

INDIANA WATERWAYS

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Jules Mink
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The wooden aqueduct of the summit of the Miami and Erie Canal in Lockington, Ohio, showing interior of trough undergoing repairs ca. 1900.
(original photograph courtesy of Terry Wright)

HISTORIC CANAL PRESERVATION IN SOUTHWESTERN OHIO

by Terry D. Wright

(Although the following article deals with an Ohio canal, not an Indiana one, it has a distinct bearing on canal preservation efforts everywhere. It also illustrates the almost total community involvement which is necessary for a successful canal preservation project.)

The Great Miami River Corridor Committee of Miami and Shelby Counties began in 1975. The project's roots are along the abandoned Miami and Erie Canal and the scenic Great Miami River. The River Corridor is a volunteer group of delegates and alternates from: cities, villages, Miami and Shelby Counties, Park Districts, Chambers of Commerce, the Miami Conservancy District, Shelby County Regional Planning Commission and the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission. There are paid coordinators for Miami and Shelby Counties and a paid Director. The River Corridor has progressed through its eight years of existence constantly promoting a threefold philosophy

That three-part philosophy is:
to conserve the integrity of the floodplain, preserve the history along the Great Miami River and promote recreation along that beautiful waterway.

I would like to deal with only one aspect, concerning the second philosophical point of the River Corridor in this article, namely: *To preserve the history along the Great Miami River.*

The Great Miami River extends from Indian Lake, near Lakeview, Ohio to the Ohio River close to the Indiana-Ohio State Line. Indian Lake, the source of the Great Miami River, was a small natural lake that was greatly enlarged to provide water for the Loramie Summit of the Miami and Erie Canal.

The Miami and Erie Canal paralleled the Great Miami River much of the way from Cincinnati to Toledo. Along the route, northward, the canal passes many historic towns and villages.

Such historic points of interest include Indian Agent Col. John Johnson's farm. In the 1750's, 6000 Indians were encamped at the farm to keep them from joining the French or British. Today, the farm complex, with a historical Indian museum, is operated by the Ohio Historical Society. Other features such as the site of Fort Pickawillany, an old brewery, and pioneer industries dot the way through Miami and Shelby Counties along the canal.

Today it is understood that the Miami and Erie Canal could not be reopened in its entirety because of county roads covering much of what was once the canal-bed and buildings sitting on top of many artifacts. Still, many canal remains are possible to rehabilitate for use of future generations.

The River Corridor Committee set to work on preserving the retrievable canal remains which were appreciated locally as a spectacular engineering feat.

The River Corridor used the now-defunct Youth Conservation Corps for many years to clean the six sets of locks at Lockington, Ohio, the summit of the Miami and Erie Canal (just North of Piqua in Shelby County). A Youth Conservation Corps grant was received from the State of Ohio and matched by cities and villages in the corresponding counties to sponsor the successful project. At the summit level, the River Corridor also sponsored a Tri-County Boy Scout Jamboree where scouts from Miami, Shelby and Darke Counties planted 50,000 tree seedlings which were purchased from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources by a local service organization.

Recently, a task force has been formed to determine the possibilities of stabilization for the locks at Lockington. The large cut limestone blocks are starting to move from position within the structure of the locks. The Lockington Lock Preservation Task Force

is spearheaded by the River Corridor and is made up of an architect, an engineer, historians and public relations individuals.

Twenty-five to thirty feet below the southern side of Lock No.5 in Lockington flows Loramie Creek. Before the devastation of the 1913 flood, a stable wooden aqueduct spanned the 'creek' that appears more like the Great Miami River, judging by its depth and current. Loramie Creek flows into the Great Miami River near the Johnson Farm, about three miles away. The Lockington aqueduct was destroyed and swept away in the 1913 flood. The foundation sits in Loramie Creek patiently awaiting another expansion to cross its historic limestone piers. The new span would carry hikers across a footbridge to visit Lock Number Six and continue toward the rewatered section of the Miami and Erie Canal at the Johnson Farm.

There, a blue and yellow canal boat, 'The General Harrison' is docked impressively against a background of green trees and flowering shrubs. The boat and fresh team of mules wait for their crew and passengers just as similar canal boats did in the late 1830's at this location. The River Corridor sponsors a canoe race each year during the Piqua Heritage Festival on this actual section of the Miami and Erie Canal, thereby educating people to the historic significance of that area.

Further south, on County Road 25 A, near Farrington, is Lock Number 10 of the Miami and Erie Canal. The lock is only 10% visible after having been used for many years as a dump site. The River Corridor coordinated clean up work with the Piqua Task Force of the River Corridor and Boy Scout Troop #295. One industrious scout decided to use the uncovering of the lock as an Eagle project. A local historical group is interested in marking the lock once it is exposed. The lock sits on Miami County-owned land.

Following the towpath south, between Piqua and Troy, Ohio, we find the only **2**

existing twin arch stone culvert in the area. The culvert stands on hospital-leased land owned by the Division of Public Works. The Twin Arch Stone Culvert, like the Lockington Locks, is on the National Register of Historic Places. When adjacent County Road 25A was widened a few years ago, the arches were in danger of being demolished.

Because of public awareness about possible demolition, alternate plans were discussed in order to save the arches. The result was that the new highway was moved ten feet to the west and the arches were rescued.

Once the arches were safe the Piqua Boy Scouts from Troop #295 were again called into action. The Scouts have kept the creek below the ca. 1830's stone arched culvert from build-up of silt and debris. Thus, Beetle Creek would not back up and overflow onto hospital ground. About thirty feet south, in the canal bed, the Youth Conservation Corps built a picnic shelter. Girl Scouts placed a picnic table, (purchased with revenue-sharing funds), inside the shelter. The Camp Fire Organization built and placed Wood Duck boxes and Bluebird houses in the surrounding nature area. The Camp Fire Organization then landscaped the area with varieties of flowers. All of this work was coordinated through the efforts of the River Corridor.

About six miles south of Troy, in Tipp City, is Lock number 15. This well-preserved lock on the Miami and Erie Canal is next to the old Tipp Roller Mill. The River Corridor again assisted by securing revenue-sharing funds and, with city assistance, had the historic canal lock, located on public land, cleared and cleaned.

Additionally, the River Corridor has developed a slide program concerning the Miami and Erie Canal that is shown to area school children and service organizations. Students will be educated and service clubs can become interested in a particular project in this manner.

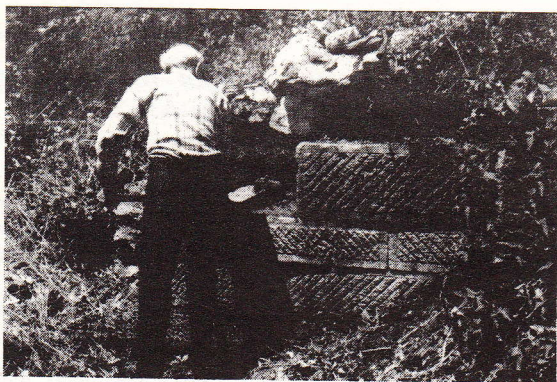


Photo: courtesy Terry D. Wright

Piqua Task Force member clearing the Farrington Lock (Lock No. 10 on the Miami and Erie Canal) just south of Piqua.

Recently, many cities along the canal have formed National Register Historical Districts which assist in securing the integrity of the area and history of the canal system.

The America the Beautiful Fund, in Washington, D.C., has presented loans to local historical societies to print out-of-date historical canal maps. The maps were then sold with the profit going to the historical organization to preserve canal history. The loan was then repaid without interest.

These are just a few of the many ways in which the River Corridor Committee of Miami and Shelby Counties is striving to preserve the remaining canal artifacts in Miami and Shelby Counties along the Miami and Erie Canal.

(TERRY D. WRIGHT is the Miami County Coordinator for the Great Miami River Corridor Committee of Miami and Shelby Counties, Ohio. Mr. Wright is also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Canal Society of Ohio, and a member of the Canal Society of Indiana.)



Twin Arch Stone Culvert between Troy and Piqua, Ohio on the Miami and Erie Canal. Located next to County Road 25-A.

Photo by Terry D. Wright

THE WHITEWATER CANAL CLEAN-UP PROJECT or: 'CANOES NOW, PACKET-BOATS LATER!'

by Thomas Meek

It was about 10:30 AM on Saturday, April ninth, when David Freund pulled his van into the parkinglot at the White-water Canal Feeder-dam near Laurel, Indiana. With him were his wife, Linda, and Thomas and Julia Meek, all from Fort Wayne, where we had started out earlier that morning. We were met by Paul Baudendistel and Dan Goetcheus who had waited in the rain with the four canoes since about 9:00 that morning. (The canoes were generously lent to the Canal Society by the Morgan Canoe Livery of Brookville, Ind.)

The first words Paul spoke to us were: 'Well, do you want to call this thing off?' 'Heck, No!' was the instant reply. Paul was grinning happily when he asked: 'Do you want to sit around here for a while, or start work?'

We crawled out of the van and into the fresh, cool, damp air. Shoes and clothing were changed, tools rounded up, and everything loaded into three of the canoes. David and Linda took one, Thomas and Julia the second, and Paul started out alone in the third canoe, to be joined by Dan after the latter drove to Metamora with the extra canoe and the trailer, and was ferried back to meet us by Carol Auman, our 'support crew'.

Our task was relatively simple: to pull the trees and branches out of the canal and up onto the bank. Our tools were simple also: one brush-hook, one axe, one tubular-steel handled 'buck saw', one mitre-box backsaw and about twenty feet of 3/4 inch rope. Paul Baudendistel also brought the most ingenious and useful tool, which was a large iron hook attached firmly to the end of a ten foot pole. This was a most useful and efficient tool, used for hooking debris which was in the water and pulling it to the bank. Paul says that similar tools were used to pull debris from the locks in the

old days. I highly recommend the use of such a device to anyone contemplating a similar canal-cleaning project, and I only wish that we had brought four of them.

Our methods were to hook or just grab smaller branches, work them to shore, and pull them out. For larger branches, we would sometimes attach the rope and haul them to shore, where they were cut up with the saw and taken out in pieces. Sometimes we had to cut off sections in order to get them down to a manageable size. We usually attached the rope to the branch so that it could be retrieved when it had been cut free.

The work was hard, and the weather was cool and damp, but in front of us was a canal often partially or completely blocked, and behind us was a canal which was open and easily canoeable.

The worst blockage came about half-way through our day. A good-sized tree had fallen into the water and had been trapping floating logs and branches for some time. We all got out of the canoes and stood scratching our heads. 'Looks like we'll be here for awhile,' someone said. . . . Yep.

Dan Goetcheus grabbed the axe and balanced precariously on the shore end of the most formidable-looking tree in the jam. He started whacking away with a will, and the rest of us came out of our state of shock and fell to work. It was time to bring out our hole-card: two pairs of chest-high wading boots, lent to us by Canal Society members Dan and Sarah Jane Carmona. The Meeks donned these and waded into the four feet of cold water to attack the floating mass of logs and brush. David and Linda Freund and Paul Baudendistel worked on the banks of the canal hauling out everything they could get their hands or ropes or hooks on.

David, from time to time, would give a great roar and send some monstrous-looking log flying up the bank while the rest of us stood slack-jawed in wonder. Dave seemed to enjoy this, and indeed, it was very impressive.

True to the prediction, we were there for awhile. Can't say how long; (some things are best unknown) but we were there long enough to open up a hole through the jam which would fit a canoe. A couple of canoes, in fact. We were rather proud of that feat, and after that jam, nothing could discourage us. (Well, almost nothing.)

I nearly forgot to mention the seventh member of our crew, and he was such an energetic and willing worker that I must say a few words about him.

Shadow is a Metamora dog belonging to Dan Goetcheus (or perhaps it's the other way 'round). He's a handsome and friendly black fellow who smiles a lot and who might be a mixture of setter, collie, and black labrador, or your guess is as good as mine.

Perhaps you've read the stories about canal boatmen who trained their dogs to take the tow-ropes across the canal to a waiting team? I believe that Shadow is descended from that hardy stock. Shadow loves to carry sticks. He'll fetch them, but only Dan can get him to relinquish his hold. If anyone else should grab the stick, Shadow will stubbornly and powerfully tug away at the other end. I have little doubt that if we had tossed him one end of our rope and held onto the other, he would have pulled the canoes back upstream to the feeder dam!

Shadow was delighted that six humans were all playing his favorite game of *Stick* with him, and he pitched in with great energy. Unfortunately, he was not very methodical, and would drop his sticks back in the water as often as on the bank. Nevertheless, he was a constant source of inspiration and entertainment as well.

Everybody worked *very* hard; nobody complained much, and we accomplished what we set out to do, despite awful

weather and other setbacks. We were tired, aching and damp when we pulled the canoes out of the water at Metamora, but also satisfied and proud of what we had done. *The section of the Whitewater Canal between the Laurel Feederdam and the town of Metamora was now open to canoe navigation!*

In addition to the actual work-crew members, our sincere thanks to Carol Auman and Dave Kistler who provided transportation for canoes and personnel; to Dirk and Starla Morgan of Morgan's Canoe Rental at Brookville for the loan of four canoes and a canoe trailer; to Jim Moran who generously offered hospitality and lodgings at his Tipi Village near Metamora; to Ben Meek, Orville Freund, and Dan and Sarah Jane Carmona for the use of tools and equipment; and a special thanks to Paul Baudendistel who, after entertaining us on Saturday evening, spent Sunday afternoon driving the Fort Wayne bunch around Franklin County showing us the historic sites of Brookville, Oldenburg, the Whitewater Canal and much more.

We also thank those who were willing and eager to help, but who were unable to participate. Don't feel bad, folks; you'll get another chance.

EPILOGUE

On Sunday, April 24, Julia and I, along with Joel Hyde, who had been unable to come with us on the previous weekend, drove down to Metamora to remove the one big obstruction which had been left in the water at that time due to fatigue and approaching darkness. This was a large tree which had fallen right in the canal, with its top branches reaching nearly to the opposite side. It was just possible to get around the tree without portaging. We decided to remove as much as we could with the resources at hand. A chain-saw would have been handy for dealing with that monster, but we made a good showing with our little bucksaw and rope. We got most of the branches out of the water, but someone still needs to go into the water and cut off two six-

inch branches. We're still waiting for the water to warm up!

At the time of this writing (April 30), we recently learned that Shadow, our canine work-crew member, had developed a bad case of 'swimmer's ear', and is under veterinarian's orders to stay out of the canal for two weeks. For such a dedicated water-dog as Shadow, this is bad news, indeed, because it might involve the ultimate indignity of being tied up. We sympathize with Shadow, and hope that his jovial spirits will survive the ordeal.

-T.M.

STEAMBOATS ON INDIANA RIVERS

by Ben W. Meek

The first steam boat West of the Appalachians was the *New Orleans*, built at Pittsburgh by Robert Fulton and Robert Livingstone in 1810. It came down the Ohio as far as the Falls at Louisville and was stopped there by the shallow water. It was soon seen that the boats for use on the rivers must be built quite differently from those used in coastal trade in the East.

Captain Henry Shreve is credited with designing shallow draft hulls which were dish-pan flat, with a draft of 24 inches or less.² To navigate the smaller streams required smaller boats which 'could go over a pasture in a

which 'could go over a pasture in a heavy dew'. The first steamers were small boats about one hundred feet long with one deck and a small engine.

The average life of the boats was only about five years due to fires, hitting rocks, submerged logs and other boats. Boiler explosions also took a great toll of steamboats and passengers. The captains were careless in many cases, and the urge to race other boats in order to establish a reputation for speed seemed irresistible.³

On the weekend of May 8, a flash flood washed out between 150 and 160 feet of the Feeder Dam at Laurel, Indiana, the source of water for the restored section of the Whitewater Canal, effectively curtailing any canoeing for this season. We understand that bids are being taken for repairs to the dam, but it is not known at this time when the dam will be back in operation. It is believed, however, that enough water will be available to operate the Ben Franklin this summer.

Along the Ohio River, the Indiana towns of Lawrenceburg (at the foot of the Whitewater Canal), Vevay, Madison, New Albany, Jeffersonville and Evansville were all important steamboat towns.

Many steamboats were built at Madison, Indiana and in the Jeffersonville, New Albany, Louisville area. The Howard shipyards at Jeffersonville built some of the largest and finest boats in the Ohio and Mississippi trade. The famous *Rob't E. Lee*, the *J.M. White*, and the *James Howard*, as well as many other huge ships and many ferries, barges and tow boats.⁵

The first Wabash River steamboat was the *Florence*, docked in 1822 at the old flatboat yard in Terre Haute. More boats appeared each year on the Wabash, and by 1831 thirty-six boats had arrived in New Harmony from down river and twenty seven from above in one month. At the larger towns the trade was greater.⁶

There was considerable argument as to where the head of navigation was on the Wabash River. The Wabash and Erie Canal had set it at the mouth of the Tippecanoe River a few miles up from Lafayette, but Delphi, Logansport and Peru all claimed this honor.

Peru offered 15 barrels of whiskey to the first boat owner to make the round trip to Peru. In a spring freshet, a little steamboat *The Republican* almost got to Delphi but was stuck on a sand bar near that town; after several hours of labor the crew and passengers managed to get moving again. Then she stuck at the rapids seven miles below Logansport. Finally they pulled the boat into Logansport with a dozen yoke of oxen. There it sank and remained visible on the bottom for many years.

In 1835 with the help of another spring flood, the steamboat *Science* advertised that it would go from Lafayette to Logansport, Peru, and to Godfrey's village at the mouth of the Mississinewa River. Quite a few passengers went along for the one-day trip. They ran into sandbars too, but after much lightening of the load by removing the cargo and passengers, she finally got to Peru and passed to the mouth of the Mississinewa, visited with Chief Godfrey and made the trip back successfully. It is not recorded if the owners collected the whiskey that had been offered as a prize. This was the one and only steamboat trip above Logansport on the Wabash.⁷ The Wabash & Erie Canal feeder dam at Pittsburg had a steamboat lock but it was little used except by flatboats.⁸

(It seems that if the canal had stopped at Lafayette and the Wabash River had been used to get to the Ohio and the other rivers with steamboats, much time and money could have been saved. Can any of our readers tell us the reason for the extension?)

Indianapolis also had delusions about the White River, being a navigable stream, and that with a little bit of dredging and straightening of the river, the capitol could be a busy port. The story there is much the same as the Wabash; boats stuck on sandbars all Summer, chimneys and pilot-houses smashed by overhanging limbs. . . . Only one small steamer, the *O.P. Morton*, ever made the trip to Indianapolis

without mishap, and that took high water and good luck.⁹

The steamboats prospered in the areas of Indiana where they could navigate, until the 1850s when the railroads began to invade their territory. The rails were much faster for passenger travel and soon brought an end to the packet boats.¹⁰ Today only a few excursion boats and the Greene Line *DELTA QUEEN* carry passengers on the rivers. Much bulk freight is moved on the canalized rivers by huge barges pushed by motorized boats but there isn't much romance on the rivers these days.

- ¹ Howard, Robert West, *THE OHIO RIVER, THROUGHWAY FOR THE WEST* in *WATER TRAILS WEST* by The Western Writers of America, Garden City, N.Y. 1978 p. 51
- ² *ibid.* p.52
- ³ Fishbaugh, Charles Preston, *FROM PADDLE WHEELS TO PROPELLERS* Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, 1970 pp.17-27
- ⁴ Parsons, John; *A TOUR THROUGH INDIANA IN 1840*, edited by Kate Milner Rabb. Robert M. McBride & Co. New York 1920 pp.43,51,56,361,370
- ⁵ Fishbaugh, pp.77-92
- ⁶ Writers Program of the Work Projects Administration of the State of Indiana; *INDIANA, A GUIDE TO THE HOOSIER STATE*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1941 p.262
- ⁷ Stuart, Benj. F. *HISTORY OF THE WABASH AND VALLEY* pp.30-34 1925
- ⁸ *ibid.* pp.41-42
- ⁹ Leary
- ⁹ Leary, Edward A. *INDIANAPOLIS, THE STORY OF A CITY* Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc. Indianapolis, 1970 pp. 35-36
- ¹⁰ Fishbaugh, pp. 97-101

Boats on the St. Joseph River (Of the Lake)

The first keelboat on the St. Joseph River appeared about 1831. By 1833 there were ten or eleven keelboats carrying cargo between Three Rivers, Michigan, Elkhart and South Bend in Indiana and Niles, St. Joseph and

Benton Harbor in Michigan. Some of these keelboats were eighty feet long.

The first steamboat on the St. Joseph was the *Newburyport*. It made only one trip. It was a lake type boat and not constructed for river travel.

In 1833 the Matilde Barney,

In 1833 the *Matilde Barney*, a flat-bottom stern-wheeler, began trips over the same route. The *Davy Crockett* went into service the next year. Between

FIRST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CANAL SOCIETY OF INDIANA by Julia Meek

May 21st, 1983 marked the first anniversary of the Canal Society of Indiana, and what a busy and productive year it has been! To celebrate this anniversary, the First Annual Meeting of the C.S.I. was held on Saturday, May 7th, at the Historical Society in Fort Wayne, and presented a full day of canal activities for over thirty Society members and others.

Events began at 9:00 with Registration and a Continental Breakfast in the Frank Freimann Room, followed by a warm welcome from Michael Hawfield, the Executive Director of the Historical Society.

The Morning Session included President Clarence Hudson's slide presentation of the historic Wabash River: AN AVENUE TO HISTORY, and amateur cinematographer Mark Polloni's film highlighting both 1982 Canal Society tours: The Wabash & Erie Canal between Ft. Wayne and Delphi, and the Whitewater Canal. Mark's film also included a look at some long-gone Fort Wayne scenes and some priceless footage of the launching of the canalboat Ben Franklin II in 1981. By documenting such scenes and events with a keen historical awareness, Mr. Polloni is performing a valuable service both to us and to those who will come after us.

The morning session also included Marking and Indexing Committee reports by Thomas Meek and a sneak preview of the afternoon's bus tour.

The afternoon session began at 1:00, under ominously cloudy skies, as the participants boarded the tour bus and proceeded to Riverbend Golf Course, a few miles North of Fort Wayne on the St. Joseph River, site of the St. Joseph Feeder dam, and our first stop on the tour. (Cliff Richards, our guide, continued his commentary on the history of the feeder canal en route, pausing occasionally to point out various historic sites along the way.)

1836 and 1850 about eighteen steam boats carried freight on the river. The railroads cut into their business but some continued to operate until about 1900.

(From a manuscript by John Strode: *A Brief Survey of Transportation in and Around South Bend From its Origin Until 1900* bound copy in the Allen County Public Library, Indiana Collection—Fort Wayne—)

From the Feeder-dam ruins, the bus followed the path of the feeder canal as closely as possible to the junction with the Main canal line at the West end of the large Basin (near the intersection of Wheeler Street and Growth Avenue in Fort Wayne's West End). The group also stopped at the site of the Aqueduct by which the canal crossed the St. Mary's River, where we got the first real rain of the tour, which, fortunately, was over.

(Look for Cliff Richards' article on the Feeder canal which will appear in the August issue of I.W.)

The evening session included an informal deli supper, followed by a brief business meeting.

The featured speaker for the evening was Ed O'Brien of Crown Point. Ed has worked his years of canal research and photography into a fine presentation on 'THE SEARCH FOR HIDDEN HOOSIER HISTORY' explaining the past and present history of Indiana's canal system. After Mr. O'Brien's presentation, the meeting was adjourned.

Although Sunday's unofficial activities were in direct competition with Mothers' Day, the Old Fort offered ½ price admission to Society members, and six canal fanatics made an auto caravan tour of the Wabash & Erie Canal from Fort Wayne to Defiance, O.

A very special thanks goes to Michael Hawfield and the Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society for hosting the meeting, and for all of the support they've given the Canal Society of Indiana.

Thanks also to the speakers for their preparations and presentations, to the faithful and hardworking crew of Phama Hudson and David & Linda Freund.

Congratulations to Dan McCain for a fine job of organizing this meeting. Dan is already working with Lloyd Davis of Evansville on the Fall Meeting and Tour, which will take place in Evansville. We hope to see you there!

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