

This covered bridge was built across the Tiffin River in 1871 at the site occupied by the existing Lockport covered bridge, constructed in 1999.

east of Lockport. None of Southport's 43 lots were sold, however, and the town plat was vacated in 1856.

In 1864 Lockport contained a post office, sawmill, gristmill, cooper shop, ashery, school, cemetery, general store and a number of residences.

Perhaps Lockport's last real shot at survival and growth came with the proposed Mansfield, Coldwater & Lake Michigan Railroad in the early 1870s. The railroad survey crossed County Road 21/N one-half mile north of Lockport. Grading and other work on the right-of-way was performed in the Lockport area, but the railroad ran into financial difficulties and was never completed.

The Lockport mills passed through several owners before being destroyed by a suspected arsonist in 1885. The mills were not rebuilt, and Lockport's only significant industry disappeared.

The Lockport United Brethren Church was organized in 1862. The congregation

erected a frame church on the west side of Mill Street in 1887. The church disbanded about 1960; the building and grounds were sold at auction in 1962 and were converted to other purposes.

The first Lockport Mennonite Church was erected in 1908. This frame building was replaced by the existing structure, dedicated April 7, 1963. The 1908 house of worship was moved to the southeast for private use.

Prior to 1871, the Lockport Tiffin River bridge stood east of the existing crossing. In 1871, a wooden covered bridge was constructed at the current location. This was replaced with a steel span bridge in 1919. The current Lockport covered bridge was completed in 1999.

Although Lockport was one of the area's first villages, it was unable to obtain transportation facilities or industry to ensure its survival and growth. Nearby towns West Unity and Stryker—with transportation and business advantages—soon eclipsed Lockport.

Today, the Lockport Mennonite Church remains an active congregation. The cemetery, Hull house, former United Brethren and Mennonite churches, covered bridge and scattered residences mark the location of this once thriving rural economic center. Although many of Lockport's lots were vacated in 1910, much of the town plat still exists—a monument to the dreams and ambitions of Dr. John Evans.

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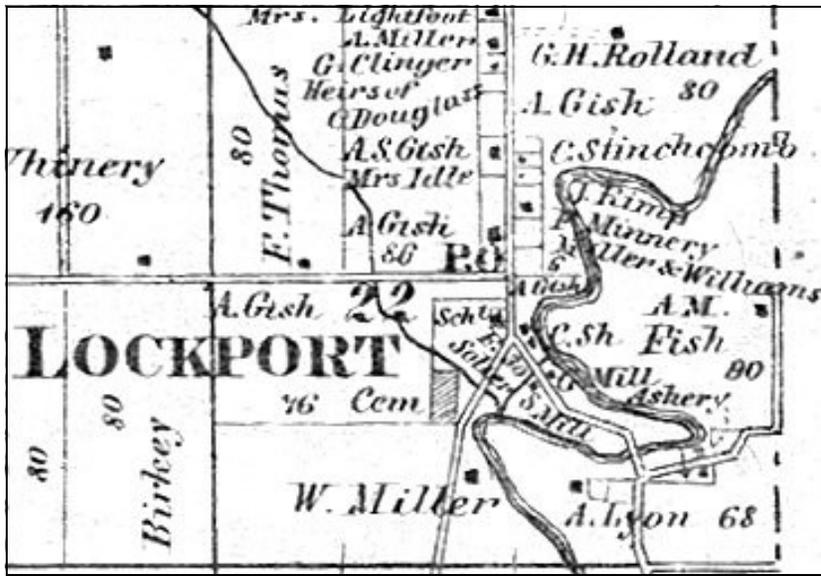
Lockport

Early Tiffin River Economic Center



This 1874 view looking north on Lockport's Mill Street (County Road 21/N) shows the water-powered sawmill and gristmill on the right. The Hull house can be seen on the left, and the Lockport schoolhouse is visible on the horizon.

Lockport—Early Tiffin River Economic Center



This 1864 map shows the locations of Lockport's cemetery, school, mills, cooper shop, ashery, post office and Miller & Williams' store. The Lockport Tiffin River bridge stood east of its current location.

Historical accounts state that Abraham Wurts settled in Section 22 of Brady Township in 1834, and the following year constructed a dam across the Tiffin River (also known as Bean Creek) and built a water-powered gristmill.

Much of Lockport's early significance was due to this mill. Sawmills provided settlers with sawed lumber to replace log houses with frame buildings, while gristmills supplied flour and cornmeal, staples of the pioneer diet.

On February 26, 1836, Dr. John Evans of Defiance had Lockport—consisting of 110 lots—surveyed north of Wurts' mills. Lots, streets and alleys were laid out on each side of Mill Street (County Road 21/N), between County Roads I.50 and J.

Dr. Evans was Williams County's first Recorder and Clerk of Courts. He also ran a general store and hotel in Defiance.

At the time Lockport was surveyed, it was almost impossible to bring a wagon through the area's thick, primitive forest and underbrush. The region was poorly drained, wet and marshy much of the year, making travel on horseback and on foot treacherous.

Compared to overland travel, journeying on waterways was relatively easy, making the Tiffin River an early transportation thoroughfare.

In addition, speculation existed that Bean Creek might become part of Ohio's canal system, hence the "port" suffix in the village's name.

Canals used "locks" to raise and lower watercraft along their courses. Lockport, N.Y., which may be the village's namesake, was located on the Erie Canal.

The 1874 Williams County atlas states that Lockport "was for a time the best place in the county for trade."

The 1882 Goodspeed Williams County history adds, "The grain, or whatever was brought into the country, was taken off at Lockport, and brought with much difficulty by land to the homes of the settlers."

The Lockport post office was established July 15, 1837, with Abraham Wurts as its first postmaster. Lockport was the second post office in present Williams County; only Pulaski predated it. Shortly thereafter, a postal route was established between Lockport and Defiance. The Lockport post office was discontinued January 17, 1876.

Augustus F. Hull opened Lockport's first general store in 1837 and continued until about 1844.

In the early 1840s, classes were held in a log house on the northwest corner of County Roads 21/N and I.50. In 1845 a frame one-room schoolhouse was constructed north of the Lockport Cemetery. In 1882 a brick school was erected at the southwest corner of County Roads 21/N and I.50. This school was destroyed by fire in 1898 and replaced by a frame structure. Lockport School District #7 was consolidated with Stryker in 1917; the school closed in 1919.

The date the Lockport Cemetery was established is unknown, but tombstones date to 1840. The graveyard is mentioned in an 1846 deed, which reserved "a small hill known by the name of the burying ground...with the privileges of going to and from it for the use of the public." The Lockport Cemetery Association was organized in 1879, and the cemetery was turned over to the Brady Township trustees in June 1927.

On November 15, 1850, Samuel Werts had the village of Southport surveyed south-



Classes were held in Lockport by the early 1840s. Lockport school district was consolidated with Stryker in 1917, and the school closed in 1919.