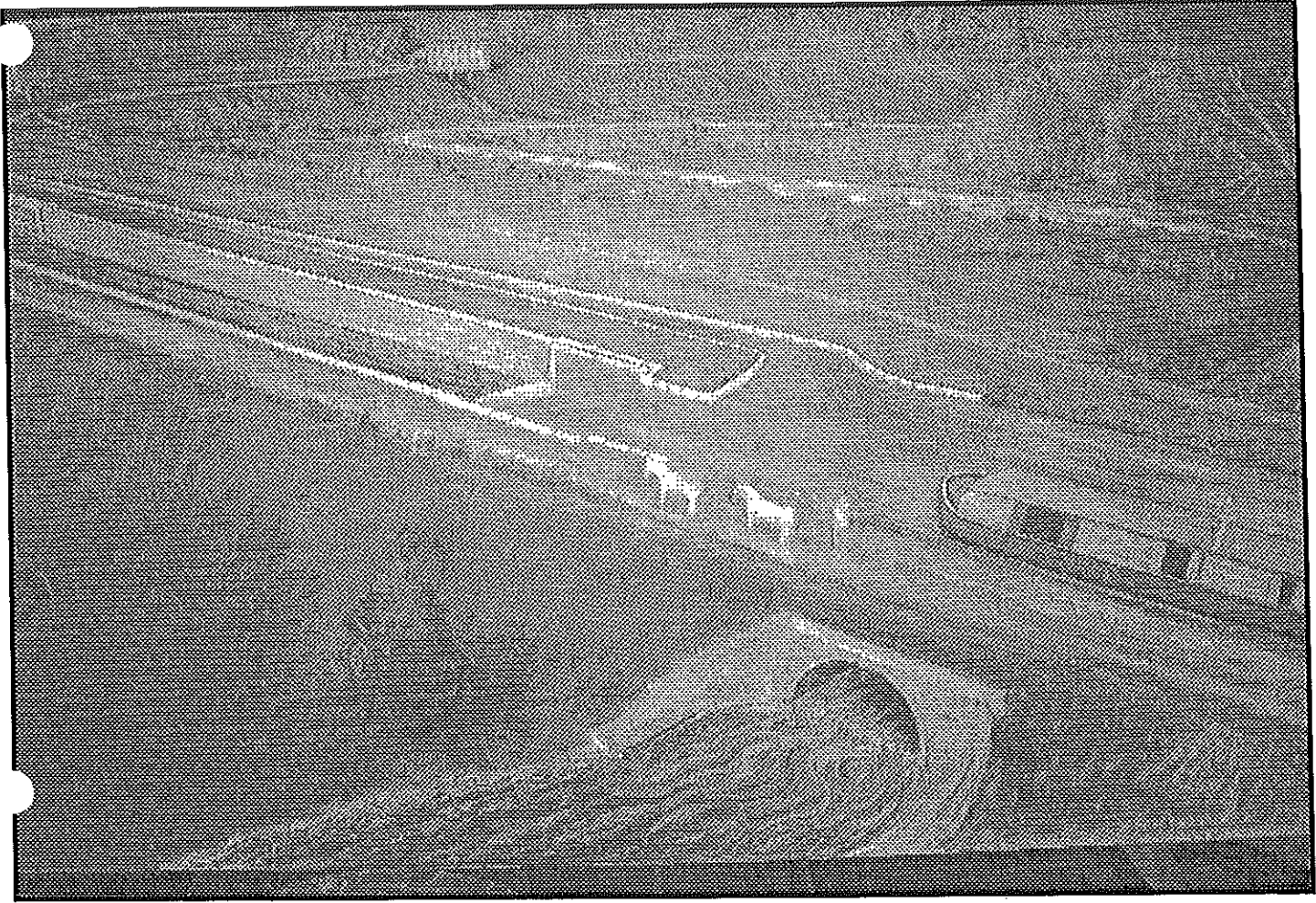
the west bank of the Tippecanoe River, and then followed the river downstream to a point near present-day Norway. Here it crossed the river and headed east to higher ground at a point between Idaville and Burnettville. After crossing U.S. 24 it moved toward a southern course along the west side of Burnett's Creek where it finally met the Wabash River. "It crosses the river at what is known as Fording Rock to the mouth of Little Rock Creek."

Using this trail, settlers of the Wabash Valley could transport their farm production north to Chicago or to Michigan City. After the canal opened, this was an already well-traveled route and one that the settlers were accustomed to using. Further, Lockport offered other canal attractions that are recalled by current-day tourists. A great depression in the ground alongside Towpath Road west of town, marks the site of Lock No. 29, which could raise and lower canal boats ten feet. Here to, facing the lock was the Burris House, an inn that is standing today and once served canal travelers with food and lodging. The Burris House has the distinction of being the first property in Carroll County to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Hidden in the ledges of the bluff north of the inn and the lock across Towpath Road is "Potawatomi Springs" where in 1838 the long line of native Indian people halted to take water for their trail of death removal west to Kansas. These are a few of the historical treasures to be found west of Arch No. 100 and Lock No. 28.

Now, the Carroll County Historical Society is actively pursuing the purchase of the land that adjoins Burnett's Creek Arch. The arch that has stood for so many years has been settling. Today, the structure is the oldest in-service bridge in Indiana and is on the national Register of Historic Places. During October 2004, Carroll County officials received a \$500,000 Federal Transportation Enhancement grant for use in non-traditional transportation projects. It covers eighty percent of the cost to restore the arch while the county must provide funding for the remainder. With the new grant, the repair project will include an additional stream flow to minimize the effect of water passing under the arch foundation that supports the viaduct as well as stabilizing and sealing to protect it from future repairs.

With the clarification of the arch and Lock 28's conjunction defined - along with the road bridge and mill site - Carroll County has the potential for a roadside park with walking trail and historic markers for interpretation. As the knowledge of these structures is better understood, Terry Lacy was able to produce another of his fine mural-size oil paintings for Canal Center visitors to view and enjoy of a nineteenth century marvel set in a northern Indiana pastoral landscape. Memorialized in a full color painting, Lock No. 28 is one lifting lock on the

Wabash & Erie Canal that will not soon be forgotten.



This mural of Lock 28 and Burnett's Creek Arch is a work of art in progress. This photo was taken in the artist's studio as he neared completion. Terry Lacy depicts these structures of the Wabash & Erie Canal at Lockport, IN after a study was made of the area. Note the S-shape of Burnett's Creek as it flows to the stone arch culvert, the Wabash & Erie Canal as it crosses the arch with the towpath on the side nearest the Wabash River (not shown), the lock bypass or tumble that diverts excess canal water from the lock, and the lock. The lock gates point upstream toward the summit at Ft. Wayne, IN. The gate recesses are shown on either side of the lock.

Photo by Dan McCain

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

CSI welcomes aboard the following new members who have joined at the membership level of \$22 unless otherwise noted:

James & Jeanine Isham - Greenwood, IN  
Fred Patterson - Anderson, IN

Membership year Jan. 1- Dec. 31, 2005

## 2005 CONTRIBUTORS (Continued)

CSI wishes to thank the following who have given at the \$30 Contributor level. Your extra gifts help fund our projects such as the windows in the Vinton House, an old canal inn, and boats for the canal at Delphi.

Marvin Carmony  
Dwight & Ann Ericcson



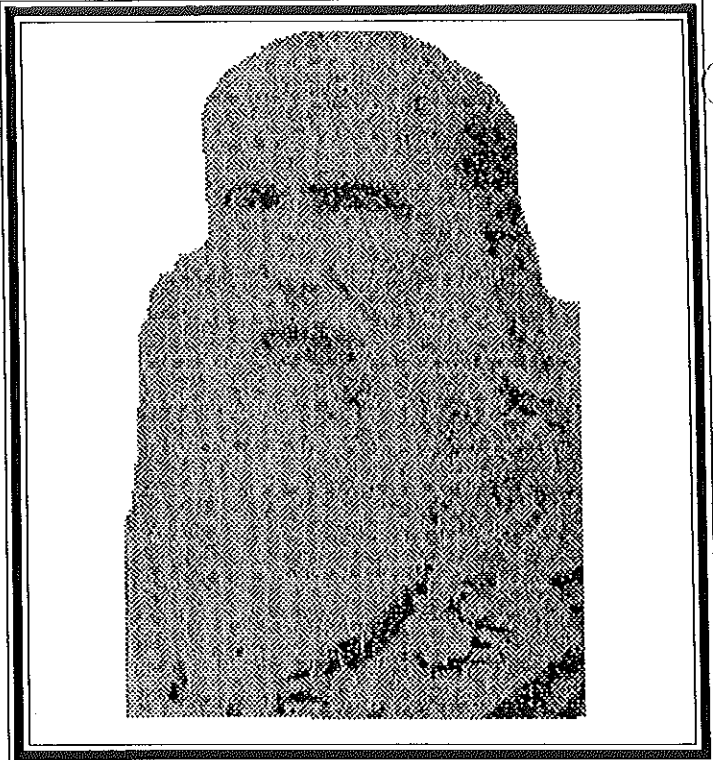
# CANAWLIERS AT REST

## ABRAHAM B. CONWELL

**b. August 15, 1796**

**d. November 1, 1886**

By Carolyn Schmidt  
with help from  
Phyllis Mattheis



Abraham B. Conwell was born in Lewiston, Delaware in 1796 to William and Nancy A. (King) Conwell of English and Welsh decent. Also of interest is that A.B. was named after his grandfather Abraham Conwell, who married the daughter of Betsy Ross, the maker of the first American Flag.

At age fifteen A.B. was apprenticed as a tanner and continued in that trade for five years. In 1817, at the age of 21, he and James, his brother, left Washington City (D.C.) on foot heading west. When they arrived at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, James went into a shipyard, but A.B. continued on to Kentucky and resided in the little settled country for two years.

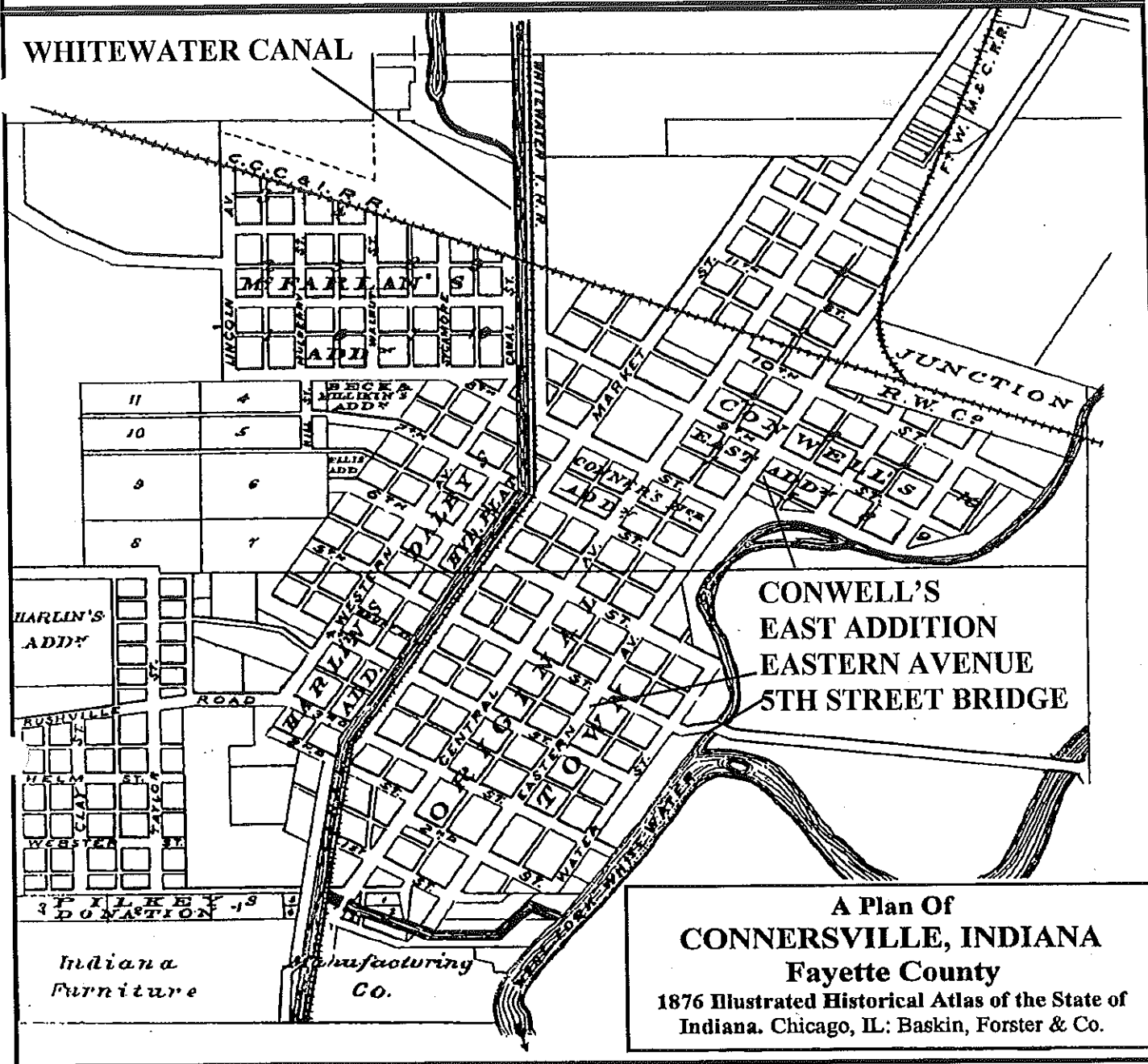
In 1818, three of A. B.'s brothers, James, Isaac and William, who were already in the West, made a six-months tour on horseback through much of the Northwest. They searched for the most advantageous location to settle and determined that if the Whitewater Valley in Indiana was not worth settling, then they might as well go back East. This was the place to live. James, a Methodist minister, selected Laurel in Franklin County. Issac made Liberty in Union County his home. William chose Cambridge City in Wayne County.

In 1819 A.B. followed their advice and settled at Connersville in Fayette County. The county had a population of 3,950 in 1820. Connersville was a growing community around which much of the population was centered. There A.B. adopted the motto, "Desire and ye shall receive—knock and it shall be opened unto you."

In a newspaper article written by Kate Herron in recent years, she says that A. B. came with \$10,000 and bought much government land at a small price per acre. Earlier histories report that he began by buying one acre of land from Mr. John Conner, the founder of Connersville, on which he started a tannery and once again was in the tanning business. The tanyard was interesting to the local boys and young adults who frequented the place. A treadmill was used by a pet bear that labored faithfully to pump water, which filled the vats. The tanyard was not far from the grist-mill owned by Conner. Conner later sold the mill to DeCamp, who in turn sold it to A.B., who ran it until it was worn out.

On February 22, 1821, A.B. married Elizabeth Sparks, daughter of Matthew Sparks, formerly of Maryland, but later of Franklin County, Indiana. The newlyweds lived in Connersville.

A county press in the 1870s carried reminiscences by a writer known as " Rambler." He says: "The old mill was familiar to all the pioneers for many miles around. Going to mill was a task in those days, and often a trip of forty or fifty miles on horseback. Each grist was numbered, and frequently was several days awaiting its turn, while a number of the customers would be in camp close by. The Saturdays of our boyhood days were spent in ramblings, and as a guest of Lafe Conwell (A. B.'s son Lafayette), our school mate at that time, the old mill was examined with boyish curiosity, and its mysteries solved. In after years, when there with grists, we were more interested in seeing the miller manipulate



the toll dish. The honesty of the miller is proverbial, but they were sometimes absent-minded, and would repeat the operation of taking toll, and have been known to forget that important proceeding, as I have received, as the product of a grist, a range of from twenty-eight pounds to forty-six pounds of flour to each bushel of wheat at that same old mill."

Although the tanyard prospered and is included in an 1821-list of Connersville businesses, A.B. decided to abandon the business and engaged in the mercantile or dry goods business for a while. Calico was brought over the mountains from Baltimore by horse and wagon and sold at 75 cents per yard. Hands received about 25 cents per day for their labor. Corn was almost given away.

The Conwells built and lived in what in its day was a fine house. It was located a little way north of the Conwell mill.

A subscription paper was circulated on Christmas Day in 1833 to raise funds to purchase a bell for the County Seminary's cupola. They raised \$24. A.B. contributed \$1.00 toward the bell. It weighed seventy-five and a half pounds, cost 40 cents per pound for a total of \$30.20. Others must have later contributed to its purchase price.

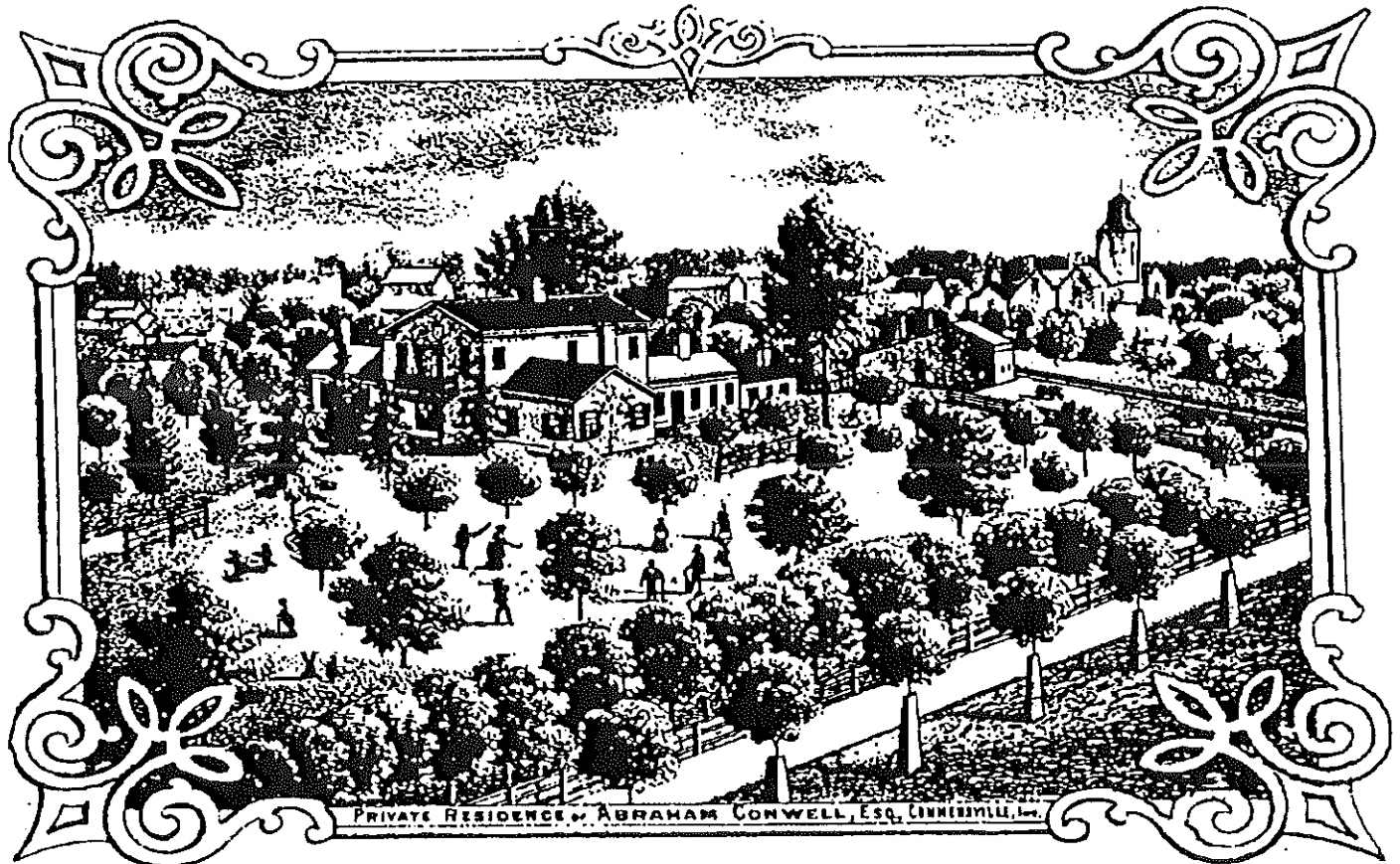
Samuel Little wrote "Pioneer Days in Fayette County in 1879 that described conditions when he arrived there in 1833 as follows:

"That portion of the county lying east of the 'old boundary line' being settled ten years earlier than the west side, had nearly passed the stage of log-cabins. Every farm had its occupant, many had comfortable frame or brick dwellings, and some had barns and fruit-bearing orchards; but nearly all the improvements on our western border were of a primitive character, and it is mainly of this part of the county, in which I (the author) lived for fifty-three years, I would speak.

"Farms ranged in size from a forty-acre tract to a quarter section, and nearly all of them had some improvement. The log-cabin was the prevailing dwelling, and it was almost always surrounded by a cleared patch, or deadening, ripening for the fire, by whose agency it was cleared up for the plow. So dense was the forest that the only evidences of other occupied farms near by was the sound of the axe, the crowing fowls or barking watch-dog.

"Paths leading from cabin to cabin passed around large trees or logs and over streamlets, led us through the tangle of spice-wood or pawpaw in our neighborly visits, and highways were marked out and corduroy bridges bore us over marshes on our way to market, public worship, or to mill in our wagons, up hill and down the same, and through streams, which were all without bridges. The stumps, roots and logs gave the beaten track a serpentine direction, which required great

skill in the teamster. If Levi Conwell were here he could tell you all about it, or if you ask Uncle Billy Simpson how he used to freight A.B. Conwell's whisky and flour to Cincinnati and return with a load of store goods, he can describe it better than I can. Pork and the articles named were our staple productions. Cincinnati was our only market. Our pork was driven on foot, requiring an average of eight days to reach our destination, three to close out the sale, and two more to return, The entire trip consumed about two week's time. Wheat sold in Cincinnati in 1834 at 50 cents per bushel, flour for \$2.75 per barrel, and Uncle Abe (Abraham Conwell) can give you the price of whisky; as I did not handle it my memory is at fault. We got but little money, and we spent little. Our food grew on our farms, and our clothing was mostly home-made, growing in the flax patch or on the sheep's back, and its manufacture was mostly domestic. The flax-pulling and wool-picking were frequently done by combination or neighborhood frolics, and were occasions of great social pleasure. There are mothers present who would tell how they used to race with their sweet-hearts at the flax-hullings, and some of them recollect how the points of their fingers ached after pulling the burrs and stick-tights out of the wool. Yes, and how they enjoyed their trip on foot to the spelling-match or singing-school with their beaux by their side, just to help them over the fences and mud holes. Or, perchance, they rode behind on the same horse, so that if the horse stumbled they could hold on?..."



Source: An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Fayette County, Indiana 1875. Chicago, IL/Higgins, Belden & Co.



A. B. invested heavily in the Whitewater Valley Canal, which promised so much for Connersville. He invested in real estate. The canal, begun by the State of Indiana in 1836, ran into difficulties. When the question of completing the canal arose in 1839-40, Conwell was one of the leading promoters of a new Canal Company, which eventually secured the rights to complete the canal in 1842. He was the heaviest stockholder in the company. A million dollars had been spent and the canal had only been completed as far as Brookville in Franklin County. The Canal Company completed it as far as Laurel in 1843, to Connersville by June 1845, and to Cambridge City shortly thereafter spending another half a million dollars.

The First Presbyterian Church in Connersville was organized in 1824 and built its first church in 1833. This old building was sold to George Fryberger. On April 14, 1845, A.B. sold land to the church for a new building.

Shortly after the completion of the canal in 1846-47, A.B. built a new larger flouring-mill, which was located on North Eastern Avenue. He installed the latest and most improved machinery. He was engaged in the milling business for years and operated one of the most extensive flouring-mills in that section of the State. It had the capacity of manufacturing from 150 to 200 barrels of flour per day. Farmers awaiting their turn to have their grists ground would camp on the green. The mill was carried on in the Conwell name until its cessation in 1866, when its water-power was destroyed by the great freshet of that year. After that the building was used by the Triple Sign Company until it caught fire. As of 1917 a part of the mill was still standing.

Pork-packing engaged the attention of many Connersville citizens for about 25 years following the completion of the canal. For a time hog-slaughtering and pork-packing were the leading industries and were carried on in several extensive factories. Prior to the canal hogs were driven to market. In 1822 it required the production from about three counties to make one drove of 250 hogs. A.B. went into buying hogs, grain, etc. and, in time, became a very extensive pork packer. He purchased a lot of 1,500 hogs in 1828 at 75 cents per hundred. By 1846 and the use of the canal there were 6,000 hogs packed in Connersville.

In the late 1840s or early 1850s A.B. built the Merrill block in Connersville for his pork packing business. In 1852 Conwell & Sons killed for Daniel Hankins. That year 25,000 hogs were slaughtered in the town. By 1856 about 11,000 hogs were slaughtered, packed and sold by just the firms of A.B. Conwell & Sons and J. Holton & Co. alone for \$6 per hundred. Conwell's transactions sometimes amounted to over \$600,000 a

year. This was a huge sum of money for the time.

A.B. was buying up land in Fayette county. At one time he owned about fifteen hundred acres. He was able to have several business ventures going at a time—his store, flour mill, pork-packing establishment and hundreds of acres of farming land..

The canal was a failure. In less than two years two of the most extensive aqueducts were swept away, several feeder dams nearly destroyed, and many minor injuries sustained by heavy floods. However, the Canal Company in a little less than a year had repaired the canal and navigation was resumed. Almost immediately there was another flood. Such repeated disasters disheartened the Company. Shareholders became disgusted with the high assessments. The canal was abandoned. The railroad took over the towpath for its iron rails.

When the canal began sinking, A.B. invested heavily in railroad enterprises. He took part in raising funds to build the branch of the Cincinnati, Indianapolis & Western Railroad that connected Dayton and Rushville. He invested \$60,000. Since the railroad eventually turned into a failure like the canal, he got little in direct returns, the appreciation of the real estate, of which A. B. was one of the largest holders in the county, paid off.

The county commissioners put the old court house, Clerk and Recorder's office and the old jail up for sale on January, 1849. A.B. purchased the court house and jail for \$575. The other building was sold to Sherman Scofield for \$96.

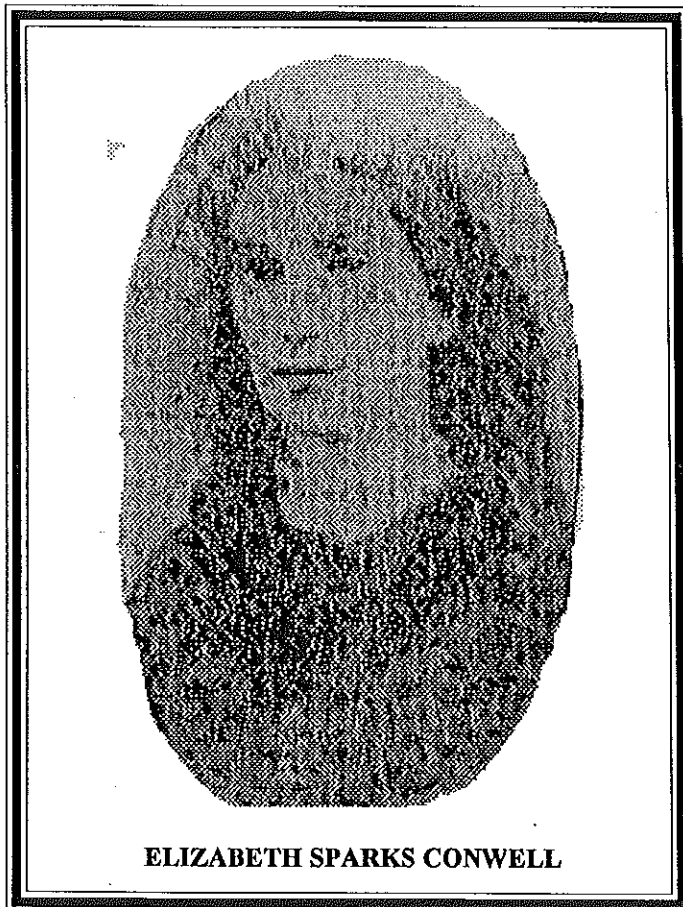
In August 1850 land was purchased on which to build a church for St. Gabriel's parish. The location of the site seemed very far from the Connersville business section. A.B. generously gave money and made acquiring the land possible. The church was built between 1851-1853. In later years the wisdom in selecting the site became evident. It was north of the Cincinnati, Indianapolis & Western tracks, on Eastern avenue and the town eventually expand to that far north.

The Bank of Connersville was organized in 1852. It started with twice as much capital as any of the other fifteen banks organized in the state under the May 18, 1852 act providing for state banks. Its original stock was \$400,000. Its first president was George Frybarger. It was located in the rear of Frybarger's store, which stood at the southwest corner of Central Avenue and Fifth Street. It built a three-story brick building on Central Avenue between Fourth and Fifth Streets. A. B. Conwell followed Frybarger as its president in 1853.

A.B. was a charter member of the first Masonic

lodge established in Connersville. Although a life-long Jacksonian Democrat, he never consented to become a candidate for public office. He took a hearty interest in the welfare of the community and community decisions such as the location of the bridge across the Whitewater River. Colonel Hankins and others wanted to place it as the end of Third Street facing out from the Rushville road. Conwell and others owning property and businesses two squares up the street wanted it leading from Fifth street. Conwell offered extra inducements. George Frybarger, stepped into the intersection of Central avenue and Fifth street on the day the question was to be decided, drove a nail into the earth and said, "Gentlemen, for years to come these four corners will be the center of the town," and the bridge was placed where A.B. suggested. He focused his energy in the business word. His integrity was unquestionable.

One historian refers to A.B. Conwell as the last of the four Romans—one who lives between the past and present—and says he was a man of wonderful natural intellect and judgment. He was known for his wise forecast as well as for his quiet success in all his business and speculations. He was recognized as the most prominent merchant of Connersville and was identified with its history from 1819 to 1886—a citizen who contributed to the advancement of the different phases of growth of Fayette county.



ELIZABETH SPARKS CONWELL

A. B. and Elizabeth had three children:

**Lafayette**, who was associated with his father in business but died before A.B., married Anna D. Conwell and had 6 children:  
 William D.  
 David T.  
 Annie C.  
 Cornelia  
 Lafayette  
 Rose M.

**Anna K.** became the wife of William Merrill, a banker and merchant of Connersville on November 1, 1840. William died before A.B. died. They had 9 children:  
 William, who was the only Democrat that served as city councilman for many years

**Charles**

**Frank P.**, who was the proprietor of a restaurant in Grass Valley, California

**Conwell**, a farmer

**Sarah Elizabeth**, widow of Dr. George Garver, a prominent physician

**John**, a farmer who lived with his mother in the old homestead

**Emma**, wife of William Havens of Rushville

**Minnie**, wife of Andrew A. Norman of Cincinnati

**Anna M.**, wife of McIlheny of New York city

**Charles K.** died in 1876 before A. B.

Elizabeth Sparks Conwell, A.B.'s wife died on February 12, 1876. She is listed as Betsy in the City Cemetery book.

Abraham B. Conwell died on November 1, 1886. He was ninety years old. A.B. owned Lot 57 in Section 1 of City Cemetery, which is located at 13th and Grand Avenue in Connersville. His grave is in Lot 57 along the south side, about ten rows west of the middle drive in the southwest section.

Today Lot 57 is mostly bare ground. The few stones there are no longer readable. One recent stone stands for Fritz Conwell, who was buried in 1958. According to the cemetery's records, there are eleven Conwells in Lot 57, including the two sons. Daughter Anna is buried with the Merrills.

No obituary was found in the Connersville Times for A. B. Conwell, but a later undated article about the "kin" of Betsy Ross in Indiana was found in the Conwell file at the Fayette County Public Library. It carried the pictures of Abraham and Elizabeth used in this

publication and the following story:

"Another of Betsy's 'close of kin' in Indiana was Abraham B. Conwell, of Connersville. He accumulated considerable wealth and although not like James (another of Betsy's kin) in religious bent, found pleasure in giving sites for churches in his Indiana home. He also was a public benefactor in other ways, having contributed to the establishment of rights of way for the Lake Erie & Western and the Junction railroads, the latter afterward being known as the Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton railroad. He gave eleven acres of land to the furtherance of the Junction railroad. When Abraham, or Abram as many called him, died in 1886, five ministers, Catholic and Protestant, walked at the head of his funeral procession, thus recognizing his qualities of heart and citizenship.

"Genealogists have record of fifteen descendants of Betsy Ross still living in Indiana, all from the Conwell line. Among them is Miss Laurel Conwell Thayer, attached to the probation division of the Marion county courts. Others are Mrs. J. Ellison Fish, Russell Fish, Miss June Cotton, Frank Merrill, George Garver and Clyde Lewis Garver, of Indianapolis; Mrs. John Frazee, Walter Smith, Dr. Hale Piercy and Dr. Horace Piercy, of Rushville; Lafayette Conwell, Miss Cornelia D. Conwell and Fritz Conwell, of Connersville, and Will Merrill, of Richmond.

The Connersville Times also recorded some of the Conwell family's activities following his death:

November 3, 1886 - Mrs. William (Anna) Merrill is making improvements to the old Conwell homestead.

November 24th, 1886 - The old Conwell Mill is being leased as a stock room by McFarlan Carriage Co.

December 8, 1886 - Connersville and Milton Turnpike will be made a free road as of 1 January 1887.

December 15, 1886 - William Merrill and Dave Conwell are thinking of going to the golden state.

Sources:

An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Fayette County, Indiana. Chicago, IL/Higgins, Belden & Co. 1875.

"An Old Citizen." Connersville Times. July 17, 1877.

Barrows, Frederic Irving. History of Fayette County, Indiana: Her People, Industries and Institutions. Indianapolis, IN/B. F. Bowen & Co., Inc. 1917.

Biographical and Genealogical History of Wayne, Fayette, Union and Franklin Counties, IN. 2 Vol. Chicago, 1899.

Conwell file article, Fayette County Public Library.

History of Fayette County. Warner, Beers & Co. 1885.

Slevin, Ruth M. Fayette County, Indiana Will Records 1819-1895. 1970.

**NEW CANAL BOOKS**

**CANALS** by Robert J. Kapsch has just been published by the W. W. Norton & Company of New York and London in association with the Library of Congress as part of its series of visual source books in architecture, design and engineering. The 310 page book is the largest source of material on American canals and is full of black and white photographs and diagrams of canal structures throughout the United States. A CD-ROM accompanies the book and has these images on it. The book has an introduction to American canals, which is followed by a capsule tour of over three dozen U.S. canals with a description and illustration for each one. There are chapters on canal structures, the Morris Canal and the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal.

Larry Turner, CSI member from Ohio, tipped off headquarters and we purchased the book. It was well done with the exception that it missed some of the smaller canals. Headquarters verbally recommended it to other members who have purchased it and found it interesting.

**Wedding of the Waters: The Erie Canal and the Making of a Great Nation** by Peter L. Bernstein also published by Norton was reviewed in the Ft. Wayne Journal Gazette on January 8, 2005. The article said that the Erie Canal is probably the most written about transportation system in U. S. history and is often considered the most influential. Today the canal is little more than a tourist attraction. Bernstein gives the story of its conception, construction, drama, and how it inspired a burst of progress in America. He shows how it made New York City the greatest city in the nation and perhaps the world. The 448 page book puts the canal into perspective.

CSI headquarters was given the book review by Tom Castaldi, CSI member from Fort Wayne. It was also favorably reviewed in Preservation magazine. It said "Bernstein freshens it up by setting it within the larger saga of a young nation striving to find its way...The Canal is a monument to ingenuity...(it was) the Internet of the era."

NEWS FROM DELPHI

CSI CANAL BOAT GRANT

The directors of the Canal Society of Indiana authorized a grant of \$1000 to the Carroll County Wabash & Erie Canal, Inc. to help fund the 3 pontoon boats' refurbishing to get Canal Park visitors in Delphi, IN onto the canal. The following letters of appreciation were received by CSI headquarters:

Canal Society of Indiana Members:

Thank you so much for the grant of \$1000. Our Canal Park has benefited from years of support from CSI and we like to show off some of these accomplishments. Primary to the past gifts is the sponsorship of the Grand Lobby in the Canal Center. As some of you know the appearance of murals is continuing: first was the Speece Boat; next the Sample & Sons Warehouse; then started but not up yet is the Burnetts Creek Arch with lock and canal boat (much like it would have been in 1850); after the arch is completed comes the pivot bridge in Logansport; and, last for now will be the Attica wedding boat.

We still have spaces "for sale" so that we can complete the murals from Evansville to Toledo. We established a price of \$2,000 per space and then we take care of whatever the cost of the mural will be. There is a plan for the remaining pictures but if anyone has some really special canal scenes showing structures, boats, docks or other items of significance from the canal era let us know. We especially need 1-2 pictures from both Ohio and south of Terre Haute.

We will use the \$1,000 grant to facilitate the pontoon "Plan B" boats that we will use for the next couple years. Hopefully we will receive the Historic Transportation TEA-21 grant for the Replica Boat for which we just reapplied. Dan McCain

Dear Friends,

We have received your check for \$1,000 to the Carroll County Wabash & Erie Canal, Inc. Thank you so very much for this added support.

According to your wishes, this has been designated for the canal boat project, which will some day bring us to the point of offering a true canal experience to our many visitors to Canal Park. We do appreciate both your financial and moral support of this important undertaking.

I know Dan has thanked you, but on behalf of all the members of the Board of Directors, we want to express our gratitude for your interest and support. Annadell C. Lamb, Donor Relations Chairman

CANAL BOAT VISION

Ever want to fly a airplane? Well how about something more down to earth, or in this case down to water. The Wabash & Erie Canal Association in Delphi is launching a new adventure this summer. Think of history, water and travel in this community and you come up with a vision of a CANAL BOAT. This was a mode of travel common in the mid-1800s. The W&E Canal was the longest canal ever built in the United States and Delphi has about all that is left of a watered usable section.

By June the Canal Association intends to operate two pontoon boats on the reconstructed one mile section of the man-made historic waterway in Canal Park and the Canal Annex. These boats are donated pontoons that were given by people from Carroll County. They are being retrofitted with new decks, electric trolling motors and looks that are somewhat familiar to the original canal boats--only these won't be pulled by mules.

These boats are part of the Canal Association's "Plan B," which means eventually there will be a replica canal boat with very close adherence to the looks and shape of the barges of the mid nineteenth century on the canal. That eventual "Plan A" will take a little longer because of needs for more fund raising and grant money. In the meantime the pontoons will serve the need to have an additional visitor attraction in Delphi.

VOLUNTEER CALL-OUT

The Carroll County Wabash & Erie Canal, Inc. held a Volunteer Call-out event on February 24, 2005 from 6-8 p.m. in an attempt to attract more willing persons that may enjoy being hosts, docents, captains, trail guides, maintenance technicians, historians, carpenters, etc. A couple times each year the organization calls for new volunteers and always receives at least a few blessings. At this time the organization is more involved than ever with the operation of the Canal Center for the enjoyment of people from near and far.

Delphi canal volunteers are usually fed on work days. This event was no exception. Those attending the meeting at the Canal Conference and Interpretive Center, located a dozen blocks north of the Court House on Washington Street, were served a free old fashion, simple bean supper and then asked to register for things they might like to do to become involved with this dynamic organization and feel the pride of "community spirit." Who said "there is no such thing as a free meal." Delphi's volunteers are some of this community's best citizens.

**CANAL LANDMARK WILL BE PRESERVED**

Burnett's Creek Arch, an important Wabash & Erie Canal landmark, has received funding that will assure its preservation for years to come. Last fall Carroll County Commissioners received a \$500,000 grant that will fund the restoration. The engineering firm claimed that wasn't enough so with Commissioners permission they wrote a second grant for another \$500,000 from the same source.

Although the Canal Association has no direct responsibility for this historic stone bridge, we recognize it as an important artifact in local canal history and are thrilled that it will received much needed work. The second grant however is in completion with the Association's request for a "Replica Canal Boat" submitted in January, 2005.

The stone arch was built in 1838 to carry the Wabash & Erie Canal over Burnett's Creek. When the

canal was abandoned, this section of it was paved over and became "Towpath Road." The structure is the oldest in-service bridge in Indiana and is on the National Register of Historic Places, due to the efforts of the Carroll County Historical Society. It is also one of the oldest and largest surviving stone arch culverts along the 468-mile Wabash & Erie Canal.

Built without mortar, the arch has stood for many years, but it has been settling. The restoration project will address that, and will also minimize the water flow to lessen stress on the structure. The project also includes a parking area and pedestrian area to enable tourists to view the arch. Public access has not been available in the past.

The grant is one of the highly competitive Federal Transportation Enhancement grants for use in non-traditional transportation projects and covers 80 percent of the project. The County will provide the remaining 20 percent. Donations collected by the County Historical Society a few years ago will provide landscaping.

**DELPHI HISTORIC TRAILS - 2005 NARRATED TRAIL WALKS**

Narrated walks include history, nature and archaeology and others are health walks.

- April**
  - 6 Wandering Wednesdays Nature/History Hike to High Bridge 1-3 PM from City Park
  - 9 A Long Hike for fitness and enjoyment with Lois Johnston-meet at Canal Park 1 PM
  - 23 EARTH DAY at Canal Park with hundreds of Boy Scouts camping in the Park and Annex
  - 23 Odd Fellows Cemetery Walk at 2 pm ½ mile N of Delphi on Carrollton Rd. Mark Smith
  - 28 Spring Nature Walk along Rock Creek-owner Terry Lacy narrating 6:30 pm
  - 30 Riley Park to High Bridge on Deer Creek 10 AM-Patrick Hale narrating wildflowers
- May**
  - 14 A Walking Meditation along the Wabash from Trailhead Park 10 AM-David McCain
  - 18 Towpaths, dams, locks and the Irish-1-3 PM from Trailhead with Dan McCain leading
  - 21 May Day Celebration in Canal Park. Workday with lunch AM - Playtime & Walk 1 PM
- June**
  - 4 National Trails Day-Volunteer Recognition and lunch at Canal Park-11:30 AM
  - 4 A Long Hike for fitness and enjoyment with Lois Johnston-meet at Canal Park 1 PM
  - TBA Paper Mill Tour with papermaking demonstration from Canal Park 1 PM-Mark Smith
- July**
  - 2 A Long Hike for fitness and enjoyment with Lois Johnston-meet at Canal Park 1 PM
  - 4 Narrated Canal Walks around the building discovering the facades-Brian Stirm
- Aug.**
  - 13 A Long Hike for fitness and enjoyment with Lois Johnston-meet at Canal Park 1 PM
- Sept.**
  - 3 Native plants along the trails-10 am. from Trailhead Park, Patrick Hale narrating
  - 17 A Long Hike for fitness and enjoyment with Lois Johnston-meet at Canal Park 1 PM
  - 18 Delphi Airport "Fly-In" connection with the Delphi Historic Trails (TBA)
- Oct.**
  - 8 St. Mary's Treaty/Early Founders walk-Trolley from Canal Park 2 PM-Smith / Stirm
  - 19 Fall Nature walk along Rock Creek at 2 PM with landowner Terry Lacy narrating
  - 29 Odd Fellows Cemetery walk by Mark Smith at 2 PM ½ mile north of Delphi
  - 29 A Long Hike for fitness and enjoyment with Lois Johnston-meet at Canal Park 1 PM
- Nov.**
  - 13 Downtown and Railroad remembrances with the Trolley (TBA)-Smith and Stirm
  - 26 "Saturday after Thanksgiving" narrated walk (TBA) with Dan McCain
- Dec.**
  - 26 A winter walk after Christmas—long or short depending on weather (TBA)



**Newspaper Items Concerning The Cross Cut  
of the Wabash & Erie Canal in Greene and  
Clay Counties, Indiana: Part 3**

(first compilation appeared August 2004)

(second compilation appeared April 2005)

Compiled by Dixie Kline Richardson

*These excerpts from microfilmed newspapers were gathered during a research project unrelated to the canal; hence this is not a comprehensive collection. These particular items are from Worthington, Indiana newspapers. There are no complete editions of the publications, their having missing and/or illegible issues.*

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The Valley Times of Worthington published August 26, 1858, the following "sensible and truthful article from a late number of the Vincennes 'Gazette.' "

The Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal have just published their annual statement. They complain that the result of the year's operations has been very unsatisfactory, attributing their misfortunes to the "very disastrous railroad competition," and the floods. The damage by the railroads is beyond all computation, we suppose, but that by the floods is set down at the round sum of \$50,000.

The aqueduct over Wea creek, 140 feet long, was wholly carried away, and it was at first supposed that the damage was so great that it would be advisable to abandon the whole Canal! They also lament that the available means of the trust are barely equal to the expenses and repairs, and say that they have been forced to postpone the payment of interest on the 6 percent loan until October "when they hope to be able to make the payment."

As for the boo-hoo-ing about railroad competition cutting down the revenues of the canals, it's all bosh. It hasn't been possible for the railroads to interfere with the canal; for the reason that there has been no canal to interfere with. It hasn't been in a navigable condition scarcely three days together since it was "opened." It has been impossible for even a crawfish to propel itself through the ditch from Evansville to Terre Haute.

The canal is a great improvement, to set up in opposition to the railroads of Indiana! Why if all the railroads that the Trustees are so lachrymose over had never been built, Indiana would today have been the wilderness she was forty years ago, with no cities, no canal, even no highways, no gigantic improvements, but sparse population, nothing but an overwhelming public debt and no means of paying even the interest on it.

But this canal can't pay anything more than the fat salaries of the host of officials that have been quartered upon it; can't pay any interest, and these officials--Tite Barnacles--wisely considering that such an arrangement will not be satisfactory to the holders of the

6 percent canal bonds, are alarmed at the consequences; and want the State to do something for them. Well, the State ought to do something for these worthy gentlemen if she can-- kick them out of their fat offices, let them go to work on their own hook and put men in their places who have honesty, capacity and energy enough to keep the canal in working order, and not broken down political hacks who are imagined to be able to control a few politicians in some quarter of the State. This policy is ruining the canal and has damaged it more than all the floods that ever fell or all the roads ever built. Put good, capable men at the head, men who will put the canal in order and keep it in order, and there can be no doubt about its having plenty of business to do. To believe that it will not, one must deny the evidence of his own senses.

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...although considerable complaint has been made in the past few years about poor schools, now there is no cause for it. In Miss Whiting, who has charge of the School on the east side of the Canal, and Miss Meade, who is instructing a class at the residence of Mr. G. W. Langworthy... (Nov. 11, 1858)

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The Wabash and Erie Canal is now in navigable order for its whole length, we believe, and boats arriving daily, bringing large quantities of freight. Quoted from "Terre Haute Express" (Nov. 11, 1858)

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The Canal boat "Lone Star", Capt. Jot. Kelly, arrived here on Saturday night, having on board about fifteen tons of freight for this place. (Nov. 11, 1858)

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It is evident that unless the Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal get some assistance from the state, they will be compelled to abandon the whole line from Toledo to Evansville as the expenditures are more than the revenue. In their recent Report to the Legislature, they say that the expenditures on the portion between Terre Haute and Evansville during the past year amounted to \$93,500, and on the portion north of Terre Haute, \$62,000, making the sum of \$155,000. This was in a great measure caused by the great and continual overflow last Spring, having done many serious injuries along the line. The revenues of the Canal have been cut down by Railroads running parallel with it, carrying the freight which should be taken by boats. The State is in part to blame for the damage thus done to the Canal, she has granted charters to roads which has taken a vast amount of the business property belonging to the Canal. Taking these things into consideration, it would seem that they have been extremely unfortunate. The Trustees think than an appropriation of from \$50,000 to \$80,000 a year, for a year or two, would soon put the Canal in such condition that its own resources would keep it up. We therefore think the Legislature should make an appropriation without delay, for if the Canal should go

down without such fostering care as to maintain it in its infancy, it will not only be a lasting disgrace to the State, it will be a loss of from 30 to 50 percent on the price of all real estate along the line, causing serious injury to thousands and utter ruin to many worthy inhabitants, and likewise a great loss to the revenue of the State in the decline in value of a large amount of taxable property. Should the Legislature take the matter under consideration, she ought to recommend a reduction of the large salaries which are now being paid to officers along the line. They could be reduced two-thirds and men can be found who will do the business as correct and just as honest as those who are now getting such enormous salaries.

The Canal has never been of as much benefit to the country as it would have been had it always been kept in good boating order, so as to always do the business that was required. But its benefits to all classes of community have been very equal, as it has given a home market for all the surplus produce of the country, and has brought in all the heavy articles our citizens demanded, at a very reasonable rate. Hence, if it is permitted to go to ruin, for want of small appropriation, the citizens of this section of Indiana will more deeply regret it than any calamity that could befall them. When they lose the Canal and feel the effects of it, in having to depend on White River as an outlet for their produce, and on New Orleans as a market, with all the additional trouble and expense of getting to market--and when they experience the additional price they will have to pay for their salt and other heavy articles, they will be better capable of appreciating the advantage of the canal than at present.

Every effort should be used to induce the Legislature to make such an appropriation by meetings and petitions. The people of Terre Haute and Evansville seem to take the matter quite easy, as they say nothing can induce the Legislature to do any thing for the Canal. Some talk of forming a company to put the Canal in order, but so long as there is any prospect of getting an appropriation from the State, we would earnestly recommend that policy--for while money is as hard to get as at present, it is difficult to induce men to take stock in a concern that they are not certain of reaping a good percent and quick return. But if the State refuses to assist the Trustees, we are decidedly in favor of using every effort to get up a stock company. (Jan. 27, 1859)

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#### The Canal Gone by the Board!

By a private letter from a gentleman at Terre Haute, we learn that the Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal have determined to abandon the Canal from Terre Haute to Evansville, and of course will not make any more repairs but let it go to destruction. Governor Willard in his recent message alludes to this subject as follows:

The Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal reported to me in Dec., 1857, the condition of this work.

The report for the year 1858 will be laid before you at an early day which will inform you as to its present condition. I regretted to see, in their report of 1857, that its revenues were greatly diminished, and I am informed that during the past year there has been no improvement. It is, indeed, feared that the revenues will prove wholly inadequate to keep the Canal in repair, and that by them alone it cannot be maintained. I am further informed that the bondholders are unwilling to sustain the work itself, besides advancing \$800,000 for its completion.

They have informed the Board of Trustees, in the most formal manner, their determination to close the canal and to abandon the work whenever its tolls and revenues shall be inadequate to its support. The report of 1858 will disclose the action of the bondholders.

The abandonment of the work would seriously embarrass those who reside in the vicinity of the canal. If the work should be abandoned by the Trustees, there is no law under which it could be maintained. (Jan. 29, 1859)

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In the same issue of the Worthington "Valley Times," the following report of public meetings appears (Jan. 29, 1859):

The citizens of the different towns on the Canal between Terre Haute and Evansville are getting alarmed at the indications of an intention to abandon the Southern portion of the Canal, are holding public meetings to determine what steps were necessary to prevent being shut out from all revenues of transportation to the markets of the commercial world, for their rich agricultural products. One influential citizen of Pike county writing to the Petersburg "Reporter" says: It appears by recent developments that our worst fears are about to be realized, respecting the abandonment of the Southern division of the Wabash and Erie Canal by the Trustees. It is said that the Canal at best is poor dependence, in consequence of the uncertainty of navigation, occasioned in the first place by the frail and imperfect manner of its construction, and secondly, by the inefficiency and negligence of a majority of those who are employed to keep it in repair. But then, poor as it is, and badly as it has been managed, it is the only facility afforded us, for the transportation of produce, lumber, coal and general merchandise, except by the hazardous operation of flatboating down White River and Patoka, which is an age behind the times.

The grave question now forces itself upon us, what shall we do? Will we in Pike county quietly fall back to the "days or yore," in the conveyance of all our goods and produce in wagons and flat boats whilst the adjoining neighbors of Gibson, Knox and Daviess are every day saluted by the thunder of the "iron horse" and the rumbling of railroad cars? What is the best for us to do under these discouraging circumstances? This is an important inquiry--an interrogatory of serious import--a

question which demands our calm and dispassionate consideration, followed by a unanimous response and prompt efficient action.

All will admit that it is necessary for us to do something, and that we do it speedily; for we have all learned by long experience that it is the height of folly to place any confidence in the canal. We have flattered ourselves year after year that it will work better after a while--but instead of improving it is all the time getting worse. It is in such a wretched condition that no sane man will willingly risk his property upon it to go a distance of fifty miles; if he does, there is no certainty that it will reach its intended destination in three months.

This being our situation we will be forced to seek a more convenient and reliable outlet for the various commodities which are begging for market from this county. I propose the building of a railroad from Petersburg to the most convenient point on the Ohio and Mississippi Road. The distance from Petersburg to Washington is about thirteen miles, and to Vincennes about twenty miles. It is thought by some that the route to Vincennes is the most practicable of the two, considering the ground, and the amount of stock which can be raised there over and above what we may expect to obtain in Washington.

The "Evansville Journal" says: At Newberry, a large meeting was held on the 15th inst. to take into consideration the expediency of constructing a branch railroad to Washington in Daviess county, to intersect the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad. A number of spirited speeches were made and a good deal of enthusiasm was aroused in favor of the project. Resolutions were passed declaring that the citizens of the county had lost all hope in the final completion of the Straight Line Railroad, and all confidence in the canal as a means of transportation of the products of the county to a market; they were, therefore, determined to use all the influence and money in their power to construct a railroad from Newberry to Washington. Large and respectable committees were appointed to promote the object--to solicit aid--to meet the citizens of Washington, and to consult and arrange the preliminaries for the enterprise. The citizens of Washington, and of Greene county generally, appear to sympathize in the movement.

These proceedings are matters of deep concern to our citizens, for though there may be no immediate prospect of getting a railroad through these fertile districts to the Ohio & Mississippi Railroad, which would carry off the important trade of Greene, Pike and Clay counties from this city to Cincinnati--the description of it suggests a real danger that is worthy of our

consideration. If the Southern section of the canal were to be closed, and the people of those counties should be reduced to the primitive mode of hauling their products over (?) and roads to a point for shipment, they would inevitably go 15 or 20 miles to the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad instead of coming 100 miles to the Ohio river. If therefore the canal goes down, the trade of the important counties of Pike, Greene and Clay will be lost in a great measure to Evansville whether a branch railroad through them to Washington be ever constructed or not. Unless we can keep up the navigation of the canal, or finish the straight line railroad, the trade of the White river valley will surely desert us.

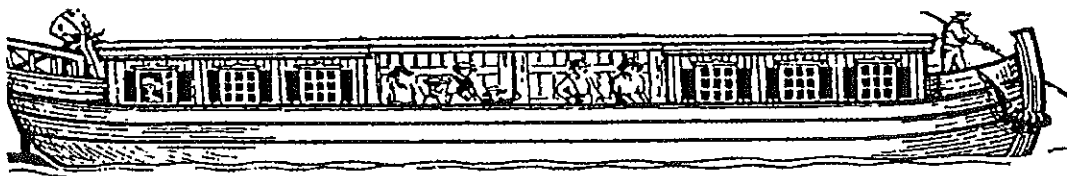
It is undoubtedly true that the trustees contemplate the abandonment of the entire line of the canal as soon as they have exhausted the land fund; and the Southern sections will be the first to be given up, as the most expensive and yielding the least revenue. It is well to consider what ought to be done in such an event. In the discussions which the subject has elicited in Pike and Greene counties we see that a suggestion is made to form a local company to aid the Trustees in keeping the divisions from Newberry to Evansville in navigable order. If they could be placed under efficient and judicious control, it is believed this part of the canal could be made to support itself; or the citizens along the line and in this city had better, it is said, make an annual contribution to maintain it than to permit it to go to decay.

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The Trustees of the Canal--We learn, says the Evansville "Journal" from Judge Foster who returned from Indianapolis a few days since, that the Trustees expressed a willingness, in case the State would make no appropriation for the repairs of the Canal, nor accept its transfer to the State, to deliver the Southern division into the charge of a private company who should take the entire arrangement of it. As the State will make no appropriations for it, and as the members of the Legislature have generally pledged themselves to their constituents not to take back the canal, they are afraid to receive it even as a free gift lest they might incur some implied obligations to give an equivalent for it in some shape.

It is not likely, therefore, to be accepted by the State, and the destiny of the Canal seems to be to fall into the hands of private companies.

Those interested in the Canal along the line will be strong enough to secure a sufficient amount of stock to put the Canal in good repair and keep it in good order. (Feb. 3, 1859)



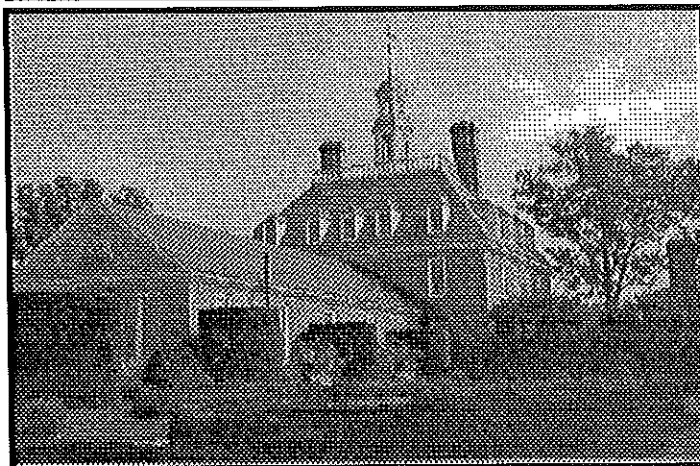
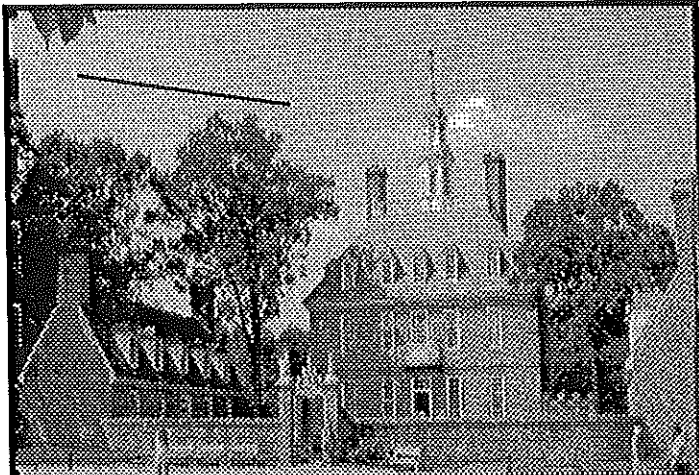
**THE PALACE CANAL  
AT WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA**

Virginia became a "destination" after its discovery by explorers sailing into Chesapeake Bay looking for a shortcut to China and Indonesia's spice trade. After Jamestown was settled, it depended on "re-supply" shipments of essential goods from Europe financed by the Virginia Company until 1611. Little was manufactured in the colony during the 1600-1700s. Supplies such as books, cloth, farm tools, glasses, rugs and wine were all shipped from over seas to the colony, which in return shipped bulky raw materials. Since these transatlantic ships were Virginia's main means of transporting goods, plantation wharves (and tobacco docks after 1730) became the colony's economic centers. Once an economic foundation had been created through the tobacco trade, strong leaders in the new colony used martial law to make sure enough food was grown to feed the local citizens.

Jamestown was a swampy area with brackish water and disease. Its location left it vulnerable to attacks by the Dutch, French or Spanish. A proposal was made to move the capital inland to Williamsburg. However, this meant they would have to tranship items from the ships to wagons pulled by horses and carry goods and people from the river bank to the town. This would take time and raise the cost of supplying the capital. The road to Hampton was not too bad since it followed a high point of land that drained quickly following a rain, but the roads around Williamsburg were little improved with mud holes and ruts.

Why not build a canal and make Williamsburg a port city? In 1771 Governor Lord Dunmore announced that a canal would be built from the headwaters of Archer's Creek on the James River to the headwaters of Queen's Creek on the York River. Although the canal was begun and remnants can still be seen behind the Governor's Palace gardens, the canal was never completed. When Governor Spotswood moved into the Palace in 1716, he turned his attention to the gardens and laid out a series of terraces that descended to the

canal. However, the Peninsula was never converted to an island. No transatlantic ships ever sailed to the back door of the Palace. Although still watered, the canal is about 4.5 times as long and one half as wide as the length of the Palace. It is shaped like a spoon with the handle toward the front of the Palace and the bowl back by the garden maze.



**Top:** The Governor's Palace as seen from the front in Williamsburg, VA has remnants of the Palace Canal behind the buildings on the left and down a slight bank. The black line shows the canal alignment. Photos by Bob Schmidt

**Bottom:** The Palace Canal is located to the right of the path seen in the bottom right corner of the photo and down an embankment. Today it is a spoon shaped lily and fish pond.



February 9 - Terre Haute

Jeff Koehler, CSI board member and Clay County Historian, presented a canal program to over 140 members and guests of the Vigo

County Soil and Water Conservation District at their annual meeting in Terre Haute, IN on Wednesday, February 9, 2005 at 6:30 p.m. During the half hour presentation, Jeff showed slides of what can be seen of the Wabash & Erie Canal in the area around Terre Haute and told how the area was influenced by the 468-mile long waterway.

March 10 - Clay City

Jeff Koehler also presented his canal program at the Union United Methodist Church's Father-son Banquet on Thursday evening. There were approximately 50 people present. Jeff answered questions about the Wabash & Erie Canal and Indiana's other canals following his talk.

# John's Whitewater Canal Trip

By Jane Schuck

Courtesy of Ball State University's Virginia Ball Center's "Traces and Trails Project: Intersections of Wayne County" and Dr. Ron Morris. Funding provided by a Preservation and Education Grant from the Historic Landmarks Foundation and the Indiana Humanities Council.

It was a beautiful, breezy day in the late 1840s when my family arrived in Cambridge City by stagecoach on the National Road from Richmond, Indiana. The town was bustling and busy. In fact, everyone seemed in a hurry. The noise was constant. Stagecoaches lumbered across the bridge over the Whitewater River at the eastern end of town, then rolled down the road in a swirl of dust. The blaring stage horn sounded its warning as the coach came to a halt with the squeal of brakes. Horses were quickly exchanged for a fresh pair, and the drivers were off again with a crack of the whip and a shout.

Townpeople rushed to and fro, jumping out of the way of wagons and traffic coming down the National Road. Men shouted in the road and down below by the canal; horses whinnied, pigs snorted and sheep bleated in protest all around us. My father laughed, and declared it was just like a fair.

We were met at the Vinton House by our host Mr. Elbridge Vinton,<sup>1</sup> who bowed very formally to my parents, calling them "Sir" and "Madam." He recited a witty poem to Ben and me about good manners, which made us laugh. He told us with pride that he had started out in the business as Solomon Meredith's porter at the White Hall tavern just up the street, and he was now the proprietor of his own establishment. He seemed a gallant, clever sort to own a big hotel. He directed his porter to show us upstairs, and we were soon settled.

My brother and I had a room overlooking the canal landing on the west side of the hotel. The building was built at an angle on this side to accommodate a turn-around basin of the canal running along beside it. We were watching a gruff, old canal worker shout orders to everyone while a cargo boat was loaded with freight right under our noses. There must have been at least twenty wagons and teams waiting in line to unload. We saw barrels of beef, coops of live chickens, kegs of lard, bushels of barley, and about sixty head of live hogs.<sup>2</sup> We were attempting to count the wagons when Mother came to hurry us along, reminding us that Father was hungry, and ready for his supper. We hated to leave our perch by the window, but scrambled down the stairs after them.

The dining room of the Vinton House was crowded and loud. Father had to raise his voice to be heard above the clanking of dishes and silverware, and the hum of conversation around us.

My father asked, "John and Ben, what is your first impression of the Whitewater Canal?"

Ben and I looked at each other in pleased agreement, and I answered, "It's even better than we expected. When do we get to ride the boat?" Mother and Father exchanged glances, and chuckled.

"You will get your chance, bright and early tomorrow morning. Don't unpack much tonight, and go to sleep early. You don't want to miss anything tomorrow," Father replied.

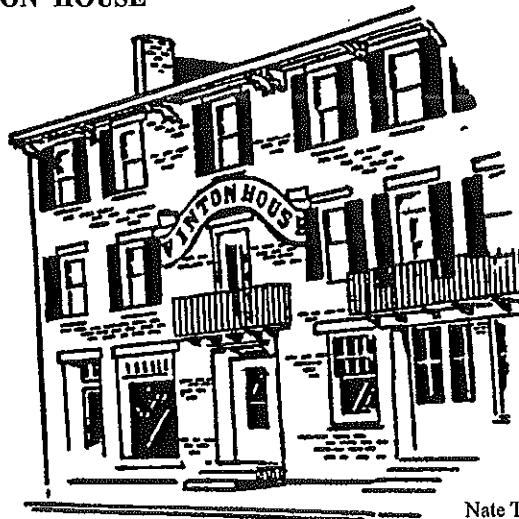
"May Ben and I take a short walk after dinner, sir?" I crossed my fingers under the table, hoping he would consent. He looked concerned, and glanced over at Mother.

She winked at us, then said, "Why not, dear? Mind you, though, just a short walk. Be sure to stay near the hotel, out of the road. It's too congested. Oh, and don't get your clothes dirty." As if having second thoughts, she added, "And stay away from the canal. Ben could drown if he fell in the water. Oh, and don't try to pet or feed any of the animals, especially the canal teams."

Good old Mother.

"Really, Mother, don't worry. The canal is only four feet deep, twenty-six feet wide at the bottom, and forty feet wide at the surface. Since the water is calm, it's much less dangerous than a natural waterway. Ben will be perfectly safe with me."

## VINTON HOUSE



Nate Tagmeyer



Mother smiled, and said, "It sounds to me as if someone has been reading up on their canal facts."

I had to admit this was true. I also knew all the names of the boats on the Whitewater Canal. I had been fascinated ever since the canal had opened in Cambridge City in October of 1845.

Ever since the seven mile northern terminus to Hagerstown was completed in 1847, I had been pleading with my parents to take us on a boat ride. Since my Mother's sister and my cousins lived in Hagerstown, it was decided we would go and visit them by way of the canal. I had been counting the days, and I read every newspaper account I could find on the subject.

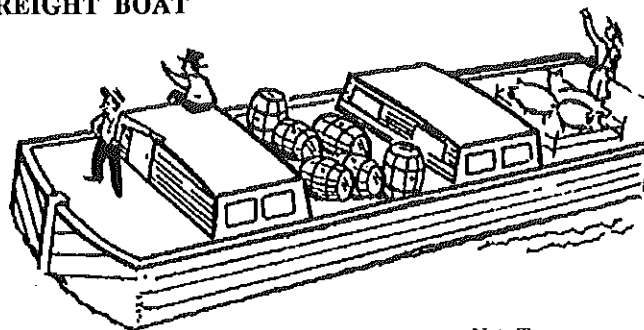
The coming of the canal was extremely exciting and important to Wayne County because of the lack of good transportation here. At the passage of the Mammoth Internal Improvement Bill by the Indiana Legislature in January 1836, towns had celebrated and looked forward to an era of progress and opportunity. People in the southern Whitewater Valley began anticipating profits from the canal, expecting it to become the gateway to the state's interior.<sup>3</sup> Before the canal, wagon trains hauled everything overland, and it was expensive and time-consuming in bad weather. The canal made hauling goods, produce, and freight much cheaper and faster.

For instance, my uncle owns a foundry in Hagerstown. If he wants pig iron hauled to his foundry from Cincinnati by wagon, it costs \$12.50 a ton, and takes time. It's \$10 a ton to Richmond. My uncle's last letter claimed he was receiving shipments of pig iron from Cincinnati at only \$2.50 a ton by canal in just two days. He could save \$10 a ton using the canal, and it was much faster. He had the advantage of \$7.50 a ton over his Richmond competition.<sup>4</sup>

Herding farm animals like hogs to the Cincinnati market had to be done on foot. The overland route was hard on both men and animals. Usually the hogs lost weight, and some died on the trip. Hauling hogs and other animals by canal was easier, quicker, and more profitable.

We still didn't have a canal that connected Richmond, and it looked like we never would. Flooding destroyed what little work had been completed on the canal by the Richmond-Brookville Canal Company, and many people agreed it would be too expensive to repair it and start again. But Richmond is getting left behind in the national trade network. Some people are counting on a railroad system from Cincinnati to Richmond to save Richmond's business interests, but it seems like a dream at the moment. The canal is king.

FREIGHT BOAT



Nate Tagmeyer

Cambridge City is smaller than Richmond, but more important now since it has become the principal shipping point for Wayne, Randolph, Rush, Henry, Fayette, Union, and Delaware Counties, a fertile area of three thousand square miles.<sup>5</sup> Huge warehouses line the basin between Main Street and Front Street to accommodate shipping and trade on the canal.<sup>6</sup> Benjamin Conklin owns the Imperial Mill that produces "4A" brand flour. It is a huge four story building with an attic and big basement that frequently stores ninety thousand bushels of wheat, along with corn meal and animal feed.<sup>7</sup> I keep a clipping in my wallet of an article my Uncle sent us from an 1847 issue of The Cambridge City Reveille Newspaper listing the "shipments on canal for month of December, 1846, clearing at this port." Just listen to this: "1,823 barrels of flour, 142 barrels of pork, 142 barrels of green apples,...18,942 bushels of wheat, 1,868 bushels of oats, ...248,034 pounds of bulk pork, 162,717 pounds of lard, 2,450 pounds of butter, 120 pounds of feathers, 1,796 pounds of chickens, ...and 5,000 pounds of oil kegs."<sup>8</sup> The list goes on, but you get the idea of the enormous amount of goods being shipped from Cambridge City in just one month.

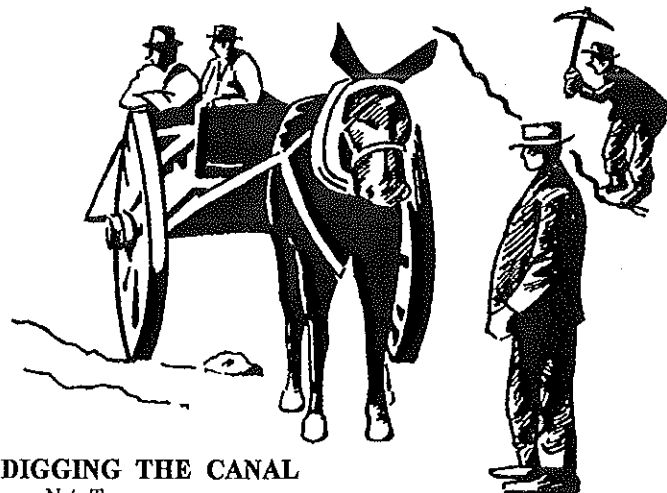
Even Hagerstown warehouses and manufacturing interests are competing with Richmond, threatening to overtake us because of the water power and transportation opportunities the canal offers. Not only is the canal a shipping line for towns along its banks, but the water also supplies power for mills and factories. Manufacturing companies in many towns are harnessing the water power for new industries.

Just like the National Road, the Whitewater Canal has turned everything it touched to gold, causing towns to prosper and grow. Father says the small town of Milton is a good example of the kind of prosperity resulting from the canal's proximity. Milton was platted as a town in 1824, but the National Road bypassed it two miles north, and it remained undeveloped. But after the canal came through little Milton, it became a small manufacturing town. Even though East Germantown (Pershing) was on the National Road, the canal missed it, and it remained a farming town.<sup>9</sup>

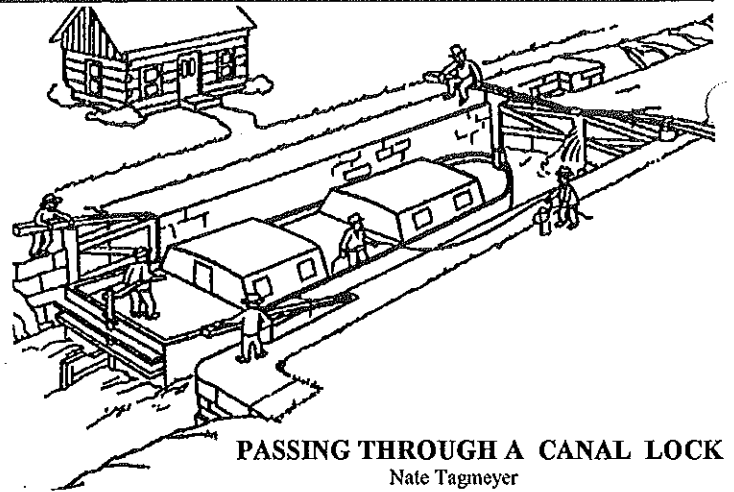
Even the Milton boys my age profited from the canal for a while. The canal boss was paying ten cents for each Muskrat tail the Milton boys brought him because muskrats damage the canal banks. The boys thought up a scheme to make more money by increasing the amount of tails turned in. They did this by doubling back and watching where the boss threw the tails away. Then the boys retrieved them and turned the same tails into the boss again for more money. The trick didn't last too long, but gave the local boys plenty of spending money for awhile.<sup>10</sup>

I can't believe how hard it was to build the canal. German immigrants and Irish migrants labored with Hoosier workers to dig the wide trenches that would hold the big canal boats. Rocks and boulders had to be moved, and huge trees, stumps, and roots had to be grubbed out of the canal bed by man and beast. As many as one thousand men were employed to clear the fifty-five foot right-of-way, then hand-dig the canal with scoops, shovels, wheelbarrows, and carts. Teams of horses and mules hauled dirt and teams of oxen hauled logs and timber. Some old timers said the crashing of trees, cracking of ox whips, and swearing at oxen sounded like the beginning of a battle.<sup>11</sup> The process reminded some old timers of the building of the National Road a decade before.

Construction of the Whitewater Canal required seven dams and fifty-six stone locks, basins, guard locks, culverts and aqueducts. Construction averaged about \$15,000 per mile for a total cost of over one million dollars. Wayne County alone required twenty structures: ten locks, three culverts, three feeder dams, and two aqueducts, plus the Cambridge City and Hagerstown basins.<sup>12</sup> The state went bankrupt in 1839, and mammoth internal improvement projects like the canal were halted. The last thirty-nine miles to Cambridge City were built with private capital.<sup>13</sup> In spite of careful planning, there are questions about the canal's future.



DIGGING THE CANAL  
Nate Tagmeyer



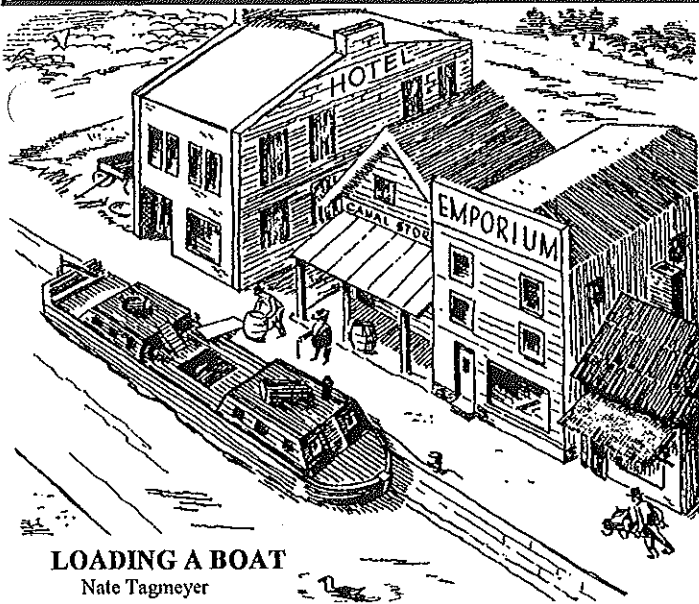
PASSING THROUGH A CANAL LOCK  
Nate Tagmeyer

There is a steep 490 foot drop in elevation along the seventy-six mile canal from Hagerstown to Lawrenceburg on the Ohio River that is rumored to make the canal difficult to operate. Also, it is said the canal was built too low, with narrow locks, and people fear that it will be susceptible to damage from high water by future flooding. For this reason, Hagerstown hired chief-engineer John Minesinger to build the last section of the canal north of Cambridge City to Hagerstown on higher ground.<sup>14</sup>

The people of Hagerstown are proud of the fact that they extended the canal eight miles north of Cambridge City by forming the Hagerstown Canal Company. Quaker Hiram Mendenhall, who lived one-half mile south of Hagerstown, is credited with the successful extension plan.<sup>15</sup> He even constructed the first section of the Hagerstown canal himself.<sup>16</sup>

Benjamin Conklin of Cambridge City agreed to build the last two locks of the canal to Hagerstown in exchange for perpetual water rights for the operation of his mill.<sup>17</sup> German Baptists called Dunkards are credited with contributing tools and labor to the canal project. Father says it was an impressive community project, and the self-reliant town is reaping the benefits of their hard work now.

But the Whitewater Canal has its critics, too. For instance, Solomon Zehner's mill business at Hagerstown was lost when the Whitewater Canal came through part of his land. He sued for damages, and was offered compensation at different times, but he refused all offers. The problem was that the state constitution of 1816 had not clearly established the right of eminent domain at that time. His suit was finally decided by the Indiana Supreme Court, who upheld the judgment of the county court at Centerville in favor of the canal company. The decision established that "water rights of the canal company were senior to all other rights...."<sup>18</sup>



LOADING A BOAT  
Nate Tagmeyer

Other critics of the canal complain that storms and floods cause damage that closes down the canal for long periods while expensive repair work is done. Still others claim the canal is seasonal at best since the water freezes in the winter, shutting down canal transportation then also.

But when the canals freeze, ice skating becomes a fun community event, and some energetic Cambridge City people brag about skating all the way up the canal to Hagerstown and back. When I am older, I want to do that. There are also big ice ponds that skaters use, such as the one at Hagerstown. The town merchants give prizes to the best skaters during competitions.<sup>19</sup> You have to be careful not to fall in where workers have cut big chunks of ice out of the pond for delivery to merchant's ice houses to be kept for the summer months. Huge blocks of harvested ice are stored in a big ice warehouse insulated with sawdust next to the pond. At one time, an ice warehouse burned to the ground, but surprisingly there was still a huge chunk of ice left standing in the middle of the wreckage.

When the canal boats are running, they charge for hauling both ways. For instance, if a farmer from Wayne County wants to sell meat, grain, or other farm products to the Cincinnati market, the boat captain charges him a certain rate based on his products. Then the canal boat captain charges a Cincinnati business to haul merchandise back up the line. The canal company in turn charges the boat captain to use the canal at toll gates along the way. The usual fee per trip is \$25 for an empty boat, and \$75 for a fully-loaded one.<sup>20</sup> Father says owners often clear profits of \$200-300 per trip.

At Hagerstown alone, my uncle claims an average of three to four large canal boats are unloaded and loaded in a single day. The toll books show there is

an average of over \$200 collected daily.<sup>21</sup> Huge quantities of flour, ground at mills in Wayne and surrounding counties, are transported to Hagerstown for shipment down to the Cincinnati market, along with many other surplus products.

"Store-bought" goods are shipped from Cincinnati to Kearns and Beck General Store at Hagerstown, and Ben Conklin's Cambridge City store. Mother was impressed with the choice of fine linen goods, muslin, calico, cashmere, fringe, and ribbons she saw in there. Father bought her a new tablecloth, a knife for Ben and me to share, and some tobacco for himself. Mr. Conklin is planning on opening another store in Hagerstown soon, and putting his brother Henry in charge.<sup>22</sup>

There are cargo boats called freighters; passenger and mail boats are called packets. Between thirty to fifty boats use the canal. I wish we were traveling all the way to Cincinnati on a packet, but Father says not to wish for the moon. We are lucky to get to ride to Hagerstown. After all, it's not everyday that people ride canal packets, and especially not as far north as Hagerstown.<sup>23</sup>

Sometimes the trip to Cincinnati only takes two days, and the packets can hold up to a hundred people, even though the usual amount is about half that. You get to eat and sleep on the boats, for the round-trip fare of \$3.00. Some of the passenger boats are fancy, with slick paint jobs and curtains at the windows. The crew usually consists of a captain, two steersman, a cook, and a driver.<sup>24</sup> I have read travel accounts in the newspaper about them. Captain Paver's Packets, as well as others, service the canal to Hagerstown.<sup>25</sup> There was even a picture of a wedding that took place on a canal boat somewhere.

However, Father says that even though the packets sound exciting, the common freight boats are the more important boats on the canal. They have made the Whitewater Valley competitive with the national economy. The real money is in trade goods and the big business they have brought to the area, and not just to companies that use the canal to ship their products. Hotels, horse barns, boat builders, and huge warehouses have sprung up to serve the needs of the canal, too. Father says that the canal has extended commerce and given new life to towns, and will help the state of Indiana grow.<sup>26</sup>

The canal boats are privately owned, and there is intense rivalry between the canal boat captains. The speed limit for boats was set at four miles per hour to reduce erosion of the canal banks, but sometimes the boats race and their crews get into fist fights, even

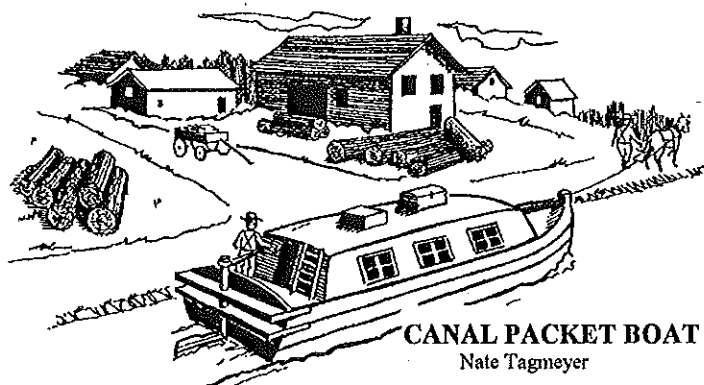
though racing is prohibited.<sup>27</sup> I hope something thrilling happens on our trip.

I wish I had been in Cambridge City when the county celebrated the opening of the canal. There was a great jubilee then. The town was illuminated, with bands playing, canons booming, and huge crowds of thousands of people shouting and screaming. Twenty boats raced each other to be the first one up the canal to arrive at Cambridge City.<sup>28</sup> Captain John Lemon and the "Belle of the West" beat everyone else that day. Other names of boats include the Belle of Indiana, the Rover, the Wayne, the Henry Clay, Milton Torch Light, Mayflower, Brilliant, the Crawley, and the Fly.<sup>29</sup> We will be boarding the packet Fashion tomorrow, owned by August Boden of Cambridge City.<sup>30</sup>

The mule or horse teams pull the boats on the towpath beside the canal at a slow, but steady gait. They are usually hitched tandem, or by twos, with a driver walking behind them. However, I have seen three or more traveling down the towpath single file, with the driver riding the rear animal. The boats are on average about sixty feet long, although some are longer. The tow-rope is fastened to the side by an iron ring. The ropes are three inches thick by two hundred feet long, but they still break sometimes. The horses or mules are changed every ten miles at stations along the way, and most cargo boats carry an extra team in a stall on board the boat.<sup>31</sup>

One young driver named Leonard Pitman brags that he has time to "get off his horse which is towing the boat, run into a field, pick up a watermelon, and hurry back in time to catch the boat."<sup>32</sup> It is rumored that runaway slaves are hidden on some of the canal boats in Cincinnati, and dropped off at the Vinton's house to catch a wagon ride to a depot on the Underground Railroad.<sup>33</sup> I would give anything to find a stowaway on board our packet. Ben and I would keep it a secret, and bring food to him in a napkin. Ben and I would help him get to Richmond without getting caught.

"Ben! John!" It's morning already, but barely



CANAL PACKET BOAT  
Nate Tagmeyer

light. I must have gone to sleep dreaming about stowaways.

"Mother, I had this really great dream - you'll never guess what happened. We found a runaway on board our boat and ..."

"That's nice, John. Now here, put this coat on this morning. Your Father is downstairs waiting."

"But Mother...."

"John, please wake your brother up. I have a million things to do before we board the boat. Hurry now." Mother clapped her hands together and left us to dress. By the time Ben and I went downstairs to eat a hurried breakfast, I had completely forgotten what my dream was about.

A bell summoned all travelers as we boarded the boat before two cows and three pigs,<sup>34</sup> and the passengers on deck greeted us warmly. The packet was crowded and noisy. A passenger with a fiddle was playing, and some people were clapping their hands and stomping their feet to the music.<sup>35</sup> A few old-time Quakers seated together looked dour and disapproving.

"Care to dance a jig, my dear?" Father whispered teasingly to Mother. She laughed and shook her head at him.

Ben and I stood on deck, leaning over the side to get a good view of the two big work horses pulling the boat along the canal towpath. There was a man behind them holding the reins loosely in his hand as they began to move along. We felt a slight lurch forward before the boat gathered momentum and began to glide upon the water.

The air was still and heavy, but the movement of the packet created a slight breeze on deck that was refreshing. I felt sorry for the women in their bonnets, and the men with their hats. The air felt good on my bare head. I wished Ben and I could go swimming in the canal. Wouldn't that be something to tell the folks back home?

All of a sudden there was a sound like fireworks behind us. I couldn't believe it - there were some young men shooting off pistols.<sup>36</sup> The fiddler kept playing, the Quakers looked even more disapproving, and Mother yanked Ben and me to her side by the neck of our coats. Ben and I were sandwiched between Mother and Father, and had to crane our necks to see around them.

Some people were playing cards, and others were conversing with our parents. Two couples started dancing to the music, and the heathens, or so I heard

Mother refer to them, would shoot off their pistols every so often. Everyone would jump and look sternly at them, they didn't stop. Even the Captain asked them to settle down and put their firearms away, but they continued anyway. They seemed to be aiming at objects on the bank as we passed by, and I had a feeling they were betting on the outcome.<sup>37</sup> Pretty soon a banjo joined the fiddler, and the boat seemed to gently sway from all the stamping feet keeping time to the rollicking tune.

When we came to a lock, the boat suddenly struck the lock wall with enough force to throw the dancers off-balance.<sup>38</sup> Cards went flying into the air like confetti. For once, the music stopped and pistols were silenced, as both men and women picked themselves up, and adjusted their hats and looked around in surprise. I looked around at the crowd, and noticed everyone seemed to have suffered a mild shock at the ramming of the boat,<sup>39</sup> except the Quakers. It was the only time on the whole trip that I saw a slight smile lift the corners of their mouths. At the next lock, everyone was on guard.

All of a sudden the captain sounded an ear-splitting warning on his horn as the Fashion packet came up behind The Zephyr cargo boat a half mile away. Packet boats are supposed to have the right-of-way on the canal, but the freight captains don't always feel obliged to pull over and let them through.<sup>40</sup> Mother pulled to her, and started to silently pray along with the Quakers.

I saw a glint of murderous glee light up the Captain's face as he sounded the required warning again. He chewed on the end of his cigar, eyes squinted in determination. I knew we would be first through that lock, but I didn't know if it would be underneath or on top of The Zephyr's hull. I figured Father was thinking about the \$2,500 loss if the two boats collided. The freighter was owned by Richey and Fleming, and was worth at least one thousand dollars, and the packet was probably worth about fifteen hundred to Mr. Boden.<sup>41</sup> The heathens were hooting and hollering, and shooting off rounds as we sped closer to the big barge. If we weren't going over four miles an hour, I would eat a broad-brim hat. Finally, The Zephyr's captain, S.W. See, was pulling over and yielding the right-of-way to the Fashion, and everyone on board breathed a ragged sigh of relief. The rowdier passengers whooped it up in celebration. Mother covered our ears with her hands as she hugged us to her chest, but I heard the Captains exchange "greetings in French" despite her efforts.

Well, I had wanted excitement, and I got it. What story to tell our cousins! At the next lock, two boys dropped from the foot bridge above the canal to the boat deck below to hitch a ride. They were barefoot and carefree, and I wished I was one of them. As we glided



PACKET PASSING THROUGH COUNTRYSIDE

Nate Tagmeyer

along, I thought again about how lucky Ben and I were to take a trip on a canal boat to see our cousins.

Soon we would be in Hagerstown, and this leg of the trip would be over. But we still had the return trip home to look forward to that evening. It would be dark then, and I hoped that if the heathens weren't on board, Mother might let Ben and me sit on top of the canal boat and gaze at the stars. As I was thinking about this, I heard Mother tell Father that the view of the surrounding land on either side of the canal was breathtaking.

I looked around and really noticed for the first time how the hills and forests graced the countryside, mingling with patches of cleared farmland. Stretches of huge trees shaded the valley and everything seemed rich and vibrant with life. Ducks waddled along the banks as our packet slid through the calm muddy-green canal water.

The din of music, shouting, and laughter on board seemed to fade away as I concentrated on the beauty of it all. My world seemed to stand still for a moment in time, and I realized I would remember this canal ride all my life. I looked at the countryside around me with new eyes and a fresh awakening in my heart. I was dimly aware of the Fashion docking at Hagerstown as the noisy crowd prepared to disembark. As I looked out at the scene one last time, I knew then that no matter where life took me or how far away from home I might travel, I would always recall with pride how good it was to be born in the beautiful Whitewater Valley of Wayne County, Indiana.

#### Notes

The Whitewater Canal took eleven years to build, and was only in operation for twenty years. The canal suffered extensive damage from flooding that was too



expensive to repair. In 1853, a railroad system was established from Richmond to Cincinnati. Even though shipping by train was more expensive, it was also fast and dependable. Eventually the railroad or "iron horse" replaced the Whitewater Canal completely by the mid 1860s, and much of the railway tracks were laid on the old towpath where teams of horses and mules used to pull the canal boats. The Whitewater Canal was a short-lived costly enterprise, but it also brought prosperity and manufacturing to towns along its banks.

**More Canal Facts:** "Many Civil War soldiers left for battlefields on the canal boats and returned home on trains. The tracks were laid on the old towpath while they were away at war." In Metamora, Memorial Day is celebrated by spreading flowers on the Whitewater Canal.

The Van Camp family moved to Metamora in 1851. Ten years later son Gilbert Van Camp, "founded the Van Camp Packing Company in Indianapolis in 1861. Van Camp's Pork and Beans fed the troops during the Civil and Spanish American Wars. Soldiers in later wars were fed "C" rations produced by Stokley & Van Camp Company."<sup>42</sup>

### "Traces and Trails Project"

Jane Schuck was one of the students who participated in a Ball State University project entitled "Traces and Trails: Intersections of Wayne County." She worked on the "traveling trunks" for fourth grade classes in Wayne County, which are individual units of study for classrooms. The trunks contain some copies of artifacts, primary source documents, and laminated pictures. The Whitewater Canal trunk contains a small canal boat as well. Jane wrote texts for each traveling trunk after researching each subject. The texts contain details students should be able to use for various lesson plans included in the manuals.

The Whitewater Canal, The Quaker Trace, The Underground Railroad (in Wayne County), and The Formation of the Young Republican Party traveling trunks are stored and checked out from the History Room at the Cambridge City Library. The National Road trunk is kept at the Huddleston House near Cambridge City.

See the February 2005 issue of The Hoosier Packet for more details and pictures of this project.

- <sup>1</sup> Schmidt, Carolyn I., ed. Whitewater Canal. Fort Wayne: The Canal Society of Indiana, 2001
- <sup>2</sup> Schmidt, Carolyn I., ed. Whitewater Canal. Fort Wayne: The Canal Society of Indiana, 2001
- <sup>3</sup> Garman, Harry O. "Whitewater Canal, Cambridge City to the Ohio River." Cambridge City Library, pamphlet.
- <sup>4</sup> Feeger, Luther M. Richmond Palladium Sun-Telegram May 1953.
- <sup>5</sup> Ingells, Paul F. Richmond Palladium-Item 1/1/191
- <sup>6</sup> "Boat captains on Whitewater Canal hauled city's produce." Cambridge City Library, notebook. Material compiled by Indiana Jr, Historical Society; report by Whitewater Canal Days Committee.
- <sup>7</sup> Morris, George. "Old Creitz Mill." Cambridge City Library, ms.
- <sup>8</sup> "Boat captains on Whitewater Canal hauled city's produce." Cambridge City Library, notebook. Material compiled by Indiana Junior Historical Society; report by Whitewater Canal Days Committee
- <sup>9</sup> Steele, Patrick, ed. Then and Now. Indianapolis, Indiana: Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, 1977.
- <sup>10</sup> Fox, Henry Clay, ed. Memoirs of Wayne County and the City of Richmond, Indiana. Volume 1. Madison, Wisconsin: Western Historical Association, 1912.
- <sup>11</sup> Indiana Historical Bureau newsletter, 1997. (Based on John T. Campbell Journal.)
- <sup>12</sup> Mattheis, Phyllis and Jerry. "The Whitewater Canal." Cambridge City: Western Wayne Heritage, Inc.,
- <sup>13</sup> Fox, Henry Clay, ed. Memoirs of Wayne County and the City of Richmond, Indiana. Volume 1. Madison, Wisconsin: Western Historical Association, 1912. 2004.
- <sup>14</sup> Mattheis, Phyllis and Jerry. "The Whitewater Canal." Cambridge City: Western Wayne Heritage, Inc.
- <sup>15</sup> Fox, Henry Clay, ed. Memoirs of Wayne County and the City of Richmond, Indiana. Volume 1. Madison, Wisconsin: Western Historical Association, 1912.
- <sup>16</sup> Feeger, Luther M. Palladium Sun-Telegram 6 May 1953.
- <sup>17</sup> The Hagerstown Exponent Sesquicentennial Edition 11 August 1982.
- <sup>18</sup> The Hagerstown Exponent Sesquicentennial Edition 8 August 1982.
- <sup>19</sup> Schmidt, Carolyn I., ed. Whitewater Canal. Fort Wayne: The Canal Society of Indiana, 2001
- <sup>20</sup> Schmidt, Carolyn I., ed. Whitewater Canal. Fort Wayne: The Canal Society of Indiana, 2001
- <sup>21</sup> Ault, Lee. "Whitewater Canal." Ms Wayne County Historical Museum, Richmond, Indiana; pamphlet file: 1900.
- <sup>22</sup> Ault, Lee. "Whitewater Canal." Ms Wayne County Historical Museum, Richmond, Indiana; pamphlet file: 1900. (Based on toll books still in existence in 1900.)
- <sup>23</sup> The Hagerstown Exponent Sesquicentennial Edition 8 August 1982.
- <sup>24</sup> Feeger, Luther M. "Our History Scrapbook." The History of Transportation. Ms, Wayne County Historical Museum, Richmond, Indiana; pamphlet file.
- <sup>25</sup> Feeger, Luther M. "Our History Scrapbook." Palladium-Item. Cambridge City, Indiana; Library file
- <sup>26</sup> Schmidt, Carolyn I., ed. Whitewater Canal. Fort Wayne: The Canal Society of Indiana, 2001
- <sup>27</sup> Ault, Lee. "Whitewater Canal." Ms, Wayne County Historical Museum, Richmond, Indiana; pamphlet file: 1900.
- <sup>28</sup> "A Canal Boat Captain on the Whitewater Canal." The Indiana Historian. Indianapolis; Indiana Historical Bureau (1997): 8-14.
- <sup>29</sup> Indiana Historical Magazine June 1997
- <sup>30</sup> Feeger, Luther M. "Our History Scrapbook." Palladium-Item. Cambridge City, Indiana; Library file
- <sup>31</sup> Feeger, Luther M. "Our History Scrapbook." Palladium-Item. Cambridge City, Indiana; Library file
- <sup>32</sup> "When Travel by Canal Boat was Luxury Deluxe." News article 9 Sept. 1925. Cambridge City, Indiana Library file.
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