



Marker Text

In 1836 construction began on this fifty-six lock, one hundred one mile canal. Opened from Lawrenceburg to Brookville (1839), it was extended to Laurel and Cincinnati (1843), Connersville (1845), Cambridge City (1846) and Hagerstown (1847). [map]

Report

This marker certainly meets the current guidelines for state and national significance due to the economic impact upon the state. As a result of the canals, thousands of jobs were provided, hundreds of businesses were created, and Hoosier products were sent beyond the borders of the state. A May 16, 1845 issue of the *Brookville American* sums up the general feeling of optimism at the time. The article states, “The valley drained by the White Water river is composed of the counties of Franklin, Fayette, Wayne, and Union, with parts of Henry, Randolph and Dearborn. The White Water Canal will be the highway for the surplus productions of these and many of the adjoining counties. No definite or satisfactory idea can be formed of the sum total of these productions will reach a few years hence, when the immense water power and the whole of this fertile valley is improved and settled.”

The Whitewater Canal was authorized by Indiana Internal Improvement Act 1836.¹ The statement of fifty-six locks is given several secondary sources, including in Harry O. Garman’s article, “Whitewater Canal, Cambridge City to the Ohio River.” Garman states, “There were seven feeder dams in Whitewater River, and 56 canal locks. . . .”² A primary source is needed. The canal located in Indiana was 76 miles, the

¹ An Act to amend an act, entitled “An act to incorporate the Whitewater Canal Company,” Approved January, 23, 1827, *Laws of Indiana* (Indianapolis, John Douglass, 1827) pp. 28-29; “An Act to amend an act, entitled “An act to incorporate the Whitewater Canal Company,” Approved January, 23, 1827, *Laws of Indiana* (Indianapolis, John Douglass, 1827) pp. 28-29; “An ACT to Provide for a General System of Internal Improvements,” Approved January 27, 1836, *Laws of Indiana* (Indianapolis, Bolton and Emmons, 1836) pp. 6-21. States, “. . . The Whitewater Canal, commencing on the west branch of the White Water River, at the crossing of the National Road, thence passing down the valley of the same to the Ohio river, at Lawrenceburg, and extending up the said west branch of the White Water above the National Road as far as practicable . . . That if the state of Ohio shall ultimately refuse to grant leave for the construction of that part of the White Water Canal which passes through her territory, the said Board [Internal Improvement] shall construct a Rail Road from some point near Harrison to Lawrenceburg, keeping it wholly in the territory of this state. . . .”; J. L. Williams, “Report of the Engineer on Canals,” December 13, 1836, The State Board of Internal Improvement Report, December 19, 1836, *Journal of the Senate of the State of Indiana*, 1836 (Indianapolis, Douglass and Noel, 1836) pp. 131, 148-52; “Internal Improvement,” *Brookville American*, September 16, 1836.

² Harry O. Garman, “Whitewater Canal, Cambridge City to the Ohio River,” and Whitewater Canal Under Construction 1836 to 1847,” [Map] *Indiana History Bulletin*, 39:9, September, 1962 (Indianapolis, Indiana Historical Bureau, 1962) pp. 127-37; *Professional Surveyor Magazine*, Online only-2009, Accessed at <http://www.profsurv.com/magazine/article.aspx?i=70326>. The article states, “The entire Whitewater Canal from Lawrenceburg to Hagerstown covered 76 miles. The drop in elevation totaled 491 feet, with 56 locks, 7 feeder dams, and 12 or 13 aqueducts. It cost about \$1,164,665 or slightly more than \$15,000 per mile.”; “Whitewater Canal,” Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites, Accessed at <http://www.indianamuseum.org/sites/whit.html>. “Along the canal, 56 locks were built to accommodate a fall of nearly 500 feet.” August J. Reifel, *History of Franklin County*



additional 25 miles was located in Ohio, making a total of one hundred and one miles.³ The statement the canal was finished from Brookville to Lawrenceburg in 1839 is confirmed in the engineer's report of that year.⁴ The statement the canal was extended to Laurel in 1843 is supported by a *Brookville American* newspaper article.⁵ Another *Brookville American* article supports that the canal to Cincinnati was completed that same year.⁶ Indiana worked with Ohio to complete the canal in that state.⁷ Again,

Indiana: Her Peoples, Industries and Institutions (Indianapolis, B.F. Bowen & Company, 1915) p. 250. It states, "The length of the canal was seventy-six miles, with a fall of four hundred and ninety-one feet from its head at Nettle Creek (Wayne county, near Cambridge City) to its terminus at Lawrenceburg, requiring fifty-six locks and seven dams, the latter varying in height from two to eight feet.."

³ "White Water Canal," *Brookville American*, June 15, 1835, p. 2, c. 3-5. Provides a chart from the Engineer's report which gives the total miles as seventy-six; Darius Lapham, Chief Engineer, "Cincinnati and Whitewater Canal: Report of the Engineer to the Board of Directors of the said Company," December 31, 1840, Document A, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Ohio being the first session of the Thirty-ninth General Assembly* (Columbus, Samuel Medary, Printer to the State, 1841) pp. 618-622. It states, ". . . Of the 251/8 miles, the total length of the Canal . . . actually completed . . . twelve miles and seventy-four chains. Of this distance five miles and thirty-four chains extending from the junction with the Indiana Canal to the crossing of the dry fork of White Water will be ready for the reception of water as soon as two bridges are completed which are in progress . . ." Charles Cist, *Cincinnati in 1841: Its Early Annals and Future Prospects* (Cincinnati, E. Morgan & Co., Power Press, 1841) p. 88. It states, "The Cincinnati and Whitewater canal is very favorably situated in regard to the amount of revenue which it will produce. It being the last twenty-five miles of a line eighty miles in length, extending from Cincinnati to the national road at Cambridge. . . ."

⁴ "Annual Report of the Chief Engineer to the Board of Internal Improvement," November 11, 1839, *Report of the State Board of Internal Improvement of the State of Indiana* (Indianapolis, Douglass and Noel, 1839) Accessed *Google Books*; "The Canal Open," *Brookville Indiana American*, June 14, 1839, p. 3, c. 1. Article states, "The first Canal Boat, (Ben Franklin) owned by Long and Westerfield arrived at this place from Lawrenceburg, by the Canal on Saturday evening last, on which occasion our citizens let loose to their feelings of joy, by the firing of cannons and other manifestations of pleasure, calculated to be experienced at the successful completion of such an enterprise."

⁵ "Canal Again," *Brookville American*, November 10, 1843, p. 2. Article states, "We are informed on the authority of Mr. Coffin, who is commander of the squadron, that the contemplated trip on the Canal to Laurel will take place will take place on Tuesday next. The *Native* will proceed to Laurel and thence direct to Cincinnati through the Tunnel." "Pleasure Excursion," *Brookville American*, November 17, 1843, p. 2. Article states, "A large company of Ladies and Gentlemen of Brookville made a pleasure trip to Laurel on Tuesday last, on the Canal Boat *Native*, it being the first passage by boats made on this newly finished portion of our Canal."

⁶ "The Celebration," *Brookville American*, December 8, 1843, p. 1. The issue reprinted a story from the *Cincinnati Gazette*. Article states, "Yesterday was devoted to the celebration of the opening of the Cincinnati and White Water Canal." *Indiana Gazetteer or Topographical Dictionary of the State of Indiana* (Indianapolis, E. Chamberlain, 1849) p. 27. *GoogleBooks*. The *Gazetteer* states, "[the canal extended] to Connersville, twelve miles further, in June, 1845; and in October, the same year, was completed to Cambridge city . . . The same year a lateral branch was constructed from Harrison, thirteen miles above Lawrenceburg, to Cincinnati, a distance of twenty-six miles, by a company chartered by the State of Ohio."



Brookville American newspaper articles confirm the opening of the canal at Connersville in 1845.⁸ According to several primary sources, the canal was open at Cambridge City in 1845, not 1846.⁹

⁷ “An Act to permit and authorize the State of Indiana to construct a part of the Whitewater canal within the territory of Ohio,” *Acts of a Local Nature passed at the first session of the Thirty-fourth General Assembly of the State of Ohio* (Columbus, James B. Gardiner, Printer to the State, 1836) p. 268-69, Accessed *Google Books*; J. L. Williams, “Report of the Engineer on Canals,” December 13, 1836, The State Board of Internal Improvement Report, December 19, 1836, *Journal of the Senate of the State of Indiana*, 1836 (Indianapolis, Douglass and Noel, 1836) pp. 131, 148-50; “An Act to incorporate the Cincinnati and Whitewater Canal Company,” *Acts of a General Nature, passed at the first session of the Thirty-fifth General Assembly of the State of Ohio* (Columbus, S.R. Dolbee, Printer to the State, 1837) pp. 393-99, accessed *Google Books*; “To amend an act entitled, ‘An act to incorporate the Cincinnati and Whitewater Canal Company,’ passed April 1, 1837.” *Acts of a General Nature, passed by the Thirty-seventh General Assembly of Ohio* (Columbus, Samuel Medary, Printer to the State, 1839) p. 296-97, accessed *Google Books*.

⁸ “White Water Valley Canal Celebration,” *Brookville American*, August 1, 1845, p. 1, c. 3. Article states, “Navigation is now opened from the Ohio River to the Feeder at Connersville.”

⁹ *Gazetteer*, 1949, p. 27; “The Canal,” *Brookville American*, October 10, 1945, p.2, c. 2. The article states, “It is the opinion on the upper end of the line that the rains of the present week will swell the waters sufficient to fill the Canal to Cambridge.” And the same issue, “Postscript,” p.3, c. 2 states, “We have the pleasure of announcing to our friends, the arrivals of boats at this place, from Cincinnati.” And again under “The Cincinnati and Cambridge,” which states there is now a daily line of packet boats leaving the White Water Canal basin and arriving at Cambridge the next day.; “Commercial, White Water Canal,” *Brookville American*, November 14, 1845, p.3, c. 3. The article states, “The following is an account of the imports and exports from the towns of Cambridge, Milton, Connersville, Laurel, Metamora, and Brookville. . . .” The same article then lists goods to and from Cambridge City. Many secondary sources incorrectly give the year as 1846. On January 3, 2013, an email was sent to the Canal Society of Indiana for clarification; Bob Schmidt, President, Canal Society of Indiana to Indiana Historical Bureau, email, January 4, 2013. Schmidt states, “It appears that we have some conflicting data within our various canal publications. The official data should be that the *Native* arrived in Connersville in June 1845. The *Belle of Indiana* It appears that we have some conflicting data within our various canal publications. The official data should be that the *Native* arrived in Connersville in June 1845. The *Belle of Indiana* reached Cambridge City in October 1845. See Paul Fatout page 117. Also in the CSI tour book on the Whitewater Canal - Sep 2001, we state on page 15 “The canal was completed to Connersville by June 1845 and to Cambridge City by October 1845.” Elsewhere we used the date of 1846. The 1845 date agrees with other data I found elsewhere. I guess we can say that real commercial traffic didn't begin until 1846 as that is also when the Hagerstown Canal was chartered but their portion of the canal didn't open until 1847.” Schmidt's statement that the *Belle of Indiana* reached Cambridge City in October of 1845 is misleading, as it makes it sound as if the *Belle* was the first boat. August J. Reifel, *History of Franklin County Indiana: Her Peoples, Industries and Institutions* (Indianapolis, B.F. Bowen & Company, 1915) p. 256. In an interview, The *Belle of Indiana*'s captain, Josiah M'Cafferty talked about the opening of canal to Cambridge City. He does not give a year. He states, “John Lemon was the captain of the ‘Belle of the West,’ and I was pushing him mighty hard, for he was in the lead. But the water was not deep enough for a good race and he beat me into Cambridge City: but I was right behind him.” The aforementioned October 10, 1845 *Brookville American* substantiates parts of M'Cafferty's story.



Hagerstown was not named specifically in the Internal Improvement Act of 1836. Instead, it states, “The White Water Canal, commencing on the west branch of the White Water river, at the crossing of the National Road [Cambridge City] as far as may be practical” According to Henry Clay Fox’s *Memoirs of Wayne County and the City of Richmond, Indiana*, the original canal survey only took the canal to Cambridge City. Fox states, the citizens of Hagerstown constructed a connecting branch at their own expense, completing it in 1847.¹⁰

Additional Sources

Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette, Purdue University Press, 1985) Digitized, June 2, 2010.

Links

Canal Society of Indiana, Accessed <http://www.indcanal.org/>

Cincinnati and Whitewater Canal, Accessed <http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=682&nm=Cincinnati-and-Whitewater-Canal>

American Canal Society, Accessed [www.americancanals.org/.../Ohio/Cincinnati%20Whitewater%20Canal ...](http://www.americancanals.org/.../Ohio/Cincinnati%20Whitewater%20Canal...)

Cincinnati and Whitewater, Accessed <http://www.oocities.org/heartland/prairie/6687/cinci.htm>

Cincinnati and Whitewater Canal Tunnel, Accessed <http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=2689>

Cincinnati and Whitewater Canal Tunnel, Accessed <http://www.northbendohio.org/CanalTunnel.html>

Cincinnati and Whitewater Canal Tunnel, Accessed <http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=2689>

¹⁰ “An ACT to Provide for a general system of Internal Improvements,” Approved January 27, 1836, *Laws of Indiana* (Indianapolis, Bolton and Emmons, 1836) pp. 6-21; “An Act to amend an act entitled an act to incorporate the Hagerstown Canal Company, Approved February 11, 1843, *Laws of a Local Nature* (Indianapolis, Dowling and Cole, State Printers, 1843) p. 52-53; *Indiana Gazetteer or Topographical Dictionary of the State of Indiana* (Indianapolis, E. Chamberlain, 1849) p. 27. GoogleBooks. The *Gazetteer* states, “The Hagerstown canal, extending seven miles north of Cambridge, is nearly finished.” Even though the *Gazetteer* was published in 1849, the “Introduction” states, “The publishers of this work commenced about two years ago since to prepare the materials for it. . . .” This makes the year 1847 plausible; Henry Clay Fox, ed., *Memoirs of Wayne County and the City of Richmond, Indiana* (Madison, Wisconsin, Western Historical Association, 1912) p. 130. Fox states the original survey did not include Hagerstown but the citizens wanted the economical advantages the canal would bring. A meeting was held in 1846 to take steps to construct a branch canal to connect with the Whitewater Canal at Cambridge City. The Hagerstown Canal Company was organized and stock was issued in \$50 and \$5 shares. The branch was finally completed in 1847 at the cost of \$100,000 and was successfully operated until the lower canal was abandoned.



21.1966.1 The Whitewater Canal
Fayette County
Marker Text Review Report
1/2/2013

The Cleaves Tunnel a Rare Extant Example, Accessed
<http://www.cmnh.org/site/Files/InvertPaleo/ClevesTunnel.pdf>