



# End of the Canals



During George Washington's treks as a surveyor in the Ohio Valley, he saw the great commercial potential of canals. The ability of farmers and merchants to transport their goods affordably from the plains to the Mississippi Delta or to the north was instrumental in the population growth in the Ohio Valley during the 1800s. Many communities popped up along the banks of rivers as a result of the canals. The first of two main canal lines stretched across the entire state from Cleveland along Lake Erie south to Portsmouth on the Ohio River. The second extended from Toledo along the western edge of Lake Erie to Cincinnati .



Torrential rains and destructive floods in late March of 1913 brought an end to the canal systems. The unprecedented runoff from three days of intense rainfall destroyed levees, dams, and canal banks. The canals in Akron were dynamited in several locations—a successful effort to save the town. Many canals across the state were damaged, and funds to repair the canals were slow to materialized, if at all. With the increased use of railways and introduction of automobiles, the commercial use of canals waned significantly, and not enough to support the cost of maintaining them. Today the canals are used primarily for recreation, but still suffer from periodic floods. The floods of 1913 all but put an end to the canal era.

Photo Courtesy of the Ohio Historical Society. This photo shows a boat passing a wheat mill along the Ohio-Erie canal adjacent to the Cuyahoga River in Valley View where the mill still resides.

