



Discover America

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ADT Featured Trail

Hennepin Canal Trail:

Healthful Heartland Happiness

By Chuck Oestreich

The heartland: Land scoured by the last glacier. Rock ground down into enriching nutrients lying hundreds of feet thick over bedrock. Vegetation as tough and weather resistant as a shaggy bison. Wildlife, ebbing and flowing like the Mississippi River in its midst. Birds filling the air; birds filling their beaks with seeds and insects.

Then man came and changed it all. The plow broke the plain. John Deere's invention cut through that grass-tough soil, faster and more profitably than diggers in the western gold fields. The result was food for a nation, corn for the world.

The Hennepin Canal wasn't cut with a John Deere, but it could have been. It runs almost

in a beeline across the once-prairie heartland. And its purpose, of course, was both to take the bounty away and to bring in civilized products. But like a prizefighter in training too long, its timing was off and a young upstart, the railroad, knocked it out in its first round.

Now, through the loving efforts of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the canal is doing a superb job of showcasing the northern Illinois ecology, terrain, culture, history, and natural beauty.

The canal's towpath has been converted into a ribbon of trail almost 105 miles long.

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A quiet day on the Hennepin Canal Trail

Photo courtesy of Larry Varney

What a way to cross a country!

By Chuck Oestreich

It struck me when I was in the air, flying home to the Quad Cities from Chicago. With the airline magazine map open accidentally on my lap, I looked down and saw the Hennepin Canal. A glance at the map and I drew a mental line from Chicago to my home in Rock Island—almost a straight line paralleling the canal. And on the map an arrow from this line hit Des Moines, then Omaha, Denver, Salt Lake City, and ended in San Francisco.

Sure, that's it. Why such a canal? Go west from Chicago, that's why. Before the canal, it was 500 miles south and north from Chicago to Iowa—down the Illinois River to Cairo and then up to Iowa's chief river stop, Davenport. With a canal, it would be only about 75 miles.

The idea was first proposed in 1834: Go with the crow. Go from the Illinois River to the Mississippi straight west. And, of course, go by canal. This was an era of canal building, of moving across big chunks of land by cutting a water trough for an unlimited number of barges filled with coal, corn, any kind of cornucopia.

The actual work on the canal began in 1892, and the 60 years in between were filled with reports, recommendations, laws, and appropriations from both the state of Illinois and the federal government, all for the express purpose of building this canal.

But, and this boggles the mind, a railroad was completed to Rock Island in 1855. And this railroad ran almost exactly parallel to the projected path of the canal. In other words, for almost 40 years after a more reliable and efficient means of transportation was actually in use, serious people were spending enormous efforts to get the canal built.

(Continued on page 7, Column 2)

Hiking Club Formed to Enjoy the Indiana ADT

Question: What does Richmond, Ind., have that is unique along the American Discovery Trail? Answer: A hiking club specifically named after the ADT.

Don Royer, the group's founder, started the American Discovery Trail Hiking Club in the early 1990s after the Cardinal Greenway Trail made its way through Richmond. Royer, who celebrated his 90th birthday last year, first began hiking with a volksmarch group when he taught at a military base. He enjoyed that experience so much he decided he wanted to start a similar group in his area when he returned to Indiana. When the ADT was eventually routed through his town, he thought he would take advantage of this attraction.

Today, the club has nearly 20 members and offers hikes three days a week. The two weekday hikes are usually an hour and a half long while the weekend hikes last two to three hours. Attendance varies, with some coming only on the weekday hikes while oth-



Don Royer, founder of the Richmond, Ind., ADT Hiking Club Photo courtesy of Charlie Adams

ers are able to hike only on weekends. Some are fair weather hikers while others are not stopped by rain or snow.

Besides the health benefits to the hikers, the ADT Hiking Club also helps the trail. As they hike, they remove debris that blocks the

trail, collect trash, trim vegetation, and pull up invasive plants. Their help with the local maintenance and cleanup keeps the trail in outstanding condition for all to enjoy.

The club's outreach efforts this year included a booth at a Richmond Earth Day (April 29) event where they promoted hiking and handed out brochures about the ADT and other places. The local newspaper has featured articles and photos of them to let others in the community know about the trail and their hikes.

Despite his age, Royer is still hiking with the club. He says people join the club to maintain or improve their fitness. Many seek the enjoyment of nature and the companionship of hiking with others who share this appreciation. Royer summarizes the benefits simply by stating, "It clears your mind and makes you feel good."

Other club members feel it is Royer's steadfastness, organization, and encouragement that have made the club what it is today. Says member Jan Bolser, "Don has been our leader and inspiration."

Stark Publishes New Book About Running the ADT

Brian Stark, who ran across America in eight months on the American Discovery Trail in 1998, finally stopped running long enough to write a book about his experiences. Called *Getting to the Point*. In a dozen pairs of shoes, Stark bills it as the story of the first modern-day trail run across America.

Running alone with only a 10-pound pack, ultra-runner Brian Stark ran between 20 to 30 miles per day to complete his journey. In the process, he says he learned firsthand what this country is really like. And especially, he met the people along the way and listened to their stories.

Stark's book is available in both electronic and paperback form. To read an excerpt or order your copy, go to <http://www.authorhouse.com/BookStore/ItemDetail~bookid~27893.aspx>.



Some members of the Richmond ADT Hiking Club getting out on the trail.

Photo courtesy of Charlie Adams



Trail Work – ← Before and After →

South Western Ohio Trail Association volunteers cleared a section of the Buckeye Trail near Richmond Dale, Ohio, that coincides with the American Discovery Trail and the North Country Trail. Here former Buckeye Trail Association president Jim Sprague walks through the area as it looked before and after all that effort.

On a 5-day work party the crew of a dozen volunteers managed to build 5000 feet of trail through a forest area. The result will take the trail back off a road from a road construction project that took several years to complete.

Photos courtesy Patrick Hayes



Trail News

Kansas

There is a rail corridor railbanking opportunity opening up between Chase and Silica. A six-mile stretch of the Chase-Silica rail line in Rice County is up for abandonment. The towns are between Lyons and Ellinwood (which is east of Great Bend). The line lies very close to the Santa Fe National Historic Trail (including the famous Ralph's Ruts landmark). This segment could be a critical section of the American Discovery Trail if it is railbanked and conserved for future trail use. Anyone interested? Contact Ron Ruoff, the Kansas ADT State Coordinator at rrpack@earthlink.net.

Kansas legal news: Ron Ruoff reported about an important district court decision in Kansas, in which the court found that the federal "Rails to Trails" Act takes precedence over the Kansas Recreational Trails Act, a state law designed to make it more difficult to create rail-trails. Ruoff says, "This should enable trail groups to move forward in the state."

Indiana

The Muncie StarPress.com (5/9/06) reported that Ind. Gov. Mitch Daniels has announced an initiative to build a state-

wide trail system that would encourage Hoosiers to exercise while promoting tourism and economic development. This is the first time the state has expressly supported rail-trail development. The privately supported Cardinal Greenway Trail, one of our American Discovery Trail affiliated trails, is on the forefront of this important development. Cardinal Greenway Director Lenette Freeman says she gets calls from across the country seeking information on how to create trail systems and she is happy to mentor these fledgling groups. She says communities with greenways systems such as the Cardinal Greenway can play a big role in luring new development and jobs to their areas.

Former Indiana ADT State Coordinator Ron Craig attended the Governor's Indiana Trail Plans Summit conference about this plan on May 31. He reported, "The ADT held a prominent position on maps, proposed trail corridors, and in the breakout sessions. I was impressed, but when you think about it, the ADT message of connectivity is exactly the same as the state's."

Don Burrell, Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator for the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments reports that 1.8 miles of the Aurora/Lawrenceburg (Dearborn) Trail were dedicated on March 4. This adds to a critical link that will take the ADT off roads in this area.

Ohio

Everything seems to come together in Milford, Ohio! Over 22,000 miles of long distance trails junction in Milford, including the Buckeye Trail, American Discovery Trail, North Country National Scenic Trail, Sea to Sea Long Distance Hiking Route, Underground Railroad Cycling Route, Ohio to Erie Cycling Route, Little Miami Scenic Trail, and Little Miami Scenic River.

To celebrate its outstanding connections, Milford is hosting the First Ever Junction Trail Festival Sept. 8-10. There will be music, hikes, slideshows, speakers, and an outdoor expo. For more information, see www.thejunctiontrailfest.org.

California

Ken and Marcia Powers, who completed the first continuous thru-hike of the ADT in 2005, have been busy giving presentations about the trail and their trip at numerous REI and other locations in the San Francisco Bay Area during the spring and early summer.

They particularly emphasize how much they enjoyed the western portion of the ADT, and explain the planning involved in the remote wilderness areas of Utah and Nevada.

Memberships and Donations

A membership in the American Discovery Trail Society helps to promote and sustain America's only cross-country non-motorized trail. It also makes a great gift!

Each membership includes a member I.D. card, a lapel pin, and *Discover America* newsletter. Discovery and Life members also receive an ADT decal, patch, and a guidebook.

- Yes, I want to be a part of this American adventure!
- Life Member - \$1,000
 - Corporate Member - \$250
 - Discovery Member - \$100
 - Family - \$50
 - Member - \$30

Did you know that the American Discovery Trail Society is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization and your donations are tax-deductible?

Here's my additional tax-deductible contribution of:

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Come join us at the ADT Society's Annual Meeting 18th National Trails Symposium October 19 – 22, 2006

The American Discovery Trail Society's annual membership meeting will be held at 8 a.m. on Sunday, Oct. 22, at Union Station, 102 S. Harrison St., Davenport, Iowa. The board of directors meeting will follow at the same location. Union Station is about three blocks from the convention center, where the National Trails Symposium will be held.

The Quad Cities is hosting the 18th National Trails Symposium at the River Center in Davenport, right along the American Discovery Trail and near the Hennepin Canal Trail. The symposium provides an opportunity for trail enthusiasts to get together at an educational conference with workshops, exhibits, recreational opportunities, and more. The National Trails Symposium is sponsored by American Trails, a national, nonprofit organization working on behalf of all trail interests, whose members want to create and protect America's network of interconnected trails. The theme for the 2006 Symposium is "Trails for America: Every Where, Every Way, Every Day." For more information, visit the American Trails website at www.americantrails.org.

2006 Long-Distance ADT Travelers

Many long-distance travelers are out on the American Discovery Trail this year. Those listed below have websites detailing their adventures along the way. The locations and miles traveled are as of mid-June.

Traveler	Start Date	Mode	Heading	ADT Miles	Last Location
Robin Grapa (daughter) Patty Laatsch (mother) www.ourhike.com	Feb 4	Backpack	W	2,320	Kinsley, KS
Randy Propster Sheri Propster www.treckusa.com	Mar 7	Backpack	W	1,172	New Albany, IN
Jakob Teitelbaum Tamar Teitelbaum www.walkacrosstheus.com	Apr 26	Backpack	W	1,010	Cincinnati, OH
Debbie Schachner www.walkingwithfaith.com	2005	Backpack	E	1,691	Leadville, CO
Jim Shaner www.walkacrossamerica.info	2004	Walking	W	626	Vincent, OH



Cactus flowers in the Utah desert

Photo courtesy of Debbie Schachner

A Long Hike to a Library

Debbie Schachner, a lay-missionary from O'Fallon, Ill., wants to build a library in Africa, so she decided to take a hike. Her idea was to raise awareness and funding for her project while hiking across the country. Schachner, who volunteered in Kenya in 2003, came back wanting to do more to help the community she had served. Then she thought about the American Discovery Trail. Schachner started on the ADT from

Point Reyes National Seashore in California on May 6, 2005 and snowshoed over the Sierra Nevada to reach the Nevada state line on June 11. Then she went home for a break.

On Sept. 25, a couple she met on the Tahoe Rim Trail drove her over 300 miles to make water drops every 15 miles in the Nevada desert before she started up again. Later, other friends drove her to

make water drops in Utah. She hiked all the way to Boulder, Utah, before stopping for the winter on Dec. 5.

On April 26, Schachner returned to Boulder to resume her journey and is now contending with snow in Colorado. She plans to hike to Illinois this year and finish the ADT at Cape Henlopen, Del., next April.

Schachner's website (www.walkingwithfaith.com) explains her mission and includes a journal of her experiences. She sees hiking the ADT as a chance to motivate people to search inside themselves to find their own talent and passions. She says, "Every day on the ADT is an adventure." We couldn't agree more.

***Making Connections...
Coast to Coast***

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Hennepin Canal Trail

(Continued from page 1)

Because the canal came late, and was located between two burgeoning population centers—Chicago and the Quad Cities—no cities, not even towns, interfere with this trail’s lonely path over what some have called the most productive soil in the world. Not that a trail traveler is isolated. Small towns a mile or so off the trail regularly dot the countryside. And not far away is modern America’s transportation headliner—Interstate 80.

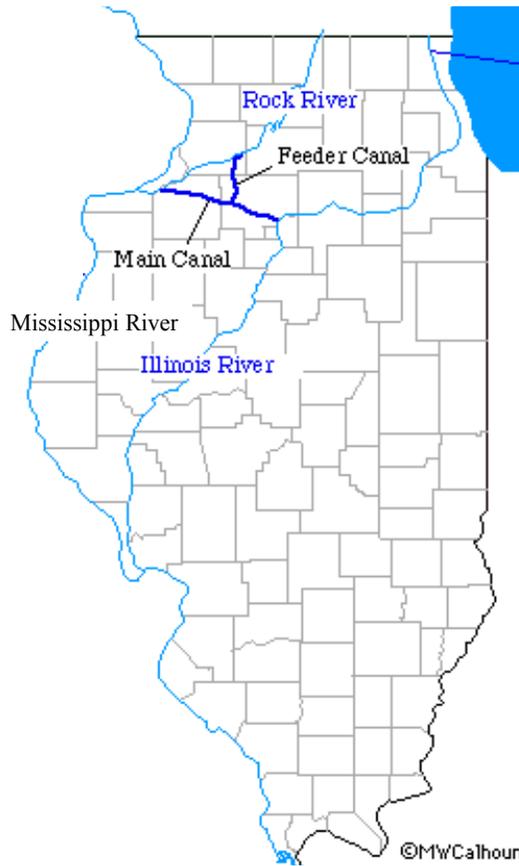
But when you’re on the trail you’re caught in a tussle. On one side, the venerable 19th century canal itself: It has water; it has fish (as those dangling a line from its banks will cheerfully tell you); but it has no canal barges anymore. And most of the locks have long been out of working order.

In contrast, on the other side, much of the time modern Illinois makes itself evident—geometric lines of corn or soybeans showcasing a tractor. Sometimes a ditch levels off to a green crop-filled horizon interspersed with the occasional remnant wood lot and big shed filled with crops and machinery.

This trail is flat—you can’t change geography. It’s not the gray flatness of a desert. Illinois’ flatness is like the sculptured icing on a pan of flat cake—not only flat, but also marvelously flavorful and rich.

But it’s not completely flat, and that’s the reason for the Hennepin Canal’s most unique trait: Its water runs both ways. The land between its boundary rivers (the Illinois and the Mississippi) rises, only moderately, but still it does go up. And, unfortunately, water does not. So the engineers brought water from a point on the Rock River about 30 miles north via a feeder canal. They created what amounts to an isolated lake with one inflow and two outflows—the outflows are the two legs of the canal—one to the Illinois River to the east, and the other to the Mighty Mississippi to the west.

But as a traveler, you hardly notice the



Map courtesy of Melissa Calhoun

rise of the land, especially on the western leg. On the eastern side, however, close to the Illinois River, the last 15 miles or so do drop noticeably. In fact, the canal here shares a modest valley with a small but rollicking river. The hills on both sides burst into color in the fall, quite a contrast to the autumn brown of the trail’s dominant farmland.

The Hennepin Trail, a relic of the heartland past, is still full of heart. Walk it; run it; bike it; even ride a horse on it. Use it. It’s heartening.

Chuck Oestreich is the ADT State Coordinator for Northern Illinois.

What a Way...

(Continued from page 1)

And build it they did. It was just about obsolete the day it opened on Nov. 15, 1907, 52 years after the railroad made a canal economically laughable. The canal’s use was “disappointing from the start.” But it was used. The Rock Island YMCA held swimming lessons in it; the rights to cut its ice were sold; and International Harvester

shipped some steel products on it.

Fishermen and nature lovers discovered it, however. And after it was basically abandoned and left to deteriorate after 1951, they became its principal beneficiaries.

And now through the efforts of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, led by greenways and trails manager Dick Westfall and Grand Illinois Trail coordinator George Bellovic, the canal is a glorious part of a national trail—the American Discovery Trail—and a key link in the 550-mile Grand Illinois Trail.

Perhaps all that effort and money spent back in the late 1800s wasn’t wasted.

Hennepin Trail Facts

The canal was obsolete before the initial voyage on it in 1907.

The canal was open to boat traffic until 1951.

Ice made from its frozen waters was sold during the winters to help pay the canal’s maintenance costs.

During the canal’s peak year, 1933, 30,000 tons were moved, or 1/600 of the maximum planned capacity.

The Hennepin was the first American canal built of concrete without stone cut facings.

The towpath, intended but never used by animals for towing boats, is the basis for the present-day trail.

Seventy bridge and 32 lock locations are available for fishing, with pools stocked with bluegill, crappie, wall-eye, and bass.

There is a visitor’s center just north of Sheffield.

The trails along the 70-mile main canal and the 30-mile feeder canal have a surface of compressed stone, easily used by bicyclists.



Randy and Sheri Propster visit the Agricultural Research Service National Visitor Center in Beltsville, Md., a stop that combines history and geography.

Photo courtesy of Randy & Sheri Propster

An Outdoor Classroom

What is your idea of the perfect honeymoon? For Randy and Sheri Propster of Wintergreen, Va., thru-hiking the American Discovery Trail is just right for them. When they married in December, the Propsters were already Appalachian Trail thru-hikers, so they decided on the ADT as a unique honeymoon and left Cape Henlopen on March 7.

But being educators, the Propsters also wanted to do more than hike. They set a goal to use their perspective and modern technologies to compile information pertaining to the environmentally, historically and culturally significant points of interest they discover throughout their journey.

The Propsters see the ADT as an enormous

outdoor classroom and want others to use their hike as a virtual field trip. They set up an interactive website designed to cooperate with curriculum presented in traditional classrooms and stimulate teachers' ideas for unique learning platforms. Their photos, journals, latitude and longitude coordinates, and temperature and other weather readings all become resources for teachers and students.

At Wilson Memorial High School in Fishersville, Va., Scott Steele's ninth grade earth science class is studying such topics as identifying watersheds, locating various rock types, finding fossils, and searching for high and low elevation points in states along the trail. Steele's classroom curriculum is presented in a classroom activities page and articles written by his students will create a virtual library. Students are given computer lab assignments to research and lesson plans are listed on the site.

Using the American Discovery Trail as an educational tool is just one more way the ADT is enriching people's lives. To learn more about the Propster's hike visit www.treckusa.com.

