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NEWS FROM THE WABASH & ERIE CANAL • DELPHI, INDIANA
February 2023



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**Volunteer Highlight:
Tom Castaldi**

Each month, we want to highlight one of our many volunteers in recognition of their service and to share

Investigating Canal Mysteries



One amazing part of Wabash & Erie Canal history is how much remains to be discovered. Of course, we know the route of the canal, and we know about the main canal structures thanks to surveys from the Canal Era. However, due to factors like

ways that you can get involved in our mission of preservation, education, and recreation.

This month, we'll hear from Tom Castaldi.



What is your volunteer role at the Canal?

I chair the Archives Committee, and we are always looking for more members to join! We have such good people on the Archive Committee who know the area and know the people here in Delphi.

I helped organize the Archives, and from the beginning our committee included members who worked for historical organizations and offered us priceless advice and guidance. We made field trips to organizations such as the Indiana Historical Society, the Indiana State Museum, and Conner Prairie--to name a few--to learn best practices. With provenance, getting approvals from donors, there are legal ramifications to "collect history" correctly!

environmental changes, 150 years gone by, and new ownership and construction, some of the precise details are still open to interpretation!

We experienced one such mystery last week at the former site of the Wildcat Creek Dam, located near the present-day intersection of I-65 and State Road 25 in Lafayette. Ed Geswein, owner of a beautiful property on the west side of the creek, invited members of Carroll County Wabash & Erie Canal, Inc. to interpret the site in an effort to discover: what exactly did this area look like when the canal was operational?

To start with what we know: there was a dam at the Wildcat Creek that created a large slackwater (like a man-made lake), plus there were guard locks and support structures. This afforded canal boats a peaceful section of water to cross through the Wildcat Creek. We also can see a massive remnant of a stone abutment for what was likely the crossing point (pictured below). The canal channel is also evident on the west side of the creek, making a line towards downtown Lafayette.



If we can see these remnants, what is left to figure out? Well, quite a bit! Since we do not have any existing images of the site from the Canal Era, it is difficult to tell exactly where the dam structure was situated, what the crossing bridge looked like, and how the canal channel and towpath transitioned into and out of the creek. As an added layer of complexity, the Wildcat Creek is very active and shifts over time!

How many years have you been volunteering, and how did you get involved?

The Canal is a subject that has grabbed me ever since I was a little kid. And in the 1970's I spent time on Roseland McCain's back porch, early in the canal project in Delphi. And I thought, "This seems interesting, I'd better latch onto this, these people know what they're doing!"

My most precious connection was back when Dan McCain and I were working to build the State Museum in Indianapolis. I ended up president of the State Museum Foundation, and by golly we had a good group. We learned a lot from the project, and we used that knowledge to develop the Wabash & Erie Canal Interpretive Center in Delphi.

My proudest moment was working with Dan, Terry Lacy, and others to write the script and do the research for the exhibits. And it has held up pretty well. Nobody has attacked me too much for any mistakes yet!



What is your favorite part of volunteering at the Canal?

It's always been people for me, I just enjoy people. My mom said that when I was five



Above you can see another interesting feature: huge metal bolts that are anchored into the earth alongside the creek, several hundred yards downstream from the large stone abutment. How exactly do these figure into the canal's crossing? Apart from doing an all-out archaeological inspection of the area, our best bet is to use existing documents and comparable crossings to piece together the mystery! We are grateful to Mr. Geswein for affording the opportunity to research deeper into this scenic and historic site.

months old, the salesmen all loved to come see me because I was smiling at everybody. And I just never left that position! I like people, and I like to help people know stuff.

Do you have a favorite Canal Era fun fact?

When the Wabash & Erie Canal was completed, it had crossed the subcontinental divide between Allen and Huntington Counties, thus offering a critical connection between the Gulf of Mexico, the Hudson River, and the Saint Lawrence River.

We need new participants to keep the Archives Department going! If you would like more information, we can get you connected. Click the link below for more information about volunteering with us.

VOLUNTEER **TODAY!**

2023 Event Calendar



2023 Event Schedule

Events & Festivals

May 6	Village & Trails Spring Cleanup Day	9-12pm
May 20	Canal Season Opening Day	9-4pm
June 10	Visit Pioneer Village Crafters & Donors	9-4pm
July 1	Canal Open Festival	10-4pm
Aug 12	Kids' Fun Day in the Pioneer Village	9-4pm
Sept 8	Canal Season Closing Day	9-4pm
Oct 17	Wabash & Erie Canal Annual Meeting	7pm
Oct 21	Village & Trails Fall Cleanup Day	9-12pm
Nov 4	Take the Trails Day in the Park	9-4pm
Dec 2	Christmas at the Canal Festival	10-4pm
Dec 24	Day After Christmas Walk guided tour	1pm

Saturdays May 20 through Sept 9

Canal Boat Rides 1:30 & 2:30pm*
Pioneer Village Crafters & Donors 9-4pm
Interpretive Museum* Reed Case House Tours* Kids Canal Playbook

1830 N. Washington St. Delphi, IN 46122
Closed January, February, Easter, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day
*Visit www.wabashanderiecanal.org or call 765-564-2870 for details

Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok

There are not a lot of public events happening at the Canal right now, but you can still get excited for the new



Above, the team discusses theories and pores over historic maps. From left to right, they are Tom Castaldi (author and Allen County Historian), David McCain, Jack Korty (author and historian), Ed Geswein, and Dan McCain. When it comes to our mission of preservation, education, and recreation, it is a treat to get "hands on" and research the canal out in the field.

The Canal Society of Indiana has created a terrific [Google Maps resource](#) where you can trace the route of the Wabash & Erie Canal and its structures county-by-county. The map represents estimates as to precise locations, but there is always new canal history to be uncovered!

A Doll Tale

season coming your way this year



We invite you to [visit the Events page on our website](#) to check out the 2023 calendar. There will be plenty of things to do, and Canal Season will be extended by **two weeks** this summer! That's right: every Saturday afternoon from May 20 through September 9, you can ride *The Delphi*, tour the museum and Reed Case House, and visit the Pioneer Village.



Additionally, we will still host other favorites such as Canal Days, Christmas at the Canal, and other monthly specials. We look forward to seeing you at the Canal this year!



As Rosie Wilson pointed out last month, it is delightful to see the artifacts that are donated to the Carroll County Wabash & Erie Canal, Inc. Archives. These items often help us experience the human side of history, like the doll we received last fall (pictured above) from Carmen Slavens.

This doll was made in Germany in the 1880's, and she is in wonderful condition for being 140 years old! Her eyes still open and close, and she gives us a glimpse of how children of the 19th century shared a bond with their toys, just like children today.

This doll came to live with 10-year-old Lois "Muriel" Henderson in 1900 (pictured below), and was later passed through the family and lovingly kept in excellent condition. Thanks to Peter Cooper for colorizing the original photo!



Now Hiring!

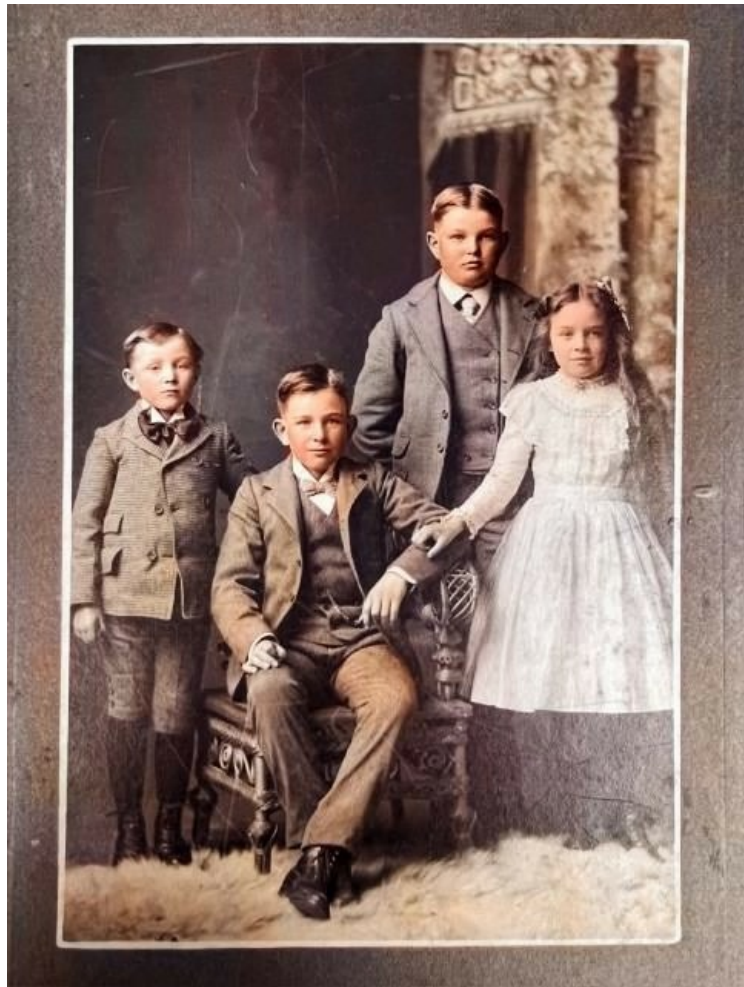
We are looking for individuals interested in a flexible, part-time job as one of our Event Monitors.

If you have weekend and evening availability, enjoy meeting new people and making them feel welcome, you may be a great fit!



We are searching for ambassadors to assist guests who are using the Conference Center for their special events and meetings. It would involve opening and closing the Interpretive Center for events, as well as a working knowledge of the facilities and its resources. Training is provided for all aspects of the work.

This role also includes helping look after the building as events come through.



Today, you can read the full backstory and see Dolly and the original photograph when you visit the Reed Case House in Canal Park. This is a crucial part of what we do: preserve and share the stories of the past in order to appreciate where we are! While Dolly might not tell us about things like canal structures, she certainly helps us glimpse the lifestyle of families and children that lived, worked, and grew up during the 19th century.

If you would like to join the Archives Committee, get in touch with us today by emailing: director@canalcenter.org or call our office: (765) 564-2870.

Major Water Upgrade

This role only involves monitoring events that fit your schedule, and you would be free to opt-in just for events that are convenient to you.

For more information, please email director@canalcenter.org.

A Canal Trailblazer



In 1880, James Hinton (pictured above) became the first African-American to be elected into statewide office in Indiana, but did you know he also had groundbreaking ties to the Wabash & Erie Canal?

He was born in North Carolina to free parents in 1834, but his family moved to Terre Haute in 1848. He eventually worked as a barber and a teacher, moving to Indianapolis in 1862.

At the start of the Civil War, African-Americans were not allowed to serve in the military in Indiana, so Hinton volunteered for the Massachusetts 54th and 55th United States Colored Regiments as a recruiter.

Even after the Civil War, Black residents could not vote



If you have been to Delphi in the past month, you may have noticed that the water levels in our restored portion of the Canal were much lower than usual. You may also know that the water we receive is pumped to us from the neighboring quarry operated by U.S. Aggregates. On an average day, we are gifted with three million gallons of clean water that keep the Canal filled and picturesque, but unfortunately some of the pipe infrastructure was in need of repair.

U.S. Aggregates was kind enough to fund the replacement of the entire pipeline with a newer, more durable material. They completed the work in such an efficient manner that our trails remained accessible to the public throughout the process. And today we are once again receiving water via the newly-installed system.



We are grateful for the partnership and support of U.S. Aggregates, because this is not something they do out of obligation--they do it to protect community and cultural assets! They are also committed to education, and their field trips at the quarry help students get acquainted with the resources and land that we call home.

in local, state, or national elections, nor could they send their children to public schools.

Nevertheless, Hinton persevered and went on to work in outreach and promotion for the Republican Party in Indiana and other states. As part of this work, he used his powerful oratory skills to pursue education rights for Black children and adequate public funding for the needed teachers and schools.

In 1874, he was appointed Trustee of the Wabash & Erie Canal, becoming the first African-American to hold a statewide office in the Hoosier State. As the Canal closed, there was much work to be done indeed.

When Hinton won his historic election to the General Assembly in 1880, the *Indianapolis Leader* wrote, "Thirty years ago, the Indiana Legislature was engaged in concocting brutal laws to prevent the entrance of colored people into this state. Now a member of the race then proscribed, is a member of the legislature. Time sets all things right."



The bust pictured above is in

Next time you are at Canal Park, feel free to stop by the renovated Tumble (what we call the point where the water comes in), located at the far north end of our portion of the Canal.

Photo Album Flashback



This month, we were pleased to find a photo album from founding member Roseland McCain with photographs dating back to the early 1970's. Let's take a quick look at some of the things we found! *Above: volunteers work on the terrain along the bank of the Canal.*



Above: this was the view in 1972 from the approximate present-day vantage point of the Red Bridge.

the Indiana Statehouse today, commemorating the work and life of James Hinton. We are glad to celebrate the progress and change that his work achieved from humble beginnings to the Canal to the Statehouse.

Did you know...?



You can hold your wedding, corporate meeting, or birthday celebration at the Canal Center?



We offer a variety of options for each different type of event. We offer free wifi and can accommodate up to 300 guests!

Save your date today!



For a complete list of activities please visit us at www.wabashanderiecanal.org



Above: this view towards the Stone Arch Bridge looks much more swamp-like than the present-day appearance!



Above: (left to right) Millie Waymire, Nicki McCain, Dan McCain, and Roseland McCain enjoy a canal-themed boat ride on the Madam Carroll, October 23, 1979.

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Above: the Reed Case House slowly makes its way across the Washington Street railroad crossing on its way to Canal Park in the 1980's.

We hope a glimpse of these early days help illustrate how instrumental the community and volunteers have been to build a beautiful space that all can experience, learn from, and enjoy.

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