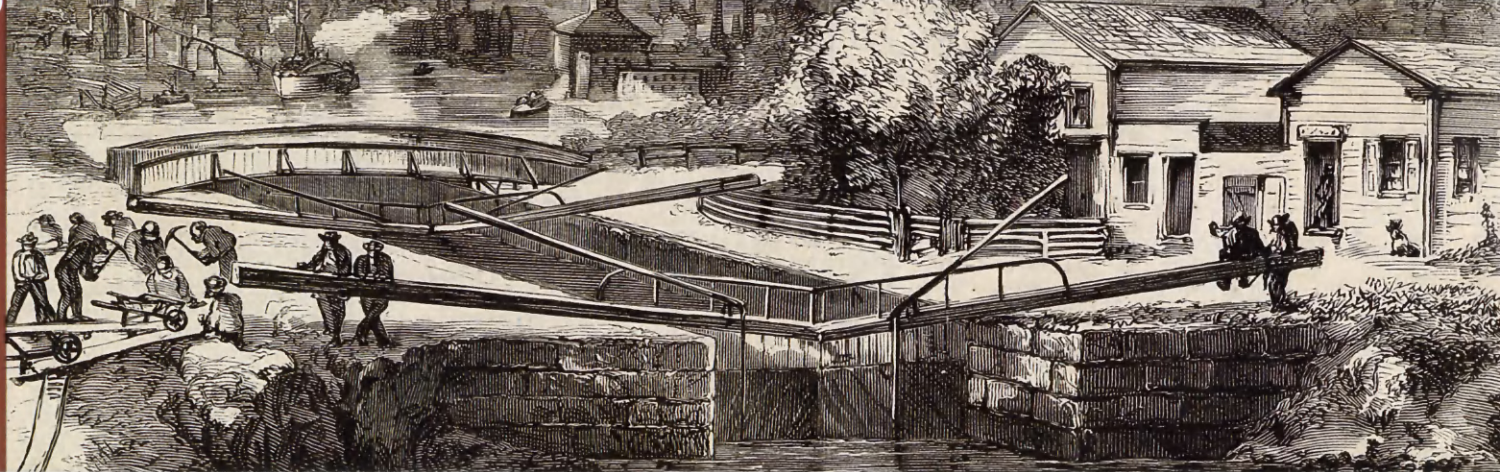
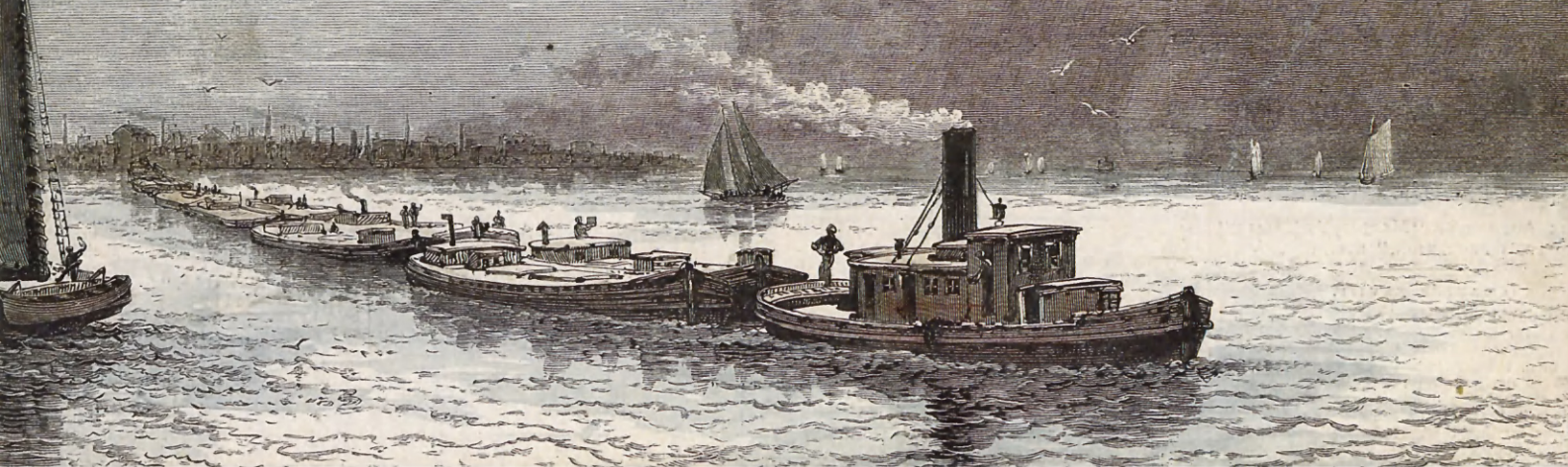




TOP: A statue at the Chicago Portage National Historic Site, Lyons

ABOVE: Washington Park and the Reddick Mansion, Ottawa

FAR RIGHT: Historic Gaylord Building, Lockport

RIGHT: Voyageur Rendezvous at the Isle a la Cache Museum, Romeoville

* William Gooding photo from "History of Will County", courtesy: Lewis University Canal Collection

BELOW: Cycling along the I & M Canal is a popular pastime

Restored parlor in the historic Reddick Mansion, Ottawa

RIGHT: Fishing in the placid waters of the I & M Canal at Lock #6, Channahon



A Corridor of Historic Travel
By connecting the Great Lakes to the Illinois River, the Illinois and Michigan Canal provided a link between the East Coast and mid-America. The waterway is also a link between the past and the world of today.

The earliest recorded inhabitants of this region were the Native Americans. In 1673, they met the first Europeans to venture into the area, Louis Jolliet and Father Jacques Marquette. These two explorers and their company were returning to Canada from their explorations down the Mississippi River.

Marquette and Jolliet traveled north from the Mississippi via the Illinois and Des Plaines rivers. At what we now call the Chicago Portage, the party encountered a low divide that separated them from the Chicago River and Lake Michigan.

Jolliet saw an opportunity to connect the Chicago and Des Plaines rivers, providing an uninterrupted route to the sea. He wrote that if a short canal of but "half a league of prairie" were dug through the portage, one could travel from Lake Michigan to the Gulf of Mexico entirely by boat.

Marquette and Jolliet's party portaged over the divide and returned to French Canada. The French retained control of our region until their defeat by the British in the French and Indian War. The British, like the French, were primarily concerned with the fur trade, and the construction of a canal seemed a frivolous expense.

When the Americans won the region after the American Revolution, priorities changed. The American government wanted to establish military control over the region. They started by negotiating a treaty with the Potawatomi tribe, in which the Potawatomi ceded six square miles of land at the mouth of the Chicago River. Fort Dearborn was built at this site.

Trade rapidly increased after the erection of Fort Dearborn, but the idea of a canal did not re-emerge until 1810, when a New York Congressman told Congress "...the most

inconsiderable expense would open a canal between the waters of the lake and the Illinois River."

In a treaty six years later, the Potawatomi ceded land ten miles on either side of the Des Plaines and Illinois rivers from Lake Michigan to the Fox River. In 1823, Illinois created a Canal Commission, but enthusiasm for the canal was limited by financial resources. No money meant no construction, and the Commission was dissolved.

By the 1830s, settlement in the region was slowly increasing and land speculation grew. A new Canal Commission was formed in 1835 and, unlike the first, it was empowered to raise money.

The Commission had a federal grant of 284,000 acres of land along the proposed canal route, which it tried to sell for \$1.25 an acre. The Commission found selling land in the absence of canal construction difficult, but enough funds from land sales were raised to start canal construction on Independence Day, 1836.



After its dazzling start, construction quickly became an on-again, off-again matter. Money problems plagued the Commission, and the "Panic of 1837" created shortages which eventually led to the halt of all canal construction in 1841.

After a four year stoppage, new funding was secured from English and eastern investors, and construction resumed. Amid cheering and speeches, the Illinois and Michigan Canal officially opened its locks in 1848.

Building the Canal
Chief Engineer William Gooding, who had worked on the Welland Canal and canals in Ohio, was charged with engineering and constructing the I & M Canal. His plan divided it into three sections: the Summit segment (Chicago to Lockport), the Middle segment (Lockport to Seneca), and the Western segment (Seneca to LaSalle).

The Canal was 60 feet wide at water level, 36 feet wide at the bottom, and six feet deep along the entire route of 96 miles. The Canal connected to Lake Michigan via 5.5 miles of the Chicago River. In the northeastern portion of the Canal, pumps were needed to keep it filled with water from the lake.

A total of 15 locks were built on the I & M. These were needed to lift or lower boats along the course of the Canal as water levels changed. Other construction along the Canal included aqueducts (which carried the Canal over rivers and streams), bridges, dams, lockkeepers' houses and the tow-path along which mules pulled the motorless canal boats.

If we were to be transported back to the heyday of the I & M Canal, we would be astonished at its quiet character. The modern, harsh sounds of jet engines, trucks and trains would be replaced by the soft sounds of the mules' hooves on the tow-path and the conversations of the boatmen.

The Canal and Its Impact
In April 1848, a cargo of sugar and other goods from New Orleans reached the docks of Buffalo. On the surface, this event was barely noteworthy, yet it had never happened before. It signaled a new era in the growth of the United States.

The trickle of commerce between east and west swelled into a continuous flow of people and goods. The Midwest's hub became Chicago, and the city's population soared 600% in the decade after the opening of the Canal.

The growing prosperity was not limited to Chicago; communities along the Canal route flourished. Illinois underwent a tremendous change in population and immigrants poured into the northern part of the state.

The intense use of the Canal was not to last. By 1854, railroads offered faster travel, rendering passenger boats obsolete. Rail transportation of freight became increasingly competitive, and the I & M Canal responded by reducing tolls. Canal traffic and income declined; services also declined and the Canal began to deteriorate.

Increasingly, the Canal was used to carry wastes away from Chicago. In 1900, the larger Sanitary and Ship Canal went into operation, carrying both wastes and larger, more modern barges. Six short years later, the traffic on the I & M Canal consisted mostly of small, local barges and pleasure crafts. All use of the I & M ended in 1933, with the opening of the Canal's modern successor – the Illinois Waterway.



TOP: Starved Rock, the namesake of Starved Rock State Park, Utica

ABOVE: I & M Canal barge in the late 1900's

LEFT: Swallow Cliffs Toboggan Slides, Palos Region of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County

FAR RIGHT: Waterfront celebration at Joliet's Bicentennial Park

PLACES TO DISCOVER

Enjoy your visit to the Corridor and keep in mind that each Corridor community has a special identity. For information about towns and special events in the area, contact one of the following Visitor Centers. Please phone ahead to confirm hours.

• Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area
5010 N. Jurgtown Rd., Morris, Illinois, 60450, 815/942-2899. Open 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., daily, March-Nov.; 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., weekdays, Dec.-Feb.

Goose Lake Prairie is the largest remnant of prairie left in the Prairie State. The Visitor Center has displays on the native grassland and its inhabitants. Visitors can also walk the Tallgrass Nature Trail. On site is a replica of an 1834 log cabin built by John Cragg, one of Grundy County's first settlers. The park has picnicking, water and restrooms.

Next door, Heidecke State Fish and Wildlife Area offers deer, duck and dove hunting (in season) and fishing. North of Goose Lake Prairie (across the Illinois River) lies one of the I & M Canal's engineering feats, the Aux Sable Aqueduct. Also nearby are Lock No. 8, the Aux Sable lockkeeper's house and Dresden Island Lock and Dam.

Near Channahon are McKinley Woods and the Aux Sable and Dresden Accesses to the I & M Canal State Trail.

McKinley Woods offers hiking and biking in the preserve and on the I & M Canal State Trail. You can also picnic, camp, boat or fish there. The Des Plaines Conservation Fish and Wildlife Area offers camping, picnicking, fishing, boating, hunting, dog training and trap shooting. Canal Accesses in Channahon offer a variety of recreational opportunities and include some of the original I & M locks.

• I & M Canal State Trail, Gebhard Woods Access
102 Ottawa St., Morris, Illinois, 60450, 815/942-0796. Open 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., daily

The multi-use I & M Canal State Trail is accessible at several points. It runs for 61.5 miles, from LaSalle to Channahon and is suitable for hiking and bicycling; snowmobiles are allowed on the trail (with 4 inch minimum snow base).

One of the trail's access points, Gebhard Woods, is an I & M Canal Visitor Center and the headquarters for the I & M Canal State Trail. Gebhard Woods offers picnicking, restrooms, water, a softball field, horseshoe pits, fishing and camping.

Other nearby sites include W.G. Stratton State Park, Nettle Creek Aqueduct and Potawatomi Chief Shabbona's grave in Evergreen Cemetery.

West of Gebhard Woods is the Seneca Grain Elevator. The elevator, built in 1861-2 on the north bank of the I & M Canal, is the oldest grain elevator on the Canal.

• I & M Canal Visitor Center
200 W. Eighth St., Lockport, Illinois, 60441, 815/838-4830. Open 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Wed.-Sun.

Lockport embodies the essence of the National Heritage Corridor and is considered one of the best preserved canal towns. The I & M Canal Visitor Center is located in the Gaylord Building, a former canal warehouse made of locally quarried limestone. The building, restored to its 19th century appearance, also houses the Illinois State Museum Lockport Gallery and a restaurant.

Nearby are the Norton Building, the Canal Commission Office (home to the Will County Historical Society Museum), Lockport Lock and Dam, the restored Fitzpatrick House, the Gladys Fox Museum and the Lockport Prairie Nature Preserve.

• Illinois Waterway Visitor Center
Rt. 1, Dee Bennett Rd., Ottawa, Illinois, 61350, 815/667-4054. Open 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., seven days a week (hrs. extended in summer).

The Illinois Waterway Visitor Center features a modern lock and dam with indoor and outdoor observation areas. Several displays on the Waterway, locks and towboats are featured. In nearby Ottawa is Washington Park (site of the first Lincoln-Douglas debate), Reddick Mansion, Fox River Aqueduct and W.D. Boyce Memorial (Boy Scout founder and Ottawa resident).

Across the Illinois River is Starved Rock State Park. The park offers 15 miles of trails, many of which lead to spectacular waterfalls. Recreational opportunities abound the year-round. In downtown Utica are the LaSalle County Historical Society Museum and the Marquette Memorial.

Other nearby parks are Matthiessen State Park and Buffalo Rock State Park, where you can access the I & M Canal State Trail or tour the modern land sculpture, the Effigy Tumuli.

The Marseilles Lock and Dam and Illini State Park are located in Marseilles. Another nearby town, LaSalle, is the site of restored Lock No. 14 and the Little Vermilion Aqueduct. Further west lies Peru, where the waters of the Canal merge with the Illinois River.

• Isle a la Cache Museum
501 E. Romeo Rd., Romeoville, Illinois, 60441, 815/886-1467. Open 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Tues.-Sun., year-round.

Isle a la Cache Museum features the history of this region prior to the construction of the Canal, when French-Canadians traveled the waterways in canoes to trade with the native peoples. Inside are many interactive, hands-on displays for adults and children. The museum is located on an 80-acre island in the Des Plaines River. Amenities include picnicking and canoeing. Hiking is also available on the nearby Centennial Trail, which parallels the course of the Des Plaines River.

Nearby sites include Veterans Woods, Lake Renwick Heron Rookery Nature Preserve and Keepataw Preserve.

• Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Center
9800 S. 104th Ave., Willow Springs, Illinois, 60480, 708/839-6897. Open 9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Mon.-Fri., 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Sat.-Sun., Mar.-Oct.; 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., daily, Nov.-Feb.

Located in the northern portion of the I & M Canal National Heritage Corridor, the Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Center is close to Chicago and its many points of interest. The Little Red Schoolhouse itself is a historic structure, built in 1886 as the first school building in the area. It features indoor and outdoor exhibits and is close to other recreational areas, including Crawdad Slough and Maple Lake.

Many nearby towns offer additional points of interest: the Bridgeport neighborhood of Chicago was the scene of the ground breaking ceremony for the I & M Canal in 1836; Arie Crown Forest is located in Hodgkins; Palos Park includes the Children's Farm and Nature Center; and

Palos Heights is the location of Lake Katherine Nature Preserve. At 48th Street and Harlem Avenue in Lyons is the Chicago Portage National Historic Site, a 91 acre preserve which includes part of the original portage used by Marquette and Jolliet.

Nearby Lemont is home to one of the best known I & M Canal historical sites—St. James of the Sag, a church built with locally quarried limestone. Irish immigrants who built the Canal are buried in the church's cemetery. Also in Lemont is the Lemont Area Historical Society Museum.

• Will County Historical Society Museum
803 S. State St., Lockport, Illinois, 60441, 815/838-5080. Open 1:00-4:30 p.m., daily, closed mid-Dec.-early Jan.

Lockport boasts a well-preserved historic district, bounded by the Canal, 7th St., 11th St., and Washington St. There are 37 historic sites and structures here, among them the original I & M Canal Office, which today houses the Will County Historical Society Museum. The 10-room museum features many artifacts, pictures and documents dealing with the building and operation of the I & M Canal. Popular items include the tool room, full of century-old hand tools, and the complete office of Dr. Dougall, chief surgeon for the I & M Canal Division.

Nearby sites include the Pioneer Settlement, which has a number of historic buildings, the Gaylord Building, Runyon Preserve and the 2.5 mile Gaylord Donnellan Canal Trail, which ends in Dellwood Park.

• Will-Joliet Bicentennial Park
201 W. Jefferson at Bluff St., Joliet, Illinois, 60435, 815/740-2216. Open 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Mon.-Thurs.; Fri., 8:00 a.m.-noon.

Will Joliet Bicentennial Park was built as a memorial to our nation's 200th birthday. It includes an indoor theater and outdoor band shell. Located next to the Illinois Waterway, the site offers a historic walk along the bluffs of Joliet, year-round concerts, seasonal festivals, boat rides and drama classes for children.

Also in Joliet are the Rialto Square Theater (restored to its 1920s era grandeur), the old Illinois State Penitentiary, Slovenian Heritage Museum, Brandon Lock and Dam, Joliet Area Historical Society, Pilcher Park Nature Center, Higginbotham Woods, the Old Plank Trail, the

newly restored Union Station and the ruins of ironworks and blast furnaces at a site called Heritage Park.

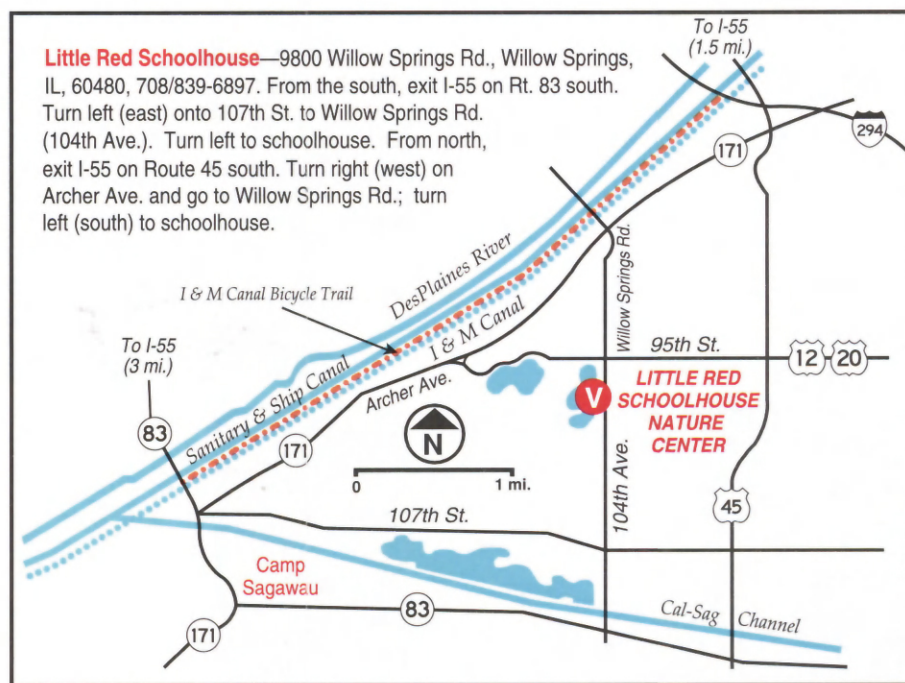
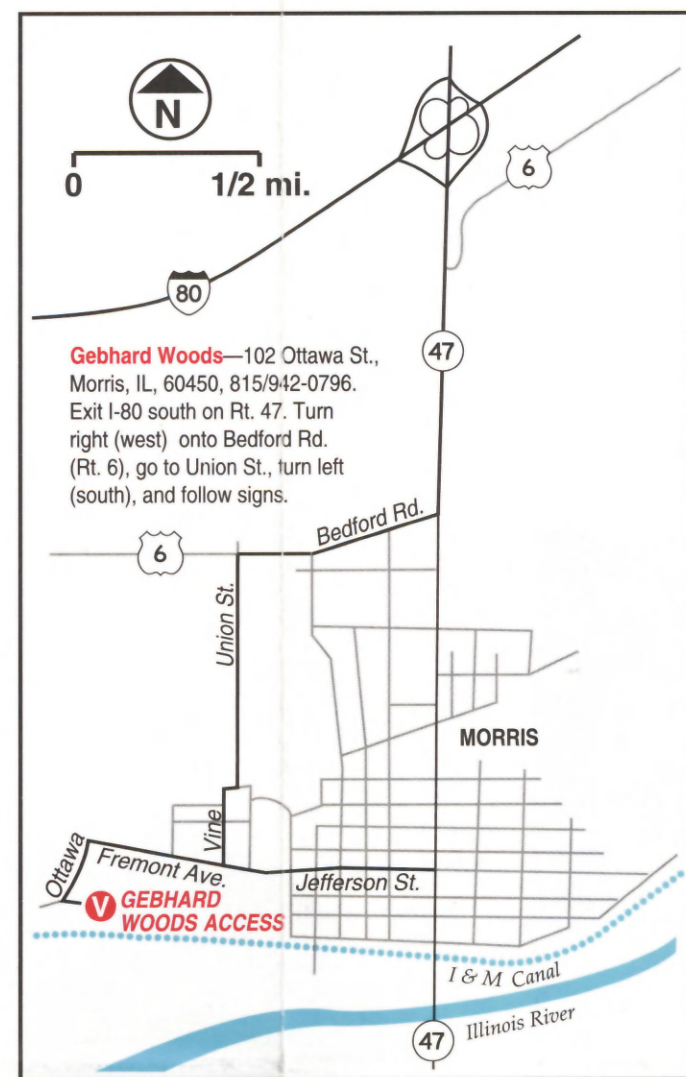
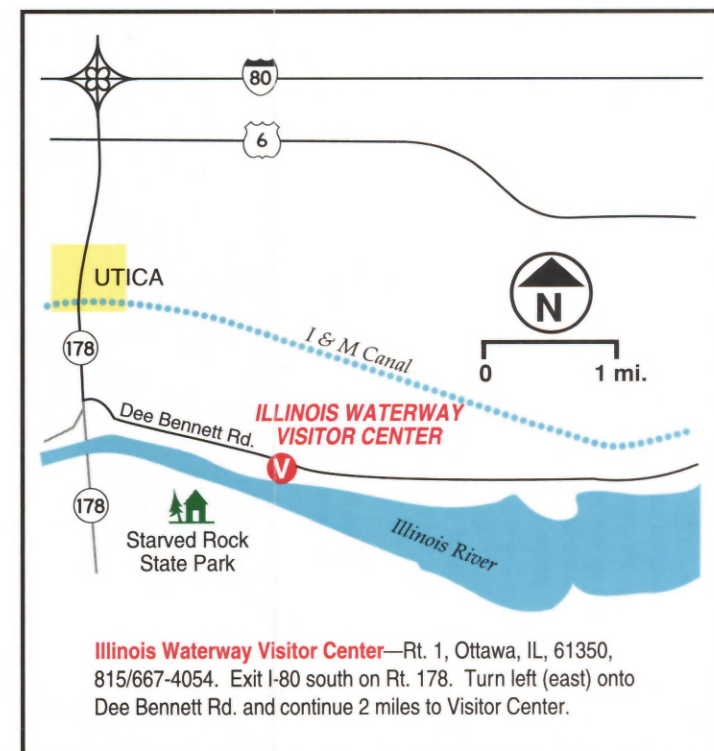


Conserving A Heritage

The I & M Canal National Heritage Corridor was the first of a new form of "partnership parks" to be established by Congress in 1984. Stretching some 100 miles from Chicago to LaSalle/Peru, this heritage corridor includes over forty cities and towns, portions of five counties and nearly twenty Chicago neighborhoods – their

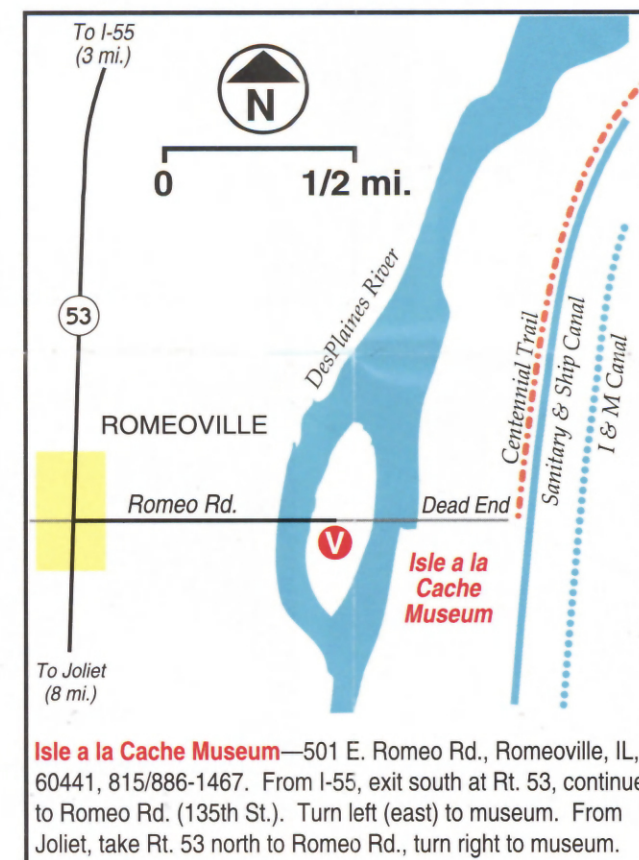
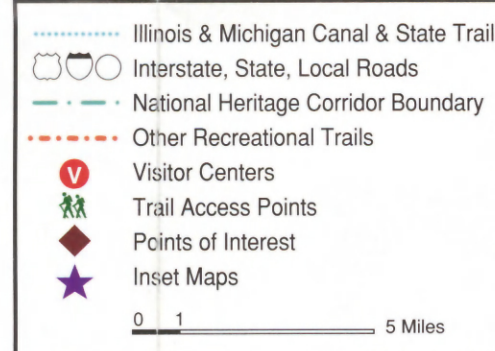
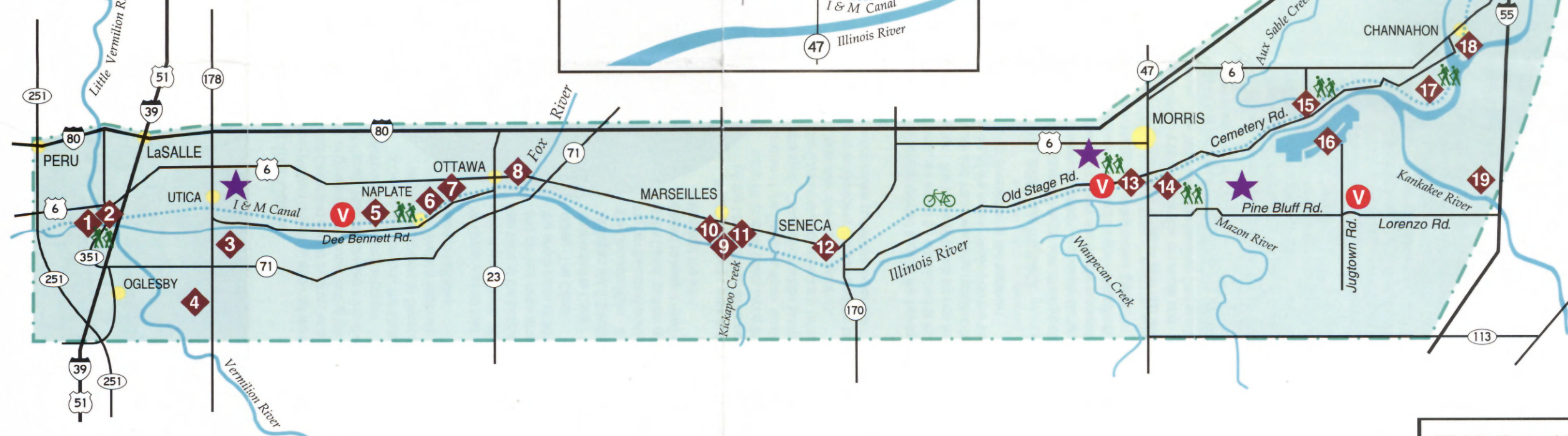
commercial centers, residential districts, industries, parks and museums. It also includes rare natural areas, beautiful state and local parks and forest preserves set aside for picnicking, hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing, canoeing and camping. Most importantly, however, the heritage corridor preserves diverse historic sites, many of which played a

critical role in the history of Illinois and the nation. Portions of the nineteenth-century canal still exist, as do the towns, agriculture and industries that grew up around it. This map and guide highlight a large selection of historic sites and structures of the canal and surrounding communities.

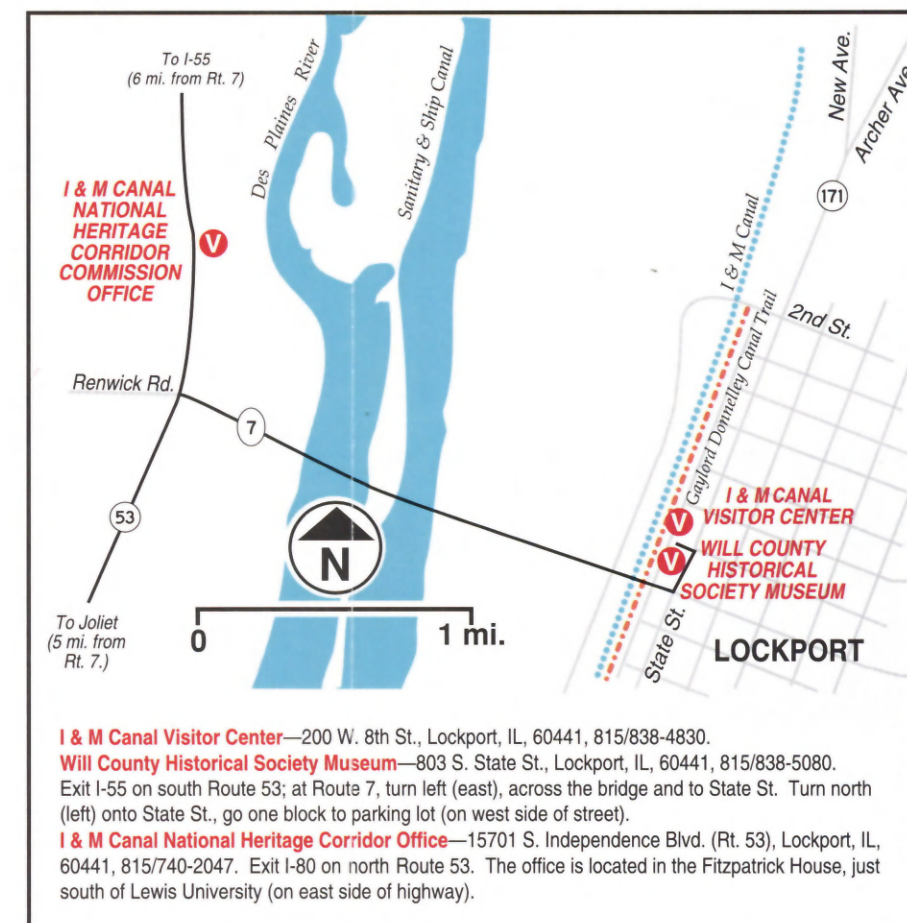
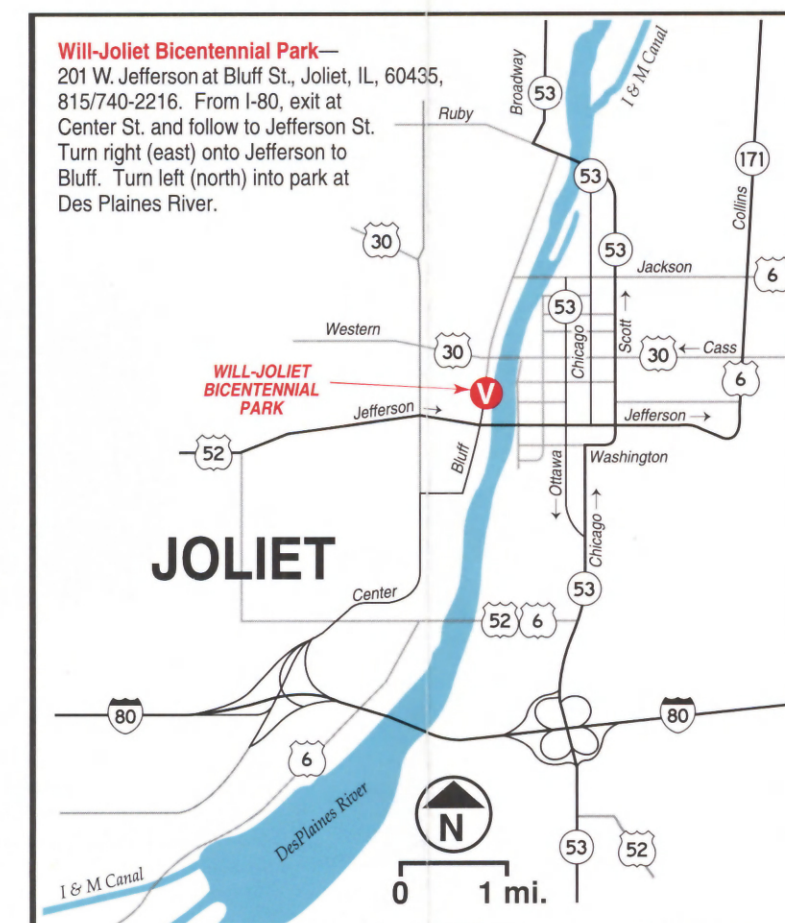
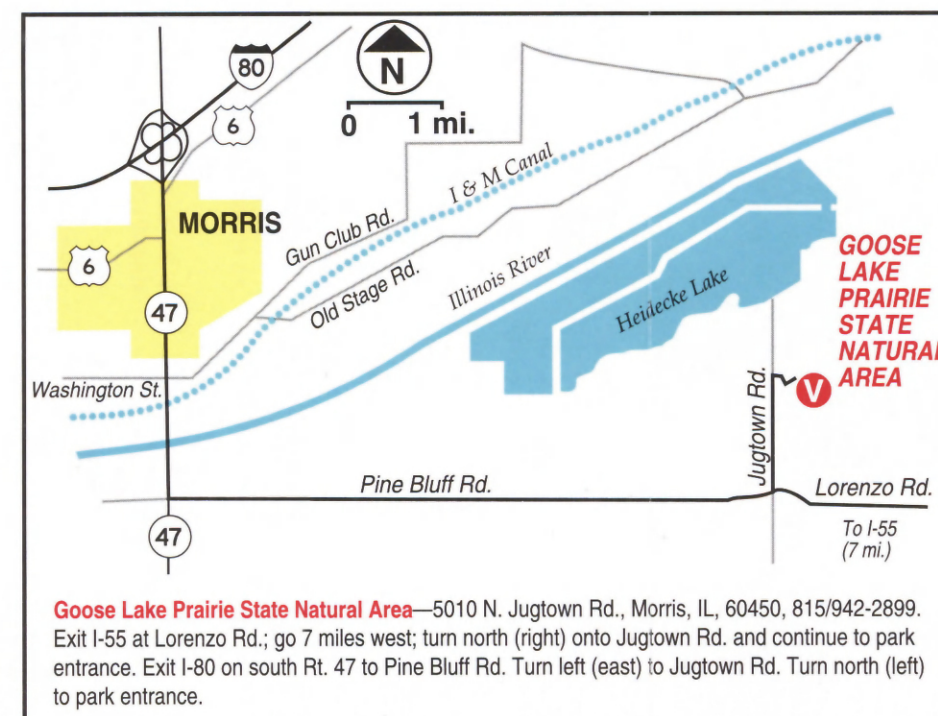


For Further Information:

Write to: **I & M Canal NHC**
15701 S. Independence Blvd. (Rte. 53)
Lockport, Illinois 60441
(815) 740-2047
Fax: (815) 740-2026



- 1 Lock #14
- 2 Little Vermilion Aqueduct
- 3 Starved Rock State Park
- 4 Matthiessen State Park
- 5 Illinois Waterway Visitor Center
- 6 Buffalo Rock State Park & Effigy Tumuli
- 7 Lock #12
- 8 Lock #11
- 9 Fox River Aqueduct
- 10 Illini State Park
- 11 Lock #10
- 12 Lock #9
- 13 Seneca Grain Elevator
- 14 Gebhard Woods Information Center
- 15 Nettle Creek Aqueduct
- 16 W.G. Stratton State Park
- 17 Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area
- 18 Aux Sable Access (Aqueduct, Lock #8 & Lockkeeper's House)
- 19 Heidecke Lake State Natural Area
- 20 McKinley Woods
- 21 Channahon State Park (Locks #6 & #7, Lockkeeper's House)
- 22 Des Plaines Wildlife Conservation Area
- 23 Will-Joliet Bicentennial Park
- 24 Pilcher Park
- 25 Heritage Park
- 26 Lake Renwick Heron Rookery
- 27 Gaylord Building, Pioneer Settlement, Gaylord Donnelley Trail, Gladys Fox Museum
- 28 Will County Historical Society Museum
- 29 Fitzpatrick House
- 30 Isle a la Cache Museum
- 31 Centennial Trail
- 32 The Children's Farm at The Center
- 33 Lake Katherine Nature Reserve
- 34 Camp Sagawau
- 35 Waterfall Glen
- 36 Little Red Schoolhouse
- 37 I & M Canal Bicycle Path
- 38 Chicago Portage National Historic Site



Tear-off maps providing detailed directions to various Corridor sites and attractions are available at the Visitor Centers shown in the inset maps.