



61.1966.1 Wabash and Erie Canal
Parke County
Marker Text Review Report
2010

Marker Text

The Wabash and Erie was the longest canal built in North America, running from Toledo to Evansville. Montezuma was the main port of Parke County. This portion was abandoned about 1865.

Report

Most of the information on this marker is correct with the exception of the date given for the abandonment of the portion of the canal. Also, more research is needed to claim Montezuma as the “main port of Parke County.” This report attempts to provide more information and make corrections.

Workers completed the last section of the Wabash and Erie Canal in 1853 according to the *Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal to the Governor* from 1853. The canal ran from Toledo, Ohio to Evansville, Indiana and established a link between Lake Erie and the Ohio River. Sources agree the Wabash and Erie Canal ran a length of 468 miles and was the longest canal built in North America. For more information see Thomas Meek’s *Profile of the Wabash & Erie Canal* (1984) compiled from 1847 and 1852 reports by the Chief Engineers of the State of Indiana.

See also Ronald E. Shaw’s work, *Canals for a Nation* (1990).

Though the canal was grand in size and significance, this marker focuses on the history of the Wabash and Erie Canal in Parke County. Evidence strongly suggests Montezuma as the main port of Parke County. A.T. Andreas’s 1874 *Parke County Atlas* clearly depicts the town as the largest with canal access. The Board of Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal also mention Montezuma by name in their previously referenced annual reports, which indicates the town held some importance as a canal port. Further data from different censuses corroborate the claim of Montezuma as the main port of Parke County. For instance, the 1860 census, which would have occurred during the prime of canal operations, lists Rockville as the largest town (728 people) and Montezuma as the second largest (580 people). The 1870 federal census lists Montezuma as the second largest town as well. Since the canal did not flow by Rockville, Montezuma was the most populous port in Parke County.



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However, the reports of the canal Board of Trustees disprove the marker's assertion that Montezuma's citizens abandoned their portion of the canal in approximately 1865. Though a dam break in 1866 rendered the canal south of Logansport impassable, the Board of Trustees contracted the Wabash and Erie Canal Company to maintain a navigable route from the lower lock in Terre Haute to the Ohio state line, starting on July 1, 1866 and lasting until July 1, 1878. By 1869, the company had repaired the damage and boats passed as far south as Armiesburg, which was further south than Montezuma. See the "Report to the General Assembly of the State of Indiana" and the "Report of the Chief Engineer" from the 1876 *Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal to the Governor*.

The Wabash and Erie Canal Company kept the stretch from Armiesburg to the Ohio state line open until 1873. The company's repair work cost more than their pay, so they abandoned the canal in 1874, signaling the end of the canal as a navigable body of water. See the "Report of the Chief Engineer" from the 1874 *Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal to the Governor* for more information.

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>