Marker Text

Constructed 1832-1853, canal was nation's longest, connection Lake Erie at Toledo with Ohio River at Evansville. Key portion in Carroll County included Deer Creek Lake Dam, constructed 1838-1840 (1 mile west). Various canal structures are still in evidence.

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.

Construction on the Wabash and Erie Canal began on February 22, 1832.1 In 1853, construction reached Evansville.2 The Wabash and Erie Canal was the longest canal in the nation.3 Deer Creek Dam4 was under construction in 1838 according the chief engineer’s report.5 The 1839 chief engineer’s report6 states, “. . . During the past season the contractors for these dams [Deer Creek and Wild Cat] have progressed with praiseworthy energy, and there is now good grounds to believe that both dams may be closed and rendered secure before the return of winter. . . .” The November 11, 1840s report of the Board of Internal Improvement7 states, “. . . the Wabash and Erie Canal is now fully ready for navigation from the State line to Lafayette. . . .” The chief engineer’s 1841 report8 states the dam is complete. The Wabash and Erie Canal Park in Delphi, Indiana has restored parts of the canal and several of its walking trails follow the old canal.9

Additional Sources


“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/


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


3 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. . . .”

5 “Engineer Report to the Board of Internal Improvement,” December 12, 1838, Report of the Board of Internal Improvement, December 19, 1838, Journal of the Senate of the State of Indiana during the Twenty-third session of the general Assembly (Indianapolis, Douglass and Noel, 1838) p 253, accessed http://archive.org/details/journalofsenateo183839ind. Report states, “. . . The dams over Deer creek and Wild Cat, I regret to say, have been advanced but little towards completion since my last report. . .

6 “Annual Report of the Chief Engineer to the Board of Internal Improvement,” November 11, 1839, Need to locate complete source. The 1838-1839 Senate Journals are confusing.

7 Report of the Board of Internal Improvement, November 30, 1840, January 13, 1840 accessed http://archive.org/details/documentaryjourn18402indi. Report states, Work was stopped on most internal improvement projects in 1839 due to lack of state funds. Indianapolis Indiana Journal, August 23, 1839, p 2 c 1; Vincennes Western Sun & General Advertiser, August 31, 1839, p 1 c 5; Indianapolis Indiana Journal, September 7, 1839, p 1 c 1; Vincennes Western Sun & General Advertiser, October 5, 1839, p 1 c 4.

8 “J. L. Williams’ Report to the Board of Internal Improvement,” November 27, 1841, Report of the Board of Internal Improvement, December 6, 1841, Doc. No. 2, Senate, December 6, 1841, Documents of the Senate at the Twenty-sixth Session of the General Assembly of the State of Indiana, 1842, accessed http://archive.org/details/documentaryjourn1841indi. Report states, “Side cut canals, for the purpose of water power at the Delphi dam, have also been constructed as required by law, and a portion of the water power on the west side of the river, has been leased, and the machinery nearly ready to operate.”