

canton loop

illinois river country nature trail



illinois river country 



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nature trail
connecting great lakes to great rivers

Illinois River Country

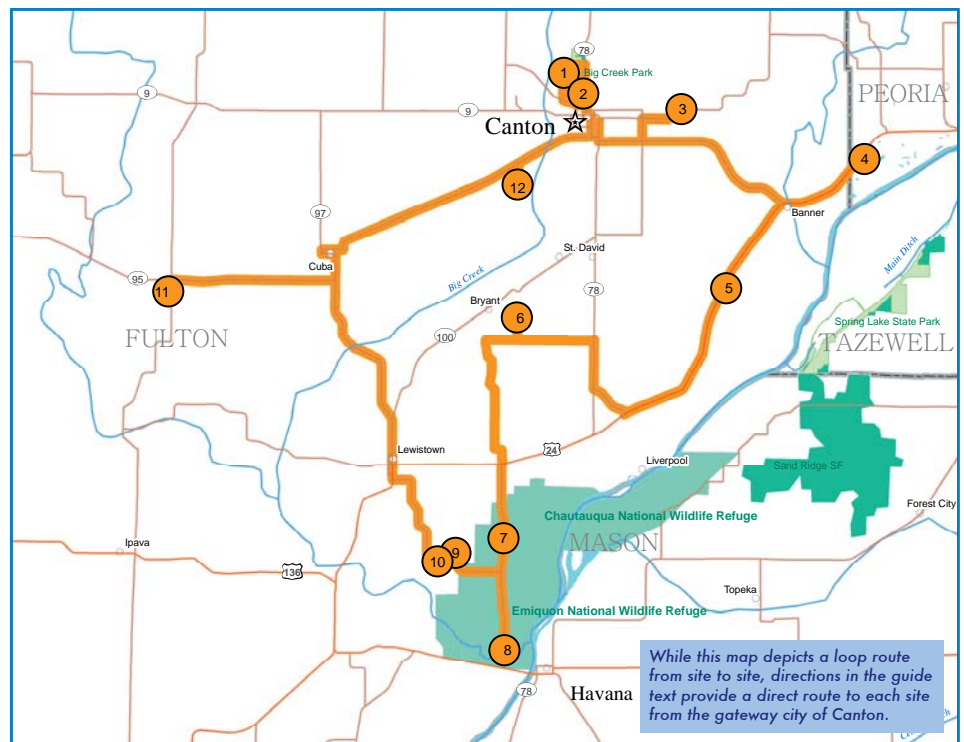
The Illinois River Country Nature Trail unites 100+ nature-based destinations in the Illinois River Valley beginning in Ottawa and ending 140 miles south in Havana.

The trail showcases great places where visitors and residents alike can go to discover and experience the nature of the region. From hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, canoeing, wetlands, gardens, birding, and watching wildlife, the possibilities for adventure are endless.

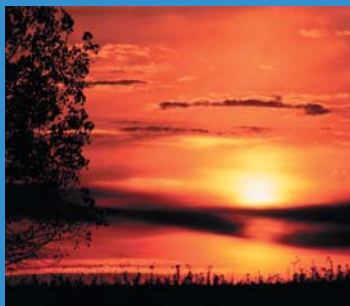
As it follows the Illinois River south, the trail travels through a mixture of backwater lakes, bottomland forests, floodplain wetlands, upland forest, savanna and some of the country's last remaining tallgrass prairies. The river and these adjacent habitats provide an ideal environment for diverse birds, butterflies and other wildlife as well as numerous plant communities native to the valley. The Illinois River Country Nature Trail will guide you through the Valley to some of Illinois' most treasured, natural gems.

Canton and surrounding towns are steeped in the arts and crafts tradition for which Fulton County's "Spoon River Country" is known. Down at this latitude, Illinois River backwater marshes and shallow lakes dominate the landscape. Banner Marsh Fish & Wildlife Area provides an excellent example of this watery ecosystem.

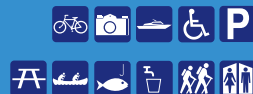
Artistically, one of the best interpreters of this area's aquatic biology is sculptor Bill Swango. If time permits, take the opportunity to make an appointment to view his work, which is mostly executed in black walnut. The hardwood forest which surrounds Spoon River College is another natural jewel which should not be missed. Thankfully, the college has ensured protection for this valuable area by designating it as an arboretum.



While this map depicts a loop route from site to site, directions in the guide text provide a direct route to each site from the gateway city of Canton.



site: one
 site access: free, fee for fishing & boating
 gps: n 40.57854; w 90.04823
 site contact: 309.647.4702
 or 309.647.1345
www.cantonpark.org



Lakeland Park

directions

From the intersection of SR (State Route) 78/N Main St. and SR 9/W Locust St. in Canton, go north on SR 78/N Main St. for 1.6 miles. Turn left (west) on Lakeland Park Drive and go approximately 0.8 miles to the park on the right.

description

Measuring nearly 600 acres in size, Canton's Lakeland Park is a prime example of the possibilities involved in restoring ecological integrity to strip mining sites. Much of the park's terrain is tallgrass prairie habitat. In those sections which have been allowed to restore themselves, grassland birds such as meadowlark, sparrows, Red-winged Blackbirds, American Woodcock, Bobolink, and others frolic in the prairie wildflowers. Look also for butterflies and dragonflies, especially within those grassland sites adjacent to the lakes.

Residents and visitors alike can take advantage of the park's five lakes, hard-surfaced walking/biking trails, boat launching facilities, fishing piers, and lake overlooks. Another favorite pastime among locals is "catfish feeding" from the chute bridge between Bond and Fitch lakes. Small bags of catfish food are sold at the concession stand.

Liverpool Riverfront

The community of Liverpool was founded in 1836 as a commodity loading site for Illinois River freight boats destined for markets in Chicago to the north and St. Louis to the south. Prior to the construction of a levee system on the river, Liverpool was basically situated on an island, with the Illinois River on the south and east, and flooded backwater lands to the north and west.

Amid bountiful fish and waterfowl habitat, Liverpool was also known for its angling and hunting guides. Chicago's infamous Al Capone owned a vacation home in Liverpool which he used for fishing and hunting trips.

three

? information

P parking

restrooms

driving trail

handicap accessible

boat accessible

cabins/lodge

camping

canoeing

food

picnic area

viewing area

hiking trails

visitors center

drinking fountain

fishing area

beach area

lookout tower

biking

swimming

Photo and line art credits

Cover: clockwise from top left: Lotus, Kelvin Sampson; gourds, Bill Fontenot/FERMATA, Inc. (BF); White-tailed Deer, Jim Miller; Tundra Swan, State Journal Register/Chris Young; Bald Eagle, Wildlife Prairie State Park; dragonflies, Jim Miller; Green Heron, Jim Miller; owl, Kevin Wright; Page 3: Song Sparrow, Jim Miller; Lakeland Park, Kevin Wright; Woodcock, Kevin Wright; line art, USFWS; Page 4: Big Creek Park, BF; Largemouth Bass, USDA/Kevin Hammond; Canton Lake, BF; Line art, USFWS; Page 5: Prairie Dock, Kelvin Sampson; lotus, Kelvin Sampson; Common Yellowthroat, USFWS; line art, Mark Mohlenbrock/NRCS; Page 6: Great Blue Heron, Jim Miller; Monarch, Kevin Wright; Great Egret, Jim Miller; line art, Mark Mohlenbrock/NRCS; Page 7: Wild Turkey, Ted Lee Eubanks/FERMATA, Inc.; Emiquon Preserve, Kelvin Sampson; Page 8: Canada Geese, State Journal Register/Chris Young; Spoon River, Kevin McGuire; line art, USFWS; Page 9: Dickson Mounds Museum, Kelvin Sampson; milkweed, BF; Page 10: Orchard Hill Farm, BF; gourd, BF; corn, USDA; Bill Swango's Wildlife Art Gallery (BSWAG), Cindy Arnett; BSWAG, Cindy Arnett; Page 11: Pileated Woodpecker, Jim Miller; Prothonotary Warbler, Jim Miller; Spoon River College, BF; line art, USFWS; Back Cover: line art, USFWS; Emiquon Preserve, Michael Jeffords.

The symbols used here are those of the various signing (official and unofficial) used by the Forest Service in marking recreation and other accommodations throughout the national forests.



site: two, site access: free, gps: n 40.56882;
w 090.03615, site contact: 309.647.1345,
www.cantonpark.org

Big Creek Park



The park hosts numerous special programs throughout the year, such as a senior arts and crafts group, a "Spook Trail" during the Halloween season, and disc golf tournaments, among others.

directions

From the intersection of SR (State Route) 78/N Main St. and SR 9/W Locust St. in Canton, go north on SR 78/N. Main St. for 0.7 miles to the entrance of Big Creek Park on the left side of the road.

description

Big Creek Park was the first property purchased by the Canton Park District for park development. A scenic drive winds through the park's gently rolling, oak-hickory-maple forest, an island amid the adjacent urban thoroughfares. In addition to its scenic beauty, the park also features a hiking trail, lighted tennis courts, skate park, disc golf, picnic shelter, swimming pool, bocce ball court, and senior/teen center.

The park also hosts numerous special programs throughout the year, such as a senior arts and crafts group which meets every Friday 12pm-3pm at the Senior Center, a "Spook Trail" during the Halloween season, and disc golf tournaments, among others.



site: three, site access: free; fee, gps:
n 40.56127; w 89.97540, site contact: park:
309.647.0288, campground: 309.647.9600

Canton Lake



directions

From the intersection of SR (State Route) 78/N Main St. and SR 9/W Locust St. in Canton, go east on SR 78/E Locust St. for 0.4 miles. Turn south (right) on SR 78/N 5th Ave. and then make an immediate left (east) on E CR (County Road) 27/E Chestnut St. Go 3.0 miles to Canton Lake located on the left.

description

Located just east of Canton, the 250-acre Canton Lake's lovely, wooded, 13-mile shoreline possesses a public campground and boat launch, as well as private residences. Open April 15-October 15, the campground offers full-hookup sites and a restroom/shower facility. A nice sandy beach is conveniently located near the campground.

Peoria area fishermen will tell you that Canton Lake's fish are the best tasting in the region, attributing it to the lake's cold spring source. Bluegill, crappie, muskie, Largemouth Bass, and catfish are all there for the taking (with a valid Illinois fishing license). Please note that a boating permit from the city is required at Canton Lake.



site: four, site access: free, gps: n 40.53741; w 89.86183,
site contact: 309.647.9184, [http://dnr.state.il.us/
Lands/Landmgt/PARKS/R1/banner.htm](http://dnr.state.il.us/Lands/Landmgt/PARKS/R1/banner.htm)



Banner Marsh State Fish & Wildlife Area

directions

From the intersection of SR (State Route) 78/N Main St. and SR 9/W Locust St. in Canton, go east on SR 9/E Locust St., following SR 9 southeast for 8.0 miles to US 24 in the town of Banner. Go north (left) on US 24 for 3.0 miles to the main entrance to Banner Marsh on the right.

description

Purchased in the 1980s by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, this 4,363-acre complex of freshwater marshes, shallow lakes, and deepwater habitat, boasts over 100 individual bodies of water which offer some of Illinois' most sought after fishing. Banner Marsh serves as a major holding area for migrating waterfowl, Osprey, Bald Eagle, and the exotic Mute Swan, as well as many songbirds such as Gray Catbird, Common Yellowthroat, and American Goldfinch.

American lotus, a striking native water lily, shows pastel-yellow blooms all summer long, and the distinctive seed heads of cattails fill out by mid-summer. Look for the shy American Bittern and its diminutive cousin, the Least Bittern, amid cattail colonies. Perhaps the most beautiful of the local wildflowers is swamp milkweed, with its lush pink flowers. Swamp milkweed is also an important host plant for the Monarch Butterfly, which inhabits the marsh during spring and fall migration. Look for this as well as Viceroy and Spangled Fritillary butterflies.

American lotus, a striking native water lily, shows pastel-yellow blooms all summer long and the distinctive seed heads of cattails fill out by mid-summer.



site: five, site access: free; fee, gps: n 40.47652;
w 89.94776, site contact: 309.647.9184,
<http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/Landmgt/parks/r1/rice.htm>



Rice Lake State Fish & Wildlife Area

The Rice Lake wetland complex is composed of 5,660 acres featuring numerous shallow floodplain lakes and bottomland forest habitats.

directions

From the intersection of SR 78/N Main St. and SR 9/W Locust St. in Canton, go east on SR 9/E Locust St., following SR 9 for 8.0 miles to US 24 in the town of Banner. Go southwest (right) on US 24 for 3.3 miles to Rice Lake on the left.

description

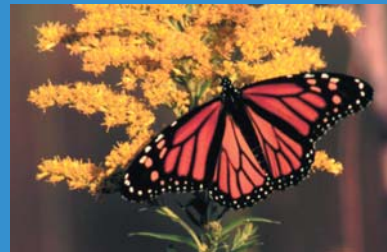
Owned and operated by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Rice Lake wetland complex is composed of 5,660 acres featuring numerous shallow floodplain lakes and bottomland forest habitats. These forested areas feature large, mature stands of American elm, silver maple, cottonwood, and black willow, often lined at the edges with native hibiscus colonies. Check the expansive mudflat near the north boat launch for Great Blue Herons, Ring-billed Gulls, and assorted plovers and sandpipers.

Mature planted specimens of tulip poplar, black cherry, and other hardwood trees surround the lake's headquarters. Here, right across from the headquarters' small marina, visitors can study the large baldcypress tree, which is probably one of the northernmost specimens of its kind.



site: six, site access: fee; call for area restrictions,
gps: n 40.46284; w 90.07748,
contact: 309.668.2931

Fulton County Camping and Recreation Area



directions

From the intersection of SR (State Route) 78/N Main St. and SR 9/W Locust St. in Canton, follow SR 78 south out of town for approximately 4.2 miles. Turn west (right) on SR 100 and go 3.0 miles to Conservation Rd. Turn south (left) and go 0.8 miles to the site.

description

Located between Lewistown and the community of St. David, the 440-acre Fulton County Camping and Recreation Area includes 150 cumulative acres of surface water spread throughout a myriad of ponds, sloughs, and lakes. The site is managed by Fulton County for recreational use.

Besides camping, fishing, and hiking, this site also hosts good “water birding” and other nature study opportunities. In particular, Little Sister Lake often hosts butterflies, dragonflies, and songbirds along its brushy shoreline, as well as geese, herons, egrets, ducks, and other water birds on its open water.



site: seven, site access: please call ahead for site access, gps: n 40.35838; w 90.08587, site contact: TNC Emiquon Preserve; 309.547.2730, <http://nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/illinois/preserves/art1112.html>



The Nature Conservancy Emiquon Preserve

directions

From the intersection of SR (State Route) 78/N Main St. and SR 9/W Locust St. in Canton, follow SR 78 south out of town 10.9 miles. Turn west (right) on US 24/SR 78 and go 3.1 miles. Turn south (left) on SR 78/SR 97 for 1.4 miles to The Nature Conservancy’s Emiquon Preserve.

description

“We were looking for a place to begin the restoration of the Illinois River, and the river led us to Emiquon,” remarks Doug Blodgett, director for The Nature Conservancy’s (TNC) Illinois River project. To that end, TNC has embarked on one of the largest wetland restoration projects in the entire U.S. When complete, this project will be used as a model for restoration of the entire Illinois River system.

Scientists believe that beneath the nearly 7,000 acres of plowed cropland TNC acquired, lies a dormant seed bank of prairie, hardwood forest, and aquatic plants just waiting for re-exposure to natural elements. Once the river is reconnected to the site, the backwater habitats will almost restore themselves, attracting even more of the region’s hundreds of mammal, bird, butterfly, and fish species. It is hoped that the populations of some of Illinois’ rarest species, including the River Otter, Paddlefish, and Western Ribbon Snake will return.

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seven

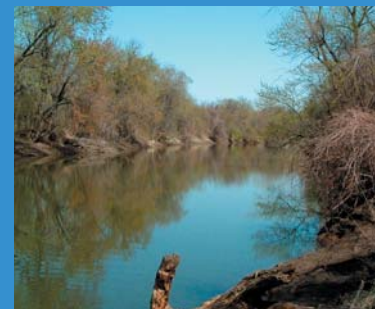
site: eight

site access: free

gps: n 40.30547; w 90.08533

site contact: Chautauqua NWR; 309.535.2290

<http://midwest.fws.gov/illinoisriver/emq.html>



Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge

Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) represents a massive effort undertaken by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and other partners in restoring and managing native habitats throughout the backwaters and floodplain of the Illinois River.

directions

From the intersection of SR (State Route) 78/N Main St. and SR 9/W Locust St. in Canton, follow SR 78 south out of town 10.9 miles. Turn west (right) on US 24/SR 78 and go 3.1 miles. Turn south (left) on SR 78/SR 97 for 6.1 miles to the Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge parking area on the left.

description

Derived from an Indian name for “spoon,” Emiquon refers to the historic plethora of freshwater mussels within this region of the Illinois River, the shells of which were used as spoons by early Native Americans. Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) represents a massive effort undertaken by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and other partners in restoring and managing native habitats throughout the backwaters and floodplain of the Illinois River. Historically, the middle reaches of the Illinois River’s floodplain supported a vast mosaic of clear, shallow lakes, sloughs, bottomland hardwood forests, and tallgrass prairies.

Managed by Illinois River National Wildlife Refuge, the historical hydrology on the recently-acquired Emiquon NWR is being gradually restored, resulting in ever-increasing patches of shallowly-flooded agricultural lands. Visitors equipped with spotting scopes should carefully scan these newly-flooded lands for sandpipers and other shorebirds, especially during spring and fall migration periods. Likewise, ducks and other waterfowl make use of the refuge during the winter months.

Perhaps the best introduction to the Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge would include a hike down the Frank C. Bellrose Nature Trail. There, not only birds and butterflies, but also mammals such as Striped Skunk, Raccoon, Opossum, and White-tailed Deer may be spotted along the trail.

site: nine

site access: free; 8:30-5:00 daily

gps: n 40.35149; w 090.11556

site contact: 309.547.3721

www.museum.state.il.us/ismsites/dickson



Dickson Mounds Museum

directions

From the intersection of SR (State Route) 78/N Main St. and SR 9/W Locust St. in Canton, follow SR 78 south out of town 10.9 miles. Turn west (right) on US 24/SR 78 and go 3.1 miles. Turn south (left) on SR 78/SR 97 and go 3.5 miles to the brown Dickson Mounds sign. Go west on E CR (County Road) 9 for 1.5 miles to Dickson Mounds Road and the museum located at 10956 N Dickson Mounds Road.

description

One of the major on-site archeological museums in the country, Dickson Mounds Museum also interprets the ecology of the Illinois River's Emiquon region. The site itself lies where two major ecosystems meet: The Upper Mississippi River-Illinois River Bottomlands, and the Western Forest-Prairie complex. Turning onto the museum's entry road, it's easy to visualize this natural division, with the bottomlands situated due east and the forest-prairie complex lying to the west. Thus, nature-oriented visitors have the luxury of exploring both ecosystems from this single site.

The museum's observation deck provides an excellent starting point for visitors. From there, it's easy to note the habitat differences within the site. The oak-hickory forest creeps into the facility's parking area, and a newly restored prairie exists adjacent to the Eveland Village site to the south. The museum grounds are substantial, and both forest and prairie plants and animals abound at the site.

Inside the museum, exhibits explore 12,000 years of human experience in the Illinois River Valley, including complex societies of native peoples who inhabited the site all the way back to the Ice Age! The museum also offers a hands-on discovery center, resource center, a gift shop featuring works by Illinois artisans, and a coffee shop/snack bar.

Inside the museum, exhibits explore 12,000 years of human experience in the Illinois River Valley, including complex societies of native peoples who inhabited the site all the way back to the Ice Age!





site: ten, site access: free; hrs: 9am-5pm

gps: n 40.34746; w 90.12679,

site contact: 309.547.3221



Orchard Hill Farm



directions

From the intersection of SR (State Route) 78/N Main St. and SR 9/W Locust St. in Canton, go west on SR 9/W Locust St. for 8.4 miles. Turn south (left) onto SR 97 and go 12.5 miles to SR 100/US 24 in Lewistown. Continue south on SR 100/US 24 for 0.5 miles. Turn east (left) on Avenue L/CR (County Road) 9/CR 1350N, traveling 3.6 miles to the orchard.

description

Orchard Hill Farm has been producing fine crops of fruits and vegetables since the 1930s. Opting for new and more peaceful careers, Ken and Sharon Thompson purchased the farm in 1987. The 125-acre farm contains 50 acres of row crops, 40 acres of woodland, and about 30 acres of orchards. In addition to fresh produce sales, they also operate a small bakery, selling Sharon's famous fruit pies, dumplings, and breads. Orchard hours are 9am to 5pm from mid-July through mid-November.



site: eleven, site access: free; reservations

required, gps: n 40.47515; w 90.29339,

site contact: 309.783.3283



Bill Swango's Wildlife Art Gallery



directions

From the intersection of SR (State Route) 78/N Main St. and SR 9/W Locust St. in Canton, go west on SR 9/W Locust St. for 8.4 miles, then turn south (left) on SR 97. Go 5.7 miles through Cuba, turning west (right) on CR (County Road) 95 and going 5.2 miles to Smithfield. At Smithfield, turn south (left) onto CR 2, turning west (right) on State St. Follow State St. 2 blocks to the Red Brick School.



description

"Memories of things I did as a kid, especially with my dad, have had a great deal of influence on my art and my life," states Fulton County sculptor Bill Swango, who fashions incredible wildlife pieces of solid walnut and clay. For all his talent, Swango is quick to credit his long and successful career to his wife Shirley, who helps in arranging his pieces and getting the correct colors on his painted works.

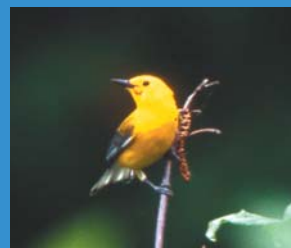
Swango begins his wood carvings with a chain saw, followed by a painstaking series of small saws, chisels, grinders, gouges, and files. Final finishing is accomplished with dental tools and fine sandpaper. The "Red Brick Schoolhouse" in the village of Smithfield serves as Swango's gallery. Opened in 1917, this classic 2-story building once housed grades 1-11 and was only recently (1990) closed to classes. Please call for an appointment.



site: twelve, site access: free, gps: n 40.52579;
w 90.07706, site contact: Spoon
River College; 309.647.9184



Spoon River College Arboretum



directions

From the intersection of SR (State Route) 78/N Main St. and SR 9/W Locust St. in Canton, go west on SR 9/W Locust St. for 2.6 miles, turning south (left) onto CR 22. Continue down CR 22 for just over 2 miles to Spoon River College on the left. The arboretum entrance is located 150 yards north of the main access road to the college, on the northern edge of the campus.

description

Nestled along the edge of an old growth oak-hickory forest, Spoon River College lies 4 miles southwest of Canton. It is a public community college and hosts a network of nature trails along with a 10-acre arboretum.

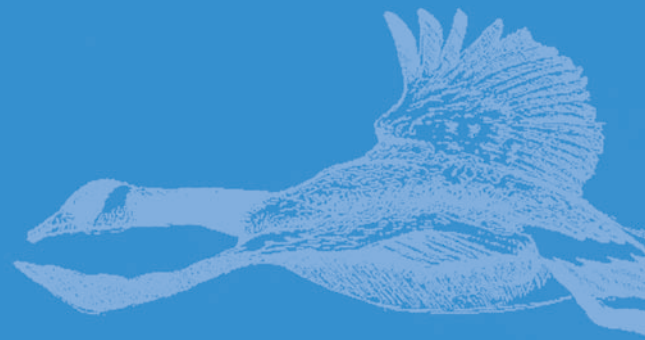
With the Ezra J. Clark outdoor theatre as its centerpiece, Spoon River College Arboretum is a unique natural resource that has been developed into a rustic educational laboratory. The site possesses 30+ labeled trees, all native. Encircled by the Lake Point Trail, the lake at the western edge of the arboretum often holds geese and ducks. Look for woodpeckers and flycatchers, along with numerous woodland songbirds such as vireos, chickadees, titmice, thrushes, and warblers in the forested area.

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Bernadotte Dam on the Spoon River

Located on Central Illinois' legendary Spoon River, the little community of Bernadotte (established 1826) is the site of the only dam on the river, a small and quaint structure which was constructed in 1830 for local grain mill use. The dam was revamped during World War II to create a water supply to the military's nearby Camp Ellis.

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↓ illinois river country

Canton is rich with history and has been home to citizens of great character and ambition, including Charles Duryea, inventor of the first practical automobile, Elizabeth Magie, who developed the game of Monopoly, and William Parlin, an agricultural equipment innovator during the 1800s. Parlin's legacy lives on through a generous endowment supporting Canton's exceptional park district. The Canton Park District manages more than 1600 acres of park and open space that enhance the quality of life within the community, including: Wallace Park, the park district's operational hub; Big Creek Park; Athletic Park; and Lakeland Park. For more information, please contact the Canton Area Chamber of Commerce at chamber@cantonillinois.org.



ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.