

**Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission**  
 Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
 Division of Outdoor Recreation  
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 Indianapolis, Indiana 46204  
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# L' ESPRIT DE OUABACHE

The Newsletter of the Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission

2001

## How the Wabash River Got Its Name

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"Wabash," the name of Indiana's important and legendary river comes from the Miami-Illinois language. This is an Algonquian tongue spoken in late prehistory and early history in Indiana and Illinois and later in Indiana and Oklahoma. This river's name dates to around 950 AD, the likely arrival date of Algonquian-speaking peoples in the Ohio River and lower Lake Michigan watersheds.

The first historical appearance of this place-name is in the writings of the French explorer René Robert Cavelier de La Salle, who first penned the term in 1681 in the form <Ouabanchi>. His is a relatively good recording if one ignores the <-n-> that did not exist in the native term. La Salle never visited the Wabash; he learned of its existence from local Indians. But, after having spent three additional years among Miami-Illinois-speaking Indians along the Kankakee and Illinois rivers, he revised his early spelling to <Ouabaché>, the form that appeared in 1684 on a map he helped design in Paris with the assistance of the royal mapmaker Jean-Baptiste Louis Franquelin. Later French writers, who like most Frenchmen in the 18th century, were lackadaisical about using accent marks, simply wrote the hydronym <Ouabache>, even

though they always pronounced the name with a final vowel. Even so, it is precisely because they often failed to write accent marks that we today pronounce the river's name "Wabash" rather than "Wabashee", a spelling--and pronunciation-- that was still common in English in the 1700's.

After La Salle's time in the Illinois Country, the Miami-Illinois name that is the origin of "Wabash" showed up in the writings of late 17th and early 18th century Jesuit missionaries to the Illinois Indians. Later, it appeared in the recordings done by late 19th century linguists of Miami-Illinois language.

In Miami-Illinois, the form of this place-name is waapaahsiiki siipiiwi. siipiiwi is the word for 'river'. waapaahsiiki is a verb meaning 'it shines white'. The components of this term are waap- 'white', -aahsii- 'shine' and -ki, the third-person inanimate intransitive conjunct verbal suffix whose closest equivalent in English is "it". Verb-based place-names are very common in the Algonquian languages. This hydronym, which best translates to English "White Shining River," refers to the originally bright white limestone bed of the upper river between Huntington and Carroll counties.

What is particularly curious about this river's Miami-Illinois name is that it referred to a water course much greater in length than today's Wabash River. In the minds of the Miami-Illinois-speaking people and from the French point of view right up to the time that the French lost control of North America to the Britons in the 1760s, waapaahsiiki siipiiwi ~ <Ouabache> bracketed a waterway that combined our modern Wabash River and the lower Ohio River right on down to the Mississippi. From their point of view, the Ohio River ended at the confluence of today's Wabash and Ohio rivers.

Written by Michael McCafferty, Indiana University

### Upcoming Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission meetings (locations are tentative)

March 7	1:00 PM
Indianapolis	
May 2	1:00 PM
Cass County	
July 11	1:00 PM
Parke County	
September 5	1:00 PM
Tippecanoe County	
November 7	1:00 PM
Indianapolis	
January 2, 2002	1:00 PM
Indianapolis	

Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of all odd numbered months at 1:00 pm

For more meeting information and locations, call (317) 232-4070



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## When its Built They Will Come

The Canal Interpretive Center Commission proposed of members appointed by the City of Delphi, the City Park Board and the Wabash & Erie Canal Association is soon to complete the detailed architectural plans for the new multi-use building in Canal Park. At the same time an effort is underway to raise needed matching money for completing the museum's exhibits. The non-profit Carroll County Wabash & Erie Canal, Inc. has launched a campaign to raise at least \$50,000 to supplement the grant recently received from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Every dollar raised will be matched with four dollars from the grant.

Building construction is targeted to begin as early as next spring on this Canal Convention and Interpretive Center. There will seating space for over 275 people at tables and catered meals. Adjacent restrooms, an office for the manager, a break room for volunteers, storage for materials and an artifacts processing room will be in the finished building. The operation of this Center will be vested in the six member Commission that is made up of appointees representing the City and the Canal Association. Local property tax money will be used for this building.

Initial construction money came in 1998 from the DNR Interpretive Center grant and from Lilly Endowment through the Carroll County Community Foundation. This funding could match a much larger allocation in July 1999 from gasoline tax funds through the Federal Highway T-21 "transportation enhancement" program. The federal money comes through Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) and its Indianapolis administrative office. INDOT will let a general contract for the building construction. They do this through a once-a-month contract letting day.

Locally there will not be any contracting responsibility for the bid letting or the selection of a general contractor. However using INDOT money required that all the basic floor layout and architectural planning be developed locally. This has been the responsibility of the Canal Interpretive Center Commission since its inception. The Commission contracted services from MSKTD Architects, a firm in Fort Wayne, to design and draw these plans and has been meeting at least twice per month for the last 15 months.

The architectural plans that detail this \$1.4 million facility will be completed in late January. Locally developed, these plans then will be checked carefully before being forwarded to INDOT by early February. INDOT conducts a four-month review prior to their bid letting.

Ultimately the building's general contractor will be selected and awarded by INDOT. On site construction supervision will come from the Commission's architectural firm MSKTD & Associates. Local contractors interested in this project will have to contact Indianapolis and work through INDOT's federal guidelines and procedures to become eligible to bid on this work. The construction phase is expected to take nearly a year to complete.

This multi-purpose building will be located in Canal Park off of north Washington Street. When open in 2002, the Center will offer diverse activities for children and adults. The Interpretive Center portion of the building will feature exhibits and displays that highlight the 1832 to 1876 Canal period in Indiana. Historic elements depicting the raucous Irish workers who constructed the canal through this area, the engineering of water control structures, and features of the business and industry that flourished in Delphi in the mid-1800s.

A centerpiece of the museum gallery will be an operating water model of a canal lock. Archived material, hands-on working models, and historical artifacts will be featured in the museum. Think what it might have been like to build this massive project without the aid of power machinery. Get a feel for engineering and construction techniques of the 1830-40s. These high-tech exhibits make for exciting visitor experiences. Private financial matching support is needed.

Individuals, organizations, corporations, and all are still needed to complete the interior furnishings for the center. These items needed for operation and maintenance of the building are yet unfunded. A three-page list of specific items is available from the Commission or Canal Board members for review. These items need to be committed but don't have to be secured until the time of building completion in spring of 2001.

A beautiful color brochure depicting a canal lock being approached by a boat beckons the reader

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## 27th Johnny Appleseed Festival

If it didn't exist before 1850, it probably won't be at this year's 27th annual Johnny Appleseed Festival (Fort Wayne, September 15 and 16, 2001). If you have any interest in how European settlers and the geographical quirks of the headwaters of the Wabash River affected our history, you will be well satisfied with the offerings of fun, food and entertainment.

Festival visitors won't find craft-booth sellers sitting in director's chairs, sipping from soda cans, selling plastic trinkets made in China, or posting gold and blue "Visa accepted here" signs. What the tens of thousands of festival visitors will find are crafts made by hand, food cooked over open fires, and vendors wearing ground-skimming skirts and to-the-knee pants while seated on wooden stools or straw hay bales. Historically accurate presentation of rural life in the 19th century (specifically the period of John Chapman's (Johnny Appleseed) life, 1775 to 1847) is the theme of the festival. Demonstrating what life was like, and that everything today comes from a time when things did not come from stores, is the underlying thrust of the fun.

Rules are strict - no electricity, no plastics, no visible cash registers or calculators, no exposed aluminum tent poles. And all vendors, even those working for only an hour, must be in period clothing. In a typical year, 150 participants following the rules,

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to "open the gates" and become a contributor to this project. Inside the brochure is the floor plan and 1850s look of this 12,000 square foot Center. The exterior façade selected depicts the various buildings of downtown Delphi in the pre-civil war era.

Delphi was an important water transportation link to Lake Erie and the East Coast. This canal also connected the many river ports on the Wabash, Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to the south. Delphi merchants and farmers were blessed with better prices for their products as they shipped products through this earliest

show how common items were made in the period. Food vendors - 30 some groups that raise money for charity and donate a portion of the profits to the festival - prepare food as it would have been made more than 150 years ago. Over a hundred Crafters sell items made of material common for the period. Stages, among the few places where electricity is allowed, offer entertainment forms common to Johnny Appleseed's era. Dipping candles, spinning wool, iron smithing, leather tooling, even making soap, are all up for view and sometimes participation.

The trade in goods, and the increase in craft specialization, drove the development of the portage, and later the canal, from Toledo and the Maumee River basin to the Wabash valley. The fur traders, the farmers, and the craftspeople that followed, are all the subject of this festival, with hours from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday. The festival is free and there are buses to and from nearby free parking. Come, and bring your family, but be careful - the times required frequent military actions and you never know when conscription for a militia might be necessary...for more information log on to [www.johnnyappleseedfest.com](http://www.johnnyappleseedfest.com).

*Edited from "Harvest of History" by Sarah True, Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette*

Hoosier heavy transportation route.

Watch for progress in the development of this new facility. Come to the Canal Association's "Old Fashioned Christmas" at Canal Park on December 10th from 1-4 pm for a public review of the plans and a chance to interact with Canal Board and Interpretive Center Commission members. Arrangements may be made for an on-site presentation of building and museum plans to individuals, groups and organization by calling 765-564-6297.

*Submitted by Dan McCain*

## Finishing Touches Put on Restored Iron Bridge

The last of the restoration work on the 1873 Iron Bowstring Arch Bridge in Delphi is finished according to Dan McCain, Coordinator of the Volunteers. The bridge is in use as a trail connection along the Wabash & Erie Canal in Delphi. It can be found in Canal Park Annex at the extreme north end of Union Street, 11 blocks north of Main Street.

The volunteers put the finishing touches on the two-year project when they completed the ornate iron hand rail and painted the remaining portion black. All of the original 1873 wrought iron structure is painted red. Red was the Carroll County bridge color of that time. Altogether nearly one hundred volunteers worked on this project from start in March 1998, to the finish.

The bridge originally spanned Paint Creek southeast of Camden. Then about ten years ago this county bridge was determined obsolete and the land leading to the bridge and the deteriorating structure were given back to the adjacent rural landowners. The Wilmer "Stub" Hodges family donated the ornate structure to the Wabash & Erie Canal Association in

1998. Restoration work began when the association received a \$42,000 Hometown Indiana grant from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. Duel plaques honoring the donors and the volunteers adorn the mid section of the railing.

The many volunteers including several 4th grade classes studying Indiana History were involved in the restoration work. Donations of materials, products and time were generously offered as the project evolved. The bridge was first moved to a warehouse owned by The Andersons Grain Company for complete disassembly and repair, then it was reassembled, painted and moved to the site over the Canal in north Delphi.

Principal volunteers worked until the last of October to finish the handrail. Many trail hikers have been enjoying the connecting trails and view of the scenic canal. The Delphi Rotary Club is also adorning Canal Park Annex near the restored bridge. Members are building a new "old looking" picnic shelter overlooking the canal. Hand hewn barn timbers used in the shelter help the looks and utility of this popular public site.

*Submitted by Dan McCain*

## History of Delphi and the McCain Family

*The following story is from an email response to Bill Wepler from Dan McCain*

To Bill Wepler:

I am finally responding to your rather simple question about methods of shipping products on the Canal. Your work with the displays in the new Indiana State Museum needs to feature factual information about shipping. As my story goes see what you might want to pick up--

The lime kilns in and around Delphi shipped the finished product (plaster, whitening and mortar) in barrels on the canal boats. My great great grandfather David Rogers Harley started a kiln operation in 1857 along with his partner (who was my great great uncle Erastus Hubbard) the site was back along the canal right here the restored 1873 Iron Bridge is now located.

They had bought the land from Dr. Sam Grimes after he had failed in his effort to develop the property

as a dozen large 2-4 acre building lots (enough space for a home, barn and pasture for your horse or cow). I now live on one of those lots.

Dr. Grimes also built a hotel (also just behind my home) on a rise that overlooked the canal at a distance. There was supposed to be a canal slip or sidecut come off the main waterway back at the boat turnaround (where the City Well is now) but that never was constructed. The hotel was located too far for passengers to conveniently walk from the boats to the hotel. Boats could be tied up at the docks along the edge of the turnaround. The hotel venture failed and became known as "GRIMES' FOLLY". It stood vacant for several years. I have a picture of it.

Then when Harley and Hubbard bought all the land comprising Grimes' Second Addition (about

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30 acres) for the Lime Kilns, it included the vacant Hotel. They converted it to a Cooper Shop and they proceeded to make wooden barrels for shipping the lime products on the canal beside the kilns. David Harley owned a canal boat that he sent north on the canal to secure logs for fuel in the kilns. The woods they cleared were land beside the towpath following the Wabash Lake below the Carrollton crossing. The land comprised a farm where my grandfather Luther McCain grew up as a boy.

In 1871 my great grandfather Daniel McCain became manager of all the kilns in Delphi. By then 22 kilns were operating all over the north end of town and were having a time competing and marketing so the various owners combined efforts and formed the Delphi Lime Company. Daniel was manager until his death in 1884 at the age of 53. During that time he had responsibilities for shipping. Production involved 80-100 men and the production in a good year totaled 500,000 bushels of burned lime output. It was hot and dirty work. The final product had to be sifted to remove impurities and was then placed in barrels. The product was time sensitive, as it would begin drawing moisture as soon as it cooled.

The canal shipped to as far as New York City and when its connections were lost, the canal failed. Daniel had to develop the Wabash and Monon railroad connections. He had to work deals with different markets. Finally the Monon Railroad reached Chicago and many of the fine homes of Chicago that had burned earlier in the Great Chicago Fire were rebuilt with Delphi Lime. After all it was some of the finest quality plaster to be found anywhere.

The railroad finally put in a spur called the Beltline right over the canal at the point where the Iron Bridge is today. It served the newer "patented kilns" that were then in operation by the Harley Brothers (Charles my great grandfather and George). The Monon Railroad passed through productive Oak-Hickory forests to the south of Delphi and the Harley's bought 320 acres just for the timber. Nearby Delphi woodlots were bare by that time. They needed all the fuel they could get and even had a standing offer to buy all the logs from those who were clearing land if they would deliver to the kilns site. The logs from the new land (first 80 acres bought in 1875) were placed

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on the Monon at a switch called "Harley" 5 miles south of town and brought in to the kilns by rail just north of my house. It took 25 men to work year around in the woods to provide the needed fuel.

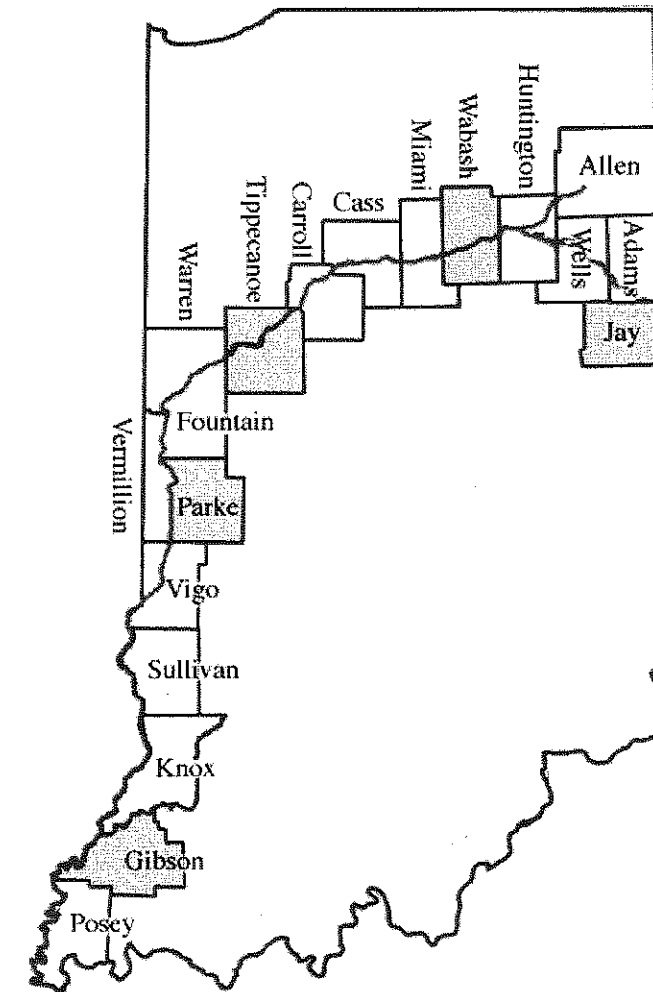
I remember as a kid going along the tracks and seeing the switch where the cars filled with logs were diverted to the three story tall kilns. I remember steam locomotives bringing coal cars up through this same Beltline to the Ice Plant where they sold coal and ice. The wooden trestle over the Canal floated out in a flood in the late 1940s and the trains never came back through our property again. The RR bed is now part of our 7 mile Delphi Historic Trails system--it's called the Beltline Trail. Even part of the old timber trestle is still on display by the interpretive sign highlighting the lime business.

The last of the lime operations ceased in 1917 when my father was a boy. Ironically it was just after the untimely death of great grandpa Charlie Harley that the business folded. George was not a businessman. Charlie had been mayor, a state representative and the warden of the Indiana State Prison in Michigan City before he died. My dad's parents were the combination of this lime kingdom through a marriage of a McCain and a Harley. Most of the central operations were on property where my grandparents built their home in 1926. I was born in this house in 1940 grew up there and left in 1962, and came back to live in the same house in 1987. I am thankful that as a kid I could visualize some of the remnants of this once thriving operation. It made a great kid's outdoor playground. I am still a kid at heart, playing with what remains of the once busy industrial site.

Within a year we should see the original 1857 "pot kilns" site nominated for the National Register of Historic Places. Archaeologist Wayne Bischoff is responsible for the write-up as part of his current project. We will also see the National Register nomination of the Irish Canal Construction Site and Lock #33. These two are on the VanScoy Towpath Trail southwest of Delphi.

To answer your question Bill, I guess they shipped lime in barrels. DAN

## 2001 Wabash Corridor Events



August 11-12, 2001

### Wabash Walking Weekend

Sponsored by Banks of the Wabash, from Delphi to Terre Haute. A variety of walks are scheduled along the nine counties of the western leg of the Wabash River. Dusk-dawn. No adm. chg. Information: (800) 872-6648.

Many other events occur in the 19 counties that make up the Wabash River Corridor. To receive a copy of the 2001 Festival Guide, which lists the events for the entire state, call the Indiana Division of Tourism at 1-800-289-6646 or visit [www.enjoyindiana.com/](http://www.enjoyindiana.com/)

For an online listing of festivals from the Indiana State Festivals Association (ISFA), go to [www.indianafestivals.org](http://www.indianafestivals.org) Only members of the ISFA have their events listed there.

**If your county is one of the 19 in the Wabash River Corridor, and you have an event you would like listed in the 2002 newsletter, contact the DNR Division of Outdoor Recreation at: 402 W. Washington Street, Indianapolis IN, 46204 (317) 232-4070.**

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