



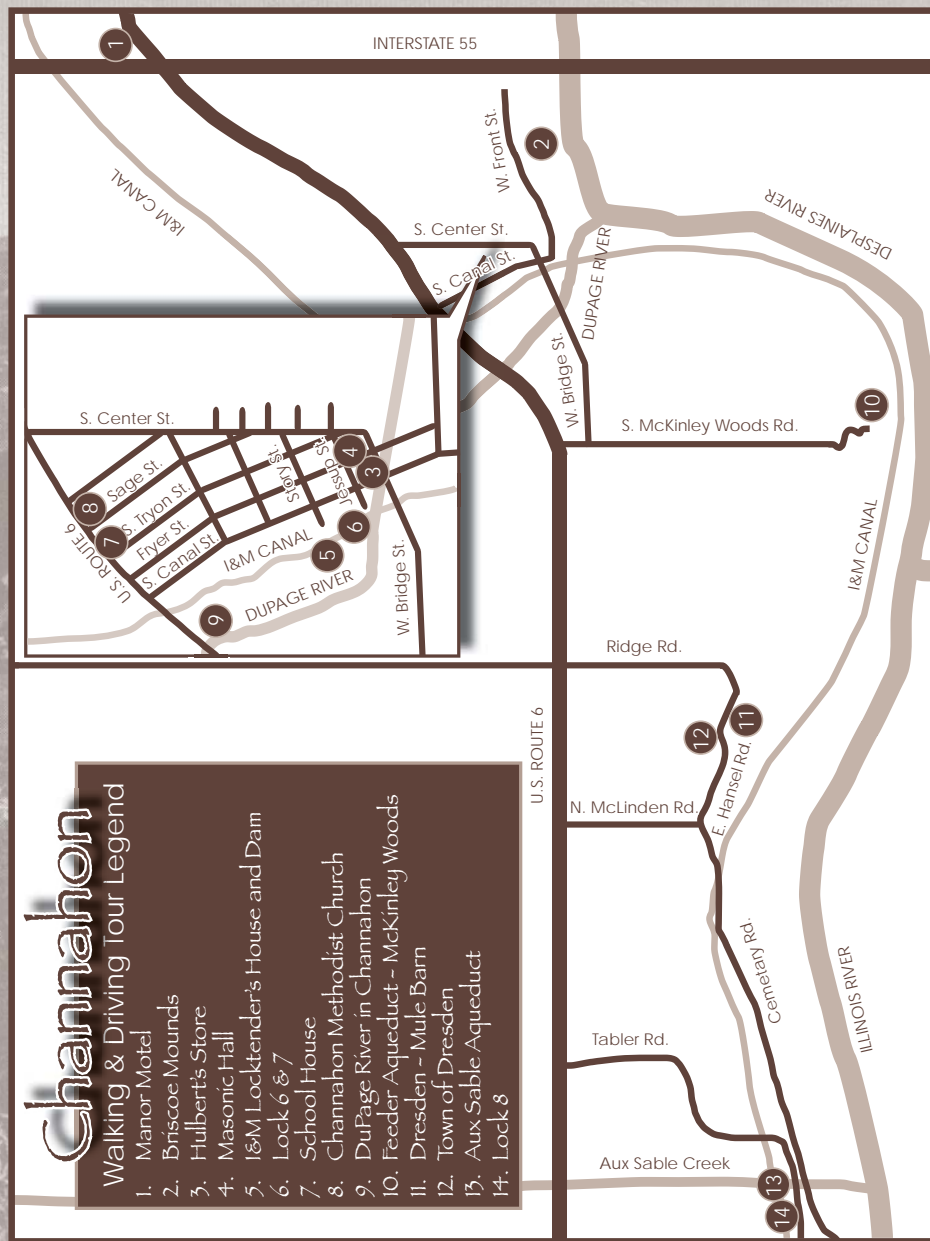
A Historical Look at Channahon

The history of this region can be traced back to the original Potawatomi inhabitants, who called this area "Channahon," an Indian word that translates to "Meeting of the Water," where the DesPlaines, Kankakee and DuPage rivers come together to form the Illinois River. The Potawatomi Indians solely inhabited this area until white settlers, looking for good farmland, settled here in 1831. Joseph Shoemaker is believed to be the first white settler in the township. Shoemaker arrived from Ohio and soon made a land claim. Settlement patterns soon developed, and early pioneers led by George Tyron, Myrvin Benjamin, Salmon Rutherford, Issac Jessup, William Peck, Joseph Fryer, Peter McCowan, E. G. Eames, and others, began to inhabit the area. In 1845, the village of Channahon was laid out by Myrvin Benjamin and was first called DuPage, after the river that flowed through the area.

Canal construction began in 1836, and, upon its completion in 1848, the Illinois and Michigan Canal joined the Chicago River at Bridgeport near Chicago with the Illinois River at LaSalle. The nearly 100-mile-long canal provided a direct water link between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River. From the beginning, canal commissioners and private speculators platted numerous towns in the 1830s and 1840s, including Lockport, Joliet, Channahon, Ottawa, and LaSalle, as well as other towns that did not survive the depression of 1837 and the economic woes that soon followed.

While the canal prospered during the early years, carrying freight and passengers to distant towns and markets, passenger traffic soon waned as the Chicago & Rock Island Railroad passed through the area in 1852, eliminating the village's commercial center. It was during this period that the early business development concentrated east of the I & M Canal and the DuPage River. Commercial property along Bridge and Fryer Streets began the center of 19th century business activity for village.

Channahon was first incorporated as a municipality in 1896. In 1911, the Village Board voted, and the town became unincorporated. The town of Channahon remained unincorporated until 1961, when it was again reincorporated as a municipality by the Village Board. The 1970s saw a surge in industrial development in the area, and large companies moved into the community. A slow and steady commercial growth period continued through the 1980s, followed by a residential housing boom the following decade. With continued residential development, village officials have transformed Channahon from a small rural town into a growing community that still maintains those small town qualities and character of the past.



Channahon

Walking & Driving Tour Legend

1. Manor Motel
2. Briscoe Mounds
3. Hulbert's Store
4. Masonic Hall
5. I&M Locktender's House and Dam
6. Lock 6 & 7
7. School House
8. Channahon Methodist Church
9. DuPage River in Channahon
10. Feeder Aqueduct - McKinley Woods
11. Dresden - Mule Barn
12. Town of Dresden
13. Aux Sable Aqueduct
14. Lock 8

Channahon

A Walking & Driving Tour of the Village "Where the Waters Meet"

Prepared by Altonka Community High School teacher David Redden and his Local History Class
 Photos courtesy of the Three Rivers Public Library District's Local History Collection
 the Lewis University Canal and the Regional History Special Collection



Channahon

tour map appears on the reverse side of this page

1 Manor Motel W. Eames Street and I-55

Route 66 was realigned to pass through Plainfield and Channahon and bypass downtown Joliet in 1940. Constructed in the 1950s and located along the new Route 66 alignment in Channahon, the Manor Motel offered the Mother Road traveler to a nice place to spend the night. Today, the old motor hotel still caters to the travel-weary motorist and offers an automobile-friendly place to stay.

2 Briscoe Mounds South of Front Street along the Des Plaines River

The Briscoe Mounds archaeological site is located on Front Street along the Des Plaines River. The two well-preserved Indian mounds are situated along the western side of the Des Plaines River, and date to approximately 1000-1200 A.D., during the Mississippian Period. The site is owned by the Illinois State Museum and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.

3 Hulbert's Store Northeast corner of Canal and Bridge Streets

Soon after the village of Channahon was organized in 1845, several businesses began operation, including four mercantile stores, two blacksmith shops, a wagon shop, a hardware store, two saloons, a hotel, and a grocery store among others. The grocery business was known as Hulbert's General Store and was run by three generations of Hulberts. The Hulbert's store also housed the Channahon Post Office for many years.

4 Masonic Hall Southeast corner of Fryer and W. Jessup Streets

Freemasonry in the United States is as old as our country, and Masonic Lodges are found in many communities across America. The Masonic Lodge No. 262 in Channahon was chartered in 1857 and included nearly fifty names on the roll of membership. The Masonic Hall in Channahon was located for many years near the center of 19th century business activity for village.

5 I&M Locktender's House and Dam West Story and South Canal Streets

A locktender's house was built along the west side of Lock No. 6 in 1848. The Greek Revival-style structure was constructed in Lockport and floated down the canal to its present location. A smaller locktender's structure was built to the west of Lock No. 7; this structure was razed in 1910. The original timber crib dam, circa 1846, was replaced by a stone dam in 1877, and in 1934 a new concrete dam was constructed. The dam functioned as a bridge and barrier boom, keeping canal boats from being carried into the DuPage River and allowing mules to tow barges between the upper and lower docks.

6 Lock 6 & 7 West Story and South Canal Streets

To accommodate differences in the elevation and topography of Illinois, the I&M Canal contained 15 locks, as well as two near Chicago, four aqueducts, and a pumping station at Bridgeport in Chicago. Covering 96 miles from Chicago to La Salle, the canal was 60 feet wide at the top, 36 feet wide on the bottom, and six-feet deep. In communities and areas along the canal, bridges, dams, locktenders' houses, mule barns and the tow path for mules that pulled the boats were constructed.

7 School House Southeast corner of Tyron and West Eames Streets

In 1837-1838, the first schoolhouse was built on the property of Dr. Ira Knapp. The opening of the Illinois and Michigan Canal in 1848 caused rapid development and a growth in population required a new school. In 1869, an elegant and substantial two-story white-framed building was erected which offered a primary and secondary school education. The two-story building burned in 1922 and was replaced the following year by a modest brick structure on the same corner. Channahon High School classes were discontinued in the building in 1947, when they were consolidated into Minoaka Community High School.

8 Channahon Methodist Church Southeast corner of West Eames and Sage Streets

Channahon United Methodist Church has been an important part of the community for more than one hundred years. The earliest Methodist Minister of Channahon was the Rev. Isaac Pool, who preached in the early 1850s. It was during this time that congregation discussed the construction of a church, and in 1854, a wooden frame structure was built. In 1926, the old wooden church was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. Shortly after the fire, a building committee was formed and a new church was erected on the same lot.

9 Du Page River in Channahon River flows south through the western part of the Township

The DuPage River is a tributary of the DesPlaines River and begins as two separate streams. The West Branch meets the East Branch at a spot between Naperville and Bolingbrook. The DuPage River continues south from there through Plainfield, West Joliet, Minooka and Channahon before meeting the DesPlaines River. Channahon is where the waters of the DesPlaines, Kankakee, I&M Canal and the DuPage Rivers all flow through.

10 Feeder Aqueduct - McKinley Woods Located on McKinley Woods Road just south of the Highlands subdivision

There was a continuing problem keeping the minimum six-foot depth of water in the canal. At Bridgeport, the eastern terminus, a steam driven station pumped water from the Chicago River. In addition, four feeder canals along the route supplied water. The Kankakee Feeder carried across the Des Plaines River by a stone pier aqueduct to feed the I&M Canal near McKinley Woods. The stone piers were later destroyed when the Illinois Waterway was constructed in 1930.

11 Dresden - Mule Barn East Hansel Road, just south of McLindon Road

The structure at the old settlement of Dresden is thought to be the I&M Canal's last surviving mule barn. Mule barns housed mules when they became tired from towing boats along the canal. These barns were maintained about every 15 miles along the canal route. The old mule barn at Dresden was also used as a granary, and grain was stored in sacks for shipment on the canal.

12 Town of Dresden - Rutherford Inn East Hansel Road, just south of McLindon Road

The small town of Dresden was established and platted in the 1830s by Salmon Rutherford, along an early stage coach line that ran through the area. Construction of the I&M Canal fueled entrepreneurial ideas, and Rutherford soon built an inn for travelers. The panic of 1837, and the years of depression that followed, extinguished many incipient towns, including Dresden. Today, the old Catholic cemetery still remains on the hill at old Dresden.

13 Aux Sable Aqueduct Aux Sable Creek just north of Cemetery Road

In the early 19th century, Aux Sable was a natural barrier to the construction of the I&M Canal. Because the creek was a natural watershed, the I&M Canal engineers had to construct a 136 foot aqueduct over Aux Sable Creek. The Aux Sable aqueduct is one of four aqueducts built along the canal as a solution to transporting canal boats over other bodies of water.

14 Lock 8 Cemetery Road west of Aux Sable Creek

The I&M Canal locks were essentially water elevators that lifted boats over changes in elevation as the canal descended from Chicago toward the Mississippi River valley. Locks were 18 feet wide and 110 feet long and generally had lifts of between 5 and 12 feet. Canal boats were nearly 100 feet long and nearly as wide as the locks through which they passed. The canal locks were constructed of Joliet and Lemont limestone as well as locally quarried sandstone.

