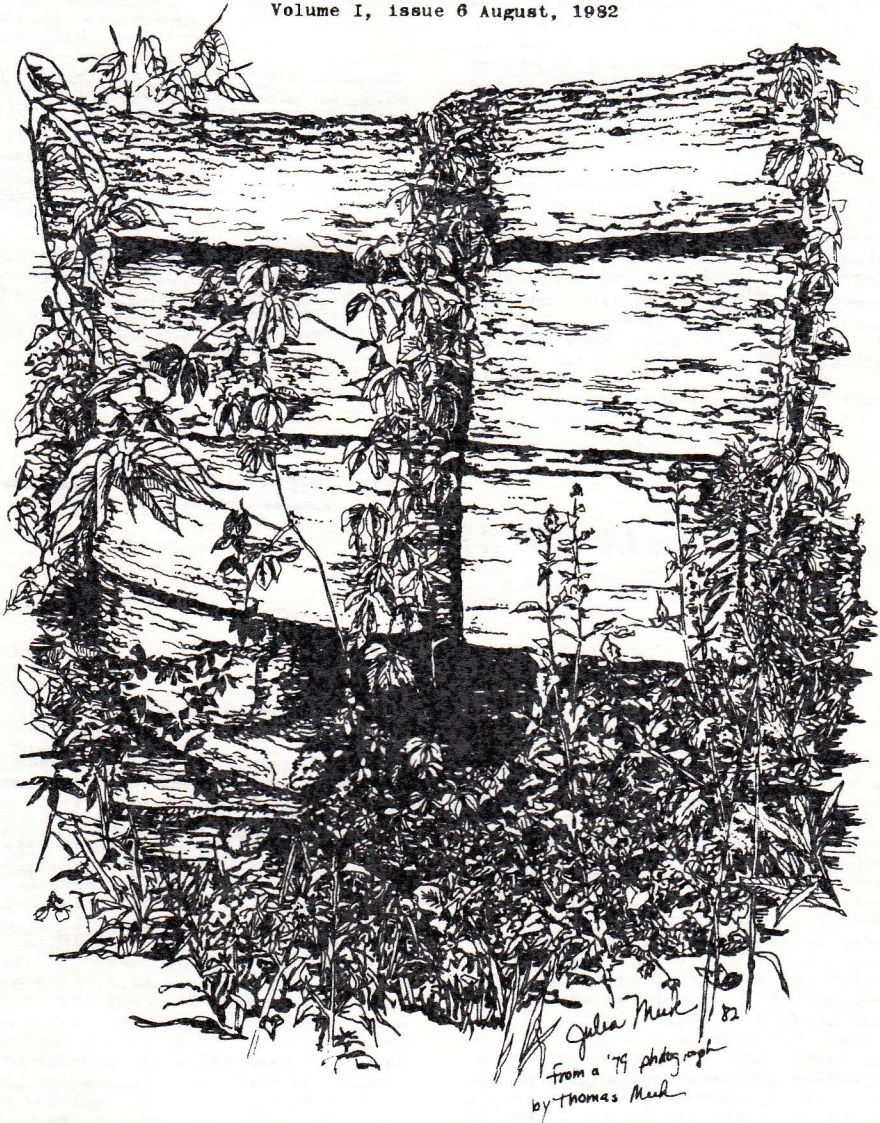
INDIANA WATERWAYS

Volume I, issue 6 August, 1982



Groove for stop-planks at upper end
of Kerr Lock, Lagro, Indiana

Society Plans Whitewater Tour

The Canal Society of Indiana is planning an excursion to the Whitewater Canal and the restored canal town of Metamora, Indiana on the weekend of October 16th and 17th. Details were, at this writing, being worked out, but here is a tentative schedule:

Saturday Afternoon: For ambitious outdoor—loving canawlers, a hike from Laurel Feeder dam to Metamora, along the towpath of the Whitewater Canal.
For non-hikers; Visits to Huddleston House, and other historic sites in Connersville area.

Saturday Evening: Dinner (probably at Holiday Inn) followed by a short business meeting and speaker to give us background on the Whitewater Canal and the Whitewater Valley Area.

Sunday Morning: Walking-tour of historic Connersville in late morning, followed by a train ride along the towpath of the Whitewater Canal to Metamora.
Free time in Metamora (Canalboat and Gristmill tickets included in tour price)
Return by train to Connersville. We may be able to stop at some of the more interesting spots such as the Laurel Feederdam and some lock-sites on the return trip.

A special mailing will be sent out (In fact, you may have already recieved it by the time you read this), giving the final plans as reservations are confirmed, etc. We hope that many of you will attend. The WhitewaterValley is very picturesque and scenic, especially in the Fall of the year, when the foliage is every bit as lovely as the famous Brown County.
Come see for yourself; We think that you'll agree.

from: SKETCHES OF THE WABASH VALLEY

by J.Wesley Whicker
Attica, IN 1916

(We are grateful to Connie Wick, of Lafayette, for this material)

I remember my uncle, George C. Worthington, and John McKnight, who died recently, at Veedersburg, built a scow on land that was afterwards owned by my father. I was very much interested in the construction of this boat and when they finished it they called in the neighbors to turn it up-side-down to calk the bottom; I watched the process with great interest. They calked it with hot tar and some kind of lint, dipping the lint into the hot tar and driving it into the cracks of the bottom. I was present when this boat was launched and watched them lay down the plank and slide the boat into the canal. Mr.McKnight had a daughter by the name of Aetney, who now lives somewhere in Minnesota, and this boat was named the "Aetney" for Mr.McKnight's daughter. So far as I know, this is the last boat built for use on the old Wabash & Erie canal.

The merchant boats were much larger than the scows and were built with a cabin on the back and a place on the back of the cabin for the pilot to stand as he worked the steering gear. My father purchased a boat of Douglas Trott; it was called the "Hoosier Boy". In the spring of 1883, the men of the neighborhood east of Attica hitched a team to this boat and went to Covington to pay their taxes, and I went with them. This was my first trip to the county seat. I remember that my father talked with three men on this trip, one of whom was Homer Sewell. John Glascock was teaching in The Bend school near the Nebecker place, and Frank Glascock,a relative of his, was with us. We stopt for a short time and Mr. Glascock went to the schoolhouse to visit with his relative.The other man was Mr. Haupt. John Glascock is still living and each of these men looked exactly the same to me the last time I saw them as they did the first time.

Homer Sewell, after I came to manhood, became one of my best friends, and we often talked of our first meeting. I was not yet ten years of age and was frail in health, and my family and the doctors had concluded that I could not weather the storm. However, owing to the truthfulness of the old adage that the good die young, even then I was assured of a ripe old age.

In the fall of that year I made two trips to Lafayette with my father on the "Hoosier Boy." On the first trip we took cordwood and the entire neighborhood had cordwood on that boat. It was body hickory and brot $7.50 a cord in Lafayette. A few weeks later I took another trip and we took potatoes. The weather was cold. We covered the potatoes with straw and reached Lafayette all right, about six o'clock in the evening. That night it froze and the next morning I helpt in gathering the frozen potatoes off the top of the cargo. The men worked very rapidly to get the potatoes out of the boat before night. About five o'clock they finished unloading and we started back home at once for fear that the canal would freeze over. We got as far as Riverside, aiming to take the boat to near where Ignatz Pritscher lived, but there was so much ice in the canal that we left the boat in the "widewater"at Riverside, about where the Independence road now crosses the canal. So far as I know this was the last trip taken by a canal boat to Lafayette. Soon after this the canal went down and my father's boat stood for many years in the"widewater at Riverside. We finally tore it to pieces and used it in making cribs and bins about the barn.

It is recorded in a history of Fountain county publisht in 1883 that the last boat to clear from Covington for Lafayette was the "Goodman," on Nov. 13, 1875. The last boat that cleared thru from Lodi to Toledo was the Rocky Mountuai, under command of David Webb, which toucht at Attica October 26, 1872.

Near Flint there was what was called "The Aqueduct" where Flint creek ran under the canal and then there were locks at Flint and at Attica; in going to Covington we went thru the locks at Attica, and in going to Lafayette we went thru the locks at Flint. The Attica lock was located just back of where the old handle factory building now stands.

I remember very well of the boat being pulled into these locks and the gates shut back of them, and the water being turned in from above, until the boats were raised from the level of the water below the lock to the level of the water above the lock. In coming the other way they would let the gates down first, fill the locks with water, run the boat in, raise the lower gates and let the boats go down to the lower level. The canal was level from one lock to another and the fall of the canal was all taken up in the locks.

I would stand at the back of the boat and watch the fish swim from under it, and then there was a green moss that grew in the canal in long ropy strings, and as a boy I enjoyed very much watching those strings floating behind the boat.

The town of Riverside was named for the Riverside schoolhouse, now known as the Fix schoolhouse. They used to have subscription school there in the summer, and when the boats would come up or down the canal the teacher would let us children go to the canal and watch them pass. This was a great treat for us and we kept a sharp look-out for the boats.

The farmers along the water-way would have rafts made of two logs fastened together, and with a pole one could get on these logs and push across the canal. Every farm had a raft.

In summer the canal would be full of frogs and turtles and always full of mudcat and sunfish, with a few other varieties. Of an evening one could easily catch in a few hours a large string of fish. I used to nearly keep the family in fish in the spring and fall. The canal ran close to the Riverside school and our principal sport in winter was skating on its glassy surface. As quick as school was dismissed for recess or noon every pupil gathered his skates and with the teacher made for the canal to skate during the short period of rest. In the summer we boys would hunt the gravwlly fords and bathe and swim.

While the canal had its uses and its pleasures it had its faults too. The mosquitoes were a great pest along this waterway, and every fall one shook with ague. We were not as well acquainted with the mosquito and his habits then as now, and did not attribute the malaria to his bite, but with the passing of the canal the malaria and ague passed from the Wabash Valley.

The canal company kept a dredge and a gang of men with it, who worked continually dredging the canal to keep ti deep enough so that the boats could travel on it. I became

well acquainted with the family that operated the dredge and spent many a pleasant day with the other boys on the dredge, watching it dip mud from the bottom of the canal. The good lady whose husband was the boss of the dredge cooked for the hands and when we boys wanted to spend the day watching the work she was very kind to us. Often she would have a soft shell turtle out of which she would make soup and we were very fond of this. With fish and turtle soup she won the affection of every boy along the canal.

As the Wabash Railroad improved the canal grew less and less of service until at last the bondholders closed their mortgage and the canal was sold in the United States Circuit Court. The Fountain county right-of way was purchased by Nebecker & McManomy and they sold it to the Wabash Railroad company from the towpath to the low water mark of the canal. That portion of it below the low water mark was sold to the farmers along the way, who finally cut the banks and let the water out and it eventually reverted to farm land. When they cut the "widewater" near the Pritscher place, the farmers in that locality took out tons of fish.

Had man known of the gasoline engine the canal could have been maintained and made profitable for boats propelled by gas engines, and the mosquito pest could have been overcome with oil. I believe that this waterway would have been of value enough to the commonwealth in different ways to have justified its maintenance.

The flint from the flint bar was hauled to Lafayette for the improvement of that city's streets on canal boats from the opening of the canal until it went out of use. They would often gather boat loads of boulders and haul them to Lafayette andAttica to make gutters for the streets.

There was a very dense undergrowth in a swamp near Flint; Henry Butler was driving the horse on the tow path that pulled a boat for my uncle James Whicker. One evening when they passed this swamp they heard a panther screaming. Henry's hair stood on end and he ordered a halt, but my uncle told him to drive right on as no one was in danger but Henry himself, as the animal would either have to fly or swim to get the rest of them. Henry obeyed and as the panther probably was scared as badly as he was he is still with us today to verify this incident.

Abandoned Canals:
A Special Habitat for Native Plants

Written & Illustrated by Julia Meek

Indiana's canals are a source of much outdoor fun and activity. Ruin hunting and serious exploring are best in early Spring andlate Fall, when foliage is at a bare minimum. But the lush growth that takes over the canal bed by early June is no reason to put away the cameras and picnic baskets. The Spring and Summer months produce a beautiful, wild mass of foliage that may impair exploring, but certainly makes a great setting for hikes, picnics and just plain enjoying the out-doors.

This striking display of native plants has pleased and fascinated me for all the years we've been canawling. At first, I was puzzled by the wide variety of plants, especially wild flowers, growing in such a condensed area. Then I began realizing that the actual composition of the canal bed produced several artificial growing situations that welcomed a diverse range of plants not normally found near each other. Speaking as a plant lover, (not a botanist), I would like to describe some of what you'll find growing there, and why, in hopes that you'll

TOADFLAX

explore this lovely, wild treat for yourself.

When the canals were built (in the 1830's-1850's), there was a thorough clearing of trees and scrub in the general area, followed by the digging of a shallow, wide ditch for the channel. The soil was irregular (often loose and porous) and the channel had to be faced with clay to prevent leaking. The banks, especially the towpath, were built high and topped with gravel to insure stability and good drainage. From then until the mid 1870's, the canal bed was maintained, and the surrounding area was mowed and kept cleared for canal traffic. When the canals fell into disuse, large portions of the right-of-way were bought up by power companies and rail road companies, or used for road bed. The cleared land and solidly built towpath were a big head start for these particular building purposes. Much of the remaining land was sold as farm land, and the canal bed itself often provided, with little alteration, drainage for surrounding fields. These uses have kept long stretches of canal line undeveloped and free of large trees, and kept the soil conditions unchanged. Even the shallow ditch-shape remains. The originally disturbed soil conditions probably quite rapidly attracted a variety of plants, mostly perennials spread by seeds. And the abrupt blend of soil features invited a unique combination of neighboring plants.

In the canal bed itself, the clay lining created moist to wet conditions, welcoming wet-land plants and low river-bank plants that like a lot of water. Parts of the canal bed that have been altered for better drainage, and the inner sides of the canal banks still retain quite a bit of moisture, and seem to be most favorable to high river-bank plants and the ditch plants that need some moisture. The tops of the banks and the wide towpath are usually very sunny, well-drained areas, and invite a large variety of hardy, grow-anywhere plants, including many we know as prairie and pasture plants. And a number of plants, usually rather unceremoniously referred to as waste or wasteland plants, actually thrive in the limestone gravel of the canal banks, and even grow well amid the stone ruins.

An early and distinctive perennial plant to look for is the Horsetail or Shave Grass. Since it will grow in any wet place and flourishes in a water-clay surrounding, it often fills the canal bed. It has a reedy, bamboo-like appearance. The tall, thin stems are hollow and ridged, with tiny grey sheathes at the joints. The fruit is in a cone-like spike on the end of the stem. These shoots appear early in the spring and quickly die off, soon to be replaced by a clump of stems, usually with naked points.

One of the showiest spring blooms in wet areas is the Wild Iris or Blue Flag. This lovely, familiar, blue-purple flower (well named after the Rainbow Goddess, Iris), has fleshy creeping rootstock (rhizomes), rather than bulbs, as most cultivated varieties do. It spreads itself very well in favorable growing conditions.

Another crowder plant in the canal bottom is the tall, spiked Cat Tail. The perennial plants emerge in April and grow rapidly through May. (One of the earliest exploration foilers) It often grows eight to fifteen feet tall.

The bane of anyone on foot is the Great Stinging Nettle. It is a dull green plant two to four feet high, with heart-shaped leaves armed with nearly invisible, very irritating, small prickles. The flowers are tiny and green in long, branched clusters. The sting of nettles makes this plant worth knowing in order to avoid. An on-the-spot remedy, if you have to learn this plant the hard way, is rubbing the nettle juice itself on the irritated area. The young shoots are harmless, and are, in fact, a tasty source of Vitamin C when prepared and eaten as a green. But from June until the first good frost—Look out!

Blue Vervain is a tall, elegant plant that blooms midsummer to Fall. This perennial plant has several stems with coarse, serrated leaves, and tiny purplish-blue flowers arranged in long erect spikes. It is hardy and will grow most anywhere on the bank-sides, but since it loves naturally moist soil, the largest and showiest blooms, often two to four feet high, will be found near the bottom of the canalbed.

Woody Nightshade is a shrubby plant that also thrives in moist banks and low, damp soils. The base of the plant is sturdy and covered with ashy-green bark. The long, slender branches straggle, and will grow many feet in length when supported by other plants. The small flowers are easy to recognize—small purple, star-shaped blossoms, with thin protruding yellow centers, arranged in loose, drooping clusters. Woody Nightshade blooms all summer, and produces small berries which are deep red when ripe. (These berries are poisonous.)

Bouncing Bet, or Soapwort, is a perennial that tolerates all soils, and prefers sunny, dry, well—drained slopes. The erect stems, eight to twelve inches high, have long, oval leaves and clusters of pink flowers that are five-petaled and roughly star-shaped. The long lasting flowers bloom all summer. The plant contains soap-like substances, and the name Bouncing Bet, is an old fashioned name for a washerwoman.

An interesting canal plant is the Great Mullein. It is biennial, the first year's growth being a rosette of large leaves, six to ten inches long, two to three inches across, covered on both sides with a dense, furry mass of hairs. (This gives the leaves a very soft, velvety feel, and subsequently one of its most amusing nicknames: Indian Toilet-paper) The following Spring, a solitary, thick stem emerges. The stem, which grows three to five feet high, bears a thick, densely crowded flower spike usually a foot long. It is covered with yellow, irregular, cup-like blossoms which open irregularly through the Summer.

One of the most prolific canal perennials is Catnip. It grows well anywhere, thrives in well-drained soil, and spreads rapidly. Its erect branched stems are covered with downy, heart-shaped, serrated leaves. The leaves have green tops and white bottoms, giving the plant a dusty, grey-green appearance. The flowers appear from June through September. They grow in short spikes of tiny blossoms that are creamy white, dotted with purple. Being of the mint family, the leaves emit a pleasant, minty odor when bruised. Warning: Cats definitely recognize this odor, so cat owners are advised to snip a sprig or two to distract their pet, to preserve clothes and their skin!

Wild Raspberries or Blackberries also like a moist but well-drained soil, and are, (lucky us,) a very hardy canal perennial. This shrubby plant has serrated, heart-shaped leaves and is covered with stickers. It flower in May and June, and produces luscious, deep purple berries in July. Blackberries love sunlight, do especially well in clay loam, and quickly take over large areas of canal bank.

A beautiful curiosity plant is the Teasel. This biennial has a tall, rigid prickly stem, large pairs of leaves at the base, and a cylindrical flower head. They are, unfortunately, perhaps best known as an accent in dried flower arrangements. It is unfortunate, because the bloom is lovely and the flower growth is very interesting. The flower heads are a mass of semi-stiff spines. Each head is enclosed by narrow green bracts arising in a ring at the base of the head and following its line. When the head flowers, the tiny purple florets show in a ring about half way down the head, and then spread in rings, which move upwards and downwards simultaneously.

A very popular plant is the Prairie Cone-flower. It is a native of the western prairies that has spread rapidly through the midwest. It is a perennial that likes sun, is drought resistant and tolerates poor soil, so we find it growing crazily on the

banks and tow-path. This daisy-type flower has a brown, cone-shaped center which is surrounded by yellow-golden petals arranged in rays. It has coarse, dark green leaves, grows two to four feet high and blooms all Summer.

We find several kinds of thistles along the canal, since they thrive on dry banks, gravelly soils, and limestone. The tall branched stems, two to five feet high, and the coarse, dark green leaves are spiny, and the flowers are a brush-like crimson bloom. They have a delicate, sweet fragrance, and bloom through July and August.

The most fragrant plant, I think, is Chamomile. It grows tufts of leaves and flowers up to a foot high. The stems are freely branching, covered with thread-like leaves that give the whole plant a delicate, feathery appearance. The small flowers grow solitary on long stems. They have yellow centers and a fringe of white petal. It is noted for its sweet scent of apples. (Chamomile, in Greek, means ground apples) When hiking, especially on a warm sunny day, the scent is a real treat. Chamomile is a perennial that loves dry, gravelly soil, and spreads rapidly over the bank tops.

Toadflax or Wild Snap Dragons prefer dry soil too, especially limestone, and spread quite rapidly. The plant has several slender stems, not too branched, one to two feet high. The stems are covered with many long, narrow pale blue-green leaves. The stems hold spikes of showy yellow blooms. The pale yellow flowers are shaped like snap dragons, but with long spurs, and the lower lip of the blossom is orange. This gives it its popular nickname—Butter and Eggs. This perennial blooms late June to October.

This is but a small sampling of plants to look for and enjoy. Dog Roses, Yarrow, many members of the Sunflower or Daisy family, Oyster Plant, wild grapes, and many native grasses crowd the canal, and the list goes on and on. From the first warm days of Spring until the heavy frosts, the canal lines are alive with beautiful, interesting greenery. The mixture of plant-life is fantastic, and the wild flowers, Spring through Fall, are a special treat.

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Our First Year of Publication

This, the sixth issue of INDIANA WATERWAYS, marks the first year of its publication. It's been an exciting year; lots of work and lots of fun, too. In the Summer of 1981, when we decided to start this publication, we thought that a magazine devoted to the history of water transportation in Indiana would be favorably recieved, but we did not know for certain. We determined to publish the magazine for one year, and then to decide whether we wished to continue, on the basis of the interest shown by the public. I am happy to say that, after the first few months, the question has not even been brought up. The response has been quite good; the Canal Society of Indiana has been "launched" and INDIANA WATERWAYS has been made its official newsletter.

We are especially grateful to the persons who have written articles and sent in material for publication. Without them, the magazine could not succeed. We ask our readers to continue sending material to us. The variety of sources is what keeps INDIANA WATERWAYS fresh and interesting.

We feel that we've made a lot of progress since the first issue in October, 1981. Improvements have been made in legibility of the type, quality of printing, and the overall layout and design of the work. We hope to continue with more such improvements in the future. (At present, our typesetting is being done on a vintage 1918 Oliver Typewriter.)

All in all, in spite of its faults, we're proud of our little magazine. We've come a long way in the first year, and although we have "a ways to go yet", we'rs having a good time of it, and hope that you are, also.

TM

Jesse Lynch Williams, Canal Engineer 1807-1886

He was born in Stokes County, North Carolina on May 6, 1807. In May, 1814, his parents moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, and then to Warren County Ohio. In 1819, they moved to Wayne County, Indiana.

In 1824, at the age of 17, Williams worked as a rodman on a surveying crew of the Ohio Engineering Corps, then making a preliminary survey of the Miami and Erie Canal between Cincinnati and Maumee Bay on Lake Erie. In 1828, at age 21, he was appointed to make the final location of the Ohio Erie Canal section between Licking Summit near Newark, Ohio and Chillicothe, Ohio; and later he supervised construction of a division of the canal in the Scioto Valley of Southern Ohio.

He married Susan Creighton of Chillocothe, Ohio, (the daughter of an early Congressman) in 1831.

In 1832, Williams was appointed by the Board of Commissioners of the Wabash and Erie Canal as Chief Engineer to take charge of the location and construction of that canal. He moved to Fort Wayne at that time.

In 1834, Williams oversaw the survey ing of the line of the Wabash and Erie Canal east of Fort Wayne and from LaFayette to Terre Haute in addition to the Whitewater Canal and others.

Under the Internal Improvements Act of 1836, Williams was appointed Chief Engineer of the State of Indiana with responsibilities covering all of the projects approved under that measure.

The Chief Engineer was required to visit the construction sites and this required a great deal of travel mostly by horseback, in addition to long hours at the drawing-table. He was a member of the Board of Internal Improvements from 1840 to 1842. In 1842, a Legislative Committee from both Indiana Houses, investigated charges of Williams conspiring with David Burr to lay out canal routes more favorable to their own land speculation interests than those of the people of Indiana. Williams was completely exonerated of all charges.

In February, 1854, he was appointed Chief Engineer of the Fort Wayne and Chicago Railroad (later the Pennsylvania, now Conrail. He served on the Board of Directors of that railroad at least until 1880.

In July, 1864, Williams was appointed by President Lincoln a Government Director of the Union Pacific Railroad and remained in that position until 1869.

On January 19th, 1869, Williams was appointed Reciever ao the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad and supervised 200 miles of its construction.

In 1842-43, Allen Hamilton and Jesse L. Williams built the City Mills located on the West side of Clinton Street, in Fort Wayne, immediately North of the canal on lot 25, original plat (now Clinton & Superior, SW corner). In 1843, the mill commenced running. Williams continued in this business with a succession of partners: Pliny Hoagland, Mr. Comstock,

Chris. Tresselt--until around 1870, when he, perhaps seeing the future of canal-water powered mills, retired from that business.

Williams was a member of the original Board of Trustees which established Lindenwood Cemetery in 1859. He was laid to rest in Lindenwood in 1886.

T.Meek

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CANALBOAT PRIMER:a Review

A CANALBOAT PRIMER

by the Staff of the Canal Museum
available from: Constance A. Eustis
The Canal Museum Shop
Weighlock Building
Erie Blvd. East
Syracuse, New York 13202
37 pages, 11"x8 1/2"
$4.95 at shop; $6.20 postpaid

This book gives a survey of the types of canalboats which traveled the canals of New York from their beginnings in 1817 through the closing of the Erie Canal in 1918.
A general description of the various kinds of canalboats that were built for the New York canals is followed by a detailed look at two types of canalboats-the New York State Repair Scow and the Laker. Both the construction and launching of canalboats are discussed in words and photographs.

Included in the PRIMER are drawings of canalboat remains which now lie on the bottom of the Finger Lakes. The drawings were made by divers of the Underwater Archaeology Association of Elmira,New York and were produced during the Canalboat Archaeological Needs Assesment and Location Survey (C.A.N.A.L.S.) funded under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

The book also contains statistical tables from Whitford's History of the Canal System of the State of New York (1905). Finally, the CANALBOAT PRIMER contains an excellent bibliography which lists much helpful information for further study.

Why would anyone living in Indiana want to pay $6.20 for a book about New York canal boats?

First, except in fairly rare instances, such as the early Morris Canal, the sizes of the canals and their boats were quite uniform, at least during the period of the construction of Indiana's canals. Indeed, the dimensions of the Wabash and Erie Canal were fixed at the size of the original Erie Canal (The prism being 40 feet wide at the waterline, and 28 feet wide at the bottom, with four feet of water). The idea, of course, was to allow the same boats to use the entire canals system, including the waterways of Ohio,Pennsylvania and other states. (Readers of INDIANA WATERWAYS will note the article on page 5 of the June, 1982 issue which is a reprint of a news article telling of the construction of two new canal boats at Utica, New York, for use on the Wabash & Erie.) The route taken by these packets on their trip West is of more than casual interest, since the most obvious route would be across Lake Erie to Toledo. How the flat-water canal barges may have fared on the treacherous waves of Lake Erie, and the extent of shipment of goods over that route is the subject of present research and a forthcoming article in INDIANA WATERWAYS. But I digress.

My second point is somewhat more obvious, and it is that although one may be mainly interested in the canals of a particular region, the American canals tended to function, if not as a complete hole,then certainly as a somewhat disconnected system, and therefore it is misleading to cut off one section of this system from the others.

The CANALBOAT PRIMER is packed with interesting and useful information, with a positive wealth of diagrams and photographs. It is attractive and very well laid out, and is well worth the price.

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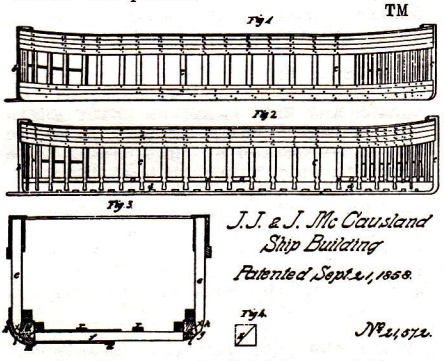

Patent drawing for construction of canalboats to improve stability. Kingston & Esopus (D & H Canal) from N.Y.S. Historical Association.

(from:A CANALBOAT PRIMER 1/2 size. Also, many fine photographs)

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