**For immediate release:**  

**Wabash & Erie Canal’s Annual Meeting**

**Tuesday, April 19 features a special speaker and it’s an official Indiana Bicentennial Legacy Project**.

Members and any of the public, students and all, are invited to the 42nd Annual Meeting of the Carroll County Wabash & Erie Canal, Inc. on Tuesday, April 19th. This evening event will be held in the Canal Center, 11 blocks north of the Court House Square on Washington Street in Delphi. The meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. in the conference area and includes a short business meeting of the non-profit association. Election of four directors and recognition of the activities of the volunteers concludes this portion of the meeting.

The main feature of the program will be a presentation of canal-era history narrative, poetry and Celtic harp music by Indianapolis author Liza Hyatt. Hyatt’s research of family history led her to connections to the Wabash & Erie Canal. She will share stories of the lives of her canal-building Irish great-great grandparents, who were Irish immigrants who came to Indiana in the 1830s.

Titled **“A Poet’s Pilgrimage on the Wabash & Erie Canal*,”*** the program has been endorsed by the Indiana Bicentennial Commission as a Bicentennial Legacy Project.

Her grandmother's paternal grandfather worked on the Wabash and Erie Canal through this region and her grandmother’s maternal grandfather worked on the Whitewater Canal in southeastern Indiana first as a stone cutter and later as a lock-keeper.

Hyatt’s program weaves together the history of how the land and people changed through the canal’s construction, including stories of the Native Americans whose land was used for the canal, European immigrants who built it, and slaves escaping to freedom following the towpath north.

Liza received an Individual Artist project grant through the Indiana Arts Commission to develop this program, which is endorsed as a Bicentennial Legacy Project. She also presented recently at the Wabash County Historical Museum.

Concluding the meeting after the speaker will be a treat for those that attend. Hot Apple Dumplings will be served and participants may wish to visit and speak with Ms. Hyatt.

**A Poet’s Pilgrimage on the Wabash and Erie Canal**

**Indianapolis author Liza Hyatt will share poems and stories developed while following the path of the Wabash and Erie Canal, researching the lives of her canal building Irish great-great grandparents who came to Indiana in the 1830’s. In the bardic tradition of her Irish heritage, Hyatt will accompany her poetry with Celtic harp playing. Hyatt’s story about tracing Indiana’s canal era history will inspire and inform others seeking to explore, research and write about their own family history.**

**A discussion period in which audience members can dialogue about creatively researching family history will follow the presentation of Hyatt’s work.**

**Hyatt’s work on this project was funded in part through an Individual Artist Project Grant from the Indiana Arts Commission.**

**This program is relevant to Indiana's 2016 bicentennial in the following ways:**

 **1) The program celebrates an essential part of Indiana's history as a newly established state. The Wabash and Erie Canal was a crucial means of bringing trade and settlement into the young state at a time when there were few roads and travel was extremely difficult. Through its construction (in large part by Irish immigrants) Indiana transitioned from frontier to industrial age.**

**2) The program is culturally inclusive. To tell the story of the canal, this program weaves together the history of how the land and people changed through the canal's construction, including stories of the Native Americans whose land was used for the canal, European immigrants who build it, and slaves escaping to freedom following the towpath north. While Hyatt's performance is told through the perspectives of her Irish ancestors, the program encourages audience members to look into their own cultural heritage and to connect it to state history.**

**3) The program creates a lasting legacy for Indiana's future through arts-based exploration of the connection of family heritage with state history. Through partnership with organization's dedicated to preserving the legacy of Indiana's canal era, such as the Wabash & Erie Canal Association, Hyatt will debut a performance that will be of value and interest to history centers in all counties through which the canal traversed. Hyatt's bicentennial year debut performances will provide the foundation for future performances and family history writing workshops, as Hyatt travels the path of the canal as a bard sharing stories of the canal era and her ancestors. This project also furthers Hyatt's completion of a published book telling her ancestor's canal era story. In addition to the legacy cultivated through these performances, workshops, and book publication, this program will teach others how to investigate, research, write about, and publish their own family history within the state thus cultivating public involvement in additional legacy-making projects.**

**4) The project will engage and inspire youth and young adults to take an interest in state history, family heritage and writing about personal family connections to the places where they live.**