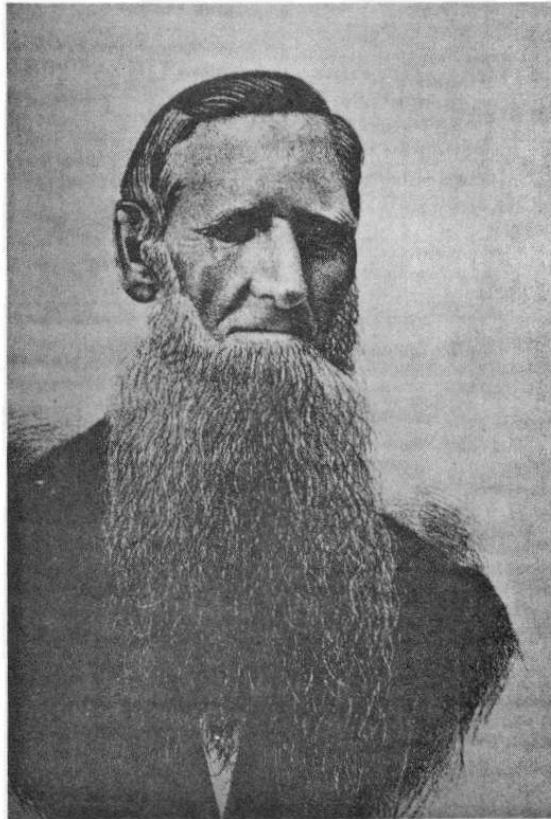


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# **WILLIAM GOODING**

## **Chief Engineer I. and M. Canal**

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**\$1.50**

ILLINOIS CANAL SOCIETY  
Lockport Illinois

## William Gooding, Chief Engineer, I. and M. Canal

John M. Lamb

### Preface

This is the fifth annual pamphlet produced for and by the Illinois Canal Society. The previous pamphlets have been *Illinois and Michigan Canal Annual Commissioner's Reports*; *The City of Pekin Story*; and *Locks on the I. and M. Canal*. I want to thank the members of the Illinois Canal Society whose support has made these publications possible. In the coming years the society will continue to explore the history of the inland waterways through pamphlets, research, field trips and exhibitions.

John Lamb, Illinois Canal Society

Like most canal engineers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, William Gooding was trained on the job. The canal era from about 1800 to 1860 produced a body of engineers who knew one another and learned from each other but had no formal engineering education. They designed and built a series of canals that connected the Hudson River to the Great Lakes and the Ohio River to the east coast and the Great Lakes. Gooding designed the waterway that connected the Great Lakes to the Mississippi via the Illinois River. This canal was called the Illinois and Michigan Canal because it connected the Illinois River to Lake Michigan.

William Gooding was born on April 1, 1803, at Bristol in Ontario County, New York.<sup>1</sup> His father, James Gooding (called Deacon Gooding), was born in 1767 in Massachusetts and migrated to western New York, and then preceded his son, William, in emigrating to Illinois in 1832. James Gooding died at age 82 in 1849.<sup>2</sup>

William Gooding was educated in common schools and by private tutors, and taught school and worked on his father's farm before he left for Canada at the age of 23. In 1826 he began his engineering apprenticeship under Chief Engineer Alfred Barrett in construction of the Welland Canal. This was the first Welland Canal, and its structures were made of wood. He worked on that canal until 1829 when he returned to New York to run a store in Lockport.<sup>3</sup> In 1831 he was back at his preferred occupation – canal engineer. He was hired as a Junior Assistant Engineer on the Ohio canal system on the Wabash and Erie Canal.<sup>4</sup> In 1832 he married.

In the same year (autumn 1832) his father and brothers moved to Illinois, settling in Yankee Settlement, Homer township near Lockport in what became known as Gooding's Grove. William decided to follow, but was held up by the outbreak of the Black Hawk War in 1832. He came in May 1833. He, his wife Ann, and infant son were the first passengers to come around the head of Lake Michigan with the United States mail headed for Chicago.<sup>5</sup> He squatted on land near his father and brothers, a cabin already having been built. Although he didn't tarry there long, he was interested in farming, particularly the cultivation of fruit trees. He is credited with introducing fruit growing in Will County.<sup>6</sup> He wrote an article in the 1830s for The Prairie Farmer on fencing by using dirt mounds and ditches. At that time, before the invention of barbed wire, the problem of fencing was acute as there were few trees on the prairie suitable for split rail fencing.

In June 1834 Gooding was hired by the Indiana Canal Commissioners to head a corps of engineers to survey a route for the proposed Whitewater Canal from Wayne County near the border of Ohio to the Ohio River.

He was assigned by the Chief Engineer of the Wabash and Erie Canal, Jesse Williams.<sup>7</sup> He also seems to have worked on a survey to extend the Wabash and Erie Canal from "the old treaty ground" on Wabash to Lafayette.<sup>8</sup>

Because of this wide experience, in 1836 he was hired by the Illinois and Michigan Canal Commissioners of the state of Illinois as Chief Engineer. He used to tell the story of the visit by the Canal Commissioner to his humble cabin in “Yankee Settlement,” as the area was called around Lockport. George Woodruff, Will County’s first historian, tells the story. The cabin was built on contract for \$25. Gooding furnished the timber and a team of oxen.

“This was covered with ‘shakes’ - a kind of roof which would shed the rain and snow, if the wind did not blow, and had its chimney outside, according to the style of the times, because if placed inside there would have been no room for anything else. This chimney was built with sticks plastered with clay. The furniture was mostly the handiwork of Mr. Gooding, including the bedstead made of poles.”<sup>9</sup>

One winter morning in 1836 there came to this prairie homestead William B. Archer, Canal Commissioner, who on July 4<sup>th</sup> of that year would turn the first spadeful of earth on the Illinois and Michigan Canal. With Colonel Archer were Chief Justice Wilson of the Illinois Supreme Court and Robert Dale Owen, the son of the Utopian Socialist Robert Owen. They came before breakfast after staying all night at one of those frontier stage stop hotels that promised little in the way of breakfast besides whiskey and dirt.

“To be so suddenly called upon to entertain these notables was somewhat embarrassing to the young wife of Gooding, Woodruff observes. The country did not afford very much variety wherewith to improvise a breakfast. To add to the difficulty the guests, except Colonel Archer, were strangers and as the one room was kitchen, bedroom, dining room and parlor, and it was too cold to adjourn to the only other place – outdoors – the breakfast must be prepared in their presence. In one all-important respect, however, the hostess was happy. Some little time before, Colonel Archer, whose tastes were somewhat of the Hoosier order, had seen a piece of calico in Chicago which he greatly admired. Wishing to make Mrs. Gooding some expression of his regard, he had bought five yards of the goods, which struck his fancy, which he had given to her with the remark that as she was small it would be ample, and she had the dress on this memorable occasion.”<sup>10</sup>

Having been hired as Chief Engineer of this promising transportation and commercial venture, the greatest such embarked upon by the young state of Illinois, Gooding turned his attention to projects that would aid the economic development of this northern part of the state. He helped to build one of the first mills on the lower Des Plaines in West Lockport in 1836 to 1837. He also laid out West Lockport. As construction of the canal proceeded, surveyors under his direction would lay out many towns along the canal such as Lockport, La Salle, Morris, Channahon and other towns that would disappear in the railroad era like Dresden, and would be moved, such as Kankakee. But Gooding’s principle interest was in water power development. Water power was not incidental to the canal’s construction, but a central part of the project. Gooding was convinced that this as much as transportation would build the hardly settled northern part of the state and would make the canal that much more valuable to the state. It was this interest in water power that led to the establishment of Lockport. This was because at Lockport there was the largest fall on the course of the canal. There is a drop of forty feet in five miles between Lockport and Joliet (then called Juliet). Not much, but unusual on the flat Illinois prairie. Lockport is at the same height as Lake Michigan, and Joliet is forty feet below it. At that time it was proposed that the new canal be built with a “deep cut” that would have reversed the flow of the Chicago River. It would draw water directly from Lake Michigan by cutting below the divide of ten feet that separated the Great Lakes flowage basin from the Mississippi water basin at Chicago. So, as Gooding observed at Lockport, a hydraulic basin could be built that would have plenty

of water power because it could draw on Lake Michigan water. This would increase the value of state land and give income to the canal from water rental. This brought complaints from Joliet which feared Lockport would become more important, and that the mill located at Joliet in the 1830s would become obsolete.<sup>11</sup>

Many in Joliet continued to feel that the canal had somehow cheated them by not locating the headquarters in Joliet rather than Lockport. But this town, it seemed to Gooding and the Canal Commissioners, was better situated to exploit the water power and reward the state instead of speculators. As Gooding wrote in his report to the Canal Commissioners in 1838.

“The value of the water power here (Lockport) and at other points upon the canal, by drawing a supply of water directly from Lake Michigan, can be appreciated after a season of such severe drought as the past years. The Des Plaines River and many other considerable streams of the country have been nearly dried up, and probably three-fourths of the water-mills throughout a large portion of the United States have been standing still for the last three months. But had this canal been completed, there would have been during the last season an unusual supply of water, as the surface of the lake has been 9 feet 4 inches above the canal bottom, or 3 or 4 inches higher than was originally calculated upon for the supply.”<sup>12</sup>

Gooding realized that more important than the fall of water was the water supply. If the water for the summit level of the canal was drawn directly from Lake Michigan, there would as a result be an unlimited supply. The locks at Lockport were designed so that the water not used for lockage could be used for water power purposes.<sup>13</sup>

After the canal was begun in 1836 and particularly in 1838 and 1839, the financial crisis that the state was mired in forced the Canal Commissioners and Gooding to redesign the canal on a less ambitious scale. The deep cut was dropped. The water on the Summit level, from Bridgeport (or Chicago) to Lockport would be pumped from the Chicago River and also supplied by a feeder from the Calumet River rather than from Lake Michigan. Even though the water supply was less sure, a hydraulic basin was planned and built at Lockport on the plans laid out by Gooding in his report to the Canal Commissioners in 1838.

“...a hydraulic basin has been estimated, which is to be constructed in such a manner that the mills or manufactories [*sic*] which are to be operated by water-power created here will be built upon and draw their water from three sides of it – the other side being next to the canal and only separated from it by the towing path, a street and a tier of warehouse [*sic*] lots. The basin will be connected with the canal in such a manner that boats or vessels can readily pass into it, and load and unload at the mills and warehouses.”<sup>14</sup>

Despite the fact that the Illinois and Michigan Canal had begun in 1836 with a great deal of enthusiasm, financial difficulties had by 1838 and 1839 slowed down construction and brought increased political attacks upon the canal supporters. Gooding had received enthusiastic support of people like Colonel William B. Archer. It was Archer who had hired Gooding, it was Archer who had turned the first spadeful of earth on July 4, 1836, and it was Archer who had pushed for a road from Chicago to Lockport to make the canal headquarters a center of canal and commercial activity. But by 1841 the canal and its officers were experiencing increased attacks from certain politicians in the State Legislature. There were complaints officially of overpayment to the engineers. Gooding received \$3500 a year, making him by far the highest

paid state official. On November 29, 1941, when construction had stopped completely because of lack of funds, Gooding wrote to Colonel Archer:

“I trust that I need not assure you that I am highly gratified that you are in the legislature this winter, but I am afraid that you will not have it in your power to do the country as much service as you have done heretofore. I think we have a reckless loco-foco legislature that will go in for measure of the most destructive kind.... We all feel a most intense interest in the fate of the Canal, and I am anxious to have your opinion, even at this early stage of the Session....

“As far as the officers upon the Canal I suppose it is already decided that they shall walk. But this as far as I am personally concerned does not give me the least uneasiness. I need not tell you that I have served the state honestly and faithfully, for no one knows better than yourself what my services have been. I need not assure you that I have had nothing so much at heart as the good of the canal, and that I felt a pride in being connected with it. At one time I fondly hoped that I should gain some credit for the services that I have rendered. But I now feel a perfect indifference. So much have all canal officers been abused (except through going locofocos) that I am satisfied to be turned adrift, and let them supply my place with some bawling demagogue like Capt. Burnett.”<sup>15</sup>

Gooding distrusted the Locofocos or Jacksonian Democrats because they were more interested in giving out the spoils of office than in keeping competent engineers. When in 1844 it became evident that the canal would receive sufficient money to be completed in a timely manner, and that contractors as well as canal officials would be paid, the opportunities for spoils became apparent to the Democrats. As a result the attacks upon Gooding intensified. Gooding was a Whig, then a Free Soiler and finally a Republican. He was not very political, but he had an intense dislike of demagoguery and excessive appeals to common prejudice and political jobbery.

After 1844 the canal was placed under trustees, two of whom were appointed by the note holders in the East and one by the Governor of Illinois. This Board of Trustees would control the canal until 1870, when it was turned back to the State. The two trustees appointed by the note holders in the East and England were a banker, David Leavitt, and an army engineer, Capt. William Swift.<sup>16</sup> These men considered Gooding an exemplary engineer, but there were consistent attacks upon him in the state from those who wanted the job, or rather wanted to appoint to it some friend or acquaintance of the correct political connections. It seemed to some that this project, the largest yet launched by the state, was designed mainly to pass out political jobs, and secondarily as a transportation artery. The construction of the canal had been slow, but the slowness was caused by insufficient funds; even so the Chief Engineer was castigated for this, though it was beyond his control. After the loan arrangements entered into by the state made it clear that the canal would be finished, and that money would no longer be a problem, the attacks upon Gooding began to increase. His nemesis was to be a prominent Democratic politician, William Oakley, an ambitious and powerful figure destined for the governor's mansion it was felt.<sup>17</sup> In a letter in 1845 to David Leavitt, the New York banker and canal trustee, Oakley attacked Capt. Swift because Swift supported Oakley. He noted that the contractors didn't want Governor David<sup>18</sup> of Massachusetts appointed trustee, because then Gooding would be back and according to Oakley the canal would be run as badly as before.<sup>19</sup>

Oakley could get nowhere with Leavitt because the general opinion amongst those with a stake in the canal's construction was that Gooding was the best man for the job. They were also aware of the interest on the part of certain politicians to gain control of the hiring and firing on the canal.

Governor Davis certainly supported Gooding, and he recorded the following in his diary written in 1844 when he was in Lockport investigating the canal.

“It is proper also to remark, that we have had many and free conversations with the Chief Engineer, who appears a frank, sincere, intelligent and skillful man. We have also conversed freely with many contractors, and find, that they all, not only, respect him, but place great confidence in his integrity and judgement. Expressing most of them, a willingness to undertake work upon his estimates. I have seen so much of this feeling among men who have worked under him for a series of years, that I am obliged to infer, that his estimates have been liberal and accurate, or they could not have inspired this confidence. It has I confess strengthened my confidence in him.”<sup>20</sup>

By 1845 the departing Governor Ford (who had successfully worked to save the credit of the state and pursue the task of finishing the canal) wrote to the Board of Trustees recommending the reappointment of Gooding. He wrote “...no less qualified by his talents, experience and integrity in his profession, than he is by his tact and address in conciliating everybody whilst engaged in the performance of his duty.” He then goes on to suggest that two engineers who were seeking the appointment were political manoeuvrers.<sup>21</sup> In 1837 one of the first and greatest 19<sup>th</sup> century canal engineers, Judge Benjamin Wright, had praised Gooding's engineering judgement in a letter to the Canal Commissioners. He wrote:

“In reviewing the whole line of this proposed canal, the location of it, and the plans proposed to overcome all difficulties, I cannot award too much praise to your engineer. He has shown skill and sound judgement in every part of the line, and I do not think the plans he has laid down for the prosecution of this work can be improved upon or made better with the materials so far discovered.”<sup>22</sup>

In 1847 the Democrats were in firm control of the State House. Governor Augustus French and leading Democrat, Oakley, sought to get control of the canal. They attacked the two trustees appointed by the Eastern capitalists. It was maintained they were paid too much and the incumbents should be residents in Illinois. The Eastern note holders didn't buy this argument, so Governor French and Oakley turned their energies against Gooding. In January 1847 Oakley was appointed by French, State Canal Trustee. The old State Canal Trustee Colonel Fry was fired for disloyalty because he bucked party discipline and voted against a known crook thus preventing his appointment as a judge. Oakley's appointment caused Gooding a great deal of concern. He wrote to Swift expressing his misgivings in January 1847.

“It is thought by many that he (Governor French) will very soon remove me, but I don't believe that he will at present, as no one could be appointed in my place by your Board that would suit his advisors. I think it is intended that I shall remain until next June, when a thorough reform is designed. You and Mr. Leavitt are to be thrown overboard and everything will then be in their own hands, and the friends of Colonel Oakley of course liberally provided for. The appointment of Colonel Oakley is but a part of a plan of certain wire pullers to get control of the Canal and the Canal property,

distribute the offices and make splendid fortunes at the expense of the State and her creditors.”<sup>23</sup>

By the summer of 1847 Gooding’s troubles had increased. Oakley stirred up the Irish laborers on the Summit Division to strike for \$1.25 a day and an eleven-hour day. The strike or “turnout” as it was called, didn’t spread down the line, and the Irish laborers returned after a couple of weeks at their old wages of a dollar a day and twelve hours of work a day. In June 1847 Gooding offered to resign, but neither Swift or Leavitt accepted it. As the summer of 1847 ended, the Canal was near completion, and Oakley grew more bitter in his attacks upon Gooding. At one point in the fall he told Leavitt:

“...He has engaged an Engineer to go to Illinois, and if William Gooding is not discharged he will take the work into his own hands, and that we shall have an insurrection. That he will no longer submit to insults from his inferiors.”<sup>24</sup>

He had already told all and sundry that the canal would not be finished in 1848. In the fall of 1847 he submitted a list of charges against Gooding and requested the Board at their New York meeting dismiss Gooding. The Board refused to do so. As a result, he went to the Governor who could fire Gooding. By this time there was amongst many Democrats a growing disenchantment with Oakley, whose attacks were getting more rabid. However, they wanted the power to appoint their friends and supporters to lucrative posts in the State’s biggest public works project. It was as a result almost a foregone conclusion that Governor French would eventually fire Gooding. But Oakley didn’t make the task any easier for poor vacillating Governor French. He drew up a number of errors or crimes that he said made it clear that Gooding was incompetent. Most of these revolved around judgements Gooding made at one time or another during the course of canal construction. Some of the charges are as follows:

1. Saying in 1839 that the canal could be completed in three years.
2. Saying in 1839 excavations on the Summit level could be done for 75¢ to 85¢ per yard. In 1843 these figures were 19¢ to 33¢ per yard.
3. Refusing to pay the men on the Summit level nine shillings or \$1.25 a day. A strike resulted.
4. Gooding refused to appoint a good Democrat that Oakley was pushing as Superintendent of Laborers.
5. Gooding was accused of borrowing money from the contractors, and his brother and brother-in-law were big contractors on the canal.
6. In 1847 Oakley got 100-150 Hollanders in the east to work on the canal, as more laborers were needed. Yet they weren’t hired on the canal.
7. There is general dissatisfaction in the state. Gooding should be removed as also should Capt. Swift and Leavitt.<sup>25</sup>

That these accusations were flimsy can be seen if one notes that Gooding’s judgements are condemned because costs were higher in 1839 than 1843. Others were self-serving: why should Gooding have paid the laborers more and increased the cost of construction. Why should he hire a man, even though a good Democrat? as he had stirred up a strike amongst the workers he would supervise. The Hollanders hired by Oakley are interesting. As soon as they got to Illinois, expenses paid, they began looking for farm land to settle on. None were really interested in the back-breaking canal labor, for that only the sons of Erin had the

stomach or the back. Since the want of judgement charges were so fallacious, Gooding replied as best he could.

“For more than twenty years I have been engaged in my profession. I have served in Canada, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. I have been associated with, and been, fortunate enough to have my professional character approved by such engineers as Alfred Barrett, present Chief Engineer of the Canadas; by Judge Wright; Charles B. Fisk Esq. of the Ohio and Chesapeake Canal; J. L. Williams, Chief Engineer in Indiana; by the President of your board (Capt. Swift) himself an Engineer.”<sup>26</sup>

Gooding attributes his troubles to the machinations of greedy contractors.

In December Governor French wrote to Gooding that he felt there were too many Engineers on the canal. Gooding knew French was under considerable pressure from Oakley to remove him. Gooding was aware that the Governor was trying to get affidavits to support Oakley’s charges. As Gooding observed in December 1847, “It is humiliating to believe, to know the Governor is a consummate hypocrite.”<sup>27</sup> As the canal was being completed in the winter of 1848, the attacks upon Gooding continued. Governor French sent out a judge to gather evidence; Gooding was to go with him. But the Engineer’s daughter was seriously ill and would soon die. With all these troubles descending upon him, Gooding came to Chicago but was prostrated by adversity and never left his room at the Sherman House for weeks. The Judge and Oakley proceeded down the canal trying to rebut witnesses favorable to Gooding.<sup>29</sup>

The result of all this was that just as the canal was finally opened in April 1848, Gooding was dismissed by Governor French. Now the Governor could evidently fire certain officials, but he had no more power to hire than the one vote of the State Trustee. Oakley had promised the job to several politicians, but the other two trustees, Leavitt and Swift, ignored him and hired Gooding’s assistant engineer Edward Talcott and subsequently changed his title to Canal Superintendent. Oakley felt frustrated and bitter. In June of 1848 he wrote to Swift complaining that he was required to submit a receipt for an advance of \$100 he demanded of the Canal Secretary. His dignity was undermined.

“Now I have practiced forbearance until it has ceased to be a virtue, nay it has worked and worked injury to myself. But I shall submit to it no longer. I put it to your sense of justice is it fair to have me thus treated, and permit our subordinate officers to discriminate in the degree of respect they may show to the members of the Board.”<sup>29</sup>

Oakley went on at the indignity of not being able to put his hands in the canal funds with impunity for four folio pages. But his agony was only to increase, for in October 1848 after the death of Robert Stuart, Secretary of the Canal Board, William Gooding was appointed by the Canal Trustees to fill the vacancy. The Secretary post was the most important post under the Trustees. The two most important trustees, despite the efforts of the increasingly obnoxious Oakley, felt Gooding had done an excellent job as Chief Engineer, had steered the canal to a timely completion, and had been attacked by greedy men with questionable motives. The Secretary’s job was important, and Gooding’s ability was unquestioned. Governor French was furious. In December 1848 he wrote:

“In a word it is very singular that the trustees could not find some man to fill this place sustaining a different relationship to myself and the State Trustee, from Mr. Gooding, except it were designed in contempt of what has taken place, in which light only can I view it.”<sup>30</sup>

The Governor then goes on in good political style about the people of Illinois and their wishes of which he was the present embodiment, and yet these trustees beyond his ken did this to him. Oakley took it far more seriously; he up and died in January 1849.

But the Governor didn't forget it rankled, providing a perpetual itch to his thin political skin. His ego was burdened beyond endurance, for still in April 1849 he wrote:

“...I really think it a subject much to be regretted that there should be no one but Mr. Gooding capable of performing these duties. A man known to be personally hostile to me, removed for good cause from his office, and with whom it could not have escaped the trustees, it would be unpleasant to me to do business or carry on communications. I am bound to suppose that Capt. Swift did not intend to annoy me personally by this appointment, for he so states, but if he could for one moment overlook the inference [*sic*] which everybody would draw, and in fact have drawn, that they have made issue with the executive of the State, in this appointment, I am much mistaken.”<sup>31</sup>

One final testimony to Gooding's job as Chief Engineer was from a Swiss engineer named C. W. Culmann, who in 1850 made a world tour examining engineering works. He took a trip on the Illinois and Michigan Canal and was favorably impressed. “The canal is only two years old, and is exceptionally well built, all engineering is heartily and expertly executed. Not a trace of slovenly, sloppy work could be found here, which is so characteristic of some American construction.”<sup>32</sup>

However, this political donnybrook did have long-term, serious consequences for the canal. It created a coterie of Democratic politicians who were not interested in protecting this public project. It appears fairly clear that in 1851 when railroad charters were being distributed by the politicians in Springfield, some of them made sure that the Rock Island Railroad got a charter that allowed it to run parallel to and in direct competition to the Illinois and Michigan Canal. It ran through every town on the canal from Joliet to La Salle, and in many places the railroad runs right next to the canal. The motives for giving such a favorable charter seems to have been that since the canal was beyond the control of the politicians, there was more personal benefit to them to dish it for the rewards the railroads were distributing. Despite the fact that the Rock Island cut into a commercial empire created by the canal out of the frontier, and that the canal's passenger business was bought out by the railroad in 1853, the canal still offered the state an efficient and cheap freight carrier. In fact, its freight rate forced the railroad to lower theirs in those months the canal operated.

The continued success of the canal, despite the Springfield road blocks, is due in part to Gooding's continued tenure as secretary, and his close association with the President of the Board of Trustees, Capt. W. Swift. Both retained their positions until 1871, when the canal, having repaid all costs, was turned over to state control under a politically appointed group of Canal Commissioners. Within ten years canal revenue declined, and with it, upkeep and usage. By the end of the century as a viable commercial artery, it was done for, although the last commercial trip down the canal occurred in 1914.

While Gooding was Secretary of the Board of Trustees, he pursued other engineering interests. In the 1850s he submitted plans for a tunnel under the Chicago River at State Street; it was, however, never built.<sup>33</sup>

His principal interest was the canal, and he supported various efforts to enlarge it on the lines originally planned. There was talk during the Civil War of enlarging it to take gun boats to fight the South or Great Britain or whatever else came along. Congress in 1866 ordered a survey, and Gooding in conjunction with General James Wilson made a report on this survey in 1868. This report recommended a canal 160 feet wide

with locks 350 feet long and 75 feet wide. The cost would have to be born by the United States government, which was interested in surveys, but was little interested in the financing of such a project.

In 1871 the City of Chicago hired Gooding to help design a deep cut on the Illinois and Michigan Canal that would reverse the flow of the Chicago River and send pure Lake Michigan water in unlimited quantities rushing down state, thus purging the Chicago River of its sewage and cleaning the waters of the canal. The major purpose of this work was to clean the Chicago River, but to Gooding it meant more water power and more industry, particularly in the Lockport-Joliet area. He felt that from the first lock at Lockport “to the head of Joliet Lake a few miles below Joliet, would be a continuous manufacturing city.”<sup>34</sup>

Inspired by this faith, his friend, Hiram Norton, at his grain warehouse in Lockport, carved out a tunnel underneath the canal so his plant could take water directly off the canal to run a turbine sunk eight feet below the surface of the canal. The tunnel under the canal would bring the water to a turbine leading to the Des Plaines River. This water power was used until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although the use of the canal for hydraulic power increased, it never achieved what Gooding had hoped it would. The level of Lake Michigan dropped unexpectedly and as a result, the canal became a stinking extension of the polluted Chicago River.

Gooding, though much abused by politicians, was not blind to the excellent qualities of some of that persuasion. On June 11, 1860, he wrote to Capt. Swift to reassure him that Abraham Lincoln was a better candidate than Seward, as Gooding was in close touch with the delegates at the convention, and an acquaintance of Lincoln's. He notes:

“Now whilst Mr. Lincoln is by no means Mr. Seward's equal as a Statesman, he certainly is no common man, and in natural ability doubtless superior to Mr. Seward. It must be understood in arriving at Mr. Lincoln's powers, that he was born and brought up where ignorance was the rule, that he was poor and consequently compelled to labor hard until years after he had reached man's estate. In fact he has never ceased to be a hard worker, but for nearly 30 years his labor has been mostly mental. He had done much, all that a man with a naturally strong understanding could do under the circumstances, to render the defects of his early education. He is now a good legislator, a fine lawyer, and able debater, but he is not a polished man, and yet no boor in manners as you have doubtless heard him presented. In fact, almost any sensible man like yourself, would be much pleased with his unaffected and unostentatious manners and strong good sense. A more upright, honest, straight forward man than he has been and is now, can nowhere be found.”<sup>35</sup>

Could a better, short appraisal of Lincoln be written, and this of course, before his years of glory? Gooding was always a keen observer and acute in his perceptions. George Woodruff, the first historian of Will County, wrote of Gooding in 1878.

“Besides his valuable public service, his purity of life and his urbanity, Mr. Gooding was also noticeable for his general culture and his refined taste, and the clear and lucid style of all his reports and public communications, and his imaginative and poetic taste, although his chosen profession was severe and dry.”<sup>36</sup>

In the 1870s his health began to fail, and during the winters he traveled to various southern climates to escape the Lockport winters. In 1873 he wrote about Havana, Cuba.

“On entering the church, I have observed that the ladies take a good look at the gentlemen standing in the vestibule – such a look as American ladies would consider altogether improper; but it is not so regarded here, for it is the universal custom of the Cuban and Spanish ladies to look strangers squarely in the face without an approach to a blush, even if the look be returned with interest. This is a habit – a custom of the country – which is a little disconcerting to the modest stranger, but must not be regarded as it would be with us. So let no vain fop from our frozen clime think that he is particularly captivating because the daughters of the sunny isle look hard at him. Why, even I, a septuagenarian, meet such looks in every morning’s walk, but this may be partly owing to the length of my beard rather than to any other attraction.”<sup>37</sup>

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1878, William Gooding passed away. As George Woodruff commented that he was the “firm friend” of the Illinois and Michigan Canal “from first to last.”

“...its efficient Director, and against whom no suspicion of jobbery were ever entertained. Fully a master of his profession, prepared for all emergencies, urbane in his intercourse with all, he is entitled to the grateful remembrance of every citizen of this state, to the prosperity of which he has been so largely instrumental.”<sup>38</sup>

Woodruff goes on to note that on his death:

“A large concourse of neighbors and friends, not only from Will County, but from Chicago and the entire length of the canal met at this home to pay their sincere tribute of respect to one who had filled so important position in the public service, and filled it long and well.”<sup>39</sup>

Gooding’s body was interred in the Lockport Cemetery, where he and his wife now lay buried. He left his home and his worldly possessions amounting to \$50,000 to his wife, Ann M. Gooding. He left two sons, William A. and Edward L., and five daughters: Esmelda, Ada, Ella, Ida and Anne.

### **Footnotes**

1. Greene, E. B. & Thompson, C. M. ed., Governor’s Letter Books 1840-1853, Executive Series, Vol. II, Springfield, 1911, p. 145 (note 1).
2. Woodruff, George Perrin W. N., Hill, H. H., History of Will County, Illinois, Wm. Le Baron, Jr. Co. 1878, Chicago, p. 253.
3. The Biographical Encyclopedia of Illinois of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Galaxy Publishing Co., Philadelphia 1875, pp. 85-86.
4. Kilbour, John (compiled by), “Tenth Annual Report of the Board of Canal Commissioners,” Public Documents Concerning the Ohio Canals, Columbus, Ohio, 1832, p. 14.
5. Op. cit., Woodruff, Perrin & Hill, History of Will County, pp. 420-421.
6. Ibid., p. 519.

7. Fatout, Paul, Indiana Canals, Purdue University Studies, West Lafayette, Ind., 1972, p. 62.
8. Op. cit., Biographical Encyclopedia of Illinois, p. 86.
9. Op. cit., Woodruff, et al., History of Will County, p. 303.
10. Ibid., p. 303.
11. Report of the Canal Commissioners to Governor John Tanner, Dec. 1, 1900, Springfield, 1901, p. 139.
12. Ibid., p. 154.
13. Lamb, John, Locks on the Illinois and Michigan Canal, Illinois Canal Society, Lockport, 1981.
14. Op. Cit., Report of the Canal Commissioner 1900, p. 154.
15. William Gooding to Colonel Archer, Nov. 29, 1941: Swift Papers, Chicago Historical Society.
16. Capt. William Swift, 1800-1879, was a graduate of West Point, worked as an engineer on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canals, did a map of post routes, built the first skeleton iron tower, was president of several railroads, as well as the Illinois and Michigan Canal trustees from 1844-1871. He supported his nephew, James McNeil Whistler.
17. Colonel William Oakley (1792-1849) born in New York and came to Illinois in 1834. He was appointed State Fund Commissioner in 1839 and went to Europe to renegotiate the Internal Improvement loan. In 1843, 1844 and 1845, he made trips to Europe to try and obtain loans for the Illinois and Michigan Canal. In 1847 he was appointed Canal Trustee for the State.
18. Governor Davis (1787-1854). A lawyer and Governor of Massachusetts. Also, a Congressman and Senator from that state. In 1943 he was appointed by a group of Eastern bankers to go to Lockport and investigate the canal to see if it was worth investing in. He agreed it was, and hence the canal got the funds to finish.
19. Charles Oakley to David Leavitt, April 24, 1845, Illinois State Historical Society MSS Collection SC 743 Folder 2, Springfield, IL.
20. Lee, Grey Ed: "Diary of the Illinois-Michigan Canal Investigation 1843-1844," Papers in Illinois History and Transactions for the year 1941, Illinois State Historical Society, Springfield, 1943, pp. 50-68.
21. Gov. Ford to Capt. Swift, July 10, 1845, Swift Papers, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago.
22. Op. cit., "Benjamin Wright to the Board of the Commissioners of the Illinois and Michigan Canal, Oct. 25, 1837," Report of the Canal Commissioners 1900, p. 182.
23. Gooding to Capt. Swift, Jan. 27, 1847, Swift Papers, Chicago Historical Society.
24. Leavitt to Capt. Swift, Oct. 13, 1847, Swift Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

25. Report of the Majority of the Board of Trustees of the Illinois and Michigan Canal of a Meeting of the Subscribers Held in New York, Oct. 18, 1847, Washington, 1847.
26. Ibid., Appendix L.
27. Wm. Gooding to Capt. Swift, Dec. 11, 1847, Swift Papers, Chicago Historical Society.
28. Robert Stuart to Capt. Swift, March 14, 1848, Swift Papers, Chicago Historical Society. Stuart had worked for Astor and the American Fur Co. He became Secretary to the Canal Trustees in 1845 and held that post until he died in October 1848.
29. Oakley to Swift, June 3, 1848, Stuart Papers, Chicago Historical Society.
30. Op. cit., Greene & Thompson, Governor's Letter Book, p. 149.
31. Ibid., Greene & Thompson, pp. 194-198.
32. Culmann, C. W., Culmann's Notes on his Journey to U.S.A. in 1850, from a MSS in ETH-Library, Zurich, Switzerland.
33. p. 369 Andreas, A.T. History of Cook County Illinois Chicago, 1884.
34. p. 305, Woodruff, Geo. et al. History of Will County op. cit.
35. William Gooding to Capt. Swift, June 11, 1860 Swift Papers Chicago Historical Society.
36. p. 305 George Woodruff et al. History of Will County op. cit.
37. Will County Courier, May 27, 1874.
38. p. 301, Geo. Woodruff et al. History of Will County op. cit.
39. p. 302, Woodruff, Ibid.

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Also see CANAL HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: "Illinois and Michigan Canal." *Towpaths to Tugboats: A History of American Canal Engineering*. American Canal Society, (1982): 44-47.