

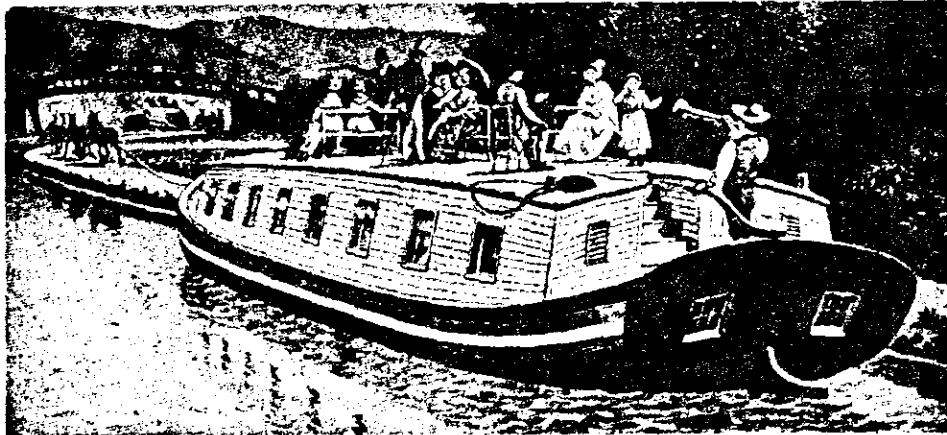
THE WABASH-ERIE CANAL

1832-1876

WITH EMPHASIS ON THE LAGRO LOCKS

written and compiled by

V. Friederika Van Buskirk



Canal Packet Boat

Published by

The Wabash County Historical Society

Wabash, Indiana

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TO THE CITIZENS OF LAGRO, INDIANA,

who consider the preservation of what is left of the "Jim Kerr" lock important, I express my gratitude, and

I DEDICATE THIS BOOKLET.

To the Wabash County Historical Society Board for underwriting this publication, I express my heartfelt thanks for their faith in me.

To MRS. MARY O'HAIR, Curator of the Wabash County Historical Museum, my deepest appreciation. This publication would have been impossible to do without her help in supplying records and histories. She answered many questions and shared my interest in the project.

To the memory of a dear friend, DR. ROSS F. LOCKRIDGE, who loved Roann, and who was first to stimulate my enthusiasm for Indiana History, "Hail and Farewell".

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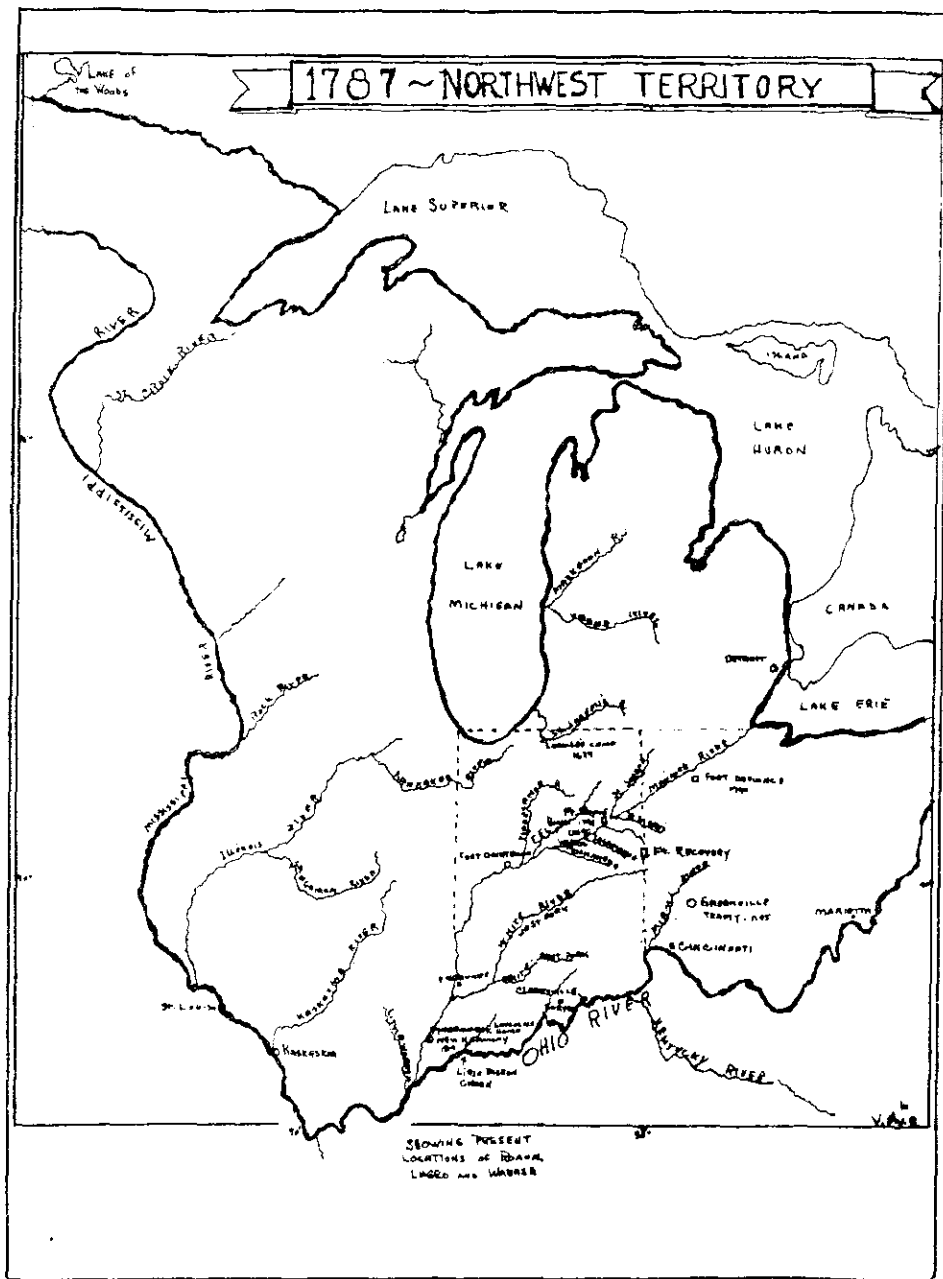
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THE WABASH-ERIE CANAL

for delivery at Lagro, Indiana, June 6th, 1965
to commemorate the site of the "Jim Kerr" lock.

Let us now, in 1965, try to imagine what this spot was like one hundred and forty years ago. The land was covered with a thick forest and undergrowth through which roamed the deer, bear, bobcat and wolf, as well as rattlesnake, rabbit, wild turkey, squirrel and quail. The sun hardly penetrated the darkness among the trees. As highways for the Indians who inhabited this place, there flowed the fish-filled Salamonie and Oubache. The lesser streams were Lagro Creek and what is now Rager Creek. The Great Spirit was good to the Indians.

The first white men to contact the Indians were the French missionaries and fur traders in the late 1600's. They came by way of the waters from Canada, traveling in their pirogues and canoes, bringing trinkets and firewater to trade for furs. The French built their trading posts at Kekionga (where Fort Wayne now stands), at Ouiatenon, near Lafayette, and another near where Vincennes is now located.

Many of the French married into the tribes of Indians, because they were content with the wandering life. When the English traders arrived, trouble began.

The French and Indian wars, 1689 to 1763, ended all French claims to the land. Then came the American Revolution which drove the English out as rulers. This area became part of the Northwest Territory, north and west of the Ohio River. The War of 1812 resulted in treaties with the Indians, by which, little by little, the United States gained all the lands west to the Mississippi, save for some small reservations allowed to some special Indians.

What is now Wabash County was under the civil control of the United States government as the Indiana Territory from 1800 until December 11, 1816 when Indiana became a state. The chief treaties which made this possible were Greenville, 1795; Paradise Spring, 1826; Forks of the Wabash, 1838 and 1840.

Let us remember that when Indiana became a state in 1816 only the southern portion of the area was inhabited by white men. 90% of all Hoosiers lived in those 17 counties along the Ohio River or up the Whitewater River Valley. The first capital was at Corydon.

LaGros was the name of the Miami Chief in this region. The first white man to settle here was a trader, Lewis Rogers. In 1832 Robert McClure built the first log cabin. In 1834 work was commenced on the canal, and about 150 shanties were constructed along the right of way for workers and their families. In 1836 the town was platted, and there soon followed a store, a tavern (Jonas Gallahan), and three churches, Presbyterian, Methodist and Catholic.

Why here? Because it was near the river and its water power, because it was on the canal, and because there was limestone easily available nearby.

LaGro boasted a brick dwelling built in 1828 by Moses Scott at the cost of \$560.00. There was a saw mill, a tin shop, 2 cooper shops, 2 shoe shops, 3 blacksmith shops. In 1875, 800 people lived in LaGro.

THE CANAL

The Wabash River rises in Ohio, flows northwest to within 18 miles of Fort Wayne, then makes a wide curve to the southwest, crosses the state, flows with much winding and curving into the Ohio River. The Little Wabash River rises in an elevated swamp six miles south of Fort Wayne, and joins the Wabash near where Huntington is now. At Fort Wayne itself there exists the confluence of three rivers; the St. Joseph which flows 200 miles from the northeast; the St. Mary's which flows 200 miles from the southeast. The latter makes a hairpin turn, merges with the St. Joseph and together they form the Maumee which turns right around and flows northeast into Maumee Bay on Lake Erie.

Because of this confluence of rivers, at the summit level where Fort Wayne now stands there are waters which flow southward to the Ohio and Mississippi and on to the Gulf of Mexico. There are also waters which flow northeast to Lake Erie, the St. Lawrence and the Atlantic Ocean. After the Erie Canal was built in New York state, the waters from Fort Wayne could connect with those reaching the Hudson. In fact, boat trips were advertised from Toledo to Manhattan, or Lafayette to Manhattan.

The geological formation which caused the rivers to be flowing in opposite directions from the vicinity of Fort Wayne was the original reason for locating a canal in this area. The 6 mile portage from the St. Mary's to the Little Wabash was the stumbling block in the way of unhindered passage, except during spring floods. Because the summit level was 790 feet above sea level and there was a gradual slope of land toward Lake Erie to the northeast and toward Lafayette to the southwest, it was a natural spot for the canal.

Congress was interested in the opening up of the lands in the new Territory, and in 1823-1824, while James Monroe was President, authorized the state of Indiana to "survey and mark through the

connect the navigation of the rivers of the Wabash, Miami (Maumee) and Lake Erie."

Finally in January, 1828, the Indiana Legislature formed a Board of Commissioners of the Wabash and Erie Canal. The members were Samuel Hanna, David Burr, and Robert John. (Some sources name a Mr. Johnson.)

A survey was made from the summit level at Fort Wayne. Mr. Hanna had to go to New York via Detroit for instruments with which to carry on the job of surveying. Two years previous to this time a corp of United States engineers under Colonel Shriver had been sent to survey the portage in Fort Wayne. The malaria infected swamps began to take their toll and all of the men of the surveying party fell sick, and Colonel Shriver died. So did his successor.

A clearing 175 feet wide was to be made through the forest in the following manner, according to the contract of builders of the canal.

"In all places where natural surface of the earth is above the bottom of the canal and where the line requires excavation, all trees, saplings, bushes, stumps and roots shall be grubbed and dug up at least sixty-four feet wide, that is thirty-four feet wide on the towing path side of the center and thirty feet wide on the opposite side of the center, together with all logs, wood and brush of every description shall be removed at least twenty feet beyond the outward line of said grubbing on each side, and on the space of twenty feet on each side of the said grubbing all the trees, saplings, bushes, and stumps shall be cut down close to the ground so that no part of any of them shall be left more than one foot in height above the natural surface of the earth, and shall also, together with all logs, brush and wood of every kind be removed entirely from said space. And the trees, saplings, and bushes also shall be cut fifteen feet wide on each side of said space to be cleared and all trees which in falling will be liable to break or injure the banks of the canal and where situation of line may require grubbing, low chopping clearing shall be extended in breadth so far that no uncleared land may be occupied with embankment or excavation.

"A contractor shall not permit any workmen in his employ while they are engaged in constructing his section to drink distilled spirits of any kind under the liability of forfeiting."

To celebrate the beginning of the canal the Commissioners met on February 22, 1832 in Fort Wayne and turned the first shovelfuls of earth.

The next step was the letting of the contracts for the various sections of the canal. Bidders and Commissioners met in Wabash at the home of David Burr at the Treaty Grounds there.

Clearing and grading were begun, trees cut down, stumps pulled out, all underbrush hauled away or burned. All this was done without benefit of steamshovel or bulldozer. Pick axes and shovels and human muscle were the tools. It was hard to get enough laborers, which delayed progress on the excavations, so the contractor traveled to New York and Pennsylvania and Maryland persuading men to come west and earn \$13.00 to \$16.00 a month digging the canal. Many Irish were hired, and Germans. Many of them had worked on canals in the East.

THE IRISH RIOT

Among the Irish were two groups. The leaders saw to it that they were hired in approximately even numbers. When they got to this area, the Protestants or Far Downers were put to work on the southwestern end of the line, and the Catholic Corkonians on the northeastern end of the section between Lagro and Wabash. David Burr was contractor.

These Irish brought their families with them when they emigrated to America. For the most part they were sturdy, hard-working individuals. Among them were some who were termed by the contractors, "worthless". The Corkonians and Far-Downers had fought each other while they were working in the East. There was trouble here too, real trouble. When they met they would beat each other up; there were a few killed; there were threats of burning their cabins in the night, and threats of harm to the women and children. Since there was no Justice of the Peace on a considerable portion of the line, there was not much done about the disturbances. It is said that the disturbances so shocked the Miami and Potawatomi Indians that they offered to put a stop to the fighting themselves.

The violence increased as the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne approached. (The Boyne was a river in Ireland beside which a battle was fought in 1690 between the forces of William III and James II.) The ringleaders egged on the fighting factions so that the workers finally had had enough, and decided to settle once and for all the question of which side would have to leave the territory.

The "worthless" carried threats of burnings and murder, so that every day the workers on the line armed themselves against attack. Soon an idle report would circulate that the other army was marching to fight. Then the opposite side would leave the work and hurry to the supposed point of danger.

From the 4th of July to the 10th, 1835, these alarms were constant; not much work was done; both sides prepared for a final battle. There had been battles before.

David Burr, Commissioner and contractor in charge of this section from Wabash to Lagro, said in his report later that he hurried to several miles south of his house in Wabash and met one army marching from the southwest. He found them in orderly array, well armed with picks, axes, shovels, pistols and knives, but there was

not a noisy or drunken man among them. They informed him that they were forced to fight, for several reasons:

1. The civil authorities did nothing to protect them.
2. Their women and children were forced to stay in the forests at night without fire, because of threats that the cabins would be burned.
3. The weaker party, the loser of the battle, would have to go somewhere else.
4. They wanted to work, but peaceably.

Burr's comment was, "I prevailed upon them to wait until I could see their belligerent friends."

So Mr. Burr went to the eastern part of the line and found that group, about 300 of them, fully prepared, in a strong military position, "exceedingly exasperated," he said.

It took some strong persuasion on Mr. Burr's part to keep the Irish from murdering the man who came with him. The Corkonians finally consented to appoint persons to agree upon terms of peace, and to suspend hostile operations until the results of this meeting could be known.

In the meantime, the citizens of Huntington who had watched these workers arming and getting ready for a real battle, were fearful that their own persons or property would not be safe, so they sent to Fort Wayne for aid from the militia. A company was immediately formed there and went to Huntington by canal boat. The citizens of Huntington organized a company also.

By now, with all this belligerence in the air, the citizens of Lagro became alarmed, and sent to Huntington for troops.

Mr. Burr said that there were 60 to 100 militia, and he knew that against 6 or 800 fighting Irish that was not nearly enough to cope with them, so he sent to Logansport and asked for assistance. Colonel John Tipton was in charge of the troops at Logansport. The militia at Lagro marched to Peru and met the two volunteer companies from Logansport, and they all marched together back to Lagro.

Two magistrates, an associate judge, and the sheriffs of Wabash and Huntington counties were collected together, and aided by the militia, arrested some 200 of the workers, eight of whom they considered to be ringleaders.

Now that they had them arrested, what to do with them? There was no jail on the canal line considered safe enough to hold them, and since the ringleaders weren't wanted around anyway, by anybody, they were sent under strong guard to Indianapolis for safe keeping. The guard and the prisoners went by foot along the Wabash River to Logansport. There they had to wade the river. The prisoners re-

fused, but the guards came at them in the run with bayonets fixed, and thus ended the Irish War in Indiana.

Eventually these eight men were set free on a writ of habeas corpus for some informality in the proceedings. I can imagine that there was a great deal of informality. Whatever happened to them ultimately has been lost from history's pages.

As a result of this so-called "Irish Riot", Justices of the Peace were commissioned and militia companies organized in Wabash, in Lagro, and in Huntington, and order was restored.

Those militiamen cost a lot of money. Wabash County had been organized too recently to have that kind of money, so the matter was referred by Governor Noble to the state legislature. The result was that the cost of suppressing the Irish Riot and maintaining order was paid by the state, because "the occurrence was of an unusual kind" and it was state work which was involved.

The work on the canal went peaceably forward until in June 1837 the feeders at Lagro sent waters into the canal. The feeder was located just west of between Davis and Dover streets, was 16 feet wide by 7 feet deep. A large crowd gathered to see the operation.

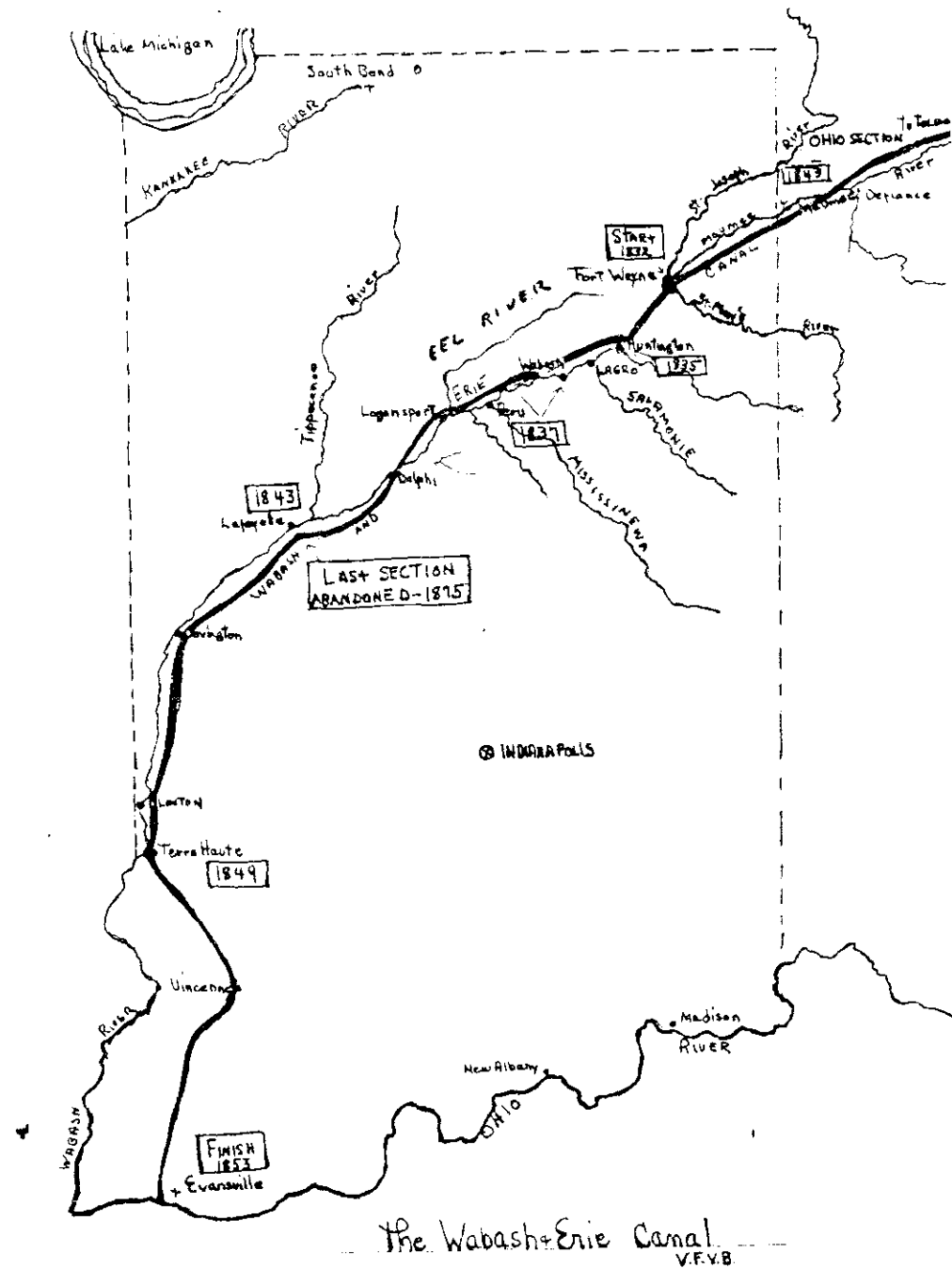
"There was a great burst of enthusiasm when the river began to pour into the great ditch and move down the almost imperceptible incline toward Wabash. The people followed in a body to Wabash, and then returned to their homes."

The first boat to arrive at Wabash was neither the "Prairie Hen" nor the "Indiana", as has been recorded by the history books. The first vessel was the "Davy Crockett" made of a sap-trough (for maple sugar water) owned by David Cassatt, on which Colonel Hanna and Colonel Wm. Steele rode. Cassatt's old mare was attached to the boat with a grape vine. She was the propelling power. The sap-trough made the trip to Lagro and return sometime before July 4th, 1837.

It had been thought that the first boat to arrive in Wabash would be the "Indiana" captained by a rough and ready burly man named "Hail" Columbia. But before his freight boat reached Wabash it was overtaken by the impudent beak of the "Prairie Hen" whose Captain Dale had aboard almost a hundred passengers, about half of whom were Hoosiers who availed themselves of the opportunity to take a boat ride and partake of a liberal allowance of firewater.

It really wasn't many minutes later when the "Indiana", newly painted, came gliding into Wabash. The sight completely dazzled the natives who in all their lives had not gazed upon such a magnificent spectacle. Though she was a freight boat, there were aboard a number of early settlers from Fort Wayne and Huntington, with a German wooden band to liven things up.

The German band led the crowd which had gathered at Wabash and persons from the two boats to a picnic ground, the site of the Treaty Ground, where a picnic was held. That evening at early candle-light they all literally "had a ball" over Colonel Hanna's store in Wabash. Thus began Canal Days at Wabash and Lagro.



A FEW DATES

1835, the canal was finished to Huntington. This is why the militia from Fort Wayne could travel by canal.

1837 — canal finished to Wabash

1838 — to Logansport

1843 — to Lafayette

1849 — to Terre Haute where the waters of the Wabash were available to the Ohio

1853 — to Evansville, connecting the waters of Lake Erie with those of the Ohio and Mississippi, from Toledo to Evansville.

A PORTION OF THE ADDRESS BY GENERAL LEWIS CASS IN FORT WAYNE JULY 4th, 1843

A great celebration was held commemorating the completion of the canal to Lafayette. The speaker of the day was General Lewis Cass.

"We come here to join in another commemoration, to witness the union of the lakes and the Mississippi, to survey one of the noblest works of man in the improvement of the great highway of nature, extending from New York to New Orleans, whose full moral effects it were vain to seek to conjecture.

"And fitly chosen is the day of celebration. The work is another ligament which binds together this great confederated Republic. Providence has given us a Union and motives to preserve it.

"The sun never shone on a country abounding more than ours does in all the elements of prosperity. It were needless to enumerate the advantages we enjoy, which give us so distinguished a position among the nations of the world. I shall not enter into the comparison.

"Our railroads and canals are penetrating every section of our territory. They are annihilating time and space. They are embracing in their folds the ocean and the lake frontier, and the great region extending from the Alleghany to the Rocky Mountains, through which the Mighty Mississippi and the countless tributaries find their way to the Gulf of Mexico. Once the work is completed we are bound together by cords no strength can sever.

"I have found the canal boat a more comfortable conveyance than the bark canoe, and this change is not the least improvement which has accompanied the march of the

white man. Your valley was then thinly occupied. The settlements were sparsely scattered over it. The pioneers were moving on, but their task was a hard one. It was met, however, with an energy which deserved the success it gained. And its fruits now greet the travelers in all those evidences of a fertile country and a prosperous people, which meet him, wherever he moves, from the Ohio to Lake Erie.

"We have come here to rejoice together. Memorable deeds make memorable days. There is a power of association given to man which binds together the past and the present and connects both with the future. Today a new work is born, a work of peace and not of war . . . Centuries hence, we may hope . . . that our descendents will come to keep the day which we have come to mark, and that as it returns, they will remember the exertions of their ancestors, while they gather the harvest.

"And what changes and chances await us? Shall we go on increasing and improving, or shall we decay and just add another to the list of the republics which have preceded us and have fallen victim to their own follies and dissensions? . . . Let us thank God for all we enjoy . . . Let us do so with words of thankfulness upon our tongues for that Providence which guided our fathers and which has given this precious heritage to their sons."

On the canal there were two kinds of boat, the freight boat which would carry its own horses, exchange them at intervals with those doing the pulling. This boat generally made 2 miles an hour. Then there was the packet boat, which was met at various points along the way by a team of horses. It carried passengers and traveled at a speed of four miles an hour. One young boy begged and teased his father to travel by the freight boat so that he could really see the country. He thought the packet went too fast for that. The latter comment was made by Clarence L. Henley of Oklahoma City. He remembers when there was water in the canal, and the Presbyterian Sunday School class was taken on a picnic by canal boat to a spot between Wabash and Rich Valley. In the winter the skating was fine to Lago.

In order to describe how the boat was arranged Mr. (?) Beste has written of a trip.

"At five o'clock in the evening we stepped from the little quai . . . on board the "Indiana" canal boat . . . Three horses were harnessed to a rope about fifty yards ahead of the boat; they started at a moderate trot; and the town, where we had tarried so long, was soon lost to our sight. We wandered over the vessel, well pleased with the promise it gave of tolerable accommodations. The captain, a very young man, was civil and attentive to our wants, and told us that tea would be served at seven, which there, on that day, was at the precise hour of sunset.

"The construction of the canal boat was — in miniature — much the same as that of the lake and river steamer. There was no hold under the deck; but on the deck at the stern were raised the kitchen, steward's room, and offices; in the center of the boat was the large saloon, the sitting room of all by day and the sleeping room of the male passengers by night — adjoining it was the ladies' saloon; beyond which again, was a small cabin only four berths. The cabin was separated by a doorway and curtain from the ladies' saloon, and on the other side opened upon the bow of the vessel. In it was a looking glass, a hand basin, two towels, a comb and brush, for the use of the ladies.

"It was a rule in the boat that no gentleman should go into the ladies' saloon without express invitation from the ladies; consequently the third little room was sacred to the female sex unless entered from the bow, in which case a male occupant would cut off the ladies from the wash-house.

"A flat roof spread over the whole of the saloons; and on it was piled the luggage; and here passengers walked up and down or sat to enjoy the view.

"The view, however, as yet was nought: the banks were low and the thick woods, in which were only partial clearings, shut us in on both sides . . .

"Our children wondered where they were to sleep, as there were visible no berths amid the red moreen curtains that hung around the ladies' saloon, to give it an air of comfort in this August weather; they dreaded to pass four nights on the floor, as they had done at Mrs. Long's hotel; but they said that they were now more used to hardships than they had been; and they also drew comparative comfort from seeing a washstand, basin and two towels, instead of that amiable American woman's small tin pie dish. The steward, however, soon solved their doubts by hooking up some shelves to the wall, and laying mattresses and sheets upon them.

"We were summoned to tea . . . all complained of the bad tea and coffee, of the hot heavy cornbread, and of the raw beef steak.

"After tea, we all began," writes Agnes, one of Beste's daughters, "a most murderous attack upon the mosquitoes that swarmed on the windows and inside our berths, in expectation of feasting upon us as soon as we should go to bed. But those on whom we made war, were soon replaced by others; and the more we killed, the more they seemed to come to be killed . . . it was as though they would defy us to exterminate the race. At last we gave up the task as hopeless, and resigned ourselves, as well as we could, to pass a sleepless night."



Why Hurry?

PROGRESS ON THE CANAL AS REVEALED BY NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS AND NOTICES OF THE DAY 1846 - 1851

Nov. 5, 1846, Indiana Journal

The tolls on the Wabash and Erie Canal have, the present year, increased 100% over those last year. Receipts of the last year will probably reach \$100,000.

June 1847, same

✓ DICKY, DOYLE & DICKY'S daily line of new and splendid packet boats running from Lafayette to the junction of the Wabash-Erie-Miami canals. Leaving Lafayette 10 o'clock every day, running thence to Toledo in 60 hours and to Cleveland in 64 hours . . . Passengers from St. Louis across to Lafayette, Indiana, can then take a packet boat to Toledo and no detention caused by changing from stage to boat. This route is the shortest, cheapest and best and most expeditious for persons visiting eastern cities. To Toledo (from Lafayette)

\$7.00. For passage apply at the office on the basin at the head of Wabash street, Lafayette, or to the captain of the boat.

October 10, 1847, Wabash Gazette

We understand that the water is slowly wending its way southwest in the Wabash & Erie Canal and that it has by this time, perhaps, reached Terre Haute.

December 10, 1849, same

The canal boat "Harriet" has a full supply of groceries such as coffees, teas, sugars, etc. Now lying at Wabash, where she will remain during the closing of the canal. (by freezing over)

1850, same

Packets on the canal go up about sunrise and down about noon each day.

September 10, 1851, same

Hull's Wabash line is now in full operation. Goods entrusted to this line will be thankfully received and punctually attended. Warehouse north side of canal between Main and Sycamore streets. Refer to J. R. Murphy, LaGro.

1851, Indiana Journal

Canal boat for sale. The undersigned will sell cheap and upon favorable terms the "SMITH GRANT" being at Wabash, as also the furniture, harness, etc. John M. Wheeler

1858, same

The report of the trustees of the canal has just been published. The results of the year's operation are bad. Competition of the railroad and the flood last spring cost \$50,000 for repairs. Expenses were \$84,934.81.

Stearns Fisher is a candidate for trustee of the canal . . . More than a million dollars passed through his hands without a shadow of charge against him.

Estimate for repairs and maintenance for 1859, \$155,000. The great decline in tolls, and the ruin of the canal as a revenue is a consequence of the railroad competition.

August 1859, Wabash Plain Dealer

Several canal boats have loaded with wheat at this point during the past two weeks, and from present appearances a heavy trade will be done on the canal this fall.

The canal and railroads are in fighting order, the railroad having reduced the price of freight on corn to 6c, one cent lower than the canal. The canal has thrown off all tolls and gives it a fair chance for competition.

May 6, 1860, same

Navigation on the canal is considerably lively and our commission houses are "cleaning out", relieving (sic) their warehouses of their heavy burden.

March 15, 1861 Gazette (Wabash)

The "Superior" is the name of the most inferior looking boat on the canal. It is drawn by two most dilapidated, jaded, ruined horses mortal man ever set eyes on. Given a fair opportunity they could gladly have drowned themselves.

March 28, 1863, Wabash Plain Dealer

We understand that the canal is establishing warehouses along the line for the purpose of competing with the railroad.

May 8, 1863, same

The canal is full of water. Boatmen are busy repairing and loading boats. Judging by the amount of freight to be run this spring they will likely have a profitable season.

March 1864, same

The city gave the use of the dock at Wabash and Canal streets for 25 years for the purpose of erecting a woolen factory.

July 21, 1870, same

The boat "Superior" lying at the foot of Miami street has sunk. Her cargo consists of ice and it is feared it will be a total loss.

March 13, 1873, same

Henry Sayre presented a petition . . . asking for a donation of \$10,000 for the Wabash and Erie Canal.

Oct., 1873, Huntington F. T. (?)

A steam dredging machine is at work on the canal in the city. It has a wonderful capacity for mud and is doing a most excellent and needed piece of work.

Three years later

January 14, 1876 Wabash Plain Dealer

The old dredge boat which has been lying in the canal bed a mile east of Lagro has been sold to Thomas Scott of Ohio, who is taking out and moving the machinery to Toledo. That destroys the last hope of the canal ever being repaired and placed in a navigable condition.

FINAL DAYS OF THE CANAL

June 1887, Wabash Plain Dealer

Plans to build a railroad along the towpath of the canal . . . It is hoped the project will go through with a whirl on this hitch.

June 17, 1887

The sale of the old Wabash Erie canal bed from the Ohio line to Lagro, at sheriff's sale in Fort Wayne on Saturday confirms the statements floating about — (A railroad will be built.) The appraisements of the bed between the points mentioned was \$16,000 but under the hammer it brought only \$15,000.

September 7, 1888, same

The street and alley committee went to Lagro to inspect the dam and

to make repairs necessary to fill the old ditch with water and destroy the frightful stench that has emanated therefrom for the last month or two.

September, 1888, same

Dam repaired at Lagro. Water was turned into the canal last Thursday week, but the filthy ditch was so dry that it did not reach Wabash until Wednesday, six days after. One summer's accumulation of disease breeding filth has been thus swept away and if the dam holds out the canal may lose a portion of its reputation as a curse.

WHY DID IT FAIL?

"The 1830's and 40's were exciting times. People were buying beyond their incomes. Credit was cheerfully extended by local merchants. The merchants, in turn, were granted credit so that they could secure the vast stock of goods to meet the needs of the buyers of that day. Nobody doubted the honesty of the other. Eventually the bubble burst.

"Errors were made in financing the system of highways by land and by water which were of such magnitude as to bring about financial destruction to the state of Indiana even before the canals were completed.

"Had they originally concentrated on one canal at a time, instead of trying to build all those canals at once, some of the financial collapse, which affected the whole state, might have been mitigated. But the state was trying to please the clamoring people of the state.

"Bonds were sold on credit. Soon there was no money to meet the demands of the contractors for supplies and construction. Wages of laborers were often in arrears. This naturally affected the merchants and the community in general.

"Just as if those trying conditions were not enough, the Panic of 1837 swept the nation, including Indiana.

"In 1842 the state found itself in debt \$207,894,613 — and facing bankruptcy. Mr. Charles Butler, representing the bondholders from the east and from Europe spent season after season in Indiana trying to salvage what he could.

"The bondholders finally took over in part lands and canal and finished construction to Evansville in 1853 — 459 miles from Toledo — 379 miles of it in Indiana. Bondholders claimed they had been defrauded of tolls because of franchise granted to railroads.

"Bondholders never realized more than 9½% of the principal invested. Though a financial failure, the canal proved an important aid in the development of the west."

CONCLUSION

100 years ago, the canal here died a slow and lingering death. The railroads were faster and cheaper, and the canals could not compete. The canal was seasonal, usable only eight months of the year and it was relatively expensive, due to inefficient management, partially. For example, who would think of running a railroad, collecting tolls for use of the rails, and permitting individuals to own their own trains to run on it?

Even so, today we see the towns which were built along the banks of the canal; we see the roads which were first laid so that produce could get to loading points along the canal; we see a flourishing agriculture which began in the early days of the canal. The industrial plants are here, and we see solid, prosperous citizens who are descendants of those who came west to work on the digging and construction of the canal, as well as descendants of those who traveled by canal to settle here.

Those ancestors of ours experienced a feeling, a real emotion when the canal was finally abandoned, "as though it had been ill treated like a good horse worn out by honest and faithful work, turned out to the commons, in old age, to starve."

"But in this faster age (written 1876) no one has time for sentiment. The ditch is dry as well as the eyes that could have wept for it."

May I say to you, in 1965, we in Wabash County do have time for sentiment. That is precisely the reason why we are here today. We do not wish these visible remains to vanish completely. We should be reminded as we look at the remains of this Jim Kerr lock of the sweat, the fevers, and the fears in the night of those early families, men, women, and children, who lived in the shanties along this canal, and of the vision of the merchants and farmers and teachers who settled here.

Wabash county is no longer covered with forests, but as in the beginning there is still the land, and the land is covered with cultivation. The fields lie open to the sun and the rain, growing our food in abundance. And the land is dotted with cities and towns and farms in which people live without the sweat, fevers and fears in the night which those early Hoosiers knew. We know that they built with their lives. Let us with our vision, our planning, and the cooperative efforts of our hearts and our hands use our lives to build for our children and those who come after them.

This is what Hugh McCulloch said on the 4th of July, 1835.

"A hundred years may roll away, and the people who then inhabit this country may meet together on this spot to celebrate the commencement of canaling operations in this state. God grant that he who is called upon to speak at that time may address, as I do today, a congregation of free men. "And although everything else may be changed but the

solid earth and the heavens above them, though the canal which is now in progress be but a hand's breadth in comparison with the important improvements that shall then be in operation, God grant that the Stars and Stripes the banner of our country, may float over their heads an emblem of liberty, union and prosperity."

THE LOCKS OF LAGRO

beginning with the most westerly

THE "JIM DITTON" CANAL LOCK"

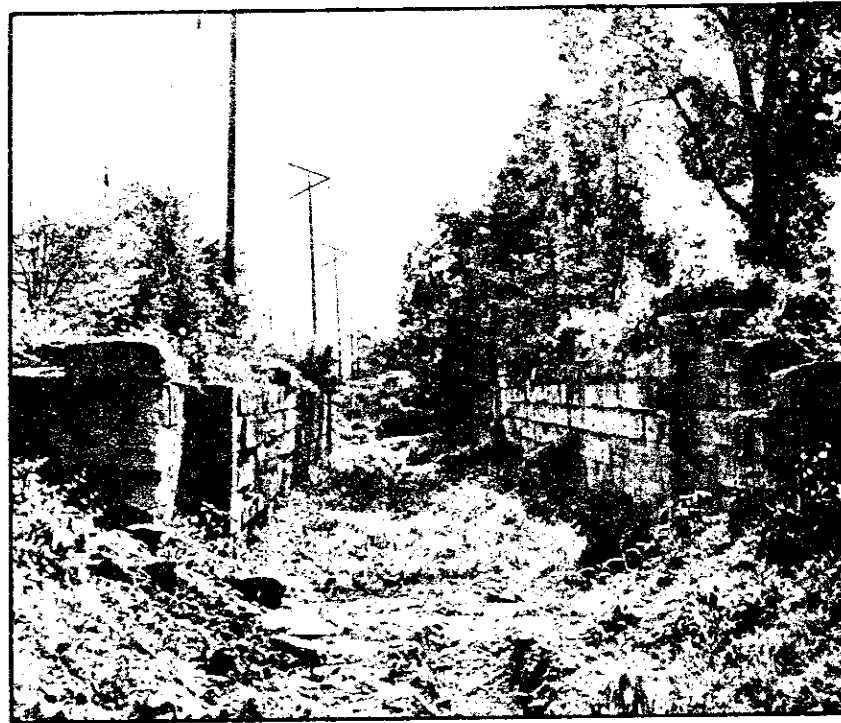
This lock is located between Davis and Dover Streets, north of the Interurban Station. It was so named because of the man who operated a supply depot there. This store, as well as others located at the strategic locks of LaGro, and east, sold everything from hay and whiskey to trinkets and nick-nacks. This particular lock today (1936) is in very poor state due to the destructive element commonly called man. Flowing into the canal, just west of the lock at times was the water of the Wabash due to a dam and a feeder. The dam was located beneath the bridge now crossing the Wabash. The feeder was located about 30 feet east of the dam. The feeder was about 16 feet wide by 7 feet deep. All traces of this have been obliterated.

THE OLD TOLL RECEIVER'S HOUSE AT LAGRO

On the south side of Washington between Davis and Dover Streets is an old building which formerly housed the office of the local toll collector on the canal. It is located on the west side of the alley. The front of the building was a saloon and grocery while the back (next to the canal) contained the Canal Toll Collector's Office. Jirah Barlow at one time occupied this office as toll collector for the canal.

While the house is not pretentious in any sense of the word its place in history maintains an undisputed spot. It no doubt has far more of an historical nature, both local and state-wide, than I have recounted in this report. Yet the one-story building should be included in the historic buildings of LaGro. Although the history of the building is very limited, the history of the system which it serves is such interesting material as to be almost legendary.

NOTE: This building has a solid walnut front.



"JIM CURR OR KERR" CANAL LOCK, LAGRO

South of Washington Street at the extreme south end of Canal Street and on the north side of the Interurban track, back of Mrs. Bechtol's residence, is the Jim Kerr lock. This lock today measures:

110 feet long; wings measure 12' 10" in length; here, as in the lock east of town you may see the niches in the wall of the canal allowing the gates to swing back flat with the sides of the canal thus removing the possibility of a canal boat damaging the gate or the boat.

From the wing back 15' 9" we find the niche which measures 12' 5". Then we find a straight-of-way extending for 56' 6" following which is another niche, then a short straight-of-way of 15' 9" and another wing. Jim Kerr maintained a supply store at this lock in the old days.

Today, due to the easy accessibility, this lock has also been molested by man and there are as a result several of the stones removed. It would not necessitate a great expense to place this lock in working order, which would provide a valuable educational feature for students and adults. Picture the large beams extending from the gates so the gate keeper could more easily open and shut them, thus

raising or lowering the water level as occasion demanded. Imagine two mooring posts set firmly in the ground so the boat could be secured while this change was taking place. It would not be an impossibility to run water into the bed thus making the picture still more vivid.

THE VIADUCT CARRYING CANAL OVER LAGRO CREEK

Less than 200 feet east of the Jim Curr lock (back of Mrs. Bechtol's) is Lagro Creek. Over this creek in the days of the canal was the canal bed. This was accomplished by a low wide archway permitting the creek to flow under the bed. The archway was wide enough to take care of surplus water during the rainy seasons. Its actual width, height and length I cannot at present determine. It is possible to imagine its approximate location and if one was a more persistent digger than what I am they or he might be able to locate the foundation for the archway.

The canal bed was made of limestone at this place as was the archway and the sides of the canal, with soil filled on the outside of the bed allowing for a towpath.

THE "CURLEY HAYES" LOCK EAST OF LAGRO

The "Curley Hayes" lock is located 1.3 miles east of Lagro on the old State Road 24. It is easily visible from the road lying to the south, just north of the Interurban tracks. Here the lock was named for a gate keeper. Just west of the lock was a large turning basin estimated to be 500' by 120' wide. In the basin boats could turn around or lay over for the night. On the east side of this basin stood a slaughter house 100' by 40' with a dock in the basin for loading purposes. West of this lock on the south side of the basin was a waste or spillway. This was constructed by digging 4 or 5 feet deep, 10 or 12 wide and filled in almost to a level, so as not to prove an inconvenience in driving the mules which pulled the boats. Over these rocks, in the rainy season, the surplus water spilled and proceeded to the river.

Here, at these seasons, the mules would often be required to wade through 4 or 5 inches of water. This lock is also in excellent condition today. (1936)

The depths of the locks today are approximately 8' 4". It (the Curley Hayes lock is 120 feet long. The other measurements, such as wings, niches, and the short straight-of-ways are approximately the same in all cases the only variation being in the length found in the long straight-of-ways. You may see the chisel marks in the limestone and the cuts for the gate hinges. This lock has also been raided by man, who, needing a limestone slab, finds it easier to remove one from the lock than to quarry the same. With the exception of an occasional missing or replaced stone, the lock is in good condition.

THE "JAMES MC DONALD" LOCK OF LAGRO

2.3 miles east of Davis street, out old 24 across the railroad tracks to new 24 there, at the second house on the left, stop and prepare for a hike. This hike leads south from the house over a field and one fence. On the north side of the Interurban track is an old canal lock known in the past as the "Jim McDonald" lock. At the north-west corner is the remains of a gatekeeper's house. The canal locks of the past, I am informed, were generally equipped with tumblers. The tumblers provided a means for the water which collected in the valley when the elevations of the creeks were sufficient, to find an exit into the canal from the Berm side without washing the bank in its way. Due to Rager Creek it was necessary to build one more elaborate than the others in Lagro Township.

Today, through the lock in the old bed flows Rager Creek. This lock is in the best state of preservation of the group. It measure 130 feet long. Here the massive limestone may be seen more easily. Here 16 inches are allowed for the gates to fold into as we find with the others, with niches measuring 12' 5" long. The North side of the canal bed was referred to as the Berm side while the south side was called the tow path for along here the patient mules, "rabbits", tirelessly towed the Canal Boats. Because of the inaccessible location of this lock it is the most accurate specimen. During the months when nettles and thistles are bad is a bad time to visit the site as I did this 11th day of June, 1936, wearing gloves and yet my hands sting from the effect of the nettles and thistles which it was impossible to avoid. The canal bed measures 14 feet in width.

The forgoing accounts of the locks in Lagro are taken from notes made by Mr. C. A. Anderson, a man who was assigned by the United States government's W.P.A. Project to do the research in Wabash County, during the 1930's. Mr. Anderson sought the assistance of Mr. E. L. Martin, Lagro, Indiana, and lists him as a reference in most of Anderson's Canal History. Mr. Martin was an old employee of the canal, a fact which qualifies his assistance as reliable.

Information in the above paragraphs was supplied by Mary O'Hair, Curator of the Wabash County Historical Museum in Wabash.

HUGH MC CULLOCH'S ADDRESS, JULY 4th, 1835

Orations in the old days were an endurance test for both speaker and listeners. At the time of the celebration of the opening of the canal at Fort Wayne, July 4th, 1835, the chief speaker was Mr. Hugh McCulloch. The delivery must have taken at least three hours or four hours. You will be interested in the topics he discussed rather fully.

The freedom of the colonies from Great Britain
The significance of the 4th of July
The fact that freedom demands vigilance
Crisis of the impending revolution
Writing of the Declaration of Independence

The Revolutionary War
 Victory
 Discussion of the meaning of the Declaration
 The need for government, human beings being what they are
 The advantages and also dangers of freedom of thought
 The French Revolution — anarchy
 Need for morality
 Patronage of the Presidency
 Abolitionists — evils of the same
 Discussion of slavery
 The need to uphold free institutions
 History of Canal beginnings
 Nature of the Legislature which passes laws regarding the canal
 A glowing tribute to the development of the Mid-west
 Friendship and cooperation between the states
 Bright prospects for the future

All this is one address!

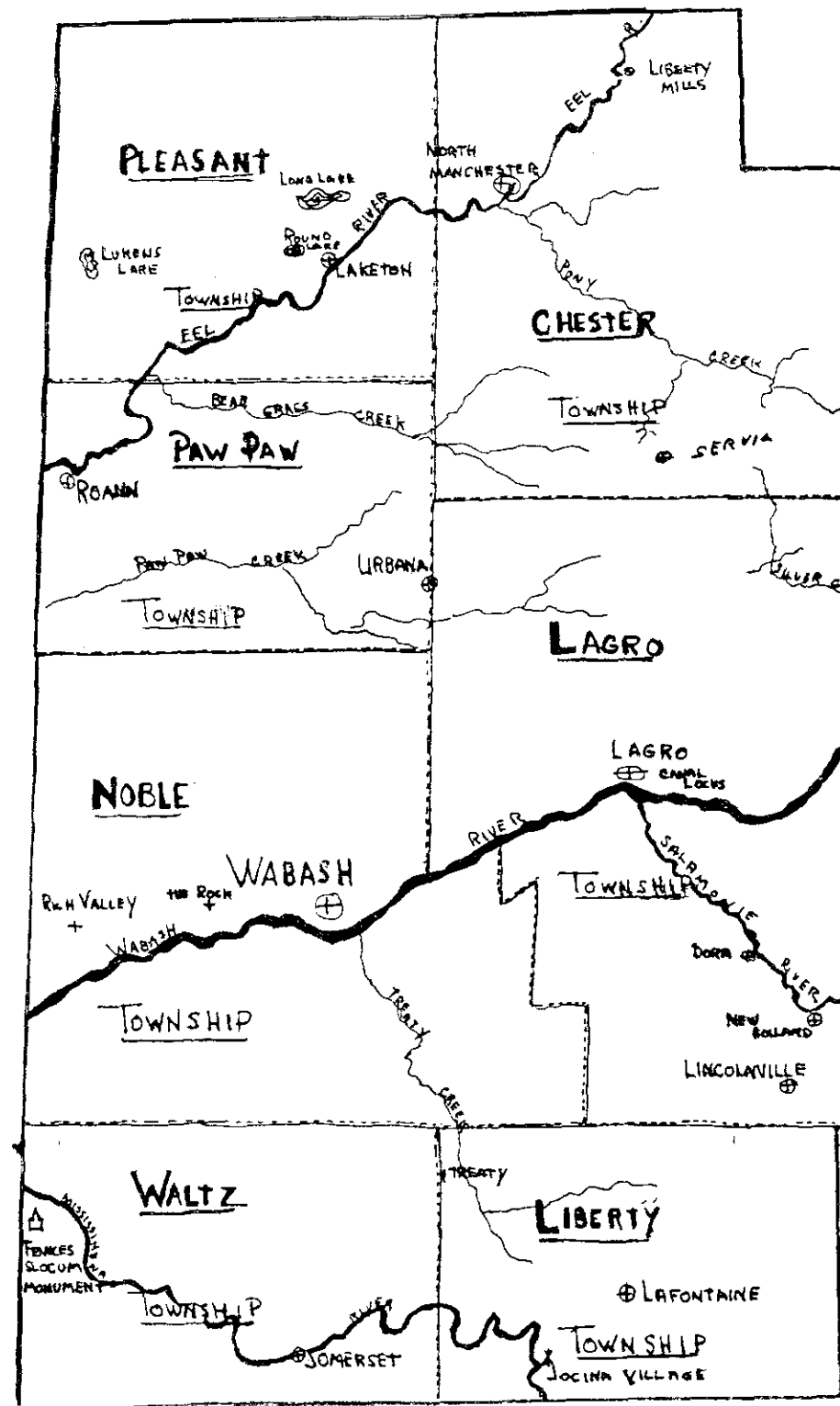
A list of Presidents who held office during the lifetime of the canal.

1817-1825 — James Monroe — first ordered a survey
 1825-1829 — John Quincy Adams
 1829-1837 — Andrew Jackson
 1837-1841 — Martin Van Buren
 1841 — Wm. Henry Harrison
 1841-1845 — John Tyler
 1845-1849 — James K. Polk
 1849-1850 — Zachary Taylor
 1850-1853 — Millard Fillmore
 1853-1857 — Franklin Pierce
 1857-1861 — James Buchanan
 1861-1865 — Abraham Lincoln
 1865-1869 — Andrey Johnson
 1869-1877 — Ulysses S. Grant

The ground breaking ceremonies in Fort Wayne were held on February 22nd, 1832, George Washington's birthday, because he had suggested "public improvements" in western lands, of which the canal was a part.

RELATIVE ELEVATIONS

Fort Wayne - Summit	790' above sea level
Fort Wayne - Summit	197' above Lake Erie
Lagro	720' above sea level
Lagro	147' above Lake Erie
Wabash	687' above sea level
Wabash	114' above Lake Erie



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