

The Ohio & Erie Canal: The Evolution of a Name, 1825-1996

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17 June 2002



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## ***Executive Summary***

For most transportation systems, there is an official name and a vernacular, common name for everyday use. For example, the official, incorporated name of Interstate 80 is the “James W. Shocknessy Ohio Turnpike;” however, in day-to-day parlance and other media, it is simply known as the “Ohio Turnpike” or “I-80.” There are numerous examples of common names for nineteenth-century railroads, such as the “Nickel Plate Road” for the New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad or the “Big Four Railroad” for the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad. This pattern of the emergence of a common, everyday name is also apparent for the Ohio and Erie Canal. During all of the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century, the “Ohio and Erie Canal” was known simply as the “Ohio Canal.” In advertisements, maps, personal correspondence, and even official state documents, the Ohio Canal is the commonly used name. Only recently has the referred title of the Ohio Canal been reverted back to the official Ohio and Erie Canal. By reviewing and analyzing available primary source documents, this report argues that the people who built, traveled on, and made a living off of the canal called it the “Ohio Canal.” And, understanding why the common name was “Ohio Canal” provides further understanding to the canal’s importance and significance to the everyday lives of nineteenth-century Ohioans.

## ***Background***

The official, legal, incorporated name for the canal that connects Lake Erie at Cleveland with the Ohio River at Portsmouth is the Ohio and Erie Canal. The name came out of the passage of the 1825 Canal Bill on 4 February 1825. After much survey work of potential canal routes, the Board of Canal Commissioners endorsed two canal projects: the Ohio and Erie Canal and the Miami Canal. The Ohio and Erie Canal was a 308 mile channel from Cleveland, on Lake Erie,

south to the Muskingum River, then westward to near Columbus, and finally southward through the Scioto River valley to the Ohio River at West Portsmouth.<sup>1</sup> The Miami Canal was a waterway between Cincinnati to Dayton, a 66-mile segment.<sup>2</sup> Historians have speculated that the inclusion of the Miami Canal in the bill was designed to gain support from the heavily populated southwestern region of Ohio, especially Cincinnati, for a central trans-state canal, the Ohio and Erie. Other measures were included to guarantee the canal bill's passage, namely road appropriations for districts to be bypassed by the canals and a progressive tax feature that tied real estate assessments to property values, known commonly as *ad valorem*.

With regard to the names of the canals, there are two interesting factors to note. First, the word "AND" is used instead of the ampersand in the official legislative language as the conjunction between Ohio/Erie. Although the ampersand was commonly used during this period, it was not part of the official name. Second, the legal name for the Miami & Erie Canal in the 1825 Canal Bill was Miami Canal. The developmental history of the Miami Canal provides clues to why the Ohio and Erie Canal became known as the Ohio Canal.

The construction of the Miami Canal proved to be slow, and by 1832, it would only extend 66 miles connecting Dayton to Cincinnati. From 1832 to 1845, the Miami Canal's influence was regional at best. Construction on the Miami Canal would continue in fits and starts in attempts to ultimately connect the system to Lake Erie. Miami Canal's name would officially be changed to the Miami & Erie Canal by the Ohio Board of Public Works in 1845 after the completion of a connection with the Wabash & Erie Canal, which stretched from Toledo, Ohio to Ft. Wayne, Indiana. The Miami & Erie Canal would finally be connected with Lake Erie via a

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<sup>1</sup> H. Roger Grant, *Ohio on the Move: Transportation in the Buckeye State*, (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2000), 56, John Kilbourn (compiler) *Public Documents Concerning the Ohio Canals*, (Columbus, OH: I.N. Whiting, 1832).

junction with the Wabash & Erie Canal at Junction, Ohio. In the previous twenty-two years, the Ohio and Erie Canal served as the only trans-state canal and became Ohio's only canal with a statewide and national influence and reputation. Hence, in the collective consciousness of nineteenth-century Ohioans, the system became known as simply the "Ohio Canal."

At the ceremonial groundbreaking for the construction of the Ohio and Erie Canal at the Licking Summit on 4 July 1825, New York's Governor DeWitt Clinton and Ohio's Governor Jeremiah Morrow made the following toast to the crowd of onlookers, "The Ohio Canal—the great artery of America which will carry abundance to all the extremities of the Union."<sup>3</sup> A hundred years later, at a celebration for the centennial of the Ohio and Erie Canal, a historical marker was placed at the Licking Summit by the Ohio Archeological and Historical Society. The marker's plaque reads, "On This Spot Saturday July 4<sup>th</sup> 1825 The Ohio Canal Was Started. Saturday July 4<sup>th</sup> 1925 This Marker Was Erected By Licking County Citizens."<sup>4</sup>

However, in other early commemorations of the canal, the state used the official Ohio and Erie Canal name but with little consistency between "and" or the use of the ampersand. For instance, the lock plate on Lock 36 at Lower Marfield contains a plaque for its 1831 completion date. The plaque reads, "Lock No. 36 OHIO & ERIE CANAL. A single link in the GRAND CHAIN connecting the great interests of the AMERICAN SYSTEM an enduring monument to the patriotism of Henry Clay, SEPT. 1831."<sup>5</sup> The commemoration plaque's quote captures Ohio's zeitgeist that the Ohio and Erie Canal had a connection to a larger, national transportation

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<sup>2</sup> H. Roger Grant, *Ohio on the Move*, 56.

<sup>3</sup> "Commencement on the Ohio Canal at the Licking Summit," *Ohio Archeological and Historical Quarterly*, 1925, 34:1, 92.

<sup>4</sup> See Figure 69 in *Proposed Ohio and Erie Canal Suitability/Feasibility Study*, (Denver, CO: United States Department of Interior, National Park Service, 1975), 109.

system and national sphere of influence. Regardless of the state's official name for the Ohio and Erie Canal, everyday Ohioans called the system Ohio Canal.

### ***Personal Accounts of Residents of Northeast Ohio***

The Ohio and Erie Canal had a profound impact on Ohio's Western Reserve. As historian Robert A. Wheeler notes, in his book, *Visions of the Western Reserve*, it would have been impossible for investors in the Connecticut Land Company to imagine that canal and steam boat travel could carry thousands of immigrants to northeast Ohio. By the mid-1830s, the prosperity wrought by the Ohio and Erie Canal became self-evident, and its importance was captured in journals and personal correspondence of the time. Several primary source records from nineteenth-century settlers in northeast Ohio also provide insight into the common name for the canal. For example, David Beardsley, the first toll collector for the Ohio and Erie Canal in Cleveland, describes his occupation in the following manner in his diary:

June 6<sup>th</sup> 1827. Spent my birthday (when I am now 38 years old) on Lake Erie on my way, in the schooner Comet, Capt. Atkinson, to Buffalo, where I arrived on the 8<sup>th</sup>, having left home (Cleveland) on the evening of 4<sup>th</sup> June. My objective in visiting Buffalo was to obtain a knowledge of the manner of Collecting Tolls on the N.Y. Canals; having been appointed Collector of Tolls of the Ohio canal at Cleveland in the month of January last; tho my salary (\$300 per annum) did not commence (if indeed it has yet commenced) till the first inst.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Jack Gieck, *A Photo Album of Ohio's Canal Era, 1825-1913*, (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1988), 114.

<sup>6</sup> The Diary of David Hamlin Beardsley, May 22, 1826—June 6, 1839. Bolton Family Papers, container 2, MS 95-203, 21-32. Western Reserve Historical Society as cited in *Visions of the Western Reserve: Public and Private Documents of Northeastern Ohio, 1750-1860*, Robert A. Wheeler, Editor, (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 2000), 187.

In 1837, Julius P. Bolivar MacCabe, Cleveland's First City Directory compiler, writes, "In 1825 the Ohio Canal was established, terminating at Cleveland, which gave an impetus to the growth and prosperity of the place, and may be considered an era in history."<sup>7</sup>

Nineteenth-century historian Henry Howe describes Akron and the Ohio and Erie Canal in the following manner. He writes:

The large and flourishing town of Akron, the county seat, is on the Portage Summit of the Ohio canal, at the junction of the Pennsylvania canal, 36 miles from Cleveland and 110 miles northeast of Columbus. The name of this town is derived from a Greek word signifying an elevation. Akron was laid out in 1825, where South Akron now is. In the fall of the same year, the Irish laborers on the Ohio canal put up about 100 cabins. South Akron grew rapidly for a few years; but in 1832, some buildings were put up half a mile farther north, and business in a short time centered around here. In 1827, the Ohio canal was finished from Cleveland to this place. In 1841, Akron was made the county seat of the new county of Summit. The same year the canal connecting Akron with Beaver, Pa. was opened and, a new impetus given to the town by these advantages.<sup>8</sup>

Some of the closest individuals to the day-to-day operations of the canal were boat captains. Although many did not leave a written account of their activities, some, like John Malvin, did. John Malvin was an African-American writer, canal boat captain, carpenter, and abolitionist who lived in the city of Cleveland from 1831 to his death in 1880. In 1879, he wrote his autobiography entitled *Autobiography of John Malvin: A Narrative* that was published by the *Cleveland Leader*. The book chronicles Malvin's life in Cleveland, including his activities on the Ohio and Erie Canal. Malvin's references to the canal are consistent throughout the study.

Malvin writes the following to describe his business operations on the canal:

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<sup>7</sup> Julius P. Bolivar MacCabe, Editor, *A Directory of the Cities of Cleveland & Ohio, For the Years 1837-38*, (Cleveland, OH: Sanford and Lott, Book and Job Printers, 1837).

<sup>8</sup> Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of Ohio; Containing a Collection of the Most Interesting Facts, Traditions, Biographical Sketches, Anecdotes, etc. Relating to Its General and Local History: With Descriptions of Its Counties, Principal Towns and Villages*, (Cincinnati, OH: Derby, Bradley & Co., 1847), 469-470.

During the year 1839 I was employed as a hand on the steamboat “Rochester,” plying between Buffalo and Chicago. The following year I left this position, and purchased a canal boat from S.R. Hutchinson & Co. This firm owned the stone mill on the canal in Cleveland. My boat, which was called the “Auburn,” was engaged in conveying wheat and merchandise on the Ohio Canal.<sup>9</sup>

Other everyday citizens of Cleveland also referred to the Ohio and Erie Canal as the Ohio Canal. Letters sent back to the east coast are filled with descriptions of the canal and its influence on everyday life in the Western Reserve. Cleveland’s Amzi Atwater’s letters to Moses Warren in Connecticut consistently refer to the city’s waterway as the Ohio Canal and the substantial economic impact of the system.<sup>10</sup> References are also found in the nineteenth-century writings of Irish immigrant Isaac Reid and Emily Nash.<sup>11</sup> Clearly, the use of Ohio Canal was the common title for the Ohio and Erie Canal.

Several nineteenth-century traveler accounts of the Ohio and Erie Canal exist and provide further insight on the commonly referred name of the system. In his 1835 trip to Ohio, New Hampshire’s Cyrus Bradley captures the essence of the canal while giving his readers a glimpse of the vernacular name for the system. He writes:

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<sup>9</sup> John Malvin, *North into Freedom: The Autobiography of John Malvin, Free Negro, 1795-1880*, with an introduction by Allan Peskin, (Cleveland, OH: The Press of Western Reserve University, 1966), 59.

<sup>10</sup> *Visions of the Western Reserve Public and Private Documents of Northeastern Ohio, 1750-1860*, Robert A. Wheeler, Editor, (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 2000), 170-173.

<sup>11</sup> See *Visions of the Western Reserve: Public and Private Documents of Northeastern Ohio, 1750-1860*, Robert A. Wheeler, Editor, (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 2000).

We passed, this afternoon, the thriving town of Portsmouth, where the Ohio canal enters the river. This connects the waters of Erie with the Mississippi, and there is a good amount of transportation upon it. The waters of the Mississippi, the Onisconsin, the Illinois, the Missouri, with all its navigable tributaries; the Arkansas, Red River, Ohio, the Tennessee, the Cumberland, the Wabash, the Kentucky, the Miami, the Scioto, the Kenhawa, the Alleghany and the Monongahela, all great navigable rivers, with many others of note, may be made to communicate with the canal, forming an inland navigation of above 8,000 miles. The trade and productions of this immense country, watered by these rivers, extending from the Alleghany to the Rocky Mountains and from the Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, floating from different directions and even different climates, can all concentrate at the mouth of the Ohio canal at Portsmouth. And much of it undoubtedly will. A vast amount of commission business must, in consequence, be done here. It is also well situated for the internal commerce of the State. Its growth must be rapid, to keep pace with the business which must naturally accumulate here. It now has over 1,200 inhabitants.”<sup>12</sup>

What is important to note about Bradley’s journal entry is that he was viewing the Ohio and Erie Canal from its southern terminus, Portsmouth, indicating that the Ohio Canal name was used statewide—not just in northeast Ohio. Other nineteenth-century travelers through Ohio are also consistent in their use of Ohio Canal. In the 1840s, both Henry S. Tanner and Franz Anton Ritter von Gerstner use Ohio Canal throughout their studies of internal improvements in the United States.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Newspaper Articles and Advertisements***

Newspapers from the period also indicate that the Ohio Canal served as the common name for the Ohio and Erie Canal. An 1827 *Cleveland Herald* article reporting the arrival of the first canal boat in Cleveland uses “Ohio Canal” for the name of the system.

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<sup>12</sup> Cyrus Bradley, “Journal of Cyrus Bradley,” *Ohio Archeological and Historical Quarterly*, 1906, 15, 217.

<sup>13</sup> See Henry S. Tanner, *A Description of the Canals and Rail Roads of the United States*, (New York: T. R. Tanner and J. Disturnell, 1840); Frederick C. Gamst, ed., *Early American Railroads*:

The editor writes:

Navigation on the Ohio canal was opened July 4 with the arrival in Cleaveland of the canal boat STATE OF OHIO from the Portage summit with Governor Trimble and other distinguished citizens aboard. The banks of the canal and the neighboring eminences were lined with, spectators and after the arrival of the boat, a procession was formed under the direction of Marshal H. H. Sizer, and marched to an arbor on the Public Square, where the Declaration of Independence was read by John M. Sterling, Esq., and a speech delivered by Reuben Wood, Esq. At the conclusion of these exercises the procession was again formed and marched to Belden's Tavern, where dinner was served, and the residue of the day spent with good feeling.<sup>14</sup>

From analysis of the *Annals of Cleveland*, the 1930s Works Progress Administration's index of nineteenth-century Cleveland newspapers, it is apparent that Ohio Canal was the preferred name of the canal system, with literally no references to the full legal name. It appears that *Erie* was implied, but rarely, if ever, stated. Many of the articles reported on the operational status of the canal, especially after periodic flooding. The following status notice appeared in the *Cleveland Herald* in 1828 and is typical of Ohio Canal citations in Cleveland newspapers:

“The Ohio canal is now in fine order for navigation from this place to Massillon, a distance of 66 miles. The boats ALLEN TRIMBLE and OHIO have reached this place laden with the produce of the interior. The other boats have made several trips to Stark county, returning with large cargoes of produce from that section.”<sup>15</sup>

Other articles concerning the Ohio Canal focused on the economic benefit of the canal to Cleveland's economy and conveyed pure nineteenth-century boosterism. The editor of the *Cleveland Whig* writes the following pointed response to the *Wheeling Gazette*'s claim that the Ohio Canal was ineffective at transporting people from the Ohio River to Lake Erie:

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*Franz Anton von Gerstner's Die inner Communication (1842-1843)*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> *Cleveland Herald*, 6 July 1827, 3:1,2.

<sup>15</sup> *Cleveland Herald*, 12 September 1828, 3:1.

The Wheeling GAZETTE says: Goods on the Ohio canal are 12 days on the passage from Cleveland to Portsmouth, a distance of about 250 miles. There are no packet boats to go at a greater speed. Why cannot the passage be effected in two and a half days? In the mean time, our steamboats and stages from Cincinnati get all the passengers destined to Lake Erie, which they reach in six days.

The foregoing is not characterized by the usual correctness of the editor of the Wheeling GAZETTE. In the first place, the length of the Ohio canal from Cleveland to Portsmouth is 309 miles, instead of about 250 miles. We learn on inquiry that the average time occupied in the passage of loaded boats from one extreme to the other is six days. Light boats, and occasionally loaded ones, make the trip in five days. The packets move at the rate of four miles on the level sections; they are limited to that speed by law. It is true that we have no regular packets on the canal at present, but many of the freight boats are fitted up in fine style. On inquiry at the Collector's office, we learn that 560 passengers were registered on this canal, all traveling northward, during the first nine days of the present month - and not less than 1,600 during all the month of October.<sup>16</sup>

The trend of using the moniker Ohio Canal continued throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. As late as 1913, in reporting on the damages from the flood that permanently close the canal, the both the *Akron Times* and the *Akron Beacon Journal* use the title Ohio Canal to label the system.<sup>17</sup>

Business advertisements from the nineteenth century provide additional visual evidence for the use of Ohio Canal as the preferred name. Canal shipping and forwarding companies advertised heavily in business directories and on broadsides in “inland port” communities, and the historical record of these advertisements are abundant. Consistent themes within all of the advertising appear to be speed of shipments and connectivity, or the ability to connect with other canals, rivers, or waterways outside of Ohio. Again, the term “Ohio Canal” dominates most of the advertisements, possibly because of the need for brevity and to avoid confusion with New York’s Erie Canal. A substantial amount of trade was conducted between the Ohio and Erie

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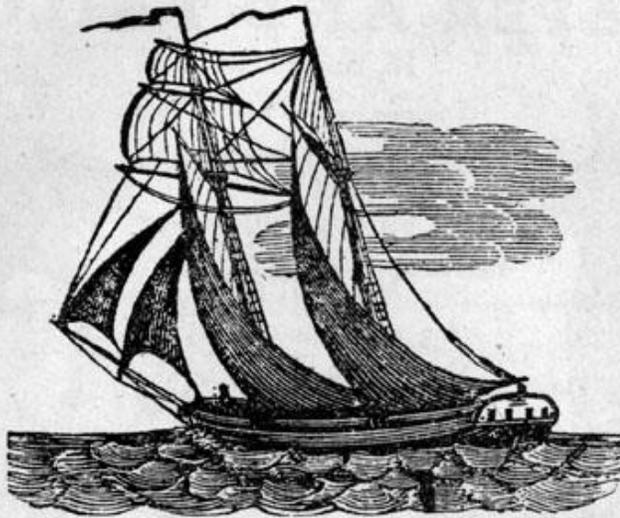
<sup>16</sup> *Cleveland Whig*, 18 November 1835.

<sup>17</sup> *Akron Beacon Journal* 25 March 1913; *Akron Times* 25 March 1913.

Canal and the Erie Canal, which provided access to the Eastern Seaboard and the port of New York City, and several of the advertisements also contain information concerning schedules for Erie Canal packet boats.

The advertisements for Cleveland forwarding companies are indicative of the maritime economy of the port city. For example, the advertisement for Tufts & Parks, forwarding and commission merchants, indicate the importance of multi-modal transportation systems. Tufts & Parks have a large graphic of a dual-mast sail boat along with smaller graphics of a side wheel steam boat and a canal packet boat. The advertisement also notes that they serve as “agents for the commercial line, on the N. York Canal and proprietors of the commercial line on, the Ohio Canal,” emphasizing their ability to ship to a national market.

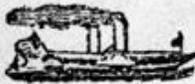
# TUFTS & PARKS,



**FORWARDING & COMMISSION  
MERCHANTS,  
And Dealers in FLOUR, PORK,  
Bshes, Salt, &c.**

A. TUFTS. }  
E. N. PARKS. }

**RIVER-ST., OHIO CITY.**



AGENTS FOR THE

**Commercial Line, on the N. York Canal,**

AND PROPRIETORS OF THE

**Commercial Line, on the Ohio Canal.**

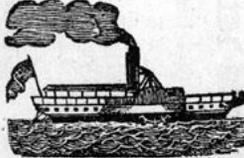
*The First directory of Cleveland and Ohio City, 1837*

An 1837 advertisement for Barstow & Company, forwarding and commission merchants, has a similar layout as the Tufts & Parks advertisement with the mast sailboat as the prominent logo. It is also important to note that Barstow & Company are “agents for the pilots, traders, Erie & Ohio Lines on the Erie Canal, and proprietors of the Washington Line, Ohio Canal.” Larger forwarding companies found it necessary to communicate in their advertisements that they had connections with the Erie Canal.

**BARSTOW & CO.**  
**FORWARDING**  
 AND  
**Commission Merchants,**  
 AND DEALERS IN  
**PRODUCE, SALT,**  
*Ashes, Staves, &c.*  
 RIVER-STREET,  
**OHIO CITY.**



AGENTS FOR THE  
**Pilot, Traders, Erie & Ohio Lines**  
 ON THE ERIE CANAL,




AND PROPRIETORS OF  
**WASHINGTON LINE, OHIO CANAL.**



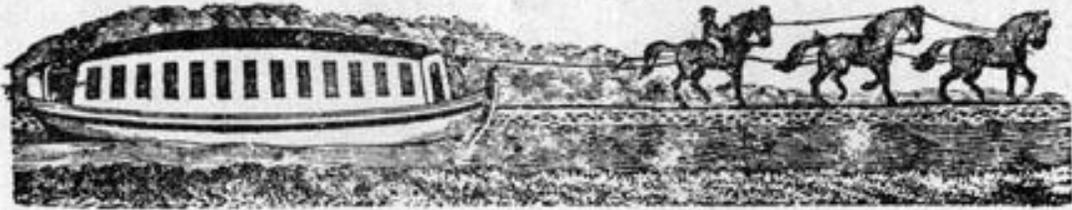


Liberal advances made on Property to be shipped or sold.

*The First directory of Cleveland and Ohio City, 1837*

Smaller transport companies that focused exclusively on passenger traffic emphasized canal scenes in their advertisements. The advertisement for the Dayline of Ohio Canal Packets highlights that their trips between Cleveland and Portsmouth covered a “distance 309 miles—through in 80 hours,” focusing on transportation speed rather than connectivity.

**DAILY LINE OF OHIO CANAL PACKETS**



**Between Cleveland & Portsmouth.**

**DISTANCE 309 MILES--THROUGH IN 80 HOURS.**

A Packet of this Line leaves Cleveland every day at 4 o'clock P. M. and Portsmouth every day at 9 o'clock A. M.

T. INGRAHAM, Office foot of Superior-street, Cleveland, }  
 OTIS & CURTIS, General Stage Office, do. } AGENTS.  
 G. J. LEET, . . . . . Portsmouth, }

NEIL, MOORE & CO.'S Line of Stages leaves Cleveland daily for Columbus, via Wooster and Hebron.  
 OTIS & CURTIS' Line of Stages leaves Cleveland daily for Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Detroit and Wellsville.

*Dayline of Ohio Canal Packets Advertisement, 1837*

The use of the term Ohio Canal in advertising continued long after the golden era of the canal in Ohio’s transportation history. For example, John S. Reese’s 1880 *Guide Book for the Tourist and Traveler over the Valley Railway!* contains dozens of advertisements for local businesses in the Cuyahoga River and Tuscarawas River valleys, and many of the advertisements reference the businesses by their proximity to the Ohio Canal.<sup>18</sup> It is clear that the brand name of the Ohio and Erie Canal was Ohio Canal.

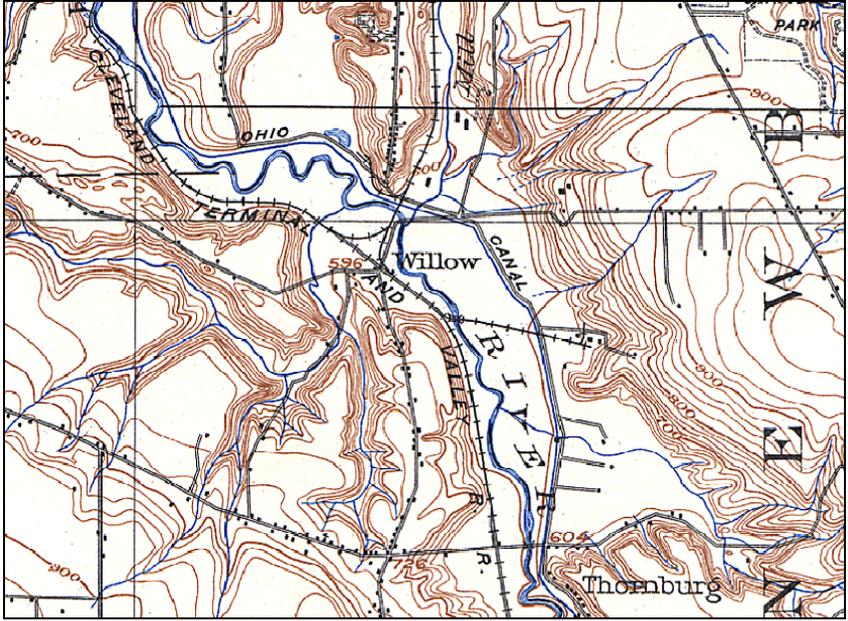
<sup>18</sup> For examples see John S. Reese, *Guide Book for the Tourist and Traveler over the Valley Railway!*, (Canton, OH: John S. Reese, 1880).

## **Maps**

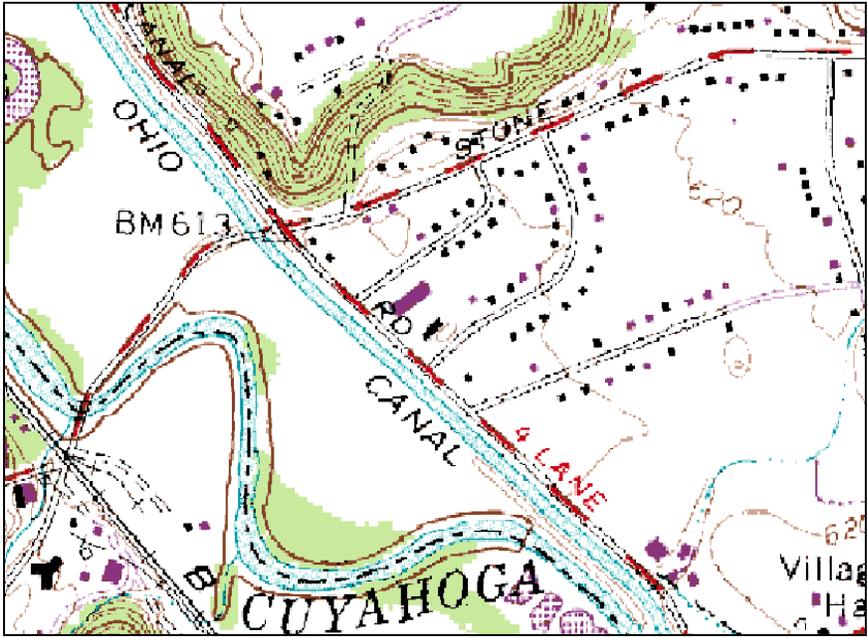
The most substantial evidence that suggests the recognized name of the Ohio and Erie Canal was Ohio Canal in the nineteenth century is provided by the United States Board on Geographic Names. The systematic standardization of geographic names in the United States began in the late nineteenth century. After the Civil War, there was a flurry of mapping and scientific reporting associated with exploration, mining, and settlement of the newly opened western territories.<sup>19</sup> Inconsistencies and contradictions among many names, spellings, and applications became a serious problem to cartographers and scientists who required a standardized, non conflicting geographical nomenclature. As a result, President Benjamin Harrison signed an Executive Order on 4 September 1890 establishing the United States Board on Geographic Names. The board was given authority to resolve all unsettled questions concerning geographical names, and the board's decisions were accepted as binding by all departments and agencies of the Federal government. By 1906, the board received the additional responsibilities of standardizing all geographical names for Federal use, including name changes and new names. The board developed principles of domestic name standardization that have remained consistent. A primary principle is formal recognition of present-day local usage for geographic names. Early on in its history, the Board decided that the Ohio and Erie Canal would be represented on U.S. maps as "Ohio Canal," recognizing the domestic, local name. Hence, all of the United States Geological Survey (topographic) maps identify the canal as the Ohio Canal.

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<sup>19</sup> United States Board on Geographic Names, *Principles, Policies, and Procedures: Domestic Geographic Names*, (Reston, VA: U.S. Geological Survey, 1997), 1

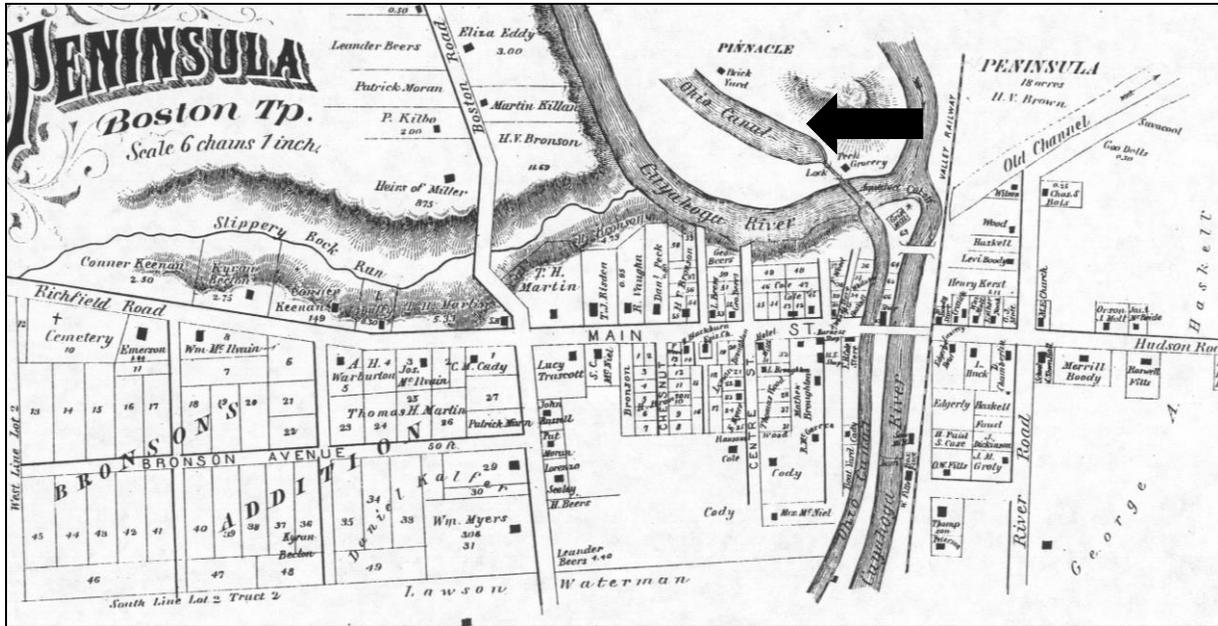


*USGS Map, 1903.*



*USGS Map, 1994. Notice Ohio Canal clearly displayed on the map.*

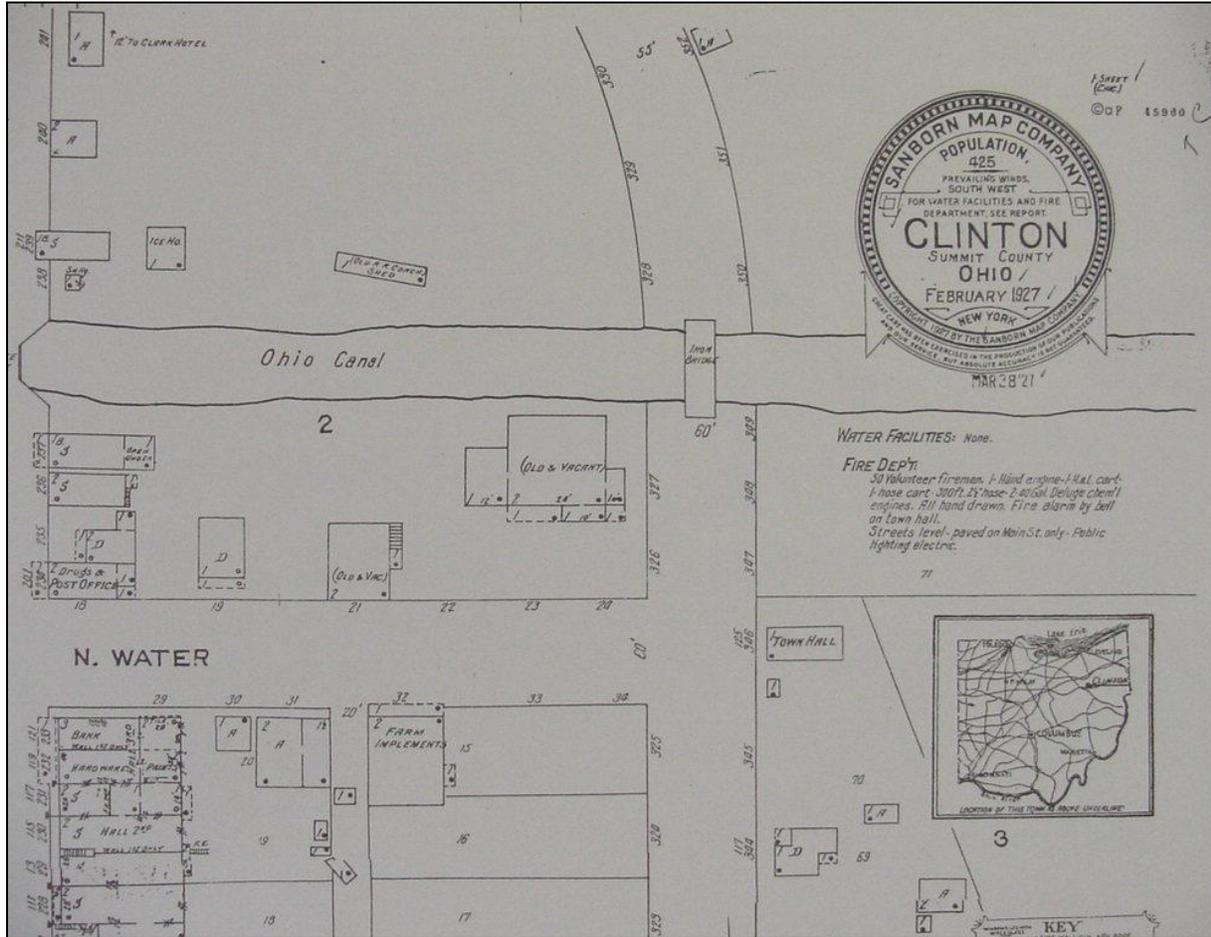
Even before the United States Board on Geographic Names attempted to standardize geographic names, nearly all of the counties through which the Ohio and Erie Canal passed had already recognized the standard name for the canal as Ohio Canal in acknowledgment of the local usage. Most of the nineteenth-century county property atlas maps indicate that mapmakers chose Ohio Canal as the appropriate name for the canal.



*Map of Peninsula, Ohio (Summit County), 1874.*

There is little question that the local mapping nomenclature had a significant impact on the decision by the United States Board on Geographic Names to standardize Ohio Canal as the name for the system in the 1890s.

The Sanborn Insurance maps for the counties through which Ohio and Erie Canal passed also recognized the local name for the canal as Ohio Canal. The bulk of the Sanborn surveys were conducted in the early twentieth century, and locations where the canal prism was extant are titled Ohio Canal.

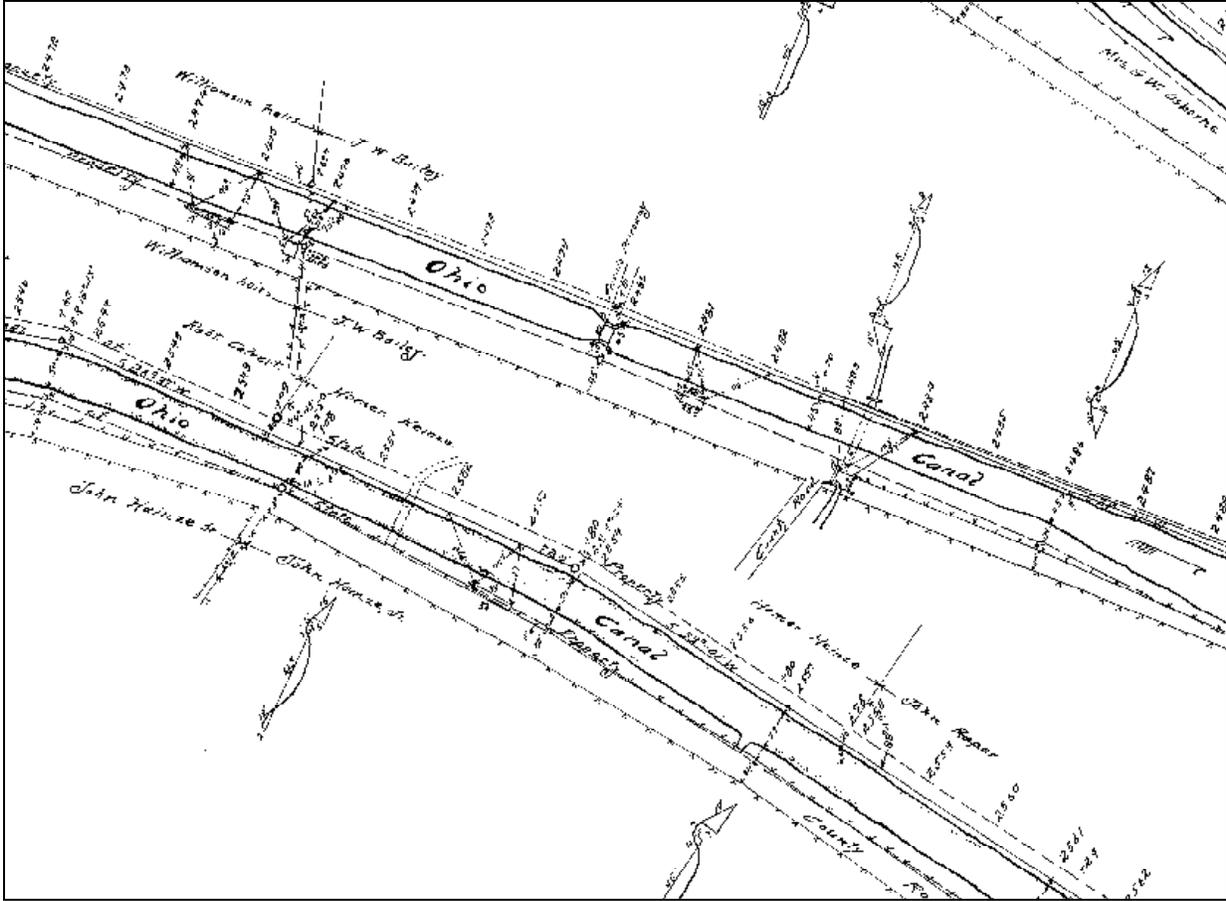


**Sanborn Insurance Map for the Village of Clinton, Ohio (Summit County), 1927. Notice “Ohio Canal” in the top left side of the frame.**

Even the State of Ohio, which named the Ohio and Erie Canal and operated the system for most of its history, recognized its local name as the Ohio Canal. In the 1890s, the state contracted to have a survey conducted on all of its canal lands to assess the scope of its ownership. The original survey maps still survive in the Ohio Historical Society’s archives. The name for the Ohio and Erie Canal chosen by the contract engineer was Ohio Canal. As a result, the survey maps for the following counties all contain Ohio Canal as the name for the Ohio and Erie Canal: Cuyahoga, Summit, Stark, Tuscarawas, Coshocton, Muskingum, Licking, Fairfield, Franklin, Pickaway, Ross, Pike, and Scioto.



*Ohio State Survey Map of the Ohio Canal in Cuyahoga County, 1892.*



*Ohio State Survey Map of Portsmouth, Ohio (Scioto County), 1916. In the 1920s, the state updated the survey maps and Ohio Canal remained as the name.*

**Art, Photography, and Postcards**

Paintings often capture the feeling of the period in which they were produced. The term Ohio Canal appears to have permeated the art community. For example, American landscape artist George L. Clough captures the canal landscape in Cleveland in *Old lockhouse on the Ohio Canal and shipyard on the west side of the Cuyahoga* (ca.1860).



***George L. Clough, Old lockhouse on the Ohio Canal and shipyards on the west side of the Cuyahoga, ca. 1860. Oil on canvas.***

Clough's painting captures two vital reasons for Cleveland's growth in the nineteenth century: paddle-wheel steamboats for lake traffic, which are under construction in the left and center, and canal boats, one of which is passing through the weighlock.<sup>20</sup> Smoke stacks in the distance foretell Cleveland's industrial future.

The title Ohio Canal also appears in other later titles of artwork like August F. Biehle's New Deal Public Works of Art Project mural *Ohio Canal* (1934).<sup>21</sup> The mural contains a map of Ohio with all of the counties identified along with the state's canal systems. The corners of the mural are accented with individual canal scenes. The "Ohio Canal" appears on the mural as the dominate canal in the state, highlighted in a bright blue color.

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<sup>20</sup> *Visions of the Western Reserve*, 248.

<sup>21</sup> August F. Biehle, Jr., *Ohio Landscapes : The Mather Gallery*, Ellen Landau, Editor, (Cleveland, OH: Case Western Reserve University, 1986).



***August F. Biehle, Jr., Ohio Canal, 1934. Lettered by W.A. Hein. PWAP, oil on canvas. 113” wide by 60” tall. Formerly located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Cleveland Main Public Library.***

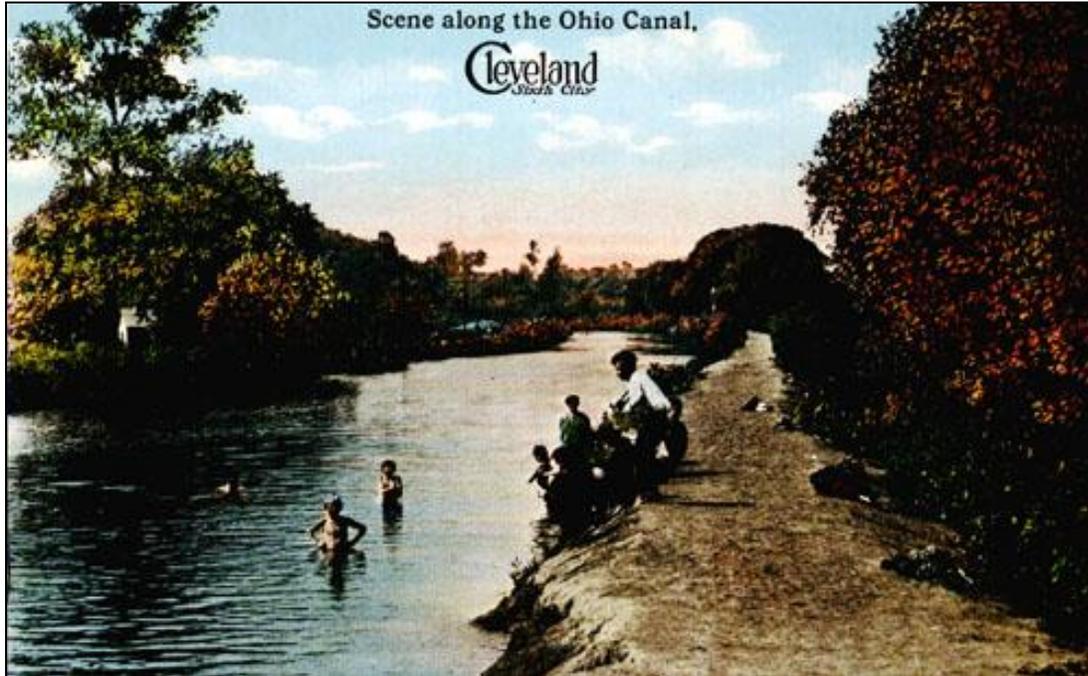
In addition to the works of Clough and Biehle, the name Ohio Canal is captured in the photography and postcards of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Often times photographers would etch or print the name “Ohio Canal” on photographs of canal scenes. Many of the photographs of Pearl Nye, late-nineteenth Ohio and Erie Canal advocate and balladeer, are etched with the title “Ohio Canal” and the locale name.

The following is an example of how a photographer printed “Ohio Canal” directly on the photograph, potentially for use as a picture postcard.



*Photograph of the “Ohio Canal” at Newcomerstown, Ohio, 1900s.*

Early twentieth-century linen postcards also endorsed the name Ohio Canal. A large series of color linen postcards were dedicated to “romantic” views of the Ohio Canal between 1910 and 1920. Most of the postcards were printed after the canal permanently closed, and the views recall the imagined slower pace of life during the canal era. A majority of the postcard scenes depict the Ohio Canal as a recreational resource, especially in the Cleveland area. However, there were also current views of the Ohio Canal in the early twentieth-century urban landscape illustrating its new use as an industrial water source.



*Scene along the Ohio Canal, Cleveland Sixth City, no date. A view of the Ohio Canal with family swimming in the canal.*



*Along the Ohio Canal, Cleveland, Ohio, 1911.*



*Quaker Oats Co. and the Ohio Canal, Akron, Ohio.*

### ***Ohio and Erie Canal Historiography***

To understand how the common, everyday name of the Ohio Canal has evolved into the Ohio & Erie Canal, it is necessary to briefly review the canal's historiography. Throughout the nineteenth century, Ohio Canal was the accepted title for the system in technical reports. From official Board of Canal Commissioners' reports to state construction documents, Ohio Canal was used consistently. One of the first historical studies of the Ohio and Erie Canal was John Kilbourne's *Public Documents concerning the Ohio Canals* (1832). Kilbourne's study focused on the canals that "connect Lake Erie with the Ohio River," which, in 1832, was only the Ohio and Erie Canal. Hence, the official name was shortened to Ohio Canal, and that usage remained in scholarly works consistently throughout the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century. Local historians, like Akron's Lucius V. Bierce in *Historical Reminiscences of Summit*

County, (1854) and Samuel Lane in *Fifty Years and Over Akron and Summit County*, (1892), used the name Ohio Canal in their studies of the system.

From 1904 to 1909, the State of Ohio attempted to rehabilitate the Ohio and Erie Canal, which renewed interest in the canal. In 1905, C.P. McClelland and C.C. Huntington wrote a book, entitled *History of the Ohio Canals, Their Construction, Cost, Use, and Partial Abandonment* (1905), that served as a polemic in support of the state's rehabilitation project. Although the authors used Ohio and Erie Canal intermittently, Ohio Canal appears to be their preferred term for the system. In 1925, the sesquicentennial of the canal's construction, several historical articles appeared in the *Ohio Archeological and Historical Quarterly*, and all utilize the Ohio Canal name. Even as late as 1968, Harry N. Scheiber's seminal study of Ohio's canals, *Ohio Canal Era* (1968), also utilized the Ohio Canal name.

The change in the name from Ohio Canal to the legal Ohio and Erie Canal or Ohio & Erie Canal appears to have been driven by research conducted by the National Park Service. With the organization of the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area in 1974, the National Park Service (NPS) began exhaustive research on the canal, a primary cultural resource of the newly formed park unit. One of the first NPS reports was the *Proposed Ohio and Erie Canal Suitability/Feasibility Study* (1975), which was a windshield survey of canal resources from Cleveland to Portsmouth. Throughout the report, the legal name Ohio and Erie Canal is used, and the cover of the report uses the ampersand between Ohio/Erie. In 1984, Harlan Unrau and Nick Scratish prepared a detailed research report on the canal in the Cuyahoga Valley entitled *Historic Structure Report: Ohio and Erie Canal, Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area, Ohio*. Again, Unrau and Scratish used the legal name throughout the report. In 1993, NPS staff wrote a feasibility study for the creation of a canal heritage corridor between Cleveland and

Zoar, Ohio entitled *A Route to Prosperity: A Study by the National Park Service of the Ohio & Erie Canal Corridor*. The *Route to Prosperity* consistently uses the legal, official name Ohio and Erie Canal in the report but substitutes an ampersand for and, which is an accepted grammatical practice if it is done consistently. To be sure, other scholarly works on Ohio's canal systems during this period also used the Ohio & Erie Canal name, such as Jack Gieck's *A Photo Album of Ohio's Canal Era* (1988) and Ronald Shaw's *Canals for a Nation* (1992). In essence, the common name for the system had transformed from Ohio Canal to Ohio & Erie Canal.

The Ohio & Erie Canal name was codified by Public Law 104-333, which established the Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor in 1996.<sup>22</sup> Since that time, the official name and common name of the canal has been the same—Ohio & Erie Canal. The “new” common name has appeared on maps, brochures, and other interpretive material published by the National Park Service and other Corridor partners.

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<sup>22</sup> Public Law 333, 104 Congress, (12 November 1996).

