



## Marker Text

Side one:

Eel River Feeder Dam, 180 feet long and 16.5 feet high, was completed 300 yards downriver from here 1839. It was constructed to carry enough water from the river to enable navigation of boats on the proposed Crosscut Canal, included in Indiana Internal Improvement Act 1836. State halted construction of canal 1839.

Side two:

Crosscut Canal construction resumed 1847; in service 1850-circa 1861 from Terre Haute on Wabash River to Worthington on West Fork White River. Feeder Dam, deteriorated with neglect, repaired and extended to 264 feet long by 1850. Part of Wabash and Erie Canal, America's longest at approximately 460 miles; linked Lake Erie at Toledo, Ohio with Ohio River at Evansville 1853.

## Report

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.

An 1836 resident engineer reports describes the original specifications as, "The dam will be raised to a height of 15 ½ feet above low water and will be 180 feet in length."<sup>1</sup> According to an 1850 chief engineer's report, the dam was repaired and extended. The report states, ". . . the extension of the Eel River feeder dam 82 feet, another discrepancy, and the raising and repairing the old dam, the entire length will be 264 feet and a height 16 ½ feet above low water. . . ."<sup>2</sup> There are no primary sources in the administration file that prove, "the 300 yards down river from here."

The completion date of 1839 is incorrect. Although canal construction was halted in 1839,<sup>3</sup> out-going Indiana governor Noah Noble was elected to serve on the Board of Internal Improvements that same year. In his report to that Board he states he obtained \$6,000 from the Terre Haute Branch Bank to finish the dam.<sup>4</sup> However, the 1839 annual report of the chief engineer states the dam was not completed in 1839.<sup>5</sup> Apparently, the dam suffered damage during the winter and spring of 1840. In its 1841 report, the Report of the Board of Internal Improvement confirms this, giving 1841 as the completion date.<sup>6</sup>

Canal construction did resume in 1847.<sup>7</sup> There are Board of Trustee and engineers' reports that confirm the dates of service for the dam. The circa 1860 is correct, as the 1859 Trustee's report does not say specifically that the canal is closed. The 1860 report states it emphatically.<sup>8</sup> The statement, "Terre Haute



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on Wabash River to Worthington on West Fork White River” is correct.<sup>9</sup> The last sentence is the Indiana Historical Bureau’s standard statement for all Wabash & Erie Canal markers.

### **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.

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**

Jonathan M. Leader, “Completion of the Gronauer Lock,” *Legacy*, Vol. 7, No. 2, December 2002/Vol. 8, No. 1, July 2003, pp. 34-37, Office of the State Archaeologist, South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, USC, accessed [www.cas.sc.edu/sciaa/mrd/documents/GronLock2.pdf](http://www.cas.sc.edu/sciaa/mrd/documents/GronLock2.pdf)

“Valedictory: Champion of the Gronauer Lock: A Remembrance and Commentary by Mitch Harper,” *Fort Wayne Observed*, accessed [http://indiana.typepad.com/fwob/2007/01/valedictory\\_cha.html/](http://indiana.typepad.com/fwob/2007/01/valedictory_cha.html/)

New Haven Heritage Association, Inc. accessed <http://newhavenheritage.org/canalhistory.html>

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](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>



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<sup>1</sup> “Report of the Engineer on Canals,” Annual Report of the Board of Internal Improvement, December 19, 1836, *Journal of the Senate of the State of Indiana during the Twenty-first Session of the General Assembly*, 1836, (Indianapolis, Douglass and Noel Printers) pp. 131-43, 155, accessed <http://archive.org/details/documentaryjourn1836indi>

<sup>2</sup> “Annual Report of the Chief Engineer,” November 30, 1848, Annual Report of the Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal, Doc. No. 5, Part II, *Journal of the Senate of the State of Indiana During the of the General Assembly*, 1848 (Indianapolis John D. Defrees, State Printer, 1849), accessed <http://archive.org/details/documentaryjourn1848indi>

<sup>3</sup> *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.

<sup>4</sup> “Report to the State Board of Internal Improvements,” n.d. Report of the State Board of Internal Improvement of the State of Indiana, *Documents of the Senate of Indiana Twenty-fourth Session*, (Indianapolis, Douglass & Noel State Printers, 1840) accessed <http://archive.org/details/documentaryjourn1839indi>, Report states, “The contractor for the Feeder Dam on Eel River, a job that amounts to 53,000, after hearing of the failure to procure funds for the public works, gave notice that he could not proceed without some assistance. Having already expended over 40,000 dollars in laying the foundation and building the abutments and guard banks, the sum was too great and the permanence of the structure too much importance to the value of the line, to be left exposed to the dangers of the floods of the winter and spring. To preserve it, I thought it my duty to make an effort by representing the case to the Terre Haute Branch Bank, and asking for the aid required by the exigency. Notwithstanding the liberal advances before made to keep up the works, the application was promptly met with an advance of 6,000 dollars, and the tender of the additional sum that might be needed to accomplish the object.”

<sup>5</sup> *Annual Report of the Chief Engineer to the Board of Internal Improvements*, November 11, 1839. Report of the State Board of Internal Improvement of the State of Indiana, *Documents of the Senate of Indiana Twenty-fourth session*, (Indianapolis, Douglass & Noel State Printers, 1840) accessed <http://archive.org/details/documentaryjourn1839indi> Report states, “Only a few of the heaviest jobs have been in progress on this line during the season. Among these, the deep cut, the Birch creek culvert, and the Eel river dam, are the principal. In respect to the two last named jobs, it was deemed quite desirable to finish them in order to avoid an entire loss of the work heretofore done. This would have been accomplished had not the contractor for the dam, been delayed for several weeks by the failure of the funds. It is still hoped the dam and guard banks will be secure against the freshets; yet the very recent information of the guard banks, and the other works connected with the dam, if finished at all, render their safety very precarious, if there should be high floods during the



winter . . . .”

<sup>6</sup> “P. Mason’s Report,” December 8, 1841, Report of the Board of Internal Improvement of the State of Indiana, December, 1841, Doc. No. 2, Senate, *Documents of the Senate at the Twenty-sixth Session of the General Assembly of the State of Indiana* (Indianapolis, Dowling and Cole, State Printers, 1842) p. 69, accessed <http://archive.org/details/documentaryjourn1841indi>. Report states, “On this line, the contracts were principally relinquished last year, leaving little to do upon it the past season, except the settlement of some claims for damages, and the completion of the repairs of the Feeder Dam on Eel River. It was not until early in June that I was enabled to visit this Dam, at which time I was accompanied by T. A. Morris, Engineer on the Madison Railroad. At that time it was ascertained by an estimate, that the expenditure of about \$5000 was still necessary to render the Dam secure. Taking into consideration the great cost of the Dam, together with the previous expenditure for repairs, it was deemed advisable to make further expenditure: since which time, the work has been completed, and finally settled for. It is now believed to be perfectly secure.”

<sup>7</sup> *Laws of Indiana*, January 19, 1846; “Annual Report of the Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal to the General Assembly of the State of Indiana,” December, 1847, Doc. No. 6, Part II, *Documents of the General Assembly of Indiana at the Thirty-first Session* ( Indianapolis, John D. Defrees, State Printer, 1848) accessed <http://archive.org/details/documentaryjourn1847indi> Report states, “. . . Under the authority given them by the Governor of the State for that purpose, the trustees arranged to take possession of the canal and its appurtenances, with full authority to commence and direct all operations, thereon, or in anywise connected therewith, from and after the first day, July, 1847.

<sup>8</sup> “Report of Resident Engineer,” November 25, 1850, Annual Report of the Board of Trustees Wabash and Erie Canal to the General Assembly of the State of Indiana, December, 1850, Doc. No. 3, Part II, *Documents of the General Assemble of Indiana at the Thirty-fifth Session* (Indianapolis, J. P. Chapman, State Printer, 1851) p. 170, accessed <http://archive.org/details/documentaryjourn1850indi> Report states, “. . . The Eel river Division of the Wabash and Erie Canal, extending from Terre-Haute to Point Commerce, a distance of 42 miles and 7 chains, was completed the 1st of June last and filled with water. On the 7th of that month, a boat arrived at Point Commerce, since which time there has been regular navigation for light draught boats, except during the extreme drought of August and September, when Eel river failed to afford an ample supply of water. In common with all the streams in the western part of the State Eel river has been much lower the past season than it has ever been known. The drought has been most extraordinary, commencing as early as June and continuing to the first of November, with but an occasional shower, which made little if any impression on the feeders. During all this period there was but one rise in Eel river causing the water to flow over the Dam in any considerable quantity, and at this time the pool is from IS inches to 2 feet below the comb of the Dam. . . .”

“Report of the Board of Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal to the General Assembly of the State of Indiana,” January 1859, Doc. No. 3, Part I, *Documents of the General Assembly of Indiana at the Fortieth Session*, (Indianapolis, Joseph J. Bingham, State Printer, 1859) p. 285, accessed at <http://archive.org/details/documentaryjourn1859indi> Report states, “In regard to the Canal south of Terre



Haute, before the Trustee had any opportunity of testing its value, in that particular, a railroad from Evansville to Terre Haute, authorized by the State, was in a rapid course of construction, aided by the leading business men at both ends of the line. This had the effect of deterring business men, at the terminus of the Canal and elsewhere . . . The Canal north of Terre Haute had no boats to spare, for the building of the Wabash Valley road had created a similar feeling at that end of the Canal, and many persons went out of the trade, and few, if any, new boats were built to supply the place of those worn out and decayed. They [trustees] were compelled to rely solely on the enterprise of such private citizens as might choose to embark their industry and means in Canal transportation, and this number was found to be quite inconsiderable. To encourage the building and use of boating on the Canal, however, the Trustees reduced the tolls down to the lowest standard, but this did not avail. The highest number of boats navigating the southern end of the Canal, and owned south of Terre Haute, never exceeded thirty-three (33). In this condition of affairs, all the Trustees could do was to keep the Canal in repair . . . .”

“Report of Chief Engineer,” December 12, 1861, Annual Report of the Board of Trustees Wabash and Erie Canal for the Year 1861, Doc. J-26 *Reports of the Officers of State of the State of Indiana to the Governor for the Years 1860-1861* (Indianapolis, Berry R. Sulgrove, State Printer, 1862) p. 386, accessed at <http://archive.org/details/documentaryjourn18601861indi>. Report states, “. . . The contract with C. Rose and others for keeping in repair this division expired on the 20th of May last. The tolls proving wholly inadequate, the parties did not desire its renewal. Messrs. Miller & Hedges have since undertaken to maintain twenty-five miles of this division, between Terre Haute and the Eel River feeder dam inclusive, for the tolls; they also receive one thousand dollars per year from the authorities of the city of Terre Haute as a further compensation. The Birch Creek reservoir remains unrepaired. . . .”

“Annual Report of the Board of Trustees Wabash and Erie Canal for the Year 1861,” December 16, 1861, Doc. J-26, *Reports of the Officers of State of the State of Indiana to the Governor for the Years 1860-1861* (Indianapolis, Berry R. Sulgrove, State Printer, 1862) p. 386, accessed <http://archive.org/details/documentaryjourn18601861indi>. Report states, “. . . That the navigation of the Canal from Terre Haute to Evansville, as stated in the last Annual Report of the Trustees of the General Assembly, has been virtually abandoned. . . .”

“Report of Chief Engineer,” December 17, 1862, Annual Report of the Board of Trustees Wabash and Erie Canal for the Year 1862, Doc. J-32, *Documents of the General Assembly of Indiana at the Forty-third [Second] Session* (Indianapolis, Berry R. Sulgrove, State Printer, 1863) p 468, accessed at <http://archive.org/details/documentaryjourn1862indi> . Report states, “. . . Of the Canal south of Terre Haute, little need be said. The report of last year indicated its disuse. No valuable navigation has been maintained upon it, though the water has been kept in, through local and individual effort, on certain portions of the route. . . .”

<sup>9</sup> “Annual Report of the Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal to the General Assembly of the State of Indiana,” December, 1850, Doc. No. 3, Part II, *Documents of the General Assembly of Indiana at the Thirty-fifth Session, December 30, 1850, Part Two* (Indianapolis, J. P. Chapman, State Printer, 1851) p. 145, accessed at <http://archive.org/details/documentaryjourn1850indi>. Report states, “. . . the Eel River Division, from Terre Haute to Point Commerce and Worthington, a distance of 42 miles . . . .”



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Map of Clay County, Indiana, compiled and drawn by G.M. Levette for the first annual report of Prof. E. T. Cox, State Geologist, 1869, Indiana Department of Geology and Natural Resources, Indiana State Library.