

Wabash and Erie Canal trade route collection S1055

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Rare Books and Manuscripts
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Summary Information

Repository	Rare Books and Manuscripts
Title	Wabash and Erie Canal trade route collection
Date	1939
Extent	0.01 Cubic feet 1 folder
Language	English
Text [Folder]	S1055

Preferred Citation

Wabash and Erie Canal trade route collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Indiana State Library

Historical Note

In March 1827, Congress provided a land grant to the state of Indiana to provide the means to build the Wabash and Erie Canal. Work began at Fort Wayne in 1832 and by 1835 was completed to Largo, Indiana. The original plan was to go as far as Lafayette and then terminate. In 1836 pressure from area businessmen, including Calvin Fletcher, led to the passing of the Mammoth Internal Improvements Act, this extended the Wabash and Erie Canal to Terre Haute. Construction reached Logansport in 1838, Lafayette in 1841, and Terre Haute in 1849. Segments also extended eastward towards Ohio, and the canal opened in Toledo in 1843. The final steps connected the Terre Haute section with the twenty-mile stretch of canal leading from Evansville (the Evansville section had been completed by 1839). This connection to Evansville was completed by 1853 by way of the abandoned Crosscut canal works and the old proposed Central Canal Route. The full route of the Wabash and Erie Canal measured 468 miles long, making it the second longest canal in the world.

Economically, the canal was not a success. The Panic of 1837 caused a depression in 1839 that led to workers' strikes and statewide debt. Expensive canal projects began to slow or die and public sentiment began to turn away from them. In 1846 Charles Butler, representing the canal bondholders, proposed that the state turn responsibility of the canal over to the bondholders in exchange for bondholders assuming half the debt and the land granted for construction. Butler also proposed that the state issue new bonds at 4 percent yearly interest for the other half of the debt, with an option for the state to redeem the certificates at its discretion. This ended state control of the canal and put the Wabash and Erie Canal in the hands of private trustees by 1847.

The most successful years for the canal were between 1847–1856. Its peak year was 1852 when tolls reached \$193,400. Eventually, cheaper, faster, and more convenient trains made the canal obsolete. Portions south of Terre Haute were closed by 1860; the decline continued until 1876 when the canal was officially auctioned off by the trustees and closed.

Sources:

Schmidt, Carolyn I. *Wabash & Erie Canal: Canal Society of Indiana*, March 27–29, 1998. Vincennes, IN: The Final Link. Fort Wayne, IN: Canal Society of Indiana, 1998.

Schmidt, Robert & Carolyn. Canal Society of Indiana (website). www.indcanal.org

Indiana Historical Society: <http://www.indianahistory.org/our-collections/collection-guides/wabash-and-erie-canal-company.pdf>

Scope and Contents

This collection includes a manuscript from author Fred Perry ranging from 1763 to 1897 regarding the trade route along the Wabash and Erie Canals.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged by subject.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Rare Books and Manuscripts

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Legal title, copyright, and literary rights reside with Rare Books and Manuscripts, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, IN. All requests to publish or quote from manuscripts must be submitted to Rare Books and Manuscripts.

Custodial History

This collection was received by Rare Books and Manuscripts as a transfer from Logansport Public Library on October 1939.

Accruals

No further additions are expected.

Processing Information

Collection processing and EAD finding aid created 2015/04/09 by Linda Gellert.

Controlled Access Headings

Geographic Name(s)

- Wabash and Erie Canal (Ind.)

Personal Name(s)

- Perry, Fred

Subject(s)

- Manuscript
- Trade routes