

Sideslips, Grist Mills, and Grain Elevators Harvest Time in Carroll County, Indiana.

The great Wabash and Erie Canal's debut in the Delphi area came during the year of 1840, after being welcomed somewhat outside the city via the huge dam across the Wabash at Pittsburg, Indiana which was constructed by James Spears and Reed Case in 1839.

Seeking to augment the blessing of the Canal in the Delphi area, Case amassed sufficient private funding to connect the canal which was so close and yet so far to the City of Delphi via a sideslip which would serve the same purpose as the typical on/off ramps would several years later with the advent of the superhighways in 1957 under President Eisenhower.

Case was no stranger to engineering having started his own construction company in approximately 1824 in Indiana when he was a lad of sixteen years of age. His exploits took him to Delphi where he encountered Spears who was no stranger to handling grain having managed a grist mill on Burnett's Creek. Spears' grain handling later

garnered him a tidy profit when he constructed the Milwaukee Block in downtown Lafayette in 1866 following a sweet grain deal. The blocks of this structure came from western Wisconsin and were shipped to Lafayette. This structure is situated at 502-518 Columbia Street next to the Lahr Hotel according to the Self-Guided Tour of Lafayette published in 2010.

According to Judge William C. Smith in his *Up the River of Time*, "It is interesting to learn from this paper that when the canal was constructed public meetings were held for the purpose of having a branch of the canal up to and along Main Street to the courthouse. And it was also proposed that as the dam across Deer Creek where the canal crossed the same backed the water up to Washington Street to where the interurban station is now located, that a tow path be built along the north side of the creek so that boats could be brought up to Washington Street. And it was also proposed that another cutoff be constructed from Deer Creek along what is now Hamilton Street to the foot of Front Street. But nothing ever came of these proposals except that a cut off was constructed from the canal up to a point

where the Kerlin elevator is now located. These improvements were sought so as to bring the canal up to the center of Delphi, as in the towns of Logansport and Lafayette the canal ran right through them which gave them an advantage over Delphi for in the late forties Lafayette became such a busy shipping center that all the streets about the public square were choked with teams loaded with produce of all kinds seeking to load it on the canal boats, and many of them had to camp on the streets several days before they could unload so great a business that the canal created.

The building of the canal cut-off to the Kerlin elevator resulted in the building of a large warehouse where that elevator now stands, and of a large hotel upon the east side of Main Street a short distance to the east upon the lot lying west and adjoining the A.H. Brewer residence and now owned by him. This hotel was known as the Delphi House, and had forty-five rooms, and it was advertised as one of the finest hotels in Indiana." This side-cut, or side-slip as it was sometimes known is visible just a stone's throw from Pizza Hut presently in an area with two interpretive panels

discussing the paper mills there which were another vital industry to Carroll County near the side-cut. Another feature of this area of the trails is the Stearns-Truss “Winamac” Bridge which spans the canal and not too far north of this lays the stone-ring “O’Connor” bridge which replaced a steel-truss structure, which in turn replaced a pivot bridge of the canal era.

This grain handling operation was erected by Spears and Case which according to the *History of Carroll County by Thomas Helm, 1882* and there were as many as 300,000 bushels and as few as 100,000 bushels of grain were handled through this grain outlet, which according to Mayhill was at one time a simple operation involving workmen operating hand shelling machines in the winter in preparation for spring canal shipping when the canal thawed. This eventually progressed to steam-driven “corn-crackers” in 1858 to encompass far more capacity than possible manually. According to the May 25th 1858 Journal there was a statement to the effect that “Spears, Case, and Co. have attached steam power to their corn sheller at their new warehouse, which enables them to

shell over 3000 bushels per day, doing as good if not better than by the old system.”

In the 1857 Delphi Journal there is mention made thusly: “Spears, Case, and Co. have averaged five hundred bushels of wheat and corn each for the last 10 of 15 days at their warehouse. This don’t look much like a scarcity of grain for old Carroll. Our farmers, generally are well-to-do in the world, and are not in a hurry about selling their produce unless they are in receipt of good prices. One farmer on Deer Creek Prairie has over eight thousand bushels of corn on hand, which will probably sell before fall at a good round price—say 70 cts.”

It should be noted here that Case and his friend James Spears owned a large amount of acreage which virtually encircled the town of Brookston. Reed invented a two-row patent corn planter which makes its own furrow and drops two rows of corn at a time, according to another article in the May 20th 1863 Delphi Journal recounting a visit to the farm of Spears and Case.

In 1882 this operation was owned by John Lenon who purchased in and mechanized it more so that the machinery according to Thomas Helm’s writing increased

the capacity tenfold. Mr. Lenon was then able to handle and ship from 150,000 to 200, 000 bushels of grain per annum with a storage capacity of 60,000 bushels.

According to the Carroll County Indiana *Legacy* book *Carroll County Indiana—2005*) Hiram Kerlin assumed this firm and developed it into Kerlin and Sons with his son Cloyd being absorbed into the operation, and with Michael Haugh serving as a vital part of this operation. Haugh had come from Ireland where he was born in 1835 to Delphi in the early eighteen-fifties and had worked with Spears and Case for many years as well as the Kerlin firm.

The elevator burned in 1907 and was rebuilt then, only to be razed in the 1990's. This is where McDonald's and CVS are located today on West Main. Thus is recapitulated a very vital spin-off of the Wabash and Erie Canal which blessed the Delphi area.

The final destination of the grain which originated in Delphi during the Canal Era was Toledo, Ohio which during the canal era shipped 1, 121, 401 bushels of

wheat in 1848, and 2, 052 bushels of corn in 1849. “At any one time, as many as fifty or sixty boats might be loading or unloading at the docks. By 1850 canal shipments worth \$10 million a year passed through the city.

According to an article in the *Logansport Pharos-Tribune Logansport Press* in the fall of 1847 the canal had reached Coal Creek, about fifty miles south of Lafayette. There were during that year there was 1, 511 barrels of flour, weighing 9, 941 tons, 882, 765 bushels of wheat, 1, 111, 061 bushels of corn, and among other shipments 27, 595 bushels of seeds. In the article Delphi was mentioned as being one of the prime ports on the canal for exporting agricultural goods.

Further up the canal, Mrs. Mary J. Guthrie in her Reminiscence states that “the first year we broke forty acres of river bottom with a large breaking plow drawn by two horses. We planted this breaking and raised one of the heaviest crops ever raised on the Wabash. We hauled it to Lockport where it was shipped to Toledo, Ohio on the Wabash and Erie Canal. We sold it at ten cents per bushel.” This was recounted in Ben Stuart’s

History of the Wabash and Valley, a rare gem penned to describe life up and down the Wabash River and in Rock Creek and Adams Townships on either side of the river itself in the northeast part of Carroll County.

A Smattering of Grist Mills.

This section is by no means meant to be an encom-

Passing tome on grist mills but a glancing view of

Some of the representative machines of this

Very vital pioneer industry here in Carroll County.

Carroll County's early-day venture into milling came in 1828 when Henry M. Graham erected in his house a portable mill in which he frequently prepared the meal for their bread. It consisted of a log about eighteen inches in diameter and four feet long, with a funnel-shaped hollow burned to the depth of twelve or fifteen inches, and then scraped out, smooth. This section of a log, prepared as above was set on end, hollow upward, adjacent to some crack in the wall between logs, into which a spring pole was sometimes adjusted, and a "pestle" consisting of a stick of suitable dimensions, attached to it—split in one end to admit an iron wedge,

secured in its place by a ring. With this formidable array of machinery, sometimes omitting the “spring-pole” much of the grinding for the family, and sometimes the neighbors, was done in the early settlement of the country. This was known as a “hominy mortar.”

As the county became more developed, lines of wagons at the neighborhood grist mills punctuated the landscape in Carroll County. The typical grist mill was powered by a body of water which coursed through the millrace and which was captured behind the typical mill dam. The typical miller was a versatile sort who was part engineer, part entrepreneur, and part enthusiast whose respect in the community equaled that of the typical blacksmith. The typical mill wasn't just a site for food processing; on the contrary, it was a social gathering place for farmers who at that time had no electronic means of communication, even telephones, which entered the scene quite a few years later. David Studebaker, who was my great-grandfather Artemas Smith's first cousin, operated such a facility in Carrollton Township and would subscribe to the local paper as a

draw for farmers who would frequent his mill. Studebaker's predecessor was Michael Baer, in 1848, which enlarged his mill in 1882, selling it to William Wyatt, who in turn sold it to Hewett and Eikenberry, who later turned it over to Hazlett and Sell.

One of the first such facilities in the Carroll (Picture) (County/Delphi area was the fabled "Red Mill "which was fabricated by pioneer Henry Robinson along Deer Creek. According to James Hervey Stewart's Recollections of the Settlement of Carroll County, 1872, p. 15. "Early in the season, the Robinsons commenced the improvement of the mill site, afterward owned by Roach and Company, above Delphi. It was slow, hard work for want of proper tools, The nearest blacksmith resided at Crawfordsville, where was also the nearest mill, store and post office; and it generally took eight or ten days to make the trip. It was the common practice for someone to go with his ox-team to mill, and to transact business for all the settlement. "A saw mill was first erected utilizing all the residents of the country from Wild-cat to Rock Creek---all twenty-eight men. (Can you imagine that?). According to Stewart this was the first and last time the men were all

together in one location. Following the erection of the saw mill the grist mill was a reality for grinding corn.

This pioneering venture burned in 1910 after exchanging hands from David Duke to James Roach to James Lepper. There was eventually a cooper shop attached for packing the finished product. The race itself was near the home of the late John Earl Walker, now inhabited by his daughter and son-in-law Robin and Rex Allbaugh.

Travelling out of the city, there was another fabled mill which was constructed in 1831 or 1832, and which was sold in 1840 to John Mullendore. The sawmill wore out, and he built a flouring mill on site. It was 36X40 ft. and three stories high, exclusive of basement. After a number of years he sold it to Sothy K. Timmons, Spencer K. Biddle, and Jacob B. Anderson in 1863. After Anderson's death it was purchased from his heirs by Levi Daugherty and Mertz. In later years, steam was used as auxiliary. Alfred Guthrie later owned this gem of milling until his death in 1893 from drowning in the millrace. This was located across Rock Creek from the present day home of commercial artist Terry Lacy and his wife Francine.

Adams Mill provides us the sole remaining example of milling life in Carroll County which was punctuated by Mills on various streams and rivers supplying food for the economy as well as food for their customers.

According to the History of Adams Mill taken from the Adams Mill Incorporated website John Adams settled with his family in Carroll County in 1831. He is reputed to have walked the Wildcat Creek scouting out a site, which he discovered around an oxbow where he built a dam, dug a millrace, and a saw mill. The saw mill continued in operation until the early 1840's. The initial grist mill was erected in 1835 as a two-story frame building, 26X34 feet with a single run of buhrs which ground both corn and wheat. In 1845 he constructed a larger mill which topped his initial structure in one which was four stories high and 45X50 feet in size with four runs of buhrs and two turbine wheels reaching a daily capacity of 40 barrels of flour. By 1848 an addition had been made and the two story grist mill had been shut down.

John Adams' passing in 1858 left the mill to his son Warren, whose passing in 1884 and Levi Bishop who

converted the flour buhrs to rollers. Jesse Johnson bought it in 1911. An electric generator was installed in 1913 which provided street lights in Cutler. Further ownership was from Claude Sheets in 1942, and later John Pritsch. In 1951 stringent health guidelines forced the closure of the mill. Both the mill and the grain elevator provided employment for high school lads. According to regional historian James Rich Dale Haun from Burlington was also an owner of this enterprise.

The chain of ownership went from Pritsch to Broadhurst in 1975 to Mark and Jill Scharer in 1993. The current owner is Adams Mill, Incorporated. The website directions for Adams Mill are CR S 75 E.

John Adams' grave has just recently been discovered through a group effort involving James Rich, Bonnie Maxwell, Al Auffart, Sue Cope, and others in Vernon County, Wisconsin. The story behind this would be far too voluminous to recount here.

Another milling story was to be had with a Mr. Davidson who erected a flour mill in the Northwest Quarter of Section six on Wildcat Creek and shortly after Benjamin Gee became a partner. Later John Chittick

became Gee's partner, and upon Gee's passing in 1882, Chittick became sole owner.

The Haun family was represented in the Burlington area by Dale's brother Earl C. Haun who was well known for the "Castle" near SR 22 now owned by the Fauble family. Earl was a miller who ingeniously secured a contract in 1912 for power generation by attaching a dynamo to his grist mill which was the ancestor of the more contemporary Star Roller Mills at Burlington formed up by Haun's son-in-law Roy Brubaker, Dale and Russell Rodkey, and John T. Johnson.

In 1913 the Haun Mill was capable of producing a quantity of 50 barrels a day. This mill was a loyal supporter of the WWI effort shipping at one point 350 barrels of meal and at another 450, all shipped to France, according to the June fifteenth, 1918 Hoosier Democrat.

Haun also fabricated a smaller grist mill on his property which would grind small bags of meal for his visitors to take home as souvenirs. Father Martin Haun was also a miller in his own right having inherited a flair for milling from his own father at Thorntown, Indiana.

Mahlon Shinn was the milling pioneer of choice in the Burlington area, having first erected a saw mill on his farm, passing it along to Grimes and Viney who remodeled it into a flour mill. In 1872 it was destroyed by fire.

There is currently a book available on milling in the Burlington area authored by Myron Brubaker, Karina Fauble, and James Rich entitled: *Millers of the Wildcat; From Mahlon Shinn to Earl Haun and his Spanish Mansion; A Brief History of Star Roller Mills and Earl Haun*. This is a project of the Burlington Historical Society at Burlington, Indiana.

Milling was accomplished in the Pymont area by the fabled Wagoner/ Fetterhoff mill, the burning of which was recorded in the Thursday, December twelfth *Delphi Journal*. This fine example of engineering was constructed by John Wagoner in or near 1829 or 1830.

John first constructed a dam across the creek and dug a race. He erected the frame work of a house, but never covered it, although he operated a sawmill in the frame for a number of years. His trade extended over a large circuit, and it is said that thousands of logs were rafted

down the creek to his mill, and fitted with necessary machinery for grinding corn and wheat. It was a rude affair through but it saved the settlers long journeys to other mills and served its purpose very well.” *History by Thomas Helm, 1882*. In 1882 it was owned by a J.J.Cripe. Buhrs were first used in this operation, and then rollers were added in 1840. The present burned epitome of milling was constructed by noted United Brethren pastor John Fetterhoff. The article further stated that “Pyrmont had great promise as a town with two to three stores, a couple of blacksmith shops, and a tavern. The mill was the thing which drew business for the hamlet.”(Kokomo Tribune).

Another pioneer miller of note in the Pyrmont area was Elias Morkert, the ancestor of Melvon Marquette, noted race car and aviator.

Grain Elevators of Note

According to the *1882 History of Carroll County by Thomas Helm* “In the summer of 1881 Montman and Ewald who had formerly conducted a grain mill at

Colburn, Indiana removed their machinery to Delphi, Indiana and erected the present frame mill north of the Wabash tracks, on Washington Street. The building at the time was 32x 44 feet, standing two stories high above the basement, which is a stone structure, ten feet high. The mill has a capacity of about twenty-five barrels of flour a day, but is operated almost entirely as a custom mill. This became Roach and Rothenberger, and later on became owned by the Whiteman family which at one time owned an entire chain of grain elevators at locations away from Carroll County at Hazelrigg in Boone County in 1913, and in 1914 purchased the Ockley elevator of McComas and Hornbeck. At that time Wilbert Whiteman was general manager of the elevator. In 1919 the Kerlin and Lane Elevator was sold to the Whiteman Brothers and Cloyd Kerlin stated that he was planning on retiring and getting out of the elevator business but would live in the Delphi area. A year ago (1918) Mr. Kerlin and Charles Lane formed a partnership for the second time—neither Mr. Lane having been in the hardware and implement business at that time neither Kerlin nor Lane had any concrete plans. In 1931 the grain elevator at Radnor had burned, as noted in the Delphi Journal,

Thursday, September twenty-fourth of that year. “The fire was discovered at one o’clock Sunday morning. The Rossville fire department responded to a call for aid but was unable to do more than assist in protecting adjacent property and did a mighty fine job of that of which the people of the Radnor vicinity are very thankful.” By 1934 Whiteman Brothers and Company at Ockley and Delphi has dissolved partnership. Lote Haslet and Vern Brown have taken over the Ockley elevator and Whiteman brothers continued ownership of the one in Delphi. This was dissolved in 2004 after almost 90 years of business.

The Whiteman grain elevator legacy at Ockley ended with a recent sale to Twylla Lyons of his holdings which are in the process of being dismantled.

An additional miller in the City of Delphi was that of Charles C. Bulger, who passed away on December twenty-first of 1895, at the age of 69 having been ill for one month. He was born near Winchester, Virginia. He came to Tippecanoe County with his father William Bulger, and resided there until he came to this county. He settled on a farm south of town and later engaged in the milling business being engaged with Ward Brothers,

of Lafayette. He diversified by being active in the real estate business.

The Burrows community was served by a grain elevator owned by William C. Smock until it burned in 1938. Smock had formerly owned elevators in Radnor, Ockley, and, of course, Burrows.

The Bringhurst area was served by the elevator of A. B. Cohee from Frankfort, which was purchased by the Farm Bureau Cooperative in April of 1945. Joe Peterson, who was head of the Cooperative, announced that the Farm Bureau would take possession on May first of that year. A special stockholders meeting was held at the Flora Community Building to publicize plans for the elevator. Principal speakers for the occasion were M. J. Briggs, treasurer and assistant general manager of the Indiana Farm Bureau Cooperative, and M.D. Gould, manager of Indiana Grain Cooperative. Both of these were well versed in Cooperative and grain marketing and will point out the advantages of farmers handling their own grain from producer to elevator. (Delphi Journal, Thursday, April 26th, 1945).

The Bordner family was represented in the ownership of the Cutler elevator which burned in July of 1931. It had been constructed in 1896. Elias Patty was also manager of the Cutler Cooperative Elevator Company. According to Robert Bordner in a history of the Cutler area:” The first elevator was built in what is now known as “Old Cutler,” shortly after the first railroad was built in 1871. It was owned and operated by Brown Wilson, and located directly north of the hotel, now the residence of Charles Cunningham. The first elevator had no modern conveniences, the grinding and elevating being done by horsepower and the loading and unloading was done by hand. A few years later Mr. Wilson sold out to Tom Howe, who operated it only a short time before he formed a partnership with Kirlin(sp), the firm being known as Howe and Kirlin(sp), later becoming Kirlin(sp) and Ryan. During this time John Black managed the elevator. When the railroad was changed in 1896 they moved their elevator to Old Cutler to the present site, this was possible because the elevator was low and easily moved. They continued in business until July 4th, 1900 when their elevator was destroyed by fire. Mr. Bert Cohee then built an elevator and Noah Plank operated it

until 1920 when the farmers bought it and it became the Cutler Cooperative Elevator Company. The elevator built by Mr. Cohee was destroyed by fire in 1932, but was replaced by a new and more modern elevator the same fall. The new elevator is electrically operated while the old one was operated by steam power. The present elevator(March 26, 1936) is managed by Orth Quinn. It handles approximately 60, 000 bushels of grain per year. It also handles feeds, seeds, coal, fencing, and fertilizers.(Robert Bordner, March 26th, 1936).

According to the fine *History of Rock Creek Township* compiled by Adeline Groninger in 1916, the first elevator was built by Mr. Enoch Stansel, father of Charles Stancel of Rockfield. Mr. Stancel sold the elevator to a company consisting of three men, Adam VanGundy, Aaron Burntrager, and Alfred Armstrong. After this company bought the elevator they built a flour mill in connection with the elevator. The elevator and flour mill burned. The elevator was rebuilt by Adam VanGundy, who then owned it. It was last owned by T. J. Ryan of Delphi. It was located southwest of the Wabash Depot a short distance.

When the Farmer's Elevator was built the old elevator was torn down.

In its prime in 1870 "The flouring-mill of Vangundy, Armstrong, and Company at Rockfield, is doing an extensive business. We are informed that they have shipped, since last August, 3,100 barrels of flour, to make which would require about 15,000 bushels of wheat. Out of this they manufactured about 217,000 pounds of mill-feed, for which they found ready sale at the mill, without shipping. Besides they have ground all the custom-work for a large section of country, and a considerable amount for their retail trade. This enterprising firm is paying the highest market price for all kinds of grain, and are always prepared to exchange or grind custom-work. It would seem from the above figures that Rockfield is doing a great amount of business, a few more such go ahead men as compose the mill firm would soon make Rockfield rival Delphi." Delphi Journal, February 16th, 1870.

The Farm Bureau's holdings in 1979 included elevators and feed mills at Bringhurst and Flora.

Further detailed information on other grain elevators and grist mills of the day can be found in the book entitled *Carroll County Rural Organizations—1828-1979* by John and Doris Peterson, *Camden Memories; The Flora, Indiana Centennial*; and *This Was Camden* by Lee Appleton.