

“I & M Boatyard Saw Heavy Use.” *Lockport Free Press*. “Old Canal Days” Special, 15 June 1978.

I & M boatyard saw heavy use

This is the latest in a series on the history of Lockport by John Lamb. Lamb, a professor of history at Lewis University, is president of the Illinois Canal Society and is the newly-elected chairman of the Lockport Historic Preservation Council. He is active in the Will County Historical Society and is this year again serving as chairman of the Old Canal Days Committee.

This week’s article deals with Lockport as a 19th century boat-building center. One early Lockport industry, no longer in existence, was the Illinois and Michigan Canal boatyard. The construction and repair of wooden boats was essential to the continued existence of the

I & M Canal. Lockport was an important boat-building location on the canal. In fact, it was the only town on the line of the canal with a boatyard. Other boatyards were located in Peru and in Chicago.

In 1848 the “Gen’l Fry” was built

One part of the boatyard was a large, two-story warehouse. The first story was used for storage of wood and other materials. The second story was a loft used by the caulkers to roll the oakum before it was used on the boat hull. In this building St. Dennis church held a bazaar complete with booths and a dance band. This was held in the winter when the boatyard was not in operation, as the canal was closed and the

boats tied up.

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