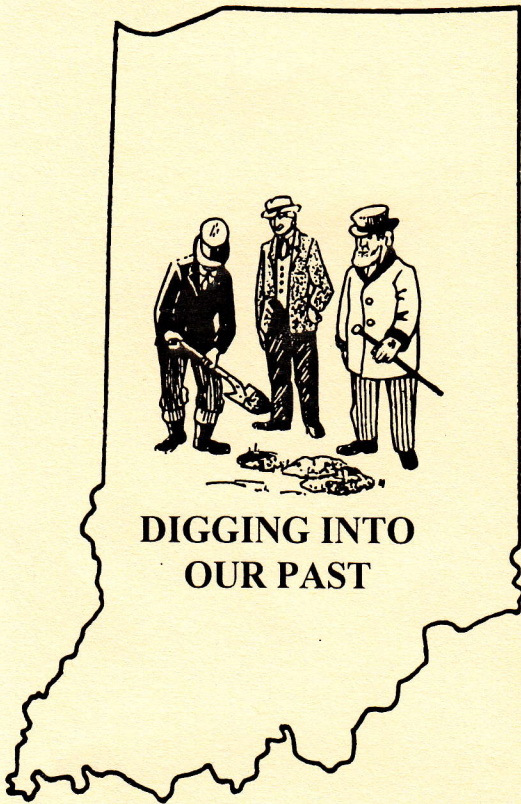


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Indiana Canals

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Volume 12, Number 4

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More Than Canawlers and Railroad Builders:

Rural Irish Immigrants in Indiana and the Old Northwest

Ginette Aley

Ph.D. Candidate, Iowa State University

Ralph Waldo Emerson once observed: "*The poor Irishman, the wheelbarrow is his country.*" The weary laboring Irishman, prone to whiskey and brawling, and the strong-minded female domestic are perhaps the most common historical images of nineteenth-century Irish immigrants, second

only to their characterization as urban dwellers. Yet a third image is slowly emerging from the first—that of the rural Irish immigrant. Canal and railroad work drew Irish men, alone or with families, into Indiana and the Old Northwest, and many took advantage of land inducements, dropping off the lines to become farmers and small town inhabitants. In so doing, they contributed to the agricultural settlement and community-building of the interior region, an image not typically associated with the Irish immigrant. More than canawlers and railroad builders, the Irish, by their

hands, played a significant part in the "greening" of Indiana, in terms of digging the canals that brought water and provided the transportation of goods and people throughout the state, in turning the soil as farm men and women, and in stamping Indiana communities with a wee bit of Irishness as seen, for example, in their construction of Catholic church buildings.

Irish settlers and farmers were first noted in northern Indiana in the 1820s and the 1830s, not long after statehood in 1816. In one of the few rural ethnic nineteenth-century Indiana

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studies, approximately 456 Irish men and women were noted in census returns for twenty-one northern counties in 1840. Within ten years, by 1850, this number had swelled to over 1700 aided by the labor demands in the construction of the Wabash and Erie Canal. Even so, according to this census about fifty-three percent of the Irish in northern Indiana were engaged in farming, while twenty-six percent listed their occupation as "laborer." The Irish also acquired property in each of the study's twenty-one counties. The 1860 state census shows that over 24,000 persons were born in Ireland, second in number only to a German-born population of over 67,000. This numerical relationship—the number of Irish-born second in number to that of German-born—held true in Indiana through 1890, and it mirrored as well the top two ethnic percentages of the Old Northwest, with the exception of Michigan where both Irish and English immigrants outnumbered German immigrants.¹

Of course, the major stimulus for the migration of the Irish into Indiana and the Old Northwest—for Irish men and women—was the available work on canal- and railroad-building projects beginning in the 1830s. By this time the success of New York's Erie Canal, completed in 1825, seemed assured, and it quickly inaugurated a period of "canal mania" in areas being settled to the west. Access to agricultural markets and a transportation network was

1 Thomas D'Arcy McGee, **A History of the Irish Settlers in North America, From the Earliest Period to the Census of 1850** (Boston: Patrick Donahoe, 1855; reprint, New York: J.S. Ozer, 1971), 179; Seventh U.S. Census data, 1850, is the source of analysis in Elfrieda Lang, "Irishmen in Northern Indiana Before 1850," *Mid-America: An Historical Review* 36, New Series, 25 (July 1954): 190-95; Robert M. Taylor, Jr., and Connie A. McBirney, ed., **Peopling Indiana: The Ethnic Experience**, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1996), 617, 618 (Table 1), 646, 648 (Table 1), 661. Indiana's distinction as the least ethnically diverse state of the Old Northwest is signified by the fact that in 1870 the number of foreign-born stood at just over 141,000 representing 8.4% of the state's population, and this percentage decreased slightly each decade through 1900. By comparison, in 1870 the percentages of foreign-born populations in other Old Northwest states, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, were 20.3%, 22.6%, and 34.6% respectively. See **Immigration Commission**, "Distribution of Immigrants, 1850-1900," Table 2.

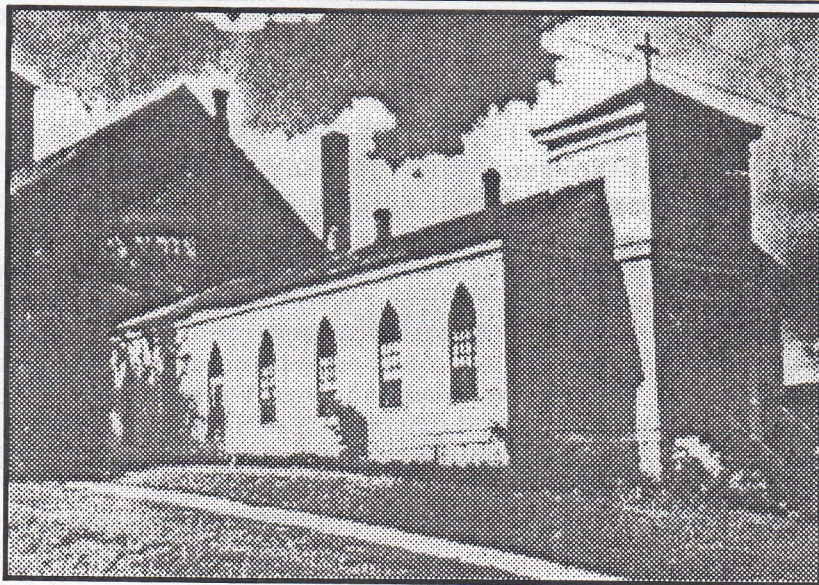
of critical importance to the early settlers of the Old Northwest who lived by farming. Although Indiana would repeatedly debate whether to go in the direction of building railroads instead of canals, the latter won out for a time and resulted in the construction of the nation's longest canal, the 468-mile long Wabash and Erie Canal. One measure of the Wabash and Erie Canal's significance is in the oft-repeated comment made by New York's DeWitt Clinton, "father" of the Erie Canal, who said to Indiana's William Stickney, "I have found a way to get into Lake Erie, and you have shown me how to get out of it...You have extended my project six hundred miles."²

So, the demand for laborers followed on the heels of the demand for internal improvements. On February 22, 1832 the townspeople of Fort Wayne and canal officials broke ground to inaugurate the building of the Wabash and Erie Canal. The call for "sober and industrious" laborers appeared in local papers but the drastic labor shortage sent canal agents to New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio where they recruited heavily among the Irish. The agents successfully employed about one thousand laborers near Fort Wayne by the summer of 1833. Some Irish came to Indiana to work under false pretenses. The Fort Wayne Sentinel reported in 1842 that "A number of stone-cutters, chiefly Irish and many with their families, have arrived here the past week, from New York on their way to Lafayette to work on the canal." They had each given \$6.50 to a man who falsely claimed to be authorized to engage them in canal work. Actually, the company did not need them as stone cutters, and these people were now stranded. Nevertheless the tight competition for unskilled laborers using picks and shovels benefited the Irish, most of whom, because of their rural and agricultural backgrounds, could not compete for the better jobs back East.³

2 See Ronald E. Shaw, "The Canal Era in the Old Northwest," in **Transportation and the Early Nation: Papers Presented at an Indiana American Revolution Bicentennial Symposium** (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1982), 89-112.



Above: The Irish canal workers lived both in Lagro and on farms around it.
Below: They were of the Catholic faith. They built the first St. Patrick's Church, a white frame structure, and later replaced it with a brick structure.
Photo courtesy of Hamilton, Suzan. **The History of Lagro: The Town, The School, The Community.** Lagro, IN: Commercial Printing of Lagro, Inc. 3000



More significantly perhaps, even surprising, are the numerous references in contemporary sources to the presence of laborers' wives and families; surprising, given the emphasis that historians have placed on defining "canal culture" almost strictly in terms of single males. Locating and bringing to light the experiences of canawlers' families inside and outside of the canal is of particular interest to my research on the canal era. New information is forthcoming, made possible in part by the current archaeological work of Wayne Bischoff. Between 1996 and 1998 Bischoff uncovered an 1839 Irish work camp at Sunset Point in Delphi, Indiana, and his report notes that some canal accounts in fact do refer to entire laborers' families being involved in canal construction. Women performed various traditional gendered roles along the lines of food preparation and cleaning while children often assisted them. Another potential source of information lies in whatever personal written accounts that may exist in private hands, and that I am actively seeking. A considerable amount of research into the daily lives of Irish men, women, and families associated with canal and railroad building as yet needs to be done, but it promises to reveal much about the settlement and development of communities in both Indiana and the Old Northwest.⁴

Canal- and railroad-building provided the Irish with a means to migrate inland, but it also presented them with an opportunity for settlement and even landownership. In a number of ways the

3 Charles R. Poinsett, **Fort Wayne During the Canal Era, 1828-1855** (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1969), 59-63; **Fort Wayne Sentinel**, August 27, 1842 (emphasis added); One of the few studies to place women and their activities within this "canal culture" is Peter Way whose study otherwise suffers from a distracting Marxist viewpoint. See Peter Way, **Common Labour: Workers and the Digging of North American Canals, 1780-1860** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 84-5, 112, 171-2; Lang, "Irishmen in Northern Indiana Before 1850," 197.

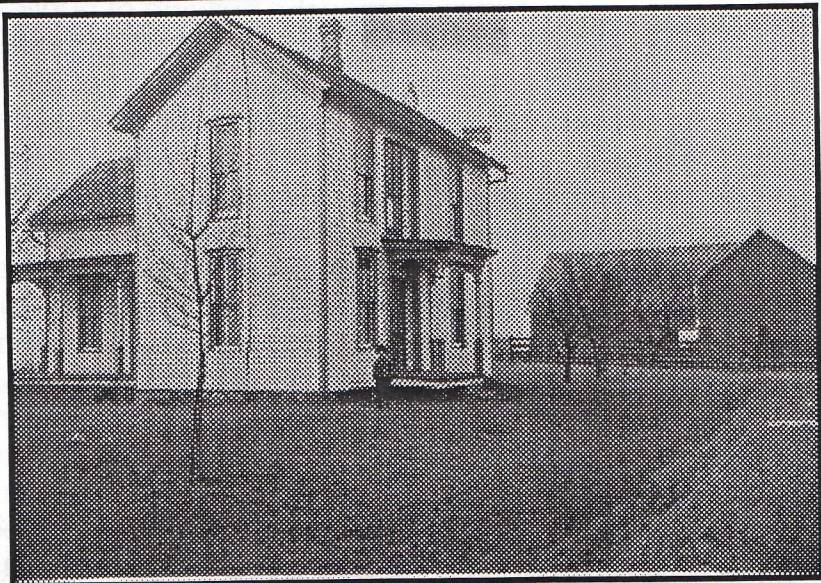
4 Wayne Bischoff, reports and conference papers in author's possession.

Irish-American experience illustrates how the building of public works resembled the settlement of the frontier. Laboring gave the Irish a chance to own land, become visible members of the rural community, and thus experience upward mobility. And canal commissioners held out this prospect to them. In 1832 the monthly wage for canal workers at Fort Wayne was ten dollars which increased to thirteen dollars and occasionally higher by 1837. Soon thereafter canal trustees also began offering land inducements of forty, eighty, and one hundred and sixty acres at favorable rates in hopes of attracting and holding on to laborers, especially men with families who would not be as inclined to quit and move on. One 1837 broadside advertising for two thousand laborers for work on Indiana's Central Canal boasted that "No section of country holds out greater inducements to the industrious laborer" in available land, "affording to those who are desirous of doing so, an opportunity of securing to themselves, with the avails of a few months' labor, a permanent home in the flourishing and rapidly growing state."⁵

Evidence of what one writer observed in 1881 of the "transformation of the [Irish] canal laborer into the pioneer farmer" is both substantive and inferential with regards to Indiana. In neighboring Illinois, the writer noted, the "predominance of the Irish...along the line of these railways, and in the farming communities in the near vicinity of the canal, cannot escape notice even by the passing traveler." One detailed 1934 study of the Illinois Central Railroad makes a passing reference to the fact that tract books in the state's Land and Tax Commissioner's office concerning the Central Station indicate that Irish laborers, with families in tow, purchased "many thousands of acres of land"

(Continued on page 10)

5 George Potter, **To the Golden Door: the Story of the Irish in Ireland and America** (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973), 320; Poinsett, **Fort Wayne During the Canal Era**, 60; Broadside, Indiana Division, Indiana State Library, reprinted in Gayle Thornbrough and Dorothy Riker, comp., **Readings in Indiana History** (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1956), 338-9.



Above: Daniel Driscoll, one of the construction workers on the Wabash & Erie Canal, purchased 80 acres of land in 1834 in the Lagro, Indiana area.. The canal was completed through Lagro to Wabash, Indiana in 1836-37 Daniel remained in Lagro, built a lean-to log cabin, and began clearing the land for farming. He then built this farm house and barn, which have remained in the Driscoll family for over 150 years. It has been designated a Hoosier Homestead Farm. Six generations of Driscolls have lived on the farm (superscript numbers indicate generations):

Daniel Driscoll

John² & Margaret Driscoll

Clay³ & Mary Driscoll

Eugene⁴ & Anne Driscoll (current owner)

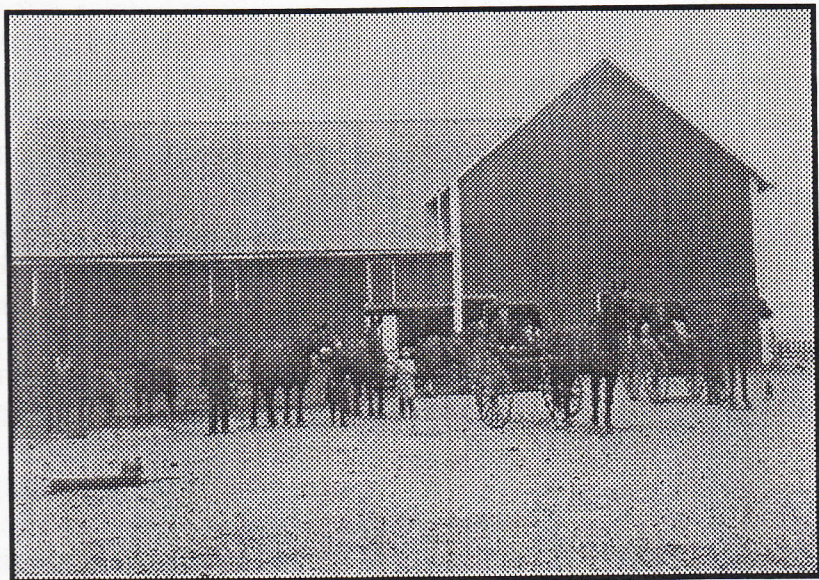
Matthew⁵ & Angela Driscoll (current resident)

Ryan Driscoll⁶ (current resident, gr-gr-great grandson of Daniel Driscoll)

Top right: Standing before the barn built in the mid-1800s are from left to right John², Mary³ and Ellen³ Driscoll, in the buggy on the left Hugh³ and Mike³ Driscoll, and in the buggy on the right Clay³ Driscoll.

Bottom right: This photo taken in June 2001 shows three generations of Driscolls. Standing left to right are Tim⁵, Anne and Eugene⁴ Driscoll. Seated is Ryan⁶ Driscoll. The original farmhouse has had new siding and windows added to it.

Photos courtesy Anne Driscoll



Watch for an upcoming **CSI Newsletter** article about the Driscoll family and some of its genealogy. More family pictures will also be included.

(Continued from page 7)

through the railroad. Other sources suggest a similar pattern of entrée into Indiana rural life. Although not typically used in this way, naturalization records are occasionally revealing. The February 20th, 1835, naturalization record of twenty-eight year old Irish-born Peter Moran noted that he was a laborer on the Wabash and Erie Canal and that he now intended to make Indiana his "place of settlement." Irish immigrant letters reveal this link between public works labor and landownership as well, showing in turn a degree of savvy in knowing how to use their labor to acquire land. In May of 1843 William Lalor of Lima wrote to his father of being seriously financially strapped, having to rent out his farm on shares. "But," he lamented, "I suppose for the purpose of earning Clothes [etc.] I shall have to go (greatly against my will) to work on some canal or rail road amongst the wicked, ignorant, profligate, dregs of Society." Robert Anderson of Valparaiso advised his brother in April of 1853 that before coming to Indiana, a young man should try to "fall into work" in the East where wages were better, "until he gets money to [buy] land."⁶

Yet, in placing the Irish immigrant in the context of rural history some familiar stereotypes do emerge. Indiana's Notre Dame University's "Fighting Irish" mascot could very easily describe the working environment along the canals. On December 30, 1835, Indiana Governor Noah Noble brought before the state House of Representatives a detailed report concerning the "riotous conduct" among Irish canal workers in Wabash County that had, over the course of a year, escalated into a serious incident the preceding July 12th involving at least seven hundred laborers, townspeople, and state and volunteer militias. The report, written by canal commissioner David Burr, sought state relief for ex-

6 "Irish Settlements in Illinois," *Catholic World* (May 1881), 157; Paul Wallace Gates, *The Illinois Central and its Colonization Work* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), 97 n57; *Naturalization Records*, Tippecanoe County Historical Association, "Peter Moran," William Lalor to D. Lalor, May 12, 1843, Kerby Miller Collection; Robert Anderson to William Anderson, April 1853, Kerby Miller Collection.

penses related to the arrests, prosecutions, provisioning of the militias, and private property damages stemming from the clash of two Irish factions: the "Corkonians" and the "Far Downs." Up to that point, antagonisms, "threats of burnings and murders," and "merciless beatings," compelled the laborers to work "armed in military array." The friction caused frequent disruptions in the progress along nearly fifty miles of the canal which traversed through newly organized counties where civil authority in the form of justices of the peace was notably deficient. Attempts to separate the factions by dividing up the canal line failed. Finally, on the day of battle, one group (of three to four hundred men) told Burr that they were forced to fight since no one would protect their families; "the weaker party would have to leave the line." The arrests of eight "ringleaders" quelled the riot but not before the nearby inhabitants of Huntington and Lagro, out of fear for their lives and property, assembled their own armed companies.⁷

Burr's report specifically noted that at least with regards to the first group, "not a noisy or a drunken man was amongst them." That being said, however, by most accounts whiskey drinking was an integral part of canal and railroad work. While early canal contracts from 1832 stipulated against workmen drinking "distilled spirits of any kind under the liability of forfeiting this contract," remote working conditions and the need for laborers soon rendered the rule a dead letter. In fact, the work gangs invariably included a "jigger boss" who carried a large pail of whiskey along the line, offering up a jigger now and then. When a former "jigger boss" was asked if this did not indicate that workers must have been constantly drunk, he retorted: "You wouldn't expect them to work on the canal if they were sober, would you?"⁸

(Continued on page 16)

7 David Burr to Governor Noah Noble, December 30, 1835, reprinted in **The Irish War** (Fort Wayne: Public Library of Fort Wayne and Allen County, 1953).

8 Canal contract published in Poinsett, **Fort Wayne During the Canal Era**, 61-2; Lafayette Journal, September 23, 1899.

IRISH 1850 CENSUS WABASH CO. LAGRO TWP. INDIANA

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION	WIFE	AGE	CHILDREN
Kinark	Timothy	45	Farmer	Ann	36	2
Kinark	Patric	31	" " "	Katherine	20	
Holland	John	43	" " "	Ellen	35	9
Welch	John	50	" " "	Ellen	50	2
Carrey	Jeremiah	51	" " "			2
Swansey	James	60	" " "			1
Ohannan	James	50	" " "	Ellen	36	7
Collins	Cornelius	50	" " "			
Hogan	John	50	" " "			
Dristel	Daniel	52	" " "	Ellen	35	6
Buckley	Patrick	21	" " "			
Buckley	Mary	55				
Driskel	James	42	" " "	Catherine	42	3
Elwood	James	44	" " "	Ellen	36	7
McNown	Hugh	32	Cabinet Maker	Grace	29	3
English	Michael	35	Farmer	Martha	30	6
Wright	Martin	45		Alice	41	5
Sweiney	John	35	Laborer			
Pursele	Bridget	41				3
Pursele	John	26	Boatman			
Henessy	Edward	35	Laborer	Elizabeth	35	4
Ryan	Linnis	35	Blacksmith	Mary G	26	2
Ryan	John	30	R C Priest			
Ryan	Ivanna	21				
Obrian	Francis	30	Laborer	Helen	23	1
Murphy	Edward	40	Merchant	Anna	35	4
Hamilton	Thomas	59	Physician	Margery	60	1
Fowler	Henry	30	Boatman			
Conway	Dinnis	29	Laborer	Abigail	26	2
Regan	Timothy	25	Laborer	Katherine	16	
Taylor	Alexander	41	Taylor	Hannah	43	4
Egan	Andrew	37	Carpenter	Ellen	30	1
Collins	Michael	41	Wheelwright	Julia	40	2
Malone	Michael	33	Shoemaker	Mary G	36	1
English	Robert	40	Merchant			
McGuire	Alexander	30	Boatman	Amelia	23	3
Dalton	John	56	Farmer	Catherine	52	6
Shanahan	Michael	32	" " "	Lydia	23	7

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION	WIFE	AGE	CHILDREN
Shanahan	John	52	Farmer	Joanna	34	8
Tewhy	James	35	" " "	Catherine	24	3
Kathlan	Michael	50	" " "	Bridget	30	3
Obrian	James	27	" " "	Mary	21	1
Egan	John	52	" " "	Catherine	42	7
Finan	Mary	31				
McDonald	James	35	" " "		31	2
Devinis	Seamis	38	" " "	Bridget	38	5
Swaney	Michael	30	" " "	Mary	21	3
Kelly	Edward	40	" " "	Joanna	35	4
Flanagan	Patric	33	" " "	Matilda	19	
Sliney	Edmund	60	" " "	Mary	45	4
Moraninn	Jeremiah	60	" " "			
Grace	Thomas	40	" " "	Mary	40	6
Murphy	Timothy	45	" " "	Mary G	46	1
Nolan	Michael	50	" " "	Elizabeth	40	6
Rorke	Patric	60				1
Lughrue	Ann	40				
Carter	Lawrence	35	Farmer	Elizabeth	27	
Barret	Wm	40	" " "			3
Graham	Samuel	35	Sawyer	Mary G	25	3
O'Laughlin	Thomas	36	Farmer	Jane	43	5
McCarty	Dennis	30	Laborer	Ellen	32	3
Dailey	James	23	Teamster			
Swaney	John	60	" " "			
McCarty	Jeremiah	32	Laborer	Anna	30	3
Slattery	Thomas	56	" " "	Mary	41	5
Ragen	Michael	21	Cabinet Matker			
Cohon	Dennis	45	Farmer	Bridget	38	5
Holland	Jeremiah	34	Laborer	Catherine	35	3
Quinn	Margaret	60				
Hayes	Cornelius	30	Farmer			
Hayes	Jeremiah	32	" " "			
Hayes	Joanna					
Fitzgibbon	Thomas	56	Farmer	Catherine	50	2
Welch	Martin	28	" " "	Bridget	19	2
Regan	Morris	62	" " "	Ellen	58	3
Clifford	John	55	" " "	Joanna	44	3
Reynolds	William	50	" " "	Fenny	41	5

2506 persons in township

Only those with head-of-household born in Ireland are listed above.

Others of Irish descent or from other nationalities also lived in the township.

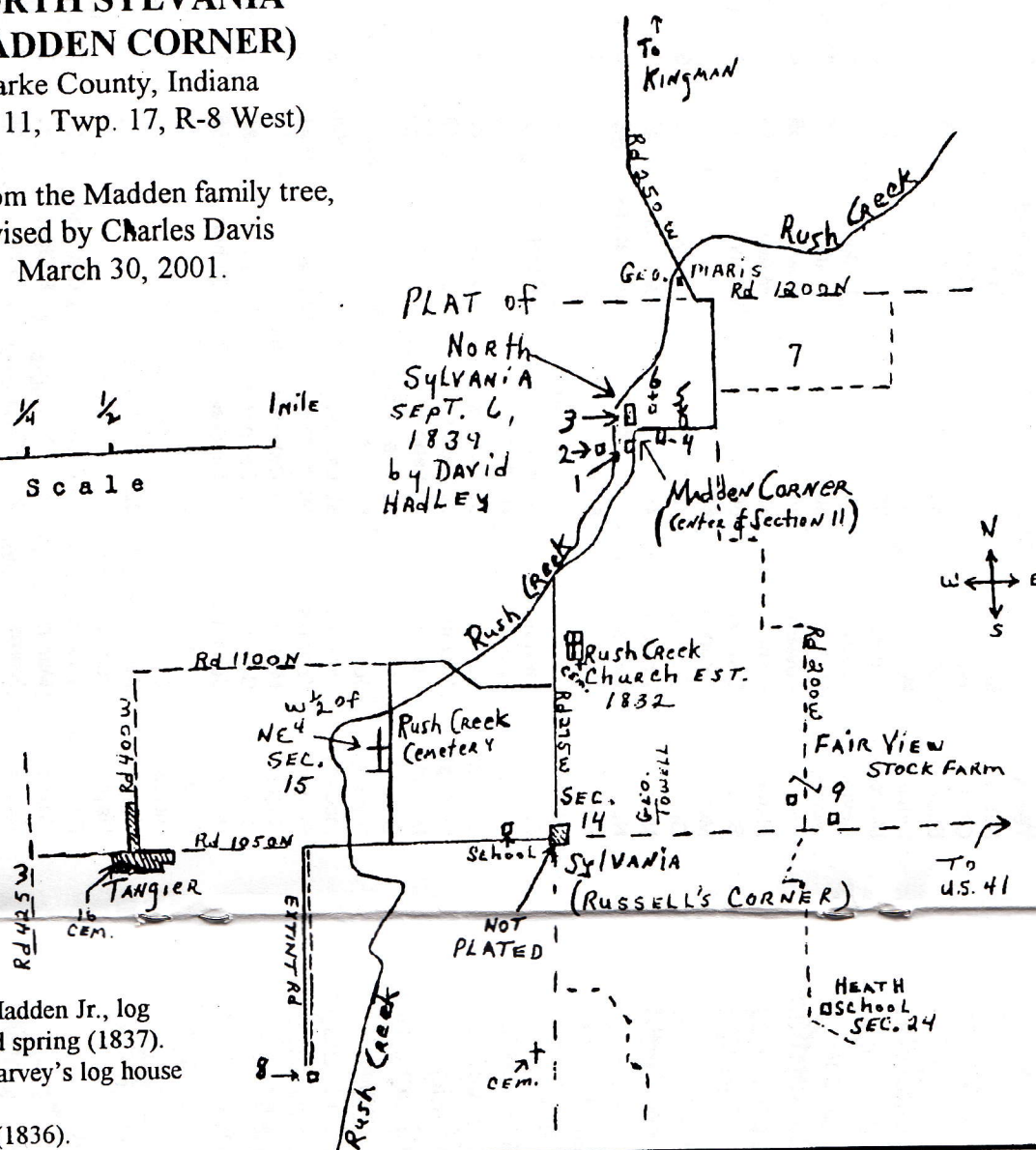
Names may be incorrectly spelled.

NORTH SYLVANIA (MADDEN CORNER)

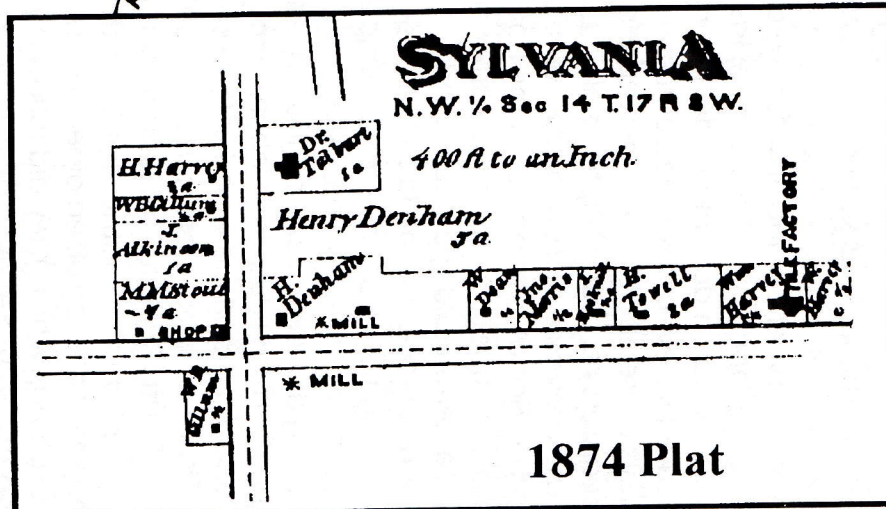
Parke County, Indiana
(Sec. 11, Twp. 17, R-8 West)

Map from the Madden family tree,
revised by Charles Davis
March 30, 2001.

0 1/4 1/2 1 mile
Scale



1. George Madden Jr., log house and spring (1837).
2. Harlan Harvey's log house (1836).
3. Tanyard (1836).
4. Samuel Chew Madden's house, post office, and store (1850).
5. Miles McNutt Madden's house (1872). Site now (1980s) of Richard Cory's home.
6. Loyd Samuel Madden's house (1900-1940s). Earlier, John and Betsy McCoy's.
7. Rebecca Commons Madden farm.
8. Joel and Piety Grimes Commons house in 1882.
9. James Marks - est. 1830



This is a detailed map of the town of Sylvania. Significant points of interest have been identified according to the list at the lower left. See Charles Davis' article about the town of Sylvania beginning on page 20.

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establish parishes where the families settled. This demonstrates yet another way in which canal- and railroad-building promoted the settlement and development of Indiana, for which the Irish had a hand. Few sources open up a view of rural Irish men and women in the way that Church documents do, in large part because women appeared in few other nineteenth-century public records; in some ways these also alter our perceptions of the Irish. Early parish registers recorded baptisms along the railroad line, underscoring the presence of Irish families who accounted for the frequent occurrence of Irish names in the books. Indiana parish histories almost routinely describe the early parishioners as Irish Catholics who came to build the public works in the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s and stayed-on to build a church and, by extension, a community, "using their earnings to buy land and make homes for themselves." Some refer to the "immigrant Irish farmers" of the parish during the same early period. In places, parish histories counter the drunken brute Irish laborer image with incidents of self-sacrifice and compassion. In 1858, twenty-eight year old Reverend Thomas Carroll determined to construct a new church in the area of South Bend for his parishioners, many of whom labored on the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana Railway. Beginning that Fall, Carroll enjoined the men to dig the foundation in the evenings which they did following a full-day-into-night's work on the rails already. The account goes that the men and their sons came from all directions, with picks and shovels in hand, and worked long into the night in order to complete the project by Spring. Often their children held up oil lanterns while women brought hot tea and coffee at midnight.⁹

Contemporary religious workers also wrote of their encounters with the rural Irish. Writing to her aunt in France from the mission at St. Mary's-of-the-Woods in 1853 or 1854, Sister Saint Francis Xavier remarked that "We have perhaps two hundred [Irish] families near us employed in constructing a railroad," and in a

(Continued on page 18)

ATTENTION:

Friends of Chief Lagros

A meeting there'll be at the Lagro Town Hall
 (Late-comers will sit on the old Stone Wall)
 They'll gather there like the pied Pipers rats
 The famous, the poor and a few Democrats
 The lean and weak, the beautiful, the chic.
 Don't miss the meeting -- **It's the first of last week!**
 From west of the church and east of the mill
 South of the bridge and north of the hill
 They'll be:

Noonan, McLananhan, Casey, Devine,
 Coughlan, McGuire, Ragan and Ryan,
 Sweeney and Walsh, Elward and Orr,
 Troxel, Hegel, Wendel Fultz,
 Bechtol, Talbert, Gretzinger, Schultz,
 Schmalzried, Wiedenhoef, Koehler and Eads,
 Hettmansperger, Schenkel, Westerhausen and Reeds.
 Bloomer, Sackman, Tyner and Kerr,
 Campbell, Curnutt and Bumgardner,
 Christman, Fulton, Thomas and Barton,
 Chamness, LaSalle, Props and Martin.
 Bitzel, Brinegar, Bean, and Bartholomew,
 Baker, Beeks, Boone and Bill Egnew,
 Bowers, Bailey, Parklman and Stone,
 Rau. Ross. Gillespie and Bone.

Russell, Rager, Stevens and Black,
 White, Green, Swan and Slack,
 Anderson, Ramsey, Enyeart and Howell,
 Schetzle, McNown, Porter and Powell.
 Peabody, Printy, Renner and Harrell,
 Bidwell, Tucker, Coomler and Terrell,
 Hilligas, Wade, Carter and Miller,
 Smith, Reynolds, Hamilton and Tiller.
 Ballard, Barnes, Blocher and Beaver,
 Ashley, Murnan, Hunt and Cleaver,
 Roberts, Lewis, Cole and Frushour,
 Driscoll, Judy, Scott and Kessler.

Ridgway, Jackson, Unger, Lawson,
 McClure, Bruner, Scherschel and Dawson,
 Adams, Wiley, Pratt and Lentz,
 Brothers, Rife, Watkins and Pence.

Ford, Hudson, Purviance, Lindley,
 Yagerlander, Dare, and McKinley.
 Pefley, Prickett, Fall and Durnbaugh,
 Stouffer, Hawkins, Cleavland and Middaugh.

If any I've missed, like Dalton, Sheb and Shue,
 This bit of nostalgia I give to you
 To let your brain dance to and fro
 Up and down the streets of LaGro.

sion at St. Mary's-of-the-Woods in 1853 or 1854, Sister Saint Francis Xavier remarked that "We have perhaps two hundred [Irish] families near us employed in constructing a railroad," and in a subsequent letter she refers to "our dear Irish who are finishing the railroad between here and Terre Haute." Later Sister Xavier spoke admiringly of an Irish woman in her community who had a way of comforting women whose children had died. The simple words she used, she commented, "sufficed to make the poor mother perfectly resigned. I love the Irish very much, notwithstanding their faults, for they are so little attached to the things of earth and have so much respect for priests."¹⁰

The nineteenth-century Irish immigrant defies a simple description. While the majority made their homes in the cities, those that labored along the canal and railroad lines in the Old Northwest left an indelible impression on the land and people of the region despite the fact that the rural immigrants were fewer in

(Continued on page 26)

9 Rev. John L. Fink, St. Michael's Catholic Church, **Madison, Indiana: A Pioneer Parish of Southern Indiana, 1837-1987** (no other publication information), 17, 19, Parish History Collection, Notre Dame University Archives (hereafter cited PHCND). This is a reproduction of the actual record which lists the last names of the four children baptized on July 30, 1837 as Regan and McNully; St. Patrick (Lagro), Centennial Anniversary, 1873-1973, 1, PHCND; **Indiana Catholic**, Jan. 22, 1915, PHCND; **Indiana Catholic**, April 14, 1911, PHCND; St. Peter's Parish (Laporte), PHCND; **News-Dispatch** (Michigan City), October 31, 1967 PHCND; "Brownsburg Parish to Mark Centennial," September 19, 1969, newsclipping, PHCND; **A Century at St. Patrick's: A History of the Priests, Activities, and People of St. Patrick's Parish** (South Bend, Indiana) (no other publication information), 22, PHCND.

10 Letter from Irma le Fer de la Motte to her cousins Mme. le Fer de Chantelou and Mme. des Cognets, dated 1853 or 1854, printed in full in **Clémentine de La Corbinière, An Apostolic Woman; or, The Life and Letters of Irma le fer de la Motte, in Religion Sister Francis Xavier, Who Died At St. Mary's of the Woods, Vigo County, Ind.** (New York: Catholic Publication Society, 1882), 390, 358; Letter from Sister Mary Joseph to one of her sisters, 1876, reprinted in **Clémentine de La Corbinière, L'Indiana, Part 2, "Sister Mary Joseph"** (St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind. : Providence Press, 1886), 88-90.

Sylvania and its Wabash & Erie Canal Connections

Today's town of Sylvania is a "blink your eyes town." Blink your eyes and you will miss it. But in canal times it was a busy little community with shops, saw mills, and factories surrounded by some of the best farms in Parke County, Indiana. The farmland was settled chiefly by Quakers from North Carolina. Pioneer settlements were made in the neighborhood of Rush Creek as early as 1824 for the most part by "Friends." A society was organized by Isaac Hobson, Lot and David Lindley and others in 1832. A frame house was built in 1840. It is located one-half mile north of Sylvania.

Elizabeth T. McCoy, a birthright member, was its oldest member in Parke County. She died on October 1, 1916 at the age of 105.

The Rush Creek Cemetery is near the church. The pioneers who settled this area that are at rest in this cemetery are the Lindleys, Hobsons, Towells,

by Charles Davis

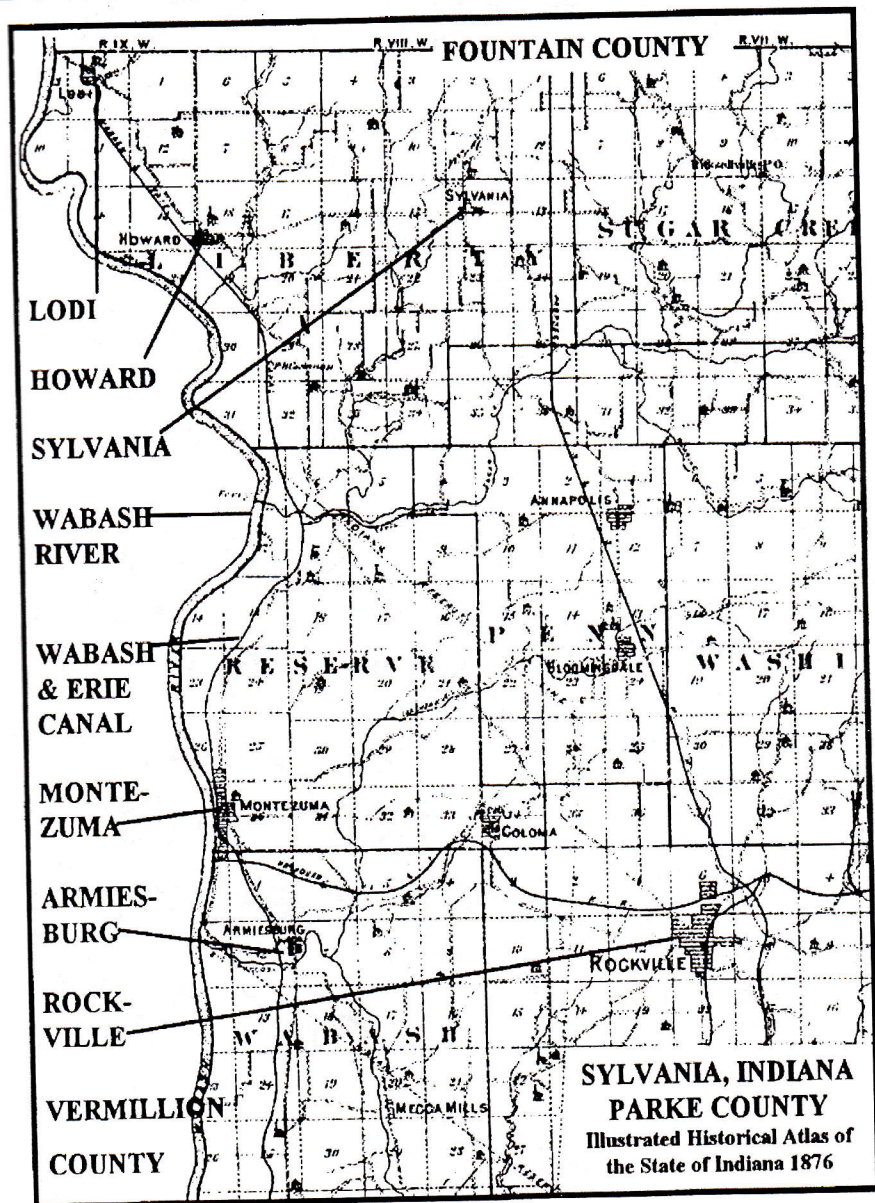
Harveys, Maddens, Hadleys and McCoys. Refer to the map at the centerfold of this issue of Indiana Canals, pages 14 and 15.

The village of Sylvania is situated in the northwest, section 14, range 8, in Liberty township, Parke county, Indiana (see map on following page.) How it began is an interesting story.

Around the summer of 1838 there was a state road ordered to be built from Covington to Rockville in Indiana. A man named George Moshur was appointed as superintendent for locating where the road would be built. He lived near the falls of Mill Creek and nearly in a direct line from Covington to Rockville. He took the job but locals didn't think he was qualified. However, he superintended the work and he ran the road by his own home three-fourths of a mile northwest of the falls of Mill Creek. The road entered the township near the center of section 3 through the west end of section 11 near the quarter-mile line.

Mr. Moshur also laid off a town called Marysville on the road. The only home ever built there was his. Years later his home was destroyed by fire and his wife perished in the flames. There were hints of foul play, but that was the end of it and Marysville.

Prior to deciding on the location of this road Alfred and Washington Hadley formed a co-partnership called A. and W. Hadley and Company for the purpose of starting a county store. The "Company" was Reuben Chew. They proposed lo-



Liberty Township occupies the northwest corner of Parke County, Indiana. Sylvania is located in the east central part of the township.

cating their place of business on this new road about one-fourth mile northwest of the center of section 11. After Mr. Chew had his residence considerably on the way to completion, David Hadley, a brother to A. and W. Hadley, concluded he wanted the town located on his farm. Consequently the road had to be changed so as to take in the prospective town. The proposed location was about one-quarter of a mile northwest of the corners of sections 10, 11, 14 and 15. The town was plotted perhaps by Hadley himself, as he was a surveyor. A few lots were sold. The town was christened Sylvania.

Isaac Hobson, who kept a few notions, lead and gun flints, got somewhat by ear of the competition of the new store. Hadley's did a thriving business for awhile but in time the lots were fenced up and Sylvania at this place was a thing of the past.



A post office was started in 1849 at the old deserted town. Jesse T. Turner was appointed postmaster. After changing the post office from place to place it finally ended up at Russell's crossroads which is the Sylvania of today. After a fearful neighborhood fight in 1865 or 66 the post office was moved a mile and a quarter to what was called North Sylva-

nia. Samuel C. Madden was appointed postmaster.

Mr. Madden was born in Clinton county, Ohio in 1828 and settled in Liberty township, Indiana in 1835. He was a life long Quaker and took an interest in Liberty township's history. He was living at Kingman, Indiana when he died on May 14, 1900. His son Miles took over the farm in Liberty township, sec. 11. The post office remained there for 2 years at which time Sylvania of today recaptured it to the joy of Postmaster Madden.

North Sylvania was boastful for a time in 1855. Nathan Lindley had a shoe shop. John Woody went into partnership with him. A small stock of dry goods and notions was added to Lindley's shop and then John McCoy took over the store.

In 1867 John Cowgill started a harness shop in which Sam C. Madden repaired harness before and after Cowgill. Dr. Joseph Talbot practiced medicine in the summer of 1868 from this point. An advertisement written by Sam C. Madden for John H. Woody says,

**"On New Years day in '62,
The credit system will fall thru,
And you must pay me my dues,
For making of your shoes.**

**To work all the time and get no pay,
Is throwing time and stock away,
And my debts can never pay,**

Not this side of judgment day.

For your favors that are past,
In my memory long will last,
And let the future like the past,
Let me work for you on a last."

The first "Ground Hog Threshing Machine" that Mr. Madden saw was at Robert Manwarring's farm (Manwarring's Basin on the Canal) on the hill just above his mill where the covered bridge at West Union crosses Sugar Creek. They were running the straw off over the hill into the mill pond in order to tighten the mill dam.

During the Civil War the present town of Sylvania had a



North Sylvania, Parke County, Indiana in June of 2001. Photo by Charles Davis

blacksmith shop run by Henry Durham. There were two stores, a harness shop, tile factory, a broom-handle and picket-fence factory, a wagon shop, and a factory for making beehives and their supplies. The physician was Dr. Ira H



Russell's Crossroads in Sylvania, Indiana, as it appeared in June 2001.
Photo by Charles Davis.

Gillum. In 1854, Alason Church and Oliver P. Davis built a steam sawmill at the crossroads of Sylvania. They did an extensive business in lumber and corn, much of which they hauled to Howard, a town on the Wabash & Erie Canal, for further transportation. The sawmill was in operation until 1875 and is said to be the first steam powered sawmill in Parke County. For more information of O. P. Davis see the article entitled "River Ferries and Canal Connections" in the Canal Society of Indiana Newsletter of September 1996, page 8.



(Continued from page 18)

number. Developing this rural Irish-American profile fosters new questions and insights about Irish immigrant men, women, and families. By looking at Indiana, a state with a predominantly rural history, we can also begin to understand and recognize how the Irish fitted themselves into American patterns of agriculture, land-owning, and community building. By their hands they contributed to the "greening" of a state and a region in a number of important ways. When one considers the full range of the Irish canawling and railroad-building experience, it seems surprising that their achievements have not been memorialized in ways similar to that of the public works' statesmen and engineers.

Ginette Aley, the author, is seeking the use of personal documents such as letters, journals, diaries, etc. that will shed light on the Irish canal workers and their families. This is part of a larger study on the canal era in Indiana and, as such, she would also welcome information on the townspeople and farm men and women of the early 1800s. She can be reached at :

Ginette Aley
627 Ross Hall, Iowa State University
Ames IA 50011-1202

or by email
galey@iastate.edu



Canawler's Quiz

Last month we challenged you to a reading test as well as a canal history test. The passage below was offered for your contemplation.

*The Monumee joined to the Wabash! Lake Erie,
connected with the Ohio, & the Mississippi! New-
York, & New Orleans, rival markets for the
products of a vast portion of the most fertile
West; with easy & rapid communication to
either! Certainly, you are very right in
rejoice in this event, as a "new & glorious
era in the history of the West."*

Daniel Webster

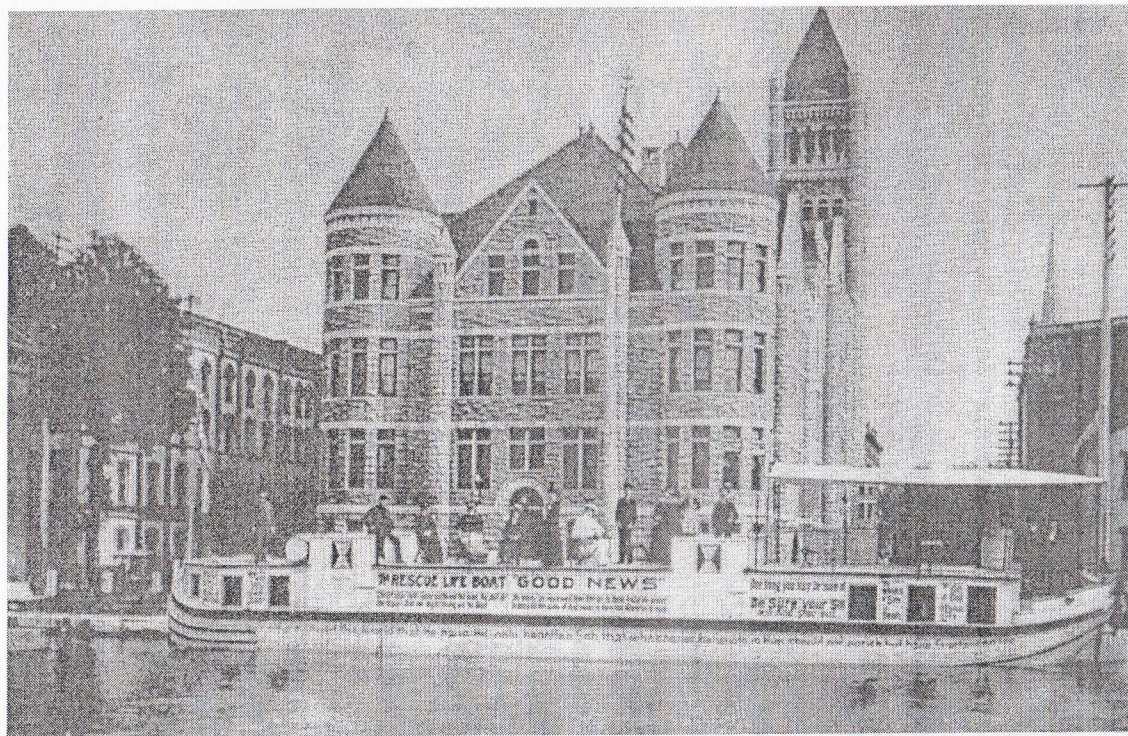
We received a correct answer as to its identity.

Jim Ellis of Fort Wayne

correctly identified the text as part of a letter written by Daniel Webster and sent to the invitation committee of the celebration of the opening of the Wabash & Erie Canal in 1843. Jim now joins an elite group of individuals who have correctly answered the Canawler's Quiz.

This month's attempt at stumping you follows on the next page





This RESCUE LIFE BOAT “GOOD NEWS” is waiting in the weighlock basin, behind City Hall in

Name the city and name the canal. Hint: you can still visit the weighlock and its museum. today!



Canawlers! Quiz

CANAL SOCIETY OF INDIANA

Organized on May 22, 1982 as a not-for-profit corporation, the Canal Society of Indiana was established to bring together those who share a common interest in Indiana's historic canals. The Society helps focus attention on these early interstate waterways through a variety of programs. Its aim is to provide interpretation of the era, to preserve canal bed and structural remains, and to support restoration of historic canal related sites.

BENEFITS:

- Canal Society of Indiana Newsletter
- Indiana Canals
- Membership Card
- Spring & Fall Tours of Canal Sites
- Books, Maps, Videos
- New Member Welcome Package

MEMBERSHIP:

- \$20.00**— Single/Family
- \$30.00** — Contributor
- \$50.00** — Patron
- \$100.00** — Frog Prince



Mail membership to:
CANAL SOCIETY OF INDIANA
P.O. BOX 40087
FORT WAYNE, IN 46804

Include name, address with 9 digit zip code,
and phone number

CANAL SOCIETY OF INDIANA <http://www.indcanal.org>
E mail: INDCANAL @ aol.com

INDIANA CANALS

Wabash & Erie Canal 1832-1874 (468 miles)

On March 2, 1827, Congress provided a land grant to encourage Indiana to build the Wabash & Erie Canal. The original plan was to link the navigable waters of the Maumee with the Wabash through the seven mile portage at Fort Wayne. Work began five years later on February 22, 1832 in Fort Wayne. Construction proceeded west as the canal reached Huntington by 1835, Logansport in 1838, and Lafayette in 1841. Work was also performed east toward the Ohio line, but the canal did not open to Toledo until 1843. A second federal land grant enabled the canal to reach Terre Haute by 1849.

At Evansville, 20 miles of the Central Canal had been completed north by 1839. The W & E was extended south in the late 1840s through the abandoned Cross-Cut Canal route. The connection with the Evansville segment was completed in 1853 forming the longest canal in the United States. By 1860, portions south of Terre Haute were closed, and the process of decline continued northward. In 1876, the canal was auctioned off by the trustees.

Central Canal 1836-1839 (8 miles/296 planned)

This canal was to extend from Peru, down the Mississinewa River Valley to the White River, through Indianapolis, and on to Worthington. Here it would meet the Cross-Cut Canal and proceed 111 miles to Evansville. Construction stopped with the financial collapse of 1839. The 24 miles from Broad Ripple to Port Royal was watered, but only 8 miles in downtown Indianapolis was operational. The entire 80 miles from Anderson to Martinsville was left in various stages of completion. Today, portions are used as a water source for Indianapolis and have been modernized.

Cross-Cut Canal 1836-1839 (42 miles)

This waterway between Terre Haute and Worthington that connected the Wabash and White Rivers lifted canal waters 78' over a summit level. The Eel River feeder and the Birch Creek and Splunge Creek Reservoirs supplied water for this summit. Begun in 1836, the works were abandoned in 1839 only to later be completed in 1850 as part of the Wabash & Erie Canal.

Erie & Michigan Canal 1836-1839 (7 miles/110 planned)

Authorized by the 1836 Internal Improvement Bill, only the Northport feeder reservoir (Sylvan Lake) and a few miles nearby were constructed. Work stopped in 1839.

Whitewater Canal 1836-1865 (76 miles)

Construction began at Brookville in 1836 as part of the statewide Mammoth Internal Improvement Bill. With its southern terminus at Lawrenceburg on the Ohio River, the Whitewater Valley Canal Co. reached Connersville in 1845. The next year 69 miles of canal were completed to Cambridge City which was on the National Road. In 1847, the merchants of Hagerstown financed their own 7 mile canal extension. At Harrison, the Whitewater also connected with the 35 mile Cincinnati and Whitewater Canal of Ohio, completed in 1843. Destructive floods in the narrow valley, inadequate financial returns, and the railroad doomed the waterway.