

*"Frühling Kanal Ausflug mit Freunden"*  
*Spring Canal Trip With Friends*

**WABASH & ERIE CANAL**  
**GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES, INDIANA**  
With sites in Jasper, Dubois County, Indiana



**CANAL SOCIETY OF INDIANA**

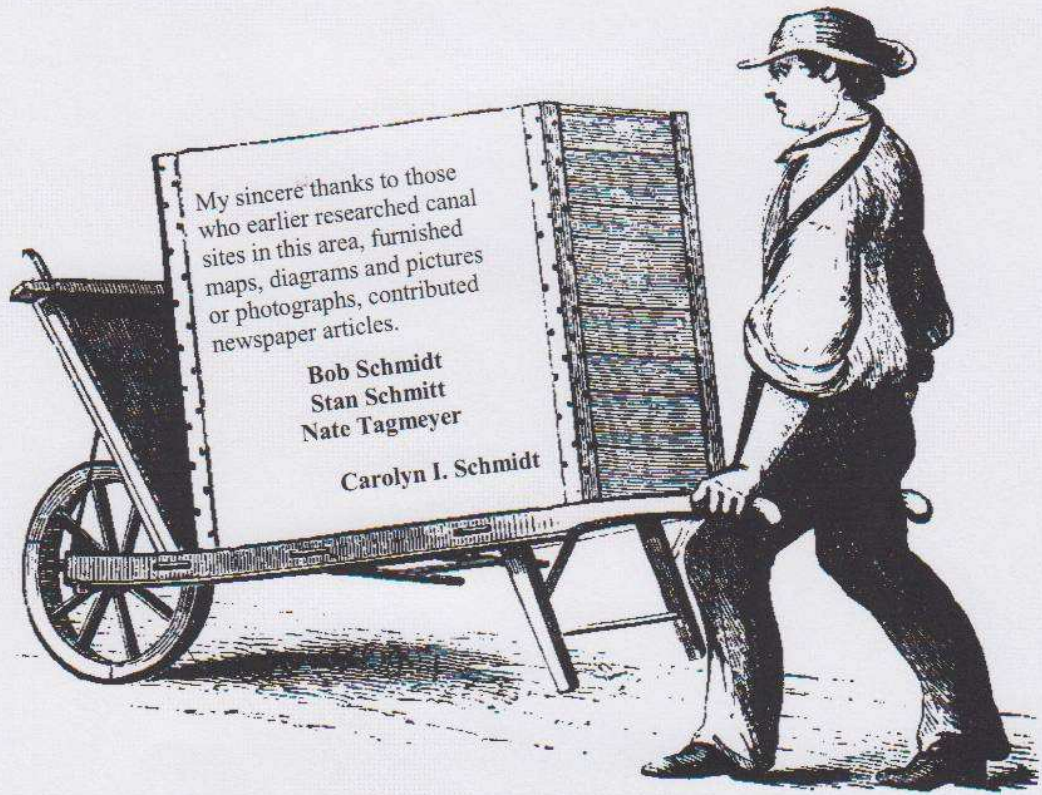
**APRIL 10-12, 2015**

Canal Society of Indiana

P.O. Box 10808

Fort Wayne, IN 46854-0808





My sincere thanks to those  
who earlier researched canal  
sites in this area, furnished  
maps, diagrams and pictures  
or photographs, contributed  
newspaper articles.

**Bob Schmidt**  
**Stan Schmitt**  
**Nate Tagmeyer**

**Carolyn I. Schmidt**



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Previous research and maps by Stan Schmitt

Canal Society of Indiana

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## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

# FOREWORD

Each tour given by the Canal Society of Indiana attempts to relate the history of the canal and point out the location of its structures in a particular area of Indiana or in a neighboring state. On this tour we will visit some of the last portions to be completed of the Wabash & Erie Canal in Gibson and Pike counties, Indiana.

The tours also include other canal related buildings and the early history of the counties and towns being toured. They usually have a theme — something that ties the tour together.

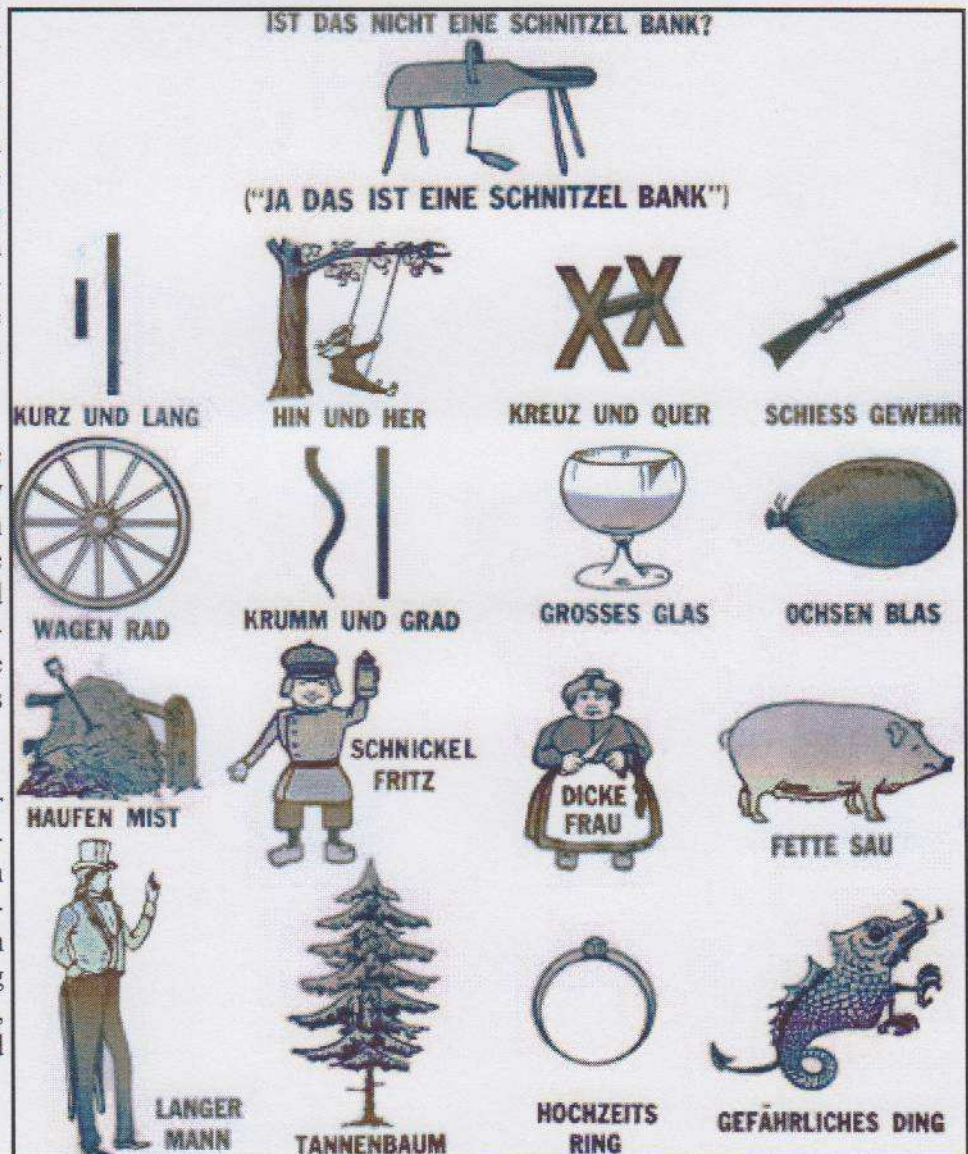
This spring's canal trip with friends, "Fruhling Kanal Ausflug mit Freunden," has a German theme. On Friday, prior to the tour, we will visit Dewig's (Day-wig's), an old German butcher shop that has recently expanded to become Indiana's largest meat market. Canawlers may purchase German sausages, cheese, etc.

As we follow the Wabash & Erie Canal northward on Saturday morning, we will see excellent examples of watered canal prism, visit Pigeon Creek Reservoir that fed the canal to the south, see where the canal crossed the Patoka River by an aqueduct at Dongola, see the prism high above the highway, and stop at a watered deep cut at Willisville.

On Saturday noon we drive to the nearby community of Jasper, an old German town in southern Indiana, where we will sample German food and sing German songs accompanied by an accordionist at the Schnitzelbank (carpenter's bench) restaurant.

Following lunch we tour Jasper City Mill, a reconstructed mill, and watch grain being ground. A stop at the Dubois County Historical Museum offers us a chance to see a log cabin, covered wagon, bison, early harvesting equipment, and much, much more.

**Welcome aboard!**





## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

This tour covers a part of the last portion of the Wabash & Erie Canal that was built to join the Cross Cut Canal below Terre Haute at Worthington to the Central Canal's completed portion 18 miles out of Evansville. Although this tour and book follow the canal in the opposite direction from which it was built, one should remember that once it was completed boats traveled in both directions.

### Saturday's Route 2015 Gibson County W&E Canal Tour

#### From Comfort Inn

L on Elpers Rd.  
R on Rusher Creek Rd.  
L on US 41  
R on I-64 E  
R on SR 57 & SR 68 at exit 29B  
R on SR 57 east at Exit 22 SR 68 to Lynnville  
L on SR 57 to Petersburg, cross Pigeon Creek and shortly turn left at next side road CR 650 E at W&E sign

L on CR 650 E  
FOLLOW along W&E Canal Prism for about 1 mile  
Gravel road curves, at curve canal continues on the left  
L on SR 168 for about 3 miles  
R on S CR 350 E, pass church  
L on CR 600 S  
R on CR 270E  
R on CR 525 S

STOP and see Pigeon Reservoir and Port Gibson, a W&E Canal town

Continue and road becomes CR 550S  
L on CR 350 E  
R on CR 250 S W&E Canal is after 2nd bridge, on right a home sits on the towpath, cross canal at next bridge  
L on CR 450 E cross W&E Canal bed with canal on right and left, 1/2 mile to next turn  
R on CR 200 S becomes CR 175 at other end

STOP and see primitive watered canal bed and marker at Francisco on right

Cross CR 550 E into Francisco, a W&E Canal town, canal bed moves to the left  
Left on Greene Street  
R on SR E 64 (Main St.) to Princeton, cross I-69  
L on SR 57 at crossroads  
R on William (Oakland City University entrance)  
R on 3rd street  
L on Oak  
SEE Cockrum Hall on left (old large brick building)  
Cockrum shipped by and wrote articles about the canal  
L on Lucretia which zigzags L on Columbia  
R on Lucretia to Student Life Building RESTROOMS

R on College  
R on Harrison (angles)  
R on Main St.  
R on SR 64  
L on Franklin at yellow flashing light and pass the school  
L on CR 200 S

R on second entrance to cemetery  
SEE William & Lucretia Cockrum's grave on right (take horseshoe route through cemetery and come out at first entrance)  
L on CR 200 S  
L on SR 64 (immediate)  
R on SR 57

L on CR 1200 E into Dongola, a W&E Canal town, where Cockrum shipped products on canal  
R on CR 150N W&E aqueduct crossed the creek here

L on SR 57  
PULL OVER and see where marker for W&E Canal was once located  
Canal bed was high above the road on left

Go through Glezen, a W&E Canal town, and under I-69,  
SEE the W&E Canal Deep Cut on right where dirt dug out for canal is piled high (posted no trespassing)  
R on CR 50 W

STOP at watered canal on CR 125 and turn around  
L on CR 50 W



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

town along current railroad tracks on right  
 SEE W&E Canal marker for canal warehouse after  
 Arby's on the left, canal ran behind restaurant

R on 9th St. (To Jasper sign) for about 1/4 mile  
 R on Goodlet St.  
 SEE home of Goodlet Morgan on the left  
 R on 7th St.  
 R on McCoy  
 R on 9th to Jasper cross I-69 will take about 30  
 minutes  
 L on SR 56  
 L on US 231N  
 Right on Newton in Jasper, follow SR 164 signs  
 Left on 3rd Avenue, cross river

L into Schnitzelbank restaurant for lunch, program,  
 annual meeting RESTROOMS

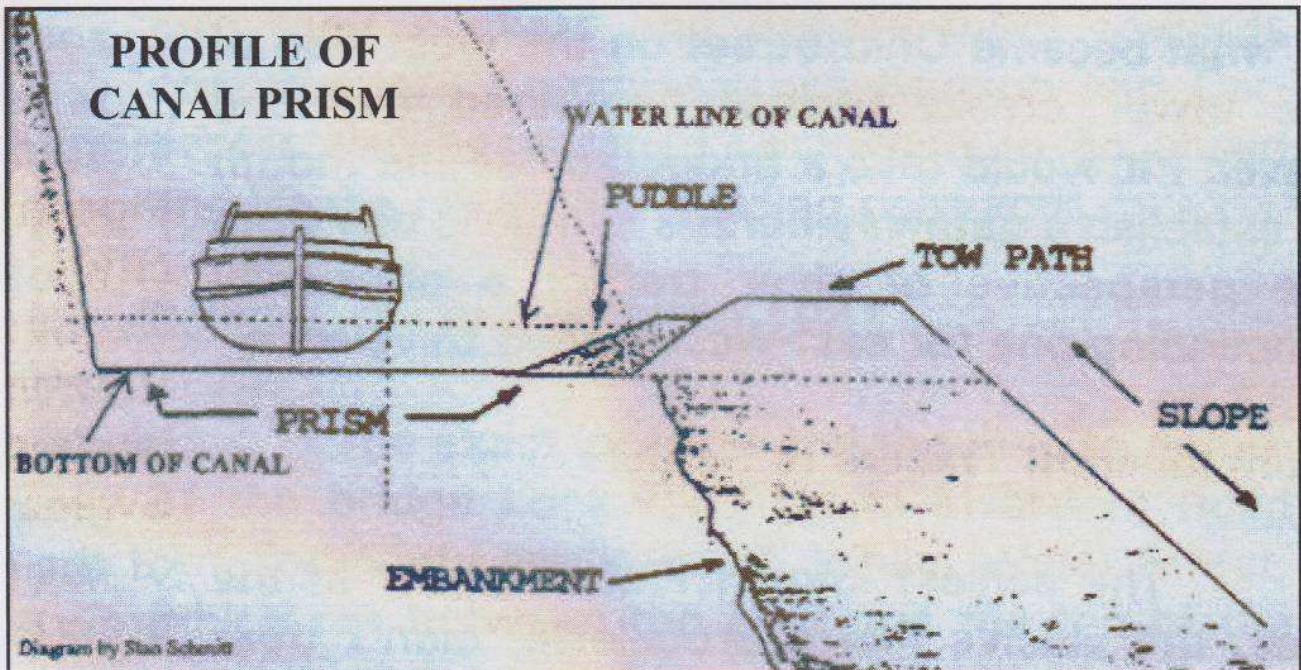
R on 3rd Ave. to Jasper City Mill on left  
 SEE mill in operation RESTROOMS  
 Return to 3rd  
 L on 3rd  
 R on Newton (becomes US 231 N) to Visitors Center/  
 Jasper County Museum

Right into Jasper County Museum

2704 Newton St. on right  
 TOUR museum about 1 1/2 hours with docents at  
 various exhibits

L on US 231 and follow route markers for about 25-30  
 minutes  
 R on I-64 W about 35-45 minutes  
 R at Exit 25B US 41  
 L on US 41  
 R on Rusher Creek Rd.  
 R on Elpers Rd. to Comfort Inn  
To Saturday night dinner  
 From Comfort Inn  
 L on Elpers Rd.  
 R on Rusher Creek Rd.  
 L on US 41  
 R at Exit 25 onto I-64 west  
 R at Exit 29  
 L on Cynthiana Rd. and cross over I-64  
 Go about a mile, first road on Left  
 L on Nesbit Rd. to Nesbit Inn for dinner

Return to motel  
 R on Nesbit Rd.  
 R on Cynthiana Rd.  
 R on I-64  
 R on US 41  
 R on Rusher Creek Rd.  
 L on Elpers Rd. to Comfort Inn





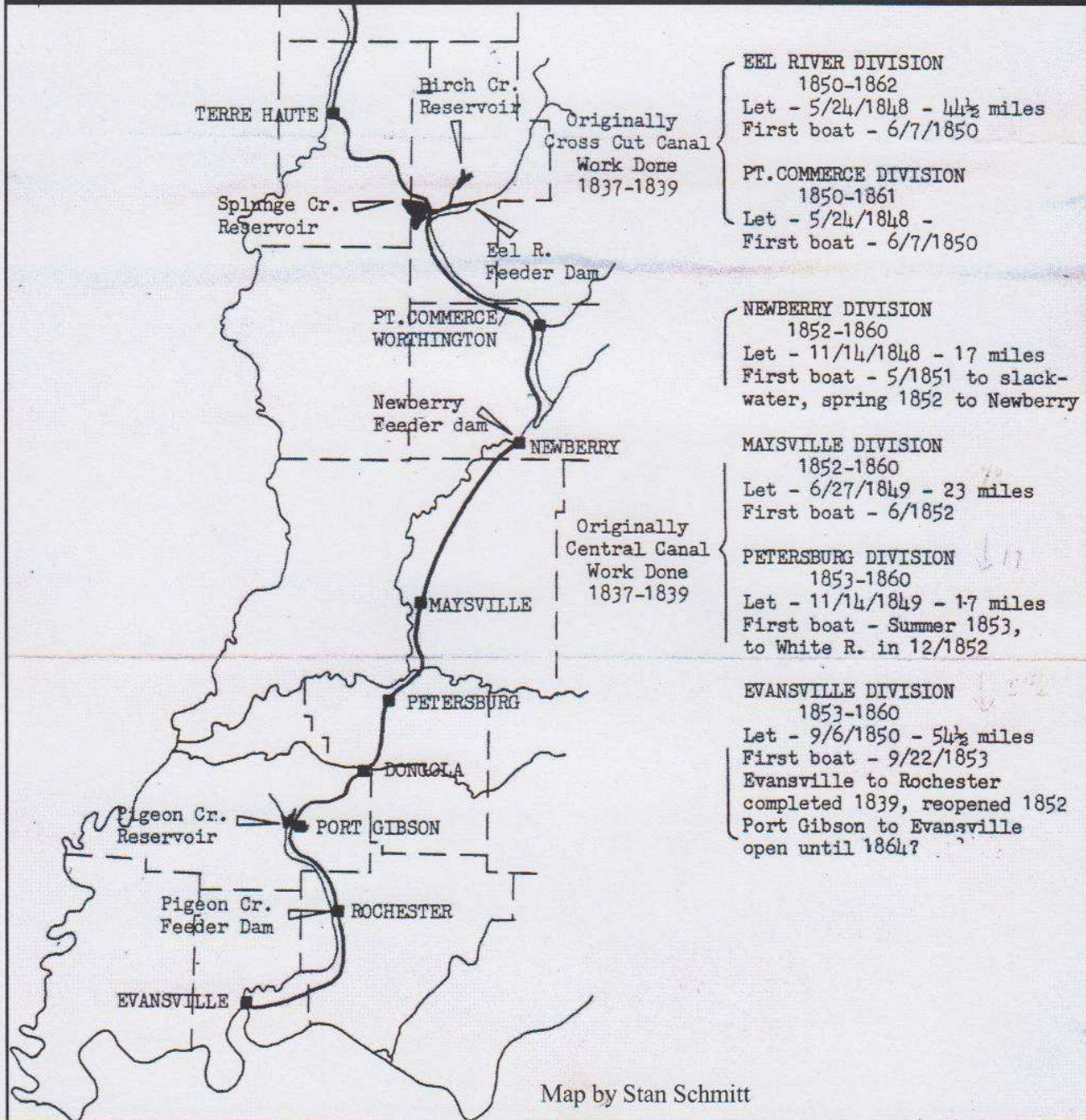
# WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

## WABASH & ERIE CANAL SOUTHERN DIVISION TERRE HAUTE-EVANSVILLE

LENGTH: 156 miles (including slack water and feeders)

LOCKAGE: 256 feet

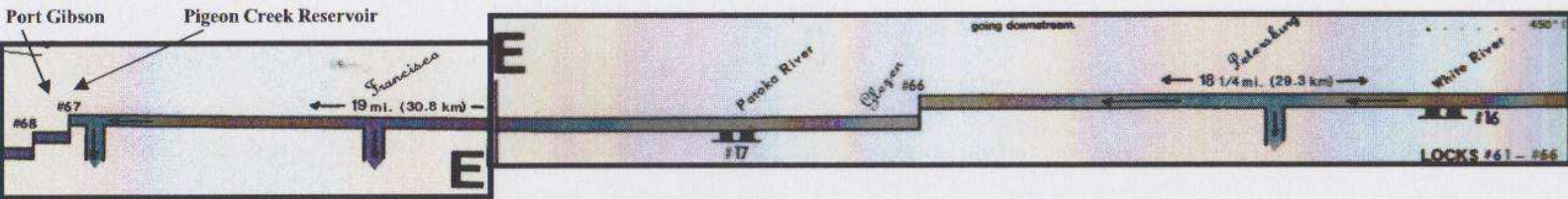
STRUCTURES: 93 culverts, 76 road bridges, 33 lift locks, 13 waste weirs, 7 tow-path bridges, 6 aqueducts, 4 dams, 4 guard gates, 3 guard locks, 3 reservoirs, 2 river locks, 2 tumblers, 1 head gate



- EEL RIVER DIVISION**  
1850-1862  
Let - 5/24/1848 - 44½ miles  
First boat - 6/7/1850
- PT. COMMERCE DIVISION**  
1850-1861  
Let - 5/24/1848 -  
First boat - 6/7/1850
- NEWBERRY DIVISION**  
1852-1860  
Let - 11/14/1848 - 17 miles  
First boat - 5/1851 to slack-water, spring 1852 to Newberry
- MAYSVILLE DIVISION**  
1852-1860  
Let - 6/27/1849 - 23 miles  
First boat - 6/1852
- PETERSBURG DIVISION**  
1853-1860  
Let - 11/14/1849 - 17 miles  
First boat - Summer 1853, to White R. in 12/1852
- EVANSVILLE DIVISION**  
1853-1860  
Let - 9/6/1850 - 54½ miles  
First boat - 9/22/1853  
Evansville to Rochester completed 1839, reopened 1852  
Port Gibson to Evansville open until 1864?

Map by Stan Schmitt





**From Profile of the Wabash & Erie Canal by Tom Meek**

Shows the descent of the canal from NE to SW

The canal is descending toward the Ohio River from Aqueduct #16 over the White River, through Petersburg, Lock #66 at Glezen (Hosmer), Aqueduct #17 over the Patoka River, through Francisco to Lock #67 at Port Gibson and on toward Evansville.

**Locks #66-68**

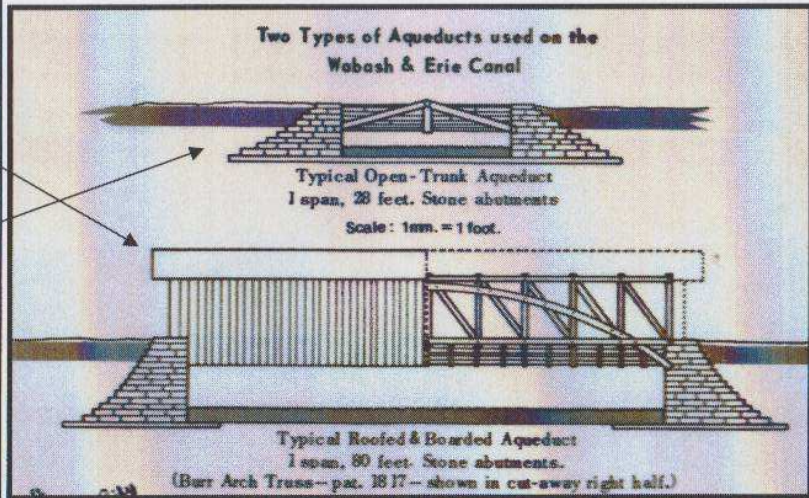
- #66 7.9 feet lift, Timber Crib plan
- #67 7.0 feet lift, Timber Crib plan
- #68 7.0 feet lift, Timber Crib plan

**Aqueducts #16-17**

- #16 White River - 510 feet, 6 spans 85 feet each, stone abutments and piers, wooden superstructure, roofed and sided.
- #17 Patoka River - 194 feet, 1 middle span 50 feet, 4 other spans (2 on each side) 36 feet each. timber abutments and piers, wooden trunk, open.

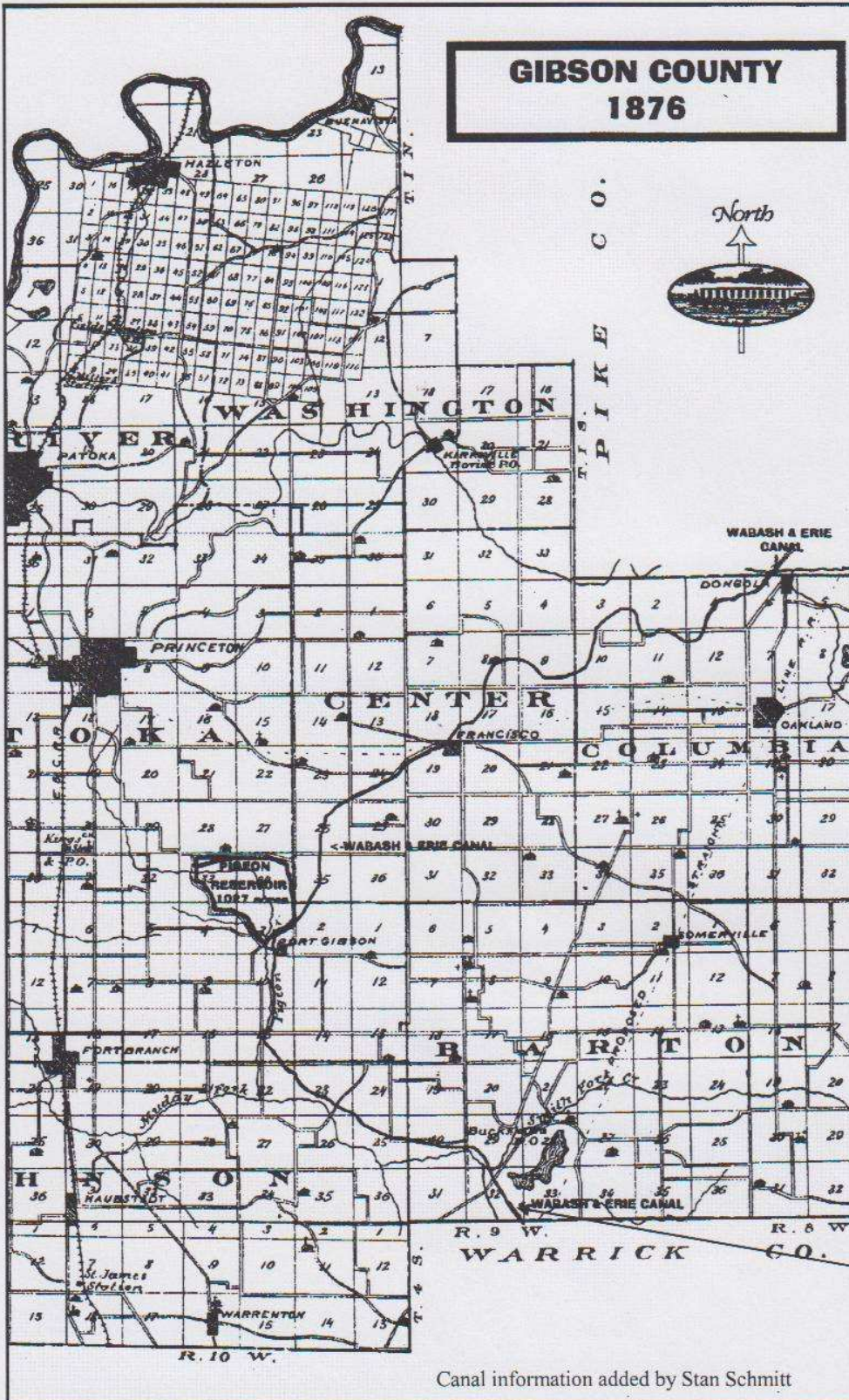
**Flood gates or Waste Weirs**

- Above Petersburg
- At Francisco
- At Port Gibson



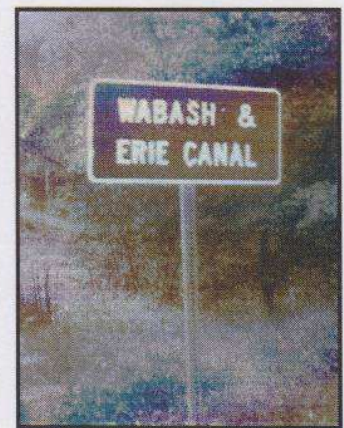


WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES



Canal information added by Stan Schmitt

GIBSON



Our first stop will be along the Wabash & Erie Canal just after U.S. 57 crosses Pigeon Creek in Gibson County, Indiana. Look for the sign above and turn left on the gravel road. We will follow the watered canal for about a mile.

Photo by Bob Schmidt



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

### GIBSON COUNTY

Gibson County contains 498 square miles and is located in southwestern Indiana. It was one of the earliest counties settled because the emigrants followed the Native American trail into the state. One of these was the Red Banks trail from Kentucky that come up through what later became Vanderburgh County.

Gibson County originally encompassed most of Dubois and Pike counties. This area was the ninth county to be organized (1813) just three years before Indiana's statehood in 1816. Later it was reduced to its current size. It was named for General John Gibson, who was Secretary of the Indiana Territory from 1801-1816.

When the settlers arrived they found the western part of the county fairly level to undulating being mostly bottom land and some barrens. This rich fertile alluvial soil that was deposited by the rivers flooding was suitable for farming. The sandy ridges (barrens) lay between the bottom land and gravel terraces. To the east and northeast were elevated plateaus covered with excellent oak and poplar timber. Deep valleys ran through the plateau. A ridge of yellow loam lay between the Patoka and White rivers. They cut their channels through limestone in the eastern part of the county and deposited it in a broad belt that lay southwest to northeast between what became Princeton and Owensville.

The stone found in the county is not of building quality being friable. Bituminous coal which lies between Gibson and Pike counties is of excellent quality. Gibson county ranks 4th in the state in coal reserves. Beneath the coal are clays that are suitable for the manufacture of tile, fire-bricks, terra-cotta and pottery.

Though of importance to the county during its early years, natural gas supplies have diminished. In 1906 there was one hundred twenty-two gas wells that produced minimal amounts of gas. An oil field is located mostly in Patoka township near northwestern Princeton.

The sand ridges, which at first seemed of little value, led to the growing of melons. The county has become famous for its quantity and quality of melons. Cantaloupe season begins about July 15th and water-melon season begins about August 1st.

The county is basically agricultural. However, Toyota has built a huge truck assembly plant near Fort Branch. Supporting industries have followed as well as housing and shopping.

Various towns and cities were platted in the county. Some fared well. Others are now defunct. These included Princeton (the county seat), Buena Vista, Dongola, Economy, Fort Branch, Francisco, Haubstadt, Hazelton, Johnson, Kirkville, Mackey, East Mt. Carmel, MaKaw Summit, Oakland City, Owensville, Patoka, Skelton, Smithfield, Summitville (Somerville), Warrenton, and Windham. Warrenton, an early state coach stop and trading post, has the Log Inn, Indiana's oldest restaurant that was built in 1825. Canal towns were Dongola, Francisco, and Port Gibson. This book contains more information about the canal towns and mentions the others in passing.

Gibson County was home to the remnants of several Native American tribes—the Shawnee, Sacs, Fox, Kickapoo, Miami and Pottawatomies. Shawnee Chief "Old Trackwell" had a village on Indian creek about two miles northeast of present day Princeton. The Miamis, who claimed ownership of a portion of the territory, had a fort on the Patoka river. The last Native American village, located two miles west of present day Owensville, was destroyed by Capt. Jacob Warrick in 1807. After the Native American removal by Colonel Pepper and General Tipton in 1838 only a few remained. They too soon fled from the encroaching white settlers.

Gibson County's actual first settler was John Severns. He and his family came to America from Wales shortly before the Revolutionary War. John volunteered for the war. One day he returned to visit his parents. A group of Native Americans attacked his family killing his father, mother, sister and younger brother. They took and kept John and his older brother prisoners. After seven years John managed to escape



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

and fled to Pennsylvania where he later married. He took a job assisting the government surveyors in Maryland and Kentucky. They were intelligent and pious, which set the moral tone for the county.

In 1789 Severns and his family settled on the south bank of the Patoka River in a cave. Having lived with his captors he had learned their language and was able to converse with Old Trackwell and win him over. After several months the local Native Americans allowed John to construct a crude hut of boughs, skins and other materials. He planted apple and peach seeds from Kentucky and had trees producing fruit before 1802.

Severns was later allowed to run a ferry across the Patoka River (now known as Severns Bridge) if he furnished "fire water" to the Native Americans and let them use the ferry for free. He was known to smoke the peace pipe with them and is credited for preserving peace upon the arrival of other settlers. He was an interpreter and also dealt with the Indian agent.

Even though Severns participated in many of the Native Americans' hunting and fishing expeditions and their sports, he had a run-in with Old Trackwell. He made the mistake of beating the chief in a race. This angered the old chief who began dancing around Severns shouting loud war whoops. Another race was run and Severns was smart enough to let the chief win thus pacifying him.

The land on which Severns actually lived belonged to the Miamis. Their chief, "Old Never-Sleep," was friendly with Severns, but basically ignored the other settlers.

In 1776 John Severns was made a Mason in Williamsburg, Virginia. He died around 1829 and was buried near where he settled.

Some of Gibson County's earliest settlers were the families of Gervas Hazelton and Daniel Hazelton, David Robb (1800), John Johnson (1802), William Hargrove and Joseph Milburn (1803), and James McClure (1805). After 1809 settlers came in more rapidly. The county's early settlers were principally from the Carolinas, Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia.

During the summer of 1810 Tecumseh was stirring up trouble in northern Indiana saying the settlers were taking the land from his people and driving them out. The settlers in southern Indiana were fearful that the Native Americans would raid their settlements. At that time they built three forts in Patoka township where present day Princeton is located. These were Fort Branch, Fort Hopkins and the stockade at William Harington's. The scare slowed down settlement for a time, but by 1811 it was hard to recall all who settled in the county.

Princeton is the county seat and is located about six miles northwest of Port Gibson. It was founded on March 28, 1814 by Robert M. Evans but was named for William Prince, a local attorney and legislator. Princeton was located at the intersection of the Buffalo Trace and the Red Bank Trace, which ran from Kentucky to Vincennes. It was Evans who was instrumental in getting the legislature to carve out portions of Warrick and Perry counties to form Vanderburgh County (Jan. 7, 1818). Evans also purchased land from Hugh McGary at the location of the new town of Evansville, which McGary named in honor of his supporter. Robert Evans was also the Representative who introduced the Internal Improvement Bill in January 1836, which authorized canals. He had many connections with the canal.

The last "golden sections" of the Evansville Division of the Wabash & Erie Canal weren't completed until 1853. They were delayed by cholera outbreaks in 1852 and labor shortages. Thus the connection was made between the Cross-Cut Canal at Worthington to a portion of the Central Canal, which had already been built in 1836-37 from Evansville to a point just north of Millersburg (about 18 miles and 24 chains in length). At this point they built a feeder dam across Pigeon Creek to supply the canal with water to Evansville. A town called Rochester was platted at the dam site, but nothing remains.

The water supply is the most critical element in the operation of a canal. They had found over the years



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

that there was not enough water from Pigeon creek to feed the canal during dry periods.

At first the southern most portion of the canal was going to be supplied from a reservoir on Flat Creek. However, this was found to be insufficient. The Resident Engineer's Report of November 25, 1850 to J. L. Williams Chief Engineer from Wm. J. Ball, Ball states:

"Finding the Flat Creek Reservoir so unfavorable, an examination was made for an eligible site on the head waters of Pigeon Creek which resulted successfully. A suitable place was found for making a bank across the valley where its width is only 30 chains and the top water line of the Reservoir surveyed, including an area of 1486 acres. Ordinates were also run, by which the content of the Reservoir when full, is ascertained with reliable accuracy, to be 387,814,680 cubic feet. Its maximum height will be 7 feet A, and the greatest available depth at the built head, 10 feet. For a considerable portion of the distance around, the banks are abrupt, another portion has a more gentle inclination, and a part of the border is very flat. A depression of 2 feet will expose 200 acres of land; a depression of 4 feet will expose 460 acres; and a depression of 6 feet, 680 acres. But around the flat portion of its border there are no settlements, and probably never will be. A very small portion of the entire area is arable land.

"The area of country inclining towards, and the drainage of which would be caught by the Pigeon Creek Reservoir, was ascertained by survey to be 14,870 acres exclusive of the area of the Reservoir. The basin forming the Pigeon Creek Reservoir is remarkably well adapted to the retention of water, being a tight impervious clay soil; and the surrounding county is generally high and rolling, in portions broken, having also a clay soil is well calculated to drain off into the Reservoir, a large proportion of the rain that falls upon it.

"In my calculations of the probable available quantity of water to be laid up in the Pigeon Creek Reservoir, I have assumed an annual fall of rain and snow melt of 35 vertical inches, and that two-fifths of

this, or 14 vertical inches, would flow into the Reservoir. This quantity would amount to 755,998,320 cubic feet. I have supposed an allowance of 4 feet vertical over a mean surface of the Reservoir (1,027 acres) would be an ample allowance for loss by evaporation and leakage, considering the peculiar tenacity of the soil. This would amount to 178,944,480 cubic feet, and being deducted from the drainage above, would leave a net supply of 557,054,840 cubic feet; which would afford 1,097 cubic feet per minute for 12 months. It is intended to raise the Reservoir bank 5 feet above top water line. It will be 10 feet wide on top, with slopes of 1 3/4 to 1 and in its centre there will be a tight wall of 2 inch oak plank, extending about 2 feet below the natural surface, and 2 feet above the top water line of the Reservoir.

"There lie on the east side of the Reservoir a high point of land composed of hard clay, underlaid with soft sandstone rock, at a suitable level for the foundations of the Reservoir Culverts, rendering the location particularly eligible. From the culverts, a short and cheap feeder will lead the water into the Canal just below the Lock.

"At the North end of Pigeon Summit deep cut, a Lock will be put in having a lift varying from 1 to 3 feet, the latter being its lift when the Reservoir is filled to top water line; and through the Reservoir, the embankments are raised to an extra height of 3 feet to keep them at all times above water, The water will be admitted into the Canal from the Reservoir by suitable waste weirs and at the north end of Pigeon Summit, a large waste weir will be provided to discharge any extraordinary floods that may occur, and the excessive drainage of certain years. It is intended to put in 4 gates 2 feet square for drawing the water from the Reservoir to fill the Canal; and these together with the waste weirs at the North end of the Reservoir, will be amply sufficient to discharge unusual floods, and prevent the water rising higher than is intended. But the Reservoir bank is raised 5 feet extra height, and would safely bear a rise of 2 feet, which would hold half the largest monthly drainage that has occurred during the last 215 years. But it is not probable the Reservoir bank will ever be exposed to this extra pressure, and I do not think the extreme oscillations in the



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

surface of the water, from the lowest stage in the fall, to the highest, probably in July, need exceed six feet. It is intended to clear 250 acres of the border of the Pigeon Creek Reservoir, which will be alternately covered with water, and then exposed to the sun, and prevent any just case of complaint, that the health of the country has been impaired by flooding the land.

“It will be seen that the distance from Newbury (Newberry) Dam to the South end of Pigeon Reservoir, is 64 miles and 6 chains, and the estimated supply of water required, 4,338 cubic feet per minute. From the Pigeon Reservoir to Pigeon Creek Feeder Dam, the distance is 13 miles and 9 chains, and the estimated supply of water required is 655 cubic feet per minute. From the Pigeon Feeder Dam to Evansville, the distance is 18 miles and 24 chains, requiring 915 cubic feet of water per minute.

“For the supply of the line from Newbury (Newberry) Dam to the South end of the Pigeon Reservoir, there is a great superabundance of water, furnished by White River, and there cannot be the least difficulty in sending forward an ample supply, considering the peculiarly impervious character of the soil, and also the enlargement of the Canal to 5 feet depth of water, to near Maysville, and 4½ feet depth, to the south end of Patoka Summit; and the current, with the increased capacity, will be so moderate as not to impede navigation.”

Therefore when the “golden sections” were dug they built the Pigeon Creek Reservoir thirteen miles and 9 chains northwest of the Pigeon Feeder Dam. Pigeon Creek ran alongside the reservoir and water from the creek was stored in it during wet months. Water from the White River could also be brought down the canal and stored in the reservoir.

The Pigeon Feeder Dam and Feeder Canal supplied 915 cubic feet of water per minute to the main canal to Evansville for eight months of the year. Once Pigeon Creek Reservoir was filled, its water was sent down the canal during the four month long dry period to supplement the water from the feeder dam and increased the rate of flow to 955 cubic feet per minute.

As plans were underway for constructing Pigeon Reservoir citizens of Evansville and elsewhere were concerned about the reservoir breeding disease and the vandalism that had occurred on other reservoirs and canal banks on sections further north. The *Evansville Journal* carried articles about the proposed reservoir as follows:

10-9-51 *Evansville Journal*  
“Canal Reservoir

“The Vanderburgh Circuit Court has just closed a two week’s session during which an unusual amount of business has been dispatched.

“The most prominent case which came up, on account of the interest involved, was the application of sundry citizens of Gibson county for an injunction to stay the construction of a reservoir which will submerge about eighteen hundred acres of land in that county, and upon which the practical utility of forty miles of the southern portion of the great Wabash and Erie Canal, almost entirely depends. The application was supported by Messrs. Jones, Blythe and Palmer, and opposed on behalf of the Canal Trustees, by Judge Law and Sam’l Judah, Esq. We had the pleasure of listening to the argument of one of the council, Judge Law, and it seems to us that his position, fortified so strongly by law and facts, cannot be shaken.

“Instead of such a reservoir being a place where noxious vapors and deadly exhalations are generated, it was conclusively shown by the affidavits of gentlemen occupying distinguished position in scientific research, as well as of those of great practical experience, that it improved the health of the surrounding country — instead of being a nuisance, these reservoirs wherever they have existed are regarded by those living in their neighborhood, as beneficent improvements.

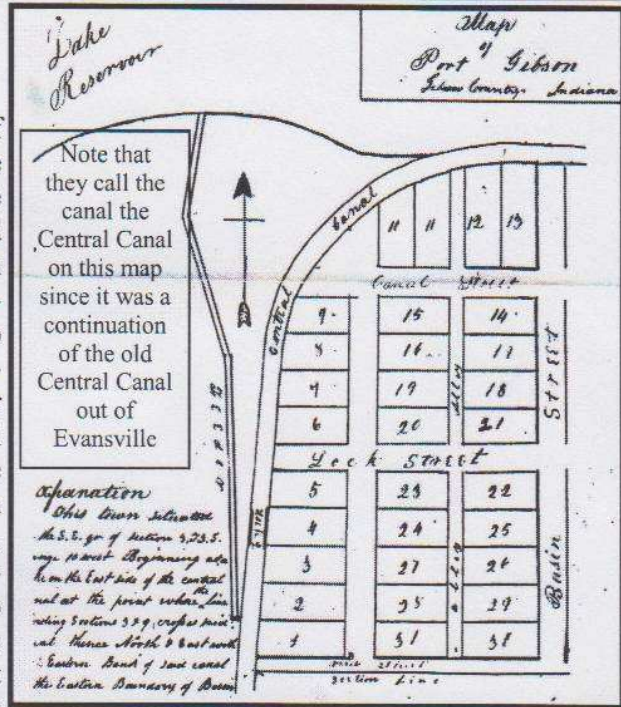
“Judge Hovey is to give his decision this week. The people look for it with interest, because upon it will depend the practical utility, we have said, of the portion of the Canal, forty miles from this place.”



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

11-11-51 *Evansville Journal*  
 "Judge Hovey's Decision"

"We publish in to-day's paper to the exclusion of less important matters, the decision of Judge Hovey in the case of Joshua W. Davis, Gen. W. Depriest, Elisha Embree and others vs. The Board of Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal. This was an application of injunction to restrain the defendants from constructing a reservoir for the Wabash and Erie Canal in Gibson county, or, if permitted to be constructed that the defendants be enjoined from finishing the same, until all the trees, shrubs, vegetable matter &c. and the surface of the earth to a reasonable depth shall have been removed from the bed of the reservoir. By Judge Hovey's decision, the injunction is refused. There has been much interest felt in the case, as upon the decision rested, the speedy or probably long delayed completion of the Wabash and Erie Canal. It was not only a matter of interest to us at Evansville, but to the whole country traversed by this great work. We hope the people of Gibson county will not realize any of those evils anticipated by the building of this reservoir. The document allowed the will be read with much interest, and be found in every respect worthy of its author."



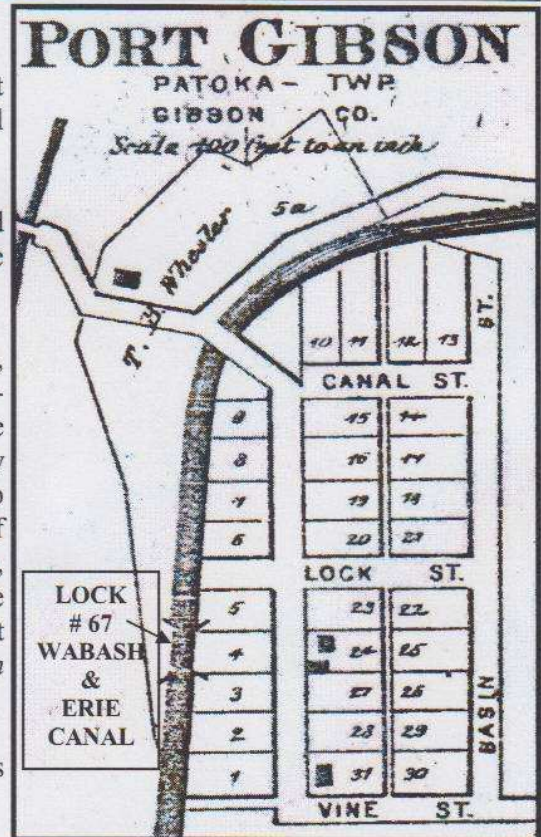
Above: 1851-52 Map used to plat Port Gibson  
 Below: 1881 Pike & Gibson Counties D. J. Lake & Co.

Another injunction was filed to stop work on the aqueduct over White River in 1851. It looked like this portion of the canal would never be completed.

Building the Pigeon Reservoir was finally agreed upon and construction began. Structures along the canal often became places to plat towns.

"During 1851-52 Elisha Embree, an attorney at Princeton, and Samuel Shannon platted the town of Port Gibson and otherwise prepared for a permanent village to be located adjacent to the canal near the reservoir. It was incorporated on May 26, 1852, By that time Port Gibson boasted of having a store, a blacksmith shop and a flouring mill, the latter being promoted by Mr., Iglehardt of Evansville. Later on 'Dud' Campbell started a saloon. For a time, after the completion of the canal, passenger traffic was quite heavy and the boats always stopped for an hour or two at Port Gibson," according to Gil Stormont in a *History of Gibson County, Indiana*.

When Pigeon Creek Reservoir was completed, it was stocked with lake fish. It became a fishing resort.





## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

Then in 1852 the *Evansville Journal* carried articles about the Birch Creek reservoir in Clay county being broken by the "regulators," how the canal was repaired and put back into a good navigable order, another cutting of the canal bank and the aqueduct burned by a mob, and how these actions injured business at Evansville and elsewhere. Meetings were held and officials sent to the site. Resolutions were made and adopted as to punishment for those destroying canal structures.

Once again in September 1857 the canal was cut at the reservoir in Clay county according to the *Evansville Journal*. Two years later the paper published the following article:

11-14-1859 *Evansville Journal*

"The Canal Managers have issued handbills offering \$100 reward for the detection of any one in cutting the banks of the canal. Several instances have come under their observation, in which the water has been let out of the canal, and they think the perpetrators of these outrages are not fully aware of the penalty that attaches to the commission of the crime. We publish below the statute on this point.

"SEC. 74. Every person who shall willfully and maliciously injure or destroy any lock, culvert, or embankment of said canal, or shall willfully or maliciously make any aperture or breach in an embankment of said canal, with intent to injure or destroy the same, shall, on conviction, be punished by imprisonment in the State prison, at hard labor, not more than five years, or by fine not exceeding five hundred dollars, and imprisonment in the county jail not more than two years; and shall be moreover liable to said Trustees for the damages occasioned thereby, which damages, whenever recovered, shall be considered as a part of the revenues of said canal, and applied accordingly. And the Trustees for the time being may prosecute and sue accordingly, and no plea or other technical objection, in her abatement, shall be taken or judiciously allowed, so as to defeat such prosecution or action, or other proceeding, on the ground of any misnomer, misdescription of the premises or parties, or one of interest in the prosecutor or plaintiff, as the case may be."

2-17-1869 *Evansville Journal*

### "A STRIKE FOR BETTER HEALTH— CUTTING THE RESERVOIR—THE RESULT

"For several years past there has been much sickness of the canal reservoir, near Port Gibson, which has been very generally attributed to the existence of that large body of water, covering hundreds of acres, including much timbered land, and being in some places fully fifteen feet deep. The conviction became so strong that one night last week, the people of that whole vicinity congregated to abate the nuisance. They came armed with picks, mattocks, and shovels, and to work they went with a will. They dug a sluice in the bank fifty-feet wide, not for a moment apprehending any danger. The country around is lower than the banks of the reservoir, and when they cut through the bank the vast field of water began to rush out.

"The stream was small and harmless at first, but as the opening widened, an angry flood began to pour through like a mighty crevasse, and fences and bridges, and stock were carried away before the wildest of waters. One bridge, 144 feet long, was swept away, besides other smaller ones. Hundreds of rails were borne down upon the resistless current, in one a German lost 50 head of sheep. The people were filled with consternation, and would gladly have closed the breach, for though many damned the wild, rushing waters, all the force they could muster could not, for a moment, check its impetuosity. The damage is almost incalculable, and farms that were once fertile and prolific, are now a swamp, and the miasma arising from the ground so long submerged is likely to produce ten fold more sickness than the reservoir ever did. Men should never act rashly or unadvisedly."

Later after the reservoir was drained, the land was found to be good farm land. Then the paper carried articles about the Birch Creek reservoir in Clay county being broken by the "regulators," repairing the canal and putting it back into a good navigable order, and then the canal bank cut and aqueduct burned by a mob. Meetings were held and officials sent to the site. Resolutions were made and adopted as to punishment for those destroying canal structures.



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

J.R. Strickland in Stormont's book is quoted saying:

"The history of the rise and fall of Port Gibson is closely interwoven with that of the Wabash & Erie canal, a water-way project born in 1827...The canal extended through the eastern part of Gibson county and furnished a highway for the transportation of much of the products of the county...The little town of Port Gibson, on the southeast bank of the canal, thrived and waxed strong.

"The canal also built locks (No. 67 & 68) at Port Gibson and altogether the little settlement became an important station, in fact, the principal canal point in Gibson county."

Today a home sits to the front of the reservoir and adjacent to the canal remains at Port Gibson. A sign put up several years ago says the population is 4. The owner of the home said their children have grown up and moved away. The correct population is 2.

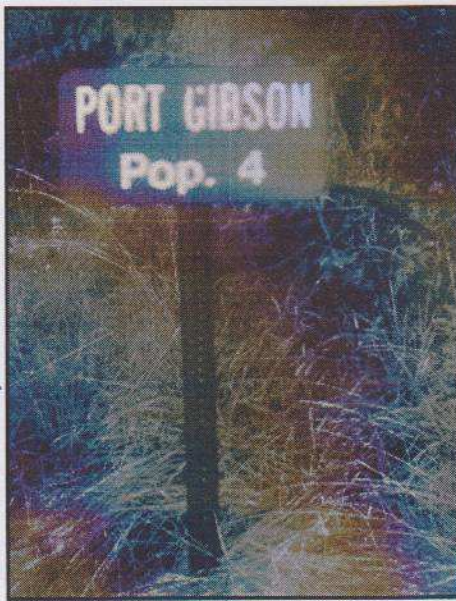
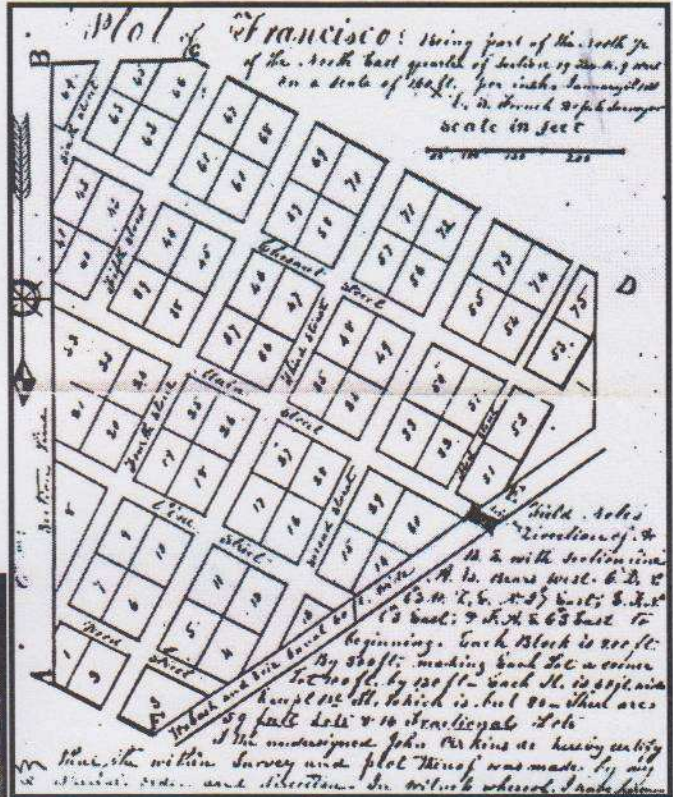


Photo by Bob Schmidt

The Wabash & Erie Canal continued northeast through the highlands of Pigeon summit that divides the watershed between Pigeon Creek and the Patoka River. The first settlers in the area near Francisco were William and Catherine Hensley Reavis who came in 1817. In 1818 William's two brothers and their families joined them. David Johnson moved from his original home in Gibson County, where he settled in 1816 to the area around Francisco in 1817. Other families drifted in and settled. But the advent of the canal spurred John Perkins to plan and lay out the town of Francisco on January 6, 1851. It was on the east side



Original plat of Francisco, Indiana



The Wabash & Erie Canal remains are still watered for about a mile to the southwest of Francisco, Indiana, but the canal has been filled in as you enter this town. The road is on the old towpath. When in use there would not have been trees between it and the canal.

Photo by Bob Schmidt

of the canal in Center township. Perkins built several business buildings, two flouring mills and a saw mill. He was also a merchant and a dealer in real estate.

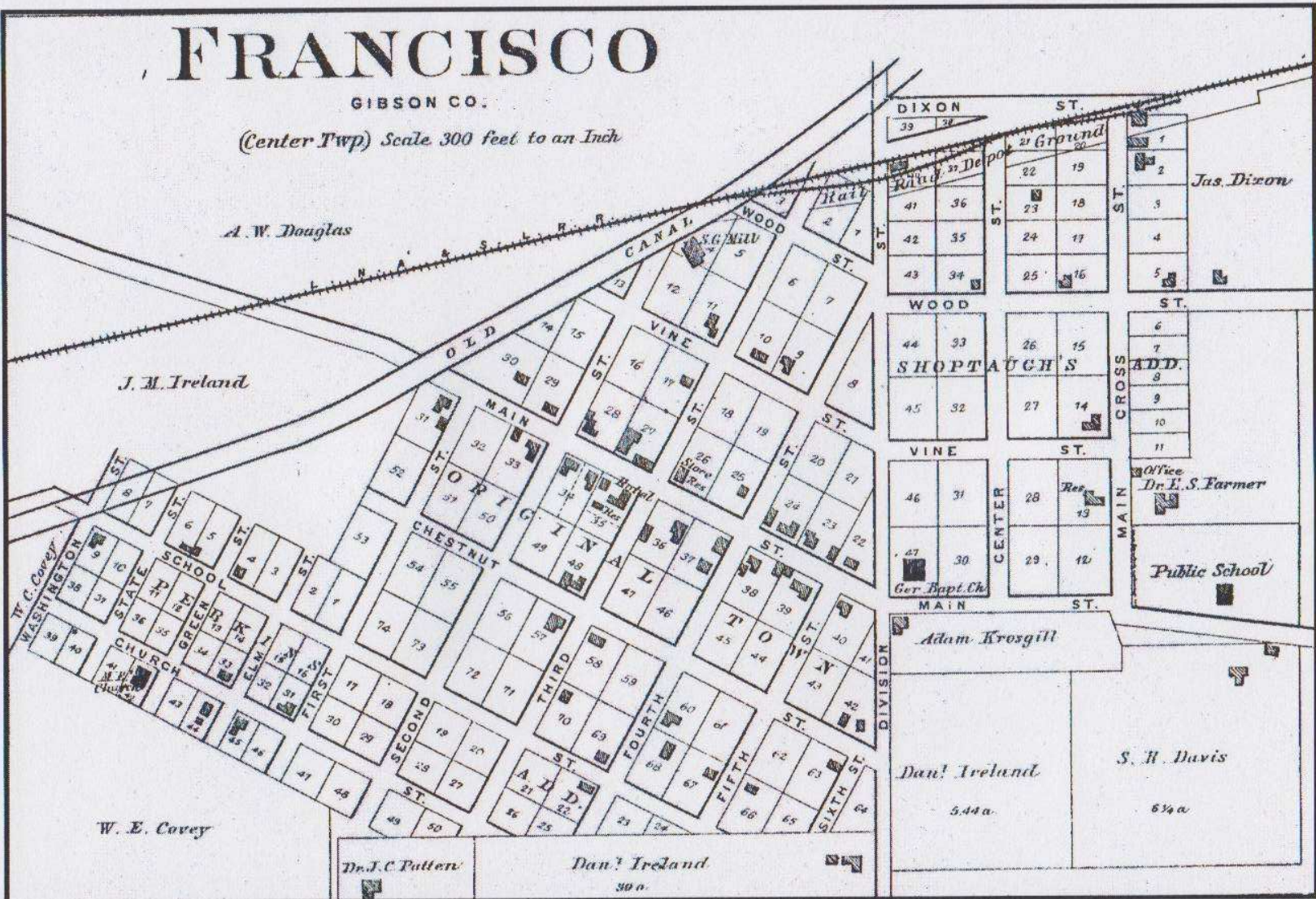
In the early 1850s there were two established roads that led to Francisco. One was a road that ran



# FRANCISCO

GIBSON CO.

(Center Twp) Scale 300 feet to an Inch



1881 Map of Francisco, Indiana from 1881 Pike & Gibson Counties D. J. Lake & Co.



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES



The canal has been filled in beyond this point and into the town of Francisco. A sign has been erected at this intersection that tells about the canal, but it is often hidden by cattails. P - Bob Schmidt

south from Hugh Murphy's blacksmith shop to Evansville and the other ran west from that shop to Princeton. Two other winding country roads ran to Somerville and to Oakland City. At that time the village consisted of about 12 homes. A grist mill where John Shanner lived stood on the canal bank. South of it was located the saw mill and log house, which stood beside the canal bridge. The post office, conducted by John Perkins, was on Main street. The mail arrived and was distributed every Saturday. There was a frame school house (16 ft. x 18 ft.) that also served as a church.

"Aunt Nancy" (Granny McConnell) was called into help with all illnesses since there was no practicing physician. Her charge for obstetrics was two dollars and fifty cents. No road was too muddy, no woods too dark, no weather too bad for her to answer the call of someone in need.

In November of 1857 a tornado set down near the head of the old reservoir, proceeded northeast through heavily timbered land and hit the town of Francisco. Several buildings were wrecked, some people were seriously injured, but no one was killed.

By 1858 Francisco boasted of having three large pork packing houses and warehouses, three large grain warehouses, several general stores and a few smaller businesses. The early pioneer businessmen were Reugen Baldwin, William Moore, S. G. Barnett and Moore & Knowles.

During the Civil War a stranger came to Francisco who was thought to be a southern spy interested in Morgan's movements. When some of Francisco's soldiers came home on furlough accompanied by some boys from southern states, it was mentioned that this stranger named Worrell lived among them. He came onto the street at about that time and one of the Tennessee soldiers named Wells deliberately shot and killed him. Worrell was buried in the Francisco cemetery. Wells was quickly sent to Evansville.

There were a few Francisco citizens who held southern sympathies. They were known as "Copperheads" or "Butternuts" and met secretly as the "Knights of the Golden Circle." Some of the women indulged in hair pulling when they heard treasonous words spoken by another woman.

Getting the news of the war was so important that clubs were formed that met a members' homes to hear the news. Since the mail arrived only weekly, they would send someone everyday to Princeton to pick up the mail from the Francisco box and bring back the *Evansville Journal* and the *Cincinnati Gazette* or *Enquirer*. If real important news from the front was to be reported, the church bell was rung outside of regular worship hours. Many learned of the death of a relative in this manner.

Francisco was incorporated as a town in 1907. The Francisco State Bank was organized in 1908 and its building cost \$1,900 to erect.

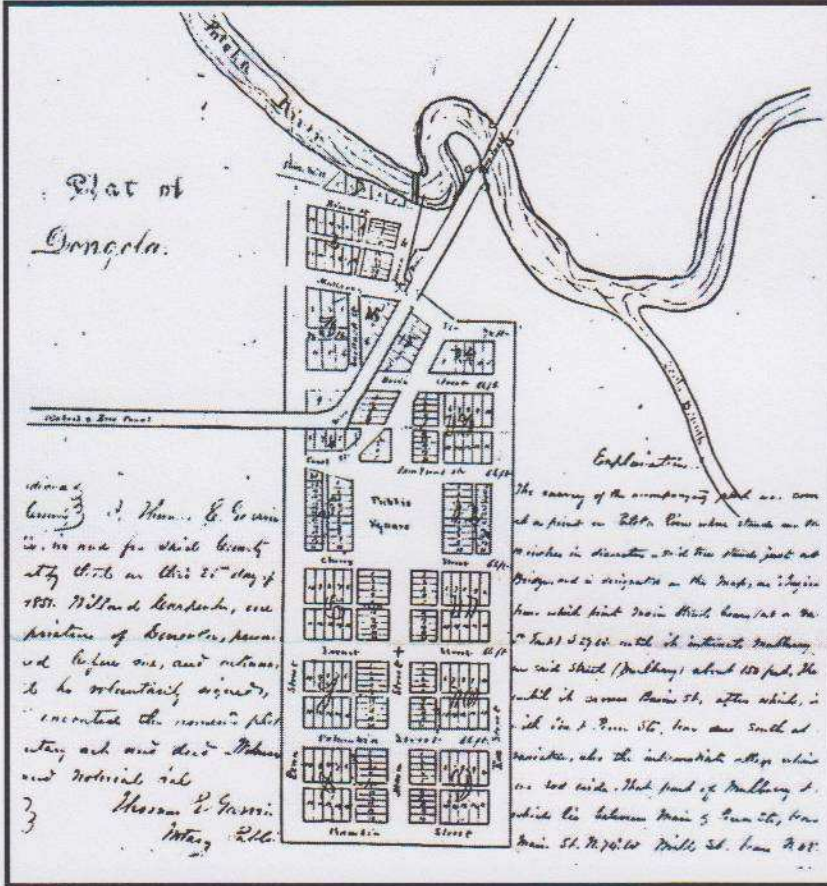
In 2010 the population of Francisco was 469. It was able to survive the closing of the canal, a portion of which is still watered to the southwest of town.

From Francisco the canal followed the lowlands of the Patoka River to Dongola. Dongola was platted on March 10, 1851 by William Carpenter and Isaac Steele.

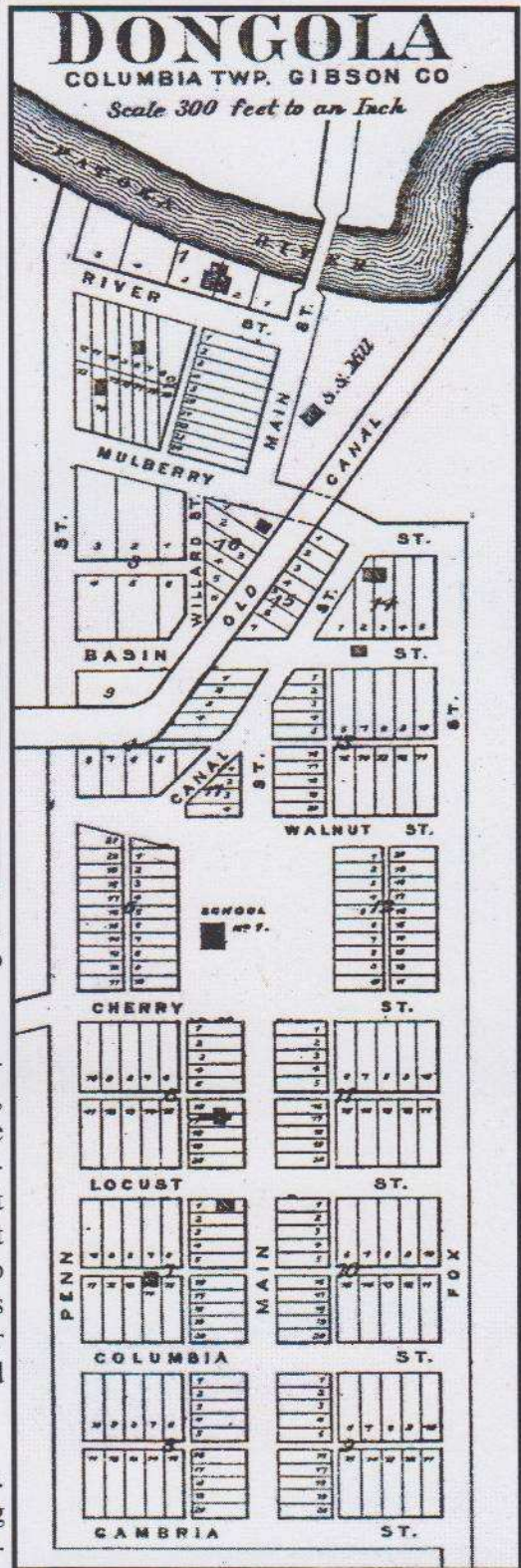
At Dongola the canal crossed the Patoka River on an open trunk aqueduct. The contractors on this section of the canal at Dongola and the building of the aqueduct were Stewart and Rockefeller. They, as was the case of most canal contractors, were honorable



# WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES



This map was used to plat Dongola in 1851.



1881 Map of Dongola from 1881 Pike & Gibson Counties D. J. Lake & Co.

men who had many men engaged to work on their section.

Shortly after beginning their section Bev Willis, a rather wild fellow, built a 10 ft. x 15 ft. shanty boat on the Patoka River. It became a den of drunkards. Contractor William H. Stewart found his best men beginning to neglect their work and gave Willis one week to take away his boat and whiskey. Willis obeyed, sold his whiskey to another "dogger man," tore up his boat and moved to California.



Sketch by Nate Tagmeyer

Then Spradley came to Dongola to build a whiskey shanty. There were no laws against this at the time. Anyone who built a log shanty and purchased a barrel of whiskey at twenty-five cents a gallon could own his own "dogger." Many of these drinking dens arose along the canal route. Spradley brought two barrels of whiskey



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

from Warrick county and set up his doggery. He boasted that the canallers would have to get busy to get rid of him. Stewart took several of his bosses armed with picks to break open the barrels and dump the whiskey onto the ground. This ended the selling of liquor in Dongola.

The Irish were known for their drinking and fighting. About this time the Irish would get drunk and pick a fight with an American by calling him a "Know-Nothing." If he resented the remark about fifteen Irish would attack him. About noon on election day in 1852, Mr. Swallow was seen running down a road near Francisco being chased by a group of men who called him a "Know-Nothing." When he was near the crowded polls, he stopped, faced his pursuers, and clubbed two of them. Ed Mosley went to his aid and began knocking the Irish men about until the whole gang started to fight. Swallow bloodied the noses and heads of over half of the gang.

Most of the sections on the canal were a mile long. But in the case of a section that had lots of heavy work, it would be shorter so that the sections could each be completed about the same time. The canal towpath and berm were built of dirt that was hauled in one-horse carts. When the haul was not over two hundred yards, the usual procedure was to have four carts and four shovel men. When the procedure was done correctly, as a full cart left to be deposited on the bank another empty cart arrived to be filled with dirt.

Over each forty men and carts was a boss. Most of the shovelers were Irishmen. Most of the lumbermen who cut timbers for culverts or bridges were Americans. The workers were given half a gill of whiskey each day.

One of the heaviest work sections on the canal was that over Keg Creek and its bottoms. Its contractor was Reagan. The fill across these bottom lands was one hundred feet wide and somewhere between fifteen to eighteen feet to the canal's bottom. Along the sides of this fill was built the berm bank (10 ft. wide) and towpath. These were six feet higher than the canal bottom. It took a great number of men, many carts and many teams of mules or oxen. These teams often con-

sisted of as many as eight yoke of oxen to pull one huge plow. It took a total of nearly three years to complete the work at Keg Creek.

The contractor for the heavy works across Hurricane Creek was Patrick Manning. Pat McTurbon worked for Manning for two years as his trusted book-keeper. McTurbon was such a good civil engineer that the resident engineer of the canal, William J. Ball, said he was more competent than any other man working on the canal and offered him a job working for him with a good salary. McTurbon turned down the offer saying Manning was a good man and he'd continue with him until the work was completed.

One day a little lean man came to Manning to apply for a job and asked for light work. Manning hired him to replace his drunken jigger boss. Soon after hiring him, another man came from Canada and took a job as a shoveler. After several weeks of work, these men and McTurbon did not show up for work. McTurbon's shanty was locked on the outside as it usually was when he went to work, but strange noises emitted from the building. Manning had the lock removed and found the Canadian and jigger boss tied up in strait jackets and gagged. They were secured to the floor by a heavy stake. McTurbon had fled with his instruments and good clothing. He wrote the following note to Manning:

"Under circumstances over which I have no control, I am compelled to leave your service, which I sincerely regret. Your accounts and time are correct up to yesterday evening. You will, on the floor of my domicile, find two guests of mine that I part from with satisfaction."

It was soon learned that the men on the floor were Scotland Yard detectives from London, who had spent six years chasing down John Cecil (McTurbon). He had robbed an English nobleman of over five hundred thousand dollars of jewelry, mostly diamonds. They knew he was an engineer and had followed him all over England and America.

McTurbon always kept his shanty locked. The detectives discovered that there was a large log on the north side of it to make it sit level on the hillside west



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

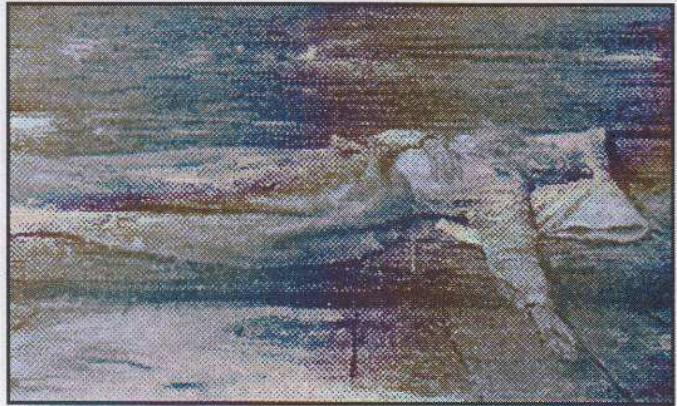
of Hurricane Creek. They wiggled under the shanty and pried loose a floor board while McTurbon was at supper. They planned to return in the dark of the night and search for the diamonds. However, McTurbon discovered the loose board and laid in wait. When the men crawled under the shanty the jigger boss removed the plank, handed it to his partner, and passed through the hole into the shanty. McTurbon hit him with a sandbag and knocked him senseless. He then tied them up and fled. The men weren't able to leave until ten days later due to their injuries.

The workers, who were mostly Irish, lived in boarding house shanties some of which were as large as eighty feet long and were capable of housing as many as fifty men on bunks. Others only accommodated four to six men. There were a hundred of these shanties between the Patoka Summit in Pike County and the Pigeon Summit in Gibson County. Rough stables for the teams of horses, mules and oxen stood beside them along the canal. All these buildings looked like a string town along the canal.

The Irish drank heavily. With living and working in such close proximity to one another, such carrying on had never been seen before in Indiana. An example of how the Irish loved to drink and quarrel was reported by Gil Stormont as happening to him personally. He and young Pat Manning, the son of canal contractor Patrick Manning at Dongola, were unloading hay on Christmas morning in 1852 at the Manning home. Close by was a small Irish shanty. The man and his wife were thoroughly drunk and having a quarrel. All of a sudden the door of the shanty flew open and the Irishman's wife landed on the frozen ground. Pat jumped off the hay wagon and ran to the man knocking him down. The wife grabbed a shovel and struck Pat in the head saying, "Again, Mr. Manning, you will learn to keep out of our little pleasantries."

In another incident A. J. Malone was attacked by drunken Irish workers when he returned home from having a single-tree repaired. He used the single-tree as a club to knock down seventeen of them, but he was hit in the head with a pick handle and left for dead. His friends took him to his home. After several weeks he regained his right mind and described his attackers. He knew some by name.

A twenty-man posse armed with guns went to the boarding shanties. They forced the Irish to come out and pass through a double line of the posse to be identified. All but three had been tipped off and fled. The three that remained had been hurt so badly during the fight that they could not escape. John Lloyd later killed one of them for bragging how he beat Malone. The other two mysteriously disappeared, probably killed by the Americans.



The cholera epidemics, which began in New York City in 1832 and continued intermittently through 1873, soon reached Indiana and Gibson County. It was hit harder than most counties in the state with the exception of those heavily populated along the Ohio River. During the summer of 1852 eighty died. Whole families were entirely wiped out by the epidemic. Another twenty or more died in 1873. Only a few others recovered from the disease.

Fear was struck in the hearts of the people when they learned of the fatal plague for which there was no known remedy. It must be noted that at that time cholera was known to be a contagious disease. Not until 1884 was it discovered that it was caused by bacteria and could be controlled by quarantine and disinfection. Taking measure to insure cleanliness eventually led to the eradication of epidemics though some individuals still caught it.

People became suspicious of one another dreading contracting the disease. Conducting business and pursuing pleasures were done only if necessary. Families who lost some of their members often had to bury their dead by themselves. However, sometimes



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

there were men and women who were true heroes and heroines. They entered the homes of cholera stricken victims, cared for them, buried their dead and did not ask for compensation. After an epidemic the community was left with sadness and deep lasting impressions.

After cholera reached the United States in 1832 it spread down the Mississippi River and through the Great Lakes from Canada. It appeared again in 1848 always spreading along water or road routes. In 1848 New York City maintained a strict quarantine, but New Orleans, Louisiana, had no quarantine facilities and the epidemic spread up the Mississippi and Ohio river valleys. By 1849 it reached Louisville, Kentucky and Cincinnati, Ohio. In Cincinnati, one hundred sixty people died in one day.

It wasn't until 1852 that the epidemic reached Gibson County. It hit the Wabash and Erie Canal construction camp located about seven miles southeast of Princeton where between two to three hundred Irish workmen lived. Sanitation among canal workers and their shanties was terrible. Most of the men lived like animals. This left them open to disease. In less than three weeks eight people had died. This epidemic reduced the labor force that was working on the canal and delayed its completion.

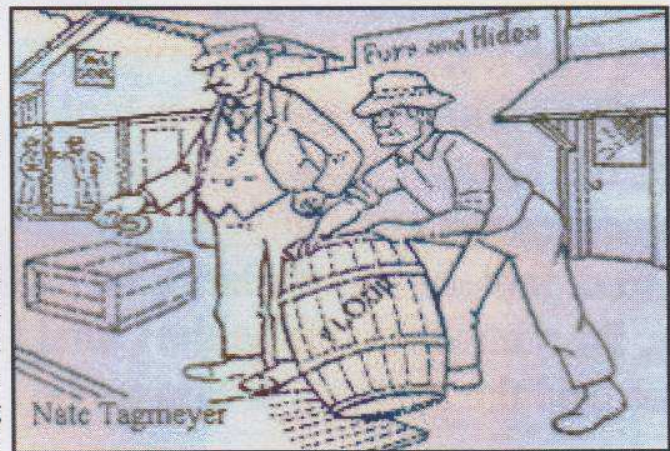
Many people fled following this first outbreak. Bodies of the dead remained for days where they had died before burial. It was next to impossible to find men to bury them. Some of the Irish who had stricken family members remained behind and, since they were already exposed, they agreed to bury the dead. Long trenches near the canal reservoir near Port Gibson were dug to receive the bodies. A few bodies were taken to Vincennes to be buried on consecrated ground. In most cases those who helped also lost their lives.

There were also deaths among community residents. The newspapers of the day only contain meager accounts of cholera attacks. A Mr. Woods of Princeton was one who died from it. A report written by Col. W. M. Cockrum states in one history that cholera along the line one summer had killed almost 1000 (100) people in his estimation between the Patoka and Pigeon

Summits. At the Porter farm, located three miles northwest of Oakland City, the death toll was so great that they brought in Whitelock, a cooper from Francisco, to build coffins. After nailing his sixtieth body in a box, he said, "I have nailed the cholera up, and no more will die." A two short hours later his body was placed in one of his boxes and nailed shut. People fled the works like cattle in a stampede. Work didn't resume until cold weather came.

The scourge entered Gibson County again in 1873. It traveled up the Mississippi valley and became epidemic in Evansville and Mt. Vernon, Indiana; in Cairo and Carmi, Illinois; and in Paducah, Kentucky where many deaths occurred.

It is believed to have reached Princeton, Indiana, from one of the infected places. At Princeton Mrs. John Seabrooks, an old lady who did laundry for a living, is thought to have become infected from handling the clothing of someone who had been in some infected territory.



Once the canal was completed, shippers had the lowest rates that had ever been seen in Gibson County. One of the old record books, kept by James and Col W. M. Cockrum for their pork packing and tobacco business in Dongola, showed that they shipped from Dongola to Evansville "tierces of lard, two hundred and fifty pounds, for ten cents each; barrels of pork for eight and a third cents each; and hogsheds of tobacco, sixteen to eighteen hundred pounds, for fifty cents each."

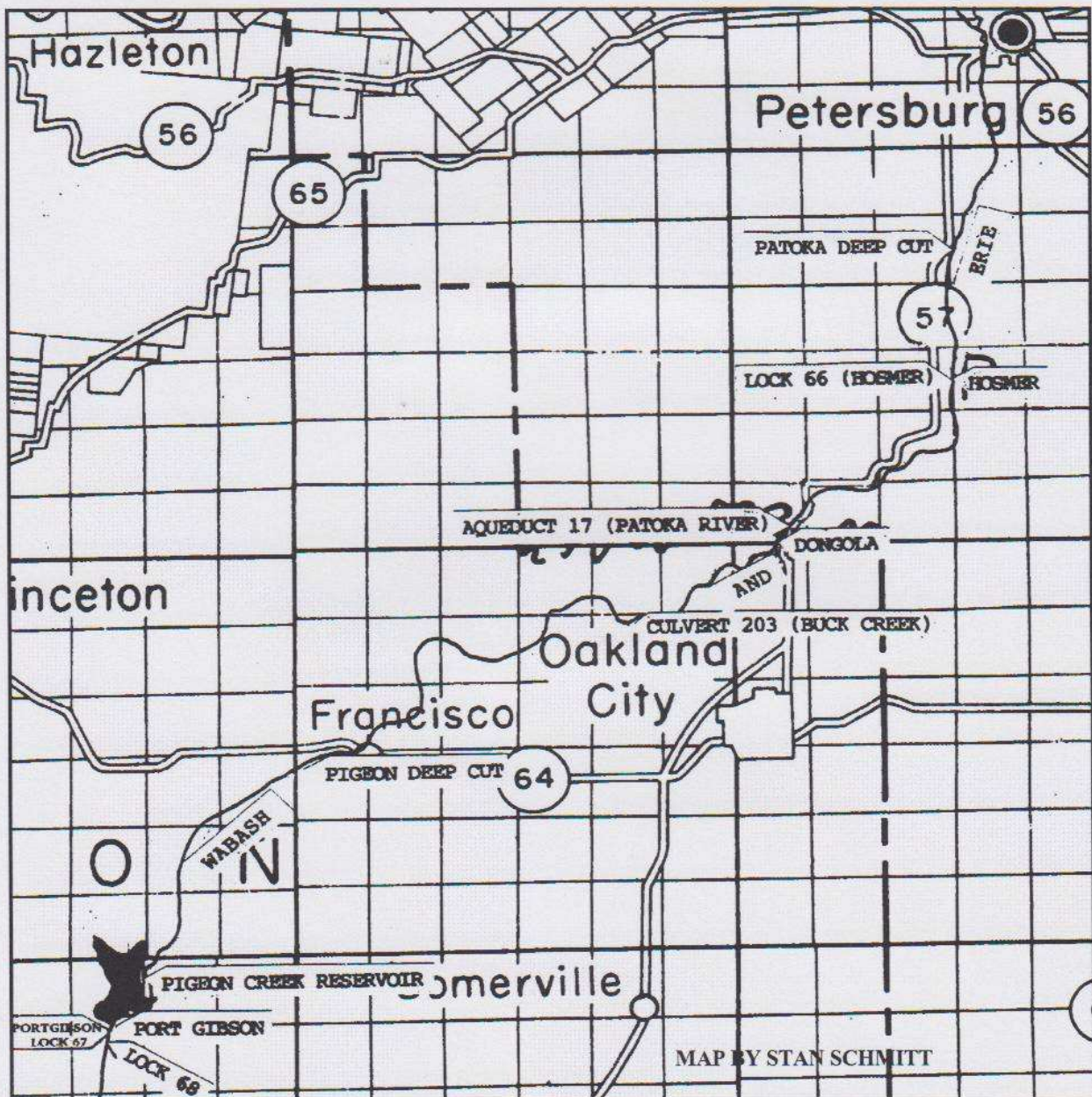


## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

Most of the boats that used the canal in this area were heavy freighters. But the "Prairie Queen" and the "Pride of the Wabash" were packet boats that ran from Evansville to Terre Haute on the canal. These could carry around thirty-five passengers each in finely finished sleeping apartments and could carry even more passengers if they provided their own sleeping needs. The packet boats ran day and night with four shifts of horses trying to cover one hundred miles every twenty-five hours.

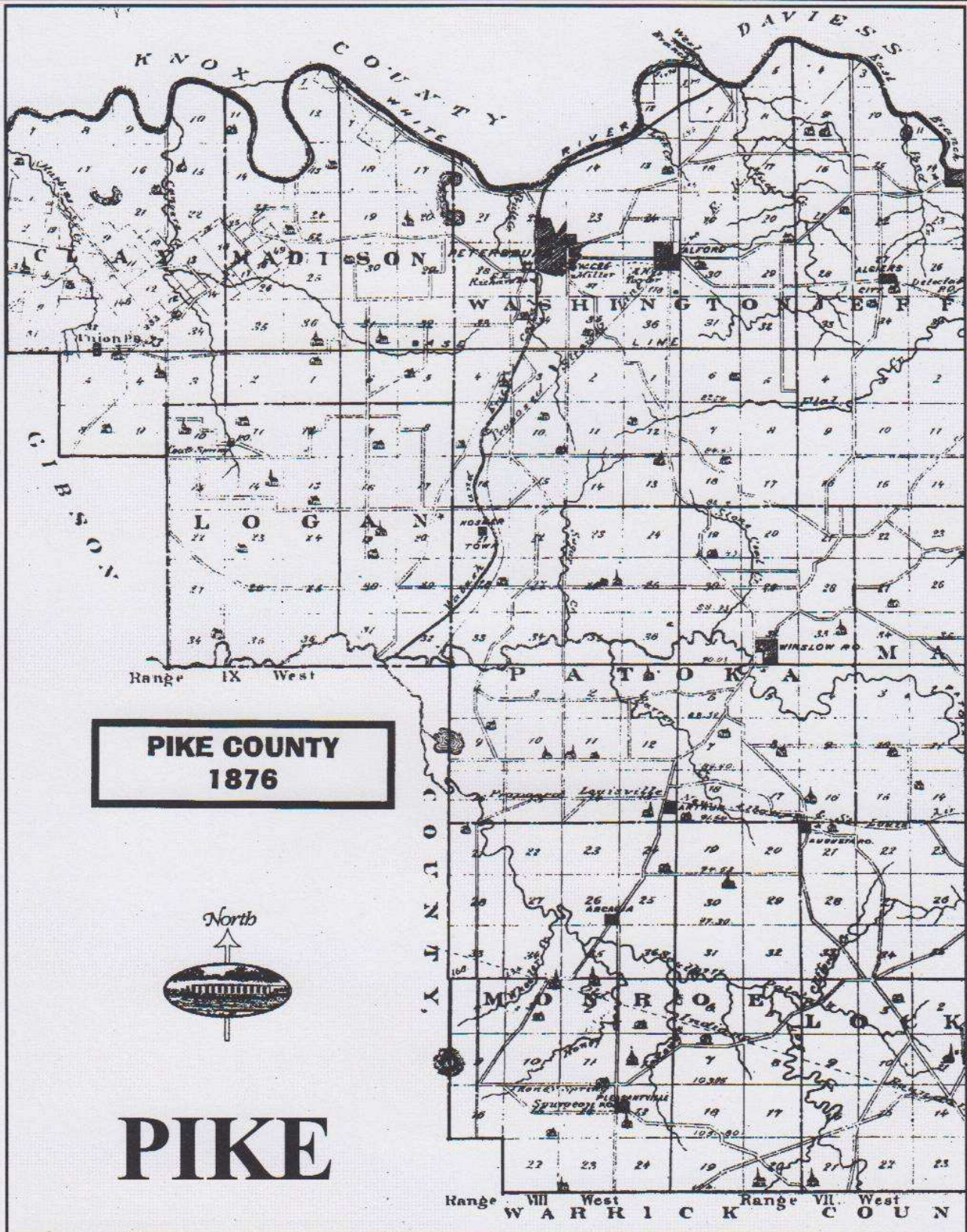
About 1810 schools were started in small log cabins. The early teachers were Ira Bostwick, David Buck, Adley Donald, John Kell, and Major James Smith.

Gibson County did not establish a county medical society until May 1, 1874. Before that so called "olden time" practitioners aided the citizens. These were Cook, Day, Downey, Fullerton, Graft, Howard, Kell, Littlepage, McCollough, Mumford, Neely, Patten, Pennington, Stockwell, Walling and West.





# WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES





## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

### PIKE COUNTY

Pike County is located in southwestern Indiana and is the second county within the state from both the Wabash River and the Ohio River. It is bordered by Knox and Daviess counties on the north, Dubois County on the east, Warrick County on the south and Warrick and Gibson counties on the west. The major rivers running through the county are the White and the Patoka. It covers 334 square miles of land.

The eastern section of the county is hilly with nice overlooks. To the west the land is more rolling. The southeastern portion of the county has been eroded from 120 to 160 feet since ancient times creating the hills and washing away fertile soils. Sand deposits, "barrens," are proof of the erosion. East of Petersburg the soil is black and rich and was the site of an early prairie. Bluffs over 100 feet high along the White River indicate the river's height in ancient times.

Several types of coal underlie the county, but valuable coking coal is predominant. Pike County ranks eighth of the 20 coal producing counties. Clay and sand for brick making and fire clay for pottery are available. Iron ore is found in the limestone beds of the Wabash and Erie Canal and along the White River north of Petersburg. The southwestern part of the county has clay iron stones, which are good for paint. The county's sandstone is of good quality for building and weathering. Some limestone is found in thin layers.

The water north of the Patoka River found in springs and wells is fairly good, but that to the south is high in mineral salts and tastes unpleasant. Three of the mineral springs are supposed to possess high medicinal qualities.

Pike County is an agricultural county and ranks 80<sup>th</sup> in the state in farm acres. However, these acres out-produce most other counties in crops and livestock.

Bituminous coal deposits are being strip mined today. Some of the coal is used by the Hoosier Energy REMC, Inc. and the Indianapolis Power and Light

Company generating plants located just north of Petersburg on the White River.

Communities within the county include Alford, Algiers, Arcadia, Arthur, Augusta, Glezen (Hosmer), Hartwell, High Banks, Littles, Muren, Otwell, Petersburg, Pikeville, Pleasantville, Willisville and Winslow. This book will primarily cover those along the canal line – Hosmer (Glezen), Petersburg and Willisville.

Woolsey Pride came to White Oak Springs, located just about one-half mile west of Petersburg, in 1800 accompanied by his family and most likely his brother, William. By 1807 he had built a block-house that was constructed of huge oak logs. It was a square building two-stories tall with port-holes in the walls. It was still in good condition when torn down in 1918. Pride was joined by Henry Miley (1802), the Coonrod and Tislow families (1803), David Miley (1804), and Hosea Smith, Charles and Ashburg Alexander, and Jacob Chappell (1811).

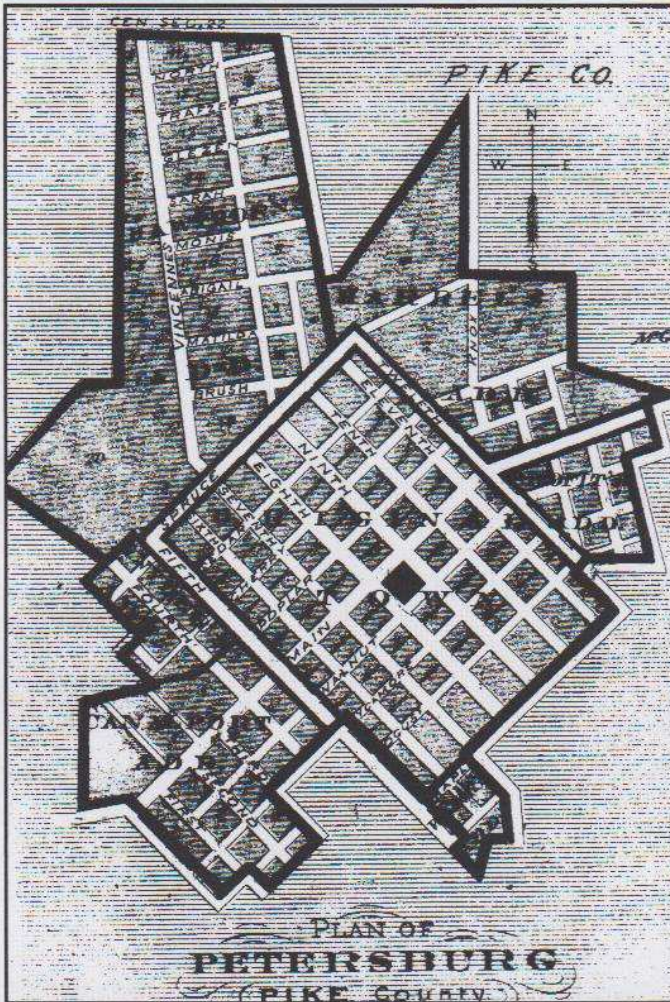
When Hosea Smith arrived in 1811 he bought the block-house from Pride and built a log palisade that led from the fort to the spring. At this time the Native Americans were upset with the whites taking over their lands. Charles Risley and the Scallerhern and Walker families arrived in 1812. The block-house offered protection during the War of 1812 to many such families who came and then remained after the war.

Even before Pike was established as a county, Hosea Smith laid out a town in 1815 at White Oak Springs, which he called Alexandria. He established the first post office at the "Springs" on the old Native American trace from Louisville to Vincennes and became the first postmaster. He was also a surveyor, justice of the peace, merchant and farmer. Had Smith been willing to donate the land for the county seat, it probably would have been in Alexandria (White Oak Springs).

The first mail carrier was Mathias Mounts. However, it was George Teverbaugh who carried the mail once a week on foot from the White River at Decker Ferry to White Oak Springs, then to Mud Holes, French Lick, Paoli, and then ended in Louisville.



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES



From 1876 Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Indiana,  
Chicago, IL: Baskin, Forster & Co.

In 1816 the Petersburg area was settled by James Brenton, Peter Brenton, Thomas Case, Thomas Mead, John Flinn, Moses Harrell, John McIntire, Thomas Stewart and the Sarter family. Hosea Smith surveyed the site and laid out 152 lots on April 3, 1817. The town was named Petersburg after Peter Brenton, who donated the main amount of the land for the county seat. On April 14<sup>th</sup> of that year the first lot was sold at a public sale to Robert M. Evans for \$144.00. This was the highest price paid for a lot then or at any later sale.

Pike County was formed out of parts of Knox, Perry and Gibson counties by an act of the General Assembly of Indiana on December 21, 1816. It was

named for General Zebulon Pike, who discovered Pike's Peak in Colorado and who was killed at the capture of York, in Canada, on April 27, 1813, during the War of 1812. A commission of five men were appointed to select the county seat. In an election held in February the following year. The people of Pike County chose Paul Tislow, James Campbell and Harrison Blackgrave as county commissioners.

The county was in its infancy and had no courthouse. Meetings and elections were held in homes. At the first meeting of the commissioners in 1817, the report of the five man commission to select the site of the county seat was held. Petersburg was chosen because of Brenton's gift of land.

The county commissioners met on February 10, 1817 in the home of Hosea Smith to divide the county into four townships. For the use of his home Smith received sixteen dollars a year for rental. The first three townships (Madison, Washington, Jefferson) were in what is today Pike County and the fourth (Harbinson) was in what is today Dubois County and a small portion of Perry and Martin counties. Throughout the following years the counties' and townships' boundaries changed. In 1824 Harbinson township was put into Dubois County and a part of Gibson County was put into Pike County to form Clay township. Monroe township was created in 1820 with a portion of it cut off in 1838 to form Patoka township. Madison township had Logan township carved out of it in 1846. Monroe township had Lockhart township created out of it in 1852. The final division was made in 1857 when Monroe township was carved from Patoka township. Today Pike County has nine townships.

Elections for the townships' justices of the peace were held on February 25, 1817. They took place in Madison township in the home of Archibald Pea with Zacharia Selby elected, in Washington township in the home of Henry Miley with two justices elected, and in Jefferson township in the home of James Brenton with John Case elected. The commissioners also appointed John Butler constable and James Brenton inspector of Washington township. Elections were held again on August 4, 1817. For many years thereafter there were elections once or



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

twice a year to elect township, county, or state officials.

Judge Hammon came to Pike County from Massachusetts with a wagon filled with "worldly goods" and glass in 1819 and settled at High Banks. When he built his home it had sash and glass windows. People came from miles around just to look at the house.

Not long after Petersburg was named the county seat, a log courthouse was built costing \$599.75. A whipping post and log jail were also erected. The \$1,340.00 two-story, twenty-foot-square jail was constructed with double walls one foot apart with upright timbers filling in the one foot space. The cells were on the ground floor but could only be reached via a trap door from the upper floor. The post office was moved from the "Springs" to Petersburg with its postmaster being Major John McIntire.

The early settlers raised some corn and hogs to supplement their diet of game and fish. They would grind the corn in a hollowed out tree stump that had been smoothed off thus forming a type of mortar. They used a large coarse stone the size of the hollow as a pestle. They would parch the corn and place a small amount at a time in the hollow. Another method was to make a grater and scrape the corn over the sharp points to produce a moderately fine grain. One can see why the advent of the mill was so important.

In 1822 Thomas Milburn built a horse mill, which he sold to Henry Miley. Miley moved the two-horse mill to Washington township to a site near the cemetery in 1824. Its production capacity was only thirty-five bushels per day. Often farmers would come a far as twenty miles away and have to wait as long as thirty-six hours for their grain to be ground. During this time they camped out and engaged in shooting, racing and drinking. Miley's Mill is also noted as the first place that bolting cloth was used in the county (1829).

A mill and copper distillery were built in 1826 by John Youngman at what is now Petersburg. He could produce about a barrel of whiskey per day. A bushel of corn produced a gallon of "spirits." The

commissioners allowed him to charge 10 to 12 1/2 cents per gallon. In 1831 a fire raged through the mill and distillery that was stocked full of barrels of whiskey. As whiskey ran down the street in streams the local citizens, not wanting it to go to waste, took straws and sipped it up until they were senseless.



In 1827 a building was erected by Peter and James Brenton to house their carding machine. That year William Deadman built a log house in which he ran a hattery. He supplied hats that often lasted as long as ten years to a large area of the country. Boots and shoes were made by William Cargle and Aaron Grider. Meredith Howard and Chris and William Miller ran distilleries that supplied a large quantity of corn and rye. They were located on the creek bank. The Miller's grain for their distillery was ground using a treadmill.

A major mercantile business was set up by Matthew Foster in Petersburg. Vincennes had been the major trading post up until this time. Judge Matthew Foster became a wealthy man through his pursuits and later moved to Evansville where he died in 1861. He was the father of John W. Foster, a minister to Mexico, and the great-grandfather of John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State under Eisenhower.

Foster went into partnership with Albert Hammond in 1828. They bought produce and shipped it by flat-boats to New Orleans. This type of transportation was begun in the area around 1825. The usual routine was to ship during the winter, sell the flat boat for its lumber in New Orleans, and return home by steamboat, horseback, or on foot. These boats were called "Broad Horns." This helped to improve the lives of the settlers. They now had better means of obtaining supplies, Women's homespun dresses were replaced by calico and silk.

Also in 1828 a tanyard was built by Samuel



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

Stuckey. It operated for more than fifty years. It produced about \$1,300 worth of leather per year. The tanner would keep one hide for every hide he tanned. This was known as "on the shares." He tanned "Murrain" cattle hides and some deer and elk.

A saw and grist mill was built by Jacob Stuckey 1828-1830. It was powered by a tread-mill. It was torn down at his death in 1838.

Hundreds of deer and wild turkey were hunted. Langworth took a flatboat load of deer hams and hides down the river in 1832. Five hundred of these pairs of deer hams were purchased from David and Ed Corn for 13 to 25 cents a pair. Another time Solomon Teverbaugh killed seventeen wild turkeys in one day and carried them six miles to his home. The next day he carried them thirteen miles on foot to Vincennes, traded them for a bag of salt, and returned home yet that day.

Snakes were also prevalent in the county. In Petersburg there was a spring known as "Town Spring" where eight rattle snakes were killed by Moses Harrell and Martin Miley. Peter Ferguson and his friends killed over three hundred snakes, mostly rattlers, in a well-known snake den during the snake's torpid period. At another time merchant George H. Proffit killed several rattle snakes that had holed up under a goods box that he had placed outside his store for use as a step. They were discovered when John Stuckey's marble rolled under the box while he was playing marbles outside the store. The largest of these snakes had twenty-nine rattles and was over eight feet long. When it was cut open, it was found to have eaten a quail, two rabbits, and many mice. Besides running a store Proffit later served several terms in the State Legislature, two terms in Congress as Representative from the district, and was Minister to Brazil.

General stores and groceries were built in the 1830s. The town of Petersburg grew slowly as did other small communities such as Winslow. J. W. Cockrum loaded a flat boat from Patoka with pork at Winslow in 1835. In 1838 George Dean set up a mercantile business in Winslow and became wealthy. His will set up a charity fund to provide relief for destitute widows living within eight miles of Winslow.

Wm. McCormick shipped the first hogshead of tobacco from the county in 1841. Its destination was New Orleans.

Up until it was repealed in 1839, there was an annual autumn muster where officers wore dress uniforms. These consisted of a blue swallow-tailed coat trimmed with stripes of red tape on the breast; a double row of brass buttons down the front, and large brass tinsel epaulets; a pair of buckskin or homespun trousers; a three-cornered hat with a plume; a pair of moccasins; and a sword. The soldiers dressed in regular frontier dress and carried rifles or muskets. Many officers obtained their titles of Captain, Major, Colonel or General at these company, regiment or brigade musters even though "not a drop of blood" was shed. Occasionally there was some excitement when an old dispute was settled through a bout of fisticuffs.

"The Patriot," published in 1851 by editor John N. Evans and printed by Henry Stout of Vincennes, was the county's first newspaper. In 1855-1864 "The Reporter" was published by Joseph P. Glezen followed by a series of other editors. In 1856 the present day paper began and was called "The Messenger" in 1865 and later changed to "Pike County Democrat" in 1869.



In 1850, before these newspapers began publication, notices like the one on the following page ap-



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

### NOTICE TO CANAL CONTRACTORS.

#### WABASH & ERIE CANAL, INDIANA.

SEALED Proposals will be received at Princeton, Ind., until the 20th day of October next, for the construction of thirty-five miles of the above named Canal. The work consists of sixty sections, embracing much variety of excavation, including considerable rock, a number of deep cuts and heavy embankments, one aqueduct, eight locks, and many culverts. All the mechanical structure to be of timber, and will afford much work for carpenters.

There will be no stone masonry of any description. Of the excavation and embankment there is much more heavy work than is common on an equal length of line. Bidders from Ohio will find it most convenient to reach this work by way of the Ohio river and Evansville, as the south end of the work is only 18 miles north of Evansville — From the middle and north part of Indiana, it will be most convenient to reach the north end of the work at Petersburg, in Pike county. Bidders who are not known to the undersigned will be expected to furnish proper testimonials of character.

\*Payments in money will be made at periods of about sixty days.

Plans and specifications of the work will be exhibited at Princeton, by the Engineer in charge, 10 days before the letting. The line will be in readiness for inspection by the first of October. For further information, persons wishing to examine the work can address W. J. Ball, Res't. Engineer, Terre-Haute.

**SAML. FORRER;  
SOLOMON STURGESS.  
S. R. HASMER.**

sept 18-11

peared in area newspapers seeking contractors to build the Wabash and Erie Canal. The *Evansville Journal* articles below are examples of them.

10-30-1850 *Evansville Journal*

“NOTICE TO CANAL CONTRACTORS  
WABASH & ERIE CANAL, INDIANA.

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### LETTING OF CONTRACTS

#### On the Wabash & Erie Canal

THE undersigned, Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal, will receive sealed proposals at Petersburg, Pike county, Indiana, on the 14th day of November next, for the construction of about 154 miles of said Canal, extending from Maysville to Petersburg. This division embraces a large proportion of the heaviest earth work on the canal, and is worthy the attention of contractors accustomed to heavy work. The line will be divided into sections suited to the shape and character of the ground, averaging near a half mile in length.

The superstructure of the Aqueduct over East Fork of White River will also be let. It is about 400 feet in length, consisting of four spans of near 100 feet, sustained by timber arches and truss-work, and enclosed from the weather.

The work will be ready for inspection for one week previous to the letting, and all necessary information will be given by the resident Engineer. Bidders not known either to the Trustees, or to the Engineers, will be expected to enclose with their proposals, satisfactory testimonials as to character and qualification:

CHARLES BUTLER, } Trustees of the  
A. M. PUETT, } Wabash & Erie  
THOS. H. BLAKE, } Canal.

Terre-Haute, Ind., Sept. 19th, 1849—sept 28.

rock, a number of deep cuts and heavy embankments, one aqueduct, eight locks, and many culverts. All the mechanical structures to be timber, and will afford much work for carpenters.

“There will be no stone masonry of any description. Of the excavation and embankment there is much more heavy work than is common on an equal length of line. Bidders from Ohio will find it most convenient to reach this work by way of the Ohio river and Evansville as the south end of the work is only 18 miles north of Evansville — from the middle and north part of Indiana, it will be most convenient to reach the north end of the work at Petersburg, in Pike county. Bidders who are not known to the undersigned will be expected to furnish proper testimonials of character.

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## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

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10-31-1850 *Princeton Clarion*  
"Canal Lettings

"Our town has been quite lively with strangers — competitors for contracts on the Wabash and Erie Canal, at the Lettings during the past week, all of the unlet portions of the said Canal.

"Below will be found the number of the section with the name of the successful bidder, as awarded on the 23d, by Messrs. Forrer, Sturgess & Hosmer:

197, 11, 36, and Reservoir,	Steward & Rockefeller.
198,	John Mecham.
199, 1,	Robert Garrett.
200, 15,	Hefferman & Mecham.
201,	James Ferriter.
202,	Kinney & Steward.
2, 7,	Jacob Haug.
3, 37, 44,	Sharon & Meldrum.
4,	James Garrett.
5,	Adam Fritz.
6, 8, 20,	David L. Bell & Co.
9, 10,	John Tarvin.
12, 17, 34,	Crimmins, Clune & Co.
13,	Kinney & Manning.
14, 16,	Eber Jones.
18, 19,	Thomas Potter.
21, 22,	M. C. Regan.
23,	Griffin & Swaggart.
35,	Clark & Stewart.
26,	McGuire & Farrell.
27, 50,	Samuel Parker.
28, 29,	Kinney & Murray.
30,	Aydelett & Parker.
31, 32,	Stewart & Walters.
33, 34, 35,	Edward Jordan.
38,	Edward Barrett.
39,	Faulkner & Syers.
40,	Thos. Harrison & Co.

Jas. Adams & Co.  
Ralph Wilson.  
Thos. Kinney.  
Carty & Pandrigan.  
Patrick Sweeney.  
E. M. & J. M. Patterson.  
George Hartley.  
John McCracken.  
Hiram Green.  
David W. Beeson.

Construction of the Wabash and Erie Canal was begun in 1849 from Maysville to Petersburg, which was thought to develop the resources of the area. In *the Annual Report of the Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal* of December 26, 1850, the trustees state:

"At the last named point (Newberry Dam), and at the several locks between this dam and Maysville, in Daviess County, there will be a larger amount of water power than on any other portion of the canal, the improvement of which will tend to develop the resources and advance the wealth of this portion of the State. It is in this light, chiefly, that the leasing of water power on any portion of the canal is sanctioned. As a source of direct revenue, it is of but little consequence."

In 1850 the canal construction was extended from Petersburg to Evansville through Pike County and was contracted to Messrs. Forrer, Sturgess and Hosmer on September 6, 1850. The work was to be completed by November 1, 1852 according to the *Engineer's Report of the Wabash and Erie Canal* of November 18, 1851.

However, the canal was not completed by November 1852 due to circumstances beyond the control of the contractors. Besides extensive repairs that required extra time and funds, Asiatic cholera broke out in 1850 in Pike County. The child of an Irish canal worker was the first death due to the disease. Her father died soon after. Before long laborers and other Pike County citizens passed away. Stories were told how a wagon piled high with dead cholera victims would pass by late at night. They were taken to Washington, Indiana where a priest performed the last rites.



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

They were either buried in a common grave or cremated.

At the stone quarry located along the Bluffs outside of Petersburg, several of the workers died. Some of them were buried in the Bluff Cemetery.

The frightened citizens of Petersburg fled. Only twelve families stayed. To their credit Dr. J. R. Adams and Dr. Alexander Leslie remained to give aid and to prevent the disease from spreading.

William J. Ball in *The 1853 Annual Report of the Resident Engineer* dated December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1852 states:

“On the Petersburg Division, the payments amount to \$357,902.62 leaving a probable sum of \$11,600 yet to be paid. All the sections in this division have been completed except two, viz: Nos. 186 and 192, and upon these much more work has already been done than was contemplated in the original estimates. On each of these sections there is a river washed bluff, and at those points the tow-path is necessarily made partly in the river and based upon a sloping rock. A portion of the material of which the embankment has to be made, seems to become semi-fluid and flattens out almost indefinitely. Other portions adhere together, but are continually sliding at the base. To remedy this evil on section 186, we have moved the line over into the bluff several feet, and cut nearly the whole prism of the canal through rock. On section 192 this plan could not be adopted, except at great cost, and our only resource is to continue to raise the bank until it acquires a sufficiently flat slope to ensure stability. It is expected that in a few weeks we may be ready to pass some water over these sections, and it is hoped that by working a force constantly the banks may be kept above the water as it is allowed to rise in the canal, until they become settled and stationary.

“In repairing breaches and lining the banks with clay at sundry points on this division, there has already been expended the sum of \$4,167.73. Much work of this kind remains to be done, which will swell the cost of the Petersburg Division considerably above the original estimate. Nor it is possible to say when these extraordinary expenditures are to stop. I have

stated a probable sum to meet them, but there is no way of determining, a priori, the precise magnitude of such work. As the difficulties arise, we can only adopt the best apparent means of remedying them, and go on with the work until the object is accomplished.

“The aqueduct over the east fork of White river is entirely completed. Some weeks since, the waters of the west crossed the east fork of White river, and recently a boat has passed through the aqueduct. This structure is 557 feet long consisting of six spans of 85 feet clear space, and sustained by five piers 42 feet high, above low water mark. The piers and abutments are of cut stone masonry, built in the most substantial manner. The superstructure of the White river aqueduct is built upon the most approved plan of a timber structure, combining the arch and truss frame, and the work has been done in a very perfect manner. The main bearing timbers are entirely above water, the trunk being suspended below, and the whole work is protected from the weather by roofing and weather boarding. Upon the whole, I have no hesitation in saying that this is the most substantial and perfect aqueduct in the state, reflecting much credit on the contractors, Mr. James Kiney, who did the earth work and masonry, and Mr. A. Madison, the accomplished architect, who executed the superstructure.”

The White River Aqueduct was No. 16 and was in the area known today as Rogers. When it was started a construction camp was set up on the north side of the river in Daviess County called New London. It became a small village with some of the workers having their own homes while others boarded in camps.

To build the aqueduct huge timbers were cut and hewn to lay in the bottom of the river. On top of this foundation was constructed huge piers and abutments made of sandstone. This stone was quarried by blasting it from a bluff north of Algiers and finishing it off to the required size. The stones were placed aboard mud boats and hauled by ox teams to the river. There they were loaded onto flat boats and floated down river about four miles to the construction site.

On top of these piers rested the bed of the aqueduct. It was built by pinning hewn timbers with



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

wooden pegs. The timber was cut to the length needed. Then two sides were scored with a chopping axe. This would be smoothed off by a ten inch wide broad-axe. The log would then be turned over and its other two sides scored and smoothed in a like manner to whatever the width that could be gotten from the small end of the log. Holes were bored into the timbers and the pins locked them together once they had a 25 to 30 foot bed that was 557 feet long. Walls that stood 4 or 5 feet tall were built on both of the long sides of the bed. They were also pinned together. To seal the trunk of the aqueduct the seams had tow fiber placed in them with pitch tar. Water later filled this trunk deep enough to float the boats. To protect the aqueduct from the elements it had weather boards and a roof like a covered bridge built above the heavy trunk. It was completed by 1838.

The White River Aqueduct was the longest aqueduct built in Indiana on the Wabash and Erie Canal. The south pier of the aqueduct is now used by the Big Four Railroad. A few stones of the north abutment remain scattered along the side of the river where the aqueduct once stood.

Jesse Lynch Williams states in the *Annual Report of the Chief Engineer* of December 7, 1852.

"In respect to the construction of the Southern Division, the report of the resident engineer will give full information. The water from the White river feeder has been introduced, and a boat has passed as far south as the vicinity of Petersburg. The first 20 miles north from Evansville having been heretofore filled and navigated, there is wanting but a short distance to connect the navigation. As there remains on the intermediate portion only the finishing up of some heavy section, it is supposed that a few weeks of favorable weather will complete the entire work."

The *Engineer's Report of 1853* shows Aqueduct No. 17 across the Patoka River as being made up of one middle span of 50 feet and four other spans (two on each side) of 36 feet. It was an open trunk aqueduct and was the fourth longest in the state on the Wabash and Erie Canal.

After the canal crosses the Patoka River and

heads north, an Indiana State Format Marker was placed in the canal prism at GPS N 3822 859M W 87D 20.065M It read:

"The Wabash and Erie Canal enters the south of Pike County in section 32 of Logan township and proceeds northeasterly through Patoka and Washington townships. One mile north of Petersburg it begins to parallel the White River and then leaves Pike County in section 7 of Washington township."

The marker no longer stands at the site. It stood high above the road in a cross section of the canal prism.

The 1850 census shows Petersburg with a population of 480. The influx of a large number of Irish laborers working on the canal started Petersburg's climb to prosperity in the 1850s.

Charles Butler, W. R. Nofsinger and Thomas Dowling, trustees for the canal, stated the following in their January 1853 *Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal to the General Assembly of the State of Indiana*.

"At the date of the last annual report, the Newberry, Maysville and Petersburg divisions were unfinished. The trustees have the satisfaction to report that these divisions have, during the season been finished, and the work paid for, with the exception of a small balance upon sections 186 and 192 of the Petersburg Division, which they withhold until those sections are received by them from the contractors...."

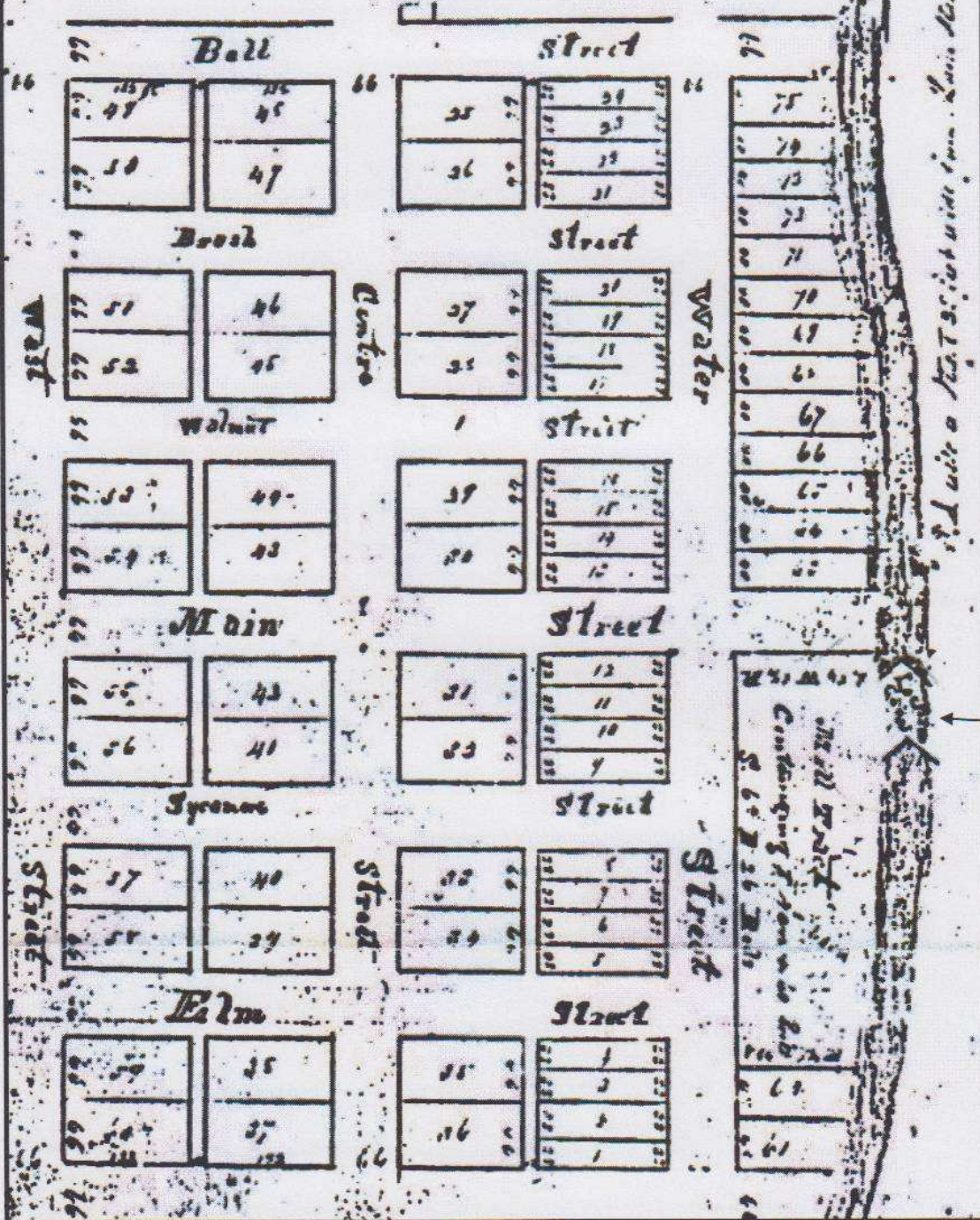
The Wabash and Erie Canal and the passage of the first boat "The Pennsylvania" down its course on July 29, 1853 led to making Petersburg one of the best shipping points in southern Indiana. It was a major port with produce arriving from Dubois, Pike, and parts of Knox and Gibson counties. Warehouses sprang up, pork packing became prevalent, and large quantities of all types of produce were shipped.

At the foot of Main Street was constructed the Wabash and Erie Canal Passenger Depot. At the time it was built this part of present day Petersburg was known as Canalport. Today an Indiana State Format



WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

PLAT OF THE  
TOWN OF HOSMER  
situated in Pike County, Indiana.



Wabash & Erie Canal  
Lock #66

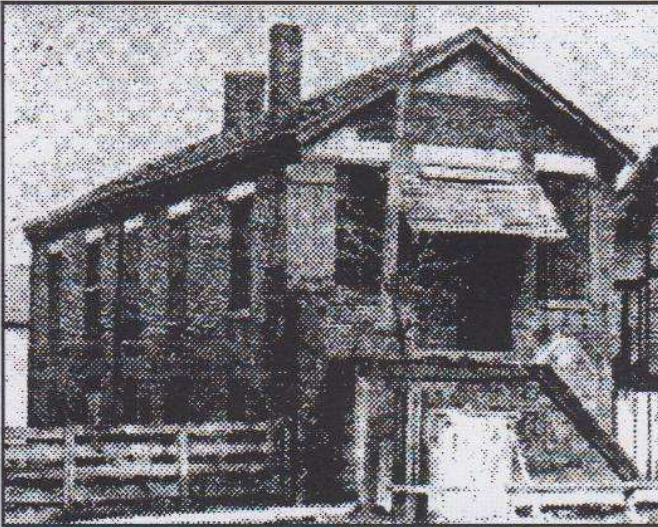
Map used to plat  
Hosmer (Glezen)



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

Marker is placed near the street by a fast food restaurant. It says:

“WABASH AND ERIE CANAL. Site of depot for canal which passed through town at foot of Main Street. Operations through Petersburg ceased 1860. Constructed 1832-1853, canal was nation’s longest, connecting Lake Erie at Toledo with Ohio River at Evansville, through Fort Wayne, Lafayette and Terre Haute.” GPS N 38D 29.281M W 87D 17.051M



1849 Canal Warehouse located in Petersburg

Two other towns grew up along the canal. These were Hosmer (called Glezen today) and Willisville. Stephen R. Hosmer owned land on the Wabash and Erie Canal and laid out a town on February 28, 1854 in the northeastern corner of Patoka township. It was named Hosmer in his honor. Its streets were given names like those found in any large city. Once the town was platted Hosmer built a steam-mill and made other improvements. With the failure of the canal the town of Hosmer began to decay.

The railroad was completed through Hosmer in 1882. It stimulated the local lumber business and kept the town going. Then the deep vein coal mines were opened providing area men with jobs.

The town’s name was changed to Glezen in honor of Mary Glezen in 1939. Miss Glezen established a successful insurance business in Petersburg in

the late 1800s and was a Notary Public. Hosmer had two churches, the Presbyterian and the General Baptist. Miss Glezen drove to Hosmer every Sunday from Petersburg to teach Sunday School. Her unfailing service to the church endeared her to the citizens of Hosmer and led to the name change.

Willisville is located about three miles south of Petersburg at the site of the Irish worker construction camp for the Wabash and Erie Canal. It was named Willisville in 1962 in honor of Floyd and Inez Willis, who operated a grocery store there for seventeen years. Floyd is the great-grandson of Maxwell and Jane Willis. Maxwell was the cousin of John and Elizabeth Willis, the first of the Willis family to settle in Pike County in 1833.

A story is told of how John and Elizabeth made the trip from North Carolina to settle in Pike County. During the trip Elizabeth tired of riding in the covered wagon and would walk behind it where she could watch her baby son Burli where he sat propped up in the back of it. When they passed through Native American territory, the men carried loaded guns and walked on either side of the wagon. Whenever the family reached a stream or river they would cut down logs and fasten them together to make a raft. This raft was discarded once the stream was crossed. They lived off the land during this journey. They shot wild game and ate berries or fruits they found. They only brought corn meal with them.

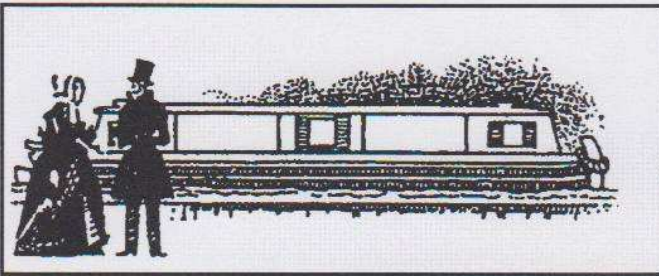
Their teams were so exhausted from climbing the hills coming through the Cumberland Gap, passing through Kentucky and entering Indiana that they rested for three weeks at French Lick before proceeding. When they saw still more hills in southern Indiana they were ready to head back to Kentucky blue grass country. A traveler just happened to pass by on horseback and spoke with them. He told them that further west in Pike County was good spring water and pasture grass that would tickle his horse’s stomach. They continued on and settled in White Oak Springs. Some of their descendants moved to the area later named Willisville and still live in homes in the area. The store once operated by Floyd and Inez was turned into a ceramic supply shop.



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

When the railroad replaced the canal with its tracks laid atop the old towpath, a whistle-stop was located just south of Willisville. It was called Clark's Station, but it was not a regular train station where the train stopped on schedule. Passengers wishing to ride the train had to flag it down and climb aboard.

The town of Littles sits along the old canal bed. It was settled after the canal era when the coal mines began operation. Therefore it was not a canal town.



The Wabash and Erie's heyday was between 1847-1856. The portion of the canal covered by this tour was completed during the middle of this time. The tolls and income from the canal reached their highest mark of \$193,400.18 in 1852. The canal was well maintained allowing passenger packets to run regularly. They would stop at every wharf for produce and passengers. While stopped the passengers could conduct business, visit friends, or pick fruits or berries. These leisurely trips were usually pleasant except for the mosquitoes. One passenger wrote "...all the mosquitoes ever hatched in the mud puddles of Indiana seemed to swarm ravenously about the heads of the passengers!" Often passengers contracted malaria on route.

After the canal had stimulated new business and brought in so many immigrants, the volume of traffic increased to the point that it was obvious a more reliable form of transportation was needed. Even in the best of times the canal was plagued with problems. It would freeze and become impassable in the winter, Spring freshets would burst dams and erode banks. People, who were opposed to the canal, because they thought it bred disease, drained the reservoirs. Others were opposed to the high costs of building and maintaining it. Repairs were extremely costly

as often whole locks, dams and aqueducts were lost to raging flood waters.

As a direct result to the traffic increase and the canal's seemingly insurmountable problems, railroad systems, which were originally planned as ways to feed the canal from the state's interior, took over and ruined the canal system. The old canal bed was filled in or silted in over the years after the canal closed. It closed to the north of Petersburg first. For a time it continued operating to the south toward Evansville. Water still remains in the old canal bed south of Willisville at Clark's Station.

After the canal was closed some of the old canal warehouses were put to use for a while as school rooms. They are long gone.

The merchants of the time were E.B. Boone, W.H. Connelly, P.C. Hammond, J.B. Hannah, W. and R.P. Hawthorn, T.M. Kitman, W.L. Minnick, T.L. Montgomery, W.L. Scott, J. Wilson, and Goodlet Morgan. More about Goodlet Morgan can be found in the Canawlers At Rest portion of this book.

The first attempt at a "Straight Line" railroad to connect Indianapolis to Evansville was begun in 1854 when the county donated \$100,000 and a large amount of labor to the project. It failed because the contractors did not pay for the labor or supplies. Many local citizens were financially ruined. It was eventually completed in 1882 by Mackey and brought prosperity to the county.

On June 23, 1855, Petersburg was officially incorporated by a narrow margin. There were 63 votes for and 61 votes against it.

Today's Pike County Courthouse is the 4<sup>th</sup>. It was erected in 1922. The first log courthouse was built in 1818 and was followed by two brick courthouses in 1836 and 1868. Behind it sits the jail built in 1853 and remodeled in 1885.

On June 7, 1990 twin tornados swept through Petersburg, a town of about 3,500 residents, and the surrounding rural coal mining communities. They left hundreds of people homeless and seven dead. They



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

cut a 4 block wide swath through the town from Hornady Park to the Elementary School. The tornados first touched down in Union, bounced through the Bowman area, hit Petersburg and proceeded just south of Alford. Damages were estimated to be between \$50 and \$60 million. In the city 114 homes were destroyed, 90 sustained major damage and 170 received minor damage. In the outlying rural areas 40 homesteads were damaged. Also destroyed were four churches, the Petersburg Elementary School, the Petersburg Health Care Nursing Center, and Hornady Park. Buildings that housed the city hall, police station, county sheriff's department, and city jail were heavily damaged. Over 3,000 acres of farmland were covered with debris that had to be removed before crops could be planted.

Today the Wabash and Erie Canal has been abandoned and filled in, but, as we have seen on this tour of Gibson and Pike counties, some of its remains can still be found in more remote areas. We can learn more about the canal through these counties by studying Jesse Lynch Williams 1853 Structure Report.

### 1853 CHIEF ENGINEER'S REPORT

The following 1853 structure report is that of Jesse Lynch Williams, chief engineer of the Wabash and Erie Canal, describing the condition of the structures. To clarify the report and to make it easier to find each structure, headings and additional current information have been added in bold type before each of Williams' descriptions. Some may be repetitive to his report. Stan Schmitt has provided much of the additional information such as lock names and the condition at the sites when he last visited them. They are given from the northeast to the southwest as the canal was built.

#### **Pike County**

**Aqueduct No. 16 (White River) South ½ of aqueduct in Pike County: South abutment intact (stone only). Masons mark carving visible. Piers have toppled and are visible at low water. North ½ of aqueduct in Daviess County.**

GPS N 38D 32.45M W 87D 13.548M

White river aqueduct, No. 16. This structure is 557 feet long, consisting of six spans of 85 feet clear space, and sustained by five piers 42 feet high above



Jesse Lynch Williams ~ Chief Engineer of Indiana's Canals

low water mark. The piers and abutments are of substantial cut stone masonry. The masonry of the abutments extends six feet below bottom of Canal. Resting on timber cribs raised from the natural surface of the river bank. The cribs are filled with stone and covered with hewn timber, laid close together, from which the masonry is commenced. The abutments are surrounded with the slope of the embankment, raised up to nearly bottom of the Canal under the trunk. The crib timbers being thus covered up and excluded from the air, and being also kept moist, are believed not to be subject to decay.

The first two piers from the south side are founded on solid rock, and the north pier on piles driven about ten feet. The piling so arranged that the outside row comes immediately under the face of the pier, all round. The piles are prevented from spreading at top by placing on each side a stick of timber the



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

length of the foundation, and bolting them together with iron rods about thirteen feet long. The space in the middle, surrounded by the piles, is filled with stones to the top of the piles. The piles are cut square and smooth on top and receive two courses of foundation timber laid close together, the first course being of short timbers laid crosswise.

The third and fourth piers rest upon platforms of timber, the first and last courses in each being laid close together. The intermediate courses are laid about twelve inches apart. The third pier from the south side of the river has six courses of timber and the fourth pier four courses of timber in the foundation. It was intended to excavate the foundation for the fourth pier so as to admit of six courses of timber, but we found a large log in our way, and the alternative was presented of either risking it at that depth with the log under it five feet below low water, or deter the completion of the aqueduct a whole year. Sickness and other causes having retarded the work so much, that at that late period in the season, the delay incident to removing the log and continuing the excavation would have endangered the whole work, it was concluded to risk the foundation with four courses of timber, the excavation having been made to five feet below low water, and our judgment proved correct in this matter, as we had barely time to get in the foundations and secure them before there was a flood in the river. The position of the log was carefully ascertained, and small stones thrown in along its sides, covering the whole bottom of the pit, so that the foundation timber would not rest on the log. All the excavations below water were made without building coffer dams, or pumping out the water, by means of a scraper with long handles worked between gunwales floating upon the surface of the water, and pulled by oxen working in a large boat, anchored in proper position. This proved to be an economical and expeditious mode of excavating below water, and will answer to a depth of ten or even twelve feet. The foundation and slopes of the embankment and the ends of the aqueduct are well protected with stone.

The superstructure of the aqueduct rests on top of the piers and abutment 6 ½ feet above the bottom of the Canal, the trunk being suspended from the arch by

iron rods 1 1/8 inch in diameter. The trunk of the aqueduct is 16 feet wide in the clear and is calculated for 4 ½ feet depth of water. There are four main chords consisting of five courses of oak plank 2 ½ inches thick by 18 inches deep. On top of these are four additional chords composed of four courses 2 inch oak plank 12 inches deep. There are four arches composed of nine courses of plank 2 ½ inches thick and 12 inches wide. The truss frame is 18 feet 4 inches high from the bottom of the lower chords to the top of the plate or upper chords, composed of nine posts and braces between each pier, or pier and abutment. The arches are footed into the chord, the versed sine being 13 ½ feet. The chord planks are bolted and pinned together, and bolted to the truss frame in the center between them. The arch plank are bent to the curve and spiked to each other, breaking joints and the whole are bolted together. The whole structure is roofed and weather boarded and painted, to protect it from the weather.

### **Guard Gate at White River Aqueduct:**

Guard gate just below the aqueduct consisting of short cribs, and one large gate swinging entirely across. This gate is suspended by iron rods from a post -- the top of which is exactly vertical over the step of the gate. There are two paddle gates for the passage of water. This gate is required to be shut when boats are passing up through the aqueduct to check the strong current. It is to be opened immediately after the boat gets through.

### **Culvert No. 180:**

Culvert No. 180. Small culvert to drain water from coal pit.

### **Culvert No. 181:**

Culvert No. 181, Small culvert to drain water from coal pit.

### **Culvert No. 182 (Lick Creek):**

Culvert No. 182. Lick Creek. Three spaces 8 by 3 feet clear. Length of culvert 156 feet. Top of culvert 18 feet B.

### **Culvert No. 183:**

Culvert No. 183. One space 5 by 3 feet clear. There being rock in the bed of the branch no foundation timber was put. Length of culvert 156 feet. Top of



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culvert 18 feet B.

### **Culvert No. 184:**

Culvert No. 184. One space 8 by 2 feet clear. Length 142 feet. Top of culvert 14 ½ feet B.

### **Culvert No. 185:**

Culvert No. 185. One space 10 by 2 feet clear. Length of culvert 140 feet. Top of culvert 15 feet B.

### **Waste Weir:**

Waste weir. This structure consists of, first, three sticks of foundation timber laid three feet apart, and timber abutments, built in the form of L's. The lower side being stepped off to correspond with the slope of the embankment. The abutments are 60 feet apart. The top of the foundation is 6 feet below the bottom of Canal. The dam consists of hewn timber laid close together in a broken curve having a versed sine of 6 ½ feet. The two end timbers in each course of the dam are 24 ½ feet long, and the middle timbers 12 feet long. The dam is raised to 3 feet A. In front of the dam there is a course of sheet piling 4 feet long, and thence upwards the face of the dam is planked. In the middle of the dam at the level of the foundation there are posts framed in, leaving an opening 2 feet square, which is filled by a cast iron sliding gate, having an iron stem and worked by a screw at the top. A crib is built around the gate, raised to the bottom of the Canal, to prevent the earth from obstructing the gate. A large bank of clay, gravel and small stone is put in front of the dam. The foundation below the breast wall is planked, as also are the wings of the abutments. The step timbers of the abutments are held out by round ties running into the embankment. Into the foundation and the top of the dam, posts are framed and capped, which support the tow-path bridge.

### **Road Bridge No. 142:**

Road Bridge No. 142. Leading from Petersburg. Ferry above Petersburg bluff.

### **Road Bridge No. 143:**

Road Bridge No. 143. Leading from Petersburg to Wright's Ferry.

**School House deep cut. The canal is cut into the bluff like it was at Fountain near Attica.**

GPS N 38D 29.850M W 87D 17.625M

### **Culvert No. 186:**

Culvert No. 186, at Petersburg. One space 8 by 3 feet clear. Length of culvert 140 feet. Top of culvert 15 feet B.

### **Road Bridge No. 144:**

#### **Marker**

Road bridge No. 144: Petersburg: double track.

### **Culvert No. 187 (Pride's Creek):**

Culvert No. 187. Pride's Creek. Timber arch 22 feet chord. Ring 17 ½ inches deep. Length of culvert 105 ½ feet from face to face. Top of culvert 6 ½ feet B.

### **Culvert No. 188:**

Culvert No. 188. One space 6 by 1 ½ feet clear. Length of culvert 110 feet. Top of culvert 5 ½ feet B. Top and parts of sides planked with two-inch oak boards.

### **Road Bridge No. 145:**

Road bridge No. 145. Tow-path changed at this bridge.

### **Culvert No. 189:**

Culvert No. 189. One space 10 by 2 feet. Length 112 feet. Top of culvert 5 feet B. Covering and part of sides planked.

### **Road Bridge No. 146:**

Road bridge No. 146.

### **Culvert No. 190:**

Culvert No. 190. One space 10 by 2 feet clear. Length 112 feet. Top of culvert 6 feet B. Covering and part of sides planked.

### **Culvert No. 191 (Pride's Creek Summit):**

Culvert No. 191. Summit branch of Pride's creek. Two spaces 10 by 2 ½ feet. Length of culvert 100 feet. Top of culvert 5 ½ feet B. Covering and part of sides planked with two inch oak boards.

**Patoka Deep Cut very visible and watered.**

### **Road Bridge No. 147:**



## WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

Road bridge No. 147. Road crossing on Patoka Summit. **is in Pike County.**

GPS N 38D 22.859M W 87D 20.065M

### **Culvert No. 192 (Flat Creek):**

Culvert No. 192. Flat creek, first branch south of Patoka Summit. This culvert crosses the Canal at an angle of 60 degrees. The length of the culvert is 116 ½ feet. There are three spaces 10 by 3 feet. Top of culvert 2 feet B. The covering timber is bolted down by iron rods, passing through a timber under the foundation and one on top of the culvert. The top and sides of the culvert are planked. This culvert is not put in where it was located, and will always be troublesome although there is a deep ditch cut from the lower side to carry off the water.

### **Culvert No. 193:**

Culvert No. 193. One space 10 by 2 feet clear. Length 101 feet. Top of culvert 3 feet B. Covering and part of sides planked.

### **Culvert No. 194:**

Culvert No. 194. One space 10 by 2 feet.

### **Lock No. 66 (Hosmer Lock):**

#### **Now Glezen, low spot**

Lock No. 66 of 7.9 feet lift. Walls 14 ½ feet high. Above this lock the water is 4 ½ feet deep, and below 4 feet, so that the difference of surface is 8.4 feet. Built on the crib plan, of timber.

### **Culvert No. 195 (Little Flat Creek):**

Culvert No. 195. Little Flat creek. Two spaces 10 by 3 feet clear. Length 136 feet. Top of culvert 14 feet B.

### **Culvert No. 196:**

Culvert No. 196. One space 8 by 3 feet clear. Length: 140 feet. Top of culvert 15 feet B.

### **Culvert No. 197:**

Culvert No. 197. One space 8 by 3 feet clear. Length: 150 feet. Top 18 feet B.

### **Aqueduct No. 17 (Patoka River):**

**There is timber under the mud which is not visible. The embankment is visible and there was a marker now missing. The North ½ of the Aqueduct**

Patoka aqueduct, No. 17. This structure consists of one middle span of 50 feet, and four other spans (two on each side) of 36 feet. The middle span is supported by two crib piers six feet thick, filled with stone, resting on foundation timber six feet before the water. The remainder of the trunk is supported by double bents, resting on foundation timber, placed in pits dug in the slope of the river bank. The abutments are of timber, resting on foundations six feet below the bottom of the canal, sheet piled and thoroughly planked. The superstructure is an open trunk 18 feet wide in the clear, and calculated for four feet depth of water. The chords rest on sub-chords on top of the piers and bents, supported in the middle by long braces footing in chords, needle beams and suspension rods. The middle span has double chords and double braces, one set of braces meeting in the center, the others being separated by a straining beam, three needle beams and three suspension rods on each side. The foundations and all the slopes up to the abutments are well protected with stones.

## GIBSON COUNTY

### **Aqueduct No. 17 (Patoka River):**

South ½ of aqueduct in Gibson County. See above description

### **Guard Gates at Patoka Aqueduct:**

#### **Former site of Dongola**

On each side of the Patoka there is a guard gate, the gates of the upper one facing up stream, and those of the lower facing down stream. They are to be used in case of accident at the aqueduct, to shut the water off both ways. Slide gates are provided in the side of the aqueduct trunk to let off the water.

### **Road Bridge No. 149:**

Road bridge No. 149. At Dongola. The tow-path changes here, the bridge being provided with additional track.

### **Culvert No. 198:**

Culvert No. 198. One space 4 by 1 ½ feet clear. Length 127 feet. Top of culvert 11 1/2 feet B.



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**Culvert No. 199:**

Culvert No. 199. One space 9 by 1 ½ feet clear. Length 142 feet. Top of culvert 15 ¾ feet B.

**Culvert No. 200 (Hurricane Creek):**

**Embankment visible**

Culvert No. 200. Hurricane creek. Two spaces 8 by 2 ½ feet clear. Length 169 feet. Top of culvert 23 ½ feet B.

**Culvert No. 201:**

Culvert No. 201. Small

**Culvert No. 202:**

Culvert No. 202. One space 9 by 2 feet clear. Length 131 feet. Top of culvert 12 ½ feet B.

**Culvert No. 203 (Buck Creek):**

**Culvert under road**

GPS N 38D 21.774M W 87D 22.756M

Culvert No. 203 Buck creek. Two spaces 8 by 3 feet. Length 153 feet. Top of culvert 19 B.

**Road Bridge No. 150:**

Road bridge No. 150. Dongola and Princeton road.

**Culvert No. 204 (Keg's Creek):**

**Keg creek, large embankment**

Culvert No. 204. Keg's creek. Four spaces 8 by 4 feet clear. Length 160 feet. Top of culvert 21 feet B. Side timbers secured by bolting post to them on the outside.

**Road Bridge No. 151:**

Road bridge No. 151. Princeton road.

**Culvert No. 205:**

Culvert No. 205. Small.

**Culvert No. 206 (Lost Creek east fork):**

Culvert No. 206. East fork of Lost creek. Two spaces 8 by 3 ½ feet. Length 124 feet. Top of culvert 10 ½ feet B.

**Culvert No. 207:**

Culvert No. 207. One space 6 by 1 ½ feet clear. Length 103 feet. Top of culvert 4 ½ feet B.

**Road Bridge No. 152:**

Road bridge No 152. Francisco to Princeton.

**Pigeon Deep Cut visible and watered**

**Waste Weir:**

Waste weir with two large gates, supported by iron bars, working from a center, at upper side of foundation, raised by chains and rollers. This structure is built of timber and plank upon the plan described next before Lock No. 61.

**Tumble:**

Tumble in berm bank to let in branch. Culvert at this point impracticable.

**Road Bridge No. 153:**

Road bridge No. 153. Boonville and Princeton.

**Waste Weir:**

Waste weir in berm side to pass water to and from the Pigeon Creek Reservoir.

**Culvert No. 208 (Scaffold Lick):**

Culvert No. 208. Scaffold Lick. Timber arch of 16 feet chord. Ring 16 inches deep. Top of culvert 2 feet B. Length of culvert 96 feet from face to face. Crown of arch planked. As the water in the reservoir rises above the bottom of the Canal on both sides of this culvert, it was necessary to secure it from rising by iron bands. They pass through a stick, of timber under the foundation, and are strongly keyed together. The bars are 2 by ½ inch, made in pieces from 4 to 6 feet long.

**Road Bridge No. 154:**

Road bridge No. 154. Port Gibson, at lower end of the Pigeon Creek Reservoir.

**Pigeon Creek Reservoir Culvert:**

GPS N 38D 16.612M W 87D 30.552M

Pigeon Creek Reservoir culvert, to admit water into the Canal from the reservoir, is built of timber upon the plan of the culvert for the Splunge Creek reservoir. There are four sliding gates for the passage of water. The foundation is rock, but not being very hard, timber was put in upon it on the ordinary plan, and the whole planked on below the breast wall.



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### Waste Weir & Road Bridge:

Waste weir at the west end of reservoir bank. This structure consisted of timber abutments 66 feet apart, in the form of L's, with breast wall 3 feet high, and longitudinal foundation timbers 2 feet apart, filled in between and covered over with stone. On the breast wall there are posts against which the plank rest, raising to top water line of the reservoir, and upon which there is a wide cap, on which a man may walk, to remove the plank when a large discharge is required. From the waste weir there is a ditch to convey the water gently down to the level of the creek bottom. Across the Canal there is a road bridge about 30 feet long.

### Lock No. 67 (Port Gibson Lock) & Towpath Bridge:

Site visible, some timbers visible Embankment of Pigeon Reservoir visible.

Lock No. 67, at Port Gibson. Lift 7 feet, but the walls are raised 15 feet high, to guard against overflow, in case the reservoir should break into the Canal. The gates are raised to correspond with the walls. The lock is built of timber on the crib plan. Tow path bridge over the mouth of feeder from the reservoir.

### Lock No. 68:

Lock No. 68. Near Port Gibson. Lift 7 feet, built of timber on the crib plan.

### Culvert No. 209:

Culvert No. 209. One space 9 by 2 feet clear. Length of culvert 103 feet. Top of culvert 4 ½ feet B. Covering and part of sides planked.

### Lock No. 69:

Lock No. 69. Lift 8 ½ feet, built of timber on the crib plan.

### Culvert No. 210:

Culvert No. 210. One space 9 by 2 feet clear. Top of culvert 2 feet B. Length of culvert 94 feet. Covering and part of sides planked.

### Culvert No. 211 (Snake Run):

Culvert No. 211. Snake run, Timber arch of 15 feet chord. Ring 16 inches deep. Top of arch 2 feet B. Length of culvert from face to face, 86 feet. Crown of arch planked.

### Road Bridge No. 155:

Road bridge No. 155. Warrington road.

### Lock No. 70:

Lock No. 70, of 6.8 feet lift. Built of timber on the crib plan.

### Culvert No. 212:

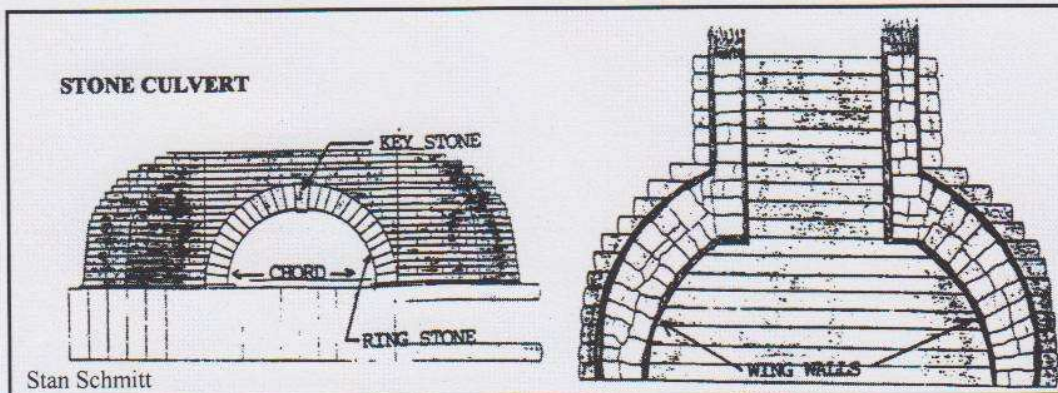
Culvert No. 212. One space 10 by 2 ½ feet clear. Length of culvert 103 feet. Top of culvert 2 ½ feet B. Covering and part of sides planked.

### Culvert No. 213:

Culvert No. 213. One space 9 by 2 feet clear. Length of culvert 99 feet. Top of culvert 2 ½ feet B. Covering and part of sides planked.

### Culvert No. 214 (Smith's Fork):

Culvert No. 214 Smith's Fork. Timber arch of 28 feet chord. Ring 21 inches deep. Length of culvert from face to face 86 feet. Top of arch 1 ½ feet B. Crown of arch planked.

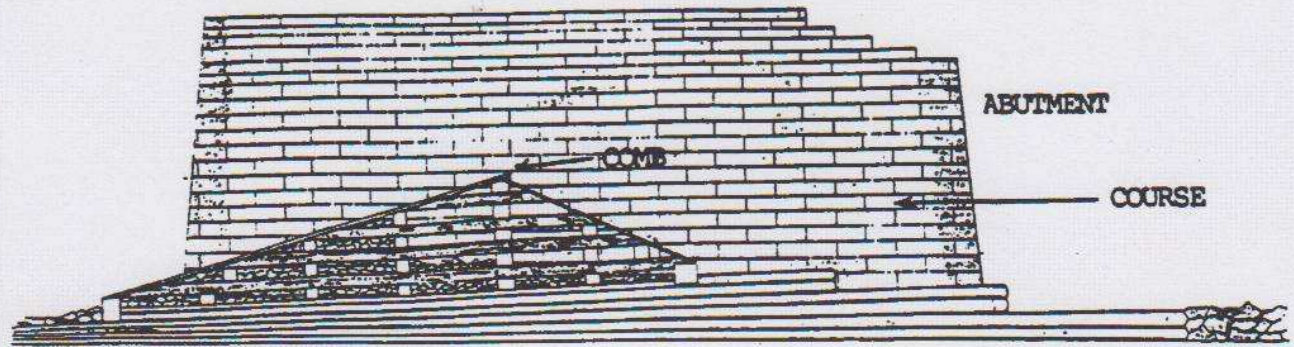
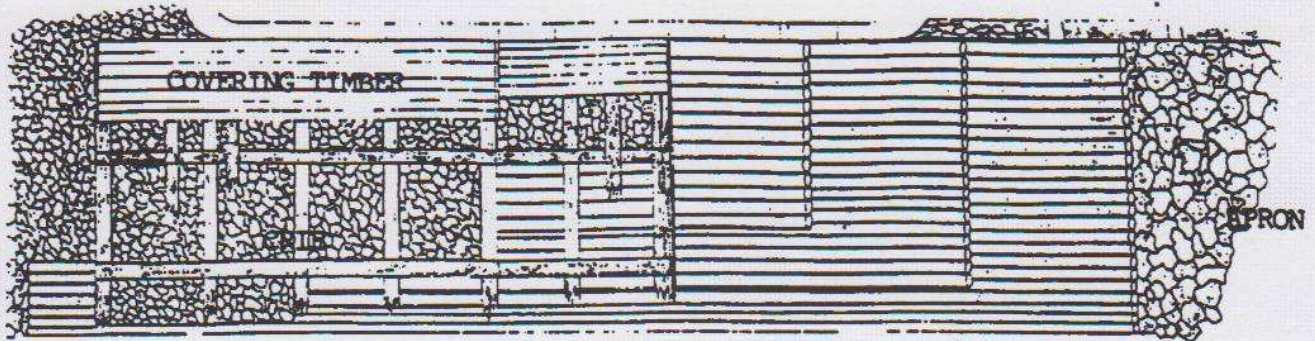




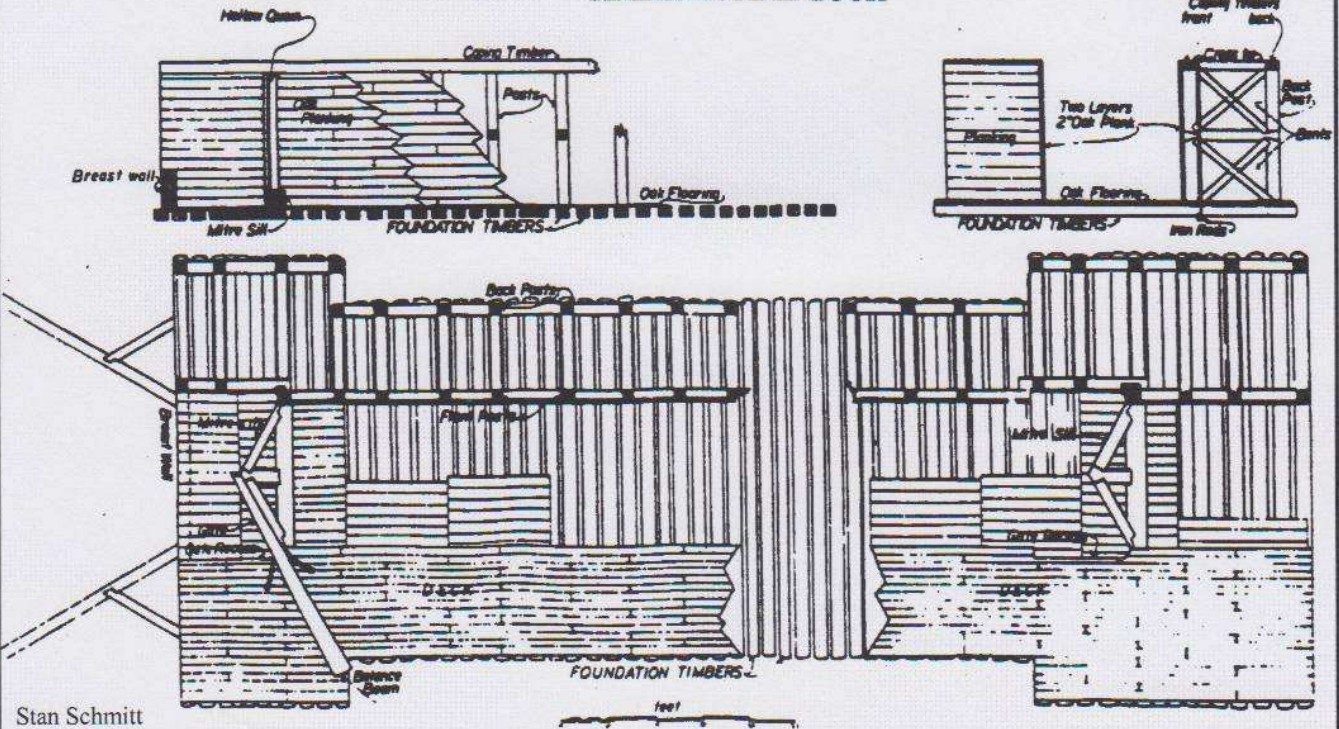
# WABASH & ERIE CANAL IN GIBSON & PIKE COUNTIES

## DAM

Stan Schmitt



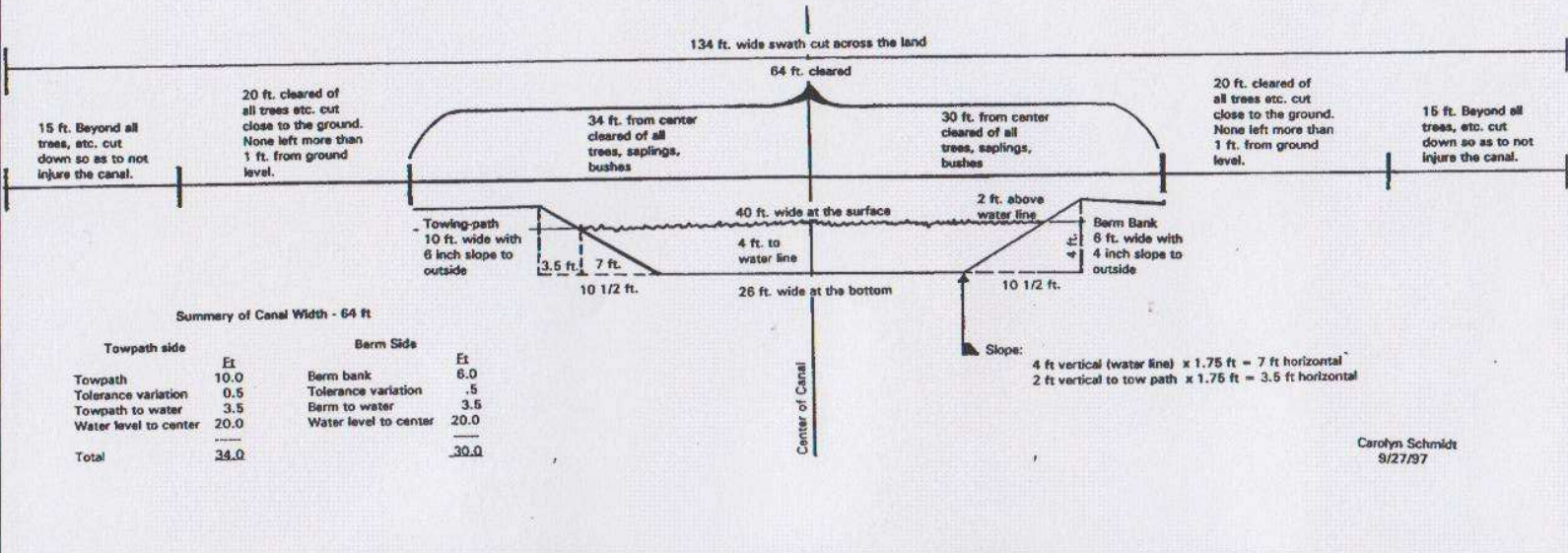
## TIMBER FRAME LOCK





## A Diagram of Section 171 (Wabash-Erie Canal)

CANAL CROSS SECTION



Although the above diagram is of Section 171 of the Wabash & Erie Canal,  
it is very similar to the sections built that were seen on this tour.

# CANAWLERS AT REST WHO LIVED AND WORKED IN GIBSON AND PIKE COUNTIES

These articles are from previous or upcoming **Hoosier Packets** and at times repeat information already presented in this book.

The biographies of William Cockrum, Elisha Embree, Samuel Forrer, David McRoberts, Peter Meyers, Goodlet Morgan and Henry Stuenkle can be found in the Canal Biographies section of this Canal Society of Indiana website.