Recent Canal Archaeology in Indiana: The Canal Craze and Its Legacy

Agenda

- An Overview of the Canal Craze
- Canal Building in Indiana
- The Decline of the Canals
- Legacy of the Canals in Indiana

An Overview of the Canal Craze



Image: "The Tow Path" C & O Canal Trust

Canal Facts:

- The First Transportation Canal –Seventh-Century BC Assyrian Kingdom – 50-mile Stone-lined Waterway
- The Longest and Oldest In Use Canal – The Grand Canal, Built in China Was Completed in 609 AD
- The Oldest Navigable Canal in North America – Coteau-du-Lac Canal in Quebec, Canada Was Finished in 1779

Canal Building in the United States:

- The South Hadley Canal in Massachusetts Was Completed in 1795, Making it the Oldest in the United States
- Canal Use Was Not Unknown in the 1800s, So Why Was There a Canal Craze?
- Before 1815, There Were Only a Handful of Canals But By 1840 There Was Over 3,000 Miles of Canals

The Canal Craze

- The Canal Craze Lasted from Approximately 1817-1840 (23 years)
- Why Was There a Canal Craze?
- A Team of Mules, 18 Mules and 2 Horses, Could Pull Approximately 30 Tons on Land
- Single Mule Could Pull The Same 30 Tons Along Via Canal Boat.

The Canal Craze Origins

- In 1817 Construction of the Erie Canal Began
- The Goal Was to Connect the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes, for Trade and Travel
- The War Of 1812 Created Great Interest in Expansion into the Great Lakes
- The Erie Canal Connected Albany, NY to Buffalo, NY (At Lake Erie), a Total of 363 Miles.

Canal Building in Indiana

Image: “Canals in Indiana” Indiana Historical Society



Indiana Canal Origins

- Prior to the Erie Canal's Inception, the Ohio River Was the Greatest Route West.
- You Could Travel or Float Goods Along the Ohio River to the Mississippi River, to the Gulf of Mexico.
- Except for One Spot: The Falls of The Ohio, at New Albany/Louisville
- The Falls Canal to Bypass the Falls was Attempted in 1805 on Both the IN and KY Sides, the KY Side Succeeded in 1830

Indiana's First Canal

- After the Completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, Ideas Abounded about Extending the Connection from Lake Erie to the Ohio River
- In 1832 a Canal From Toledo, OH to Lafayette, IN Began Construction
- This Would Become the Wabash and Erie Canal
- The Canal Entered Indiana Through Fort Wayne, Following the Wabash River to Lafayette

Wabash and Erie Canal -468 Miles

- The Canal Was Constructed in Four Parts
- Part 1: Toledo, OH to Lafayette, IN, Finished 1843
- Part 2: Lafayette to Terra Haute, Finished 1849
- Part 3: Terre Haute to Worthington, Finished 1850
- Part 4: Worthington to Evansville, Finished 1853
- The Pennsylvania was the First Canal Boat to Navigate the Whole Canal on September 22, 1853

The Whitewater Canal – 76 Miles

- The Canal Began Construction in 1836 in Brookville, IN
- The Whitewater Canal was to Connect Eventually to the Ohio River and the Markets at Cincinnati, Finished 1843
- An Extension to Cambridge City, IN Began in 1842 and Finished in 1846
- Merchants and Farmers from Hagerstown, IN Paid to Have the Canal Extend North to Hagerstown, It Began in 1846 and Finished in 1847

Honorable Mentions

- The Indiana Central Canal Proposed a 296-mile route from Indianapolis to Evansville
- This Canal Began Portions in 1836 and the Only Completed Section was in Indianapolis, Finished 1839
- The Erie and Michigan Canal was Constructed from 1836 to 1839 but Never Completed
- This Canal Would Have Connected Lake Michigan to the Wabash and Erie Canal at Fort Wayne
- Only Sylvan Lake (Feeder Reservoir) and Canal Around it were Completed

The Decline of the Canals



Image: Whitewater River Canal Lock – Franklin County, Indiana S

The End of the Canal

- As Stated Before, the Canal Craze (23 Years), Ending in 1840
- In 1836 Indiana Overextended Itself Financially Through the Mammoth Internal Improvement Act
- The Financial Panic of 1837 Dried up Funds and Called in Debts
- Indiana Went Bankrupt in 1839, Meaning No New Construction

The End of the Canal

- In the Same Year the Madison to Indianapolis Railway Began
- Railroads Overtook the Canals and the Irony is, the Canals Brought the Railways
- The Whitewater Canal Closed in 1862 Due to Flooding
- The Wabash and Erie Canal Closed in 1874

Legacy of the Canals in Indiana

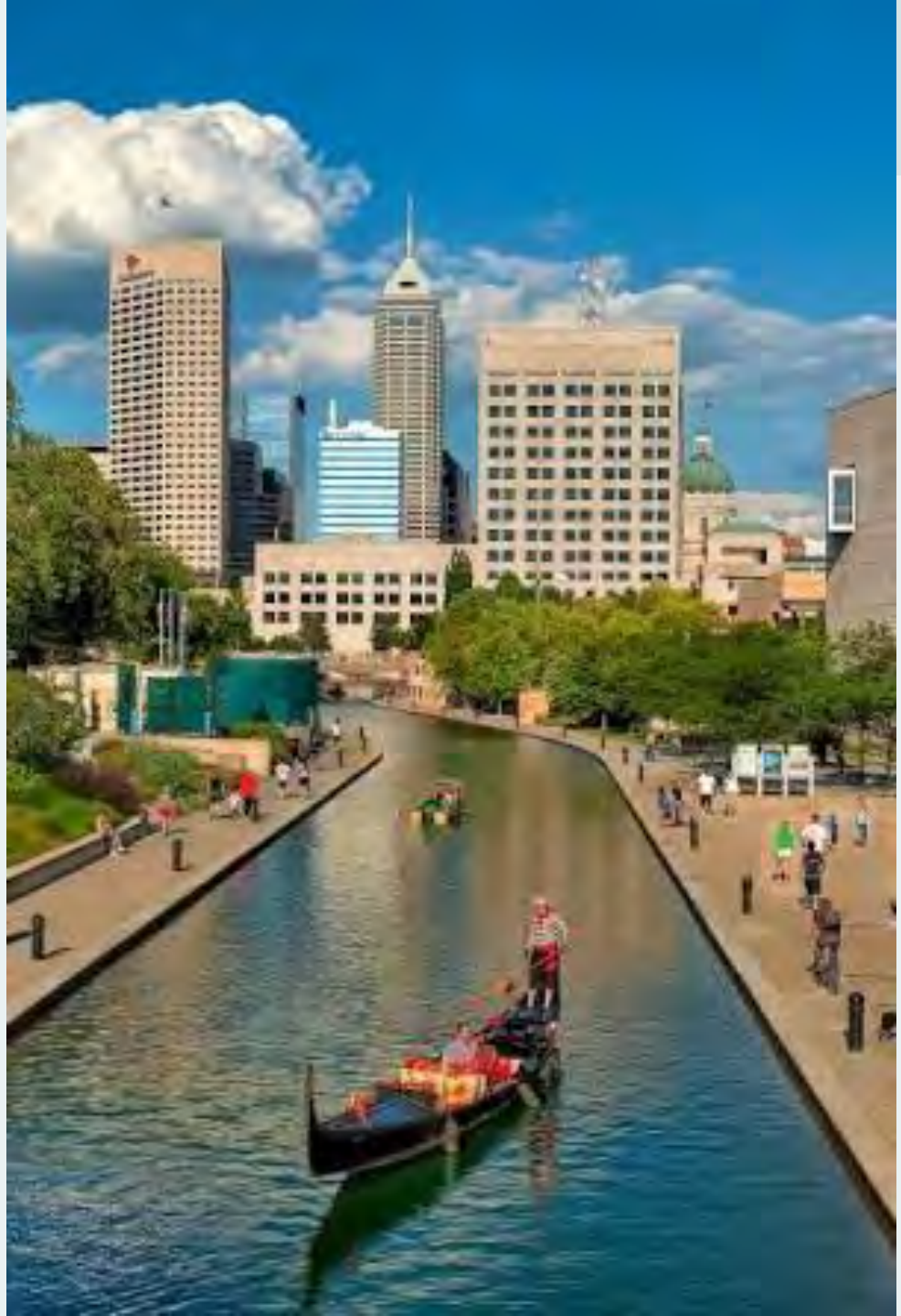


Image: “Indy Canal” Visit Indiana

What Was Left Behind

- In 1958 a State Owned Warehouse Burned, Containing Many of the Original Records of the Canals
- There are Numerous Known and Unknown Canal Structures Remaining
- Portions of the Canals are Still Open to See
- Much of the Canal is Covered or on Private Land

A Plea For More Archaeology

- The Wabash and Erie Canal was the Longest Canal in North America
- The Wabash and Erie Canal is the Longest and Among the Most Significant Cultural Resources in the State
- Yet There Has Not Been a Push to Preserve and Record this Resource Systematically nor Evaluate Canals and Their Structures in Indiana Wholistically

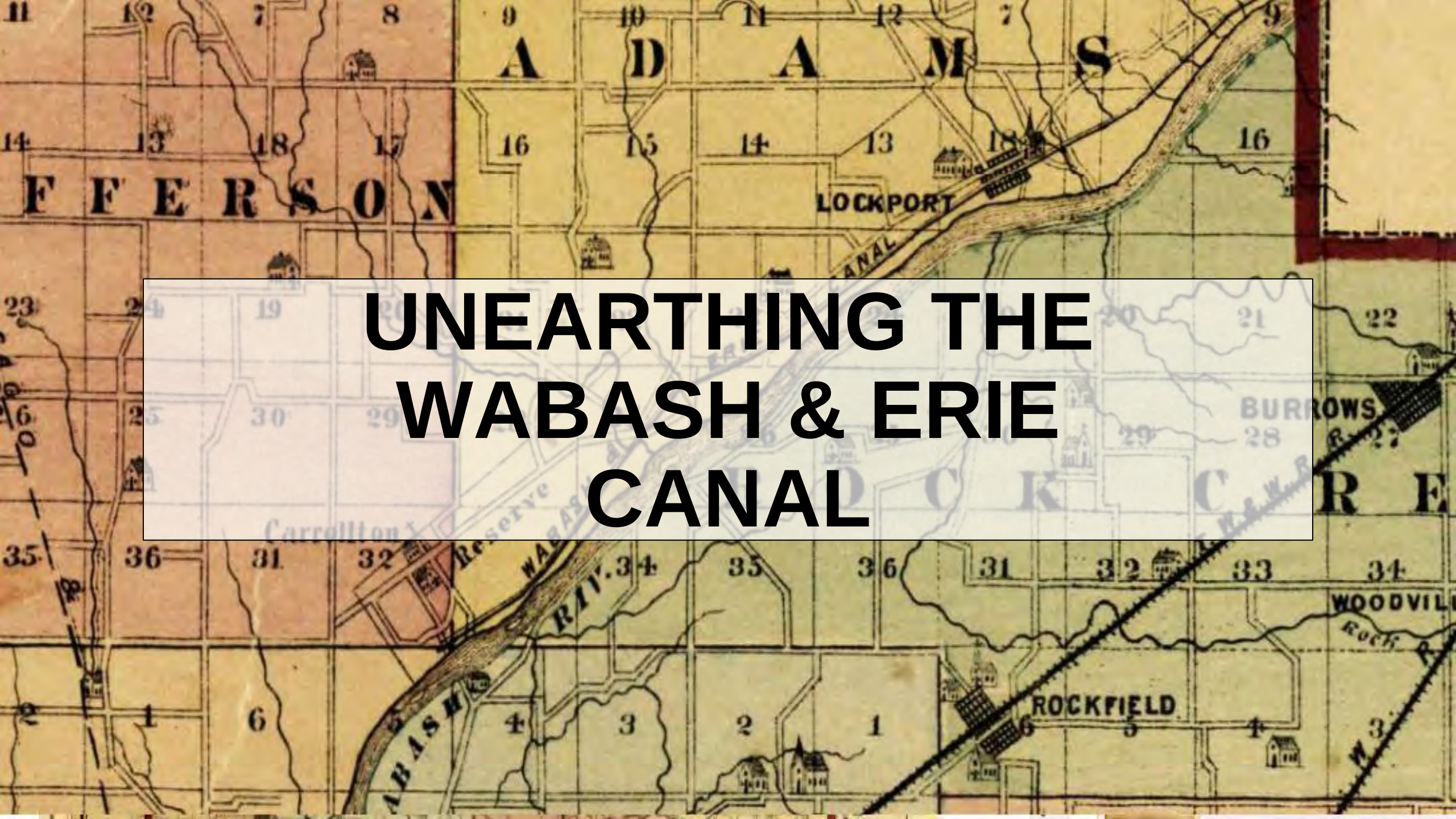
Thank you

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UNEARTHING THE WABASH & ERIE CANAL



US Government – 1827

General Assembly – 1836

Opened to Logansport – 1838

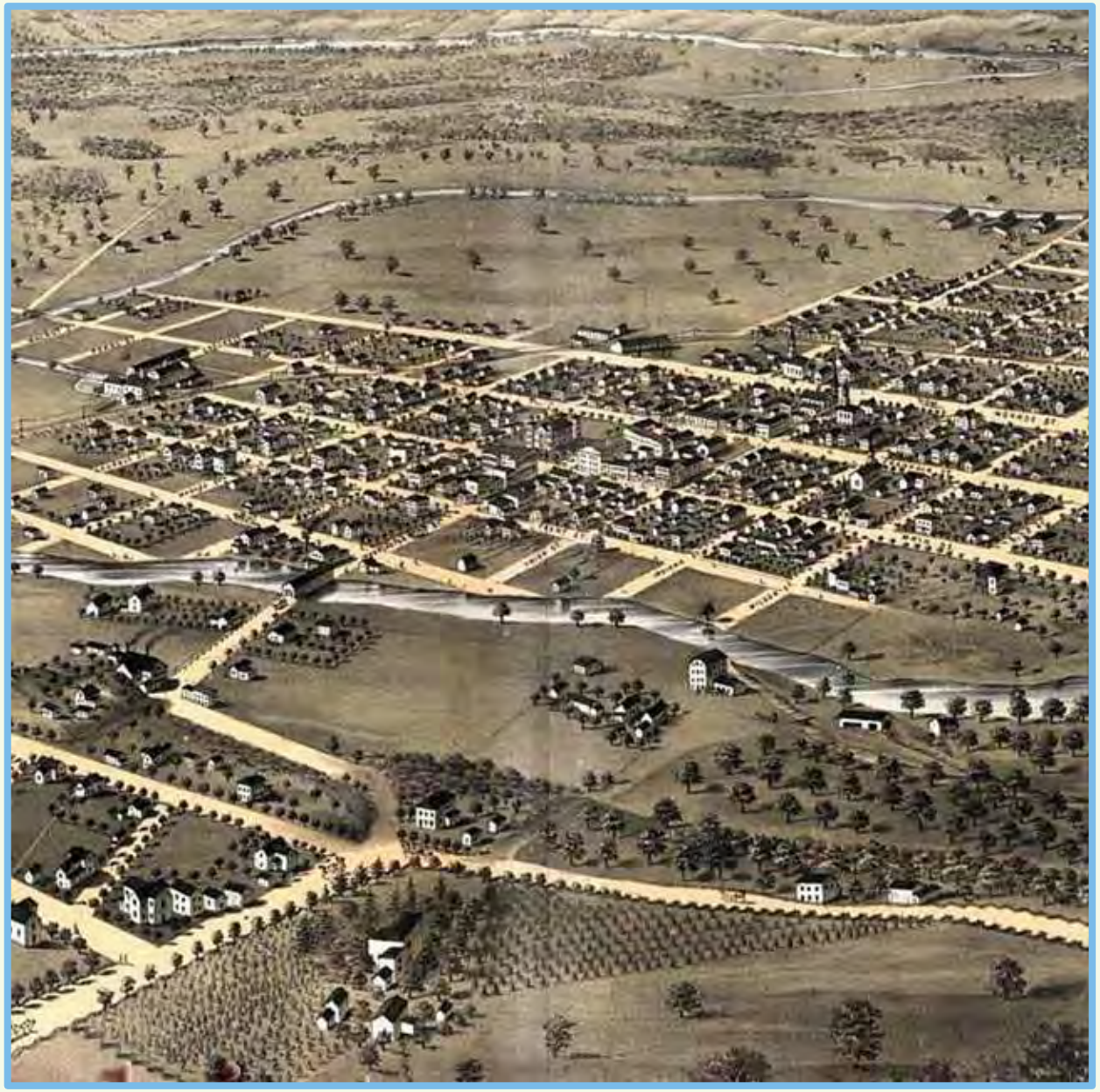
Opened to Delphi – 1840

Opened to Lake Erie - 1843

Completed – 1852

Funding Ended – 1875

Ceased Operations - 1890



Boom Times!

Population in 1835 ~12,000

Population in 1845 ~60,000

Population in 1855 ~154,000

New Towns Platted

Agricultural Production Rapidly Expanded

New Markets Emerged

Industries Grew along the Canal

WARP

Wildcat
Archaeological
Research Project





Above Ground Structural Components

Restored canal sections

Open, maintained

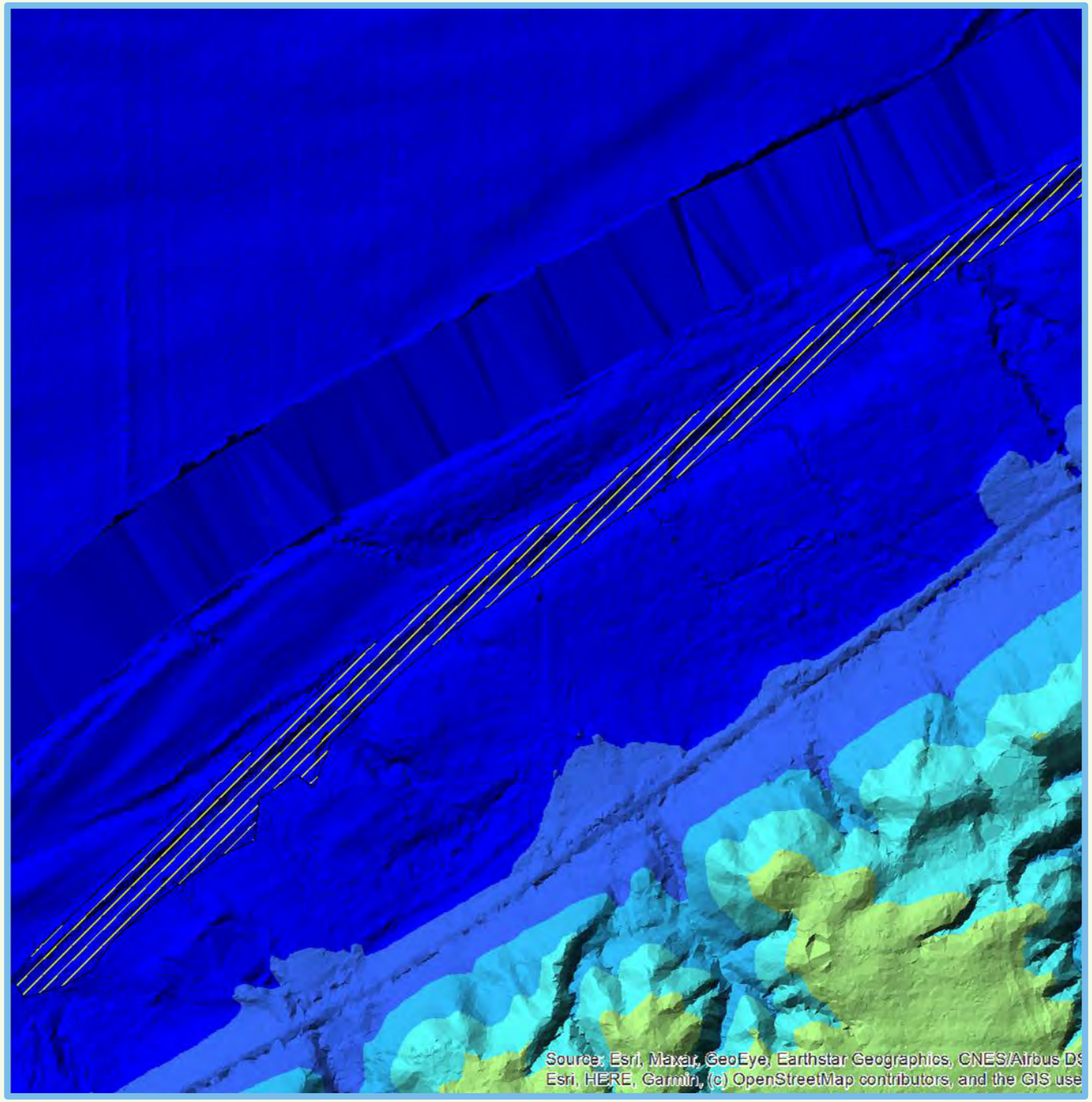
Open, not maintained

Filled

How much of the canal remains?



Aerial Imagery


Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS
Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS use

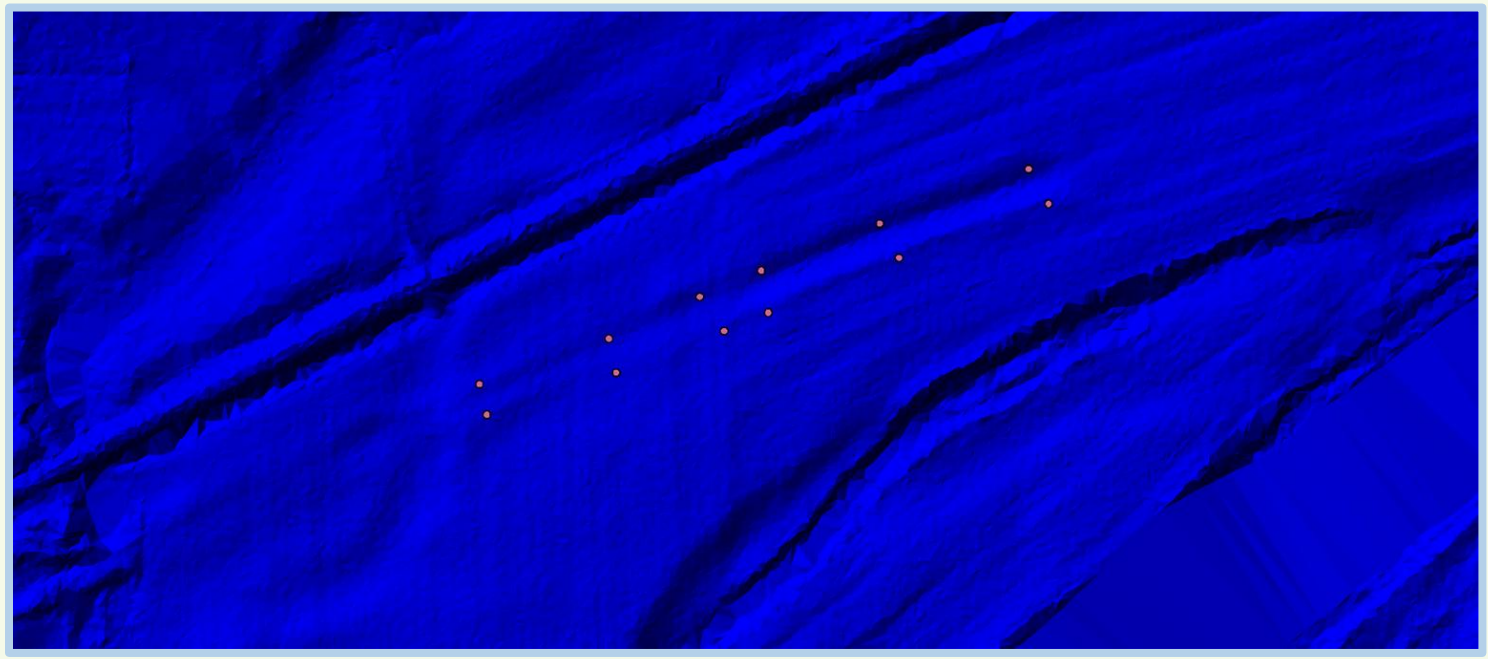
LIDAR

Carrollton Crossing Lock

(Lock No. 32, Site 12C75)







Below Ground

Structural Components

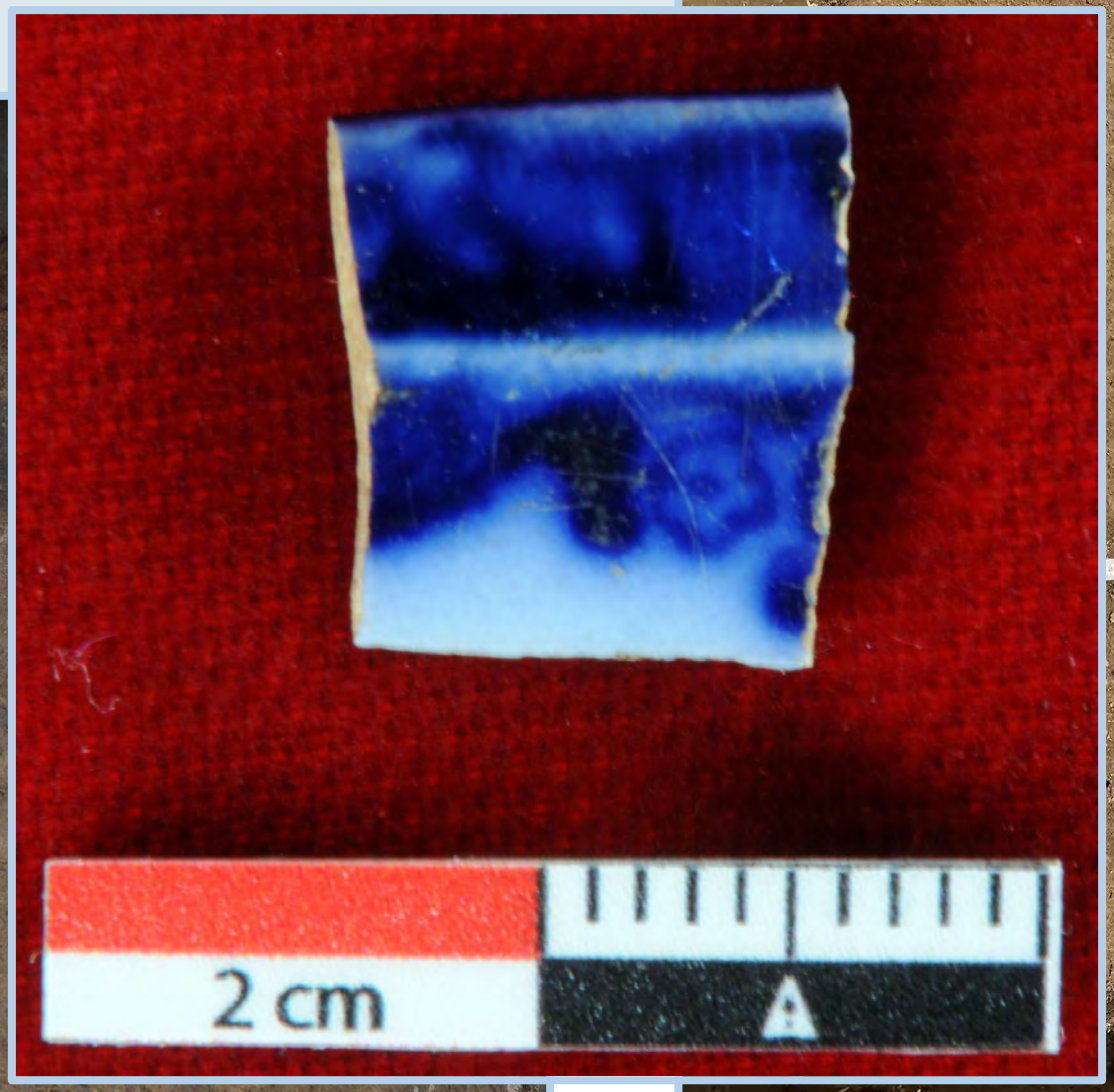


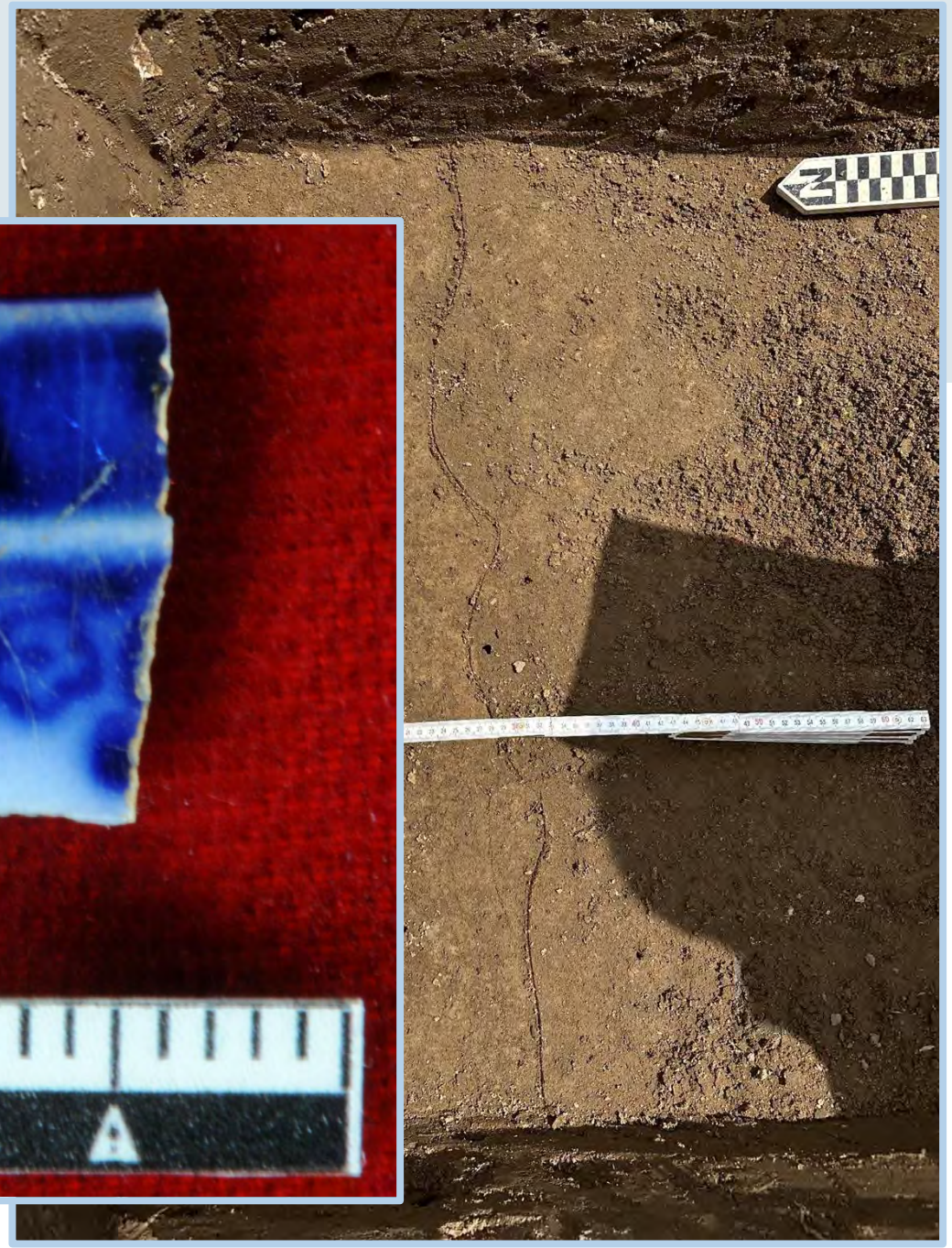
Alder Canal Site

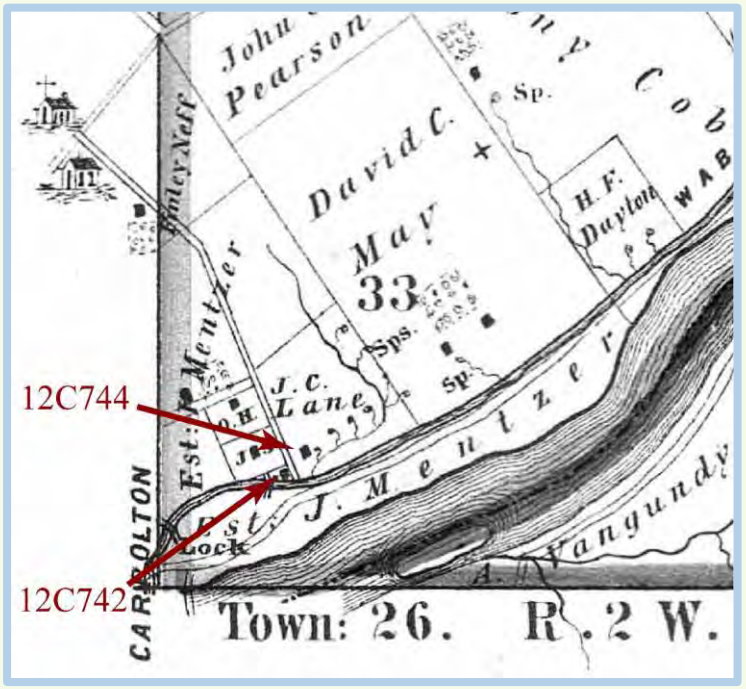
(12Ca455)

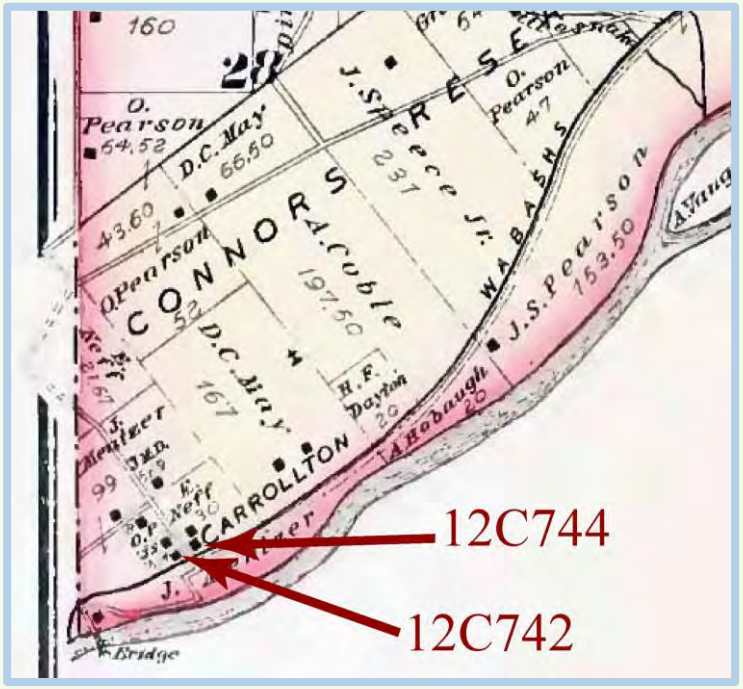
ALDER SITE

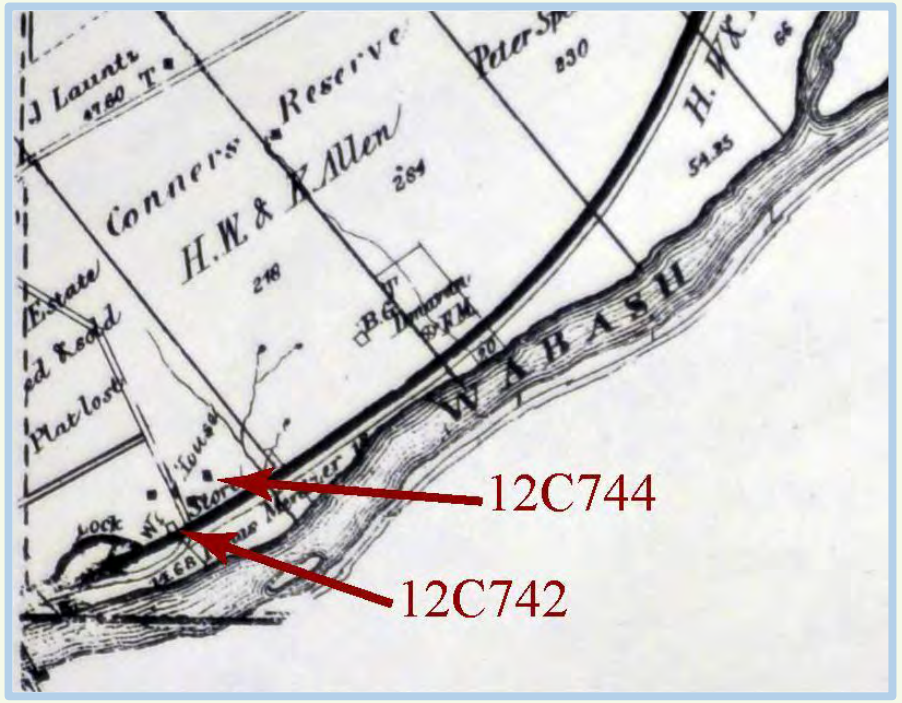












Below Ground

Structural Components

Spear Site

(12C744)

SPEAR SITE







SPEAR SITE











Evidence of Economic and Demographic Growth

Mentzer Tavern

(Site 12C738)

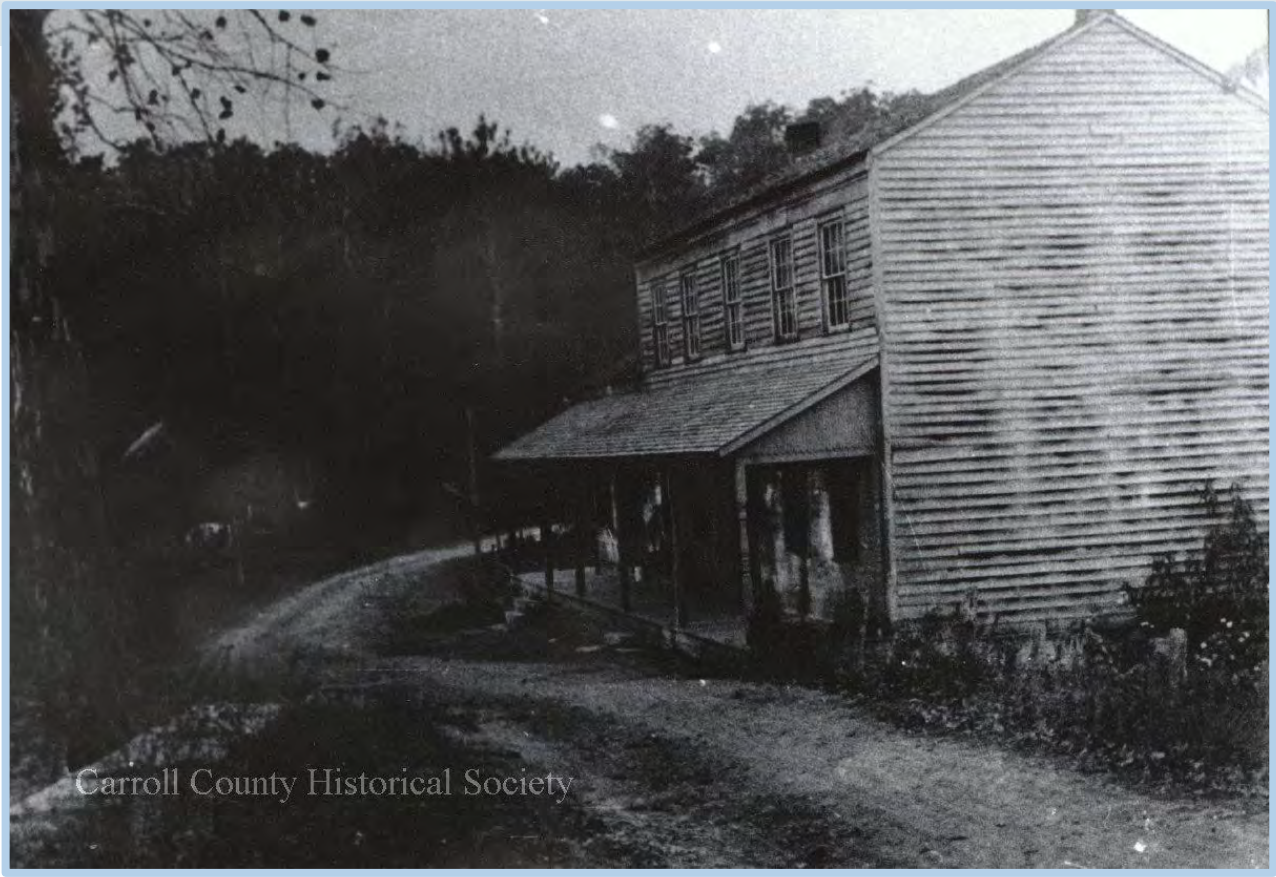
MENTZER TAVERN

- Built in 1840 as a cooper's shop by George Friday and Ignatious Mentzer
- Federal-style double pile I-house with dry-laid stone foundation
- Functioned as a tavern during the canal era
- Used as a private residence until 1910
- Tore down between 1915 and 1920
- Today, it's a public park



MENTZER TAVERN





MENTZER TAVERN





THE CANAL AS A HISTORIC RESOURCE

Many undisturbed canal era sites exist in the region.

Even disturbed sections of the canal can tell us something new about the past through archaeology.

Ongoing artifact analysis will tell us so much more about life and commerce along the canal!

THANK YOU

Wabash & Erie Canal Association

Carroll and Cass County Landowners

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