

CURRENTS

WINTER 2008 NEWSLETTER

Published quarterly by Wabash & Erie Canal Inc. for its members and friends

18th Annual "Christmas at the Canal"

For the 18th year, Old Fashioned Christmas at the Canal will be celebrated at Canal Park this December. If you and your family have not yet attended, isn't it time that you came and enjoyed the crafts, the pioneer buildings, the Reed Case House and the apple dumplings fresh out of the oven?

Dates to put on your calendar: **Saturday, December 13 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Sunday December 14 from 12 noon to 4:00 p.m.** All buildings will be open during those hours.

A brief history lesson: *The first public celebration of the Christmas season at Canal Park was in 1991. It consisted of a two-hour open house on a Sunday afternoon. Shingle making, blacksmithing, spinning and cornmeal grinding (and "mush") were demonstrated, and there was old-time fiddling and singing. Weather permitting, ice skating on the canal was offered. The Kuns and Bowen log cabins were open, and there was open hearth cooking in the Bowen cabin. Two new buildings --the Fur Trader's cabin and the blacksmith's shop -- were dedicated. Spirits were high as we huddled close to the fireplace or stove in the unheated cabins.*



Today's Christmas at the Canal has expanded from the pioneer village area to the Reed Case House and the Canal Center. The number and variety of crafters and artisans has increased to include an alpaca display, pottery, decorated gourds, soaps, stained glass, hand-made jewelry, home-made candies, water color note cards, wooden toys and other wood crafts. Booths will be set up in the Canal Center where Christmas cookies also will be available for your holiday entertaining.



Kathy McGraw will entertain in the Case House at Christmas

The Bowen cabin also has an abundance of hand-made items that will help you with your holiday shopping for one-of-a-kind gifts. In 1991 the Case House was unfit for tours. Now it welcomes visitors to see its many furnished rooms and invites you to enjoy punch and cookies and Victorian music by Kathy McGraw during your tour. The log school house and blacksmith shop will be open as well. A certain "gentleman in red" will appear each afternoon to delight the children.



Canal volunteers made 1,610 apple dumplings for sale frozen or hot out of the oven for Christmas Festival

To top off your visit, order a hot apple dumpling with ice cream and coffee at the Canal Center. Let the children play on the Playground Canal Boat – newly reconstructed following a destructive fire. Enjoy a ride in the pony cart, or take a walk on the trails. Then warm up with a hot apple dumpling in the Canal Center. And pick up individually frozen dumplings at \$2.25 each for baking at home.



More Benches Added to Canal Park and Trails

Lyndell Hawkins, of Lafayette, has contributed funds for two commemorative benches. One will honor the memory of Russell and Fern Hawkins. The second one is in memory of her parents Marcus and Ella Criswell. The benches will be marked appropriately.

A thoughtful gesture came from Richard and Marguerite Wiebusch, of Burlington, who are sponsoring a bench for Canal Park "In honor of all the Volunteers." Thank you!

Benches are available for sponsorship at \$150 each and are appreciated by our visitors.

Historic Lime Kiln Finds a Place Along Canal

In the canal era nearly two dozen lime kilns were in place in the Delphi area, burning limestone to a powder to make plaster, mortar and whitewash. One such kiln – a very large example of the stone structures – has been donated to the Canal Association by U.S. Aggregates. In November it was dismantled and moved from Limestone Company land to a site along the upper trails near where such kilns were known to exist. We owe the Limestone Company a big thank you for this special gift as well as many other gestures of kindness and cooperation, including gifts of land, water and stone..

The rebuilt kiln will serve as an example of a prosperous local business of the 1800s. Delphi's lime was much in demand because of its high quality and whiteness. It was loaded from the kilns onto canal boats for shipping to distant destinations. This type of lime production ceased here in 1917.



Helping direct the disassembly was Rich Markins (left), a retired mason from Valparaiso and Roy Patrick. Rich has come to work with our volunteer crew and help with similar projects in the past. We are grateful for his expertise and guidance.

For fuel, logs were harvested from surrounding land being cleared for farming. Hubbard & Harley were brothers-in-law who began in 1857 operating six “pot kilns” along the canal close to the Red Bridge at the Canal Annex Park. Ruins are still visible. The location is on the National Register of Historic Sites. These earlier kilns were not very efficient because they were not capable of being loaded with fuel day and night. New kilns of the 1870s and 1880s could receive continuous feeding of wood fuel and fist-sized lumps of quarried limestone. By this time the canal fell out of favor and the lime products started to be shipped by rail. Much of it went to Chicago to rebuild after the great fire.

Susan Feller Books Find a New Home

The estate of the late Susan Feller, one of our most active volunteers at the Canal Center who passed away last year, bequeathed several rare books to the Canal Association. Among them were 15 antique agricultural books from the 1800s which were important volumes that our Archives Committee determined were outside the area of our specialized focus on Midwestern canals and the canal era in general.

They were offered to Purdue University and were accepted for the Purdue University Library, Archives and Special Collections. Purdue expressed pleasure in receiving them and will provide recognition of Susan and the Wabash & Erie Canal Association for the donation. The books are in excellent condition, very rare and not available in other collections.

“The Archives Committee felt it was important to preserve and protect the books where they might be used by students and scholars of agricultural history,” David Kelly, Archives Committee volunteer said. Two of Susan’s books that were deemed appropriate for our collection were kept for our own archives collection.



Susan Feller (far right) was instrumental in helping secure many valuable historic items like this loom from Conner Prairie

We Welcome New Volunteers

Once or twice a year we schedule a Volunteer Call-out to give anyone interested in working with our varied projects a chance to find the right niche as a Canal Association volunteer. The latest Volunteer Call-out in November was attended by nearly 30 new applicants.

Some of the most popular jobs were as docents and hosts at the Interpretive Museum and Case House. The roles of docent and guide for trips on the canal boat that will be delivered next summer also were popular selections. Re-enactors also are needed as well as captains and crew for the canal boat. There is much archival work to be done. And volunteers are always needed for construction work, painting, and maintenance of Canal Park buildings and the many trails.

One of the most rewarding volunteer jobs is working with the children who come to learn about the canal. Dozens of tours are scheduled in the spring and fall of the year, especially for fourth grade classes as they study Indiana history.

Any time is a GOOD time to become a Canal Volunteer! Come to the Canal Center to sign up or call 765-564-2870 or 765-412-4308.

Playground Boat Rebuilt and Named

In honor of the many volunteers who originally built, then rebuilt the Playground Canal Boat, the Board of Directors has officially voted to name the boat "The Volunteer." The name will be painted on the boat soon.

We are deeply indebted to Richard Funkhouser, of West Lafayette, a descendant of a pioneer family who arrived in Carroll County on the Wabash & Erie Canal in 1850, for sponsoring the playground Canal Boat as a part of our Total Canal Experience campaign. Descendants of his great-great grandparents still reside in this area. He has shared the detailed history of the family with us and with the Carroll Co. Historical Museum.

Word spread quickly on Labor Day weekend that someone had set fire to the Playground Canal Boat. About half the structure was destroyed. Immediately word went out from President Dan McCain that we would rebuild. Donations came in quickly to help purchase materials. Our volunteer crew dropped other projects to clear away the burned debris and start the rebuilding. Soon additional volunteers appeared, ready for work. Some construction workers came on their days off.



Professional painters volunteered their skills. Some women came to help hand up tools and run errands for workers.

A kindergarten class at Camden Early Childhood Center raised money by selling popcorn. One member of the class gave the money she had saved for a special American Girl doll. Upon hearing of her sacrifice, a donor came to the school to present the money she would need to get her cherished doll.

Church groups and others brought coffee and donuts or other refreshments to the work crew. Businesses donated supplies or offered discounts. It is impossible to name all of the acts of kindness that came our way.

A huge **THANK YOU** to everyone who helped in any way and to the many who expressed dismay at the tragedy and offered their sympathy.

The boat is ready once again for the children's enjoyment. The perpetrator has been apprehended and will be dealt with in the courts at a December trial.

Kerlin Family and Business Recognized

For several years it was hoped that a large sign rescued from the former Kerlin Grain Elevator business could be used some place in Canal Park. The business was a landmark and was situated along a former side slip that brought passengers and goods from the canal to the foot of Main Street.

Since the sign is not in good condition, the Board of Directors voted to have a new sign made recognizing the Kerlin business and honoring the memory of William and Evelyn Kerlin, who left to the Canal Association one of the largest bequest it has received. They had been life members of the Canal Association since 1994. The sign will say C. M. Kerlin Elevator and will be placed on the north end façade of the Canal Center. A smaller "Office" sign will hang above the doorway depicted there.

Naming the Canal Association as a beneficiary is an excellent way to see that a portion of your estate is used in the manner you wish. Such gifts are tax deductible to your estate.

Halloween Party a Big Success

Attendance was very good at the Halloween party at Canal Park the evening of October 31. It was a joint effort of the Canal Association, the Delphi Methodist Church and Chamber of Commerce. The church leaders had many clever games to keep the 250 youngsters entertained, and lots of hot dogs were served. Bill Draper conducted a hay ride and Richard Newell donated straw. Brian Stirm brought the trolley for rides during the party.



What's Happening at the Canal

- Another bed in the Reed Case House is ready for roping. It had formerly been converted for use with slats. Gordon Stevens re-fitted it with pegs. Now we need someone to do the roping! Call the Canal Center at 765-564-2870 or 765-447-3359.
- The Children's Bedroom also needs comforters or quilts and feather pillows for two beds.
- A video of our School Master, Wally Dolan, conducting class at the log school house, has been completed and is available for viewing.
- The Earth Team reports that 123 volunteers have put in 6,500-plus hours of work the past year! It's work like this that keeps our grounds and buildings in shape.
- Several preservationists have expressed interest in saving the Burris House at Lockport. This structure once served as an inn for canal travelers.
- Volunteers processed 18 bushels of apples and made 1,610 apple dumplings in October. The dumplings are frozen in individual containers and can be purchased for \$2.25 each for baking at home. Or come to our Christmas open house to have some fresh from the oven.
- Remember, you can rent the Canal Center for your party, reunion, wedding reception or business meeting. Call Mary at 765-564-2870 or 765-564-4661.
- **We continue to seek donations to our Total Canal Experience campaign to raise the additional funds needed for the replica canal boat and the many exhibits and interpretive panels planned along the canal. These exhibits and marked historic sites, when completed, can be viewed either from the trails or from the canal itself while riding on the boat! You may use the form above to make a gift to the campaign.**

Visit our web site ~ www.wabashanderiecanal.org