



# Winter fun on the canal

BY C.W. LATTIN <sup>2-11-10</sup>  
Orleans County historian

Vol. XXXI, No. 39  
**Bethinking  
of Olde  
Orleans**

The photo shown here was taken just west of the Fancher Road canal bridge in February 1911. A steam shovel appears on the south bank as this was when enlargement was taking place. Ice and snow readily appear in this view.

Years ago, young people used this icy corridor for winter time fun. Ice skating was a very popular sport during the wintertime.

My father and a friend of his, Whitney Hoose, frequently used the canal for skating purposes. The Hoose family lived just west of Albion on Albion Eagle Harbor Road, directly across from the canal. It was easy for Whit to put on his skates, cross the road and go out for a twirl.

One cold but bright winter morning sometime between 1917 and 1920, my father and Whit decided to skate together on the canal.

A slight breeze from the west directed them east toward Albion. From there they decided to go to Fancher, then Holley and Brockport.

All along the way they knew that if they got tired they could simply catch the BL&R trolley back to Albion. The trolley tracks passed directly behind Whit's house and, of course, went through all canal towns.

But being two young invincible men they pursued on to Adams Basin and Spencerport. By then they had to go to Rochester in this unplanned adventure.

At 4:30 that afternoon, those two young men could barely climb a flight of outside stairs to the street

level in the City of Rochester. The first thing they saw coming their way was the welcome sight of the BL&R trolley headed west. They both agreed the warm car and a comfortable seat was a pleasant end to a cold day's exercise of skating to Rochester.

Needless to say they were worn to a frazzle.

Marcus Phillips and his brother William from Hulberton made an ice boat back in the late teens. This they used on the canal with an attached sail. The Heisler brothers from Albion in the 1920s made an iceboat and for locomotion used a motorcycle engine with a propeller. It could go up to 80 mph, which was very dangerous. Some broken bones proved to them that 80 mph was perhaps too fast.

This writer, as a word of warning, does not recommend that any of their stunts be re-enacted!