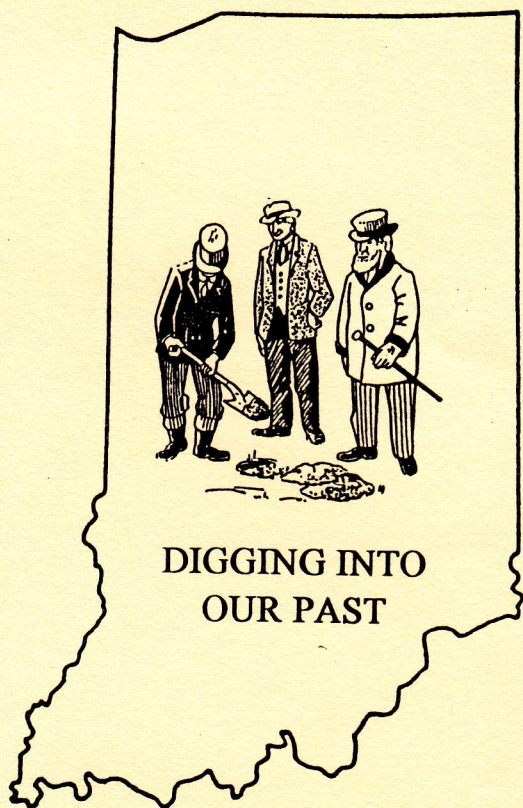


INDIANA CANALS



DIGGING INTO
OUR PAST

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Vol. 9 No. 3

Summer 1998

INDIANA CANALS

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INDIANA CANALS

The Journal of the Canal Society of Indiana

Volume 9, Number 3

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Wabash & Erie Canal Workers' Graves at Georgetown by Tom Castaldi

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The Cass County's Historical Society has one of those difficult-to-find local histories written by a respected historian. Dr. Jehu Z. Powell, author of *History of Cass County* (1913), prepared a *History of the Cemeteries of Cass County, Indiana 1907-1910*. In this piece a hand written note explains that, "These sketches were published in the *Logansport Daily Journal* from March 1st to 25th 1910 -- clipped out and pasted in this book." Neatly positioned on page 28, one clipping

### In this issue . . . .

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tells of a forgotten graveyard in western Cass County high on a bluff overlooking the Wabash River and the route of the Wabash & Erie Canal.

## GEORGETOWN CEMETERY

is located on Cicott's reserve a quarter of a mile NW of Georgetown, on a high wooded hill on land now owned by Wm. L. Ferald. No deeds (sic) for the burial ground has ever been recorded although old residents say that deeds were made by Daniel Bell when he owned the land in the 30's (1830s). This cemetery is very difficult of access, the hill upon which it is situated, is very steep, but is finely located, commanding a grand view of the Wabash Valley to the south.

There are probably one hundred or more graves on this hill, but very few of recent date and it is practically abandoned for burial purposes.

There are a number of monuments and markers and I note some of the inscriptions:

Martha, daughter of A. and E. Gray, 1883; three children of A. and E. Gray, 1834, 35,36; Peter Ellsroth, 1840, Harry Ellsroth, 1881; David B. Ellsroth, 1897; Sarah Tam, wife of Daniel Dritt, 1857; Stephen Tam and son, 1847,1846.

Emanuel Wirick, first husband of Mrs. Banta, who told me that her husband voted for Abraham Lincoln in 1860, came home from the election and died suddenly of apoplexy the same evening; wife of Bartholomew Noel, 1845; Hornady, 1848; Mahala Klepinger Wirick, mother of County Assessor Wirick, 1850; and David Wirick, his grandfather, 1859; Robert and Alexander Gray, who settled here in 1830, are interred here in 1868 and 1875; the father of Wm. Hilton, 1847.

There are many unmarked graves on this hill. Many laborers who died when digging the canal in the 30's were buried here.

Soldiers - Jacob Wirick, Ohio Infy died 1880, aged 70.

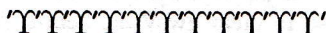
Daniel Bell, mentioned in the clipping, is the person who platted Georgetown in 1835 on a portion of Cicott Reserve. Bell served as a private in Captain Spier Spencer's Indiana Militia Yellow Jackets. This is the same unit of which Ensign John Tipton assumed command at the battle of Tippecanoe when both Spencer and 1st Lieutenant Richard McMahan were killed in action on November 7, 1811.

Later, Dr. Bell married Nancy Spencer, a daughter of Captain Spencer, and served as an assistant surveying and locating the Indiana-Illinois boundary line. Dr. Bell was once the owner of Cicott's Mill on the Wabash River at Georgetown. On October, 19, 1991, the Canal Society of Indiana visited Cicott's Mill and a spoken reference was made about the old Georgetown Cemetery.

The cemetery remains difficult to reach and it is not listed on maps such as the U.S. Geological Survey Topographic (7.5). Engulfed in a forest of trees, it is a graveyard that has few if any stones still standing.

It can, however, be visited from a residence park over a trail through a forested area. From Cicott's Mill travel northwest on Georgetown CR 150S to Lockport Road. Here the road passes west at the base of the high bluff mentioned in the Daily Journal newspaper account. Follow Lockport Road to Ridgeview Estates' entrance road and travel north, up a steep hill, and continue to the Ridgeview Estates' Recreational Park. From the park's tennis court the cemetery can be found using a foot trail. The trail disappears into the heavily wooded area to the south and east. Follow the trail until the ground is covered with myrtle. Look carefully and the grave markers can be found about the area near the overlook of the bluff.

Here lie the remains of those, "Many laborers who died when digging the canal." Canal Society of Indiana members find great satisfaction in recalling our great Hoosier canals, and it is only proper that those canalers who worked so hard to build them are not soon forgotten.



## **ROUTE OF THE WABASH AND ERIE FOLLOWS INDIANS' PORTAGE**

The following article that appeared in the *Ft. Wayne Daily Sentinel* on May 20, 1872 was written by the Hon. J. W. Dawson, a Ft. Wayne newspaperman, lawyer, and politician. He was born in Cambridge City, IN in 1820 and came to Ft. Wayne in 1838; he died in 1877. This article was one of a series by Dawson which he titled "Charcoal Sketches of Old Times in Fort Wayne." It concerns the naming of the old Indian portage between the Maumee River and the Little River to the Wabash River thus connecting Lake Erie to the Gulf of Mexico. The Wabash and Erie Canal followed the same historic transportation route and crossed this portage often called "*The Glorious Gate*."

## **MARAIS DE PEAGE, COMMONLY CALLED PRAIRIE DU PARSH, IN ABOITE TOWNSHIP**

Those who have lived here for thirty years, and even many of later residence hereabouts, are familiar with the name of "Prairie du Parsh," a small stream two branches of which are crossed by the Huntington State Road, on the Southeast quarter of Section 13, Congressional Township 30, N. Range 11, E., or Civil Township, Aboite, now the farm of George Bullard, about four miles southwest of Wayne. This name is more commonly applied to the marsh which the little streams drain. Both marsh and streams were in an early day, and even now, so swampy and marshy as to nearly forbid a passage across. Like nearly all French and Indian names originally given streams and places, the name has been so corrupted as to defy, without investigation, any correct knowledge of the meaning. In fact, scarcely any two persons use the same name to designate it. It is, therefore my purpose to clear away the debris, so as to discover to the public not only the true original name, but to give the signification of the words which constitute it, in order that it may go accurately into history.

The French very early made use of the Maumee River to this place, then found in the possession of the Miami Indians, to transport their goods, etc., then by the portage or carrying place from the St. Mary's across the land to the first navigable point on the Little Wabash, or Little River, and so on, by boat down the Wabash to the Ohio River. In 1734, Captain M. De Vincennes, of the French army, came up to this place, then called, in the Miami dialect, Ke-ki-ogue., and found it in possession of the Miamis. It was regarded as "the key of the whole country below." He then descended the Wabash to the very mouth of the Wea Creek, a few miles below where Lafayette now stands. There he established a post, and called it Ouiotanon, and then to a place called Chippe-Cake (or Brushwood town), and there he built a fort, which was called Vincennes.

At the great treaty held at Greenville, Ohio, in August, 1795, Little Turtle, the great chief of the Miamis, called this place (now Fort Wayne), where were located the Miami villages, "that glorious gate through which all the good words of our chiefs had to pass, from the north to the south and from the east to the west." It was the great trading point between Detroit and Vincennes. All the goods sold to the Indians on the Wabash and at Vincennes had to pass through this "key to the whole country below," the "glorious gate." All the furs and peltries bought of the Indians had to be returned through this "gate." So profitable was this trade, that at the Treaty of Greenville, when General Wayne requested the Indians to cede to the United States six miles square of land at Fort Wayne, and two miles square at the west end of the portage on Little River, about eight miles southwest of this, on now Section 26, Aboite Township, the whole tribe of Miamis objected. Through their chief, Little Turtle, who, addressing General Wayne said: "Elder Brother: I now give you the true sentiments of your younger brothers, the Miamis, with respect to the reservation at the Miami villages. We thank you kindly for contracting the limits you at first proposed. We wish you to take this six miles square on the side of the river (Maumee) where your fort now stands, as your younger brothers, wish to inhabit that beloved spot again." You shall cut hay whenever you please, and you shall never require in vain the assistance of your younger brothers at that place. Elder Brother: The next place you pointed to was the Little River, and said you wanted two miles square at that place. This is a request that our fathers, the French and British, never made us. It was always ours. This carrying place (portage) has heretofore proved, in a great degree, the subsistence of our younger brothers. That place has brought to us, in the course of one day the amount of one

hundred dollars. Let us both own this place, and enjoy in common the advantages it affords.”

General Wayne replied in substance that he had traced the lines of two forts which the French had once possessed here--one on the St. Joseph, an established rule among European nations to reserve as much land around their forts as their cannon could command. And as to the portage between Fort Wayne and Little River, and the fact that it had produced the Miamis one hundred dollars revenue per day, he remarked that though the French paid the tax or tariff for the use of the portage, yet in the end the Indians who bought the French goods had to pay it. As the United States would always be the carriers between their different posts, he inquired why they should pay annually \$8,000 if they were not to enjoy the privileges of open roads to and from their reservations--a sum which the United States agreed was \$1,000 annually. The claim to six mile square at or near the confluence of the rivers St. Joseph and St. Mary's where Fort Wayne now stands, or near it and two miles square in the Wabash, at the end of the portage from the Miami to the Lake, and about eight miles westward from Fort Wayne, was assented to by the Indians. These reservations gave complete control to the United States of the “glorious gate,” “the key to the whole country below.” From that day the portage ceased to be a toll-road or turnpike.

Now here comes the origin on the word which has been corrupted into Prairie de Pash, or Prairie du Parsh.

In the French tongue Peage, pronounced Pa-azh, means toll, tax, as collecting toll at a toll gate, and sometimes used for road, turnpike, etc. A marsh is called Marais, or as near as I can pronounce it on paper, “Marah”--the first syllable is pronounced ma, as the a in marry, and the second a as in rank; the whole with accent on the last syllable Marais de Peage or the turnpike or toll-road swamp, or the turnpike marsh.

I have been thus particular to give the early history of the portage, and that it was a toll-road for revenue purposes to the Indians, in order to bring out from its corruption the name of Marais de Peage. The portage line may be seen marked with much accuracy on the map of Allen County, lately published by Henry J. Rudisill, Esq., Auditor of the county, As for the accuracy of which map I can vouch, and a copy of which every intelligent gentleman on the county should have.



From the date of the ratification of the treaty, the portage which crossed this marsh between the present traveled road and the Wabash & Erie Canal, ceased to be a toll-road, and yet the marsh will be known by its original name in history now recorded.



CITY MILLS  
AND

Canal Turn Bridge

by Jerry Thompson

As a history buff and collector of Fort Wayne memorabilia, I recently purchased this very early photograph of the "City Mills" at an estate sale. Few, if any, photographs are known of early gristmills. Some artists' sketches or drawings were done and were later reproduced as photos, but this albumen photo is rare. (See pages 12, -15.)

The "City Mills" was located on original lot #25 of Fort Wayne at the southwest corner of Clinton and Water (now Superior) streets on the north side of the Wabash & Erie Canal. Jesse L. Williams and Allen Hamilton were greatly involved in bringing the Wabash & Erie Canal through Fort Wayne and establishing the St. Joseph Feeder Canal in 1832-1833. They became partners in the mill in 1842 according to Griswold's *History of Fort Wayne*. The *Fort Wayne Times* of August 17, 1844 states, "CITY MILLS, HAMILTON AND WILLIAMS, are prepared to pay cash at all times for wheat at their Mills in rear of their store fresh flour, corn meal, bran, &c. constantly on hand."

In a few years, Hamilton retired and Pliny Hoagland became a partner as "Hoagland & Williams." In the late 1850s a miller by the name of Comstock was admitted as partner. The mill now was named "Hoagland, Comstock & Co." until 1860. Comstock retired and Christian Tresselet was admitted as a silent partner and the name became "Hoagland & Co." until 1870 with the actual owners being

Williams, Hoagland and Tresselet. In 1870 the name was changed to "Hoagland, Tresselet & Company."

In 1872, Williams retired and the name was once again changed to "Hoagland & Tresselet." At this time a water lease of the Canal waters was renewed for 30 years. This lease did not last as the canal right-of-way was sold to the railroad. Late 1880-1881 the canal was filled in and the railroad built on top of the canal bed. In 1884, Hoagland died and Tresselet became sole owner as "C. Tresselet & Sons."

During its early years the mill used an overshot wheel as a way to get water from the canal for power. Lack of sufficient water in the canal at times in its later years, led its owners to install steam powered equipment.

I dated this picture to have been taken around 1872-1875. The banner between the pictures reads "Hoagland & Tresselet Fort Wayne, Ind." Also on the back of the picture's frame are the words "C. L. Schweiters owned this in 1875." There is no record of C. L. Schweiters owning the mill. This means some descendant is indicating Schweiters owned the picture in 1875.

Doing further research in the 1867 *Allen County Gazetteer* I found a Herman Schweiter who was a baker on Columbia Street. It also listed a C. F. Schweiters who was a salesman for Fox Bakery and Delicatessen and then the Myron Downing Bakery.

The trussed bridge across the canal is on Clinton Street. It has a turntable on the south side of the canal allowing the bridge to turn 90 degrees so that canal boats could pass the mill on the canal. There is a gas light at the end on the bridge on the left. "City Mills" is written near the roof on the side of the building and over the door. The building to the right rear reads "Carriage & Wagon Manufactory" that stood at #11 E. Water (Superior) Street and was owned by Adam Steinman. The building to the left appears to be the old stone canal house built by John Brown in 1852 and currently occupied by Arts United of Fort Wayne.

The photograph taken by Stowe Photo of the barrels and the men in the lower picture shows Pliny Hoagland on the left of the barrels in the front

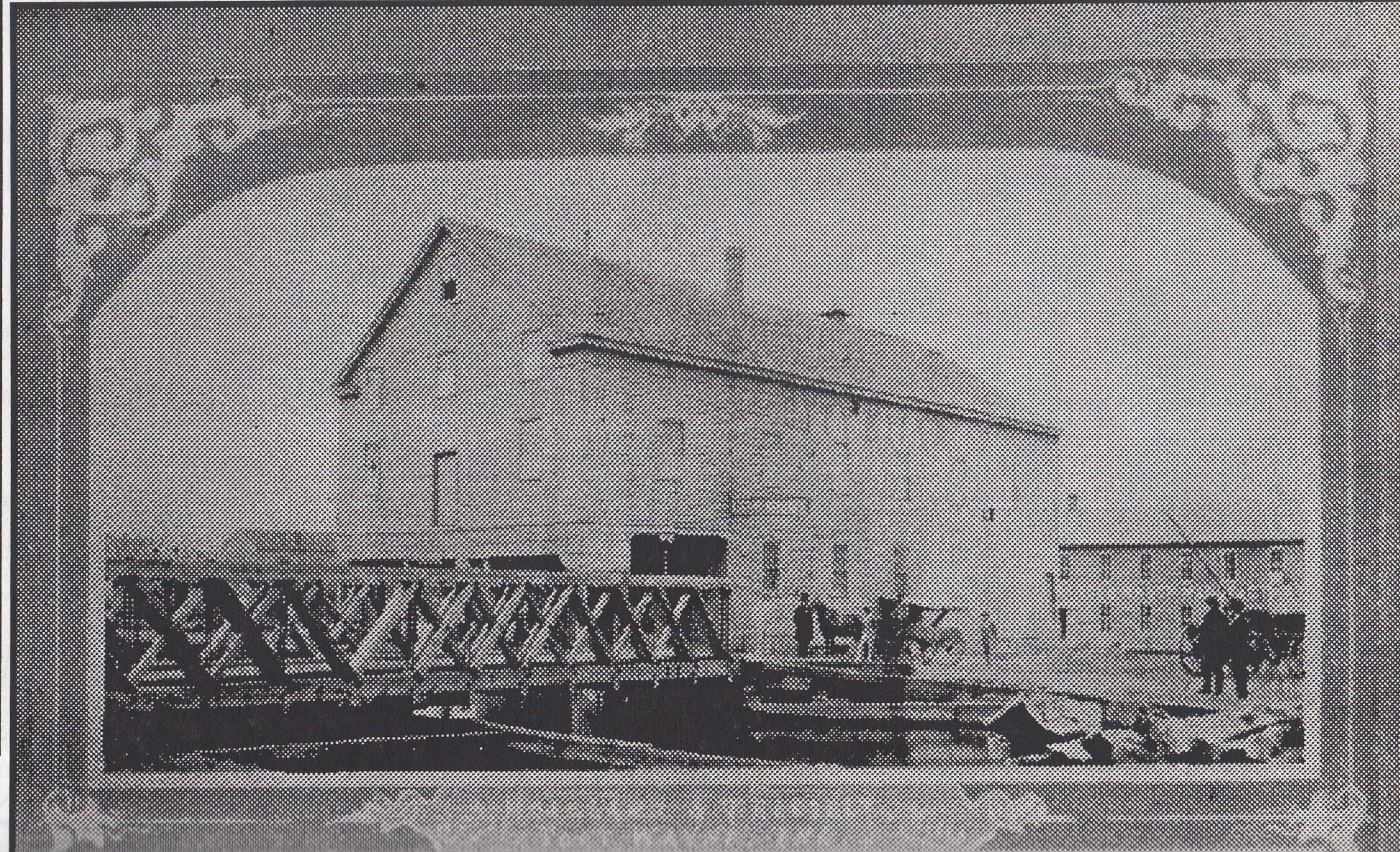
row holding his top hat. Also on the front row second from the right is Christian Tresselet. The best I can make out the barrels read as follows: (Top) - Eagle Mills XXX Hoagland Tresselet (2nd Row) - Left - Queen of the West XXX St. Louis MO, Right - Aetna Mills Double Extra White Flour J. L. Williams Fort Wayne, (3rd Row) Left - Emerald Mills 196 Extra Family Flour J. L. Williams, Center - Atlas Mills 196 Extra W. R. Evans Indiana, Right - unreadable.

This is a great picture of early industry in downtown Fort Wayne.

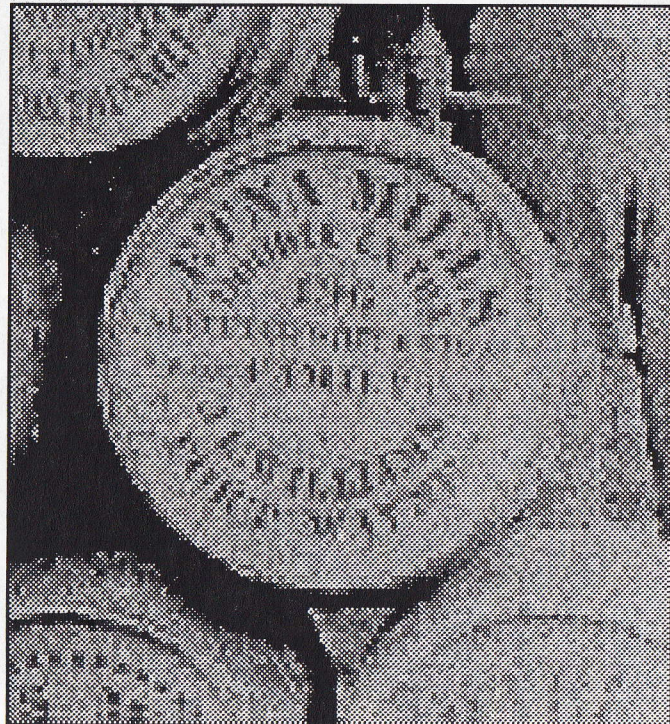
*Jerry Thompson is retired from Zollner, a piston manufacturer. He has spent the past thirty years searching for objects with a metal detector, his latest model being a White 6000 DI Pro. He started collecting Indiana memorabilia and then decided to lower his territory and concentrate on Fort Wayne memorabilia. He has a large collection of Robison Park items and postcards, a collection of Fort Wayne brewing items from the Burghoff, Centlivre, and Hoff Brau breweries, a large collection of glass bottles, early pottery, and maps and newspapers. CSI will publish some news items at a later time.*

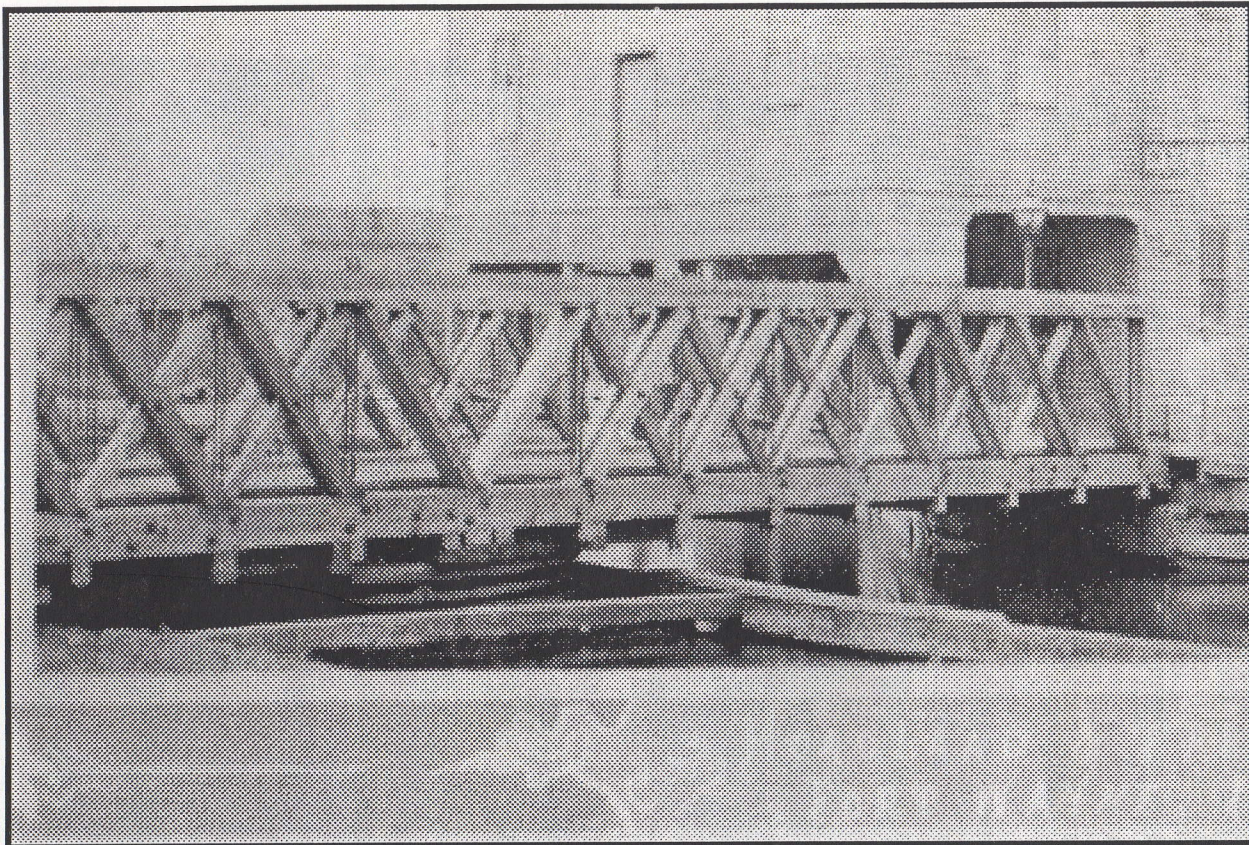






Notice that the barrel on the right of the second row and the barrel on the left of the bottom row held flour from Jesse Lynch Williams. One was from Actna Mills and the other from Emerald Mills. This proves Williams' interests lay beyond his being Chief Engineer on all of Indiana's canals.





The above turn bridge was located across the Wabash & Erie Canal on Clinton Street in Fort Wayne, Indiana. On the left side of the bridge stood City Mills. To its left stood the old stone canal house built by John Brown (1852).

# RULES AND SPECIFICATIONS RELATING TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WABASH AND ERIE CANAL

*Submitted by Stan Schmitt*

In the Spring 1998 issue of Indiana Canals we began a new series relating to canal construction. We are publishing this information which comes from a pamphlet printed for prospective canal contractors on the W&E Canal. Following it we offer an explanation as to what the rules and specifications meant and why they were important. The second installment follows.

**Dimensions of the Canal.** - The canal shall be at least thirty-nine feet wide at the bottom, and sixty feet wide at the top water line, unless from the peculiar difficulties of particular situations, or other causes, it shall be deemed expedient by the acting commissioner or engineer having direction of the work to diminish the breadth. In all cases where the canal is formed by the construction of a single bank near the base of a hill or natural bank, and also when the excavation to the depth and breadth above required, is not sufficient to raise the banks to the necessary height, the depth and breadth of the canal shall be increased beyond the limits above prescribed, to such extent as the acting commissioner or superintending engineer shall deem expedient, provided the cost of the canal shall not be materially increased, nor the safety of the canal materially diminished thereby.

**Mucking and ditching.** - In all places where it is deemed necessary to raise the banks of the canal, or either of them, above the natural surface of the earth, all wood and rubbish of every kind, all vegetable matter, all muck, all loose and porous earth, shall be removed from a space at least ten feet wide, or more if required by the engineer having charge of the work, under



each bank so that the artificial bank may rest upon and unite securely with the solid and imperishable earth underneath. And whenever, in the opinion of the acting commissioner, or any engineer having charge of the work, it may be necessary, a ditch shall be dug lengthwise under the center of each, or either bank, or in such other position as said commissioner or engineer may direct and of such breadth and depth as they shall deem necessary. Wherever such a ditch shall be required it shall in all cases be filled with good solid imperishable earth, before the bank above shall be commenced. And in all cases where mucking and ditching are required, it shall be at all times kept at least fifty feet in advance of the bank to be raised thereon, until the contractor arrives at his end of the section or job, and then shall be carried at least five feet beyond the extreme end of the bank, unless the contractor on the adjoining job shall previously caused this to be done.

## EXPLANATION

### OF THE RULES

### AND SPECIFICATIONS

*by Carolyn Schmidt*

Upon reading the above Dimensions of the Canal, the first thought that will come to mind for most CSI members is that most of the Wabash and Erie Canal was not built to the above specifications. From Fort

Wayne to Evansville in Indiana it was generally 26 feet wide at the bottom and 40 feet wide at the top except at wide waters or along a steep cliff. However, it was built with the above specified bottom width of 39 feet

and top width of 60 feet from east of Fort Wayne, IN to the State Line. The Ohio portion from the State Line to Junction, OH was constructed even differently. Its top width was 50 feet. Then from Junction, OH to Toledo, OH it once again had a top width of 60 feet.

The Wabash and Erie was joined with the Miami and Erie at Junction, OH. It should be noted here that the original section of the Miami Canal from Cincinnati to Dayton was 40 feet wide at the top. The Miami Extension Canal from Dayton to Junction was built with a top width of 50 feet. You will recall that what was originally known as the Wabash and Erie Canal from Junction, OH to Toledo, OH was joined to the Miami

In southern Indiana there was not enough water available to maintain a depth of 4 feet in a canal any wider than 40 feet at the top

Extension Canal in 1843. On March 14, 1849 the Ohio Legislature renamed the Miami, Miami Extension, and Wabash and Erie from Junction to Toledo the Miami and Erie Canal. (From *The History of the Ohio Canals: Their Construction, Cost, Use and Partial*

*Abandonment* by Fred J. Heer of Columbus, 1905.)

Since there is no date accompanying the Rules and Specifications pamphlet, the above facts lead us to believe that these rules and specifications were for the canal being built from Fort Wayne to the State Line or for areas where there was sufficient water to

keep the proper water depth in the canal. In southern Indiana there was not enough water available to maintain a depth of 4 feet in a canal any wider than 40 feet at the top. Even by using water from the Eel River Feeder, Birch Creek Reservoir, Splunge Creek Reservoir and Pigeon Creek Reservoir, the water was often not deep enough for navigation.

The contractors were given leeway to adjust to the local terrain. Where the canal ran along a steep bank they could narrow the channel and make the towpath higher. An example of this would be the narrow channel cut through the stone at Fountain, IN near the Portland Arch. It was so narrow that boats could not pass one another. The rock was cut and put into the Wabash River to build up the very high towpath. They also could raise banks and widen widths such as at locks and

basins where wider turning areas were needed.

Any changes made to the specifications had to first be approved by the canal commissioner or superintendent. He had to take into consideration the cost of such changes, the prevention of bank washouts (safety), and the volume of water required to maintain the prescribed depth.

The term  
"imperishable,"  
which they  
used, means  
solid, stable soil  
through which  
water could not  
seep.

The Mucking and Ditching specifications were made to insure that the canal banks would be solid and free from

debris that could rot and cause breaches in the canal. The first thing done was to remove all vegetation that was in the path of the canal. This meant digging out the roots of all vegetable matter as well as removing it above ground level. These roots if left behind would rot and provide channels for seepage of water that could lead to the bank giving away (a breach).

The canal often had to cross unstable soil such as when it crossed sand or swamp muck. The specifications called for a ditch to be constructed through these areas below where each bank would be built and the unsuitable soil thus removed. The ditch was to be at the very least 10 feet wide. Instead of thinking of it as a ditch, which one generally assumes is to drain off water, think of it as a ten foot wide trench dug down below the surface of the land until bedrock or stable soil was reached. The

term "imperishable," which they used, means solid, stable soil through which water could not seep. This trench was to run the length of the works until good solid soil was again found. This trench was then filled with good/imperishable soil. The towpath or berm bank was built on top of the filled trench with additional stable soil. The soil was then compacted and a water tight barrier created.

As the trench (ditch) was being dug, it was always to be 50 feet in advance of the route of the towpath or berm bank.

Consider the amount of work done over miles of terrain. A tremendous expenditure of effort was needed when they dug through stable soil and built up banks on either side of the canal. But in areas of unstable soil, an even greater effort was necessary to remove the soil and debris before any building could be done. Then good soil was brought in to fill the trench and to build the banks. All of this soil was moved using small two-wheeled carts which were easy to fill and dump but required many trips to the site and back. It boggles the mind to think of canal workers and their mules transporting good soil through a huge swamp before reaching the path of the canal.

As the trench (ditch) was being dug, it was always to be 50 feet

As the trench (ditch) was being dug, it was always to be 50 feet in advance of the route of the towpath or berm bank.

in advance of the route of the towpath or berm bank. This allowed the commissioner or superintendent to check to make sure that a solid foundation was reached before filling and building on top of it. The trench

was also required to extend 5 feet beyond the end of a contractor's finished section. This allowed another contractor to join his section to it and it would be watertight. If the section before his was finished first, he did not have to build the extension. He simply ran his section up against that of the other contractor.

During the 1830s and 1840s canal engineers sought a firm foundation on which to construct

the canal. Similarly, in the 1990s, a firm foundation for building an interstate highway and its off ramps was needed. This led to the unearthing of the Gronauer Lock. Highway crews were in the process of removing unstable soil from the ditch beside U.S. 24 (the former Wabash & Erie Canal) when they hit the Gronauer lock remains. They said the lock had to be removed because it might decay and cause the road bed to sink. Once two thirds of the lock remnants were removed and the good condition of the timbers noted, it was determined that the north cribs were stable enough to be left where they were located. The lock site and canal ditch were then filled with "imperishable" material and the road built.

Similarly, in the 1990s, a firm foundation for building an interstate highway and its off ramps was needed. This led to the unearthing of the Gronauer Lock.



*Until next issue*



*Happy  
Canawlin!*



# 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.

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