

## CANAWLERS AT REST

### DANA COLUMBIA

b. March 6, 1797  
d. December 23, 1865

By Bob & Carolyn Schmidt



DANA COLUMBIA

Courtesy of Allen County Fort Wayne Historical Society

Ask anyone what is the source of the name Columbia Street in Fort Wayne and most people will respond they don't know. Others will guess that it is named for the South American country or maybe the moniker for the United States. If the person is a canawler, he or she might correctly associate the name with Dana Columbia, the man who operated an inn on this street in Fort Wayne in the early 1840's and later moved to Junction, Ohio. They are correct, but there is a lot more to this "Canawler at Rest" that needs to be told.

The American Revolution 1775-83 was to have a profound influence on the lives of Dana's mother and father. Out of the chaos of this war emerged two persons from different worlds who were to become his parents.

Dana's mother was Margaret Moor Ransted, who was born in Boston on December 6, 1767, the youngest child of John and Elizabeth (Daulbille) Ransted. Her mother, Elizabeth died in 1767, probably as a result of childbirth or illness. Shortly thereafter her father John, took Margaret out into the countryside to live with a cousin of his deceased wife. John, who apparently was part of a local militia, then became ill and died also 1767.

For poor Margaret, things continued to go from bad to worse when the cousin she was living with also died. Margaret was passed on to another cousin who likewise died. Eventually she lived with strangers in nearby Dorchester. In 1775 when she was 8 years old, Boston was in the midst of chaos. British troops under General Gage and later General Howe occupied the city and the American patriots surrounded the town. Hostili-

ties began at Lexington/Concord in April 1775, followed by Bunker/Breed's Hill in early June of that year and the siege extended until March of 1776, when the British left Boston for Halifax. The revolution ended in 1783 with the Peace of Paris. Margaret remained with her foster parents in Dorchester until she was 18 (1785).

Margaret's fortunes began to turn when, after much travel and searching, Chessman Ransted, her older step-brother, found her and took her back to Boston to live with their half sister. It was there where she made the acquaintance of a Frenchman, Captain Louis De La Colombe, who had been the aid-de-camp of both General Marquis De Lafayette and also Johann "Baron" De Kalb, but had remained in the U.S. when General Lafayette returned to France. Perhaps the political situation in France is what influenced Louis Colombe to remain in America for, following the French Revolution, U.S. relationships with France had deteriorated. The Federalists of New England were extremely anti-French.

Details of how Margaret & Louis Colombe met are not known, but 40-year-old Louis Colombe married the young 23-year-old Margaret Ransted of Boston on November 29, 1790. Initially they lived in Dorchester, Massachusetts near Boston, where their first two daughters, Elizabeth and Sally were born. In 1795 they briefly were in New York where son John was born on June 24, 1795. By March of 1797 they were back in Massachusetts where our subject Dana Columbe (Columbia) was born on March 6, 1797.

General Lafayette's son, George Washington Lafayette, age 15, arrived in Boston in August 1795, trav-



eled to New York and briefly stayed with Louis Colombe that October. President George Washington then got George Lafayette enrolled in Harvard. In April 1796 George went to Mt. Vernon for a visit with the Washingtons. In 1797 George Lafayette wanted to return to France to see General Lafayette, who had been captured by the Prussians in 1792, sent to Austria, and held in prison until 1797. President Washington corresponded with Colombe asking that he persuade George Lafayette to remain in America after he heard his father was released from prison and his whereabouts were unknown.

By the time of the census of 1800 Louis Colombe had changed his name to Columbia perhaps as result of the anti-French attitude in New England at the time. A daughter Margaret and son Lewis were born in the next few years. By 1815 the Columbias decided to move to the frontier near Athens, Ohio, where many others from Massachusetts were relocating at that time. They settled in Ames township on the creek above Owens settlement. After a few years, Louis moved on to Walkers Branch (creek) on the farm later owned by Mahlon Kasler. He erected a rude structure where he tanned the skins of wild animals until his death at age

75 in 1825. A historical marker at the Athens courthouse lists Louis de la Colombe as one of the Revolutionary soldiers buried in the county. The death records of Athens county recorded the date 1825 but not the cemetery, which is unknown.

In 1815, Dana was eighteen years old. It is doubtful that he moved with his family to Ohio. The census of 1820 only shows Louis and Margaret. An older brother John Columbia married Lucy Brown Clark in Athens county in February 1819.

About 1820 Dana Columbia married Amanda Wild in Sullivan county, New York, so he may have lived in New York after 1815. Dana and Amanda remained in New York until the mid 1830s. Two daughters and one son were born there: Harriett A. Columbia born in 1822, Sarah H. Columbia born in 1827, and Oscar, date unknown.

In the mid 1830s (1835-36) John and Dana both moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana. At about the same time Dana's wife, Amanda (Wild) Columbia, died. Again this may be a contributing reason for Dana moving to Fort

**PARENTS & SIBLINGS OF DANA COLUMBIA**

<u>NAME</u>	<u>BORN</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>DIED</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>BURIAL</u>
Phillipe Louis Saint Ange Morel C de la Colombe (Columbia)	6-13-1750	Rockford, France	8-05-1825	Athens Co., OH	
Margaret Moor Ransted Married November 29, 1790	12-06-1767	Boston, MA	2-27-1837	Fort Wayne, IN	
Elizabeth Brown Columbia	6-12-1791	Boston, MA			
Sally Columbia	3-01-1793	Dorchester, MA	7-15-1863	Walpole, MA	
John Columbia	6-24-1795	NY	6-24-1840	Fort Wayne, IN	
<b>Dana Columbia</b>	3-06-1797	Dedham, MA	12-23-1865	Junction, OH	Ft. Wayne, IN Lin.J-152
Margaret Columbia	1-22-1799	Dedham, MA			
Lewis Columbia	5-09-1808	Dedham, MA			

**WIVES & CHILDREN OF DANA COLUMBIA**

<b>Dana (Benton ?) Columbia</b>	3-6-1797	Massachusetts	12-23-1865	Junction, OH	Ft. Wayne, IN Lin.F-24
1. Amanda Wild Married ?		Sullivan, NY			
Harriett Amanda Columbia Married Snyder	@1822	New York	1932		
Oscar Columbia	@				
Sarah Henrietta Columbia Married David F Comparet	4-26-1827 3-06-1826	New York Ft. Wayne, IN	10-09-1909 10-11-1903	Ft. Wayne, IN Ft. Wayne, IN	Ft. Wayne, IN Lin. F-24 Ft. Wayne, IN Lin. F-24
2. Elsa Ward (Elsie, Elsie) Married 1837	2-03-1809	Poultney, VT	8-09-1893	Junction, Perry, OH	
Thomas H. B. Columbia Married Corilla Marcellus	11-10-1842 6-17-1848	Terre Haute, IN	12-18-1884 3-21-1922	Junction, OH Paulding Co., OH	
3-5-1865 Gertrude Columbia	@1846-7	Auglaize, OH	1847	Paulding Co., OH	



Wayne. Dana now at age 40 brought at least daughter, Sarah, age 10 with him to Fort Wayne and probably Harriett, age 15. John and Dana also brought their mother, Margaret (Ransted) Columbia, with them. Perhaps the change was too much for her. She died in Fort Wayne in February 1837 shortly after arriving in the city. That same year Dana married Elsie Ward, age 28, in Fort Wayne. The 1840 Allen County census shows 3 females in the household.

The building of the Wabash & Erie Canal was well under way and provided opportunities for ambitious men. In 1835 Asa and Oliver Fairfield, old sea captains, moved to Fort Wayne. Asa operated the first canal boat, "Indiana", which traveled from Fort Wayne to Huntington, Indiana, on July 4, 1835 for the canal dedication celebration. Dana Columbia arrived a year or so later and became the next captain of the "Indiana." He sought to gain fame as the first boat to arrive in Wabash, Indiana, on July 4, 1837.

The officials of the city of Wabash planned a gala celebration that July 4<sup>th</sup> and a race that offered \$50 to the captain of the first boat to tie up at the Canal Street dock. Because they wanted everything to go smoothly they fixed the race. Their plan was to have Captain Dana Columbia (better known as "Hail or Hale Columbia") bring the "Indiana" down the canal on July 3 to a spot a few miles east of Wabash, tie up and then be first to enter Wabash the following day. Columbia, being a competitive man and wanting the \$50 prize, agreed to do so. The officials also planned to have a large crowd waiting at the dock, geat speeches by dignitaries and a huge ball. Columbia even went so far as the write his victory speech.

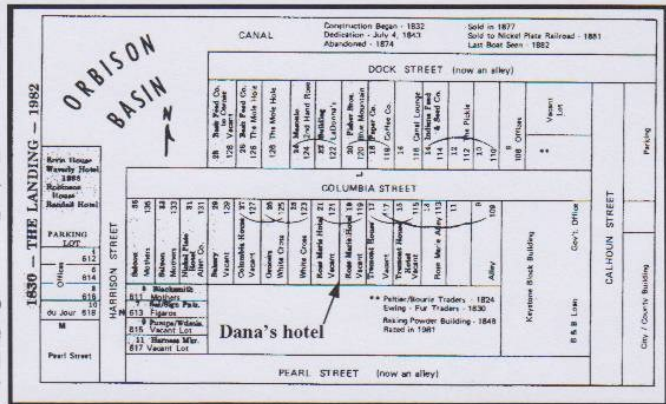
Captain Ed Patchin of the "Prairie Hen" also wanted the prize. When he heard about the fixed race he decided he would win. Just before nightfall he tied up the "Prairie Hen" a few miles above the "Indiana." Then late at night on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, when he felt the crew on the "Indiana" were fast asleep, he had his mules tow the boat within close range of the "Indiana." He then sent the mules through the woods around the other boat while his crew quietly poled their boat past the "Indiana." Once around he re-hitched the mules and pulled the "Prairie Hen" to a spot one mile outside of Wabash.

The morning of July 4, 1837, the "Prairie Hen" started toward Wabash unknown to Columbia who leisuely towed the "Indiana" there as well. As the crowd at the dock saw the boat coming in they began cheering and the bands played. On board were one hundred pas-sengers of which half were uproariously drunk Indians. Patchin docked the "Prairie Hen" and demanded his prize money from the welcoming committee. Not know-

ing what else to do, they gave him his prize and let him make a speech. He went on and on as to how he beat Columbia to town even though the race was rigged. The "Prairie Hen" was often seen thereafter at the dock loading or unloading cargo it brought up and down the canal.

Apparently during the early 1840s Dana also operated the canal boat "Chief Richardville" between Fort Wayne and Lafayette. This boat was owned by Francis Comparet. This relationship is interesting in that David Comparet, Francis' son married Sarah Columbia, Dana's daughter, in 1846.

From the late 1830s until 1846, Dana Columbia lived in Fort Wayne and he built a twenty-two room crude log inn on the south side of Columbia Street. This was where most of the commercial loading and unloading of canal boats occurred. Roy Bates, Fort Wayne historian, described the street and hotel like this: "Strangely the street that was to flourish so abundantly took its name from a hawk-nosed hotel proprietor, Dana Columbia, obviously he was of a personality that made a deep impression upon the growing community and his 22 room hostelry which stood on the site of the old Rosemarie Hotel becoming a popular gathering place."

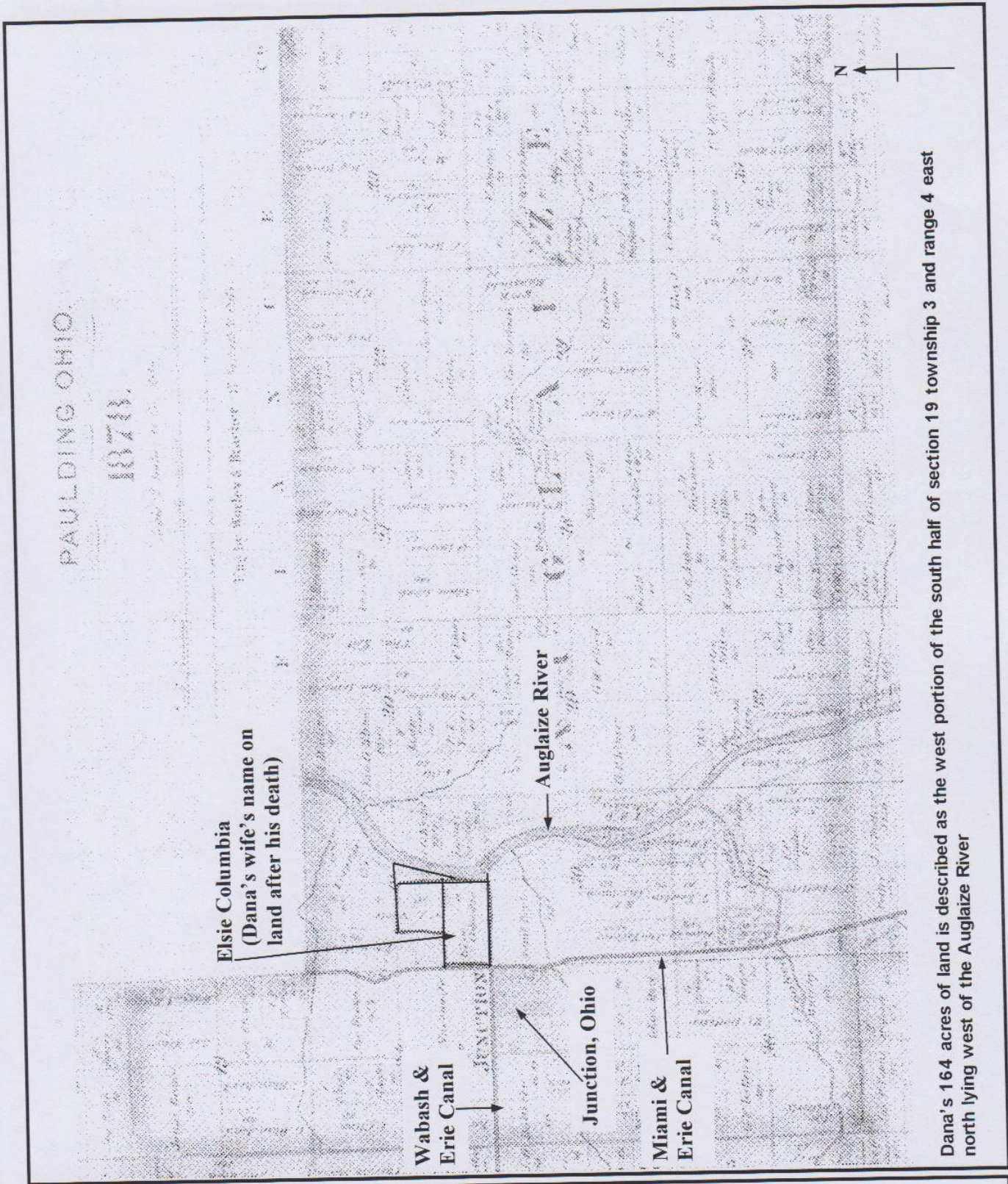


The location of Dana Columbia's 22 room hotel is shown on this map from CSI member Neil Sowards' book *A Guide to Three Rivers Region Fort Wayne and Northeast Indiana*.

Schaab, in his *Streets of Fort Wayne* describes Columbia Street as follows: "Columbia Street was mud rutted with wooden plank walkways, It was a sea of horsemen, wagon teamsters, farmers driving herds of hogs, French backwoods traders with their packs of hides, hosts of travelers, men of the ministry, sharps and cut-throats. It was the commercial street where everything happened. Its warehouses lined the Canal from end to end. The deals made, the money changing hearts, the tonnage coming and going constantly, the hearts broken. Today all that remains is "The Landing." One can almost picture the hustle and bustle on this



# Dana Columbia's land at the junction of the Wabash & Erie and Miami & Erie Canals in Junction, Paulding County, Ohio.



PAULDING OHIO.

1873.

Elsie Columbia  
(Dana's wife's name on  
land after his death)

Wabash &  
Erie Canal

Auglaize River

Junction, Ohio

Miami &  
Erie Canal

Dana's 164 acres of land is described as the west portion of the south half of section 19 township 3 and range 4 east north lying west of the Auglaize River



street during the canal era.

By 1840 Indiana had completed the portion of the Wabash & Erie Canal from Fort Wayne to the state line and awaited Ohio to complete her part of the construction. In 1843 Ohio finally completed the portion from the Indiana state line to Defiance, Ohio. In May of 1843 the first boat the Albert S White made its way from Lafayette to Toledo. The grand dedication of the canal was held in Fort Wayne on July 4, 1843. By 1845 the Miami Extension canal from Dayton reached Junction, Ohio.

Dana Columbia, like others, felt that Junction was destined to become a great commercial city with the two canals bringing traffic from the west (Indiana) and the south (Ohio) through there on the way to Lake Erie. Dana's daughter Sarah, married David Comparet in February 1846. Sometime around this 1846-47 period Dana moved his activities from Fort Wayne to Junction. We know that his daughter, Gertrude, was born in Indiana in 1846 and that a Fort Wayne newspaper of January 13, 1848 places him in Junction. It said, "We understand that a fire occurred at the Junction, on Sunday night last, destroying D. Columbia's grocery store, the Collector's office, Brubaber's stable etc."

The 1850 Census shows Dana and his family in Auglaize County and Dana is operating an inn and a grocery store next to the toll collection office in the town of Junction. Paulding court records also show that a tavern license was granted to Dana Columbia on May 6, 1850 to keep a tavern in his house and was again renewed in December 1852.

At one time Junction, which was laid out and a post office established in 1842, had a population of around 300 people. It had five grocery stores, several well stocked dry goods stores, a saw mill, a flour mill, two blacksmith shops, a hoop shop, a distillery, a brewery, three hotels, three grain warehouses, and about six saloons. Daily packet boats by Doyle & Dickey and others passed by the town until about 1852.

In 1852 Dana took possession of the west portion of the south half of section 19 township 3 and range 4 east north lying west of the Auglaize River. This farm extends just east of Junction to the Auglaize River and half the distance (1/2 miles) to the Six Mile culvert, which CSI members have visited on canal tours. He owned this land until his death in 1865 and his wife and son, Thomas, lived there into the 1880s.

Although the Wabash and Erie Canal ceased to function in Ohio after the late 1870s and the Antwerp reservoir was destroyed in 1887, the Miami and Erie Canal continued to be "open" past Junction until the

flood of 1913. In reality there was little boat traffic in the 1890s and 1900s. The last boat passing through Paulding County to Defiance occurred in 1909.

Dana Columbia turned from the canal to farming in the late 1850s. His farm consisted of 165 acres at Junction. He initially cleared about 20 acres, planted an orchard, farmed the cleared lands, had some cattle, and employed workmen to assist in quarrying stone on the property. He continued to expand his cleared acreage and built a farm house, a barn, and a cistern. After his death in 1865, Thomas H. B. Columbia, his son, continued operating the farm until his death in 1884. Then Thomas's son, Frank Columbia, continued farming there into the early 1900s before he moved to Defiance and worked in a machine shop.

We learned a lot about the details of Dana's farm from a lawsuit that occurred in 1882. Disputed was how Dana Columbia had acquired the land on which his farm was located. He had bought it in 1852 from the state. The Ohio Supreme Court concluded regardless of the dispute the statute of limitations was 21 years and the claim was beyond this period. The case provided many details about the farm property. The case was The Trustees of Oxford Township vs Thomas H.B. Colombia et al. and is available on Google Book.

Dana Columbia died on December 23, 1865 in Paulding County, Ohio. His body was taken to Fort Wayne and laid to rest in Lindenwood Cemetery. Originally his plot was in Section J Lot 152, but cemetery records say that it appears to have been moved to Section F Lot 24 beside his daughter Sarah's grave and that of her husband, David Comparet. He has no stone.

DANA COLUMBIA'S  
UNMARKED  
GRAVE

COMPARET  
DAVID 1903  
SARAH COLUMBIA 1909



Photo by Bob Schmidt





Dana's daughter and son-in-law's grave marker.  
Photo by Bob Schmidt

Sources:

Ancestry.com

- [trees.ancestry.com/tree/15716062/person/320100278/media/?pgnum=1&pg=0&pgp](http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/15716062/person/320100278/media/?pgnum=1&pg=0&pgp)
- [trees.ancestry.com/tree/16171452/person/351487988/story/f600646f-0b4f-4c39-8fb9-499f7](http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/16171452/person/351487988/story/f600646f-0b4f-4c39-8fb9-499f7)
- [trees.ancestry.com/tree/17254/person/483993110?ssrc=trees.ancestry.com/tree/18392030/person/654524365](http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/17254/person/483993110?ssrc=trees.ancestry.com/tree/18392030/person/654524365)
- [trees.ancestry.com/tree/232552/person/-703425863?ssrc=trees.ancestry.com/tree/23463679/person/1390011651?ssrc=trees.ancestry.com/tree/23463679/family/familygroup/fpid=1390011651](http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/232552/person/-703425863?ssrc=trees.ancestry.com/tree/23463679/person/1390011651?ssrc=trees.ancestry.com/tree/23463679/family/familygroup/fpid=1390011651)

Beatty, John D. *History of Fort Wayne, Indiana 1700-2005*. Evansville, IN: M. T. Publishing Company, Inc., 2005.

Balch, Thomas. *The French in America During the War of Independence of the United States 1777-1783*. Philadelphia, PA: Porter & Coates, 1895.

Budd, Everett. *History of Paulding County, Ohio*. 1892.  
 Comparet, A. C. *Ft. Wayne Evening Sentinel*. February 1, 1902.  
 Dana, James D. and Silliman, B. *The American Journal of Science and Arts*. New Haven, CT: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor. 1874.  
 DeWitt, E. L. *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Ohio*. New York, NY: Banks & Brothers, Law Publishers, 1883. Oxford Twp. V. Columbia. January term 1882 p. 87.  
*Gateway to the West. Vol. 11.*  
 "Fire At Junction." *Ft. Wayne Times and Peoples Press*. January 13, 1848.  
 Heitman, Francis. *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army During the War of the Revolution*. Washington, D. C. : The Rare Book Shop Publishing Company, Inc. 1914.  
 Internet  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis\\_Saint\\_Ange\\_Morel\\_chevalier\\_de\\_la\\_Colombe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Saint_Ange_Morel_chevalier_de_la_Colombe)  
[Newsfeed.rootsweb.com/th/read/AMERICAN-REVOLUTION/2007-03/1174188598](http://Newsfeed.rootsweb.com/th/read/AMERICAN-REVOLUTION/2007-03/1174188598)  
[www.hmdb.org.marker.asp?marker=15544](http://www.hmdb.org.marker.asp?marker=15544)  
 Jones, Steve. "Prairie Hen" 1st Canal Boat in Wabash." *Marion Wabash Sunday*, January 15, 1995.  
 Lindenwood Cemetery Records  
 Litt, Nevin O. *A History of Northwest Ohio*. Chicago, IL: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1917.  
*Ohio Law Journal Published Every Thursday by Lord & Bowman*. Columbus, OH: Ohio Law Journal Printing House, 1882.  
 Schaab, James M. *The Streets of Fort Wayne: The Streets of West Central*. 1991.  
 Sowards, Neil and Shuman, Lynne. *A Guide to Three Rivers Region Fort Wayne and Northeast Indiana*. Fort Wayne, IN: 1982.  
 United States Federal Census: 1800, 1810, 1820, 1830, 1840, 1850, 1860, 1880.  
 Walker, Charles M. *History of Athens County, Ohio*. Cincinnati, OH: Robert Clarke & Co. 1869.  
 Worley and Bracher, *1878 Map of Paulding County, Ohio*.

FROG TRIVIA



Did you know that Pomeroy, Ohio held Ohio's State Championship Frog Jumping Contest and Frog Derby on June 20, 1976? Jumping time was a 7 p.m. in Meigs Downs, the stadium at Meigs High School, with the first prize for the longest jump being \$300. It was won the previous year by a frog jumping over 16 feet.

The Frog Derby was held at 8:30 p.m. on a 35-foot-long oval track. It was supposed to be the only frog derby in the U.S. where the frogs had jockeys - owners with yardsticks guiding or should I say goading them on.

There was also a Mid-eastern Frog Jumping Contest, with frogs entered from several states. Participants could bring their own frog or rent one for 50 cents. There were 50 frogs available for rental.

Fred Crow, a Pomeroy attorney, was in charge

of the event. The man known as the Grand Croaker was Earl Ingels of Middleport, Ohio. Pomeroy had a "Bicentennial Frog" and its commissioners planned to fly a frog flag that day.

Perhaps a similar event can be held at canal festivals in the future. You'll have to find a frog supplier or have someone who is good at catching them in the wild.

Kay Sheldon, CSI member from N. Ridgeville, OH

**Speakers Bureau**

Fort Wayne, IN - April 3, 2012

CSI president, Bob Schmidt, presented a Power-Point program about Indiana's canals concentrating on the Wabash & Erie Canal in Fort Wayne to 15 members of CURIOS, an antique group, in the home of Phyllis Robb at 7 p.m. A question and answer time was followed by a drawing for a 3 month CSI trial membership that was won by Bernice Schlichtenmyer and drawings for past issues of "The Hoosier Packet." One of the ladies had played in the canal near the Vermilyea house.