



# Milemarker

Quarterly Newsletter of the Whitewater Canal Trail: Spring 2005



## COMING TO A TRAIL NEAR YOU ON APRIL 30<sup>th</sup>

Put on your walking shoes, pump up the bike tires & bring the kids! Celebrate the opening of the Yellow Bank section of the Whitewater Canal Trail on Saturday, April 30<sup>th</sup> with your friends and neighbors. Many volunteers have been diligently working during the past months to ready this part of the trail for the community's enjoyment.

Opening activities & ribbon cutting will begin at Noon on Saturday, April 30<sup>th</sup> near US 52 & Yellow Bank Road. Come meet the members, volunteers, and supporters who made this trail a reality. Special thanks will be given to the Visteon Corporation for a contribution from their "See the Possibilities Fund". This public hike-and-bike trail, nearly a mile long, will be a source of pride for our community. The trail will offer a variety of nature, history and wellness activities.

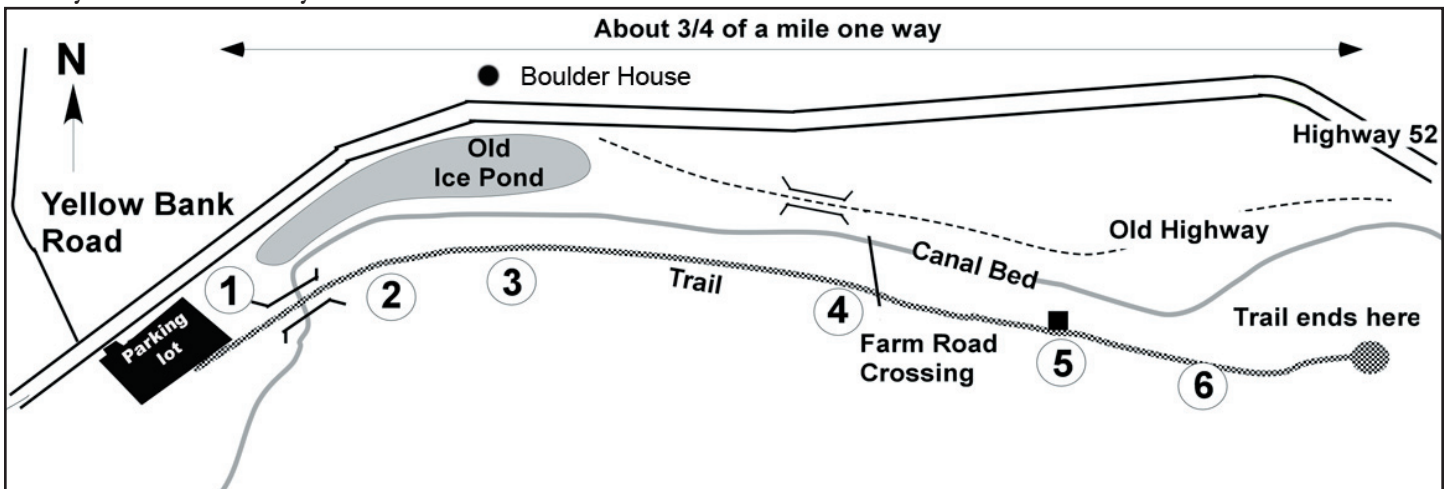
## ON THE TRAIL AT YELLOW BANK

At first glance, the Yellow Bank section of the Whitewater Canal Trail is a quiet trip through a wooded area that is bordered by farm fields. Along the trail you walk on an old railroad track bed, which generally follows the path of the historical Whitewater Canal.

The path you follow was built over 150 years ago. On the trail today you can see many reminders of Franklin County's transportation and commercial history. The following descriptions refer to the numbers on the map at the bottom of the page

1) *Railroad Bridge*. As you enter the trail you immediately cross a small bridge where the old canal bed goes under the railroad. The canal then turns and runs right next to the trail. The trail now follows the old railroad bed which was built on the tow path of the canal. Although the railroad was built mostly on the towpath of the canal, there are a number of places where their routes were separated.

2) *Ice Pond*. The low-lying area seen from here used to be "Hendrickson's Ice Pond". In the 1800s, there was a series of ice ponds along the canal. Ice from these shallow, flat-bottomed ponds was "harvested" during the winter and stored in ice houses. Some of the ice was used locally, but most was shipped to the Cincinnati area. (Continued on page 2)



## On the Trail at Yellow Bank

(Continued from page 1)

3) *Habitat Management.* The basin of the ice pond and the areas along the trail are returning to nature, now that the canal and the railroad have been gone for years. WCT will maintain three distinct habitat areas, to provide homes for a wide variety of plants and animals. Much of the area will remain in larger trees. Other parts will be kept in younger trees. The area under and near the power lines will be a “prairie” area made up of native grasses and wildflowers. The nest boxes along the trail are part of a larger project to provide more homes for cavity nesting birds such as bluebirds, tree swallows, chickadees and more.

4) *Old Highway Bridge.* From this point, what is left of an old stone wall and concrete bridge is visible. These are the remains from the old river road that became part of the highway connecting Brookville and Indianapolis. The bridge and the old highway were abandoned when US Route 52 was built.

Franklin County’s transportation history is all here: the new Canal Trail travels the path of the canal and the railroad and it overlooks the old canal bed. Across the canal is the ghost of the old road that ran through the river valley. Just beyond, the current US highway 52 can be seen or heard.

5) *Milepost 46.* This concrete post is typical of the markers used by the railroad. Although its paint faded long ago, this is milepost 46, indicating that this point is 46 miles from Cincinnati.

6) *Canal Separates from Railroad.* From this point, the canal bed moves gradually to the north, marked by the ridge that originally served as the towpath for the canal. The railroad did not need to closely follow the “water level route” like the canal, so the railroad sometimes took a straighter path when the canal made a big curve.

On the south side of the trail, there is an unusual earth structure. Little is known about when or why it was built, so it is a bit of a mystery for now.



## The Boulder House

A unique landmark along US 52 between Brookville and Metamora is the Boulder House. It is located to the east of the entrance to the Whitewater Canal Trail near Yellow Bank Road. It was built on what was then the north edge of Hendrickson’s Pond.

It is said that William Mittendorf, a Cincinnati candy manufacturer, bought a 5 acre tract here overlooking a popular fishing pond and commenced laying stone. Commuting from the city nearly every weekend by train, getting off at Yellow Bank Flag Station, he obviously found total relaxation and delight in fitting stones to form his house, garage, walls, porches, a few column porticoes, fences, arches, gate posts, steps, foot bridges and benches. What started as a weekend vacation evolved into a 40 year obsession with laying stones.

William’s wife eventually became disenchanted with the vacation home project in the Whitewater Valley and suggested perhaps going somewhere for a weekend. But his obsession was too great ( it is said that there is at least one boulder, purchased or acquired, in the work from every state in the then 48 states).

What would have been the final blow to any normal man occurred about 1929 when plans were presented for the construction of the new Federal highway (US52). It was to go not only through his back yard, but right through the middle of the old Hendrickson’s pond.

Prior to this disturbing development the old road, (called the “Brookville Road”) had run behind the house as we see it today. But even this did not deter Mr. Mittendorf. He simply built a new front for the house, including a porch, onto the back of the house, thus creating a house with two fronts.

And so today, we begin our hike at the Trailhead we call Yellow Bank near The Boulder House, which is just one of many unique landmarks to be encountered along the Whitewater Canal Trail.

### In Cooperation with WWCSSHS



The Canal Trail is on land that was once part of the Whitewater Canal. It is now part of the State Historic Site, and WCT is pleased to have the cooperation of the site’s managers on this important project.

# join the adventure...



How often do you get the opportunity to make a direct, personal contribution to a project as important as the Whitewater Canal Trail? The completed trail will start at Brookville, pass through Metamora, and end at the feeder dam near Laurel. It will preserve some of the most important canal history in Indiana.

This trail will also offer wonderful recreational opportunities for hikers and bike riders, history buffs and bird watchers, and anyone who wants to take a leisurely stroll to enjoy the scenery of the beautiful Whitewater River valley.

Planning and building the Whitewater Canal Trail will require a variety of resources. The trail project is an all volunteer effort, and we need support from all of our friends and neighbors.

Do you have a professional or technical skill that will be needed to complete the trail, such as:

- engineering
- surveying
- landscape design
- construction



Would you like to:

- contribute to an important community project
- preserve canal history
- create a great place for family outings

Will you help with:

- trail construction
- project planning
- education programs
- mailing newsletters
- public relations



Join us on the Whitewater Canal Trail adventure....  
Become a member, help build the trail, come along on a walk. Sign up on the back of this page, and we'll see you on the trail!

# The next steps...

## Get ready to open another part of the trail

The WCT Design Committee has already started work on the next section of the Canal Trail. In the fall of this year, we plan to open a 2.6 mile trail section that begins in Metamora and travels east to the site of two original canal locks.

The trailhead will be located in the parking lot near the aqueduct, at the east end of Metamora. In "Phase 1" the trail will be considered primitive. It will be leveled and marked, but it will not have an all-weather surface, nor will it be ADA accessible. The trail offers everything from beautiful vistas of the Whitewater River Valley to an opportunity to see an important historical site. It starts on the road from the parking lot to the end of the DNR's barnyard for .15 miles, then through a grassy farm field for .45 miles, then along the railroad tracks beside farm fields for 1.0 mile, and then through a wooded area on the old canal path for 1.0 mile to the "Twin Locks".

## Apply for grant funding

WCT is applying for a \$150,000 grant from the Indiana Recreational Trails Program. These funds will be used to upgrade the "Metamora to Twin Locks" section of the Canal Trail, described in the preceding paragraph. We will have at least a 20% match for this grant, bringing the total project value to a minimum of \$187,500.

If WCT receives this grant, we will use it to upgrade this entire section of the Canal Trail with a crushed stone surface. We will also have an accessible parking area, and other features for trail users with a wide variety of abilities and interests.

## Sign up more members and volunteers

The Canal Trail needs your support. WCTI is a community-based volunteer organization. Our ability to complete the trail all the way from Metamora to Brookville depends on you. Please become a member today. If you were a member last year, and you have not renewed your membership, now is the time.

Please fill out the information below and return it to Whitewater Canal Trail today.



### MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION:

New members receive a free walking stick, which can be picked up at a WCT walk or workday. Business/Corporate members receive recognition: in future issues of the newsletter, on the web site and a sponsor certificate.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Name(s) or Group

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone contacts

\_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail

- INDIVIDUAL:** **\$10.00**
- FAMILY:** **\$25.00**
- BUSINESS** **\$100.00**
- SUPPORTING GIFT** **\$ \_\_\_\_\_**
- SIGN ME UP TO VOLUNTEER FOR:**

Whitewater Canal Trail, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization. WCT is a Project Committee of Historic Hoosier Hill RC&D, a 501 (c)(3) organization. Contributions of more than \$10.00 from new members, and \$5.00 for renewing members, are tax deductible. Please make checks payable to "Whitewater Canal Trail Inc." and mail to:



**Whitewater Canal Trail, Inc.**  
P.O. Box 126  
Brookville, IN 47012

# What has WCT been up to?

It has taken the skill and labor of many people to get the Yellow Bank section of the Canal Trail ready for use. WCT is fortunate to have many skilled and generous volunteers, including an engineer and an architect, a carpenter and an equipment operator, a landscaper and an artist. These people, together with the many WCT volunteers, have been working long and hard on this section of the trail. Hundreds of hours were spent cleaning up decades of accumulated stuff along the trail corridor—ranging from old coolers to tractor tires. Preparing the trail surface meant removing hundreds of old, rotten railroad ties, digging out miles of roots, and grading a new surface.

## building a trail...



Thanks to the generosity of financial supporters like the Visteon Corporation and the Franklin County Tourism Board, we will have a new parking lot at the Yellow Bank Trailhead and a number of features to make things more enjoyable for trail users. These include garden areas that will be planted with native wildflowers, and an ongoing wildlife habitat restoration effort. There will also be an information kiosk, benches and more.

Completing the gardens and wildlife areas, and maintaining the trail will offer enjoyable volunteer opportunities for trail supporters young and old. If you would like to help with a garden, monitor bluebird boxes, or plan the wildlife habitat project, please sign up on the form that came with this newsletter or sign up on the WCT web site.



## building partnerships...



Whitewater Canal Trail is working to develop relationships with other groups and individuals who can help us build a successful project. Shown above, WCT president, Mick Wilz, discusses the management of land adjacent to the trail near Yellow Bank Creek, with Richard Vonnegut. He leads the Indiana Trails Fund, a statewide organization that assists local groups developing trails. WCT is also working with Dr. Donald Kaufman and his associates from the Zoology Museum at Miami University to do an environmental study of the trail corridor. Our representatives also regularly attend statewide trail workshops.

## building community support...



WCT is working hard to get the word out on the progress of the Canal Trail project. Board members have been speaking at the meetings of community groups from the Chamber of Commerce to the Kiwanis. We have set up an information booth at many local events such as the 4-H fair, Canal Days in Metamora, and the Franklin County Home and Garden show. For the Home and Garden show, Thad Ariens of Sulina Farm donated the use of his booth setup. Together with the additions from WCT, the booth won the “Most Creative” award for the show (Yes, that is a bicycle on top of the booth in the picture above).

If you know of a group that would like to hear about the canal trail project, or an event that WCT should attend, please let us know.

# WE'LL SEE YOU ON THE TRAIL ON APRIL 30



The purpose of Whitewater Canal Trail Inc. is to foster activities along the Whitewater Canal corridor focusing on:

- historical preservation and interpretation
- outdoor recreation
- natural resource conservation

while promoting sustainable development and improved quality of life in connected communities.

*Canal Trail T-shirts and walking sticks available at grand opening*



Whitewater Canal Trail, Inc.  
P.O. Box 126  
Brookville, IN 47012

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

*Check our web site:*

**[www.whitewatercanaltrail.com](http://www.whitewatercanaltrail.com)**

*Send us an e-mail*

**[canaltrail@brookville47012.com](mailto:canaltrail@brookville47012.com)**

*Or call:*

**765/647-6457 or 764/647-7365**