

Settling Northeast Ohio

The lands that were to become northeast Ohio were the common hunting grounds of the Eries, Senecas, Shawnees, Ottawas, Delawares and Mingoes. The area was dense forest. Travel was by foot, horse, or water. The easiest way for the natives to travel any distance was by water. Rivers were the first highways through the region. Unfortunately, rivers didn't always flow where one wanted to go and during certain times were not navigable. Across northern Ohio is a natural boundary or divide where water north of the boundary flows north to Lake Erie and eventually out the St. Lawrence Seaway. Water to the south of the boundary flows south to the Ohio River and thus by way of the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico. To travel over the boundary, one had to portage or carry all the supplies. One of the common routes from Lake Erie to the Ohio River was upstream on the Cuyahoga River across the Portage Path and then downstream on the Tuscarawas River toward the Ohio River. The Portage Path was the closest, easiest trail between the two rivers. In the treaty of Paris ending the Revolutionary War, Great Britain agreed to cede control of the area that became the Northwest Territory to the American colonies. The British and the Americans did not consult with the natives. The Fort McIntosh Treaty signed at Beaver Falls, PA in 1785 was the specific event that allowed European settlers to enter the Northwest Territory, but only as far as the Tuscarawas River. The Portage Path was noted on early maps of the area and was a natural boundary between the natives on the west and the American settlers on the east. Ohio achieved the required number of citizens and became the 17th state in 1803. American settlers remained east of the Tuscarawas River until the Treaty of Fort Industry in 1805. This treaty opened up the lands west of the Cuyahoga River, Portage Path, and the Tuscarawas River. As with any highway, towns sprouted where entrepreneurs thought they could sell the land.

The village of Cleaveland was incorporated on December 23, 1814. It was named after General Moses Cleaveland. As one of the founders and directors of the Connecticut Land Company, he saw the mouth of the Cuyahoga River as the ideal location for the capital city of the Connecticut Western Reserve. The spelling of the city's name was changed in 1831 by The Cleveland Advertiser, an early city newspaper, in order for the name to fit on newspaper's masthead.

The first major canal in America was started soon after the end of hostilities in the War of 1812. After its completion in 1825, The Erie Canal was called the 8th wonder of the world. The Erie Canal stretched 363 miles from the Hudson River in New York to Lake Erie. It wound its way up the Mohawk Valley, crossed the Appalachian Mountains, and connected the Great Lakes to New York. The Erie Canal opened up the Midwest for settlements.

After the Erie Canal was completed, the Ohio Legislature took up the idea of connecting Lake Erie to the Ohio River. Canals had an advantage over rivers in that a river was not navigable during time of high or low water. The canal system could be used for more of the year because the water levels were maintained by recycling the water into and out of holder/feeder lakes.

Planning for the Ohio-Erie Canal started in 1822. Ground was broke for construction on July 4th, 1825. The magnitude of the project is hard to imagine. The path had to cross the summit at 390 feet above Lake Erie. The canals were engineered to be forty feet wide at the top and narrowing to twenty six feet at the bottom. The depth was kept at a minimum of 4 feet. In northeast Ohio, the canal route followed the Cuyahoga and Tuscarawas River valleys. After 152 locks and 309 miles, it ended in Portsmouth, OH on the Ohio River and was the first commercial avenue in the state.



The economic benefit for a canal was obvious and various landowners and villages pushed for the canal to go through their lands. Products of the earth were bulky and costly to transport. In the early 1800's, the cost of transporting a ton of flour from Cincinnati to New York was \$25. Transportation to New Orleans was cheaper, and thus the price paid on the New Orleans market was about half. After the canal, the cost to transport the same flour to New York dropped to about \$3. Due to cheaper transportation and thus a larger market, the price of wheat increased from 10 cents per bushel to one dollar per bushel. Not only did the canal open up additional markets for the settlers in the Midwest, it also lowered the prices of commodities that came by canal back to their communities. As a result of the canal, the land prices increased by 500%.



Local farmers supplied much of the labor and equipment to dig the canals. Irishmen were shipped in to help. In the beginning, the laborers were paid thirty cents for a day from sunrise to sunset, plus plain board, lodging in a shanty, and a jiggerful of whisky.

Cities such as Akron and Massillon grew up next to the locks. The passengers, called packets, had time to get off the boat and shop. Taverns and hotels were built to accommodate them. The town of Akron was laid out in December 1825 at the summit of the developing Ohio and Erie Canal. The name derived from the Greek word ἄκρον signifying a summit or high point.



Two types of boats were pulled up and down the canal. Passenger boats, called packets, had a single cabin enclosure the length of the boat and could accommodate about 100 passengers. The packets would travel the 309 miles from Cleveland to Portsmouth in 80 hours at a cost of 4 cents per mile. The fare included meals and lodging. Freight barges typically had three cabins, one in the stern that was for the captain and his family, one in the bow that housed the crew, and one in the middle for livestock. The open areas in between served as cargo holds. They carried up to 80 tons of cargo. The boats were 13 feet wide and 60 feet long and weighed 22 tons empty. The less wealthy rode on the freight barges along with cargo. The fare was 1.5 cents per mile if you slept with the mules and packed your own beans. Speed over four miles per hour was illegal to limit wear and tear on the banks.



The captain's position was on the tiller deck at the stern. The crew also had two helmsmen, two drivers, a cook, and some help to load and unload. They earned about \$12 a month plus room and board. The crew was either on shore controlling the two mules connected to the boat by a 150 foot rope or on the stern with pike poles used to help the boat turn. It was not uncommon for whole families to live on the freight barges.

In the county of Stark, twenty five new towns were incorporated in the ten years after the canal was started. Settlement along the east bank of the Tuscarawas River was slow due to the marshes, swamps, and shallow ponds. In February, 1816, William Harvey laid out a village on the west bank and named it Clinton. A month later, his father David laid out another town in the southwest corner of Franklin Township on the north bank of the Chippewa Creek and named it Savannah. Savannah flourished whereas Clinton just existed. Savannah grew within a couple years to a population of 50-60 with several stores and tradesmen. When the route of the canal was published, it became known that the canal crossed from the west side of the Tuscarawas River to the east side just above Clinton. The citizens in the area rushed to the east side of the river. When the section of the canal opened in 1828, Savannah was completely deserted. During 1833, a post office was established in a small tavern on the bank of the canal and was postmarked Clinton. In 1835, Gorham Chapin laid out a village on the east bank just south of the guard lock and named it Orradeem. A guard lock differs from a normal canal lock in that its primary purpose is controlling variances in water level rather than raising or lowering vessels. This guard lock protects the canal as it crosses the Tuscarawas River. Two years later, William and Francis Pumroy

platted the village of Pumroy adjoining Orradeem and just south of it. The business district was centered in Pumroy. The whole area eventually became known by its postmark- Clinton.

When the last leg of the canal was completed in 1832, farmers could transport their grain and mine owners could transport their coal cheaply. Clinton was situated in one of the first wheat growing sections of the state and surrounded by the very best bituminous coal. Three large mines in the area, the Meese, the Stump, and the Chippewa, drew people from far and wide. Three hotels were built to house the migrants and settlers and were supplemented by a rooming house. There were two points on the canal in town where canal boats could pull out of traffic and the packets could get off and visit the town. One was at the rear of the Cunningham Grain Storehouse and the other was about a quarter mile south of town. (Barberton Post, Tuesday, January 14, 1954).

There were three warehouses in the village. The largest was 3 ½ stories tall and could hold one million bushels of grain. The others were 2 ½ stories tall and held just a little less. From 1840 to 1850, more grain was purchased in Clinton for shipment on the canal than Akron.

The period of greatest prosperity was 1830-1860 when 300 boats were in operation. In 1840 Summit County formed from portions of Portage, Medina, and Stark counties. In 1851, 2.5 million bushels of wheat were transported to Cleveland. Six hundred thousand barrels of flour, almost a million bushels of corn, almost 3 million bushels of coal, and nearly 11 million pounds of merchandise were shipped southward. One can imagine the number of boats, each laden with 50 to 80 tons of goods, moving in silent procession at four miles per hour.

The railroad took away the canal business and the canal officially closed in 1913 after the flood. On Easter Sunday 1913, Akron's total rainfall was recorded at 9.55 inches resulting in a flood which killed five citizens and destroyed the Ohio and Erie Canal system.

Akron became the Rubber Capital of the World when the four major tire companies Goodrich Corporation (1869), Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company (1898), Firestone Tire and Rubber Company (1900), and General Tire (1915) were headquartered in the city.

Rubber companies responded to housing crunches by building affordable housing for workers. Goodyear's president, Frank Seiberling, built the Goodyear Heights neighborhood for employees. Likewise, Harvey Firestone built the Firestone Park neighborhood for his employees.^[29] During the 1910–1920 decade Akron became a boom town being America's fastest growing city with a 201.8% increase in population.