



Ohio's Canals

After the War of 1812, many settlers moved to Ohio. Some came by boat, while others came by wagon. By 1820, the new state of Ohio had grown to a population of 5,000. There was not much reliable transportation at that time.



Canal Boat

Courtesy of the *Mount Vernon News*

There was a network of unpaved roads that crossed the state, but travel by land was slow and expensive. In 1825, the state legislature decided to build canals to improve transportation. Between 1825 and 1847, 1,000-mile of canals were built in Ohio.

Canals were large, man-made ditches, filled with water that carried boats over hilly, uneven areas. Canals in Ohio were built by hand –

dug with picks and shovels. They were built mainly by Irish, German and French immigrants who worked for 31 cents a day, plus food and shelter. The canals were 40-foot-wide and four-foot-deep.

Two major canals were built in Ohio. The Ohio and Erie Canal crossed the eastern part of Ohio, while the Miami and Erie Canal crossed western Ohio.

The first section of the Ohio and Erie Canal, connecting Cleveland to Akron, opened in 1827. The final section of this project opened in 1832, connecting Cleveland to Portsmouth. Before this canal was built, it took 30 days to travel by land from Akron to New York City. After its construction, the same trip took just 10 days by canal boat.

The Miami and Erie Canal was also built in sections. The construction of the first section of this canal, connecting Middletown to Cincinnati, began on July 25, 1825. The final section opened in 1845, connecting Toledo to Cincinnati.

Canals were successful until 1855. After that time, railroads began to become a more important means of transportation. The last sections of canals used for transportation were abandoned in 1913.

