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The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions or policies of the U. S. Government. Mention of trade names and commercial products does not constitute their endorsement by the U. S. Government.

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# Table of Contents

**Part I: Status of Interpretation** .................................................. 1
**Introduction** ................................................................................. 1
**Statement of Goals and Objectives** ............................................. 1
**Background** .................................................................................. 2
**Process** .......................................................................................... 3
**Progress Since 1988** .................................................................... 3
**Cook County Sites** ....................................................................... 4
  - *Canal Origins Park, Chicago* ..................................................... 4
  - *Chicago Portage National Historic Site, Lyons* ....................... 4
  - *Santa Fe Prairie, Hodgkins* ..................................................... 5
  - *Heritage Quarries Recreation Area, Lemont* ........................... 5
**Grundy County Sites** .................................................................. 5
  - *Canalport Plaza, Morris* .......................................................... 5
  - *Canalport Park, Morris* .......................................................... 6
**LaSalle County Sites** ................................................................... 6
  - *Hegeler Carus Mansion, LaSalle* .......................................... 6
  - *Hogan Grain Elevator, Seneca* .............................................. 6
**Will County Sites** ........................................................................ 7
  - *Gaylord and Norton Buildings, Lockport* .............................. 7
  - *Joliet Area Historical Museum, Joliet* .................................. 7
  - *Joliet Iron Works Historic Site, Joliet* .................................. 7
**Canals and Trails** ....................................................................... 8
  - *Canal Rehabilitation* .............................................................. 8
  - *New trail connections* ........................................................... 9
**Interpretive Systems** ................................................................. 9
  - *I&M Canal Passage Wayfinding program* ............................... 9
**Educational Programs** ............................................................... 10
  - *Site-Specific Programs* .......................................................... 10
**Classroom Centered Programs and Tools** ............................... 11
  - *Making Connections – What the I&M Canal is All About – Elementary Lesson Plans* .......................................................... 11
  - *Illinois State Archives Packet* ................................................ 11
  - *Exploring the I&M Canal Passage - Teachers Workshop* ........ 11
  - *I&M Canal History Fair Awards* .......................................... 11
  - *Canal Origins Park Education Initiative* ................................. 11
  - *The Last Great Canal: How the I&M Canal United 19th Century America - Teacher Workshops* ................................................... 12
  - *Swamp to City - Curricula* ....................................................... 12
**Other Regional Initiatives** ......................................................... 13
  - *Canallers in the Corridor* ......................................................... 13
  - *I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor Commission* .............. 13
  - *I&M Canal Sesquicentennial* ................................................ 13
  - *Docent Training Program* ....................................................... 14
  - *Prairie Tides Film* ................................................................. 15
  - *ISHS Markers* .......................................................................... 15
Part II: Interpretive Framework

Brief Canal History

The Canal Era

A New Transportation Corridor

The I&M Canal and the Making of Chicago

Changes Wrought by the Canal

Abraham Lincoln Praises the I&M Canal

A Story with National and International Significance

Basic Canal and Corridor Facts

Corridor Overview

Natural History

Native Americans

French Era and Early Settlement

Basic I&M Canal Facts

Pre-construction and construction period

Canal operation

Canal towns

Changes brought about by the I&M Canal

Canal and Corridor Timeline

Corridor Interpretive Themes

Corridor Story line:

Theme 1: Transportation

Sub-theme 1.1: Native Americans—the first to travel and live in the passageway

Sub-theme 1.2: People dreamed of the canal long before it was built

Sub-theme 1.3: Canal construction—building the canal was a massive effort

Sub-theme 1.4: The I&M Canal was the key to the mastery of the Midwest and helped fuel Westward Expansion

Sub-theme 1.5: The canal had a bustling and productive life

Sub-theme 1.6: Other transportation routes followed the I&M Canal, and the canal corridor still plays a major transportation role in the state and the nation

Theme 2: Nature—discovering the natural treasures of the passageway

Sub-theme 2.1: Although the canal was built in the 1800s, its story began over 10,000 years ago during the last Ice Age

Sub-theme 2.2: The canal corridor is a great place to discover and enjoy nature

Theme 3: Distinctive towns grew and prospered because of the canal

Sub-theme 3.1: Smaller canal towns each have their own special character

Sub-theme 3.2: People flocked to Illinois and Chicago boomed

Theme 4: Transformation—the passageway reflects people’s changing relationship with the environment

Sub-theme 4.1: The canal permanently altered the landscape

Sub-theme 4.2: The landscape of the passageway continues to change

Part III: Future of Interpretation in Corridor

Introduction

Research Opportunities

I&M Canal Popular History

The Canal Corridor in War Time

The I&M Canal & California Gold Rush
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I&amp;M Canal and the Underground Railroad</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I&amp;M Canal and the Civilian Conservation Corps</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghost Towns of the I&amp;M Corridor</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversal of the Chicago River</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Interurban Railroad in the I&amp;M Corridor</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American History</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor History in the I&amp;M Corridor</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The I&amp;M Canal and Agriculture</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazon Creek Fossils</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New and Enhanced Site Opportunities</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook County</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Portage National Historic Site</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hofmann Tower</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grundy County</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleman Hardware</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gebhard Brewery</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locktender’s House, Aux Sable</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazon Creek Fossil Beds</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LaSalle County</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Village of the Kaskaskia</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa Toll House</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port of LaSalle</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seneca Shipyards</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulphur Springs Hotel</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marseilles HydroElectric Plant</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will County</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briscoe Indian Burial Mounds</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dellwood West</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joliet Prison</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Counties</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeder Canals</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Recommendations</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Designation</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension of Heritage Corridor Boundaries</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreter’s Group</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Information Sharing</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Site Infrastructure</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I&amp;M Canal Centers</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDNR- Locktender Houses and Hogan Grain Elevator</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port of LaSalle</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of the Centennial Trail and other links between the canal in Cook County and the Rest of the Corridor</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Transmitters</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission Interpretive Signs</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lockport Loop Trail</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research &amp; Educational Recommendations</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeder Canals</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Archaeology ..................................................................................................................52
Canallers in the Corridor and Gallimaufry .................................................................52
Oral History ..................................................................................................................52
Cemeteries ..................................................................................................................53

Part IV: ..........................................................................................................................54
Annotated Canal & Corridor Bibliography .................................................................54
The Wider Context .........................................................................................................54
General ..........................................................................................................................54
Geographical Setting ....................................................................................................55
Political, Economic and Social History .................................................................55
Canal Traffic ..................................................................................................................56
Archaeology ..................................................................................................................56
Selected Localities .........................................................................................................57
Teaching Aids ................................................................................................................58
Photo Essays and Touring Literature ...........................................................................58
The I&M Canal’s Successor Waterways ......................................................................59
"Studies on the I&M Canal Corridor" .........................................................................59
Interpretive Studies and Plans (In Chronological Order) ...........................................60
Bibliography of Interpretive Resources ....................................................................62
Brief Bibliography of Interpretive Resources ...............................................................62
Video .............................................................................................................................63

Part V: Site Inventory Forms

Part VI: Appendices
Historic Designations in the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor
Summaries of Public Meetings, February 2005
Part I: Status of Interpretation

The Interpretive Journey

Interpretation is a guide, leading audiences from physical resources to their underlying meanings, from the tangible to the intangible, from sight to insight. By providing opportunities to connect the meanings of the resource, interpretation provokes the public’s participation in resource stewardship. It helps them to understand their relationships to, and impacts upon, those resources. And it helps them to care.

Cynthia Kryston, National Park Service 2003

Introduction

In August 1984, President Ronald Reagan signed a bill authorizing the establishment of the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor. As one author put it, this landmark notion of a public/private urban national park “changed the nature of perceptions of open space preservation in this country.” The Heritage Corridor concept was the first explicit marriage of preservation, conservation, recreation, and economic development. Clearly, this was an idea whose time had come, and the I&M Heritage Corridor helped spark a national trend, one that shows no signs of abating. To date there are 27 national heritage areas, and in a sense all owe their existence to the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor.

As this report will show, there has been a great deal of progress made in telling the stories of the I&M Corridor. By embracing the history of the canal corridor in a planned manner, awareness has risen to a new level. The challenge now is to sustain and nurture continuing programs and interpretive products to reinforce and deepen appreciation for our shared heritage. The coordination of state, federal, and local efforts with private organizations is no easy task. Local interests are often parochial, and state and federal bureaucracies are cumbersome and slow-moving, but many of the 49 NHC communities are beginning to realize the potential benefits of working together. In addition, convincing people that they share a rich historical and geographical heritage can help to break down barriers between rural, urban, and suburban dwellers.

Statement of Goals and Objectives

The overarching goal of this plan is to provide a comprehensive and consistent approach to interpretive efforts corridor-wide. It is hoped that such an approach will enhance site specific interpretation, strengthen links between sites throughout the corridor, and promote coordination and cooperation between public and private non-profit partners at all levels to build the interpretive infrastructure that creates opportunities for people to learn, have fun and enjoy the rich heritage of the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor. Its objectives are to:
• Identify what stories are being told and where, and how are they being told

• Identify what stories need to be told where, and how they could be most effectively told

• Provide resources for developing these stories, including:
  o An overview of canal history, including basic canal facts and a timeline
  o Corridor Interpretive Themes
  o Bibliography of source materials for interpretation

There have been many other interpretive plans and studies on the I&M Corridor but most of these have been consigned to the dustbin of oblivion. (See bibliography) In order for the present document to avoid the same fate various state, federal, private, and non-profit management agencies must collaborate. Such cooperation will only maximize the number and quality of interpretive sites and resources that tell the stories of the canal region.

Background

It must be stressed at the outset that interpretation in the I&M corridor encompasses far more than the story of the I&M Canal. While the canal is the backbone of the corridor, the themes of natural history, agriculture, industry, and the built environment are all central to an understanding of this heritage area.

The Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor is a linear zone in northern Illinois, one hundred miles long and averaging six miles wide, designated to encompass a distinct mixture of regional history epitomized by the central role the I&M Canal played in its early development. The 450 square mile corridor encompasses forty-nine distinct communities, spans portions of five counties (Cook, DuPage, Will, Grundy and LaSalle), representing a wide swath of territory along the main route of the canal, as well as associated feeder canals.

Included are major cities such as Chicago and Joliet, industrial enclaves such as Bedford Park and McCook, rural farms in the vicinity of Marseilles and Seneca, and coal towns such as Carbon Hill and Coal City. Forging a collective identity for such disparate communities is a challenge, one that has met with varying degrees of success. Each community has its own unique story to tell. Each has a connection to the I&M Canal, some directly, others indirectly. The challenge is finding a way to tell local stories within the larger context of state, national, and even international history.

With the passage of the 1984 legislation enacting the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor, many organizations have mobilized to share the mission in telling the story of the Canal Corridor. The primary corridor-wide players have been the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the I&M Canal National Heritage
Corridor Commission, and the Canal Corridor Association, but there are myriad of local organizations who also tell some aspect of the corridor’s history.

At this time the Corridor finds itself in a time of transition, making this a propitious time to reassess and reevaluate our purpose. As of this writing federal authorization of the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor has ended, and several National Park Service employees have been reassigned. New legislation has been introduced that will make the Canal Corridor Association the new management entity for the corridor, but this bill, as well as continued federal funding, has yet to occur. Late in 2004 the Illinois Department of Natural Resources announced cuts in staffing, eliminating the positions of three interpreters in the I&M Corridor, including one at a key site, the Hogan Grain Elevator. The critical loss of state and federal funding further underscores the need to coordinate energies and resources and through continued and increased collaboration between the state, federal, private, and non-profit sector interpretive partners.

Process

In February 2005 three public meetings were held at various locations in the corridor in order to solicit input on priorities for corridor interpretation. Over 60 people attended.

In addition, in order to understand the stories that are currently being told, identify interpretive issues and opportunities, and create a data base that facilitates ongoing coordination and information-sharing throughout the heritage corridor, the Canal Corridor Association conducted an inventory of 82 existing interpretive sites in early 2005. A sample of the inventory form and completed inventories—completed by on-site staff/volunteers—are included in Part 5.

Progress Since 1988

The designation of the Heritage Corridor has clearly served as a catalyst for change. As a result many things have occurred that may otherwise not have. Many organizations have taken a more active role in disseminating information on the canal corridor and its environs. The State of Illinois has increasingly come to recognize the value of the canal. Through state transportation funds over $30 million has been spent on the canal and its associated structures. Illinois’s active tourism department has incorporated heritage tourism in its programs, as have many individual corridor communities. The Illinois State Archives has undertaken an ambitious effort to microfilm many canal documents, and it has also produced a teacher’s packet on the canal. The story of the canal is increasingly being taught in schools, and awareness of the seminal role that the I&M Canal played in the growth and development of northeastern Illinois is growing. Derided as a mere “tadpole ditch” in 1900, some 100 years later the canal has reclaimed its rightful place as one of the most important stories in Illinois history.
The following pages provide a sampling of the progress that has been made over the past 20 years.

**Cook County Sites**

*Canal Origins Park, Chicago*

Most people do not think of Chicago as a canal town, but it was first platted by the I&M Canal Commissioners in 1830. The Stevenson Expressway (known in its planning stages as the I&M Canal Expressway) is built over the former canal for eight miles. Fortunately, the spot where the canal joined the Chicago River at 27th Street and Ashland Avenue still survives. In 2006 the Chicago Park District will open "Canal Origins Park," the only remaining remnant of the I&M Canal in Chicago. The Canal Corridor Association (with funding from the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor Commission) has designed interpretive elements that will tell the story of Chicago’s transformation from a swampy military outpost into the Midwest’s major metropolis. Man and nature, the rise of Chicago as a canal town, and transportation are the focus of the interpretation.

The canal origins site at 28th and Ashland is the last remaining remnant of the Illinois and Michigan canal in Chicago. While few realize it today, the canal transformed Chicago from a sleepy frontier town into a bustling city. Construction on the canal began here in 1836, and when the canal finally opened in 1848 people celebrated all along the canal’s length. The origins site quickly became a transfer point for goods and people, as corn, wheat, limestone, and coal were shipped into Chicago, while lumber from Michigan and Wisconsin went down the canal to build new towns. Once one of the busiest ports in the world (as reflected in the neighborhood name Bridgeport), the origins site today is a haven for wildlife in an urban setting. One species seen here is the state endangered black-crowned night heron.

*Chicago Portage National Historic Site, Lyons*

The Chicago Portage National Historic Site is one of only two National Historic Sites in Illinois; the other is the Abraham Lincoln Home in Springfield. The site contains the last remnants of Mud Lake, a huge marshy region that once extended to Lake Michigan. These woods and wetlands are rare survivors of the terrain that once covered much of the Chicago area. The site marks where traders portaged over a sub-continental divide between the Chicago and Des Plaines Rivers. In the late 1820’s two brothers, David and Bernardus Laughton, set up a trading post here, and many a weary traveler sought refuge in this primitive establishment.

In 1989 the I&M Canal Civic Center Authority commissioned the statue of Jolliet, Marquette and their Native American guide, and in cooperation with the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, installed the statue near the original Portage Creek in Portage Woods Forest Preserve. In 2004 the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor Commission developed, in conjunction with the Forest Preserve District, new interpretive signs for the site, but as of this writing they have yet to be installed.
Santa Fe Prairie, Hodgkins
Most of Illinois’ prairies have been destroyed, but visitors to the I&M Corridor can see wonderful examples of these grasslands at Lockport Prairie and Goose Lake Prairie near Morris. Other sites have been saved and are being restored. The Santa Fe Prairie in Hodgkins may not look special to the untrained eye, but over 225 plant species grow in the rich soil of this tiny 10-acre prairie remnant, now an Illinois Nature Preserve. Illinois’s acclaimed prairie restoration movement began here, led by Robert Betz and Floyd Swink.

In 1998 the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Co. railroad donated the Santa Fe Prairie to the I&M Canal Civic Center Authority. The railroad also provided the caboose to serve as an interpretive center.

Organizations that helped the I&M Canal Civic Center Authority to save the Santa Fe Prairie included the Village of Hodgkins, the Nature Conservancy, Canal Corridor Association, Openlands Project, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and the Cook County Forest Preserve District. A small group of dedicated volunteers are preserving the integrity of the site.

Heritage Quarries Recreation Area, Lemont
In 2004, Lemont had the official opening for Heritage Quarries Park. This park features 100 acres of open space and provides passive recreation opportunities for generations of Lemont residents. The park was made possible through a grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, along with some financial assistance from private industry. This project recently received the Project of the Year Award from the American Public Works Association South Metropolitan Chapter, and it is eligible to receive other regional and national awards.

In 2003, Phase I of the park was completed, including three miles of hiking and biking trails looped around the spectacular quarry lakes along the Lemont section of the I & M Canal. Four pedestrian bridges have also been installed, along with a shelter, access road and parking lot.

Grundy County Sites

Canalport Plaza, Morris
The steel silhouettes in Canalport Plaza tell the story of the Armstrong family, many of whom had a profound influence on Morris and Grundy County. Family matriarch Elsie Armstrong traveled to Illinois in 1831 with seven sons, ranging in age from 3 to 19. The promise of a new life on the Illinois frontier led her to escape a bad marriage in Ohio. Plans were underway to construct the Illinois and Michigan Canal. Her sons soon helped build it. Three became founders of Morris—Armstrong Street bears their name. Elsie is buried nearby in Evergreen Cemetery. Elsie Armstrong wrote an epic poem that records the tragic deaths of four children. It expresses her pride in the sons who founded Morris and became community leaders. The poem is a rare record of a pioneer woman’s hardships, her feelings, and a poignant reminder of the importance of families.
Canalport Park, Morris
Located a block west of Canalport Plaza, this site contains several interpretive elements. The most prominent is the canal boat play structure, dedicated in 2004. Not to scale, this boat was constructed by Carpenter’s Local 916, working with the CCA and the City of Morris.

An introductory sign tells the story of Morris and the I&M Canal as an outlet for the rich agricultural bounty of Grundy County. CCA’s Cor-ten steel silhouettes of a mule and canal driver tell the story of Old Nell, the most famous mule on the towpath, and of canal driver John Sullivan.

Prototypes of canal furniture, including barrels and trunks that serve as benches, were installed in 2003, thanks to a collaboration between CCA, local artists and the Illinois Arts Council. Funding was provided by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts Millennium Trails project.

Two other silhouette groupings have been proposed. The first will be about the life and times of a canal boat family, the Washburn’s, who were active on the canal from the 1850s until the 1880s. Captain Charles Washburn, his wife Martha and their son Frank will be portrayed on the canal boat play structure. A second grouping near the boat will focus on the Gunderson family, Norwegian farmers who relocated to Grundy County in the 1860s and shipped their produce on the I&M Canal.

LaSalle County Sites

Hegeler Carus Mansion, LaSalle
The Hegeler Carus Mansion is at once a family home, an example of the high artistic achievement in architecture and interior design, and the site of historic accomplishments in industry, philosophy, publishing and religion. Constructed between 1874-1876, the mansion was designed by noted architect William W. Boyington, who is also responsible for the famous Chicago Water Tower. The spectacular mansion has many of its original architectural finishes, and the exterior has been beautifully restored. The Hegeler Carus Mansion is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is open for tours. The building served as the headquarters of Open Court Press, which still publishes books on philosophy.

Hogan Grain Elevator, Seneca
In the mid-1800s, the Hogan Grain Elevator was bustling with activity. Each day, farmers delivered hundreds of thousands of bushels of grain—as many as 400 wagons-full—which were weighed, sorted, and transported by canal boat. Today it is the oldest surviving grain elevator on the I&M Canal and provides a fascinating glimpse of the past. The elevator sat derelict for many years until the Illinois Department of Natural Resources devoted close to one million dollars to rehabilitate the structure. It has been open for guided tours, but recent funding cutbacks have jeopardized this important programming. The building is open for tours by appointment only.
**Will County Sites**

**Gaylord and Norton Buildings, Lockport**
The Gaylord Building is a premier example of sensitive architectural rehabilitation. In 1986 the Gaylord Building received the President’s Award for Historic Preservation. Ten years later the Donnelley family donated the building to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In 1998 a new permanent exhibition entitled *Illinois Passage: Connecting a Continent* opened. The exhibit examines the impact of the Illinois & Michigan Canal on the development of Northeastern Illinois. Blending artifacts, historic photos and an engaging interpretive text, the exhibit provides visitors with an introduction to the role that the I&M Canal played in shaping Illinois’ destiny. The Public Landing restaurant also calls the Gaylord Building home.

Two blocks away, on the other side of the two-block open area called the Public Landing, is the Norton Building. This large warehouse was built of local dolomite around 1848. Owned by Hiram Norton, the building was part of a larger milling complex. In addition to storing grain, canal drivers used the top floor of the warehouse as a dormitory. In the 1990s a local entrepreneur bought and rehabilitated the building, which now is home to the Illinois State Museum, Lockport Gallery.

**Joliet Area Historical Museum, Joliet**
In the Fall of 2002 a new cultural facility opened in Joliet, the Joliet Area Historical Museum. The museum occupies the space formerly known as the Ottawa Street Methodist Church on the corners of Cass and Ottawa Streets in downtown Joliet. The museum’s main exhibition gallery serves as an introduction to the many stories of the Joliet area and its people. The gallery is made up of seven distinct thematic zones: River City, the Canal, City of Steel and Stone, Metropolitan City, World War II, and the All-American City. The exhibit is enhanced by state-of-the-art audio-visual presentations, which include a 12 minute orientation film, an interactive video program, a re-created Trolley ride, and concluding film. Temporary exhibits and targeted educational programming provide additional interpretive opportunities.

**Joliet Iron Works Historic Site, Joliet**
More than any other single factor, the opening of the Joliet Iron and Steel Works in 1869 put Joliet on the road to being a city. The population nearly doubled in just three years, and one commentator predicted that Joliet would soon resemble Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Thousand of immigrants from Poland, Sweden and Slovenia were drawn to Joliet by the promise of work in the dangerous steel mills.

In the 1930s U. S. Steel demolished its six major blast furnaces, leaving only the foundations. In 1989 it donated forty-five acres to the Corporation for Open Lands (CorLands), including the foundations of the historic blast furnaces, engine house, and other steel-making structures. The Will County Forest Preserve District has developed this as the Joliet Iron Works Historic Site. Opened in 1998 as part of the I&M Canal sesquicentennial celebration, a series of interpretive panels tell the story of the mammoth iron and steel plants once located there, adjacent to the canal. Each
panel is divided into two sections, one on the process of steelmaking, the other on the people who worked at the plants. The adjoining Heritage Trail connects with the Gaylord Donnelley Trail in Lockport.

**Canals and Trails**

**Canal Rehabilitation**
In the 1998 sesquicentennial year, the last 5.5 mile section of the canal trail was completed, and the trail was officially dedicated, although its first section opened in 1974. Owned and managed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources the I&M Canal State Trail now runs 61.5 miles from Rockdale to LaSalle/Peru. Since the designation of the National Heritage Corridor, IDNR and the Illinois Department of Transportation have spent $20 million in rehabilitating locks, aqueducts, locktender houses, and other structures along the canal. Without these expenditures on infrastructure the canal would have deteriorated to such an extent that efforts to use it as a tourist attraction would have been seriously compromised.

Over the years the IDNR has also conducted invaluable archaeological excavations along the canal, most notably in Morris, where seven canal boats were rediscovered in 1997. The boats are now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
Another important study initiated by the IDNR details the history of the "Jugtown" pottery works near Goose Lake Prairie.

Although now closed due to budget constraints, the presence of several IDNR visitor centers along the I&M Canal itself, has enhanced interpretive efforts. At this time, Gebhard Woods State Park in Morris is the only canal-specific site with interpretive staff.

In the year 2000, Canal Corridor Association and IDNR partnered to install 62 mile markers and 15 trail entry signs on the State Trail. In 2003 CCA installed 23 additional mile markers, 5 trail entry signs and 2 silhouettes between Lemont and Joliet. Each mile marker contains two separate canal facts. Each fact has a short catchy title in bold-for example, “Don’t shoot til you see the whites of their eyes,” which explained that for sport people often shot animals from the decks of the slow moving canal boats. Another, entitled Family Affair, talks about how entire families lived and worked on canal boats. These signs provide orientation and historical information to visitors.

The Village of Lemont has also refurbished its section of the canal trail, and Canal Corridor Association and the City of Joliet have installed silhouettes and trail signs along a 4.3 mile route through Joliet city streets in order to link up to the I&M Canal State Trail. The growing numbers of bicyclists are especially well-served by creating links between various trails, and these connections add to the concept of regional identity.
New trail connections
In addition to the improvements along the I&M Canal, several new trails and trail connections that strengthen the regional system and link the I&M to state and national trail systems are underway.

In the late 1980s, the Cook, DuPage, and Will County Forest Preserve Districts formed a partnership with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District to create the Centennial Trail. This long-awaited trail will run from the Chicago Portage National Historic Site in Lyons to Romeoville. The Will County section between 135th Street and the DuPage County border opened in 2002. A trail connecting the Cook County Forest Preserve’s eleven mile I&M Canal Bike Trail in Willow Springs to the Centennial Trail in DuPage County via a bike route along Route 83 has also been completed. This section of trail was recently renamed the John Husar Trail, to commemorate the late Chicago Tribune outdoors columnist.

The I&M is a critical link of the Grand Illinois Trail system, part of the American Discovery Trail. Bicyclists can ride from the Will County line at 135th St. to LaSalle on signed trails. Other trails, including the Heritage Trail, have established links with the I&M, further enhancing the regional trail network system. When completed, the link between the I&M and Hennepin Canals will form another link in the Grand Illinois Trail system.

Interpretive Systems

I&M Canal Passage Wayfinding program
In 1997 Canal Corridor Association hired a full-time historian in order to further the goal of providing high quality interpretation for visitors to the corridor. Since then CCA has developed an extensive series of outdoor interpretive exhibits in the I&M Corridor. The I&M Canal Passage Wayfinding System consists of trail entry signs and maps, mile markers, and Cor-Ten steel silhouettes of real individuals.

The interpretive approach is informed by the belief that people learn most effectively about history when learning about individuals. Canal Corridor Association has stressed this aspect of storytelling through its innovative Cor-Ten steel silhouettes of individuals connected to the I&M Canal Corridor. These interpretive elements help tell the story of people who have made an I&M Passage. The Cor-Ten steel was chosen in part because it reflects the industrial character of the region. To date 30 silhouettes have been installed in the towns of Lockport, Joliet, Morris, Romeoville, and Hodgkins.

Characters were chosen, in part, because they have been underrepresented in existing interpretation. Individuals portrayed include: a canal engineer, mule drivers, naturalists, a pioneer woman and her family, steel workers, and Harpo and Groucho Marx; in short a rich mix of characters that tell the diverse story of the corridor. Each silhouette has a marker post with two panels. The focus is in making connections by always relating history to the present day. We are telling the story not just of the I&M Canal but of the entire canal corridor. The past is with us today in ways that we cannot fully fathom. We live with the consequences of past actions
every day of our lives. Visitors come to understand that they are following in the footsteps of others who trod the same ground. The past is, in fact, an integral way of viewing our current situation.

A grouping of five silhouettes in Bicentennial Park in Joliet tells the story of the local quarry industry. Seven silhouettes in Joliet, from the Joliet Iron Works site to the I&M Canal State Trail in Rockdale, are organized around the idea of going to work, and include steel workers, businessmen and immigrant laborers and store owners. In Morris, Canalport Plaza tells the story of the Armstrong family, founders of Morris and Grundy County. In Romeoville an Illinois Indian chief and a French fur trader greet each other at Isle a la Cache Museum.

The Cor-Ten steel markers blend with the surrounding landscape and symbolize the I&M Canal Corridor’s industrial heritage. Historical facts remind cyclists and hikers that they are traveling in the footsteps of people who have used this route for centuries, and encourage visitors to further explore the canal’s fascinating history. The markers provide information including the distance to nearby attractions, as well as a number that indicates distance from the Canal Origins Park in Chicago. Eventually, it is hoped that the markers and welcome signs will extend east into Cook County to cover the complete trail system along the canal.

Another major project involved creating and installing driving tour and highway signs from Lockport to LaSalle, in conjunction with a driving tour map and guide. These signs were installed in the summer of 2001 and the map has proven to be popular. The I&M Canal Passage Driving Tour gets visitors and tourists off the interstate highways and into the towns themselves, where they can experience first-hand the charms of places such as Morris, Lockport, and Ottawa. All signs feature the new corridor logo, a young I&M Canal mule driver and mule.

Another important aid to visitors is the I&M Canal Passage Driving Tour, which allows visitors to navigate the corridor’s back roads with a driving tour map and street signs featuring a boy and a mule.

Educational Programs

Site-Specific Programs
Sites throughout the corridor, especially nature centers and historical sites, offer a multitude of on and off-site educational public programs. For many, schools groups, particularly elementary students, are an important audience. Several examples of the outstanding student-centered programs include the LaSalle County Historical Society Museum’s volunteer-driven program which each year takes 1,000 fourth graders back in time to 100 years ago, Isle a la Cache’s “walk through time” which engages kindergarten through sixth graders in hands-on learning about the life of a voyageur and Native American traditions, and Camp Sagawau Environmental Education Center’s program that offers a full day in the field to experience the living classroom provided by nature.
Classroom Centered Programs and Tools
In addition to programs at individual sites, a number of corridor-wide initiatives have helped introduce the canal story into more and more classrooms.

Making Connections – What the I&M Canal is All About – Elementary Lesson Plans
The I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor Commission produced an elementary school curriculum on the I&M Canal entitled Making Connections: What the Illinois and Michigan Canal is All About. This has proven to be popular with teachers throughout the corridor.

Illinois State Archives Packet
In 1998 the Illinois State Archives produced an excellent compendium of canal primary sources and a teacher’s manual with suggestions on how to integrate them into classroom instruction. These have been distributed to thousands of teachers and schools across the state.

Exploring the I&M Canal Passage - Teachers Workshop
The I&M Canal Sesquicentennial sparked many new educational initiatives including an intensive three-day summer workshop designed to provided educators an opportunity to develop an in-depth understanding of the history and impact of the I&M Canal and a lens through which to explore local, Illinois and U.S. History. The interactive workshop covered the I&M Canal’s heritage from the time of the voyageurs to the present day. The workshop included presentation of geography, history and language arts lesson plans, field experiences along the route of the canal, and experts on the history of the I&M Canal. A total of 100 teachers participated in the workshop that was offered again in 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002.

I&M Canal History Fair Awards
Now in its 8th year, the I&M Canal Awards program ties into the Illinois History Fair, an annual statewide competition that gives junior and senior high school students the opportunity to excel and be recognized for their intellectual interest and expertise in developing projects related to Illinois history. Since its inception, the I&M Canal Awards program has motivated students from over 70 schools in northern, central and southern Illinois to develop research papers, exhibits, models, computer and video presentations, and dramatic performances that explore the I&M Canal’s impact on Illinois and the nation. In addition to developing self-esteem, the program helps students develop critical research, reading, writing and presentation skills, increase their awareness of community resources, and help build stewardship of our cultural heritage. Students and their projects are as diverse as the stories of the canal itself. In five of the last seven years, an I&M Canal project has been selected as one of an elite group of 28 student projects to represent Illinois at the National History Day competition.

Canal Origins Park Education Initiative
In 1999, the Canal Corridor Association launched a three-year pilot program to help realize the educational potential of the Canal Origins Park being developed at the site where the I&M Canal began in Chicago. During this time, the Association worked with 63 educators from over 30 Chicago schools to develop classroom and
on-site tools that activate Canal Origins Park as a place of learning and discovery for Chicago youth. This ambitious program has resulted in teacher training workshops, interdisciplinary, canal-focused lesson plans geared towards third-twelfth grade teachers and their students, supplemental classroom resources, and a field trip guide that support use of the Canal Origins Park site as an outdoor learning laboratory. The initiative also included a major public art program in which over 100 Chicago youth created concrete relief panels interpreting the multi-faceted canal story that have been installed as a focal point of the Canal Origins Park’s interpretive exhibits.

The Last Great Canal: How the I&M Canal United 19th Century America - Teacher Workshops
In 2004 and 2005, the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded Canal Corridor Association a major grant to conduct a series of teacher workshops. The series of five-day workshops, offered in partnership with Lewis University, were designed to give K-12 educators an opportunity to intensively study and discuss important topics in American history using historical sites. Over 240 educators participated in these workshops—about 25% of participants were from outside Illinois, with some coming from as far away as New York, Texas, California, and Washington.

Many different themes relating to the I&M Canal, its impact on immigration, transportation, Western expansion and the meteoric rise of Chicago were presented by noted scholars. The workshops also included field excursions to canal sites that allowed participants to see the canal and the communities it helped to create. Teachers had the opportunity to conduct research in the Canal and Regional History Collection at Lewis University and develop a detailed lesson plan on a topic of their choosing.

The summer workshops provided teachers with a wealth of local resources and exposure to the richness of local historical events that will serve them for years to come as they illustrate broader historical themes within their classrooms. Area participants will be able to include field trips in their study of local, transportation and immigration history. The teachers from outside Illinois have been exposed to a new, nationally significant story that they can use to shape their lessons on westward expansion, immigration, and other topics.

Swamp to City - Curricula
Completed in 2003, the Swamp to City: Chicago History from the Portage Site to the Metropolis was written for the I&M Canal Civic Center Authority by the Chicago Metro History Education Center. The junior-senior high school is designed to teach students about the historic, scientific, and cultural importance of the Chicago Portage National Historic Site. Utilizing numerous primary source documents, the curriculum notebook reveals the history of Chicago as told by its rivers, lakes, and swamps that surround it and how humans have used and changed these bodies of water to fit the needs and dreams of people. The notebook contains lesson plans, teaching tools, field trip activities, and other printed materials.
Other Regional Initiatives

Canallers in the Corridor
Informally organized in the 1980s, by 1996 this volunteer troupe of first person interpreters formally incorporated. The Canallers have become a ubiquitous sight at many corridor events, and have entertained and educated students at schools throughout the corridor. The Canallers penchant for popularizing characters from the past, including canal boat captains, mule drivers, engineers, clergy, and others, has fostered an appreciation for history. The Canallers have spoken to hundreds of school groups and represent an underutilized resource for corridor. The group has recently produced an hour long video documenting their history and featuring some of their presentations.

I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor Commission
From 1994-2004 the Federal Corridor Commission provided financial support for the Illinois & Michigan Canal Interpreters Group. The money was utilized in a variety of ways, including the purchase of books, animal skins and skeletons, a/v and other equipment, bike racks, microscopes, and binoculars. The Commission also produced several brochures, on topics including the I&M Canal, Archaeology, and Ice Age Geology. In 1992 a popular driving tour guide was produced in cooperation with the Canal Corridor Association. The Commission also installed interpretive signs at various locations throughout the corridor, and for a time maintained radio transmitters that gave information on the corridor.

I&M Canal Sesquicentennial
Efforts to spread the word about the canal reached a fever pitch with the sesquicentennial of the canal’s opening in 1998. Planning for the sesquicentennial celebrations began in 1995, and a regional network of sesquicentennial coordinators was created with representation from 34 communities. Many long-term initiatives came to fruition and new projects were begun during the sesquicentennial year. The sesquicentennial brought together a great number of partners in a coordinated way, and the public heard a unified message throughout the year and the region. This multifaceted celebration brought new awareness of the canal’s role in shaping the region. At Chicago’s Navy Pier a series mosaic sculptures entitled Water Marks were unveiled, many crafted with the aid of Corridor residents. This public art symbolizes the transportation story embodied by the I&M Canal. The I&M Corridor was also the site of the World Canal Conference in both 1988 and 1998.

Among the major region-wide events, one with national exposure was the publication of the book Prairie Passage: The Illinois & Michigan Canal Corridor, and the opening of a major accompanying exhibit at Chicago’s Cultural Center. A notable effort to develop a cohesive, regional picture of the entire corridor, the book was published by the University of Illinois Press for the Canal Corridor Association. Work on the project began with funding from the Illinois Humanities Council back in 1991. The sesquicentennial celebration afforded an opportunity to secure major state funds for the project, matched with private support. Exhibits partners included the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and the Illinois State Museum.
For the book, the noted landscape photographer Edward Ranney captured the natural and industrial environments currently found in the Heritage Corridor in 200 large-format black-and-white photographs. A few interspersed historic photographs put the contemporary landscape into a time context. Nationally known authors Tony Hiss and William Least Heat Moon offered their thoughts on the landscape, while CCA executive vice president Emily J. Harris contributed the main essay illuminating the canal’s history, organized in a geographical sequence from one end to the other. The book is a fitting tribute to the shared heritage of the canal corridor, and the striking photographs demonstrate how the waterways, man-made and natural, provide a link through urban, rural, and small-town landscapes. The accompanying exhibit attracted 50,000 people in Chicago, Lockport, and Springfield.

Another sesquicentennial production captured an even wider audience. The Canal Corridor Association produced a popular guide to corridor, the newspaper supplement on this venture, which was distributed to 750,000 Chicago Tribune readers throughout the state. In addition to listing events, the guide contained historical information, including sketches and silhouettes of numerous individuals from the area, from dancer Katherine Dunham to naturalist Robert Kennicott. The guide included a specially commissioned poem by Poet Laureate of Illinois, Gwendolyn Brooks. This powerful poem epitomizes the importance of commemoration, ending with the words, "It is our business to be Bothered."

Partners for the guide included the Heritage Corridor Convention & Visitors Bureau and the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor Commission. The year long sesquicentennial was awarded the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Preservation Award granted by the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois.

One more Sesquicentennial project bore fruit in 1999, bringing together the personal stories of people throughout the Corridor. Sponsored by the CCA, the Canal Pioneer program invited people who could trace their ancestry back 100 years in the corridor to send in their family stories. Seventy-five families responded, providing a wealth of hitherto unknown information. A subsequent grant from the Illinois Humanities Council resulted in public programs throughout the corridor in 1999, and a booklet focusing on local and family history. This project was featured on the National Endowment for the Humanities website, and an initial printing of 1,000 booklets has been nearly exhausted. Using everyday people and their family stories captivated students and the public alike in ways that traditional history rarely does.

**Docent Training Program**

Designed to help build tourism potential at both the local and regional level, in the spring of 1999, thirty-three individuals from throughout the heritage corridor participated in an intensive 10-week I&M Canal Docent Training Program. The curriculum included seven evening sessions covering the geological and natural history of the canal corridor, canal town growth, architecture and decorative arts, immigration and acculturation, canal town industry, nature and recreation. Three hands-on Saturday sessions focused on development of tour-giving skills and culminated with a practice tour from Joliet to Ottawa. Drawing from narrative
scripts they had developed, each workshop participant served as a docent for a portion of the tour.

**Prairie Tides Film**

In 2002 Prairie Tides, a documentary by Prairie Tides Productions, was released to great acclaim. Many corridor communities had showings of the film, much of which was shot on location along the I&M Canal. Prairie Tides chronicles the Illinois and Michigan Canal and the "tides" of change across the Illinois prairies—from Native Americans, to French explorers, to fur traders, to farmers and settlers, to those who built Chicago into a world-class city. It illuminates the story of the I&M Canal as a catalyst for Illinois’ transformation from a frontier state to a seat of commerce and industry. Personal stories of the visionaries who planned the canal and the immigrants who built it are brought to life through historical photographs, artifacts, graphics and impressionistic action sequences. At 60 minutes the film is an ideal introduction to the canal corridor story, especially for grades 6-12.

A more modest, but still important video, “Towing through Time” has been produced by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, illustrating the differences and similarities between the I&M Canal and the current Illinois Waterway. This 15-minute video debuted in 1998, and can be seen at the Illinois Waterway Visitor Center opposite Starved Rock in Ottawa. Today barges on the Illinois Waterway pass through the huge lock here, and the video provides an important link between today’s water travel and the historic I&M Canal.

**ISHS Markers**

The Illinois State Historical Society also has a marker program with signs in the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor. They have two signs in Grundy County, thirteen in LaSalle County, and four in Will County. Subjects include the I&M Canal, the Diamond Mine Disaster, the canal warehouse in Utica (LaSalle County Historical Society) and the Joliet Mound. See their website, www.historyillinois.org, for full text.
Part II: Interpretive Framework

This section of the interpretive plan contains an interpretive essay highlighting major facets of the I&M Canal’s history, followed by basic facts about the corridor, and a timeline. Detailed themes and sub-themes serve as guidelines for developing an overall framework for understanding the canal’s national significance. We anticipate that these resources will be used by docents, educators and other interpreters, especially in the development of programs for students. In general, we hope to see this plan disseminated to interpretive specialists and all others who are developing programs, exhibits, text, and first-person interpretation that deal with some aspect of the history of the I&M Canal Corridor.

Brief Canal History

The Canal Era

The I&M Canal was the final link in a national plan to connect different regions of the vast North American continent via waterways. Linking the waters of the Illinois River (and ultimately the Mississippi River) with those of Lake Michigan, the idea of the canal went back to Louis Jolliet and the early French fur traders of the 1670s.

The years between 1800 and 1850 have been characterized as the Canal Era in U.S. history. Since the birth of the new nation, American leaders had recognized the urgent need for a network of “internal improvements” to ease the problem of continental transportation. The success of the Erie Canal, completed in 1825, marked a period of intensive canal building in the U.S. Indeed, the years from 1790-1850 have been characterized as the Canal era. This chapter in our nation’s history has been largely overlooked, as most historians have focused on the railroads as the prime force behind America’s economic development.

Construction of the I&M Canal and the sale of canal lands brought thousands of people streaming into northeastern Illinois in the mid to late 1830s, and those who braved the hazards of this frontier outpost quickly realized the necessity of improving transportation. Contemporary accounts of stagecoach travel emphasize the perils and discomforts of traversing rutted paths that passed for roads. Much of the region consisted of wet prairie, and spring rains and melting snow turned the trails into impassable quagmires. In 1847 a reporter took a trip by stagecoach along the route of the soon to be completed I&M Canal. He noted that the ride “was as uncomfortable as any enemy, if we had one, could desire. We made progress at the rate of less than three miles an hour; the weather was intensely hot; and not a breath of air was stirring; the horses and carriage raised any quantity of dust, which, of course, rose only high enough to fill the carriage.” Another traveler noted that a long stagecoach ride “left one more dead than alive.” Water-borne travel promised a new level of comfort and convenience.

Thus, few events in Chicago’s history were more eagerly anticipated than the opening of the Illinois and Michigan Canal. The most massive public works project
ever attempted in the young state of Illinois, digging began on the 4th of July in 1836. Many hoped the canal could be completed in a few years, but in 1837 the nation suffered its first major Depression, and by 1840 Illinois teetered towards bankruptcy. Work on the canal largely ceased until New York, English, and French investors ponied up $1.6 million to jump start the stalled project in 1845. It took twelve years of on again, off again labor to construct the canal, which finally opened in April of 1848.

**A New Transportation Corridor**

On its completion the I&M Canal created a new transportation corridor. By connecting the waters of the Illinois River with those of Lake Michigan, a vast all-water route connected widely scattered sections of the United States, specifically the Northwest, South, and East. Travelers from the eastern U. S. took the Erie Canal to Buffalo, New York, where steamboats brought them through the Great Lakes to Chicago. Transferring to canal boats, a 96-mile trip on the I&M Canal brought them to LaSalle/Peru. Here people boarded river steamers bound for St. Louis and New Orleans. The canal opened the floodgates to an influx of new commodities, new people, new ideas. The I&M, and the railroad and highway connections that soon paralleled its connection between Chicago and LaSalle/Peru, became the great passageway to the American West. At a stroke, the opening of the I&M Canal gave Illinois the key to mastery of the American mid-continent.

The opening of the canal heralded a new era in trade and travel for the entire nation. The I&M allowed travelers the option of taking an all water route from Buffalo to Chicago, St. Louis, and even to New Orleans. This water highway provided a mud and dust-free alternative to overland travel. Passengers increasingly chose the all water route to the East, bypassing the Ohio River route. Freight could go from St. Louis to New York in twelve days via the I&M Canal and the Great Lakes, while the Ohio River route might take 30-40 days. Packet boat companies touted their role in a new transportation network by noting that the packets connected with a daily line of steamboats bound for St. Louis, enabling travelers to make the 400-mile trip between Chicago and St. Louis in 60-72 hours, at a cost of only $9. One commentator estimated that the number of people traveling from Chicago to St. Louis had tripled since the packet boats began running.

**The I&M Canal and the Making of Chicago**

Chicago's rapid development in the nineteenth century is regarded as one of the most remarkable stories in American history, yet few today make a connection between this unprecedented growth and the Illinois and Michigan Canal. The last of the great U.S. shipping canals, the I&M helped transform Chicago from a small frontier town to the fastest growing city on earth. The canal also siphoned off trade from St. Louis, one of the factors that allowed Chicago to surge ahead of its chief commercial rival. St. Louis and others had laid claim to the title of “Queen City” of the West: Chicago staked its claim through the changes wrought by the I&M Canal. The I&M Canal was the first link in the region’s transportation system; all others followed in its wake. Understanding the story of the I&M Canal is critical for
understanding the incredibly rapid development of Chicago and Northeastern Illinois in the nineteenth century.

The first few years of the I&M Canal were absolutely critical in launching Chicago on its path to urban greatness, and in spawning a dozen other towns along its banks that would soon industrialize and help consolidate the western end of the American Manufacturing Belt in northern Illinois. The opening of the Illinois & Michigan Canal radically reduced the costs of transferring goods, particularly grain, lumber, and merchandise, between Midwestern prairies and the East via the Great Lakes trading system. The degree to which the I&M Canal forever altered life in Chicago cannot be overstated. For the first time, the canal allowed goods from the southern U. S., including sugar, salt, molasses, tobacco, and oranges, to be shipped to Chicago. By cutting travel times, the I&M Canal also precipitated a new era of travel for people from the south to the north, and vice versa.

Changes Wrought by the Canal

The I&M Canal’s influence reached its peak during the years 1848-1852, when the canal had no serious rival as a major artery of commerce in northeastern Illinois. By 1853 the Chicago And Rock Island Railroad paralleled the canal, ending the brief but colorful days of the I&M canal packet (passenger) boat. Many people mistakenly believe that the railroads ended trade on the I&M Canal. Beginning in 1848 the I&M operated for 85 years, although it is true that the last 33 were a time of steady decline. While the I&M had only five years free of competition with the railroads, competition from the canal forced railroads to lower freight rates on bulk goods, to the benefit of consumers everywhere. With the exception of the Erie Canal, only the I & M Canal opened up a water transportation corridor still viable today, in the form of the Sanitary and Ship Canal and the Illinois Waterway, which eventually supplanted the I&M Canal in 1933. This is still an important artery of commerce for Illinois and the nation.

The results of the canal in the Midwest were profound. Farmers now had a reliable way to get their crops to market, thus allowing them to open up new acreage for cultivation. The digging of limestone, coal, sand and gravel shifted into high gear, as the canal made it economically feasible to quarry and ship large quantities to fast growing Chicago. Exploiting these natural resources in turn spurred new industries, especially the manufacture of glass, bricks, hydraulic cement, and zinc.

Abraham Lincoln Praises the I&M Canal

Illinois’ favorite son Abraham Lincoln trumpeted the effects of the I&M Canal. While acknowledging that the I&M Canal was entirely within the confines of one state, (Illinois) he noted that its benefits extended far beyond those borders, reducing the cost of transporting goods, thus benefiting both buyers and sellers. “Nothing is so local as not to be of some general benefit,” wrote the future President. “[T]he benefits of an improvement are by no means confined to the particular locality of the improvement itself.” It is no exaggeration to state that the construction and
The operation of the I&M Canal from 1836 to 1933 in northeast Illinois tells one of the most significant stories in the transportation history of the United States.

**A Story with National and International Significance**

The I&M Canal had significant implications not only for Illinois but for the entire nation. In 1827 the Federal Government gave the State of Illinois nearly 300,000 acres of prime farmland, the sale of which would finance construction of a canal. The I&M Canal shares with the Wabash Canal in neighboring Indiana the distinction of being the first American canals to receive federal land grant toward its financing. This precedent is of great historical interest, as it later served as the model for the first federal land grant to support a railroad—the Illinois Central Railroad.

During the years of the California Gold Rush many emigrants traveled part of the journey on the I&M Canal. During the nation-wide cholera epidemic of 1849, the disease came to Chicago via passengers on the I&M Canal.

The canal story is also one with international implications. In 1845, with construction of the I&M Canal stalled due to the State of Illinois’s near bankruptcy, investors from England and France put up $1.6 million to complete the canal. The investors were not disappointed in their returns, and the I&M is one of the few American canals to have more than paid for itself.
Basic Canal and Corridor Facts

Corridor Overview

- In August 1984, President Ronald Reagan signed a bill authorizing the establishment of the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor. The Heritage Corridor concept was the first explicit marriage of preservation, conservation, recreation, and economic development.

- The I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor encompasses 49 communities and parts of five counties including Cook, DuPage, Will, Grundy, and LaSalle.

- The 49 communities within the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor are: Alsip, Bedford Park, Blue Island, Bolingbrook, Bridgeview, Burnham, Burr Ridge, Calumet City, Calumet Park, Carbon Hill, Channahon, Chicago, Coal City, Countryside, Crest Hill, Crestwood, Dolton, Forest View, Hickory Hills, Hodgkins, Indian Head Park, Joliet, Justice, La Salle, Lemont, Lockport, Lyons, McCook, Marseilles, Minooka, Morris, Naplate, Ogelsby, Ottawa, Palos Heights, Palos Hills, Palos Park, Peru, Riverdale, Robbins, Rockdale, Romeoville, Seneca, Stickney, Summit, Utica, Willow Springs, Woodridge, and Worth.

Natural History

- 400 million years ago much of northeastern Illinois was 20 degrees south of the equator. The limestone (actually a form of limestone called dolomite) bedrock underlying the eastern end of the canal corridor contains the remains of coral reefs and extinct trilobites that flourished in the warm saltwater oceans here during the Silurian period.

- Near Morris are the famous Mazon Creek fossil beds, one of the most famous fossil localities in the world. 300 million years ago the region consisted of swamps and lagoons. Some of the earliest known insects, including cockroaches and dragonflies are found here, as well as giant ferns, sharks, and shrimp. This is the only place in the world where the bizarre, worm-like Tully Monster has been found. It is Illinois’ state fossil.

- Our landscape in northeastern Illinois is the result of the retreat of the glaciers approximately 12,000 years ago. Lake Michigan, the prairies, our rivers and forests, all were created by the movement of these glaciers.

- Many species have become extinct or extirpated in historic times. In 1702 a French explorer spotted Carolina parakeets near Morris. These colorful birds, the only parakeets originally found in North America, were later hunted to extinction, the last one dying in 1918.

- The explorer LaSalle found numerous bison on the prairie near Morris in 1680. Bison disappeared east of the Mississippi River around 1800. Bears and elk were also common here.
• Passenger pigeons were once one of the most numerous birds in the world. Huge flocks of these birds darkened the sky at noon on their annual migrations. Many people considered the young birds a delicacy, while others shot them and fed them to hogs. Some killed huge numbers just for sport. These birds, whose population was once estimated in the billions, became extinct by 1914.

• The prairies that once covered roughly half of Illinois are largely gone, but you can explore remnants of the original prairie landscape at several places in the Canal Corridor. The Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area in Morris, the Lockport Prairie Nature Preserve, and the Santa Fe Prairie in Hodgkins are just three of the places to see these magnificent tallgrass prairies.

• The 19,000 acre Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie is one of the more spectacular efforts in prairie restoration. The site is the former home of the Joliet Army Ammunition Plant.

• The Blackball mines outside of La Salle, once used to hide bootlegging operations during Prohibition, are now home to the Federally endangered Indiana bat.

Native Americans
• Native Americans have lived in the Canal Corridor for at least 12,000 years. The main tribes that lived in northeastern Illinois were the Illinois, Potawatomi, Miami, Ottawa, Chippewa, Kickapoo, and the Sauk and Fox.

• The land that became the canal corridor was obtained by the federal government as a result of the Treaty of St. Louis, forced on tribes after the War of 1812.

• By 1700 the rapid spread of European emigrants seriously jeopardized Indian cultures. Tribes forced from their homelands in the eastern part of the U.S. encroached on the territories of Midwestern tribes, resulting in wars and the disruption of tribal traditions.

• The Black Hawk War of 1832 ended in defeat for a mixed band of Native Americans, and the tribes were forced to sign the Treaty of Chicago in 1833, giving up all of their land in Illinois in exchange for lands west of the Mississippi River. The majority of Native Americans left in 1835.

• Descendants of the tribes that once inhabited northern Illinois still can be found in Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, Oklahoma, Michigan, and Indiana. Today, over 20,000 Native Americans live in Chicago alone, but most are not related to the tribes that once lived here.

• Like much of Illinois, the Canal Corridor once contained thousands of Native American burial mounds, but most have been destroyed.
• Father Jacques Marquette celebrated the first Catholic Mass in Illinois for some 2,000 Native Americans in April 1675.

• Relatively little is known about the Illinois Indians, and much of what we know comes from one source, an account by a French fur trader from the 1680s and 90’s. The Illinois were actually a loose band of closely related tribes or subtribes, 12 in all, including the Cahokia, Kaskaskia, Michigamea, Peoria, and Tamaroa.

• The Illinois combined agriculture with hunting, fishing, and gathering. Women were responsible for agriculture, and they grew maize, squash, beans and watermelons. Men hunted buffalo, deer, bears, and turkeys.

• Nearly everyone is familiar with the story of Starved Rock—how an Illinois brave killed Chief Pontiac in 1769, setting in motion a war that exterminated the last of the Illinois atop Starved Rock. It’s a great tale—but there is little evidence that it actually happened.

• The Grand Village of the Illinois, called Kaskaskia by the French, stood opposite Starved Rock. Serving as a semi-permanent summer village, the population fluctuated dramatically, from a few hundred to perhaps as many 10,000 people. Many different tribes gathered here, especially in the summer, but a depletion of firewood led to the abandonment of the site in the early 1690s.

• Remnants of the Indian tribes that once inhabited northern Illinois still can be found in Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, Oklahoma, Michigan, and Indiana. Over 20,000 Native Americans live in Chicago today.

**French Era and Early Settlement**

• The idea for the canal came from Louis Jolliet and Father Jacques Marquette, French fur traders in the 1670s.

• At the Chicago Portage National Historic Site in Lyons, Native Americans, French fur traders, and early settlers carried their canoes to the Des Plaines River.

• Lake Michigan was "discovered" by French explorer Jean Nicolet in 1634, and Marquette and Jolliet reached the Mississippi in 1673.

• French explorers ranged over the Illinois Valley in the 17th century, searching for adventure, furs, and mineral wealth. They called the Illinois River La Divine.

• Robert Cavelier de LaSalle, a French soldier and adventurer, sought to colonize parts of Illinois. He and Henri de Tonti established Fort St. Louis at Starved Rock in 1682.
• The first settlers along the Illinois Valley were frontiersmen from the South. By 1830 many easterners began to arrive, establishing homes along the forested river edge.

• In 1778 what is now Illinois became a county of Virginia. It was later part of the Northwest and Indiana territories before becoming a state in 1818.

Basic I&M Canal Facts

• The I&M Canal was 96.40 miles from Bridgeport to LaSalle/Peru. (Many sites use the figure of 97 miles, or 100 miles.)

• The canal was 6 feet deep, and 60 feet wide at the top and 36 at the bottom. Several widewaters allowed canal boats to pass each other.

• There is a 141 foot drop in elevation from lake Michigan to LaSalle/Peru. Canal locks were necessary to accommodate this change in elevation.

• From 1848 to 1871 there were 17 locks on the canal. Lock 1 is in Lockport, but there were two summit locks, one at Bridgeport and one in present-day Romeoville. (The summit locks were necessary after a change in canal construction plans in 1845.) The summit locks were removed after the deep cut of 1871.

• There were four feeder canals that supplied water to the I&M. These were the Fox River feeder, the Kankakee River feeder, the Calumet River feeder and the DuPage River feeder.

• The I&M Canal had four aqueducts, at Aux Sable and Nettle Creeks, and at the Fox and Little Vermilion rivers. An aqueduct carries a canal across water.

• It took twelve years to complete the I&M Canal, from 1836-1848. The canal cost over $6 million.

• The Illinois & Michigan Canal opened in April 1848. Even before its official opening, it spurred settlement and economic development in the communities along the corridor.

• In general it took about 22-26 hours to traverse the entire canal. The quickest recorded passage was 17 hours and 35 minutes. Boats traveled about 4 miles per hour.

• Freight boats carried up to 150 tons. Barges on today’s Illinois Waterway carry ten times as much (1500 tons), and one tugboat can push fifteen of them.

• The primary goods shipped via the canal included corn, wheat, limestone, coal, and wood.
• The canal froze during the winter months and was closed to barge traffic. It usually opened in April and closed in December.

• From 1848 to 1854, Chicago's population rose from 20,000 to over 74,000. Much of the increase can be attributed to the opening of the I&M Canal.

• The I&M Canal was not replaced by the railroads. The canal’s true successor is the Illinois Waterway, opened in 1933 and still carrying freight today.

• In the 1930s the canal towpath was turned into a recreational trail by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Two of the shelters they erected can be seen at Lockport and Ottawa.

Pre-construction and construction period
• The I&M Canal was the final link in a national plan to connect different regions of the vast North American continent via waterways. It joined the waters of the Illinois River (and ultimately the Mississippi River) with those of Lake Michigan, hence the name Illinois and Michigan Canal.

• The success of the Erie Canal, completed in 1825, marked a period of intensive canal building in the U. S. Indeed, the years from 1790-1850 have been characterized as the Canal era. The I&M was the last major shipping canal built in the U. S. during the 19th century.

• The land that would become the canal corridor was obtained by the federal government through the Treaty of St. Louis in 1816. Native Americans were forced to sign the treaty after taking the side of the British during the War of 1812.

• If not for the idea of the I&M Canal Chicago and 40+ miles of northern Illinois would be part of Wisconsin. When Illinois’ borders were being drawn up in 1818 the borders were moved so that the proposed canal would be in one state.

• In 1827 the Federal Government gave the State of Illinois nearly 300,000 acres of prime farmland, the sale of which would finance construction of a canal.

• Chicago is by definition a canal town. The first plat of the city was made by the I&M Canal Commissioners in 1830. Ottawa was laid out at the same time.

• Construction of the I&M Canal and the sale of canal lands brought thousands of people streaming into northeastern Illinois in the mid to late 1830s.

• The canal was the most massive public works project ever attempted in the young state of Illinois, and digging began on the 4th of July in 1836.
• Many ethnic groups helped to hand dig the canal, including Norwegians, French Canadians, and Germans. However, the Irish played the lead role in this back breaking work.

• Canal diggers made about a dollar a day, and they were provided with a gill (about 4 ounces) of whiskey per day.

• We do not know how many people died digging the canal. In 1838 alone one observer estimated that anywhere from 700-1000 died from disease and other causes.

• Shantytowns for canal diggers and their families dotted the length of the canal. Living conditions were abominable, with dozens of people crowded into tiny huts.

• Most work on the canal ceased between 1841 and 1845, when the State of Illinois teetered on the brink of bankruptcy. Canal employees were issued canal scrip, which could be redeemed for land, and many turned to farming.

• Investors from England, France, New York, and Boston put up $1.6 million in order to finance the completion of the canal.

**Canal operation**

• The I&M operated from 1848-1933, a total of 85 years. Traffic dropped dramatically after 1900 with the opening of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal.

• Packet, or passenger boats, ran on the I&M Canal between 1848-1852. By 1853 the Chicago and Rock Island RR ran to LaSalle, ending the passenger trade.

• During the years of the California Gold Rush many emigrants traveled part of the journey on the I&M Canal. During the nation-wide cholera epidemic of 1849, the disease came to Chicago via passengers on the I&M Canal.

• Why wasn’t the Illinois River used for shipping instead of the I&M Canal? The water supply in the river was unreliable, and many islands hampered navigation.

• The years 1861-1865 were among the busiest and most profitable in the I&M’s history. The canal played a major role in the North’s trade during the Civil War.

• In 1871 the I&M Canal was dug deeper, allowing Lake Michigan water to flow into the canal. This reversed (temporarily) the flow of the Chicago River and allowed Chicago’s sewage to be flushed down the canal. The river was permanently reversed by the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal in 1900.
• James Butler "Wild Bill" Hickok, born in Troy Grove, was a mule driver on the canal. In the first known fight of his career, he and an opponent tumbled into the canal.

• Locktenders operated the wooden lock gates. They made $300 per year and were on call 24 hours a day. They sometimes had to break up fights among ship captains jockeying for position.

• Mule barns dotted the length of the canal. Mule teams were changed every 10 miles.

• Several women worked as locktenders, including Mrs. George Funk, who operated Lock 11 from 1896 until 1915.

• Many people drowned in the canal over the years. Boat captains, who often had their families aboard, often tethered young children to the deck to prevent them from falling in.

• Entire families lived on canal boats. One boat captain remembered crawling like a muskrat in order to get to the cramped quarters below deck.

• Before 1871 Chicago was an important port on the Great Lakes, receiving more vessels than San Francisco, New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Charleston, and Mobile combined.

• In the winter months some people harvested cut from the canal, and others played hockey or skated long distances on the canal.

Canal towns
• Will County was named for Conrad Will, a physician from southern Illinois who was active in the state legislature.

• What's in a name? Grundy County was named in 1841 for Felix Grundy, a Tennessee lawyer. William Armstrong, who helped establish the county, was an admirer of Grundy's.

• Shakespeare may have had an influence, however fleeting, on town names in the corridor. The town of Romeo (now Romeoville) was planned as a twin city to Juliet (now Joliet).

• Many ex-canal laborers in Lockport, Lemont, and Joliet turned to quarrying the dolomite that was uncovered by the digging of the canal.

• Seneca was originally named Crotty, after Jeremiah Crotty. In the 1830s and 1840s Crotty served as contractor for over four miles of the I&M Canal.

• The town of Seneca is named after the Seneca Indians, part of the Five Nations Confederacy of Iroquois-speaking Indians of New York.
- Seneca played a leading role in World War II. Thousands of landing ship tanks (LSTs), dubbed low slow targets, were made here.

- The Joliet Army Ammunition Plant produced TNT in World War II and beyond.

- The town of Marseilles, founded in 1835, had ample water power for a variety of industries, including farm machinery, paper, and matches.

- In the 1830s Lockport, headquarters of the Canal Commissioners, had hopes of surpassing Chicago. The building now houses the Will County Historical Society's museum.

- Ottawa’s Washington Square Park was the site for the first Lincoln-Douglas debate in 1858, drawing people from all over the state. A large glacial boulder marks the spot.

- Many towns along the canal played a role in the Underground Railroad. In 1859 a group of leading Ottawa citizens helped free an escaped slave from federal marshals.

- The canal’s western terminus at LaSalle was a place where southern culture mixed with that of the north. Many boatmen congregated in the rough levee district.

- The town of Utica was originally called Science. It was moved from the banks of the Illinois River to its present location to take advantage of the canal.

- LaSalle County is almost as large as Rhode Island, and it is Illinois’ second largest county in terms of area, second to McLean County. Ottawa is the county seat.

- The hydraulic cement industry of Utica dates to the 1830s. This material was important in constructing the canal. The local limestone forms cement when burned.

- The Hegeler-Carus mansion in LaSalle was designed by Chicago architect William W. Boyington, who also designed the Chicago Water Tower and the Joliet Penitentiary.

- Starved Rock and its environs were owned for thirty years by Civil War veteran Daniel Hitt. He sold the land for $21,000 in 1890.

**Changes brought about by the I&M Canal**

- The canal created a new transportation corridor. A vast all-water route connected widely scattered sections of the United States, specifically the
Northwest, South, and East.

- Travelers from the eastern U. S. took the Erie Canal to Buffalo, New York, where steamboats brought them through the Great Lakes to Chicago. Transferring to canal boats, a 96-mile trip on the I&M Canal brought them to LaSalle/Peru. Here people boarded river steamers bound for St. Louis and New Orleans.

- The canal opened the floodgates to an influx of new commodities, new people, new ideas. The I&M, and the railroad and highway connections that soon paralleled its connection between Chicago and LaSalle/Peru, became the great passageway to the American West. At a stroke, the opening of the I&M Canal gave Illinois the key to mastery of the American mid-continent.

- The opening of the Illinois & Michigan Canal radically reduced the costs of transferring goods, particularly grain, lumber, and merchandise, between Midwestern prairies and the East via the Great Lakes trading system.

- The results of the canal in the Midwest were profound. Farmers now had a reliable way to get their crops to market, thus allowing them to open up new acreage for cultivation.

- The construction of the canal exposed large quantities of magnesium rich limestone. This stone was used in many area buildings and transported on the canal.

- The digging of limestone, coal, sand and gravel shifted into high gear, as the canal made it economically feasible to quarry and ship large quantities to fast growing Chicago. Exploiting these natural resources in turn spurred new industries, especially the manufacture of glass, bricks, hydraulic cement, and zinc.

- While the I&M had only five years free of competition with the railroads, competition from the canal forced railroads to lower freight rates on bulk goods, to the benefit of consumers everywhere.

- The I&M helped transform Chicago from a small frontier town to the fastest growing city on earth. The canal siphoned off trade from St. Louis, one of the factors that allowed Chicago to surge ahead of its chief commercial rival.
### Canal and Corridor Timeline

**12,000 years ago** The last glaciers retreat from northern Illinois, leaving a rich landscape of rivers, prairies, forests, and lakes. Mastodons, mammoths, and giant beavers become extinct.

**1673** Jolliet and Marquette explore northern Illinois, and Jolliet recommends construction of a canal to link Lake Michigan with the Gulf of Mexico.

**1682** Fort St. Louis is built atop Starved Rock.

**1763** Britain wrests control of the area from the French.

**1769** Most of the Illinois tribe are killed after one is implicated in the death of Chief Pontiac.

**1770s** Portage site is used as a trade route during the Revolutionary War.

**1783** What is now Illinois comes into American hands.

**1795** Treaty of Greenville transfers land around mouth of the Chicago River from Indian to U.S. control.

**1803** Construction is begun on Fort Dearborn in Chicago.

**1812** War of 1812 with Britain begins. Battle at Fort Dearborn.

**1816** Treaty with Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Chippewa tribes cedes land along the Illinois River to build a canal.

**1818** Illinois becomes the 21st state.

**1822** A Federal Act authorizes survey and building of the canal but provides no funds.

**1825** Erie Canal opens, leading to increased migration to Illinois.

**1827** Congress gives Illinois 284,000 acres of land to finance construction of the canal.

**1830** The towns of Chicago and Ottawa are laid out by the Canal Commissioners.

**1832** Black Hawk War results in loss for Indians; treaties the following year banish them west of the Mississippi River.

**1836** Construction on I&M Canal begins.

**1837** Panic of 1837, first major national depression.

**1838** Labor violence erupts among canal workers.

**1840-44** Most work on the canal is halted due to lack of funds.

**1847** Canal diggers strike for more wages and fewer hours. Strike fails.

**1848** I&M canal opens in April. 1st railroad begun in Chicago and 1st telegraph message received. The Chicago Board of Trade is founded to handle increased shipments of grain.
1849 A devastating cholera epidemic arrives in Chicago, via passengers from a canal boat
1852 Last year of major passenger travel on the I&M; Chicago and Rock island RR parallels canal
1854 Chicago and Rock Island Railroad opened to the Mississippi River
1858 State penitentiary built in Joliet
1861-1865 U. S. Civil War
1866 Canal brings in over $300,000 in tolls, the most ever. Another cholera epidemic sweeps through the region
1869 Iron and steel works opens in Joliet; Chicago Water tower and pumping works open
1871 I&M Canal is deepened and the flow of the Chicago River is reversed, allowing Chicago sewage is sent down the Illinois River; Great Chicago Fire; debt on the canal is paid off
1882 Greatest tonnage shipped on the canal in a year, over 1 million tons
1900 Sanitary and Ship Canal opens
1911 Texaco oil refinery opens in Lockport; Starved Rock designated as a state park
1914-1918 I&M experiences a brief resurgence during WW1
1922 Cal Sag Channel opens
1933 Illinois Waterway opens and I&M Canal officially closes; Civilian Conservation Corps establishes camps along the I&M to make repairs
1935 Designation of Illinois and Michigan Canal State Parkway from Joliet to LaSalle
1941-1945 US involvement in World War 2
1942-1945 Town of Seneca builds LST’s (landing ship tanks), and the Joliet Arsenal provides TNT for American troops in World War 2
1963 The I&M Canal is designated a National Historical Historic Landmark
1964 Stevenson Expressway opens in Chicago, built over first seven miles of the I&M Canal; dedication of old canal warehouse in Utica for the LaSalle County Historical Society
1969 I&M Canal office in Lockport closed, and turned over to the Will County Historical Society
1974 I&M Canal transferred to the jurisdiction of the Illinois Dept. of Conservation (now Illinois Department of Natural Resources)
1981 National Park Service releases concept plan for I&M Heritage Corridor
1984 I&M National Heritage Corridor is named as the nation’s 1st Heritage Corridor
1998 150th anniversary of the opening of the canal; dedication of the Joliet Iron Works Historic Site

2000 Driving tour signs of the corridor installed

2002 Joliet Area Historical Museum opens

2004 I&M Canal Heritage Corridor Commission sunsets
Corridor Interpretive Themes

Corridor Story line:
I&M Canal Passage: How the I&M Canal United Nineteenth Century America

You are walking in the footsteps of people who have traveled this passageway for centuries. Native Americans first used the waterways for trade. They showed their routes to French explorers, the first to dream of building a canal.

From 1836 to 1848, immigrant workers dug the 96-mile I&M Canal by hand. It opened a water highway between New York harbor and the Gulf of Mexico. It made Chicago our country’s greatest inland port.

The canal closed in 1933, when larger man-made waterways, railroads and highways took its place. Today the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor, a new kind of national park, welcomes travelers to the parks, trails, canal towns and landmarks along this historic passageway.

Theme 1: Transportation
– The I&M Canal created a “thread” that sewed together a natural passageway between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River, making travel, trade, settlement and industry possible.

For thousands of years Native Americans traveled between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River using a natural water passageway on rivers we know today as the Chicago, Des Plaines, and Illinois Rivers. During times of high waters, they paddled easily in canoes. When the water was low in the marshy prairie rivers, they carried their canoes through parts of the passageway, especially over a low divide between the Chicago and Des Plaines River that later became known as the Chicago Portage.

In 1673, Native Americans showed the passageway to French explorers, who became the first to dream of building a canal to bridge the Chicago Portage and connect the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. Finally, in 1848 the I&M Canal fulfilled this dream. It cut through the Chicago Portage and created a shipping channel that enabled passengers and cargo to travel all the way from New York to New Orleans, bringing the nation west.

Sub-theme 1.1: Native Americans—the first to travel and live in the passageway
For thousands of years before the canal was built, Native Americans traversed the passageway, creating trade highways along the Des Plaines and Illinois Rivers.

Illustrative points:
• Native Americans have been in the region since the end of the last ice age about 12,000 years ago. At one time, the Potawatomi, Ottawa, Illinois and Miami tribes all lived in the corridor.
• Canal surveyors in 1837 discovered 19 Indian mounds in what is now downtown Morris. Other Indian mounds were found at Channahon and Starved Rock.
• Buffalo Rock was once home to the Miami tribe.
• In both Morris and Utica large Native American settlements were established, numbering thousands of residents. Illinois Indians maintained a large village of as many as 6000 people on the Illinois River near Utica. The Grand Village of the Illinois was a meeting place for many tribes.
• Little is known about the Illinois Indians. Composed of a dozen related tribes, their culture was largely exterminated by 1800. Many perished atop Starved Rock in 1769.
• Following the War of 1812, an 1816 treaty ceded much of the present-day canal corridor to the United States.
• After the Black Hawk War of 1832, Native Americans in Illinois were forced to sign treaties ceding all of their land east of the Mississippi River. Soon after the last of the Native Americans departed, the first shovel full of dirt was turned for the construction of the canal.

**Sub-theme 1.2: People dreamed of the canal long before it was built.**
The idea of a canal that could connect the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River was central to plans for northeastern Illinois for 200 years before it opened.

**Illustrative points:**
• Early French explorers recognized the advantages of a canal from Lake Michigan to the Des Plaines River. In 1673, Native American guides led French explorers Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet from the Illinois River to the Des Plaines, across the Chicago Portage to the Chicago River and Lake Michigan, providing them a shortcut back home to Canada. Jolliet immediately conceived of a canal that would allow inland passage from the Great Lakes down the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico.
• In 1803, Fort Dearborn was constructed at the mouth of the Chicago River to protect this strategic future port site.
• Before the canal was built, it took days of bone-jarring travel on rutted turnpike roads that baked rock-hard every summer and dissolved in a sea of mud after each winter. Pioneers had only two choices for travel—by wagon and horseback over muddy roads, or by canoe. The marshy prairie rivers were unreliable for shipping. In 1818, Gurdon Hubbard wrote of an agonizing 3-week-long journey across the Chicago Portage to the Illinois River. Later he joined the ranks of political leaders, including Abraham Lincoln, who advocated for a canal.
• If not for the idea of the proposed I&M Canal, Chicago would have been a part of Wisconsin. In 1818, legislators decided that the canal should be within only one state’s borders, so they added 53 miles to Illinois’ northern boundaries.
• In 1822, a Federal Act authorized the survey and construction of the canal, but provided no funds. Five years later, Congress gave Illinois 284,000 acres of land to help finance the construction of the canal.

**Sub-theme 1.3: Canal construction—building the canal was a massive effort.**

**Illustrative points:**
• A canal is a water highway. Before railroads, water was the cheapest and most reliable way to ship goods and people. Canals were constructed all across the United States.
• Before the canal could be dug, men had to clear the land of trees, brush and boulders.
• Many different ethnic groups helped to dig the canal—Norwegians, French Canadians, and Germans among them—but the Irish played the lead role in this backbreaking work.
• Digging the canal was backbreaking labor done by brawny men. Their basic tools were a shovels, wooden scoops, and wheelbarrows. They earned a dollar a day—barely enough compensation for 12-14 hour days filled with hard labor, the diseases and squalid living conditions they endured. By the end of 1838, over 2000 men were working to build the canal. It took 12 years to build and over 1000 workers died in the process.
• One European visitor called the construction of the canal “truly fabulous” given the “savage condition” of the state of Illinois.
• Canal diggers often demanded that whiskey be provided as part of their wages. One group refused to work on Lock 8 until the contractor gave in to their demand.
• Shantytowns for canal diggers and their families sprang up along the canal. Living conditions in these shanties were abominable, and dozen of people often lived crowded into small huts.
• In 1838, a posse was formed to put down a bloody feud between different factions of Irish canal workers.
• Many canal workers and settlers in the region contracted malaria and typhoid. Some believed that digging the canal released noxious gases from the earth.
• Canal workers discovered large quantities of magnesium-rich dolomite. It was used to construct the canal locks and area buildings.
• By 1840, Illinois’ financial problem halted most of the work on the canal. Canal employees were issued scrip, which could be redeemed for land, and many turned to farming.
• Canal contractors faced serious obstacles, including unruly workers, rough terrain, and lack of funds. Many were driven to bankruptcy in the 1840s when work on the canal was suspended.
• The canal was a minimum of 6 feet deep, 60 feet wide at the top and 36 feet at the bottom. Several widewaters allowed canal boats to pass each other.

Sub-theme 1.4: The I&M Canal was the key to the mastery of the Midwest and helped fuel Westward Expansion.

The canal revolutionized the transportation system of Illinois and helped establish Chicago as a gateway for goods and people traveling throughout the continent. It also served as a gateway to the West, and ended Chicago’s days as the western frontier in 1848. Today, Illinois is still a leader in transporting goods and people, but few realize that it all started with the I&M Canal.

• Illustrative points:
• In 1830 much of northeastern Illinois was designated canal lands and sold for $1.25 an acre. Thousands of people from all over the country took advantage of these sales to realize the American dream of owning their own land.

• At a stroke, the opening of the Illinois and Michigan Canal in 1848 gave Illinois the key to mastery of the American mid-continent. The 96-mile canal connected the waters of Lake Michigan with the Illinois River. Although the canal was only 60-feet wide and 6-feet deep, it brought people, commodities and prosperity to canal towns like Lockport, Chicago and Ottawa, and the entire Midwest.

• The I&M Canal connected agricultural and industrial producers to markets. Canal boats pulled by mules carried grain and livestock, stone, coal and foodstuffs like sugar, salt, molasses and whiskey to fuel the region’s rapid growth.

• The canal meant that farmers would no longer have to maneuver through muddy roads to reach the grain port in Chicago. Families could get calico for clothing, woolen blankets, furniture and other finished goods from New York and New England. Sugar and oranges could be found on dinner tables.

• During the first six years of canal operation, grain exports grew from 3 million to 13 million bushels. In 1855, the canal transported almost 26,000 cubic yards of limestone.

• After the canal opened, people flocked to Illinois. During the 12 years it took to build the canal, Chicago’s population alone grew from 4000 to 20,000. Between 1848 and 1860, it quintupled again to 100,000.

• That Illinois is now the most populous inland American State, and Chicago the greatest city of the American heartland, is directly traceable to the 96-mile canal.

• The I&M Canal was the last of the great American canals built during an era when waterways were the nation’s major highways.

• The I&M played a role in major national stories, including the California Gold Rush, the Underground Railroad, and the 1849 cholera epidemic.

Sub-theme 1.5: The canal had a bustling and productive life

The canal looks serene today, but during its heyday there was great activity along the route. In the first few years, thousands of passengers used the canal, and over its life, millions of tons of freight were shipped. Boat captains, lock tenders, towpath walkers, toll collectors and mule drivers were among the colorful characters who made the canal work on a daily basis.

Illustrative points:

• Teenage boys led the mules that pulled the canal boats. Mule drivers had a reputation for swearing, smoking and gambling. Boat captains mistreated some.

• James Butler “Wild Bill” Hickok was once a mule driver on the I&M Canal. In the first known fight of his career, he and an opponent fell into the canal.

• The list of items shipped on the canal included ale, beeswax, ice, horns, hemp and animal skins. Corn, wheat, stone, timber, and people were also transported on the canal.
• One passenger likened the experience of traveling on a packet boat to a floating dormitory, a cramped one in which men slept on one side and women the other.  
• Mules had to pull the canal boats; some loaded with 100 tons of goods.  
• The trip from Chicago to LaSalle took packet boats 17 to 26 hours.  
• From 1848 to 1852 thousands of people traveled on the I&M Canal between Chicago and LaSalle. Railroads soon made passenger traffic on the canal obsolete.  
• There were 17 locks along the canal, needed to compensate for the 140-foot drop in elevation. Locktenders operated the wooden canal lock gates. They sometimes had to break up fights between boat captains jockeying for position.  
• Going through each of lock took at least 15 minutes each.  
• Several women worked as locktenders, including Mrs. George Funk, who operated Lock 11 from 1896 to 1915.  
• Canal boats moved through such a rich countryside, passengers sometimes shot deer as they passed along the canal.  
• Mule barns dotted the length of the canal. Mule teams were changed every 10 miles.  
• Life on the canal boats was often a family affair. The wife of the boat captain cooked, and children sometimes tethered to the deck to keep from falling in the canal. Entire families lived on canal boats.  
• Canal engineers had to design and build four aqueducts—Aux Sable, Nettle Creek and at the Fox and Little Vermilion Rivers—to carry the canal over water.

Sub-theme 1.6: Other transportation routes followed the I&M Canal, and the canal corridor still plays a major transportation role in the state and the nation.

Illustrative points:
• Railroads first paralleled the canal in 1853, and supplanted boats for passenger traffic. The canal remained the cheapest way to ship bulky goods, and competition from the canal kept railroad prices low, helping to cement Chicago’s preeminence.  
• The corridor remains a national transportation hub for industrial and consumer products, the center of passenger air travel, railroads, modern waterways, and a major crossroads on the interstate highway system.  
• The I&M Canal closed in 1933, superseded by the Illinois Waterway.  
• Barges on the Illinois Waterway can carry ten times as much cargo as an I&M Canal boat could, and one tugboat can push 15 of them—that’s 22,500 tons.  
• The Stevenson Expressway (I-55) was built over the bed of the I&M Canal. During the planning stages it was even called the I&M Canal Expressway.

Theme 2: Nature—discovering the natural treasures of the passageway.

Hidden behind the Canal Corridor’s buildings and smokestacks, lie natural treasures. As you travel in the passageway, you will still see ample evidence of the natural forces that created it and the flora and fauna that preceded settlement. There
are forests, prairie and wetlands, spectacular geological formations, river islands and rapids, and abandoned spring-fed quarries brimming with fish. Today people are helping to bring parts of the passageway back to their natural beauty.

Sub-theme 2.1: Although the canal was built in the 1800s, its story began over 10,000 years ago during the last Ice Age.

Illustrative points:

• The limestone discovered here when the canal was constructed shows us that the entire region was a warm, saltwater ocean 400 million years ago.
• Lake Michigan, the prairies, and rivers in the passageway—all were created by the movement of glaciers about 2 million years ago.
• During the last Ice Age, over 10,000 years ago, a vast sheet of ice covered most of Illinois. This glacier carved the Great Lakes and flattened the prairie plains of Illinois.
• As the glacier retreated, its meltwaters carved out the Des Plaines and Illinois River valleys, creating a natural passageway from Lake Michigan to the Illinois River.
• Four thousand years ago, a sub-continental divide rose up to interrupt this passageway and forced the Chicago River to flow east into Lake Michigan, and the Des Plaines River to flow west into the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers.
• The explorer LaSalle found bison on the prairie near Morris in 1680. They disappeared east of the Mississippi around 1800. In 1702, a French explorer spotted Carolina parakeets in the passageway. Later these colorful birds were hunted to extinction.
• Between Marseilles and Ottawa is a large terminal moraine, a ridge where a glacier once melted roughly 10,000 years ago. The glaciers deposited sand, clay and rocks.

Sub-theme 2.2: The canal corridor is a great place to discover and enjoy nature.

Illustrative points:

• After the canal opened, the Illinois prairie and many of its birds and animals were cleared in the process of industrial development. Now, after a century and a half, restoration efforts are nurturing the many pieces of local natural beauty that still survive.
• The Illinois River Valley, which makes up much of the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor, continues to be a haven for wildlife. More than 200 species of birds still use the passageway as a flyway.
• Although the prairies that once covered most of Illinois are largely gone, you can explore remnants of the original prairie landscape at different places in the passageway.
• Traveling in the passageway today, visitors can still see in the limestone and sandstone bluffs and canyons, reminders of the great natural resources that helped the region grow and prosper. Many historic buildings in the corridor, and the canal locks itself, are built of limestone discovered when the canal was being built.
• Many Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, and other water birds find the fishing good on the I&M Canal. Fishermen can catch channel catfish, carp and bluegill.
• The Fox River is the most popular canoe route in the state. Its scenic bluffs—vertical walls of St. Peter’s sandstone—reach from 85 to 150-feet high.

Theme 3: Distinctive towns grew and prospered because of the canal.

The I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor includes the historic towns and cities that grew and prospered because of the canal. As you travel in the passageway you can visit these special places that still exhibit the distinctive characteristics of nineteenth-century canal towns.

Sub-theme 3.1: Smaller canal towns each have their own special character.

Illustrative points:
• Local industry, fueled by waterpower from prairie rivers, helped canal towns become centers of employment and markets for meeting the needs of farmers.
• Canal towns including Lockport, Joliet, Morris, Ottawa and LaSalle boomed with the canal’s construction. They became shipping points for the region’s rich resources and evolved as local transfer points for grain and other farm products and as quarrying, mining, milling, and manufacturing centers.
• Settlers were drawn by the rich natural resources of the passageway and created markets for them.
• In Morris, breweries and factories dotted the skyline, along with grain elevators.
• In the 1830s, Lockport, headquarters of the Canal Commissioners, had hopes of surpassing Chicago.
• Irish and English immigrants flocked to the western end of the canal to work in coalmines. The coal was shipped on the canal from Morris.
• Joliet, the second largest city in the region, drew thousands of immigrants to work first in its limestone quarries, and later the steel industry.
• Many residential and commercial buildings still visible in the corridor are constructed of the dolomite discovered when the canal was built.
• In the early years of the I&M Canal, the arrival of a canal boat was cause for great excitement. Boat captains blew a large horn to announce their arrival. Residents came to the canal and nearby stores to buy fresh lemons and oranges, sugar, molasses, and tobacco.
• Ottawa’s Washington Square Park was the site of the first Lincoln-Douglas debate in 1858, which drew thousands of people from all over Illinois.
• Ottawa was home to a prosperous glass industry—and the very fine silica sand from this area is still used.
• Canal towns were vibrant community centers where farmers’ wagons crowded the streets and grain elevators dotted the landscape.
• Utica has one of the two remaining canal warehouses along the I&M Canal.
• Seneca contains the oldest surviving grain elevator in the passageway.
• Canal towns were built with limestone discovered during the digging of the canal—and many examples survive today.
• Immigrants came to work in the coal mines of such small towns such as Carbon Hill and Coal City, whose names still reflect their mining days from 1870 to 1910.
• LaSalle, the canal’s western terminus, was a place where northern and southern culture came together as canal boats and steamboats from the Mississippi exchanged goods and passengers. Here boatmen would gather in the rough and tumble levee district.
• After the canal opened, Germans, Italians, Poles, Swedes, and many other immigrant groups came to canal towns to plow the prairies, farm the rich soil, process corn and wheat, mine coal, quarry stone, build railroads, and make steel. They also worked as canal boat captains, locktenders, toll collectors, and mule drivers. They founded local businesses and participated in canal commerce.

Sub-theme 3.2: People flocked to Illinois and Chicago boomed.

Chicago’s phenomenal growth began with the canal, which established Chicago as the nation’s greatest inland port.

Illustrative points:
• The mere idea of the canal drew land speculators to Chicago, and when work on the canal began in 1836, Chicago’s meteoric growth was launched and its future as the Midwest’s pre-eminent city was assured.
• Before 1871, Chicago received more vessels than San Francisco, New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Charleston and Mobile combined.
• Because of the canal, Chicago would outstrip St. Louis as the Midwest’s major port and transportation hub. By 1880, Chicago was the busiest port in the United States.
• Immigrants flocked to Chicago to dig the canal and unload canal boats filled with grain, stone and coal. They worked in the city’s vast lumberyards, stockyards, steel mills and factories. They help build the Sanitary & Ship Canal and the railroads and highways that followed the canal.
• Two of Chicago’s greatest landmarks—the Water Tower and Pumping Station—were built of dolomite quarried in the corridor.
• The Chicago Board of Trade was created in 1848 to take advantage of the new trade opportunities afforded by the canal.

Theme 4: Transformation—the passageway reflects people’s changing relationship with the environment.

The canal symbolizes the 19th-century spirit of optimism and goals of conquering, transforming and exploiting the environment. Today transformed into a recreational trail, the canal and the heritage corridor are shaped by the modern conservation ethic.

Sub-theme 4.1: The canal permanently altered the landscape

Illustrative points:
• The canal transformed the landscape and replaced the valley’s prairies and wetlands with cities, towns, industry, and agriculture.
• Although portions of the canal corridor appear peaceful and serene, the landscape you see has been largely engineered—waterways have been built, moved, bridged, and dammed, fields have been drained for planting, and stone, coal, and clay have been mined.

Sub-theme 4.2: The landscape of the passageway continues to change

Illustrative points:
• “As decades pass, whole industries rise, fall, and move quickly across the landscape.” (Worldwatch paper – quoted by Tony Hiss in prologue to Prairie Passage).
• “More than 160 years ago, a small and brand-new group of Midwesterners became, in effect, the fifth glacier to sweep across northern Illinois, vastly, lastingly, and purposefully affecting both the local landscape and people halfway across the country.”
• Today, this tiny, once-neglected channel has become the backbone of a movement to preserve, interpret, and revitalize one of Illinois’ most historic landscapes.
• The canal has been reclaimed for recreational use and offers habitat for birds and animals.
• Along the canal corridor, there are sandstone canyons, and panoramic views. In some cases transportation and industrial systems actually preserved nature because they needed land as a buffer along their edges, like Santa Fe Prairie along the rail road, or the Midewin Tallgrass Prairie on the site of the Joliet Arsenal.
• As the economy changes, and heavy industry leaves the corridor, nature is reclaiming once industrial sites.
• Scenic vistas, natural areas and historic agricultural landscapes give the passageway its special character. These are at risk of disappearing as suburban sprawl spreads southwest from Chicago.
Part III: Future of Interpretation in Corridor

Introduction
There are any number of interpretive media that can contribute to telling the stories of the canal region. Interior and exterior exhibit, brochures, driving tour maps, educational programming, first person interpretation, websites, comic books, video, and scholarly publications in books and journals are all possibilities. Some sites can and should have multiple media for delivering the complexities that mark all historical interpretation.

Whatever methodology is adopted, this plan strongly endorses Freeman Tilden’s dictum that the chief aim of interpretation is not instruction but provocation. Interpretation must go beyond providing factual information in an attempt to engage people personally in the story of the heritage corridor. Most of all we should strive to make people fully aware of the fact that they are walking in the footsteps of people from the past and that they are a part of a continuum. History is not just about stories from the past, it is a recognition that we live with the consequences of history every day, and every day new history is being made.

With that in mind, the following recommendations have been identified to expand and enhance the stories being told in the corridor today. Opportunities for additional research have been identified. Opportunities for new or expanded sites have been cataloged. Recommendations for enhancing and expanding the quality and quantity of stories being told are also outlined.

It will take many individuals and entities to make the stories of the I&M Canal more compelling and more widely told.

Research Opportunities

I&M Canal Popular History
While we have a general knowledge of the I&M Canal, many of the details still need to be filled in. First and foremost, there does not exist a popular history of the I&M Canal-the single best readily available source on the canal (Putnam 1918) was published nearly 100 years ago. The canal construction period is just one area that has yet to be fully examined. The importance of the I&M Canal’s feeder canals, without which there would have been no I&M Canal, has likewise been largely ignored.

The Canal Corridor in War Time
The role that the I&M Canal played in the Civil War, as well as the stories of the men from corridor communities who served in this and other wars, have likewise received little attention. During World War I the I&M Canal experienced a brief upsurge, but little is known about this period of the canal’s history. Several corridor communities played a major role in the home-front during World War II, but few know of the story of the Seneca Shipyards or the Joliet Army Ammunition Plant.
The I&M Canal & California Gold Rush  
The canal corridor was integral to other major national stories, including the California Gold Rush and subsequent Western Expansion, but much remains to be discovered on these subjects.

I&M Canal and the Underground Railroad  
Chicago, Ottawa, and Joliet were all major sites on the Underground Railroad. An article looking at the Underground Railroad in the Heritage Corridor would be quite useful.

I&M Canal and the Civilian Conservation Corps  
The canal owes its existence as a nature trail to the pioneering efforts of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. As with those who were a part of World War II, many of the men who worked on the project are dead, and others are very elderly. Efforts should be made to get oral histories from the few individuals that survive.

Ghost Towns of the I&M Corridor  
There are many ghost towns in the corridor, communities that once existed and have since been abandoned. Each has a unique story to tell, but most have remained undocumented. Aux Sable and Dresden are just two examples.

Reversal of the Chicago River  
The story of the 1871 reversal of the Chicago River, a story that epitomized Chicago’s can-do spirit in the 19th century, has not been adequately told.

The Interurban Railroad in the I&M Corridor  
The interurban trains that connected many corridor towns between 1900 and 1933 are also ripe for investigation.

Native American History  
Despite the fact that several sites cover aspects of Native American history, there is still a need for modern interpretation of the full gamut of Native American history in the corridor. Interpretation needs to go beyond the “Shabbona, friend of the white man” storyline to cover the social history of the many tribes that once lived in the corridor. While several sites document the Native American history of the region, many important sites have no interpretation whatsoever.

Labor History in the I&M Corridor  
The corridor also has a lengthy and colorful labor history, one that demands more attention. Labor violence broke out on the canal in 1838, followed by a strike in 1847. The dolomite, steel, and coal industries all have rich histories in the corridor. For example, a violent strike in Lemont in 1886 set the scene for the Haymarket riot in Chicago the following year. Labor organizer Mother Jones visited the coal miners in LaSalle County, and the Pullman Company is another example of a nationally significant labor story.
The I&M Canal and Agriculture
The story of agriculture has been inextricably tied to that of the I&M Canal, and agriculture continues to be the lifeblood for many corridor communities. Many historical societies have farm implements on display, but the importance of the canal and its relation to agriculture has not been delineated. We are losing more and more farms to development, especially in Will County, making this a timely issue to explore.

Mazon Creek Fossils
Paleontologists and fossil hunters from around the world have long known of the wealth of riches to be found in the corridor, but relatively little information is available to corridor visitors. Most people are unaware of the scientific importance of the Mazon Creek fossil beds. While the Grundy County Courthouse contains displays of a few Mazon Creek fossils, there is a need to better inform the public about these unusual deposits, which contain the Tully Monster, Illinois’s state fossil.

New and Enhanced Site Opportunities

**Cook County**

**Chicago Portage National Historic Site**
One site that cries out for additional interpretation is the Chicago Portage National Historic Site in Lyons. The portage site is a place where the region’s Indian past mingles with the industrial present. While surrounded by expressways, railroad tracks, and major thoroughfares, it is one of the few places that appears much as it did hundreds of years ago. The marshy region at what is now 47th and Harlem is a continental water divide, separating the waters that flow into the Great Lakes from those that flow into the Mississippi River. It became an important crossroads for Native Americans, French fur traders, and later settlers, as during wet periods one could paddle a canoe directly from the Des Plaines River to the Chicago River and then on to Lake Michigan. At other times the canoes were carried, or portaged, over a swamp known as Mud Lake.

For countless generations this area served as a transportation corridor for travelers. In the late 1820’s two brothers, David and Bernardus Laughton, set up a trading post/hotel here, and many a traveler sought refuge in this primitive establishment. After the Black Hawk War and the signing of treaties banishing Native Americans from Illinois, Lyons was the site of a great gathering before the move West. The portage site has been an important factor in the growth of the Chicago area.

A recent archaeological study found no evidence that Jolliet and Marquette were ever here, and argues that evidence for any French presence is “ephemeral at best.” Others are convinced, however, that the site can be directly tied to Jolliet and Marquette. Whatever the case, the site is still important as an archaeological/historic site, especially for the 19th century. The site is administered by the Cook County Forest Preserve District. Some outdoor signage exists on the site and new signs done by the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor Commission await installation.
The I&M Canal Civic Center Authority offers regular tours of the site. A plan for an interpretive museum here focused on the French fur trade era, was developed in 1975 but has since languished due to lack of funding. Its convenient location near Interstate 55 and its rich history provide a wonderful opportunity for additional interpretation. The site would serve as an ideal gateway from Chicago to the rest of the heritage corridor.

Hofmann Tower
The Hofmann Tower in Lyons has long been a local landmark. One of the most influential men in early Lyons history was a brewer, George Hofmann Jr. In 1908 he built a dam on the Des Plaines River in order to generate water power, and adjacent to the dam he erected the Hofmann Tower. The Tower was to serve as the central node in a park and picnic grounds, complete with boat rides on the river and a beer garden. Unfortunately, by 1920 increasing levels of sewage and other pollutants had ended this venture. For many years this structure was said to have been the tallest building southwest of Chicago. The Tower lends itself to telling the story of the Des Plaines River, as well as that of amusement parks in the corridor.

Grundy County
Coleman Hardware
The origin of the Coleman Hardware Company can be traced to a Grundy County legislative bill of 1873 that encouraged companies to locate in the area. One industrial concern that did so was the Sherwood School Furniture Company, which established a factory in 1874 between Canal and Washington Streets, just west of Nettle Street. Less than ten years later the furniture company ran into financial difficulties and J.G. Coleman, secretary of the firm, took over its assets. Subsequently known as Coleman Hardware, the company expanded its operation, employing as many as 300 workers by 1910 producing pulleys, locks, hinges and other hardware as well as iron toys. Workers unloaded raw materials from canal boats at the factory’s extensive docks. Later, a railroad spur connected the factory to the Rock Island Railroad line. The building is privately owned and serves as a storage facility. It suffered extensive damage in a fire in 2002. In 1994 the building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Gebhard Brewery
In the 19th century the city of Morris aggressively marketed itself as a manufacturing community, offering financial incentives to attract factories to town. A 1905 promotional brochure on Morris states that “There are several good factories and industries in Morris but more are desired. Inducements including advantageous railroad rates, the abundance of water, the proximity of coal mines and uncongested living conditions.”

Gebhard Brewery was founded in 1866 by German immigrant Louis Gebhard, and was originally housed in a 1-story frame building at the west end of Washington Street. Brewing boomed in the 1860s and 1870s due to the introduction of lager—a pale gold effervescent brew—which soon displaced English style ale in the tastes of the American public. The I&M Canal provided a reliable shipping route for the
barley, Bavarian hops and other raw ingredients used in the beer brewing process. Additionally, coal for fuel, lard oil for lighting and wood for barrels were all delivered to Morris via the canal.

Gebhard Beer was consumed in vast quantities among Morris’ German residents, and the beer was shipped locally to many communities. Louis’ son William Gebhard took over the business in 1886 and by 1896 had replaced the frame brewery with a seven-story brick and steel building. With the advent of prohibition, the brewery closed down in 1919, and most of the machinery was dismantled and sold abroad. William Gebhard used the wealth generated by the brewery to construct homes and commercial buildings in Morris, and the Gebhard family eventually had the most extensive land holdings in town.

The building is privately owned. Interpretation of the site could focus on the themes of town development, industrialization and agriculture.

Locktender’s House, Aux Sable
One of only two locktender’s houses on the I&M Canal that survive. This building has stood vacant for years. It would be an ideal place for exhibits that would tell the story of locktenders and their families. The building is owned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Mazon Creek Fossil Beds
The Morris region is a great place to find fossils. Around 280 million years ago (100 million years before the first dinosaur) this area consisted of large swamps and lagoons. Huge dragonflies buzzed through the air, cockroaches much like today’s crawled on the land, and freshwater sharks swam in lagoons. Sixty-foot tall fern trees dominated the landscape. Some of the earliest known reptiles and spiders have been found here, and the Mazon Creek fossil beds are one of the world’s best known fossil assemblages. Illinois’ state fossil, the Tully monster, a bizarre worm-like creature, has only been found in this region.

These same deposits are coal bearing, and mining became a major industry here for nearly a century. During the digging of the I&M Canal, coal deposits were exposed, and in 1849, 5,150 tons of coal were delivered to Chicago via the canal. By 1870 coal mining had become a major industry in northeastern Illinois, thanks in part to the I&M Canal. Indeed, this became the greatest coal mining area in North America. Most underground mining ended by 1930, and strip mining continued until 1976. Illinois still has the world’s largest reserve of bituminous coal.

The Mazon Creek fossils are found on both public and private land at many different sites. The Mazon Creek fossil beds are listed as a National Historic Landmark.
Starved Rock and served as a semi-permanent summer village. The population fluctuated dramatically, from a few hundred to perhaps as many 10,000 people. Many different tribes gathered here, especially in the summer, but a depletion of firewood led to the abandonment of the site in the early 1690s. The property is owned by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

This site provides a marvelous opportunity to tell the story of the many Native American tribes who once lived here. While archaeological sites must be adequately protected, this story is simply too important to ignore. The site is extremely important to Illinois history and should be better utilized.

**Ottawa Toll House**
This is the only remaining toll house on the I&M Canal. The building is quite small but has a fascinating story to tell, as it played a role in the transportation history of the canal. As the first example of an Illinois toll system, visitors will be able to make connections to the current Illinois tollway system. The building has recently been moved and rehabilitated by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, which hopes to lease the structure to a local entity.

**Port of LaSalle**
Despite many historic structures along the canal, the I&M Canal lacks a major draw, and the absence of boats on the canal is one of the greatest impediments to attracting more tourists. In a major effort to fill both needs, the Canal Corridor Association, working with the City of LaSalle and IDNR, is spearheading efforts to put canal boats back in the water adjacent to Lock 14. The project includes a visitor ride on a replica canal passenger boat along a 2-mile stretch of the canal, an interpretive/visitor center, a replica locktender’s house, and outdoor signage. This project will engage the public in a variety of ways. Traveling on the canal via a replica canal boat pulled by horses will bring the reality of the I&M Canal home in a way that no other experience could.

A detailed draft interpretive guide for the Port of LaSalle has been developed. The focus will be on what it was like to travel on the canal. During the ride, first person interpretation of actual historical characters (including passengers, and a canal boat captain and crew) will appeal to audiences of all ages and allow for interaction with the costumed interpreter. Utilizing scholarly underpinnings, the interpretive plan aims to provide a compelling, comprehensive document for telling the story of this landmark historic site. The project builds on a substantial base of recent documentation (see Journal of Illinois History, Summer 2004).

Interpretive goals include:
- giving visitors a sense of what it was like to travel via canal packet boat in 1848;
- understanding the importance of canals and other waterways to the growth and development of the U. S.;
- educating the public about the importance of the I&M Canal in connecting various regions of the U. S.;
- providing a variety of types of interpretation including first person interpretation, museum exhibits, as well as outdoor signage.
**Seneca Shipyards**
The tiny town of Seneca played a starring role in America’s effort to win World War II. Beginning in 1942, the Seneca Shipyards made tank landing ships, also known as LST’s. Soldiers nicknamed them “low slow targets,” but none of the ships produced here was lost during the war, and some continued in service through the Vietnam War. These ungainly looking ships, also called “Ugly Ducklings,” were critical to victory in a variety of amphibious assaults, including the invasion of Europe on D-Day in 1944. Longer than a football field, the ships carried a variety of tanks and their crews. The ships were designed to park their bows on the beach, allowing the tanks to drive into battle. The shipyards employed 10,000 people at their peak, transforming a sleepy town into a booming village. When the plant closed in 1945 Seneca returned to its more traditional role as an agricultural town. This is one of the most interesting stories in the corridor, and one that deserves to be told more fully. Now privately owned and called Shipyard Industrial Park, in 2005 a memorial monument to the Seneca Shipyard was commemorated here.

**Sulphur Springs Hotel**
The Sulphur Springs Hotel derives its name from the natural springs originally found at the site, which provided drinking water. These springs were said to have healing powers and the sick and infirm often visited here in an attempt to cure their ailments. Erected around 1849, this elegant hotel served thousands of visitors along the stage coach route between Chicago and Peoria, leading to another name, the Halfway House, as the building is situated roughly halfway between the two points. One early visitor wrote that, “An abundance of wild game, on the dining table, fish from the river, poker games in which fortunes were exchanged, and a lively bar room kept things interesting on the first floor,” while the ball room on the second floor hosted music and dancing. The extension of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad through LaSalle County in 1853 took away much of the hotel’s trade, and for many years it functioned as a farm house. This combination tavern/hotel is on the National Register of Historic Places, and is currently owned by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. The building has also been known as the Spring Valley House. Situated adjacent to the Grand Village of the Illini archaeological site and near Starved Rock State Park, the hotel could serve as a visitors’ center for both the Native American story as well as the history of the house and its route on the stagecoach line.

**Marseilles HydroElectric Plant**
An important source of water power, the plant generated electricity for the interurban railroads from around 1900 to 1930. Much of the original machinery remains, and several companies have explored the possibility of again using the facility to generate power. The plant certainly has an interesting story to tell. The Marseilles HydroElectric Plant is privately owned but the owner is willing to add interpretation to the current use of power generation.
**Will County**

*Briscoe Indian Burial Mounds*

The Briscoe Mounds archaeological site is located on Front Street along the Des Plaines River in Channahon. The site is owned by the Illinois State Museum, which has developed but not yet installed an outdoor interpretive sign. The City of Channahon has proposed a museum and visitor/cultural center for the site. In 1978 the site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Dellwood West**

In many ways Dellwood West is a microcosm of the entire I&M corridor. The 176 acre site has seen intensive industrial use, and it is bracketed by several transportation systems, including the I&M Canal, the Sanitary and Ship Canal, the Des Plaines River, and several railroads. The digging of the I&M Canal between 1836-1848 uncovered rich deposits of dolomite, a magnesium rich form of limestone. Several quarries were excavated here throughout the 19th century. Later the Joliet steel industry began using the site as a place to dump 1000 degree molten slag, a waste product of steel making. By the 1930s people recognized the value of slag (used for railroad ballast, among other things) and heavy machinery roared through the site to haul out the slag.

Today Dellwood West is being transformed into a park and recreational area by its owner, the Lockport Township Park District. Canal Corridor Association has developed an interpretive plan for the site. The themes of transformation and transportation particularly resonate at this site. This is one of the most degraded landscapes in northeastern Illinois, but nature is slowly reclaiming it after 160 years of man’s harsh usage. Three thematic trails (Prairie, Quarry, and Slag) are proposed for the park, with a major interpretive pod situated along the I&M Canal.

**Joliet Prison**

Among the more imposing structures in the canal corridor is the former Joliet prison. In 2002 the prison closed and the last of the prisoners were shipped to other facilities. Many suggestions have been made regarding the disposition of this historic structure, owned by the State of Illinois. One tongue in cheek comment was to turn it into a bed and breakfast. There are several successful prison/museums in the country, and an exhibit illustrating the history of the prison and its inmates might become a popular visitor attraction. One section of the prison would be sufficient for these purposes.

The prison was featured in the 1980 movie, The Blues Brothers, starring Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi. After the success of this movie more filmmakers began shooting movies in the Chicago area. In addition, the Bob Dylan tune, Percy’s Song contains a mention of Joliet prison, as writers such as Edgar Rice Burroughs and Horatio Alger have written about the prison. Famous inmates have included: bluesman Fenton Robinson, childkillers Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, Lester Gillis aka Baby Face Nelson, several of the Haymarket conspirators, and Richard Speck.
Multiple Counties
Feeder Canals
Currently there is practically no mention of the I&M Canal’s feeder canals at
corridor interpretive sites or in the literature on the corridor. Clearly, without the
Kankakee, Calumet, Fox River feeders the I&M Canal could not have functioned.
The feeders also served to connect the I&M to towns such as Blue Island and
Wilmington, providing an opportunity to discuss regional interconnections. The
land where the feeders stood is often overgrown and some of it is in private hands.

Recommendations

The I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor is a region with a rich and varied history
allowing many stories to be told. To organize these stories for the visitor we suggest
the need to create and/or enhance nodes where visitors will start their educational
and/or physical journey of this region. These nodes will create a critical mass of
interpretation and activities. It is essential for the entities involved in interpretation
in the heritage corridor to continue and strengthen the links between the sites and
stories to enhance the educational impact and quality of the visitor experience. The
recommendations are grouped into three categories: organizational, site
infrastructure, and research and education.

Organizational Recommendations

Federal Designation
The Canal Corridor Association advocates that groups throughout the corridor band
together in order to obtain renewed Federal funding for I&M Canal National
Heritage Corridor. This is critical to the long-term viability of the corridor. A
management entity for the corridor serves as a central clearing house of information
on corridor wide interpretation.

Extension of Heritage Corridor Boundaries
Efforts have periodically been made to extend the heritage corridor’s boundaries
east of Harlem Avenue in order to include Chicago and adjacent communities.
Likewise, the area spanned by the Calumet Feeder, including Blue Island and the
Pullman region, are not officially part of the federally designated heritage corridor.
Completion and approval of a revised boundary study would broaden the scope of
the corridor and more accurately reflect the impact that the canal had on the region.
It might also have a salutary effect on efforts to create a Lake Calumet Heritage
Area.

Interpreter’s Group
In the first few years after the designation of the Heritage Corridor the I&M Canal
interpreter’s group played a useful role in disseminating information relating to the
corridor. In order to facilitate a renewed commitment to the sharing of information,
one suggestion is to have each meeting consist of a presentation by one of the
members on his or her area of specialty.
Other Information Sharing
In addition to the interpreters groups it seems “sharing of information” also needs to occur at a higher management level. Perhaps recommendations should include semi-annual roundtable forums to identify and discuss opportunities for collaboration, whether research, planning or capital improvements.

Recommendations for Site Infrastructure

I&M Canal Centers
We encourage the idea of developing interpretive nodes, or entry points at various sites throughout the corridor. The Chicago Portage National Historic Site in Lyons is one site that can and should serve as a gateway to the rest of the corridor. Canal Origins Park in Chicago, scheduled to open in 2006, is ideally located to serve as an entry point from Chicago to the rest of the heritage corridor, especially from an interpretive point of view. Currently, very few people in Chicago know the story of the canal that helped fuel the city’s phenomenal growth.

On the western end the Port of LaSalle project will fill much the same role. These nodes must contain a critical mass of signs and programs to achieve the goal of providing a solid introduction to the entire I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor.

We also advocate I&M Canal Centers at strategic points in the corridor with a mission including tourism, education, and advocacy. They should be part visitor center for the canal and the community in which they are located, part classroom for lectures, teacher training, after-school and summer kids’ camps, part exhibit space, and part I&M Canal general store. They should be high-profile, retail-like places open to a wide range of people for many hours seven days a week.

IDNR- Locktender Houses and Hogan Grain Elevator
Many people in the corridor would like to see the two remaining locktender houses located on the I&M Canal used for interpretation. For example, one building houses the superintendent of the I&M Canal State Trail, and on the grounds is a large satellite dish, a jarring intrusion into the historic landscape. The other home has been rehabilitated but has remained empty for years. One or both of these houses would be excellent locations to place signs and produce programming relating to the colorful history of locktenders and their families.

After spending almost a million dollars in rehabilitating the structure, state funding for staff at the Hogan Grain Elevator has been cut. Funding should be restored so that regular tours of the Hogan Grain Elevator can be continued.

Port of LaSalle
The I&M lacks a major tourist draw. Many other canals have long running programs for canal boat rides, a need that will be filled on the I&M with the Port of LaSalle project. A visitor center and outdoor signage are envisioned, and, coupled with the restored lock gates and canal boat and steamboat basins, make this an ideal
site to explore the canal corridor. Close proximity to Starved Rock State Park, one of the most visited of all of our state parks, makes this site particularly attractive.

Completion of the Centennial Trail and other links between the canal in Cook County and the Rest of the Corridor
More than half of the 49 communities in the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor are located, entirely or in part, in Cook County. However, the canal is not seen as a part of the regional consciousness since many of these communities are not directly on the canal. From Summit to Lemont the canal does not have a continuous trail system in place, nor is it interpreted. Willow Springs does have a nine-mile loop trail along the canal but it does not connect to the rest of the canal trail system. For a variety of reasons it is desirable that the Cook County portion of the trail be connected with trails in Lemont, Lockport, Joliet, and ultimately the State Trail beginning in Rockdale. There is also a portion of the trail that runs through the Texaco property in Will County that has yet to open to the public. Completion of the long delayed Centennial Trail will enhance interpretive efforts in the corridor.

Radio Transmitters
The Commission’s radio transmitters have either been inoperative or operated sporadically for the past several years. Large signs on the interstates still tout these transmitters, but visitors attempting to tune in to the appointed frequency hear only annoying static. The transmitters are now the property of the Canal Corridor Association. At some point the transmitters must either be replaced or the interstate signs taken down.

Commission Interpretive Signs
The I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor Commission created approximately 81 interpretive signs, now in place throughout the corridor. Some signs were made but never installed; others were given directly to the local management entity (Starved Rock State Park), while others are currently stored in the basement of the Norton Building. Many of these wayside exhibits have been up for over a decade and are in poor condition, and some have been vandalized. Some signs have inaccurate or outdated information. These signs have been turned over to the Canal Corridor Association. For the time being the signs are being maintained by the local management agency. If the local agency wants to replace them with other interpretive signs they should be allowed to do so. Such is the case in Ottawa, where the Commission sign on the Fox River Aqueduct has been replaced by new signs commissioned by the City of Ottawa.

Lockport Loop Trail
This proposed trail would take visitors on a tour of both the I&M Canal and the Sanitary and Ship Canal. Explicitly establishing the linkage between these two waterways is an important goal, and interpretive signs along the trail can make the connection between the waterways. The city of Lockport and MWRD should be encouraged to make this trail a reality.
Research & Educational Recommendations
All parties must seek to broaden educational efforts in order to insure that more schools teach about the canal and its impact on the development of northeastern Illinois. We must also encourage visits to the canal and other historic and natural sites. Part of our outreach to these constituents must be to develop field trip guides for local educators. Our goal should be to have the canal story be included in the Illinois State Board of Education learning standards, so that every child in the state learns about the I&M Canal.

In order to garner more interest in the canal among children, programs should be developed to look specifically at the role of children on the I&M Canal. Teenagers certainly played a role in the digging of the canal, and smaller children brought food and drink to the workers. Children also played a role in the operation of the I&M Canal. Many mule drivers were teenagers. Others helped out opening and closing the lock gates or selling food to canal boat passengers and crew. Expanding on this theme, the story of the many children raised on farms, now and in the past, should be explored.

Feeder Canals
There is presently little mention of the I&M Canal’s four feeder canals, yet the I&M Canal could not have functioned without them. The Kankakee and Calumet feeders in particular were important arteries of commerce in their own right. More interpretation of the Calumet feeder would help to tie this segment of the corridor more closely with the main line of the canal.

Archaeology
Finding a canal diggers shanty town would immeasurably increase our understanding of the canal construction period. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has funded a number of important archaeological studies on the I&M Canal. Clearly, interpretation feeds off of new research, but funding for archaeological explorations of the corridor is currently lacking. Interpreters and others must lobby the State of Illinois to restore funding for such programs.

Canallers in the Corridor and Gallimaufry
First person interpretation is a particularly useful way to help tell the many stories of the corridor. The Canallers have been an under-utilized resource, and these dedicated volunteers are available. Likewise, the power of music to inform about the past cannot be underestimated. Groups such as Gallimaufry add another dimension to interpretation.

Oral History
Many people involved in significant corridor stories have died without telling their story. We need to capture these stories before they are gone. Efforts should be made to conduct oral history interviews with former CCC workers, World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam veterans, and people who worked at the Joliet steel mills, Seneca Ship Yards, Joliet Army Ammunition Plant, etc.
Cemeteries
Cemeteries are rich resources for interpreting the past, and many have also become havens for wildlife. While there are several people doing cemetery tours in the corridor, this information needs to be more widely disseminated. Publication of guides to cemeteries (perhaps modeled on Nancy Thornton’s guide to St. James of the Sag) should be encouraged.
Part IV: Annotated Canal & Corridor Bibliography

The Wider Context

Buisseret, David, Historic Illinois from the Air (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 232 pp. [contains considerable coverage of the I&M Canal Corridor]


Shaw, Ronald E., Canals for a Nation: The Canal Era in the United States, 1790-1860 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 284 pp. [This is a fine introduction to the U. S. Canal Era, which forms an important part of our early transportation history. Shaw includes some specific coverage of the I&M Canal]

General


Vasile, Ronald S., “The I&M Canal: A Short Historiography and Booklist,” Bulletin of the Illinois Geographical Society, Fall 2000, vol. XLII, number 2, pp. 66-76. [Looks at how historians have viewed the I&M Canal relative to the growth of Chicago]
**Geographical Setting**
Conzen, Michael P., "The Historical and Geographical Development of the Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor," pp. 3-25 in Conzen and Carr, see above. [The canal as seen through the eyes of a world class geographer]


**Political, Economic and Social History**
Conzen, Michael P., Douglas Knox, and Dennis H. Cremin, 1848-Turning Point for Chicago, Turning Point for the Region (Chicago: The Newberry Library, 1998), 63 pp. [For Chicago and the Midwest, the year 1848 is significant for many reasons. Seminal events include the first railroad out of Chicago, the coming of the telegraph, the founding of the Chicago Board of Trade, and the opening of the I&M Canal. The canal connected Chicago to both the east coast and to the southern states]


Putnam, James W., The Illinois and Michigan Canal: A Study in Economic History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1918), 213 pp. [Still the single best source on the I&M Canal, although the focus in squarely on economics]

Vasile, Ronald S., ed., Illinois & Michigan Canal Pioneers' Stories: Bringing History to Life in the Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor (Chicago: Canal Corridor Association, 1999), 32 pp. [In 1998 the Canal Corridor Association solicited family histories from people who could trace their ancestry in the Canal Corridor back at least 100 years. This booklet incorporates contributions from 75 people who provided copies of their detailed family histories. A long-overdue look at the social history of the I&M Canal] Out of print


Canal Traffic


Archaeology


Selected Localities

Chicago Portage Ledger, Friends of the Chicago Portage National Historic Site Newsletter & Guide, Philip E. Vierling, volumes 1-6, 2000-present. [Wonderfully detailed and meticulously documented articles on the portage site, the fur trade and other topics.]

City of LaSalle Sesquicentennial Historical Book, 1852-2002, City of LaSalle, 2002. [A well-produced local history]


Sereno, Ken, 150 Years of Progress,: Grundy County Grows with the I&M Canal & 50 Years of Corn Festival, (Morris, Il., Grundy County Corn Festival, 1999).


Vasile, Ronald S., Community histories of Bedford Park (p. 72), Bridgeview (pp. 93-94), Burr Ridge (pp. 109-110), Countryside (pp. 211-212), Forest View (p. 312), Hodgkins (p. 387), Lyons (p. 497), McCook (p. 513), Stickney (p. 784), and Willow Springs (pp. 880-881), in James R. Grossman, Ann Durkin Keating, and Janice L. Reiff, eds., The Encyclopedia of Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2004. Other corridor communities in Cook and Will counties are also profiled.

Young, David M., Chicago Maritime: An Illustrated History, Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb, 2001, 248 pp. [Lavishly illustrated, includes a section on the I&M]

**Teaching Aids**


**Photo Essays and Touring Literature**


Hochgesang, Jim, Hiking and Biking the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor (Lake Forest, Ill.: Roots & Wings, 1998), 176 pp.
Ranney, Edward, with text by Emily Harris, Prairie Passage: The Illinois and Michigan Canal Corridor (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, for the Canal Corridor Association, 1998), 216 pp. [The marvelous black and white photographs of Edward Ranney reveal the full scope of the human impact on the landscape in the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor. Numerous historical photos help provide context, as do essays by noted authors Tony Hiss and William Least Heat Moon]


The I&M Canal's Successor Waterways


"Studies on the I&M Canal Corridor”
Series Editor: Michael P. Conzen (Chicago: University of Chicago, Committee on Geographical Studies, nos. 1-8, 1987- ) Copies can be found in public libraries in the corridor and in the Chicago Public Library, the Newberry Library, the Chicago Historical Society, and the Illinois State Library. [These volumes contain student papers on various aspects of the corridor. Many provide starting points for future research]


Interpretive Studies and Plans (In Chronological Order)


Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor Interpretive Plan, prepared by Interpretive Services, Inc. & John Veverka & Assoc, for the Illinois & Michigan Canal
National Heritage Corridor Commission, March 1988, 125 pages.


Bibliography of Interpretive Resources


Brief Bibliography of Interpretive Resources


Barclay, Derrick, producer. Geoffrey Lord and Jane Patterson, eds. Interpretation of the Environment: A Bibliography. Midlothian, Scotland: Macdonald Printers, Ltd.


**Video**

Art of Interpretation II. 13.5 minutes (closed-captioned). Produced by the Harpers Ferry Interpretive Design Center, National Park Service. This video describes interpretation's role in the conservation of our nation's natural and cultural resources from a variety of perspectives.
Another useful bibliography is at *The Living History Society of Minnesota, Inc.*
http://www.lhsmn.org/research/Bibliography_of_Historical_Interpretation.htm
Part V: Site Inventory Forms

For the purposes of this report, an interpretive site is defined as a historic, cultural, or natural area that has interpretation as a primary focus of its mission.
Part VI: Appendices
Historic Designations in the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor
Summaries of Public Meetings, February 2005
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor
National Historic Landmark, National Register,\(^1\) and Locally Designated\(^2\)
Historic Landmarks and Districts

COOK COUNTY\(^3\)

Blue Island\(^4\)

National Register of Historic Places
2445 High Street: Young, Joshua P., House

Local Historic District
Old Western Avenue (13301 – 13442 Western Avenue)

Local Landmarks
2620 Burr Oak: Wade Erret House (1890)
2506 Burr Oak: Theodore Guenther House (1856)
2834 Burr Oak: Russell Heacock Farmhouse (ca 1839)
2413 Canal Street: Guildhaus
2336 Collins Street: American House Hotel (1836)

2303 Des Plaines Street: Reimer Boe House (1871)
Des Plaines Street at Division: Indian Battle Site
12904 Elm Street: William Seyfarth House (1926)\(^5\)*
12908 Elm Street: William Buenger House (1928)

12939 Greenwood Avenue: William Henke House (ca 1883)
12917 Greenwood Avenue: Matt Helbreg House (ca 1890)
12905 Greenwood Avenue: Charles Young House (1886)
12850 Greenwood Avenue: Roy E. Geyer House (1923)*
12844 Greenwood Avenue: Arthur Seyfarth House (1929)*
12904 Greenwood Avenue: Robert Krueger House (ca 1913)*
12940 Greenwood Avenue: Alden Klein House (1925)
12956 Greenwood Avenue: William Weber House (1898)
13020 Greenwood Avenue: Dr. Aaron Heimbach House (1939)


\(^2\) Blue Island, Chicago, Joliet, Lemont, Lockport, Ottawa, and Will County are Certified Local Governments.

\(^3\) Cook County Heritage Corridor communities include Alsip, Bedford Park, Blue Island, Bridgeview, Burnham, Calumet City, Calumet Park, Countryside, Crestwood, Dolton, Forest View, Hickory Hills, Hodgkins, Indian Head Park, Justice, Lemont, Lyons, McCook, Palos Heights, Palos Hills, Palos Park, Riverdale, Robbins, Stickney, Summit, Willow Springs, and Worth.

\(^4\) Blue Island is a Certified Local Government.

\(^5\) Asterisk (*) signifies structure designed by architect Robert Seyfarth.
13050 Greenwood Avenue: Krueger Funeral Home (1927)*

Grove Street at Ann Street: Thomas Courtney Cabin Site / First Lutheran Church
2445 High Street: Joshua P. Young House (ca 1852)
2523 High Street: Ward Seyfarth House (1926)*
2021 High Street: Elmer Bennett House (1878)

12900 Maple Avenue: Albert Roche House (1878)
12857 Maple Avenue: William Schreiber House (1950)*
12738 Maple Avenue: Colonel William Ray House (1890)
12852 Maple Avenue: Robert Seyfarth House (1903)*

2431 New Street: Dr. Gerhard Seim House (1886)
2520 Union Street: William Vanderberg House (1890)
2441 Vermont Street: Blue Island Post Office
2626 Vermont Street: Wilson / Cooley House (1838)
Rock Island Vermont Street Depot (1868)
2444 Walnut Street: Nicholas Stoll House (ca 1868)
2627 Walnut Street: Herman Nickel House (1895)

13042 Western Avenue: The Woolworth Building (ca 1818)
13168 Western Avenue: Schreiber’s Hardware (1879, 1887)
13222-26 Western Avenue: Henry Bauer House (1854)
13635 Western Avenue: Henry Schuemann House (1840)
2537 York Street: Walter P. Roche House (1857)

**Chicago**

National Historic Landmark
Chicago Board of Trade. LaSalle Street

Pullman Historic District
Bounded by 103rd St., C.S.S. and S.B. Railroad spur tracks, 115th St. and Cottage Grove Avenue

Local Landmarks and/or Districts
2701 S. Ashland: Canal Origins Site
Exchange Avenue at Peoria Street: Union Stock Yard Gate
500-510 N. Dearborn Street: Boyce Building,
140 S. Dearborn Street: Marquette Building, 140 S. Dearborn Street

**Lemont**

National Register of Historic Places
10660 S. Archer Road: St. James Catholic Church and Cemetery

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6 Select List of sites with strong I&M Canal NHC connections.

7 Lemont is a Certified Local Government.
306 Lemont Street: Lemont Methodist Episcopal Church
410 McCarthy Road: Lemont Central Grade School

Local Historic District #1
Boundaries: Sanitary & Ship Canal on the north, Holmes Street on the east, Joliet Street on the west, Cass/Porter Streets on the south; blocks 400 through 700 of Singer Avenue.

Local Landmarks
418 Main Street, Lemont Village Hall
220 Illinois Street, St. James Academy/Original St. Patrick School
101 Main Street, Lemont Train Station
103 Stephen Street, The Norton Building
111 Stephen Street, Axel Anderson/Odin Hall Building

Lyons

National Historic Landmark
Chicago Portage Site

National Register of Historic Places
3910 Barry Point Road: Hofmann Tower

DUPAGE COUNTY

None

GRUNDY COUNTY

Channahon

National Historic Landmark
Channahon State Park: Illinois and Michigan Canal Locks and Towpath

Morris

National Historic Landmark
Benson Rd., 3 mi. SE of Morris: Mazon Creek Fossil Beds

National Register of Historic Places
Benson Rd., 3 mi. SE of Morris: Mazon Creek Fossil Beds
5010 N. Jugtown Road: White and Company’s Goose Lake Tile Works
5010 N. Jugtown Road: White and Company’s Goose Lake Stoneware Manufactury
100 Nettle Street: Coleman Hardware Company Building
E. Washington Street (East of Armstrong Bridge): Morris Wide Water Canal Boat Site

8 DuPage County Heritage Corridor communities include Burr Ridge and Woodridge.
9 Grundy County Heritage Corridor communities include Carbon Hill, Channahon, Coal City, Minooka and Morris.
10 National Register nomination of a Downtown Historic District is in progress.
LASALLE COUNTY

LaSalle

National Register of Historic Places
745 2nd Street: LaSalle City Building
217 Marquette Street: Hotel Kaskaskia
1307 Seventh Street: Hegeler-Carus Mansion
Starved Rock State Park: Starved Rock Lodge and Cabins

Marseilles

National Register of Historic Places
Commercial Street: Marseilles Hydro Plant
150 Washington Street: Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Depot

Ottawa

National Register of Historic Places
Washington Park Historic District (Bounded by Jackson, LaSalle, Lafayette, and Columbus Streets) including:

- Washington Park: Lincoln-Douglas Debate Site
- Washington Park: War Monuments
- East Side of Columbus, North of Jackson: Masonic Temple
- NE corner Jackson & Columbus: First Congregational Church
- Jackson & Columbus Streets: LaSalle County Jail (Sheriff’s Home/Office)
- 113 East Lafayette: Christ Episcopal Church
- 118 East Lafayette: House with the Pillars
- 100 West Lafayette: Reddick, William, House
- 116 East Lafayette: Third District Illinois Appellate Court Building
- Corner of LaSalle & Jackson Streets: Popcorn Stand

736 Chapel Street: O’Conor, Andrew J., III, House
532 Congress Street: Strawn, Jeremiah, House
215-217 W. Main: Knuessl Building
1333 Ottawa Avenue: Fisher-Nash-Griggs House
210 W. Prospect Street: Hossack, John, House

Local Landmarks and/or Districts

Adams Street/4-H Road, Hitt Well House (1887)
2011 Caton Road: T. Lyle Dickey Home (1842)
2101 Caton Road: W.H.L. Wallace Home (1860)
804 Chapel Street: N.H. Hollister Home

11 LaSalle County Heritage Corridor communities include LaSalle, Marseilles, Naplate, Ogelsby, Peru, Ottawa, Seneca and Utica.
12 Ottawa is a Certified Local Government.
Columbus/Jackson Streets: LaSalle County Jail (1870)
1217 Columbus Street: Canal Toll House (ca 1830s)

113 E. Lafayette: Christ Episcopal Church: (1872)
100 W. Lafayette: Reddick Mansion (1860)
118 E. Lafayette: Home (ca 1850s)
119 W. Madison Street: LaSalle County Courthouse (1881)
622 E. Pearl: Washington Bushnell Site (1872)
210 W. Prospect, John Hossack House (1854)
Prospect/Catherine Streets: Fort Johnston Site (1832)

1333 Ottawa Avenue: J.F. Nash Home (ca 1850s)
Ottawa Ave and Boy Memorial Drive: Centennial Colonnade (1918)
Ottawa Ave and Boy Memorial Drive: Camp Cushman Marker (1941)
Ottawa Avenue Cemetery: W.D. Boyce Memorial (1941)
200 E. Superior: Canal Pay Station (ca 1830s)
East end of Superior Street: I&M Canal Viaduct [Fox River Aqueduct] (ca 1830s)

Washington Park: bounded by Columbus-Jackson-LaSalle-Lafayette Streets
Washington Park: Lincoln-Douglas Debate Site: (1858)
Columbus/Lafayette Streets: Appellate Court Building (1857)
122 W. Washington: St. Columba Catholic Church

Ottawa Vicinity
Buffalo Rock State Park: Fort Ottawa Site (1760s)
Farm Ridge Township: Everett Hodgson Homestead (1853)
Gentleman Road: Norman Strow House (ca 1850s)
South Ottawa Township: Dickey’s Cavalry Monument (1942)
South Ottawa Township: Stone Bridge

**Ransom**

National Register of Historic Places
Plumb St. between Cartier and Columbus: Ransom, LaSalle: Ransom Water Tower

**Seneca**

National Register of Historic Places
SW corner of William and Bridge Streets: Armour’s Warehouse

**Streator**

National Register of Historic Places
609 E. Broadway Street: Fletcher, Ruffin Drew, House
702 E. Broadway: Williams, Silas, House
130 S. Park Street: Streator Public Library

**Utica**
National Historic Landmark
Address Restricted: Old Kaskaskia Village
Starved Rock State Park: Starved Rock

National Register of Historic Places
Dee Bennett Road: Spring Valley House-Sulfur Springs Hotel
Starved Rock State Park: Starved Rock
Address Restricted: Old Kaskaskia Village
Address Restricted: Corbin Farm Site
Address Restricted: Little Beaver Site
Address Restricted: Hotel Plaza Site
Address Restricted: Shaky Shelter Site

WILL COUNTY

Bolingbrook, Crest Hill, and Homer Glen
N/A

Channahon
Address Restricted: Briscoe Mounds

Joliet

National Register of Historic Places
Joliet East Side Historic District
Roughly bounded by Washington and Union Sts., 4th and Eastern Avenue

Upper Bluff Historic District
Roughly bounded by Taylor, Center and Campbell Sts. and Raynor Avenue

206 N. Broadway: Scutt, Hiram B., Mansion
102 N. Chicago Street: Rubens Rialto Square Theater
22 E. Clinton Street: Joliet, Louis, Hotel
927 Collins Street: Joliet Steel Works
20 S. Eastern Avenue: Henry, Jacob H., House
201 E. Jefferson Street: Joliet Township High School
50 E. Jefferson Street: Union Station
4000 W. Jefferson Street: Joliet Municipal Airport
150 N. Scott Street: U.S. Post Office
75 W. Van Buren Street: Christ Episcopal Church

Local Landmarks and/or Districts

1 Will County Heritage Corridor communities include Bolingbrook, Crest Hill, Homer Glen, Joliet, Lockport, Rockdale and Romeoville
14 Joliet is a Certified Local Government.
15 Complete list of properties available on HAARGIS website
16 Complete list of properties available on HAARGIS website
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Street Name</th>
<th>Historic Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Henry Sehring House</td>
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<td>Bridge</td>
<td>Hiram B. Scutt Mansion</td>
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<td>John H. Scheuber House</td>
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<td>225 N. Broadway</td>
<td>John Leiser House</td>
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<td>523 N. Broadway</td>
<td>Clinton E. B. Cutler House</td>
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<td>614</td>
<td>Buell</td>
<td>F. S. Davidson House</td>
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<td>815</td>
<td>Buell</td>
<td>C. Louis &amp; Lydia F. Pearce House</td>
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<tr>
<td>606</td>
<td>Campbell</td>
<td>Fred Walsh House</td>
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<tr>
<td>709</td>
<td>Campbell</td>
<td>Charles Wallace House</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 W. Cass</td>
<td>P. H. McCarthy Bldg.</td>
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<td>19 W. Cass</td>
<td>Ottawa Street Methodist Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>67 E. Cass</td>
<td>Santa Fe Freighthouse (demolished)</td>
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<td>602 E. Cass</td>
<td>Swinbank House</td>
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<td>5 S. Center</td>
<td>John W. D'Arcy House</td>
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<td>17 S. Center</td>
<td>Patrick C. Haley Mansion</td>
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<tr>
<td>16720</td>
<td>Division/Lockport</td>
<td>Morris-Niver Farmhouse</td>
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<tr>
<td>205 N. Chicago</td>
<td>Gem Theater</td>
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<tr>
<td>927</td>
<td>Collins</td>
<td>Joliet Steel Works</td>
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<tr>
<td>230</td>
<td>Comstock</td>
<td>Major Max Goldberg</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 S. Eastern</td>
<td>Richardson/Stevens House</td>
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<td>20 S. Eastern</td>
<td>Jacob Henry</td>
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<td>23 S. Eastern</td>
<td>Benjamin Pickles House</td>
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<td>28 S. Eastern</td>
<td>Henry/Folk House</td>
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<td>Dr. Charles Eldred House</td>
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<td>207 S. Eastern</td>
<td>Albert W. Fiero House</td>
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<td>1410</td>
<td>Frederick</td>
<td>Robert H. Rub House</td>
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<td>520 N. Hickory</td>
<td>Wagner Home</td>
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<td>11 S. Hunter</td>
<td>Hugo Grief House</td>
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<td>659 E. Jackson</td>
<td>Joseph &amp;Anna Skorupa House</td>
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<td>501 W. Marion</td>
<td>M. Z. Button House</td>
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<td>705 W. Marion</td>
<td>Louis Lozar House</td>
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<td>301</td>
<td>Nicholson</td>
<td>William Moore House</td>
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<td>306</td>
<td>Nicholson</td>
<td>Joseph Campbell/Strong House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>509</td>
<td>Plainfield</td>
<td>William Schwartz House</td>
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<td>506 N. Prairie</td>
<td>Frederick R. Hollander House</td>
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<td>306 N. Raynor</td>
<td>Dr. Higgins House</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Richards</td>
<td>Central Presbyterian Church</td>
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<td>Richards</td>
<td>Howard M. Snapp House</td>
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<td>Scott-demolished</td>
<td>Ivahoe Bldg</td>
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<td>314</td>
<td>Sherman</td>
<td>C. H. Carpenter/August Maue House</td>
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<tr>
<td>900</td>
<td>Sherwood Place</td>
<td>Jenie Dorn House</td>
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<td>902</td>
<td>Sherwood Place</td>
<td>Fred E. Grohue House</td>
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<td>1503</td>
<td>Sterling</td>
<td>Meinert House</td>
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<td>1212</td>
<td>Taylor</td>
<td>Oscar C. Kaiser House</td>
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<tr>
<td>505</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>W. A. S. Brooks House</td>
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<td>600</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>J. P. Stevens House</td>
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<td>Western</td>
<td>C. W. Talcott House</td>
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<td>Alphonso Wetherel House</td>
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<td>604</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>E. Meers House</td>
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<td>Western</td>
<td>W. C. Lee House</td>
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<td>W. B. Stewart House</td>
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<tr>
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**Lockport**\(^{17}\)

**National Register of Historic Places**

Lockport Historic District\(^{18}\)

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\(^{17}\) Lockport is a Certified Local Government.
Area between 7th and 11th Sts. and Canal and Washington Streets

SE of Lockport: Stone Manor
535 E. 7th Street: Milne, Robert, House
1225 S. Hamilton Street: Heck, John, House
Ninth Street spanning Deep Run Creek: Ninth Street Seven Arch Stone Bridge
803 S. State Street: Illinois & Michigan Canal Office Building

**Romeoville**

National Register of Historic Places
Bridge over pond of CS&S Canal carrying Centennial Bike Trail
IL 53: Fitzpatrick House
NE of Romeoville off US 66: Romeoville, George, Ron, Round Barn

**Will County**¹⁹

National Register of Historic Places
Restricted Address: Briscoe Mounds
515 County Road, Wilmington: Small-Towle House
100-104 Water Street, Wilmington: Eagle Hotel

Local Landmarks and/or Districts

**Homer Township:**
John Lane Monument (circa 1916)

**Joliet Township**
Joliet Works, U.S. Steel Koppers Coke Oven Plant (circa 1908)

**Lockport Township**
16th Street Bridge (Division Street Bridge)
Patrick Fitzpatrick House (circa 1842)
John Fiddyment Home (circa 1840s) [Destroyed by Fire November 2000]
William Gooding House (circa 1845)

**New Lenox Township**
Lincoln Hotel/Old Brick Tavern (circa 1846)
Schmuhl School

**Plainfield Township**
Niver-Pickel-Walsh Farm (circa 1850)
Springbanks Road Bridge (circa 1912)

¹⁹ Complete list of properties available on HAARGIS website
¹⁹ Will County is a Certified Local Government. Heritage Corridor townships include DuPage, Plainfield, Lockport, Homer, Troy, Joliet, New Lenox, Channahon, and Wilmington (proposed boundary extensions.)
Renwick Road, West off River Road
**Cook County Meeting**  
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor Interpretive Plan  
23 February 2005 - Lake Katherine Nature Preserve, Palos Heights  

**FOCUS QUESTION**

By 2015, what stories and experiences should be in place to capture the imagination and stimulate the curiosity of Canal Corridor visitors and residents?

**PARTICIPANTS**
Marcus Arnold, South Suburban Mayors Association; Gail August, Lemont Area Historical Society; Bill Banks, Lake Katherine Nature Preserve; Diane Banta, National Park Service RTCA; Christine Brooks, Worth Park District Historical Museum; Linda Bullen, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency; Jeff Carter, Cook County Special Places Advocates; Michael Conzen, University of Chicago; Sue Donohue, Lemont Area Historical Society; Phyllis Ellin, National Park Service; John Elliot, Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC); Mike Kakiski, Blue Island Historical Society; Don Kinnally, Sante Fe Prairie; Robert Kelliher, Calumet Ecological Partnership; Mike Konrath, FPDCC-Camp Sagawau; Joe Kratzer, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District; Alice and Latham and Bill Latham, Flagg Creek and Willow Springs Historical Societies; Bob Lukens, Chicago Southland Convention & Visitors Bureau; Mel Mondry, Sante Fe Prairie; John O’Neil, FPDCC-Little Red Schoolhouse; Aaron Rosinski, Southeast Environmental Task Force; Tom Schuetter, Sante Fe Prairie; Greg Starr, Sante Fe Prairie; Rod Sellers, Southeast Historical Society; Jim Vandermulen, Lake Katherine Nature Preserve; and Lisa Zeigler, West Suburban Chamber of Commerce.

RSVP but unable to attend:  
John Monckton, University of Chicago; Robert Kott, Summit Area Historical Society and Russell Lewis, Chicago Historical Society.

CCA STAFF: Laurie Scott and Ron Vasile  
FACILITATOR: Emily Harris

**CONDENSED MEETING AGENDA**

- Participant Introductions
- Review of current interpretative sites and stories in the I&M Canal Heritage Corridor
- Individual brainstorming to identify additional stories and sites
- Facilitated group discussion re: telling additional stories at specific sites and/or using
  - other interpretive media (signage, brochures, tours, tapes, etc.).
- Discussion of priorities
- Ideas on how can we work together to move us toward this vision
PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS

Participants were asked to introduce themselves and describe their most memorable or favorite experience as a visitor, either to the canal or to another site. Stories ranged personal experiences of seeing changed neighborhoods after coming back from the war, to experiencing first person interpretation on a Pullman House Tour, to the excitement of seeing the Acme Steel Plant as an interpretive site, to reading a letter from the 1850s and feeling a connection to the person who wrote it. Overall themes were the excitement of discovery of transformation of people and the landscape, the sense of walking through history, and stepping in others’ footsteps, and experiencing a sense of personal connection to the past and to the continuity of human experience over time.

SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT BRAINSTORMING and DISCUSSIONS

EXISTING and ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

**Canal Towns**

*Distinctive towns, Chicago, agriculture and industry grew and prospered thanks to the canal.*

**Existing Sites**

- Blue Island Historical Society Museum
- Flagg Creek Historical Society Museum
- Heritage Quarries Recreation Area
- Hofmann Tower
- Hotel Florence
- Lemont Area Historical Society Museum
- Lithuanian World Center
- Southeast Historical Society Museum
- St. James of the Sag Church and Cemetery
- The Children’s Farm
- Robert Vial Home
- Willow Springs Historical Society Museum
- Willowbrook Ballroom
- Worth Park District Historical Museum

**Other Existing Interpretive Resources**

- St. James Cemetery Walking Tour pamphlet created by Nancy Thornton

**Opportunities: Site Specific Ideas**

- Cemetery walks; St. James and others…stories of people buried there
- Immigrant stories

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20 Sites and comments are organized under one of four major interpretive themes: Canal Towns, Transportation, Nature, and Transformation and “catch-all” Passageway Universal.

21 Extremely limited access, once/month June – September.

22 Asterisk (*) signifies participant addition to original inventory list.
Work and family life along the Canal
Labor
Acme Steel

Opportunities: Stories Using other media
- Residential architecture throughout the HC—why same, how different

Nature
Discovering natural treasures.

Existing Sites
- Camp Sagawau Environmental Education Center
- Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Center
- Sante Fe Prairie
- Waterfall Glen Nature Preserve (DuPage County)
- Lake Katherine Nature Preserve

Other Existing Interpretive Resources
- N/A

Opportunities: Site Specific Ideas
- Natural History: archeology, geology, etc. …Mount Forest Island, how the glaciers shaped the landscape
- Native Americans
- Lake Calumet Area

Opportunities: Stories Using other media
- Virtual tours – video, computer, walking
- Boat tours
- 10-15 minute orientation video to provide overview of south side for tour groups
- Nature—what was here before (plants, animals, landscape)

Immigrant story goes throughout the HC. Why people came here, the industries that they worked in…need to do a better job telling AND linking…also in the commerce of the canal. Many immigrants were specialized in certain trades…how those trades/industry have evolved through to day…Irish canal worker story—from the time of arrival to death (being told at Camp Sagawau)

Efforts already underway through Steel Heritage Partnership and others.

Rod Sellers has a lot of information—worked on project with teachers
Transportation
Passageway for thousands of years.

Existing Sites
- Canal Origins Park
- Chicago Portage
- I&M Canal Trail & General Fry’s Landing (Lemont)
- I&M Canal Bike Trail (Willow Springs)
- Pullman Factory Complex
- Pullman Visitors Center

Other Existing Interpretive Resources
- N/A

Opportunities: Site Specific Ideas
- “Big Feeder,” Stony Creek and other feeder canal stories are not told (also offers opportunities to link HC)
- Civilian Conservation Corps\(^{26}\) and Works Progress Administration
- Commerce—Laughton’s Trading Post as an example of the radical change in trade etc., when the canal opened
- Confluence Site (I&M – S&S – Cal Sag)
- Corridor as an evolving transportation and industrial hub…the overarching picture and “Port of Chicago” story up to current day—shipping, barge, great lakes traffic, etc.
- Fay’s Point—many stories surround and converge at this site…the canal itself, Stony Creek, and Native Americans
- Early Explorers: Marquette, Jolliet, Hubbard (the visionaries)...those that were here early and influenced on the building of the canal (Chicago Portage and other sites)
- I&M Canal in Justice (volunteers have cleared path along canal; Metra station feasibility study underway—HC line that runs along the I&M Canal)
- Railroads, specifically the Rock Island Line
- Railroad/canal connections throughout the HC
- Railroads—mail order homes, another angle of the transportation story. How towns were built and canal town architecture
- Sanitary & Ship Canal

Opportunities: Stories Using other media
- Metropolitan Water Reclamation District: Sanitary and Ship Canal to the Deep Tunnel...the engineering wonder
- Brochure/tour guide of landscape as viewed from the waterways

\(^{26}\) The largest concentration of CCC workers (10,000 workers/day) was housed at site near Camp Sagawau—transportation/transformation story of converting I&M Canal into trail; connect CCC to local industry, quarries were source of limestone for shelter, etc. WPA and New Deal stories are corridor-wide.
Transformation
People’s changing relationship with the environment

Existing Sites
- Watermarks Sculpture at Navy Pier

Other Existing Interpretive Resources
- N/A

Opportunities: Site Specific Ideas
- Architecture – mail order homes that arrived via RR
- Industrial development, esp. steel industry
- Social and technological change
- Lake Calumet Area is the center of a major renaissance…labor, steel, RR, churches
- Link between natural (Lake Calumet) and historical (Pullman)
- Change over time---what was here, how the landscape/industry has changed

Opportunities: Stories Using other media
- Education curricula
- Grant writing
- Re-enactment – underground railroad (and other stories)
- I&M Passage Driving tour map and signs for Cal-Sag area

Passageway “Universal”

Other Existing Interpretive Resources
- Brochures
- Canallers
- Events
- I&M Canal Passage Driving Tour map and signs
- Prairie Tides film
- Self-guide audio and walking tours
- Wayfinding Silhouettes & signs

Opportunities: Site Specific Ideas
- Connect Trails/routes to local historical sites
- Bike path linkages
- Improved facilities at individual sites, for example restrooms at Sante Fe Prairie; ensure sites accessible to all kinds of people
- Photographer friendly design of sites
- Irish worker
- Underground railroad (2)
- Industry – steel (Acme Steel), breweries, etc.

Opportunities: Stories Using other media
- Maps of Native American sites in area
Cal-Sag-Indiana trail connections…the backbone--big way to tell the story
Promotion, i.e. web sites: expand and enhance—especially for kids; identify additional ways to bring kids into the website…follow a mule along the canal
Stories through street names
Teacher training and curricula to inspire teachers to explore their own backyard
Tour guide of the landscape from waterway perspective

PRIORITIES
• Cal-Sag Channel as a physical and interpretive resource (progress underway)
• Extension of the Heritage Corridor boundaries
• Completion of Centennial Trail
• Focus funds on linking sites/resources and education
• Stewardship program and long-term maintenance—develop volunteer program
• Involve youth through community service programs
• Don’t let things disappear! (Acme Steel)

NEXT STEPS
• Come together again
• Coalition building: get (more) people involved; get municipalities involved; garner political support including Cook County Commissioners

PARKING LOT (i.e. Management Plan and/or other issues)
• Link trails to towns via information kiosks and wayfinding (reference to Lemont specifically, but has wider application)
• Volunteer stewardship
• Regional linkage of trails/bike paths to each other and to natural and historic sites (MWRD as major player)
• Information about trails
• Stewardship—adopt a kiosk/rest area for example
• Political support
• Trail links with local anchors and resources
• Shell Oil as potential financial contributor
Grundy and LaSalle County Meeting
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor Interpretive Plan
24 February 2005 – Scouting Museum, Ottawa

FOCUS QUESTION

By 2015, what stories and experiences should be in place to capture the imagination and stimulate the curiosity of Canal Corridor visitors and residents?

PARTICIPANTS

Bob Aplington, Port of LaSalle; Diane Banta, National Park Service RTCA, Bridget O’Brien, Ottawa Visitors Center; Sandy Burns, Heritage Corridor Convention & Visitors Bureau; Dorothy Clemens, LaSalle County Special Places Advocates; Kevin Ewbank, Illinois Waterway Visitors Center; Richard Foltyniewicz, LaSalle County Board; Esther Funk, LaSalle County Special Places Advocates; Valerie Hatcher, Grundy County Special Places Advocates; John Henning, Illinois River Area Chamber of Commerce; Gerald Hulslander, LaSalle County Special Places Advocates; Jill Jackson, Illinois Department of Natural Resources; Barb Koch, Illinois Valley Area Chamber of Commerce; Mayor Dick Kopczick, City of Morris; Sam McNeilly, City of LaSalle; Betty Jo Milner, Realtor; Boyd Palmer, Ottawa Area Chamber of Commerce; Mollie Perrot, Ottawa Scouting Museum; Peggy Schneider, Ottawa Visitors Center; Ken Sereno, Grundy County Special Places Advocates; Debbie Steffes, Grundy County Special Places Advocates; and Reed Wilson, Office of Congressman Weller.

RSVP but unable to attend:
Mayor Fred Esmond, Village of Utica; Mike Mattingly, Morris Riverfront Commission; Michele Micetech, Carbon Hill Historical Society; and Jim Riley, LaSalle National Bank.

CCA STAFF: Ana Koval, Laurie Scott and Ron Vasile
FACILITATOR: Emily Harris

CONDENSED MEETING AGENDA

- Participant Introductions
- Review of current interpretive sites and stories in the I&M Canal Heritage Corridor
- Individual brainstorming to identify additional stories and sites
- Facilitated group discussion re: telling additional stories at specific sites and/or using other interpretive media (signage, brochures, tours, tapes, etc.).
- Discussion of priorities
- Ideas on how can we work together to move us toward this vision
PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS
Participants were asked to introduce themselves and describe their most memorable or favorite experience as a visitor, either to the canal or to another site. Stories ranged from Canterbury Cathedral and the Galapagos, to first person interpretive sites at Williamsburg where you were asked to make a decision as a pioneer would have, to walking the canal and imagining the vibrant industry and commerce that was there, to the AHA moment at the Joliet History Museum canal exhibit. Overall themes were the excitement of discovery, the sense of walking through history, and stepping in others’ footsteps, and experiencing a sense of personal connection to the past and to the continuity of human experience over time.

SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT BRAINSTORMING and DISCUSSIONS

EXISTING and ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Canal Towns
Distinctive towns, Chicago, agriculture and industry grew and prospered thanks to the canal.

Existing Sites
- Carbon Hill Grade School
- Grundy County Historical Society Museum
- Hegeler Carus Mansion
- LaSalle County Museum
- Ottawa Murals
- Ottawa Scouting Museum
- Marseilles Mural
- Reddick Mansion
- Seneca Mural
- Washington Square Park

Other Existing Interpretive Resources
- Scouting Museum Walking Tours

Opportunities: Site Specific Ideas
- Canal’s relationship to community development
- Coleman Hardware
- Gebhard Brewery
- Historic structures from many different time periods
- Industry of the canal – ice making
- Industry along canal - mining

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27 Sites and comments are organized under one of four major interpretive themes: Canal Towns, Transportation, Nature, and Transformation and a “catch-all” Passageway Universal.
28 The canal as catalyst to community, transportation, entire trading system, emphasis on the interconnectedness—a universal theme for all communities
29 Need inventory to identify significant structures
- 1892 “Little Brown House” along the canal in Morris – preserve and interpret as a typical working family’s house
- Lincoln connections beyond the debates
- LaSalle’s “Little Reno”
- Marseilles Hydro Plant
- Natural resources: Industry use and restoration
- Seneca Shipyards (WW II homefront)
- Sulphur Springs Hotel (Halfway House)
- Grand Village of the Illinois
- Woodruff Cemetery

**Opportunities: Stories Using other Media**
- When, where and why factories located along the canal
- City – country connections
- People stories—Capone connection, WD Boyce, astronomer Clyde Tombaugh (discovered Pluto), John Chapin (from Morris, founded Board of Trade), General Wallace
- Industry, mining, ice making may also be generally interpreted since sites are not always visible
- Lotus Beds story

**Nature**

*Discovering natural treasures.*

**Existing Sites**
- Gebhard Woods State Park
- Goose Lake Prairie
- Illinois State Park
- Matthiessen State Park
- Starved Rock State Park

**Other Existing Interpretive Resources**
- N/A

**Opportunities: Site Specific Ideas**
- F.W. Matthiessen story—connections to Westclox, State Park, Hotel Kaskaskia, etc.
- Mazon Creek Fossil Beds

**Opportunities: Stories Using other Media**
- N/A

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30 “Sin city” during prohibition—alcohol, gambling and much other illicit activity.
31 Swing from consumers to caretakers of natural resources.
32 Streets names as a vehicle to explore and tell local history
Transportation
Passageway for thousands of years.

Existing Sites
- Aux Sable Aqueduct-Locktender’s House and Lock
- Canalport Plaza
- Canalport Center
- Fox River Aqueduct
- Seneca Grain Elevator
- Illinois Waterway Visitors Center
- I&M Canal Trail Access Points
  - Buffalo Rock
  - Boyce Memorial Drive
  - Dresden
  - Gebhard Woods
  - Lock #14
  - Marseilles
  - Seneca
  - Utica
  - Wm Stratton State Park
- Ottawa Toll House

Other Existing Interpretive Resources
- N/A

Opportunities: Site Specific Ideas
- Conditions canal builders faced to build Canal
- Dayton Feeder Canal – story of the engineering and operation of the canal
- Lateral Canal
- Grand Village of the Kaskaskia
- I&M – Interurban\(^{33}\) – Illinois Central and Rock Island
- Ottawa Lateral canal
- Marseilles Swing Bridge (restore and preserve)
- Mining and agriculture along the canal
- People stories
- Port of LaSalle
- Railroad history: effect on and interrelationship with canal
- Transportation evolution: roads-rivers-rail

Opportunities: Stories Using other Media
- N/A

Transformation
People’s changing relationship with the environment

\(^{33}\) Includes interurban stations in Morris and Minooka, Battery House in Utica, old-right-of ways, overhead poles along Fox River Aqueduct, etc.
Existing Sites
- Buffalo Rock State Park (Effigy Tumuli)

Other Existing Interpretive Resources
- N/A

Opportunities: Site Specific
- N/A

Opportunities; Stories Using other Media
- N/A

Passageway Universal

Existing Sites
- N/A

Other Existing Interpretive Resources
- Brochures
- Canallers
- Events
- I&M Canal Passage Driving Tour map and signs
- Prairie Tides film
- Self-guided audio and walking tours
- Wayfinding Silhouettes & signs

Opportunities: Site Specific Ideas
- Military History- battles & skirmishes. Indians, settlers, Civil War to present day. Identify and link sites and associated institutions, hospitals, cemeteries, memorials, etc. Interpret & preserve historic structures: Marseilles Hydroplant, Sulphur Springs Hotel

Opportunities: Stories Using other Media
- Educational Curriculum—think kids-students-youth.
- Discovery Tours—walking, hiking, driving, geo-caching
- Literature—novels, stores developed and set in HC over time
- Native American footprints “discovery hunt” signs/icons in the landscape
- National partnerships: National Scenic Byway status for “Illinois River Road - Route of the Voyageurs,” Trail of Discovery, etc.

Opportunities: Stories Using other Media (continued)
- Oral histories – collected and accessible
- Theatre production

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34 For eg., Civil War Monument in Grundy Courthouse Square to the Marseilles’ memorial to those lost in Mid East conflicts; the Nash Home in Ottawa (housed a hospital during the Civil War) to the National Guard Reserve south of Marseilles, plus many other sites. Again, this is a corridor-wide theme.
35 Scouting Museum has a geo-caching program.
36 Application submitted to IDOT, to be forwarded to USDOT. Results should be known by September.
- State of the art, interactive web-site
- Stories depicting the life of children, families along the canal

PRIORITIES
- Marketing and promotion... take one or two of these things, do it well and then really invest in marketing to make people aware; to visit, learn and tell stories to others. Too often we have created something but no one knows its there and then it wasn’t worth the effort.
- Unified image; packaging...develop tour packages
- Spread the word—hospitality training at local level and educate the public
- Cable TV – in room videos, etc. to introduce visitors to the town/county/area
- Build a history ethic/culture/ongoing programming, etc.
- Identify ways to institutionalize the work, programs, – when funding dries up the work disappears and we reinvent the wheel – we need to make sure this doesn’t happen any more.
- Oral Histories\(^{37}\)

WAYS TO WORK TOGETHER
- Map of this section of the canal – overlays of history, geology, etc.
- Get together after the draft is completed and then can identify priorities
- Create a one-page print out of each site
- Partnership – unified approach

NEXT STEPS
- N/A (time did not permit discussion)

PARKING LOT
- N/A

\(^{37}\) Many elderly are passing away, need to capture stories before they are gone.
FOCUS QUESTION

By 2015, what stories and experiences should be in place to capture the imagination and stimulate the curiosity of Canal Corridor visitors and residents?

PARTICIPANTS
June Anderson, Heritage Corridor Convention & Visitors Bureau; Cindy Bakkom, Forest Preserve District of Will County (FPDWC); Scott Brooks-Miller, Will County Land Use Planning; Jim Carr, Canallers; Nancy Bruce Crilly, Will/Grundy Genealogical Society; Mary Beth DeGush, Heritage Corridor Convention & Visitors Bureau; Carol Donahue, Canallers; Kevin Horsfall, Forest Preservation District of DuPage County; Walter Keener, Joliet Area Historical Museum; Judy McKellips, Will County Historical Society; Mike Stachnick, FPDWC-Isle a la Cache; Ray Winters, Will County Special Places Advocates; Rosemary Winters, Main Street Lockport; and Reed Wilson. Office of Congressman Weller.

RSVP but unable to attend:
Ron Kozial, Main Street Lockport; John Lamb, Lockport Heritage and Architecture Commission; and Gordon McCluskey, Gaylord Building Site Council

CCA STAFF: Ana Koval, Laurie Scott and Ron Vasile
FACILITATOR: Emily Harris

CONDENSED MEETING AGENDA

- Participant Introductions
- Review of current interpretive sites and stories in the I&M Canal Heritage Corridor
- Individual brainstorming to identify additional stories and sites
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- Discussion of priorities
- Ideas on how can we work together to move us toward this vision

PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS
Participants were asked to introduce themselves and describe their most memorable or favorite experience as a visitor, either to the canal or to another site. Stories ranged from being in Mesa Verde to the Mississippi River Museum in Dubuque Iowa, to experiencing living history through first person interpretation, to participating in civil war re-enactments, to the excitement of seeing barge and tugboat operators on the waterways today. Overall themes were the excitement of discovery of transformation of
people and the landscape, the sense of walking through history, and stepping in others’ footsteps, and experiencing a sense of personal connection to the past and to the continuity of human experience over time.

**SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT BRAINSTORMING and DISCUSSIONS**

**EXISTING and ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

**Canal Towns**

*Distinctive towns, Chicago, agriculture and industry grew and prospered thanks to the canal.*

**Existing Sites**

- Billie Limacher Bicentennial Park
- Dellwood Park (east)
- Joliet Area Historical Museum
- Joliet Bike Route
- Joliet Iron Works
- Joliet Murals and Public Art
- Slovenian Heritage Museum
- Will County Historical Society - Pioneer Settlement

**Other Existing Interpretive Resources**

- Guided Bike Tours
- Lockport Architectural Walking Tour Brochure

**Opportunities: Site Specific Ideas**

- History of Stone
- Joliet Penitentiary

**Opportunities: Stories Using other Media**

- Prison History
- Immigrants, ethnicity and industry (past to present: I&M canal workers; iron workers, railroads, S&S Canal, breweries, stone, etc.)
- Labor history: I&M and Quarry workers strikes

**Nature**

*Discovering natural treasures.*

**Existing Sites**

- Lake Renwick
- Lockport Prairie
- Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

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38 Sites and comments are organized under one of four major interpretive themes: Canal Towns, Transportation, Nature, and Transformation and a “catch-all” Passageway Universal.

39 Joliet Prison: tell story and save building of the “big house” which was a major employee for 100+ years; don’t fight image, embrace it!
- Pilcher Park Nature Center

Other Existing Interpretive Resources
- N/A

Opportunities: Site Specific Ideas
- N/A

Opportunities: Stories Using other Media
- Geology—Will County glacial story

Transportation
*Passageway for thousands of years.*

Existing Sites
- Gaylord Building
- I&M Canal Trail Access Points
  - Rock Run
  - McKinley Woods
  - Brandon Road
  - Channahon Lock 6 complex
- I&M Canal Donnelley Trail
- Illinois Waterway
  - Lockport Lock & Dam
  - Brandon Road Lock and Dam
- Isle a la Cache
- Will County Historical Society - I&M Canal Museum

Other Existing Interpretive Resources
- N/A

Opportunities: Site Specific Ideas
- Briscoe mounds
- Feeder canals
- 1849 gold seekers story – westward expansion
- Farming and agricultural history
- How farmers used the canal – the process moving goods through the passageway (weigh, lift, barge, exchange, ship)
- Lockport Loop Trail – old and new canals and continued transportation evolution
- Methods of transportation for local merchants (barge, wagon, stagecoach)
- Canal building process (bridges, roads, canal itself, railroads)
- Homesteader story and their travel on the canal
- Plank Roads
- Railroad history: track – workers - stations

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40 Farming community being lost—especially in Will County. Potential sites - Round barn; Patterson home (Naperville); Homer township farm.
41 Why and how they came through the area, what they brought, what they experienced
- Stage coach routes and stops\(^{43}\)
- Daily life of ordinary people:
  - More Route 66 history
  - Railroad history
  - Farming
  - Inventors
  - Coal
  - Industry
  - Limestone quarries

**Opportunities: Stories Using other Media**

- Inventory canal related sites (not just along the canal itself) to understand what resources exist, and if they are “the last” or “one of a kind.”

**Transformation**

*People’s changing relationship with the environment*

**Existing Sites**

- N/A

**Other Existing Interpretive Resources**

- N/A

**Opportunities: Site Specific Ideas**

- Dellwood West (in progress)
- River transportation and juxtaposition of industry and nature: McKinley Woods/Three Rivers Environmental Education Center (in progress)
- Geological history and transformation of landscape – Wauponsee Glacial Trail
- WWII home front: Joliet Arsenal and LST Shipyard (LaSalle Co.)
- Homeland security: Civil War to the present
- Military history: story of people from Will County who have served in war...civl war to today
- Working lock and canal boat replica at Joliet Iron Works (2)

**Opportunities: Stories Using other Media**

- Geology—forces that created the landscape and how industry has tapped natural resources
- Historic map/brochure of canal over time—with overlays including feeder canals, tributaries, etc. that allow interpreters and the general public to trace path, compare, contrast changes of the canal over time.

**Passageway Universal**

**Existing Sites**\(^{44}\)

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\(^{42}\) This story and stations are being lost, many came here to build RR

\(^{43}\) Old taverns, stage coach inns…need to know where they are, condition, level of protection
N/A

Other Existing Interpretive Resources
- Brochures
- Canallers
- Events
- I&M Canal Passage Driving Tour map and signs
- Prairie Tides film
- Self-guided audio and walking tours
- Wayfinding Silhouettes & signs

Opportunities: Site Specific Ideas
- I&M Canal Visitor Orientation Center (designated central point and satellites)
- Illinois River Loop Project

Opportunities: Stories Using other Media
- A-V computer portrayal of entire corridor – schools, tourism
- Website with computer at select locations where one can “research” by theme or location and print out information—in many different levels, print out of maps—technology as a vehicle.
- Docent certification program-training on basic interpretive skills, information about the corridor and recognition program
- Guided walking tours and brochures: architecture, cemeteries
- Life of children along the canal
- Underground Railroad
- DVD – American manifest destiny in the NW Territory: canoes to jets
- Cable TV pieces of varying length that could be repeated and offered in multiple locations

PRIORITIES
- Water, working lock and a canal boat.
- Uninterrupted greenbelt along the canal
- Keep what we have! Don’t lose any site that we already have, for eg. Hogan Grain elevator
- Visitors center that covers entire canal
- Video that ties the story together for use at sites, cable TV, website, etc.
- Comic book
- Provide the larger context for the stories that people already know, not only regionally but nationally

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44 Although not interpretive sites per se, cultural resources such as the Illinois State Museum Lockport Gallery, and sites of interest, Abraham Lincoln Veteran’s Cemetery for example, will be included in the interpretive plan.

45 For example, St. James of the Sag Cemetery (canal workers) and Joliet’s Oakwood Cemetery (many pioneers).

46 Open for tours by appointment only due to IDNR staff reductions effective February 2005.
WAYS TO WORK TOGETHER

- Find sponsors to underwrite copies of the Prairie Tides film in every school; follow-up with materials that support a visit to the HC
- Develop the economy of the canal town communities—promote economic value of interpretation; need to sell ideas to state and federal officials
- CCA has proven that it is the only entity that can get things done—need to build strong marketing program with high quality marketing tools—esp. visual—videos...

NEXT STEPS

- Marketing program to tie it all together for schools, families, tours
- Videos, films, comic books, novels, “ameri”-canal doll
- Copy of Prairie Tides in every school library, provide in-service and make accessible to teachers, scout groups, etc.
- Promote economic impact and benefit (of heritage education and tourism)
- Technology – website or video

PARKING LOT (i.e. Management Plan and/or other issues)
School Tours @ Gaylord Building now that IDNR no longer has on-site staff. (Teachers and others can now contact Ron Vasile to arrange tours, 815.588.1100 or rvasile@canalcor.org).

Contact the Will County Historical Society at (815) 838-5080 for school, youth, or other group tours of the I&M Canal Commissioners Headquarters and/or the Pioneer Settlement