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## NEWS FROM THE WABASH & ERIE CANAL • DELPHI, INDIANA March 2024



[www.wabashanderiecanal.org](http://www.wabashanderiecanal.org)

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## Help Us Get a Mower!

When you visit Wabash & Erie Canal Park, you'll notice the absence of several

## Bridges to the Future

*Dan McCain, President Emeritus, shares about the bridges saved by Wabash & Erie Canal Park*



For over two decades, volunteer efforts have brought unique outdoor beauty and utility to the Delphi Historic Trails.

Volunteers and grants have been extremely valuable to the efforts by the nonprofit Canal Association to rehabilitate three historic iron bridges that now serve as trail crossings over the historic Wabash & Erie Canal in Delphi.

Beginning in 1998, an effort to acquire the Red Bridge began when we needed a footbridge across the upper north end above Washington Street. Finding this 1873 wrought iron relic abandoned by the County on the Wilmer Hodges farm near

features.



There are no entrance gates to block visitors.

There are no admission kiosks to charge an entry fee to the park.

There is no centralized entry point. We welcome visitors from many spots throughout the park and trails, whether by foot, bicycle, car, or canal boat!



Many guests assume we are a public park, funded by tax dollars, like the rest of Delphi's beautiful parks. We consider this a badge of honor as we provide accessible recreation and education opportunities to **all** who visit.



All things considered, we are able to steward about 60 acres of land on a very efficient budget. However, sometimes we are faced with special expenses, and **we are inviting**

Camden provided a compelling challenge to our eager volunteer crew.



Learning a how to deal with properties of wrought iron versus today's predominant use of steel proved a learning experience and involved a professional blacksmith teaching us how to repair the 80-foot span. After total disassembly (there were more than 3,000 individual parts including 1,000 bolts). The blacksmith taught us how to repair and reuse 95 percent of those century old parts.

Painting the bridge red was important because that was the favored color for Carroll County bridges in that early period. Many of those early bridges replaced "ford crossings" where a horse and buggy literally swam across the creek. The span was reassembled and placed over the canal in 1999 and remains today as the beautiful arched structure enjoyed by all that hike across it.

The second bridge was a Stearns Truss from near Winamac in Pulaski County. It was used initially as an inroad to the vast marshlands being drained in the late 1800s. It was actually manufactured to be moved as the dredging was extended. In fact, the bridge was moved once before we brought it here.

**you to help** if you can!



We have squeezed the last ounce of life from our trusty lawnmower, and we are looking to purchase a new one to keep Canal Park looking its best for many years to come.

After a lot of homework, we're looking to purchase a SCAG Tiger Cat II, and the price tag is about \$12,000.

We have been able to secure a nonprofit discount on this unit, and if you're willing to chip in we would gladly welcome the help!

Donations [may be made electronically at this link](#), or you can mail a check to Canal Park, 1030 N. Washington Street, Delphi, IN 46923. On your check, please write "mower" on the memo line so it can be sorted accordingly.



As the weather warms up and we see more and more families visiting, your support will help us provide a beautiful space for all to enjoy an Indiana history experience!

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Our volunteers were able to acquire this lightweight bridge from Pulaski County as it would be destroyed by spring dredging if it weren't removed and saved. A crane contractor was available to lift the structure off onto the field and the M-W-F crew was able to fully disassemble and bring the sections back to Delphi for rehabilitation. Again a metal restoration expert from a Michigan college came as a volunteer and guided our efforts to rehabilitate this one of a kind structure remaining in the US.

This Blue Bridge became a symbol of safety in crossing the canal trail behind Dairy Queen and Pizza Hut. It was dedicated in 2007 and has already received a new wood deck with help from youth from Camp Tecumseh.

The third bridge, called the Gray Bridge, was obtained from an Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) listing of available structures being replaced statewide by counties and was obtained at no cost delivered here. There was a catch: we had to find the monetary resources to do the restoration, painting and installation over the waterway. Again the volunteers came to our rescue.

## VOLUNTEER TODAY!

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### **INfields for Indiana Fun**

Wabash & Erie Canal Park is a proud founding member of INfields, a new nonprofit organization promoting rural tourism in our part of the state. You'll want to check it out: [visit visit INfields.org today!](http://visitINfields.org)



The mission of the organization is to promote Indiana's rural attractions focusing on art, history, nature, and recreation. In our part of the state, we are blessed with numerous such attractions and resources!

Please be sure to [sign up for the email newsletter](#) so you can keep up to date with all the happenings of member organizations.



Other members include Wolf Park and the Farm at Prophetstown in Battle Ground. As rural, small nonprofits, INfields helps spread the word about upcoming events and draws in new audiences for its members.

It has been an absolute



This span now serves as a crossing in Canal Park to our Little White Church on the opposite side. Creating this crossing was a special challenge to our volunteer crew as we were dealing with the longest and heaviest of any bridges we've dealt with to date.

Finally a bridge that became known as the Freedom Bridge was obtained from Conner Prairie near Indianapolis as it was surplus on their land and they donated it to the Canal Association. And with extra grant money, engineering, and construction support from INDOT, we enjoy the replacement section of the former Monon Rail Trail destroyed when the new Hoosier Heartland Highway was built in the 2010s. Since then the City of Delphi has paved the trail to the original Monon High Bridge crossing Deer Creek. Yes, the Canal Association was the original developer in early 2000s of this scenic foot trail.



From humble beginnings cleaning out a derelict canal to reaching for the sky with majestic bridges, the "can-do" attitude of volunteers has been the key to Canal Park's success over the years. All gratitude goes to the people who have supported this organization over its fifty year history through finances, time, expertise, and grit.

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### **In With the Old (But New to Us)**

pleasure to work with these other nonprofits because we are all part of the same ultimate goal: to promote local attractions that showcase Indiana's natural, historical, and cultural treasures.



Please be sure to sign up for the newsletter, visit the website, and follow INfields on social media! It is a valuable tool to connect you with enriching and fun experiences for all ages and interests.

## The Museum Is OPEN

Warmer weather means that a new season is dawning at Canal Park for our **50th Anniversary** year!



The canal boat will soon enough be plying the waters of Delphi, but for now you can visit the interactive Canal Museum any weekday afternoon from 1:00-4:00 PM.

The exhibits in the museum were designed with children (and kids at heart) in mind, and there are plenty of hands-on activities to bring Indiana's Canal Era to life.

Last month, the Archives Committee met to accession new donations into Canal Park's collection of historic items. Present at the meeting were faithful volunteers Carl Seese, Dan McCain, Becky Crabb, Mark Smith, and archivist Gary Stanley.



Throughout the year, local (and not-so-local) community members will donate items ranging from clothing to tools to historic documents to artwork and more! In keeping with best practices for preserving and sharing the past, all items must undergo evaluation by the Archives Committee.



In general, the criteria for selection center around a few central questions: Is the item relevant to Indiana's Canal Era (approximately 1832-1875)? Is the item in acceptable condition for use or display? Does the item help us tell the stories in our exhibits (or provide new stories for future exhibits)? Do we have an appropriate space for the item?

If an item meets our requirements, it will find its way to an exhibit or a special location for display or demonstration. If not, we might try to find a suitable home for the item elsewhere or return it to the original owner.



Starting in April, the museum will also be open on Saturday afternoons, also from 1:00-4:00 PM. If you'd like more information, be sure to [visit our new website](#). We hope to see you soon!

### 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!](#)



In this meeting, we accessioned several interesting items, including quilts, a decommissioned double barrel muzzle loader shotgun, carpentry tools, a spinning wheel, historic costumes, and a collection of *Hoosier Heritage* magazines. Keep an eye out for these items the next time you visit!

If you are interested in historic items and you like keeping things organized, get in touch with us! We would love to connect you with the Archives team. Send an email to [director@canalcenter.org](mailto:director@canalcenter.org) to get the ball rolling.

## Historic Classes on TV





## Thanks to Our Sponsors!

We are fortunate to have many generous businesses in the community who place great value on preservation, education, and recreation.

If you have need of any services offered by the businesses below, we strongly recommend you reach out to them! They are all wonderful organizations who care about the community they serve!

### Festival Sponsors

- *Duke Energy*
- *Mustangs To Fear*

### Bronze Supporters

- *Carroll-White REMC*
- *Indiana Packers Corporation*
- *Jeffrey C Rider, Attorney at Law*
- *Longhorn Apparel and Graphics*
- *PTI Machining*
- *Scarano Boat Building*
- *Security Federal Savings Bank*

### Community Supporters

**(\$100+)**

- *Brick & Mortar Pub*
- *Cassens Trees*
- *D-K Construction*
- *Helms Lawn & Landscape Specialists*
- *Industrial Federal Credit Union*

News about [historic trades classes at Canal Park](#) is spreading, and WISH-TV can help you learn more about it! Executive Director Mike Tetrault and historic trades instructor Bev Larson recently appeared on *Life.Style.Live!* on the Indianapolis station, and it was a fun chance to talk about this exciting upcoming round of activities.

You can [check out the broadcast at this link](#), and be sure to sign up for the class that fits your schedule soon!

Remember, you get to take home your creations after the class has ended, and you will be supervised by expert instructors who are passionate about their respective crafts.

There are **NINE** options to choose from in this session. You can find more details on the website, but the list of classes is as follows:

- Coopering tools** (April 19-20)
- Weaving** (May 5)
- Coopering bucket** (May 17-18)
- Broom making** (May 18)
- Wool felting** (May 18)
- Spinning** (May 18)
- Basket making** (May 23)
- Pine needle bowl** (May 29)
- Hand quilting** (June 1)

We'll see you in class!



## Water and Stone

*Note: This series originally aired on WBOI FM public radio of Northeast Indiana. Thanks to Tom Castaldi for allowing and facilitating its reproduction.*

- *The Andersons, Inc.*
- *Visit Lafayette-West Lafayette*

If you'd like to add your business to this list, please email:

director@canalcenter.org and check out the [Sponsorships Brochure on our website.](#)



For a complete list of activities please visit us at [www.wabashanderiecanal.org](http://www.wabashanderiecanal.org)

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Build the longest canal in America without a source of water, no building stone and no surveyor's tools?

That's what the State of Indiana faced in 1827, before Sam Hanna, David Burr and surveyor John Smythe laid out a water route from the Saint Joseph River six miles north of Fort Wayne to make the Wabash & Erie Canal a reality.



*Samuel Hanna (1797-1866)*

Because Fort Wayne was the highest point on the proposed line, water had to be found to be poured in from the top to make it work.

Hanna then traveled from Indiana to New York, the only place surveyor instruments could be found at the time. It's said that he made the trip out and back in an unusually fast time. Pretty good when only horse, steamboat and stagecoach could hurry the pace.

To top it off, the three men worked so rigorously that Burr collapsed from exhaustion and Smythe actually died of the fever. Somehow Hanna persevered and delivered to the Indiana General Assembly the route for a feeder canal ready to dig and the project was approved



in 1827.



A dam on the Saint Joseph, at present-day Shoaff Park, was the answer but it had to be made of felled trees, brush, sand, sediment and wood because there is no building stone in the county.

Yet, with no water, no instruments and no building stone, the canal that finally made possible an unbroken water connection between the Saint Lawrence Seaway and the Gulf of Mexico was completed. It pioneered the way for the railroads and highways we use today.

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**The Wabash & Erie Canal Newsletter is brought  
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