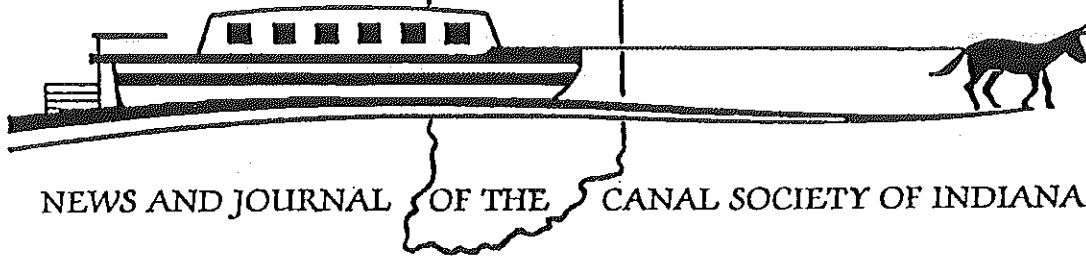


THE  
**HOOSIER-PACKET**

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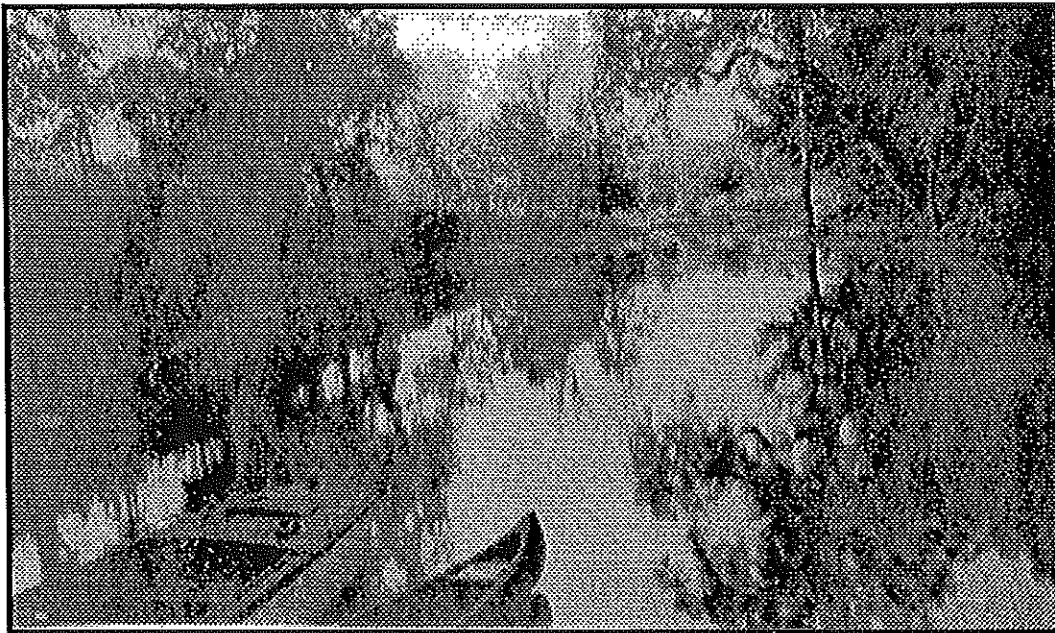


VOL. 4 NO. 3

P.O. BOX 40087 FORT WAYNE, IN 46804

MARCH 2005

## CANAL MEMORIES



The Wabash & Erie Canal basin at Roanoke, Indiana, is seen in this old photo. The original is very brown and dark but a walkway and posts can be seen all around it. The posts have been used as bolyards on which to tie up the boats. The canal was at the back of the picture behind the two points of land. Photo by E. E. Corday

### *Features*

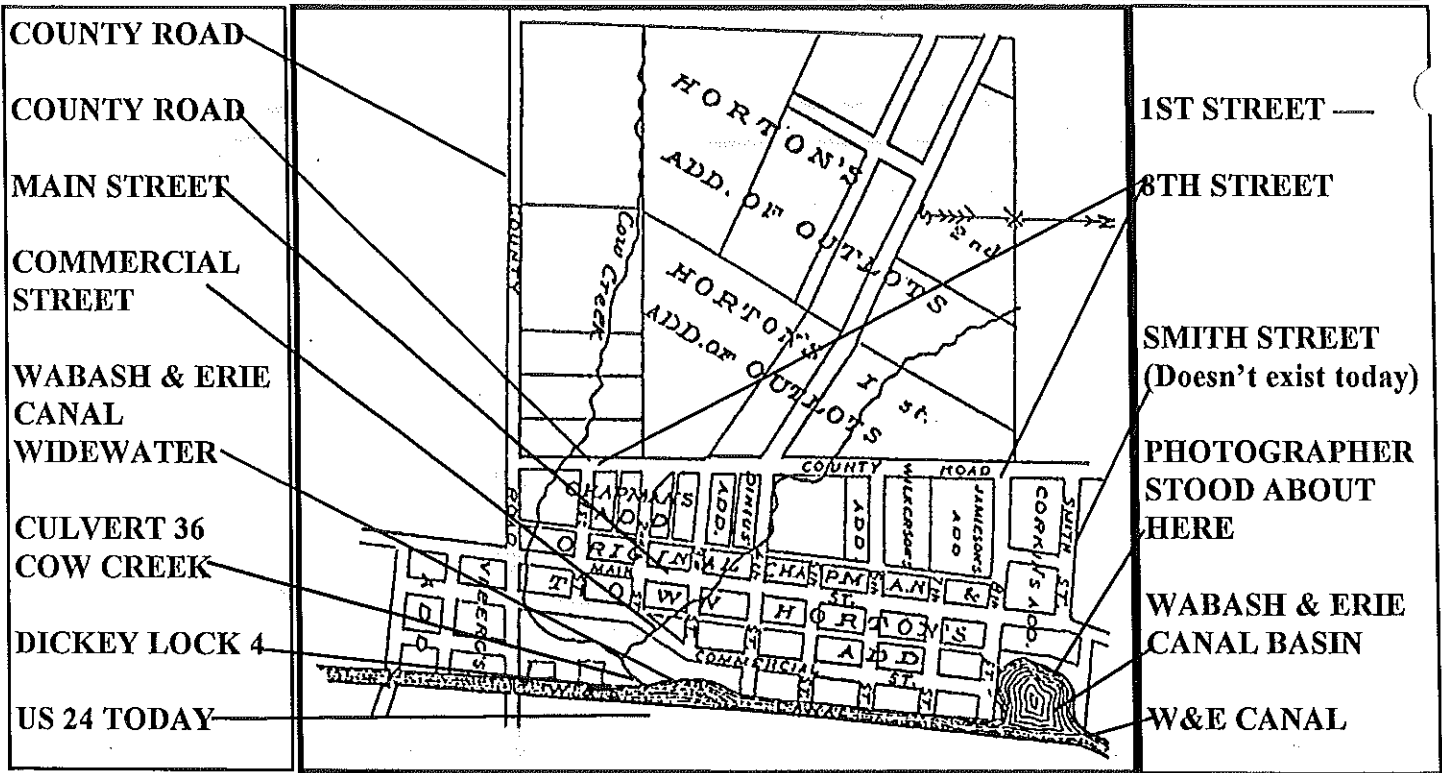
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### **ROANOKE BASIN PHOTO FOUND**

By Carolyn Schmidt

While going through some of his files recently, Bob Rose, Canal Society of Indiana (CSI) member from Roanoke, IN, came across this old photo given to him by the late Bob Myers about 6 years ago. He brought the photo to CSI headquarters to make sure it was a photo of the Wabash & Erie Canal basin at Roanoke. Checking an 1876 map and then actually going to the site, he and Bob and Carolyn Schmidt determined that it truly was a picture of the Roanoke basin.

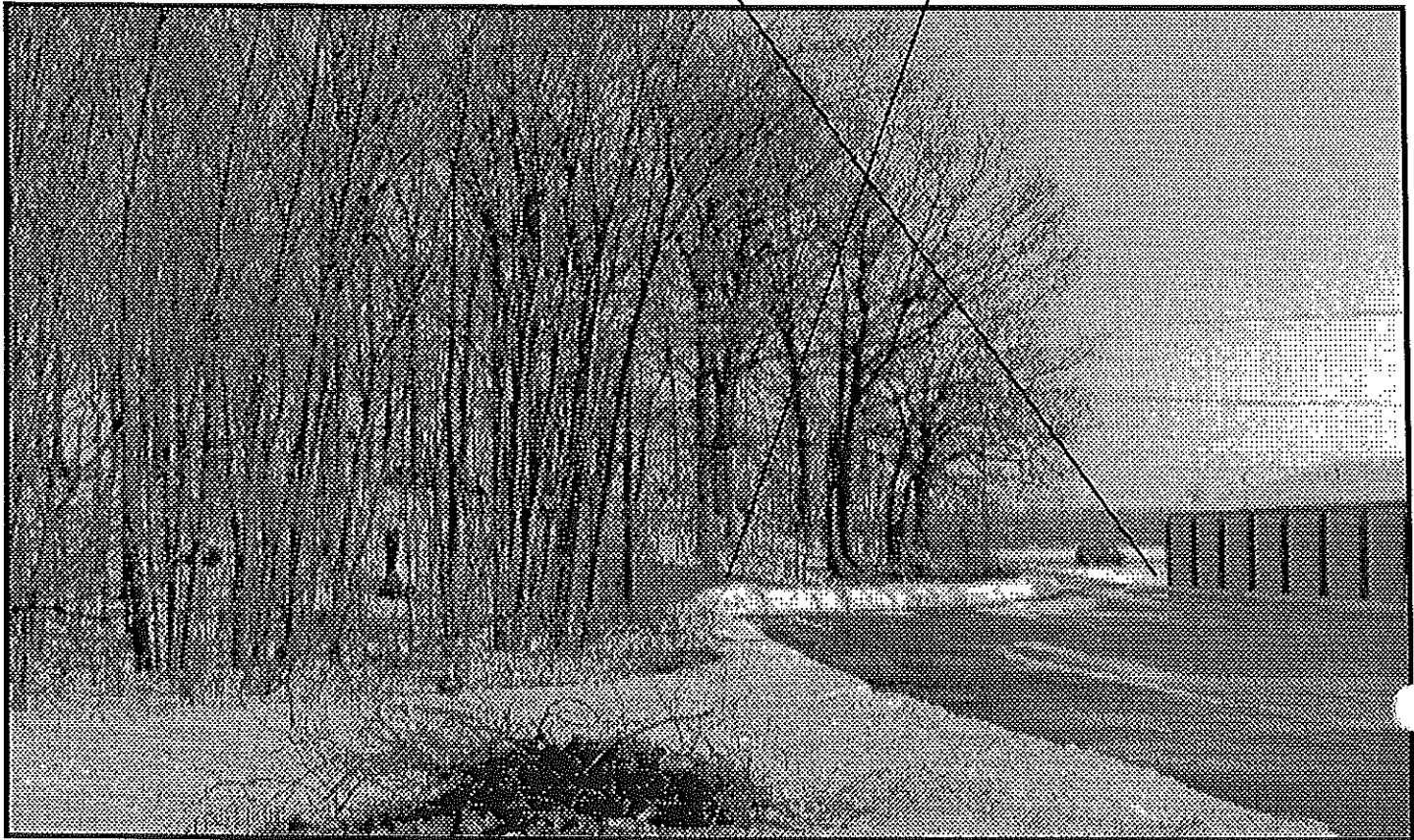
When Rose and the Schmidts arrived at the site they found a portion of the hill on the left had been removed. Rose knew that at one time Zent Amusement

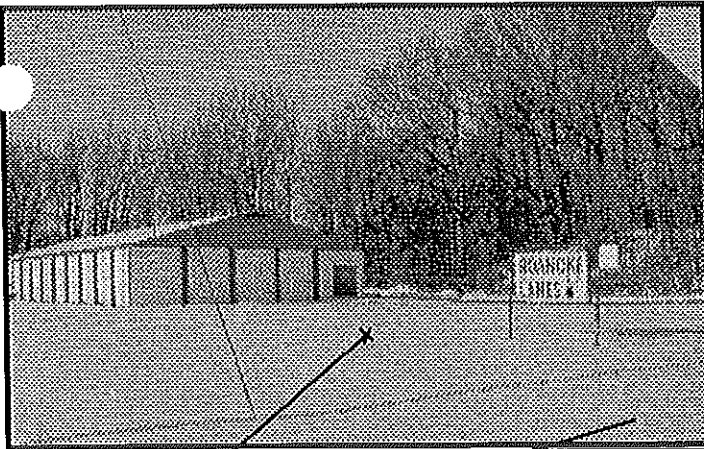


## ROANOKE, HUNTINGTON COUNTY, INDIANA

Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Indiana published by Baskin, Forster & Co. 1876

Below: This photo of the Roanoke basin was taken near where the photographer stood for the old picture. A van on US 24 is where the old Wabash & Erie Canal once ran. A point of land between the trees and the bowling alley once extended to a spot just this side of and in front of the van. A concrete abutment was built for Zent's Park.





Above: Roanoke Lanes is now located in the Roanoke canal basin. The point of land that was removed would have extended to about here. The canal ran at the bottom of the picture, which was taken from US 24.

Below: Bob Rose and Carolyn Schmidt study the old photograph and compare it to the lay of the land to determine where the photographer stood when taking the photo. Photos by Bob Schmidt



park had been located there that had a ball diamond in this area. There was a slight rise where the hill had been from a parking lot to get onto US 24. They walked around the site and determined that the picture was taken from below what is now Locust Drive looking toward US 24, which runs along and on the canal's path. The huge basin has been filled in, leveled, and now is the location of Roanoke Lanes and its parking lot.

Records show that an early owner of the property was Samuel Bash. Later the Zents owned it and ran an amusement park there in the 1930s. Was this when the basin was filled and leveled?

The old photograph has the following writing in pencil on its reverse side:

3695-72-¾ Dull Green Ant  
1305 Fox Brown 1½ margin all around  
EE Corday  
2209 Dodin  
6435 607

We believe the Dull Green and Fox Brown are directions for matting the photo for framing. We feel the next two lines are the name and address of the photographer and the last numbers are the customer order numbers.

The 1876 map shows Smith Street and another street alongside the basin. These streets do not exist today. The map shows the canal, the widewater, Dickey Lock, Culvert 36 at Cow Creek and bridges over the canal on the two streets to the left. It has been marked to show where the photographer probably stood to take the photo.

Although the photo was very brown, one could see a pathway and posts on both sides of the basin and like as not all the way around it. These posts probably protected the path, which might be planks like a narrow dock, from being damaged by canal boats and acted as bolyards on which to tie up the boats. This is a huge basin and had room for many boats to dock, unload or load.

Even before the Roanoke canal basin was turned into an amusement park, it provided enjoyment to people who lived near it. In an article by Frank Sumner Bash that appeared in the Huntington Herald Press on January 12, 1924, entitled "Ever Teach A Heavyweight To Skate? Bash Knows All About Such An Experience," ice skating in the basin is related in the last two paragraphs.

"...keenest interest in connection with canal skating, was the old basin at Swaider's mill at the north edge of Roanoke. The canal at that point backed up and formed a cove, or bay, consisting of several acres covered with shallow water which afforded ideal skating. That memorable basin is now devoted to Zent Brother's baseball park provided with refreshment stands, rest room, amusement, handsome grove and other resort improvements. During the past summer I witnessed hundreds mingling within the gates of this inviting park. As I watched the festivities of the younger generations my mind's eyes were also seeing another throng of pleasure seekers of a far different personnel - a swarm of skaters gliding over glassy ice that covered those very same acres in the long ago. As I stood and mused over the old basin's early scenes the ground seemed like the mystical isle in the river of time where shadowy hills and kindly eyes and happy smiles flashed round the heart with a widening wile, yet I knew it was not a dream picture. No, that old skating basin was a Mecca of reality—a place filled with delightful memories.

"When a mere boy I was told of an alleged incident that once took place and it impressed me greatly, but I was too young to retain any of the details. Now it is almost legendary but some of the early

residents could have related it perfectly. A mere fragment of the story is that among the many skaters on the basin one night was a handsome and popular young man, a puburner in the town employed at good wages at one of the places of business. His fine countenance bespoke for him in good standing and arguing that he had come there with clean hands and pure heart. He had been there long enough to win the affections of one of Roanoke's fairest girls. He was skating with her when whispers passed through a merry crowd that a stranger, an officer of the law, was looking for some one. A friend gave the young couple a quiet tip. They separated, the younger man circling in careless graceful curves until the main channel of the canal was gained where he went around the corner and made a dash for liberty, vanishing up the canal like a bird in flight. He never returned and nothing was ever learned of his history."

Teninge, Pioneer French Bachelor, Relates Winter Sports In Boyhood" Joe Teninge, who's actual name was Theophilus Norman Richard Teninge, said he often skated from his home near Huntington, IN, to Roanoke, a distance of about 12 miles. The article says:

"When a lad Joe did a good deal of skating on the canal. He said a dozen boys would grasp a long slender pole when making a long trip on the ice. This tandem method aided the weaker boys and was also a safeguard if the ice happened to break. The dredge during the previous season had scooped out a place about nine feet deep where there had been trouble with the channel filling. It was at the overhead bridge near what is now called the Grossman spring. Matt Hier had taken out ice at this place, but in the morning it was frozen so the boys glided over it while starting for Roanoke. Coming back the ice had thawed and some of the boys went down. They clung to the pole and were saved."

The canal and skating seemed to go hand in hand. In another article in the Huntington Herald Press on January 19, 1929, by F. S. Bash entitled "T. N. R.

## 2005 CONTRIBUTIONS TO CSI

Thanks to the following members who contributed to the society above the \$22 membership rate.

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Schmidt, Bob & Carolyn

**BOYHOOD DAYS IN PARKE COUNTY  
AND THEIR WABASH & ERIE CANAL  
CONNECTIONS**  
By Charles Davis

*While looking through microfilm I found the following series of an article entitled "Sketches for the Tribune's Boys and Girls by a Seventy-Year Old Boy" that was written by William Henry Harrison Beadle. He wrote them while living in Madison, South Dakota in 1909 and sent them to the editor of the Rockville Tribune, who published them a few weeks later in this Parke county, Indiana newspaper. They are quoted in their entirety from that paper. This is a continuation of the article from an earlier Hoosier Packet, which was about flatboats.*

Cont. in Tribune, March 17, 1909

**THE WABASH & ERIE CANAL**

The flatboat period gradually closed as the Wabash and Erie canal progressed and was completed from Toledo, Ohio, to Evansville, Indiana. The construction of this important public improvement brought new elements and activities into all communities along the Maumee and Wabash rivers. My memory does not reach back to the beginning of it when the route was surveyed and the plans and estimates were made. It was a slow enterprise compared with the progress that is now made in any like matter. Financial conditions generally were less favorable at its beginning. The State lent its credit and aid and practically built the system, but the State was not directly benefited by it. The State passed through changing administrations and the work was in different hands in successive periods and finally some of the contracts and bonds of the State were defaulted.

It was built in successive sections or divisions and these were progressively used. Parke county was rather toward the end than near beginning of the project and markets to the north, or Toledo were not available for years of waiting. The construction finally entered Parke county at Lodi and an army of laborers, bosses, engineers and superintendents thronged the region from Coal Creek to below Big Raccoon [creek].

The streams, large and small, were the scenes of what then seemed gigantic operations. Three of the large confluents of the Wabash enter it in the county. Over each an aqueduct must be built and across two at least large feeder dams were constructed. Almost primitive methods were employed. There was small use for skilled labor. The great trees were cut from the then abundant forests near by and dragged by ox or horse teams to the

sites for aqueducts, dams and bridges and then hewed and shaped and framed into these structures. So in the vicinity of these large operations and at many places where great masses of earth or gravel must be moved to build the towpath, considerable villages of cabins and boarding houses were constructed where the laborers slept and fed and sometimes lived in separate families.



**WM. HENRY HARRISON  
BEADLE**

These laborers were mainly strangers to the country, hundreds of them fresh from Ireland after the "famine of 1846" in that land. They all looked alike to us and were new to the native Hoosiers. They were mainly Catholic in religion and all of us saw priests of faith for the first time. They were seldom residents long in a place, but visited and served spiritually successive villages of their people. There were prejudices then in the native minds about that religion and people such as exists nowhere in the Union now.

Some of the older boys of the neighborhood secured employment as drivers of one horse dump-carts that were used to haul the gravel onto the towpaths and other earthworks. Their wages were five to seven dollars a month and those I knew were fortunate if they ever got all that was due them. This really great number of laborers created a demand and made a market for much of the provisions and food stuffs generally that was produced in the nearby region and made gain for the farmers. While the construction was active, usually about two years in a section, there was less need for flatboats and the New Orleans market, though such voyages continued in some measure.

That was the period for great potato crops in the region as they were in great demand. My father (James Ward Beadle) cleared eight acres of new land, a sandy loam, and planted it in potatoes. It was a big crop, but before they were dug in the fall the canal work was done in that vicinity and the contractors and their gangs were gone to another section further south and there was no market. The many hundred bushels were put in piles and covered with leaves and a little earth. They kept over well and were excellent, but worth only ten cents a bushel in the spring. He had built a flatboat as usual and expected to load it with pork but was disappointed in half the promised cargo. The spring thaw started; the

rise in the river would soon come. Then all hands, men, women and children and every available team was procured and the boat was filled with potatoes. It was but a chance, yet, when his boat touched the levee at New Orleans, the potatoes were at once sold for seventy-five cents per bushel. That was one of his profitable trips, all prices were good.

B. Madison, S. D., March 3, 1909

Cont. in Tribune, March 24, 1909

The building of the canal was not solely a matter of business of wages and of supplies and other trade, there was life, energy in this body of men, and often there were fights and petty crimes, while there were intemperance and amusements, the chief feature being horse races. The Irish were fond of these and knew a good horse and had some fast ones for those days. The old saying of "a fight or foot race" was not applicable to the Irish unless the other fellow ran. They were said to be clannish and there was no doubt of it; they had to be. It was justifiable in many cases and they believed it to be in all. But when there was no general enemy present the clans of "bunches" would fight one another at times. Except at horse races the natives did not mingle with or often go among them. The justices of the peace, constables and business men strongly discouraged race conflicts.

It came about that the worst fights were between opposing camps or factions of the laborers. Among these was here and there a bully and fighter of high degree. Between such at times were fights that would have been famous in feudal times when flat-right made law and gave title claims. When one of these bullies was meaner than others and for any reason lost caste, he became a dangerous character and sometimes attempted crimes of violence. Usually not till then did the law interfere and the arrest of such a man was planned and arranged for with all prudence and care because his clan might finally defend him.

I know a man who seemed to me wonderfully brave, one of a posse to arrest such a desperado. The latter's friends stood near him and he was defiant. The posse stood in some doubt about their mode of attack, when this stalwart young man of prowess walked deliberately over toward the bully, commanding him to surrender, which he did as the captor's hand was laid upon his shoulder. They hesitated to resist officers of the law and were mortally afraid of a pistol, few of which were known to be in the county.

When the canal was opened to use it soon had a decided influence upon the country reached by it. Freight boats carried produce of all kinds upon it north and south, wheat, corn, pork lard, and goods, wares and

merchandise. Prices improved and noticeable prosperity followed. Goods came from Cincinnati by way of Toledo to western Indiana, all the way by canal. [Goods came from Cincinnati on the Miami & Erie Canal to Junction, OH and from Junction on the Wabash & Erie Canal to Rockville or from Toledo on the Miami, Wabash & Erie to Junction and continued on the Wabash & Erie Canal from Junction to Rockville.] Agricultural machinery began to be used and I remember that wheat drills came around from Dayton, Ohio to Howard. [Indiana]

A marked readjustment of commerce and trade took place, steamboats and flatboats on the Wabash decreased in numbers till they nearly disappeared. We began to hear of towns that were before little known. Fort Wayne increased in importance as did Evansville, Terre Haute and Lafayette.

Passenger packets ran upon the canal at more than double the speed of freight boats. At Fort Wayne was located a "Young ladies seminary" that had some fame and young women went from Parke [county] upon these packets to attend that famous institution. Probably it did not compare favorable with the present Rockville high school, but it was the best available then. Of course the ladies remained there all winter for the canal froze solid for several months.

Upon these packets were some gay parties, families, ladies and gentlemen. Some of these used to say that when they rose in the morning they had to sight by two trees to learn if the boat was running. As the evening approached they had dances with enthusiasm. "First four right and left; ladies change; balance all; bridge!" and at the last call all would promptly drop to their knees till they had passed under the bridge.

Standing upon one of these bridges and seeing a packet pass fired the hearts of the boys with a yearning for travel. Boats going as fast as the slow trot of three tandem horses! Think of it!

A merchant who then resided at Armiesburg was a most polite and sociable gentlemen and a famous lover and performer of the dance. Soon after returning from such a trip with much dancing on the packet, he attended a dance near home. While he was whirling in the gay reel, absorbed in enthusiasm and courtesy, the caller yelled "bridge!" suddenly and the gentleman promptly fell upon his knees before his partner while the other and untrained gentlemen failed to perform that feature of the dance!

The very last use that I saw made of the canal was to take a company of soldiers from Montezuma [Indiana] to Camp Vigo, west of Terre Haute, early in the Civil war. Soon after the railroads came, as they had

come elsewhere the river and canal fell into disuse. They had done a valuable part in helping the people to enter upon that development of resources that has made the country rich."

B. Madison, S. D., March 19, 1909

*On May 31, 1909 there appeared a follow-up article titled "The Wabash and Erie Canal" by a G. W. Collings, Wichita, Kansas, March 21, 1909. It is quoted below:*

Your correspondent who writes the very interesting articles entitled "Boyhood Days in Parke," has this sentence in his last communication. "The flatboat period gradually closed as the Wabash and Erie Canal progressed, and was completed from Toledo, Ohio to Evansville, Ind." I think this is misleading. Unless my memory is greatly at fault, this canal never was completed to Evansville, but its southern limit was Terre Haute. It was the original intention to continue it to Evansville, but the project failed before its completion." Mr. Collings goes on to describe the beginnings of the canal, costs, etc. and finishes "it certainly would have been a great thing for the State -- if they could have been managed with graft and have kept free from politics. But I greatly fear this could not have been done during the stormy times of the last half of the last century.

*Mr. Colling's above comments drew some attention from a former canal man in Parke county. Again an article appeared in the Tribune on April 14, 1909 titled "The Wabash and Erie Canal: written by William L. McIntire.*

Marshall, Ind., April 10, 1909

Mr. Editor, the writer of this was somewhat amused at G. W. Colling's letter doubting the statements of Mr. Beadle, in regard to the finishing of the Wabash and Erie Canal to Evansville. Mr. Collings has forgotten, if he ever knew, as the writer of this article worked on the canal when it was being built, commencing at Aquila Justice's farm, at different places to within eighteen miles of Evansville and in 1855 ran a boat on the canal from Terre Haute south and knows that the canal was built to the city of Evansville. The State became so involved that she sold the canal to her creditors, the Rothchild's and they in turn sold the right to build from Terre Haute to Evansville to a Virginia company, which finished it. They paid us off with Virginia money. The name was changed on that part to the cross-cut canal. About fifteen miles southeast from Terre Haute was built a large reservoir and the Eel River feeder came to the canal and could feed both ways, the waste water ran into the reservoir, which fed the canal to White river. We backed out into the river and ran in the river four or five miles and backed out into the canal at Newberry. White river furnished water to the Pigeon reservoir, which

furnished water to Evansville. We crossed East White river through an aqueduct. It was soon found that Eel river could not furnish sufficient water and they built another reservoir on Birch creek in a heavy timbered bottom, which the people resented and cut it, letting the water out. This brought on what was known as the Clay county war. The Governor ordered out the militia. One company came from Evansville under Captain Gavit, all commanded by Col. John B. Hess, but as the soldiers left the dam was cut, and the company had the timber all cut down and after repairing the damages, let the water in again. But it was soon cut again and the other reservoir, so that was the ending of that part of the canal. I was on the ground at the time and had been boating on that part of the canal. Mr. Beadle was right in what he said. With due regard to all I remain,

Yours truly, William L. McIntire.

*Mr. McIntire's obituary gives a good description of his life.*

William L. McIntire, well known and highly respected citizen of Marshall, passed away at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Lizzie Houghland, Thursday June 6, after an illness which extended several months. Funeral services were held at the home of Mrs. Houghland, Internment at Poplar Grove cemetery.

*The following is the obituary written and read by James Engle:*

Wm. L. McIntire, born January 8, 1830; died June 6, 1918, aged 88 years, 4 months, 28 days. He was born at Bowling Green, Clay county, Indiana, where he lived until he was 21 years old. He was second of four children, two boys and two girls, all of whom are dead except one, Martha C. Clifford of St. Louis.

He came to Parke county in 1851, and spent his first year for Jonathan and Julia Maris, near Annapolis, and formed a friendship with this family that was continued through their life. He also had three half brothers and sisters, one of whom, Thos. McIntire is still living. He married Sarah Teague, Jan. 12, 1903. To this union was born nine children, David, William, John, Martha, Elizabeth, Mary, Grace, Laura, and Cora. Martha and Grace died while young and Laura died in mature life. Of six living children all live in Parke county, except David, who lives at Gwynneville, Shelby county, Ind. and John at Spartenburg, S. C. There are eighteen grandchildren and fourteen great grandchildren.

The greater part of their married life was spent in Annapolis and vicinity, he having been postmaster at this office for several years. He was Justice of the Peace for a long number of years and his studious habits and natural liking for the law easily made him one of the best posted men on law in our county. He was consulted on

points in law continually and his opinions were rarely wrong. He was a government detective during the war and his report that Morgan was to make a raid into Indiana and Ohio was among the first the Governor Morton received. He has for many years been used as an authority of the early history of his locality and Penn township in particular. His contribution to the pageant history of Parke county, was considered among the best.

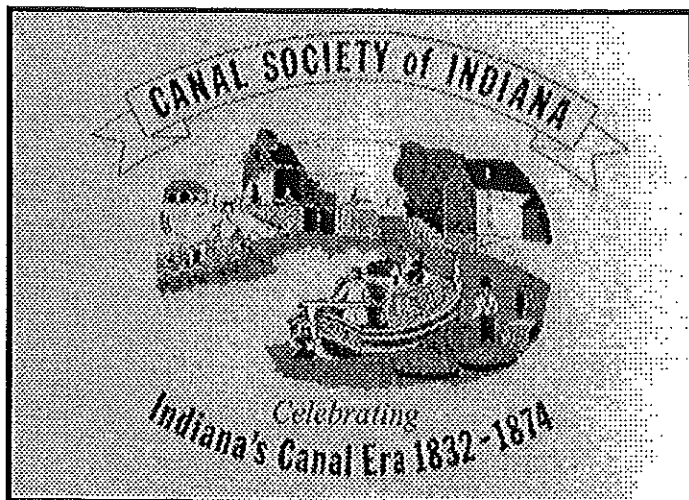
He was a great student of the Bible and could easily give the desired quotation to sustain his stand in argument. He was a member of the Laboring Men's Institute of Annapolis and was one of its greatest readers. He was an Andrew Jackson Democrat, yet he voted for Lincoln, saying he did not believe in trading horses while crossing the stream. Rockville Tribune June 18, 1918.

## ALLEN COUNTY HISTORY BOOK

The Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society has joined forces with the Allen County Genealogical Society to compile and publish a two volume Allen County History Book. It will include family biographies, histories of businesses/corporations, histories of churches/schools/clubs/organizations and tributes and memorials. It will sell for \$59.95 with a \$10.50 shipping/handling fee plus tax.

There is no cost to publish your family's biography with one photo if it is within the 500-word limit. Additional words are \$.15 per word. We encourage all CSI members who live in Allen county to submit a typed, double-spaced biography to Allen Co. History Book Project, PO Box 5192, Fort Wayne, IN 46895 by April 1, 2005. This type of history is invaluable to historical and genealogical researchers.

Since the Canal Society of Indiana was founded in Fort Wayne in May 1982 and our headquarters is located there, it is fitting that our history be included. Unfortunately there is a charge for organization submissions. We are submitting a half page history of 300 words and photo for \$175. Our entry will read as follows:



## Canal Society of Indiana

The Canal Society of Indiana (CSI) was organized at the History Center on May 22, 1982 as a statewide not-for-profit corporation. Fort Wayne continues to be the state headquarters for this organization, which brings together persons who share a common interest in Indiana's canal heritage. The group helps focus attention on these early interstate waterways through a variety of publications and programs. Its aim is to provide interpretation of the era, to preserve canal bed and structural remains, and to support restoration of historic canal related sites. Each year the Society conducts a spring and fall tour to expand its members' knowledge of Hoosier canals. The tour weekends feature speakers, videos and music related to this colorful era and include a wide variety of related cultural activities such as home and building tours and craft demonstrations. Members of CSI receive a monthly copy of the news and journal, The Hoosier Packet, which includes articles on canal history, reprints of original documents, and reports about the technical aspects of canalling. It keeps members informed about canal related events, tours and book availability and shares the growing knowledge of the canal era.

Significant accomplishments of CSI include completing two videos on Indiana's canals via Indiana Heritage Research grants and placing several historical markers throughout the state. Members were instrumental in archeological work at the Gronauer lock and the Huntington floodgate. CSI supports local canal groups in Indiana with funding and advice as they seek to build museums and save structures. It has led the way to a tremendous increase in canal heritage awareness. Trails are being built to follow old towpaths. Teachers and students take a new look at an era when horses pulled boats and Indiana developed its interstate canal transportation system to improve commerce.



# CANAWLERS AT REST

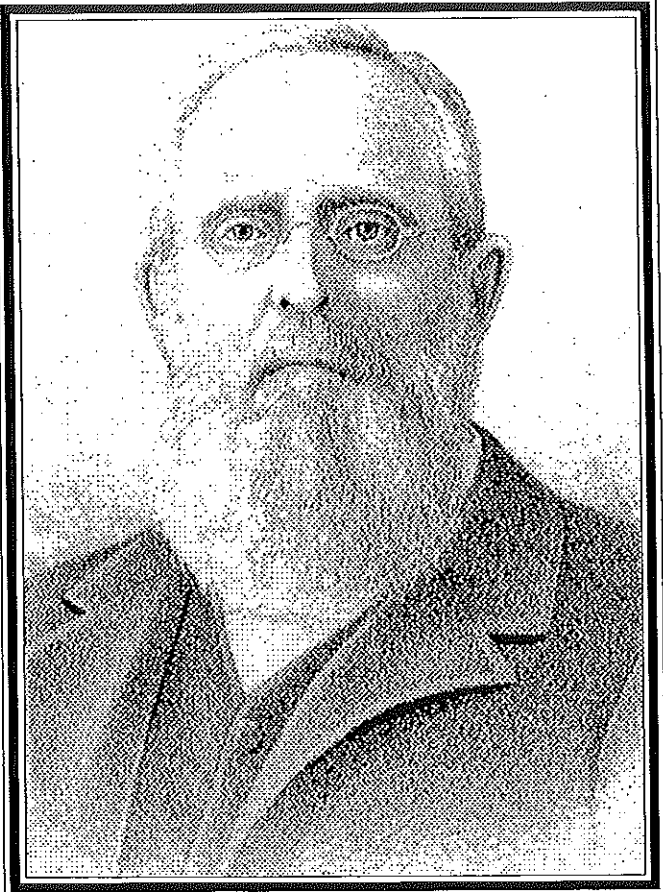
## AUSTIN MONTANA PUETT

**b. 1803**

**d. June 3, 1879**

**By Charles Davis**

Photo from 1881 Parke County History



Austin Montana Puett was a prominent man in the affairs of Parke County and Indiana. He resided there from the earliest days of the county until the Civil War, when he moved to Putnam county. Mr. Puett married a sister of Governor Joseph A. Wright, who regarded him as the faithful and efficient follower that he was. He was a leader in the practical work of every campaign, always fighting for the Democratic party, and he also filled various public offices - Sheriff, Treasurer, Canal Trustee and State Senator.

In connection with Austin M. Puett it will be of interest to know more about a family that from the very beginning of Parke County to the present day (1874) has always been prominent in the Democratic party. Among the early settlers to come to the Territory of Indiana was Coleman Puett, who moved with his family from North Carolina to Monroe County, Indiana, in 1815. At that time the country was alive with Indians and they were a source of terror to the women and children. Vincennes was their nearest town. Two or three years later his brother, Joseph M. Puett, moved to Monroe County.

About 1822 (another source says 1828), Coleman Puett moved from Monroe county to Parke County, bringing his wife, three sons and two daughters. The boys were Elisha, Johnson, and Alexander Puett.

Most of the Native Americans had moved west,

but Johnny Green was the last Indian in those parts to live the wild life in the woods. He was a frequent unwelcome visitor at the homes of the settlers. They changed his long unpronounceable name to Johnny Green. He told savage brutal stories and was ugly and ill-tempered when drunk, which caused people to fear him. He related his deeds of barbarous cruelties on defenseless women and children while the men were off fighting the war with the Indians. Once when visiting Coleman's home, he started telling a cruel story about creeping up on settler's cabins when the men were away, slipping the barrel of his gun through an open crack and shooting the women and children while standing before the fire "fleaing themselves." He told how they would fall into the fire when shot and then demonstrated how they kicked and flounced around in their dying agonies. Coleman Puett, having none of that, knocked him out and threw him on the floor. Johnny finally woke up, walked down the road to Hethco Pond and made a temporary shelter by a large tree in which he spent the night. The Puett family watched him through the night to make sure he did not attempt revenge for the blow Coleman had given him.

The next morning Johnny started for Sugar Creek followed by Coleman and his son Elisha, who were armed with their rifles. The following day they found Johnny fishing on a rock in Sugar Creek and Coleman shot and killed him.

Captain John C. Campbell, who was raised on Sugar Creek and who was familiar with the recent happenings, went to investigate. There was no doubt Coleman shot Johnny. His wife Judith, his son Alexander, and other family members had witnessed the attack by Coleman. This tragedy was later written by Coleman's grandson Shelby C. Puett as related to him by his father, grandmother and other old settlers.

Although most of Coleman's family remained in the Rockville area, Elisha Puett later went to Texas,

where he lived and died. He was in the Mexican war and in all the principal battles of General Scott's campaign. He and one son were killed in Texas by the Indians while carrying dispatches from one army post to another.

Johnson Puett married Patsy Noel. Their youngest son, Elisha A., lived at Long Beach, California. Johnson lived and died in Parke County.

Alexander Puett was one of the party of surveyors who laid out the State road from the Wabash River to Indianapolis. Shelby C. Puett and Mrs. Lucy Bates, his son and daughter, were residents of Rockville. Alexander lived and died in Parke County.

**GENEALOGY**

**Joseph Puett, brother of Coleman Puett, married Elizabeth Moore and they had 11 children:**

- Armstead W. Puett b. 1800
- Louisa Puett b. 1801
- \*Austrian (Austin) M. Puett b. 1803 in North Carolina d. June 3, 1879 in Greencastle, IN
- Esq. William Wesley Puett b. 1805
- Jesse Puett b. 1806
- Elisha Puett b. 1809
- Francis Puett b. 1812
- Joseph Puett b. 1815
- Amelia (Milly) Puett b. 1817
- Coleman Puett b. 1819 named for his uncle
- Nancy Puett b. 1821

**\*Austrian (Austin) M. Puett married Lucinda (Lucy) Puett, the daughter of Coleman Puett, his cousin on March 19, 1823 and they had eight children:**

- William Puett
- Austin Puett
- James Puett
- Louisa Puett Wilkerson
- Thomas Puett
- Coleman Puett
- Caroline Puett Darrach
- Albert Puett

Lucy Puett died in 1844 and was buried in Rockville Cemetery, Rockville, IN. Two years later Austin married Amy D., the sister of Joseph A. Wright, who served as the Governor of the State of Indiana from 1849-Jan. 12, 1857. Austin died June 3, 1879.

Beadle, J. H. History of Parke County, IN. Chicago: Hill & Iddings, 1880. A Biographical Directory of The Indiana General Assembly Vol. 1816-1899. Putnam Co. Will Record, Allen Co. Pub. Library Bk. 2 p. 301.

**AUSTIN M. PUETT**

Austin M. Puett, son of Coleman Puett's brother Joseph, was born in 1803 in North Carolina. He moved to Monroe county, Indiana with his parents and siblings. In 1820 he moved to Putnam county, Russell township near Portland mills. Later he moved to Parke county. He married Lucy, Coleman's oldest daughter, his cousin. There were 8 children named in his will: Coleman, William H., Caroline Darrach, Albert, Austin M., Louisa E. Wickerson, James W., and Thomas. He was a farmer, merchant, Democrat, and Baptist.

Austin was 2nd lieutenant in the 50th Regiment of the Indiana militia in 1830. He was the Parke county sheriff in 1833 (another source says he was appointed to fulfill the term of Sheriff of Parke county by the Commissioners in 1837 when Sheriff William Kilgore was drowned at the Armiesburg Mill Dam). He was the county treasurer 1834-1838. He served the following terms for Parke county in the Indiana Senate 1835-36, 1836-37, 1837-38 and for the Indiana House 1838-1839. Austin ran for the State Legislature in 1843 but was defeated by James Kerr. In 1844 Austin's wife died and was buried in Rockville Cemetery, Parke county. A year or two later he married Amy Wright, sister of Governor Wright.

A Biographical Directory of The Indiana General Assembly Vol. 1816-1899, p. 320

Austin was one of the founders of the Old School Baptist Church in Rockville that stood on the "Commons" located on the north corner of Erie and Ohio streets. This was the church that participated in "The Big Sleigh Ride and Its Wabash & Erie Canal Connections" article that I wrote for Indiana Canals winter 2002. Austin also built a saw mill on Williams (Billy) Creek in the early 1840s. This mill was on the east side of the creek and about 1/2 miles above the Judson road.

In the United States presidential election of 1844 when James K. Polk ran for president of the U.S. and

George M. Dallas ran for vice-president, Austin was one of the twelve Democratic electors from Indiana. In 1846 a company called the Parke County Volunteers was organized and held muster in the United States army when war with Mexico was declared. Jacob Oldshue was Captain; Austin M. Puett, 1st Lieutenant; Robert M. Gilkerson, Second Lieutenant. This company was enrolled among those on the waiting list by the Adjutant General of the State, but the war ended before they could be reached in the order of priority of organization.

Governor James Whitcomb appointed Austin a Trustee of the Wabash & Erie Canal. He first served with Charles Butler and Thomas H. Blake in 1848. The trustees changed from time to time. In 1850 he served with Charles Butler and Thomas Dowling. As trustee he participated in the following canal lettings in 1848:

- Forty miles of the Wabash & Erie Canal extending from Terre Haute to Point Commerce including one reservoir, a number of lift-locks, culverts, and rebuilding a portion of Eel river dam and the guard-lock located there
  - Seventeen miles of the canal from Port Commerce to Newberry including 6 lift-locks, one guard-lock, a dam across White river 12 feet in height and over 400 feet in length, and rock excavation at the Patoka Summit
  - Fifteen and a half miles of canal from Maysville to Petersburg including heavy earth work, the aqueduct over East Fork of White river 400 feet in length
- Source: Evansville Journal. 1848, 1850.

### The Trusteeship

Since Gov. Wright's appointment of Austin M. Puett, of this place, as Canal Trustee, the old line papers are exceedingly wordy and rapping His Excellency over the knuckles without mercy. For the purpose of showing how the appointment is received, we append the following from the Evansville Enquirer, a "real old line" paper:

"This appointment is justly regarded by the citizens of Evansville as little less than an insult to this city. We do not question the right of the Governor to appoint any person he chooses to fill the vacancy, but in view of the fact that our city feels perhaps a deeper interest in the success of the Canal than any other town in the State, we say justice required that the appointed should be a resident of this place, or a man identified with our interests and prosperity.

"There were three applicants for the office of Trustee from this city, Dr. George B. Walker, James Rouquett, and James G. Jones, Esqs. The two first the Governor could have no kind of objection to. Mr. Jones, in view of his politics might have been objectionable, though we are free to confess, we should have vastly preferred his appointment, to that of Austin M. Puett. — It cannot be denied that either

of these gentlemen would have made an active energetic and efficient Trustee. As much cannot be said of Mr. Puett. He has filled the office of Trustee before, and it is conceded that he was careless and incompetent. The only merit that he possesses consists in the fact that he is the brother-in-law of Governor Wright.

"Gov. Wright has enjoyed the confidence of the party to which he is attached in this part of Indiana, to an unlimited extent. — They have been forward to show him personal favorite at a time when he was appealing to them for their votes, but now, when he is not an applicant for any official position, he forgets those who were his friends. The Governor may aspire to a position of some kind in future, when his old friends in Evansville will certainly assist him all in their power — to mind his business."

This is tolerably forked, isn't it? But we suppose the aggrieved citizens of Evansville will have to "bore it." As to the charge of incompetency against Major Puett, we presume he is as well qualified as some Evansvillians. Whether competent or not, he has got the office, and they can't help it.

The Evansville Journal, (Republican) also speaks in rather bitter terms of the Governor, and seems to think that the Pocket City is the only town in Indiana. Hear it.

"Mr. Austin M. Puett, of Parke County, has been appointed by the Governor, Trustee of the Wabash and Erie Canal in place of Mr. Edmenson, deceased. What do our Old Line Democratic friends of Evansville, who have been getting up big petitions for the appointment of one of their party from this city, think of Mr. Puett's appointment for they may probably be consoled by the fact that this appointee is the brother-in-law of Gov. Wright. The Governor knew that by a right, Justice and decency, Evansville, that the donation of land was obtained which secured the building of the Canal from Terre Haute to Evansville.—He knew that our interest, in this connection, so long neglected so slighted, imperatively demanded a man on the Board, who would give some attention to the lowest section of the Canal, but to aid a begging relative, he has declined giving us this Trustee, and put a brother-in-law in office. We have said before, that Gov. Wright's professed interest for Evansville, was of that same demagogue nature of his professed interest for every place in which at any time he may happen to be—and the fact is illustrated. But his Democratic admirers have a bitter pill to swallow. As for giving the office to a "begging relative," the Governor had a right to give it to whom he pleased. But we opine from our knowledge of Puett's circumstances that the money in the mere office is not much of an object. The Major is like Auditor Dunn, he is in "about as comfortable circumstances as any old liner," that we know of.

In 1854, Austin served on the Rockville town board. I found this important article in the Rockville True Republican, Thursday, September 27, 1855, about his being appointed once again a canal trustee:

Evansville normally voted Democratic. Wright, a Democratic lawyer from Rockville, was elected Governor in 1849 and re-elected in 1852. His first term was for three years under the old Indiana constitution. However, in 1851 a new constitution went into affect. It provided for four year terms and limited service to two consecutive terms. Since he appointed Puett near the end of his second term and could not be re-elected Governor, Wright probably felt no compulsion to appoint a trustee from Evansville.

At some time Austin moved back to Putnam county, Indiana. On October 29, 1860 he was elected a royal arch captain in the Greencastle Chapter (Putnam county) of Royal Arch Masons. In 1861 he was elected a councilman for the 3rd Ward in Greencastle, IN. Austin served as a 1st sergeant in the 102nd Regiment for 8 days during the Civil War in 1863. He moved to Ohio and then back to Indiana. He served again in the Indiana House of Representatives in 1863 for Putnam County. In 1865 he unsuccessfully defended his seat in the House against Higgins Lane and was unseated on February 13, 1865.

Austin Montana Puett died in Greencastle on June 3, 1879. His will left all his property to Amy D. Puett in her lifetime. His children's names were listed in the will.

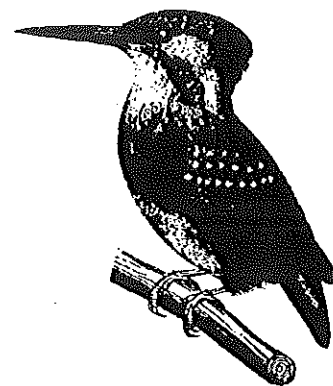
According to the Olive Branch, an early Rockville newspaper, "Wily Austin" was Austin M. Puett and he was referred to as "the braggart Austin"... "the hard-faced, oily-tongued, wily Austin," and tried to "fool the coons," but the "able reasoner." J. H. Beadle in his book tells of Austin as: "Among the earliest (Adams twp.) settlers who attained to prominence was Austin M. Puett, who died a year or two since. He was a man of very decided character, and his life was checkered with stirring scenes. He filled various stations of public responsibility - sheriff, treasurer, canal trustee and state senator."

Sources:

Beadle, J. H. 1881 Parke County History. Chicago: H.H. Hill.  
 Combined 1874 Atlas - 1908 Atlas.  
 Isaac Straus Centennial Memorial and Name Index of Parke County, Indiana.  
 Putnam County Will Record B. 2 p. 301.  
 Weik, Jesse W. History of Putnam County Indiana. Indianapolis, IN: B. F. Bowen & Co. 1910.

PARENTS CAME BY CANAL BOAT

The parents of Charles Stockbridge came to Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1842 by way of the newly-opened Wabash & Erie Canal and operated one of the first bookstores here. Charles was born in 1856. He helped his father sell books for a while and then became a letter carrier until his retirement at the age of 65. He lived at 2323 Webster Street in a white two-story frame house.



Charles Stockbridge was recognized so widely as an authority on birds that the northeastern chapter of the Audubon Society was named for him. He was friends with Amos Butler of Indianapolis and T. Gilbert Pearson of Washington D.C., both birders. He served as the president of the Fort Wayne Audubon Society for several years "during the period of the society's greatest activity" according to his obituary. He talked to many clubs, schools, and Boy Scouts about birds and sent migration reports to the state and national government for many years. After his retirement, he, along with his daughters, operated the Fort Wayne Baby Chick Hatchery until he died.

Over the years Charles amassed one of the finest bird collections in the state of Indiana. It was displayed at the public library in Fort Wayne, then moved to the Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society Museum, and then to Swinney Homestead, which sits on land where the grand celebration was held for the opening of the Wabash & Erie Canal from Lafayette, Indiana, to Toledo, Ohio. What is left of the collection is now at the Joseph Moore Museum at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana. When it was last received, the Wood Stork and a Northern Raven were still in good shape, but others were in a poor condition and without labels. Even though only a few of Stockbridge's specimens are on public display, Professor William Buskirk invites everyone to come visit the college's museum to see them.

In 1934 Charles Stockbridge died at the age of 78. Surviving him were Ada, his wife of 55 years; Alatheia and Mary, his two daughters; and Willard, his son. He was buried at Lindenwood Cemetery in Fort Wayne, in Section H, near where Pine Siskins and White-winged Cross-bills are often seen.

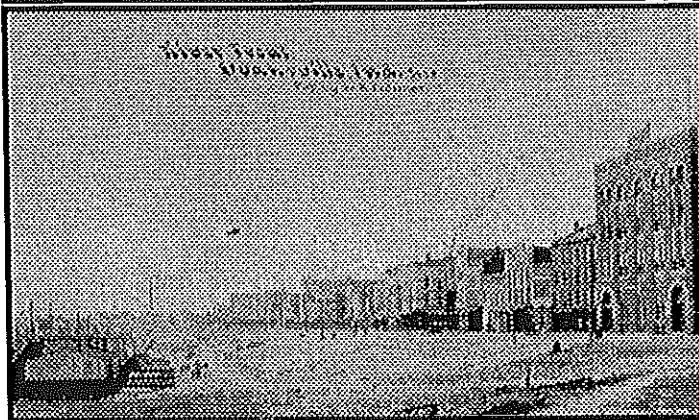
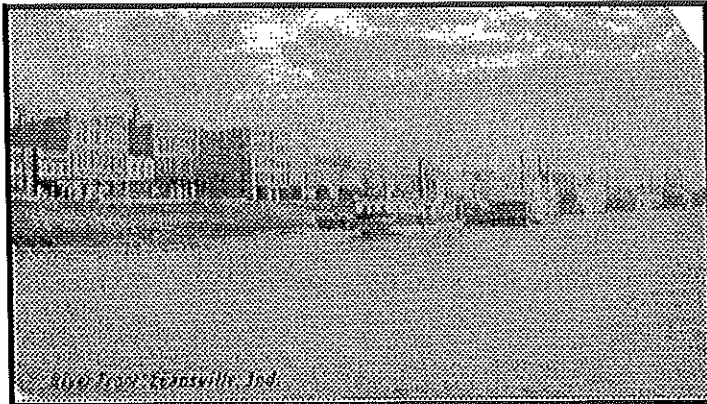


## UPS AND DOWNS OF CANALING

When one thinks of canals he visualizes locks raising and lowering boats along a manmade waterway. However, there is another up and down side to canals—the growth they brought to towns along their route and the impact on the communities with their decline. Frank M. Gilbert in Volume I of his History of the City of Evansville and Vanderburg(h) County Indiana published in Chicago by The Pioneer Publishing Company in 1910 relates the following, which is quoted in its entirety with spelling and paragraphs as it was published:

"On the 29<sup>th</sup> day of January, 1847, the governor of Indiana [James Whitcomb] approved an act of the State legislature, granting to the citizens of the town of Evansville, a city charter. Its mayor, the members of the first council and its officers chosen at an election held on the first Monday in April, 1847, were all men of distinction and recognized ability. Hon. James G. Jones, a distinguished lawyer and citizen, was selected as mayor. In the council, which met for the first time on April 12, 1847, there were L. L. Laycock, first ward; Silas Stephens, second ward; Willard Carpenter, third ward; M. Griffith, fourth ward; L. Howes, fifth ward; John Newson, sixth ward. The first officers of the city were: John J. Chandler, clerk; William Bell, assessor, collector and marshal; Samuel Orr, treasurer; James E. Blythe, attorney and Wm. M. Walker, surveyor. At the time of its charter as a city, the area covered by its corporate authority was about 280 acres. It had 4,000 souls within its limits; the valuation of its real estate, was \$901,324; and the amount of taxes assessed on this valuation was \$3,319.47, a sum adequate for the needs of the young city, though insignificant when compared with the annual expenses of today.

"Up to this period, notwithstanding Evansville had become the most important shipping point between Louisville and the mouth of the Ohio, a distance of 400 miles, very little wharf improvements had been made, other than the cutting of roads through the high and almost perpendicular banks to the landing places. But the constantly growing commerce and increased shipping interests made it necessary to construct a wharf commensurate, with the extensive business which was being established; and in March, 1848, the city entered into a contract with John Mitchell, Marcus Sherwood and Moses Ross, to grade the river bank and complete a wharf having a frontage on five square, a length of nearly 2,000 feet. This was considered a great and important step forward, in the commercial history of a place now dignified with municipal proportions and recognized by the important appellation of a city.



Evansville's river front is shown in these two postcards mailed in 1908 and 1909. From the postcard collection of Carolyn Schmidt

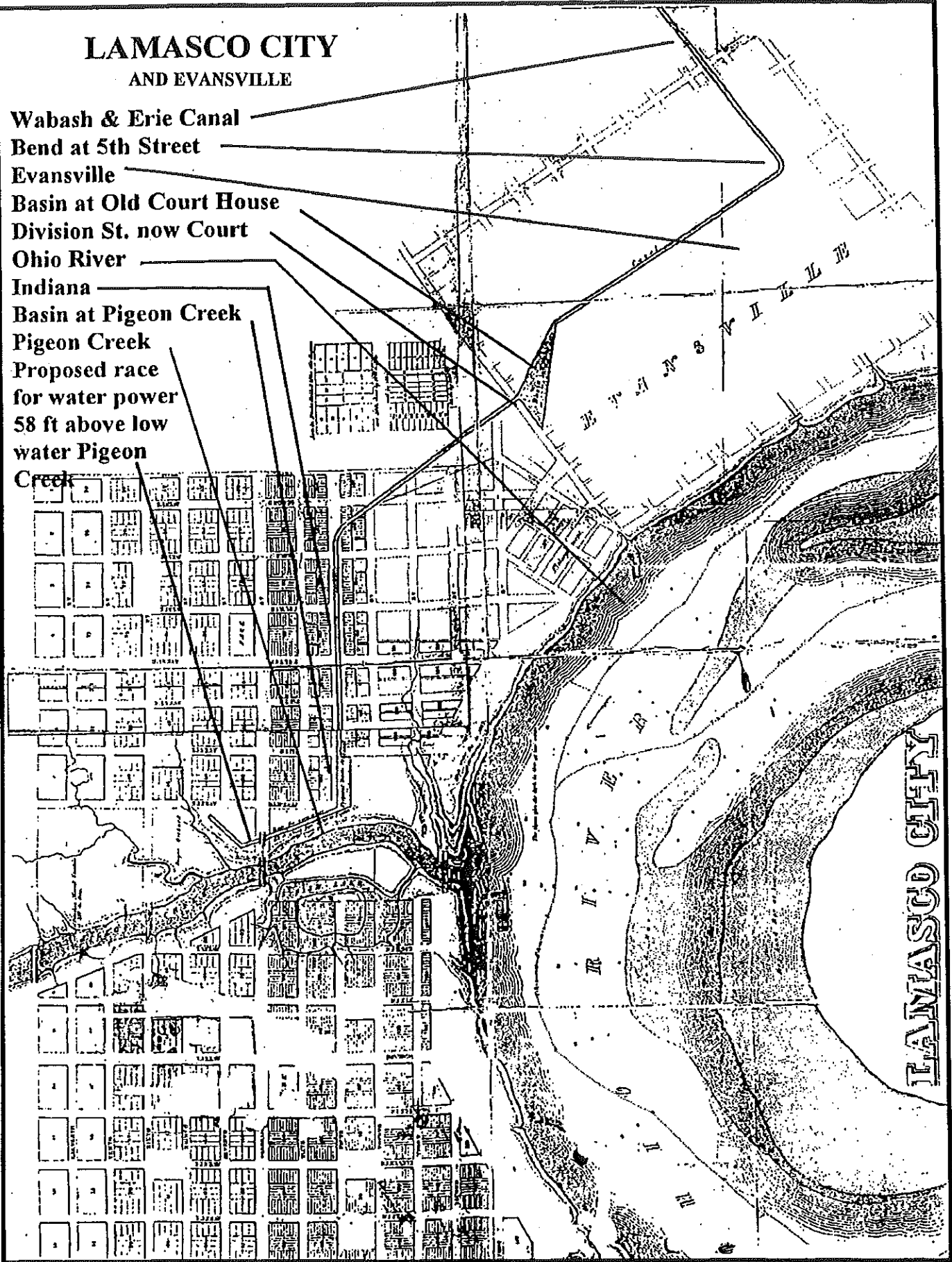
"About the first real step taken in the way of progress by the little city, was the building of a canal, the Wabash & Erie. [At the time it was the Central Canal, but later became a part of the Wabash and Erie Canal.] Many assumed that this canal was first talked of by Evansville along about the early '40s, but as a matter of fact, Congress first took up the idea in 1824, when it made a donation of public lands to the state of Indiana, for the purpose of building a canal from the Wabash river to the Maumee. As with many other matters of that kind, Congress, as it does in these days, allowed the matter to drag on until the year 1827, when it made another grant consisting of each alternate section of the public lands within five miles of the proposed line of the canal. This grant was accepted by the state.

"The idea was to begin on the Wabash near Lafayette and continue up the bank of that river to the mouth of Little river. Thence across that stream to its source. Thence to the junction of the St. Joseph's and St. Mary's at Ft. Wayne. From Ft. Wayne it descended to the town of Maumee. It was estimated that this would cost \$9,000 per mile, but the estimate was too low. There was more legislation until the year 1831, when

# LAMASCO CITY

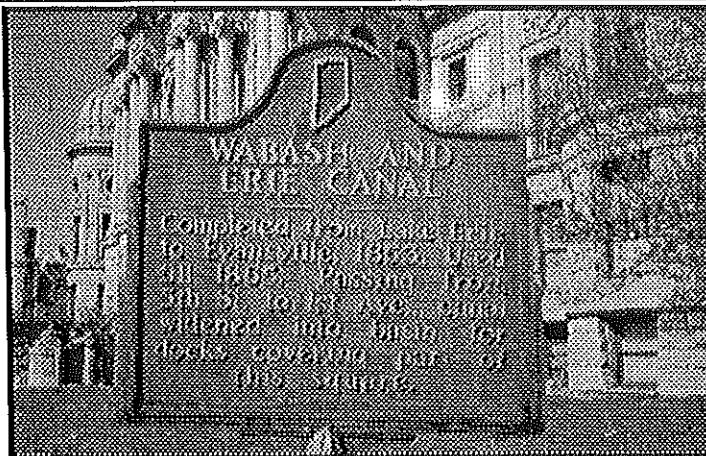
AND EVANSVILLE

- Wabash & Erie Canal
- Bend at 5th Street
- Evansville
- Basin at Old Court House
- Division St. now Court
- Ohio River
- Indiana
- Basin at Pigeon Creek
- Pigeon Creek
- Proposed race for water power 58 ft above low water Pigeon Creek



another plan was proposed to the north by way of Terre Haute. Finally still another proposition was put forward, construction of the Central canal, to strike this and come thence along the Wabash to Evansville. During all these years a great deal of time was wasted and so much money had been spent in making roads, clearing streams, etc., that the state became heavily in debt. In order to settle with its creditors who held its bonds and to complete the Wabash & Evansville canal, the acts of 1846 and 1847 were passed. The people of Evansville had almost given up all hope of ever being assisted by the canal system, which seemed to provide for the upper part of the state alone, but at this time they took fresh heart and realizing that with the canal Evansville would be the great outlet for the immense quantities of grain and produce of all kinds that came from the rich country above it, and feeling that is was the only natural outlet to the South, they can be excused for feeling that their first great step in the way of progression had begun.

"To make the great terminal at Evansville it was necessary to have a wide and deep basin and this part of the canal was always, during its existence, called the basin, from which loaded boats, as they came, could discharge their cargo. To do this the old graveyard between 3<sup>d</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> below Sycamore street, of which I have already spoken, was cleared away and a large basin was excavated. On the west side of this basin was a large dock which, by the way, was a favorite fishing place for many of our old citizens. A stock company, composed of enterprising business men of Evansville, was formed for the purpose of building canal boats and the best of workmen were brought here from the East. The first boat built by the company was called the Rowley and the second boat, the Evansville. All this time the canal was nothing but a huge ditch and one can imagine with what anxiety the people waited for the arrival of the water to fill it. When the news came that the water was actually coming, all the people of the city rushed to the banks and there was a day of great rejoicing. The first run on the boats was made as far as White river. There was much rivalry as to who would gain the honor of taking out the first boat. It was finally decided that Mason Newman, a very popular citizen, would lead off, so mounted on a mule, he had the honor of being the first one to start canal transportation from Evansville. A friend of the writer who says Mr. Newman on that occasion declared that he would not have swapped his place on the deck of that mule for a seat in the presidential chair. The canal-boat stock company was made up of the best and most substantial citizens of the little town. The first trip up the canal was quite eventful. The boats took no freight of course, as all freight came from above. But they kept open house and all the people were invited. Many took their guns and fishing tackle and indulges in a regular picnic and so plentiful was the game in the new country, through



This historical marker stands where the canal basin was located before it was filled in and the Evansville courthouse was erected. It reads:

WABASH AND ERIE CANAL

Completed from Lake Erie to Evansville, 1853. Passing from 5th St. to 1st Ave., canal widened into this basin for docks covering part of this square.

Photo by Bob Schmidt

which this canal ran, that they brought back quite a lot of deer and bear, to say nothing of smaller game.

"It was a sad thing for the little city that its first step along the lines of cheap transportation should prove such a failure. In those days the building of a railroad, even of the cheap kind which they had in those days, was looked on as an affair of great enormitude. Little did they think, those good old citizens, that in a few brief years this entire section of the country would be traversed by a perfect network of railroads. It was the old question of "getting there first." The average owner of produce was in a hurry to get his stuff to market and those of us who remember the speed of the old canal boats, with their mule power, can readily imagine that as soon as the railroads began operating, the canal was compelled to a back seat. Those who were far-seeing, readily made up their minds that the canal could only be of short existence and even in those days it was said that some day a railroad would run along its bed. This is the case, as the present Straight Line runs along it. This canal property neither in this section or in the north, ever paid one penny to the projectors. Of course all of them had bonds, but they had no real value. About the only thing that interested any one was to get hold of the lands that had been deeded by the state and in many cases these were bought for a mere song and today they are some of the finest farming lands in the world. Many of these sales were spurious and the titles were very vague and this led to endless litigations. As late as the year 1871 Mr. John Shanklin, one of our best citizens, brought suit to recover a tract that he had donated to the canal under certain provisions. This suit was lost, as was also the suit of Mr. Collett of Terre Haute, who for many

years though to gain a large body of this land. In order to located this canal thoroughly, it might be stated that it came in a straight line from the north past what was known as Hulls hill and turned abruptly just above the Mulberry street schoolhouse. From thence it went down fifth street to the basin upon which a part of the new court house now stands, then making another turn and ending at the bank of Pigeon Creek, for it was here that the holders proposed to get rid of all overflow necessary. One by one the old canal boats ceased being used and were left a various points along the canal or broken up and their timbers used in the construction of flat boats and other boats to be used in the Ohio river, until finally nothing remained except a few old wrecks. Water in the canal remained from 1838 to 1859 when, as per legal report, 'The same ceased to be used as a canal and was wholly abandoned for that purpose.' As there was no more water feed from the sources of the canal, it soon began to dry up and became a series of mud holes. Below Main street especially was this the case, and it was finally decided by the citizens to fill it up and turn it into a street. Really, the old canal was of no use to any one. At the corner of Locust and the canal, the first mill stood, and was built by Igleheart, and the water to run their mill was taken from the canal. At the corner of Main a livery stable used the water for washing buggies and for their stock. In the lower part of the city a brewery used the water and all along the line the people watered their stock, so that really these few were the only ones who suffered in the least from the filling up of the canal. While the canal story is a sad one, there were many pleasant features about it. It seems that in the old days the winters were more severe and during the winter season there was hardly a time that there was not

skating along the canal. I have seen it lined with people almost everywhere within the city limits while those of the boys who lived in the lower part of the city and went to what was then the Canal street schoolhouse, always skated up and back instead of walking. Again, the fishing was always good. There were many skiffs in it. It was so shallow that there was no danger, so that the young people of that day who are now in the sere and yellow leaf, will always have a warm spot in their memories for the old canal."

The city of Evansville as seen in this history was not as harshly impacted as other towns along the canal route. Investors lost money and the canal became a problem with stagnation until it was filled in, but the heavy trade on the Ohio River carried the city through the hard times with the closing of the canal. Smaller towns northeast of Evansville such as Smyrna, Millersburg, Port Gibson, Francisco, Dongola and Petersburg experienced growth and then fell as did many other town along it.

Smyrna was platted in Vanderburgh county about when canal construction was announced. Canal, First, Second, Third and Fourth streets ran east-west and Jefferson, Van Buren, Washington and Pearl ran north-south. The canal, located at the south edge of town, was supposed to have lifted the place to greatness, but the town was abandoned with the decay of the waterway.

At Millersburgh (aka Canal) the Pigeon Creek covered bridge was razed in 1951 and the school closed in 1965. Elmer Brown's (CSI) family was the last to leave in 1983. Today Millersburgh has been obliterated by the Peabody Coal Company for its strip mining operation.

**CONTRACTS ON THE SOUTHERN DIVISION OF THE CENTRAL CANAL**

Section # & Contractor		
1. John G. Freeman	12. William Walker	29. "
2. "	13. "	30. "
3. "	14. Henry Ryne	31. "
4. Jas. Price	15. "	32. "
5. "	16. Rowley & Sherwood	33. "
6. Murphy & Allen	17. "	34. "
7. Rowley & Sherwood	18. Osborn & Castle	35. "
8. "	19. "	36. David A Beeson
9. "	20. Wines & Osborn	37. "
10. "	21. Barcus & Mudge	38. "
11. Perkins & Allen	22. "	Pigeon Creek Dam Barcus & Mudge
	23. "	Lamasco Branch or Mill Race
	24. Wines & Osborn	1. Rowley & Gifford
	25. David A Beeson	2. "
	25. Barcus & Mudge	3. James B McCall
	26. "	
	27. "	
	28. "	