



63.1976.1 [formerly 26.1976.1] Wabash and Erie Canal Completed 1853
Pike County
Marker Text Review Report
February 5, 2013

Marker Text

The approximately 460 mile canal from Toledo, Ohio to Evansville, Indiana was the longest canal built in the United States. Here a section constructed above the natural land surface to prevent flooding and erosion, remains intact.

Report

The marker text lacks context, leaving the reader with a number of questions, and misses the opportunity to convey the canal's 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 first statement is true that the canal was 460 miles long and was the longest canal built in the United States.¹ A close look at the engineers' reports and the Wabash and Erie Canal company records would be helpful in clarifying if the canal was built above the natural land surface prevent flooding and erosion. A tour map found on the website, MapMYRide states that the Wabash and Erie Canal, located 12.27 miles above Oakland City has an elevation of 125.0 feet.² Other sources such as topographical maps could be found to confirm this. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife, a section remains above Oakland City.³ Again, a careful look at the official papers of the Wabash and Erie Canal Company should be looked at to provide primary evidence where needed.

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.

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

"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, OM0392



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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>

¹ 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. . ."

² "Wabash and Erie Canal in Oakland City," MapMyRide, Accessed <http://www.mapmyride.com/routes/view/91216059>. "This is a 12.27 mi Bike Ride in Oakland City. The Bike Ride has a total ascent of 124.67 ft and has a maximum elevation of 534.78 ft." Chart shows the elevation at Oakland City at 516 feet, going to 535 feet with a gain of 125.0 feet in elevation.

³ "Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge and Management Area Scenic Auto Tour-Western," U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Accessed www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/AutoTourWest2008.pdf 10a. Historic Site: Wabash/Erie Canal: 13.3 miles [Zone 16, 0470306e 4247888n] The canal berm can be seen just off the road to your right as you cross the bridge. It is set back in the woods. In 1831, the Indiana Legislature



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approved construction of the Wabash and Erie Canal to connect the Great Lakes with the Ohio River. Groundbreaking began in 1832 in Fort Wayne. This was the start of a 459-mile long canal; the longest ever built in the United States. The canal crossed the Patoka River near the town of Dongola and provided the first major impact on the Patoka River floodplain. Its built up earthen channel stretches across the Patoka bottoms and crossed the river on a wooden aqueduct. The earthen dikes created a canal 30 feet wide, 6 feet deep, and provided a towpath for mules pulling canal boats through the channel. The canal reached Evansville in 1852 with the first boat arriving on September 22, 1853. The canal was quickly replaced by more efficient railroads and finally abandoned in 1873. While short-lived, it had a tremendous positive impact on settlement in Indiana.”