



Marker Text

Side one:

The Huntington Landing started 120 feet west on Washington St. and continued to the lock at Cherry St. The Wabash & Erie Canal was 4 feet deep and 100 feet wide at this point. Other locks were at First St. and Byron St. The Canal was completed from Fort Wayne to Huntington on July 4, 1835, and from Toledo to Evansville, 459 miles, in 1854. The Canal preceded the railroad to Huntington by 20 years, spurring early settlement. The Canal was abandoned in 1873. [illustration of canal]

Side two:

Jefferson Street was closed to motor traffic and transformed into a landscaped and lighted walkway by private financial contributors in 1969. Jefferson Street was the Huntington segment of a pioneer route - the Fort Recovery to Goshen Road - travelled by settlers from Ohio to Lake Michigan and northwest areas in the 1830's. Here the Road bridged the Wabash & Erie Canal. [map of Wabash and Erie Canal]

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The entire length of the canal was built from 1832 to 1853.¹ Wabash and Erie Canal was the nation's longest canal² and did connect Lake Erie at Toledo with Ohio River at Evansville.³ The portion was completed from Fort Wayne to Huntington in 1835.⁴ Found in the file was a good secondary source, Tom Castaldi's, 1995 *Wabash and Erie Canal Notebook*. On page 47, Castaldi provides the exact location as the text.⁵ The description of the basin was found in Castaldi.⁶ The 1847 chief engineer's report⁷ lists all of the completed structures to that year. It describes the structures in Huntington, but does not refer to a basin. Perhaps the Wabash and Erie Canal records would have a description.

Maintenance was a constant. Literally any of the annual chief engineer's reports list decayed wooden locks that need replacing. Leaks and floods happened with regularity. Lack of rain left boats stranded for weeks at a time. In his book, *Indiana Canals*, Paul Fatout stated, "engineers soon found that keeping the canal in operation was not a simple matter. Water leaked out of bank crevices, and a heavy growth of grass in the channel required periodic mowing like a field of clover. A freshet at Fort Wayne swept away the aqueduct over the St. Mary's River. Sixteen mile below, a break in a bank drained off so much water that a packet took three days going up from Logansport, scraping bottom all the way and getting there only by the aid of another boat to "swell her through" on the wash from the blunt bow. Farmers using the towpath as a wagon road weakened banks and made them susceptible to breaks . . ."⁸

Around the middle 1840s, the chief engineer reports complain about the growing support for railroads by the Indiana Legislature. It is just a matter of carefully going through the annual reports to find the information. Newspapers also carried the pros and cons of canals vs. railroads. A look in the newspaper



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index would be helpful. Governor James Brown Ray was a staunch advocate railroads. Ray's papers include many examples of this.⁹ The statement the canal in Huntington was no longer being used in 1873 is correct.¹⁰

Additional Sources

J. Darrell Bakken, *Now that Time Has Had Its Say: A History of the Indianapolis Central Canal, 1835-2002* (Bloomington, J. Darrell Bakken, Consolidated City of Indianapolis, Department of Waterworks d/b/a Indianapolis, 2003).

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

"Wabash and Erie Canal Company Records, 1833-1837" (Bulk 1833-1862), Manuscripts and Archives Department, William Henry Smith Memorial Library, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. Collection #M 0758,OM 0392

Links

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

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

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>

Indiana Documentary Journals 1835-1909, Accessed <http://www.in.gov/library/4066.htm>

¹ "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.; *Cass County Times*, March 2, 1832, "The Commissioners of the Wabash and Erie Canal met at Fort Wayne, on the 22d ult. For the purpose of carrying into effect the requisitions of the late law of the Legislature of this State, providing for the commencement of said work prior to the 2nd day of March, 1832. . . ."; "Report of Canal Commissioners, December 14, 1832," *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana being the Seventeenth Session of the General Assembly, 1832* (Indianapolis, N. Bolton, State Printer, 1832) pp. 98-104, Accessed <http://archive.org/details/journalofhouseof183233indi>. Report states, ". . . on the 22d. day of February last, a commencement of the Wabash and Erie Canal was made"

² 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. . . ."

³ *Ibid.*, "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"

⁴ "Report of the Commissioners of the Wabash and Erie Canal," December 10, 1835. *Journal of the Senate of the State of Indiana During the Twentieth Session of the General Assembly* (Indianapolis, Bolton & Emmons, 1835) pp. 1-3. <http://archive.org/details/documentaryjourn00indi>



⁵ Thomas E. Castaldi, *Wabash and Erie Canal Notebook: Allen and Huntington Counties* (Fort Wayne, Graphik Mechanix, 1995) p. 47.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ "Report of the Chief Engineer Descriptive of the Condition on that Canal at the Commencement of the Trust," November 1, 1847, *Annual Report of the Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal to the General Assembly of the State of Indiana* (Indianapolis, John D. Defrees, State Printer, 1848) p. 223.

<http://archive.org/details/documentaryjourn1847indi>

⁸ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette, Purdue University) pp. 91-92.

⁹ Col. Thomas A. Morris, "Railroad Map of Indiana, 1850" Welcome to the World of Historic Maps, Accessed www.history-map.com/picture/002/Railroad-Indiana-map-of.htm; Map clearly shows the many railroads operating in Indiana by 1850. "River to Rail," A digital history project by the Madison-Jefferson County Public Library and the Jefferson County Historical Society. Accessed <http://mjcpl.org/rivertorail/morerail/indiana-railroads> **Bellefontaine & Indianapolis:** Begun in 1848, by 1852 it connected Indianapolis to the east and northeast. **Indiana; Central:** Begun in 1851 and completed in 1853. It ran from Indianapolis to Richmond and made the run from Terre Haute to Richmond possible; **Indianapolis & Lafayette:** The 1836 internal improvements acts included Lafayette on the Madison & Indianapolis line. Completed in 1852 it helped connect the Ohio River to Chicago; **Jeffersonville Railroad:** Chartered in 1832 but due to financial difficulties it was re-chartered and because of delays not completed until 1852. It was in direct competition with the Madison & Indianapolis and the two lines merged in 1866; **Lawrenceburg & Indianapolis:** Chartered in 1832 but not completed until 1853. Made connection between central Indiana, Cincinnati and points east; **Madison, Indianapolis & Lafayette:** Chartered in 1832, begun in 1836 and finished to Indianapolis in 1847; **New Albany & Salem:** Later called the Monon, this line was the longest in the state prior to the Civil War. It eventually connected the Ohio River to Lake Michigan and Chicago; **Ohio & Mississippi Railroad:** Spanned the southern part of Indiana from Cincinnati to Vincennes and made possible connections from Baltimore to St. Louis. It was completed in 1857; **Peru & Indianapolis:** The function of this line was to connect Indianapolis with the Wabash & Erie Canal. It was completed in 1854.

¹⁰ "Report of the Chief Engineer," January 1, 1874, *Annual Reports of the Officers of State of the State of Indiana* (Indianapolis, Sentinel Co., 1874) p. 6. Report states, "The Canal during the season of 1873 has been less productive of revenue, and conferred less benefit upon the country, and its shipping interest, than during any preceding year. The State legislation of last winter authorizing the County Boards to donate in aid of the tolls for its maintainance, [sic] will be of permanent value to the work, and is conclusive evidence of the high estimate placed upon its usefulness by the citizens of the Wabash counties. But, unfortunately, much time elapsed before the appropriation was agreed upon in some of the counties, and, as the action in each county was made dependent upon concurrent action of all the counties, it was late in the season before the repairs and renewal of decayed wooden structures, for which this money was particularly designed, was begun. No boats with through cargoes to Toledo were cleared from Miami and Wabash counties, before about the first of August. From Lafayette, and vicinity, no through cargoes were shipped during the season. The long delay enabled other lines of



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transportation to carry off the pork and grain.” Accessed
<http://archive.org/details/documentaryjourn1873indi>;
<http://archive.org/details/documentaryjourn18742indi> ; *Terre Haute Evening Gazette*, February 24,
1876; *Terre Haute Evening Gazette*, February 25, 1876, “Yesterday the Gazette gave a full account of the
sale of lands on the Wabash and Erie Canal, giving the sale of the Northern portion as an entirety to J. K.
Gapen, and sale of all the Southern portion, long since in disuse, to various parties.”