

Canal Once Connected Anderson And Daleville

Highways, electric interurban and railroad lines have served as direct links between Anderson and Daleville.

A fourth type of transportation almost came into use, on two different occasions.

It was a canal, first a part of the Central Canal that was begun in the 1830s and second as the Anderson hydraulic, constructed in the late 1860s and early 1870s.

Water actually was turned into the hydraulic on July 4, 1874, but the washing away of banks in several places and financial troubles led to abandonment of the undertaking.

Interest in the early canal projects was revived in a letter received by John Manship, Madison County surveyor, from Mrs. Sadie Bacon Symons, 1110 Dodge St., Fort Wayne, asking for information on the pioneer waterway project.

Mrs. Symons reported that her grandfather, Seth Bacon, had been engaged in the canal's construction in this vicinity in the 1830s. She disclosed that he had married a local woman, Julia Curtis, whose family had built the old Killbuck Mill here.

Some Andersonians may have historical records on early canal activity here that would aid Mrs. Symons in her research. Forkner and Dyson, in their 1897 History of Madison County, give this account:

"Governors William Hendricks, James B. Ray, Noah Noble—in fact, all the early governors of Indiana—were very solicitous concerning the development of the state's resources and consequently were deeply interested in the public highways, whether they were by land or water.

"In a message delivered before the Legislature in December of 1828, Gov. Ray said: 'On the construction of roads and canals, then, we must rely as the safest and most certain state policy to relieve our situation, place us among the first states in the Union, and change hard times into an open acknowledgement of our contentedness. We must strike at the internal improvement of the state or form our minds to remain poor and unacquainted with each other!'

"Gov. Noble, who succeeded Gov. Ray, urged upon the Legislatures of 1831-34 the importance of a well-defined system of public improvements. The people had become aroused upon the subject and demanded the adoption of measures necessary to the development of the state's resources.

"At that time, canals and railroads were being constructed in various parts of Indiana, and it became necessary that a general system of internal improvements should be adopted. Accordingly the General Assembly of 1836 passed an act providing for the appointment of a Board of Internal Improvements.

"The board consisted of six persons, appointed by the governor, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and the canal commissioners then in office. This board had general supervision of all internal improvements in the state.

"Among the important works specified in the act was 'the Central Canal, commencing at the most suitable point on the Wabash and Erie Canal, between Fort Wayne and Logansport, running thence to Muncietown, thence to Indianapolis, through Madison County) thence down the valley of the West Fork of White River to its junction with the East Fork of said river, and thence by the most practicable route to Evansville, on the Ohio River.'

"The Legislature appropriated \$3,500,000 for the construction of this canal and navigable feeder. Work was begun in 1838 on the division of the canal running through Madison County, but there came a revulsion of public sentiment in 1840 against any further appropriations for internal improvements, and work on the canal was abandoned, never to be resumed . . .

ANDERSON HYDRAULIC

"A number of years after work on the canal had been abandoned, certain individuals considered the feasibility of completing that portion of the work lying between Anderson and Daleville, and using it for hydraulic purposes. Nothing came of the scheme, and it was dropped.

"In 1868, however, a number of public-spirited citizens began agitating the question of utilizing the canal. Great interest was taken in the matter by the citizens of Anderson and vicinity, as it was thought that the enterprise, when completed, would result in making Anderson a city of the first class.

"Public meetings were held at which speakers located mills, factories and other enterprises without number along the hydraulic. Anderson was pictured in glowing colors as the 'coming city' in the state.

"Finally, on the 19th of December in 1868, the Anderson Hydraulic Co. was organized, with capital stock subscribed to the amount of \$64,000. The city of Anderson subsequently subscribed \$20,000 and issued bonds for the amount.

"The board of directors chosen by the stockholders was composed of the following persons: Peter Summan, William Crim, H. J. Blackledge, N. C. McCullough, George Nichol, Samuel Hughel and James Hazlett.

"The board organized by electing N. C. McCullough, president; William Crim, treasurer, and C. D. Thompson, secretary. The company proceeded to let contracts for reconstructing the canal, and a large force of hands was soon employed on the work.

"The canal extended from a point opposite the village of Daleville in Delaware County to the city of Anderson, being about 8 miles in length. To the disappointment of many, the work did not progress as rapidly as had been anticipated, and people generally began to lose faith in the benefits that would accrue after it had been completed.

"In the meantime, funds of the company had been gradually reduced, and by the time work had progressed far enough to turn in the water, announcement was made that they were practically exhausted.

"Water was turned into the canal from White River at Daleville on the 4th of July in 1874, but the banks gave way in several places, and it became necessary to shut off the water.

Places that had been washed out were repaired but again gave way to the pressure of the water when a second attempt was made to flood the canal.

"The stockholders had lost confidence in the practicability of the scheme and refused to contribute further assistance. That which was to have been the glory of Anderson was abandoned. Eighty thousand dollars were expended on the work.

"It was afterwards sold by the sheriff of Madison County to Edward H. Rogers to satisfy judgments held by him against the company for labor and materials furnished for its construction."

Anderson-Daleville Canal Completed But Not Used

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