

"This canal, conceived at the peak of the era of canal building, was part of Michigan's internal improvements program which was announced in 1837. The Clinton-Kalamazoo Canal would make it possible to cross southern Michigan by boat from Lake St. Clair to Lake Michigan. On July 20, 1838, construction began at Mt. Clemens amid much fanfare. Hard times, however, soon made it difficult to sell bonds to finance the canal. When excavation reached this point in 1843, the money ran out, and all work ceased. With the coming of railroads, support for the canal vanished. The completed part was little used".

Michigan Historical Marker for the
Clinton and Kalamazoo Canal
Located in Bloomer Park, Rochester, MI
Erected 1957

EARLY SHELBY TOWNSHIP SETTLERS

Tradition says that the earliest settlers of Shelby Township came from New Gnadenhutzen, a village located in the area around Moravian Drive and Harrington Road on the banks of the Clinton River. The village and adjacent farms were settled during the American Revolution by Moravian missionaries and their Indian converts. The missionaries were a pacifist group who were being protected by the British at Detroit from the effects of warfare in their home area of southern Ohio. The settlers traveled from New Gnadenhutzen to Shelby by canoe, c. 1817.



You can still see segments of the canal by walking a portion of the 2.5 mile nature trail in River Bends Park using the 22 Mile Road entrance. The canal can also be seen in Shelby Township as it crosses 22 Mile Road just west of Shelby Road, and again as it crosses Ryan Road north of 22 Mile. An unspoiled portion north of 22 Mile is on private property. A portion of the canal at Bloomer Park at the end of John R Road is noted by a state marker.

In 1837, due to the success of the Erie Canal in New York, and the need to transport farm products to market, the Clinton and Kalamazoo Canal was proposed by the Michigan legislature. The canal was to begin near Mt. Clemens and extend 216 miles to Lake Michigan in order to eliminate the long trip to Chicago through the Straits of Mackinac. On July 20, 1838, work began on the canal amid much fanfare. The digging was contracted in one mile segments and the woods were soon filled with laborers. The work proceeded westward through Utica and Shelby Township towards Rochester. Locks were built and an aqueduct was constructed at Yates Crossing to carry the canal over the Clinton River. However, financial difficulties surfaced

after the Panic of 1837, and the State withdrew its support in 1843. Only 12 miles of the canal had been completed. Before they left, the laborers pilfered anything they could carry and inflicted serious damage to the canal.

Adapted from The Clinton and Kalamazoo Canal by the Shelby Township Historical Committee and at <http://www.libcoop.net/mountclemens/canal.htm>

The proposed Clinton and Kalamazoo Canal was the first large public works project in Michigan.



CANAL WORKERS

Typical workers (above) during construction of a canal like the Clinton and Kalamazoo.



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