

Tadmor

The Nation's Crossroad of Transportation

The village of Tadmor, just east of Vandalia on the Miami River, was never very large, but yet, it was an important center of transportation in the 19th century. It was located at the crossroads of every means of transportation of its day.

The Miami Canal was started in Cincinnati in 1825. It was dug by Irish and German laborers and local farm boys for 30-3/4 cents and numerous jiggers of whiskey per day. The canal was 40 feet wide and 4 feet deep, just wide enough for two canal boats to pass. By 1829 it was open to Dayton. In 1832 over a thousand passengers a week were using it even though the locks at the Ohio River were not yet completed. Cargo still had to be off-loaded at the city and taken by wagon to the river.

The Miami Extension north from Dayton began in 1833 and work on the great Miami aqueduct began that same year. It was located just a mile south of what was to become the village of Tadmor. Work progressed slowly through hard economic times but the canal progressed through Troy in 1837. It finally linked up with the Walbath and Erie Canal eight years later and became known as the Miami and Erie Canal.

The farmers in Western Ohio could at last get their products to markets in the south and the east. Subsistence farming was a thing of the past. Flour, whiskey, pork, lard, apples, nursery stock and grain were all shipped by way of canal boat and brought cash to the farmer.

By the time the canal reached Troy, the National Road was approaching Butler Township. Construction had begun in Cumberland, Maryland in 1811 and was slated to connect the Capitals of the states by the shortest route. The clearing for the road was to be 4 rods wide, and no elevation was to be more than 5 degrees. Since 1824 all repairs to the old sections and the new construction were to be on the Macadam System – small broken stones that would interlock for a hard surface.

In 1837, bids were let for the road 8 miles west of Springfield, and the farmers were warned to get their crops from the fields for its construction. The covered bridge over the Miami River was built and the road crossed the Miami Canal. Two almost right angle turns took National Road through the escarpment and on through the newly platted town of Vandalia.

The abandoned section of the old road between the present railroad and The Falls is probably one of the few in the country which still retains its 19th century appearance.

Although the National Road became a toll road it was never self-supporting. For many years the width of the vehicles' wheels determined the toll since narrow wheels caused

more road damage than wide. A score of sheep or hogs cost 5 cents, a horse that was led or driven was 3 cents and a horse and rider paid a 5-cent toll. Thousands of head of stock were driven to market, and at time, there were lines of wagons of families going west for settlement passing freighters carrying produce to eastern markets and manufactured goods west for the settlers. It was truly the National Highway.

The Dayton and Michigan Railroad was incorporated in 1851 and by 1853 was running regular excursions from Dayton to Troy. Progress brings change, and, ironically, the proliferation of railroads drastically curtailed the traffic on the canals. Railroads did not freeze over in the winter, wash out with spring rains or suffer from drought.

After returning from the Civil War, Walter Crook became the postmaster, station agent, warehouseman and grain dealer at Tadmor. The foundation of his house is still visible. The railway depot was between the curve of the road and the tracks. There are stories that the second floor of the depot housed Hungarian railroad workers. Perched on the edge of the canal next to the covered bridge was the canal keeper's house. At one time his front room was the grocery store and post office.

A house and barn was located on the hill overlooking the depot, and there was a farm near the river to the south. An access road crossed the canal to two houses near the river. That road might well have run to a ford for livestock so they did not have to be herded through the covered bridge.

When the 1913 flood destroyed the canal, floated some buildings down river and necessitated moving the railroad tracks to higher ground, the National Road was still intact and the covered bridge still spanned the river. But, when the road was re-routed over Taylorsville Dam the residents left, and the world by-passed the village of Tadmor forever. Tadmor never became a city, and it never became well known, yet it remains a very important slice of this country's transportation history.

The Park District of Dayton-Montgomery Co. is maintaining interpretive signs of the village and is mowing the Buckeye Trail which follows the old tow-path through Tadmor. It has built a parking area accessible from National Road just west of Taylorsville Dam on old Canal Road. From this parking lot the aqueduct abutments are easy walks. Perhaps the Village of Tadmor will no longer be by-passed by the world.

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