



## Marker Text

On February 22, 1832, ground was broken two blocks north for the canal, which would link Lake Erie at Toledo with the Ohio River at Evansville. Jordan Vigus, Canal Commissioner, Charles W. Ewing, Samuel Hanna, and Elias Murray participated in the ceremony.

## Report

The marker text lacks context, leaving the reader with a number of questions. However, this marker certainly meets the current guidelines for state and national significance due to the economic impact upon the state. As a result of the canals, thousands of jobs were provided, hundreds of businesses were created, and Hoosier products were sent beyond the borders of the state.

The date, February 22, 1832 is correct, supported by a March 2, 1832, *Cass County Times* newspaper article.<sup>1</sup> The location, “two blocks north,” is questionable. The same *Cass County Times* article simply states, [Vigus and others] “. . . repair to the most convenient point on the St. Joseph feeder line . . .<sup>2</sup> to ceremoniously break the ground.” The St. Joseph line is mentioned in the 1830 chief engineer’s report which states, “. . . it began necessary to ascertain at what point on the St. Joseph’s river a feeder could be taken out to the best advantage, for supplying the summit level with water. After a close examination of the river, for several miles above its confluence with the St. Mary’s, a point about six miles above Fort Wayne was selected, as being the most suitable for its commencement.”<sup>3</sup> Without further research, the location given in the text cannot be determined as the actual location.

The statement linking Lake Erie at Toledo with the Ohio at Evansville is a version of IHB’s standard statement on all of the Wabash and Erie Canal markers. This statement is supported by Indiana laws which show the intent of the canal going to Evansville.<sup>4</sup> Specific canal commissioners’ reports and newspaper accounts prove the text.<sup>5</sup> The *Cass County Times* newspaper article confirms that Jordan Vigus,<sup>6</sup> Charles W. Ewing,<sup>7</sup> Samuel Hanna,<sup>8</sup> and Elias Murray<sup>9</sup> were all in attendance at the ground breaking ceremony on February 22, 1832. Perhaps more research should be done into roles each of these men played in the building of the Wabash and Erie Canal.

## Additional Sources

Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette, Purdue University Press, 1985) Digitized, June 2, 2010.

Charles R. Poinsett, *Fort Wayne During the Canal Era 1828-1855* (Indianapolis, Indiana Historical Bureau, 1969).

## Links

Canal Society of Indiana, accessed <http://www.indcanal.org/>



02.1992.2 Wabash and Erie Canal Groundbreaking  
Allen  
Marker Text Review Report  
06/28/2012

*The Wabash and Erie Canal: Fort Wayne on the Old Canal*, accessed  
<http://archive.org/details/wabasheriecanalf00publ>

The Wabash and Erie Canal through Huntington, Indiana, accessed  
<http://www.terrypepper.com/w&e/boats.htm>

Welcome to the Wabash and Erie Canal, [Delphi] accessed <http://www.wabashanderiecanal.org/>

Welcome to Princeton, accessed [http://princeton-indiana.com/pages/history/history-pages/wabash\\_and\\_erie\\_canal.htm](http://princeton-indiana.com/pages/history/history-pages/wabash_and_erie_canal.htm)

Wabash and Erie Canal Trails, Evansville, accessed  
<http://southernindianatrails.freehostia.com/eriecanal.htm>

Canal Mania in Indiana, accessed <http://www.in.gov/history/2409.htm#transportation>

Canal Construction in Indiana, accessed <http://www.in.gov/history/2409.htm#transportation>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Cass County Times*, March 2, 1832

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> J. Ridgeway, Jr., “Engineer’s Report to the General Assembly of the State of Indiana,” December 18, 1832, *Report of Canal Commissioners*, December 19, 1830, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana*, Fifteenth Session, December 9, 1830, Appendix C.

<sup>4</sup> “An Act to grant a certain quantity of land to the state of Indiana, for the purpose of aiding said state in operating a canal to connect the waters of the Wabash river to those of Lake Erie,” Approved March 2, 1827, Nineteenth Congress of the United States, Session II, Ch. 56, 57, *A Century of Lawmaking for a new nation: U.S. Congressional Document and Debates*, Accessed <http://memory.loc.gov/>; “An Act to establish a canal to connect the navigable waters of the Wabash river with the navigable waters of the Miami of Lake Erie,” Approved January 5, 1828, , *Laws of the State of Indiana passed and published at the Twelve Session of the General Assembly* (Indianapolis, Smith and Bolton, 1828) pp. 10-12; *Report from the Secretary of War*, Twenty-Second Congress, First Session; October 17, 1831, p. 143; “On March 2, 1827, Congress provided a land grant to encourage Indiana to build the Wabash & Erie Canal. The original plan was to link the navigable water of the Maumee with the Wabash through the seven mile portage at Fort Wayne. Work began five years later on February 22, 1832 in Fort Wayne. Construction proceeded west as the canal reached Huntington by 1835, Logansport in 1838, and Lafayette in 1841. Work was also performed east toward the Ohio line, but the canal did not open to Toledo until 1843. A second federal land grant enabled the canal to reach Terre Haute by 1849.” Canal Society of Indiana, accessed <http://www.indcanal.org/canals-wabash-erie.html>.



---

<sup>5</sup> Indiana Historical Bureau's standard statement. "Canal Society of Indiana," accessed <http://www.indcanal.org/canals-wabash-erie.html>. States, ". . . By 1853, Wabash and Erie Canal, America's longest at approximately 460 miles, linked Lake Erie at Toledo, Ohio with Ohio River at Evansville. . . ."; "The Erie Canal," accessed <http://www.eriecanal.org/> States, ". . . The resulting canal was completed in 1918, and is 12 to 14 feet deep, 120 to 200 feet wide, and 363 miles long, from Albany to Buffalo. . . ."; Canal Lands, Ohio State Parks, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, <http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/parks/canallands/canalhistory/tabid/22230/Default.aspx>. States, ". . . On July 3, 1827, two years after the ground breaking, Governor Trimble and the canal commission boarded a canal boat in Akron and the next day arrived in Cleveland. By 1832 the entire 308 mile route of the Ohio-Erie was open to traffic. . . ." *Terre Haute Wabash Courier*, July 13, 1850. ". . . We have the pleasure of announcing that an important division of forty-two miles, between Terre Haute and Point Commerce, had been completed and water let into it. We now have a continuous canal-the whole in navigable order-from Toledo to Point Commerce, Indiana, a distance of three hundred and fifty-two miles. Point Commerce is one hundred and ten miles [to ] Evansville on the Ohio river, the southern terminus of the Wabash and Erie Canal-the longest canal in the United States. . . ."; "Resident Engineer's Report to Chief Engineer," December 15, 1853, *Annual Report of the Board of Internal Improvement*, December 28, 1853 (Indianapolis, Austin H. Brown, State Printer, 1853) p. 845-51. Report states, ". . . On Thursday evening, September 22, the 'Pennsylvania' charge of Capt. Sharra, arrived at Evansville, having made the first trip through the entire canal . . . ."

<sup>6</sup> *Cass County Times*, March 2, 1832; Jordan Vigus served as a canal commissioner. *Report of Canal Commissioners*, December 15, 1829, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana*, Fifteenth Session, December 7, 1839, Appendix A; *Report of Canal Commissioners*, December 19, 1830, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana*, Fifteenth Session, December 9, 1830, Appendix C; War of 1812, Roster of Ohio Soldiers, accessed <http://ohiohistory.org/resource/database/rosters.html>; Col. Jordan Vigus (1792-1869) Find A Grave Memorial, accessed <http://findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=41207739>.

<sup>7</sup> *Cass County Times*, March 2, 1832; Charles W. Ewing (1798-1843), Find a Grave Memorial, accessed <http://findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=19662613>.

<sup>8</sup> *Cass County Times*, March 2, 1832; Samuel Hanna served as a canal commissioner. *Report of Canal Commissioners*, December 15, 1829, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana*, Fifteenth Session, December 7, 1839, Appendix A; *Report of Canal Commissioners*, December 19, 1830, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana*, Fifteenth Session, December 9, 1830, Appendix C; G.W. Wood, *The Life and Character of Hon. Samuel Hanna* (Fort Wayne, T.S. Taylor & Co., 1869); Hanna's biography can be found in Wallace Brice, *History of Fort Wayne, from the Earliest Known Accounts of this Point to the Present Period* (Fort Wayne, D.W. Jones & Son, 1868)



02.1992.2 Wabash and Erie Canal Groundbreaking  
Allen  
Marker Text Review Report  
06/28/2012

---

<sup>9</sup> *Cass County Times*, March 2, 1832; Elias Murray was paid by the State of Indiana, “. . . for his services in selecting Blue Dog lands, appraising and reporting same to the canal office at Peru and Delphi . . . .”  
*Local Laws of Indiana*, January 27, 1847, p. 189.