

WHAT PRICE PROGRESS? THE STORY OF THE WABASH AND ERIE CANAL

By Wilma Shackleton

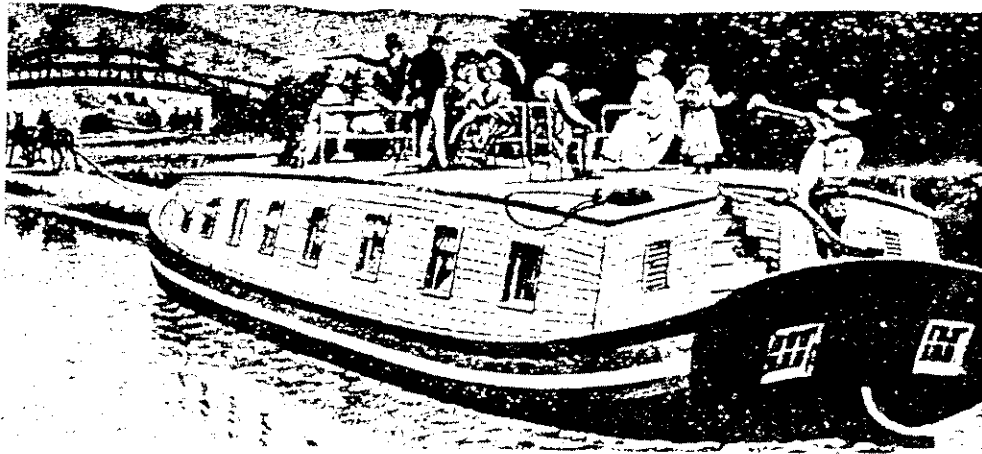
GRADE LEVEL: Secondary

Prepared in partial fulfillment of requirements for  
"INDIANA AND THE NEW NATION, 1776-1876"  
a project of the Historic Southern Indiana Project  
of the University of Southern Indiana  
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Evansville, Indiana 47712  
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FUNDED BY THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

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# What Price Progress?



THE STORY  
OF THE

# Wabash and Erie Canal

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HSE  
November 5, 1990

LESSON PLAN  
The Wabash and Erie Canal

MATERIALS:

Teacher background: Read "What Price Progress: The Story of the Wabash and Erie Canal." Read other materials listed in the bibliography.

Student information packet

Teacher-made materials

TIME:

Teacher choice: from 1 to 5 class periods

EVALUATION:

Cooperation within group  
Construction of appropriate projects  
Teacher test

STUDENT OBJECTIVES:

To:

1. Review the geography of Indiana so that the student will understand the effect it had on the transporting of goods by the pioneer.
2. Brainstorm the concept of canal transportation and analyze the advantages and disadvantages of this system.
3. Design and construct a canal boat and canal lock.
4. Compare the cost of canal building with the cost of other transportation methods.
5. List the advantages of the canal era for the state and for an individual community.
6. List the disadvantages of the canal era for the state and for an individual community.
7. Analyze the effect on the economy of Indiana.
8. Explain the "no debt" provision of the Constitution of 1851.

DAY 1: CONTINUATION OF TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS IN INDIANA

I. Review

a. Flannel board

1. Review the physiography of the state (north, central, south)
2. Describe the natural vegetation (87% tree covered, 10% wet prairie, 3% dry prairie)
3. Discuss the problems pioneers would have had moving themselves and their belongings to Indiana.

HAND OUT ITEM #1: LIST OF ITEMS A PIONEER FAMILY WOULD HAVE WANTED TO TAKE WITH THEM

b. Poster of transportation - Accumulated list of various types

1. Review the travel methods used (those prior to canals)
2. Have students offer adjectives and nouns to describe what they think a canal is. Put this on the board.
3. Have students agree or disagree with the subject headings at the top of the Transportation poster. (These may be changed at the conclusion of the unit.)

II. Assignment

- a. HAND OUT ITEM #2: "TRAVEL IN INDIANA LONG AGO" and have the students read the pamphlet.

DAY 2: HISTORY OF THE CANALS IN INDIANA

I. HAND OUT ITEM #3: MAP OF THE FALLS OF THE OHIO

a. SHOW PICTURES OF A FLATBOAT AND A KEELBOAT

1. Discuss what problems the Falls of the Ohio would be for anyone using either of these methods of transportation. (They would have to stop and go around.)
2. Discuss how the city of Louisville prospered. How did Indiana hope to capitalize on the Falls also? (by constructing a canal which failed because of rock.)
3. Go back to the map of the Falls and show where a canal was built. (on the Kentucky side)

II. HAND OUT ITEM #4: ARTICLE THE FOURTH, THE NORTHWEST ORDINANCE OF 1787

- a. Have students read the paragraph and put up their hands when they find a reference to highways and/or transportation. (7 lines from bottom)
- b. Have students explain what this line might mean. (public or tax-supported roads or right-of-ways)

III. HAND OUT MAP OF FORT WAYNE

- a. Show on a map of Indiana where Fort Wayne is
- b. Explain the word "portage"
- c. Have students recall information they already learned about the rivers of Indiana
- d. Ask them to point on their own map where the divide is between water that flows to the Atlantic Ocean and water that flows into the Gulf of Mexico
- e. Review how the Indians used the rivers for transportation

IV. HAND OUT ITEM #5: "INDIAN TREATIES"

- a. Have students mark on this map the proposed route of the Wabash and Erie Canal (to the mouth of the Tippecanoe River)
- b. Mark on the map dates for each of the Indian treaties that were for land adjoining the Wabash and Erie Canal.

V. SHOULD THE WABASH AND EIRIE CANAL BE BUILT WITH FEDERAL FUNDS?

1. History
  - a. Reference in the Northwest Ordinance
  - b. Recommendation by George Washington
  - c. In 1808 the Report on Roads and Canals recommended a Federally funded unified system of roads and canals. This was not accepted, but the idea was being considered.
2. Issues advocating the canal
  - a. Military defense against the English and the Indians for moving men and supplies
    1. 1811 Battle of Tippecanoe
    2. 1812-15 the War of 1812 against the British Canadians
    3. 1816 a letter from Capt. McAfee urging the building of a canal at Fort Wayne
    4. A way to end the Indian menace by obtaining Indian treaties for the purpose of canal building
  - b. Markets for those wanting to settle the cheap land on the frontier (Indiana)
    1. The United States government would establish better claim to this land by having more settlers living on it, and more would live on it if they could get to it with their belongings by way of a canal boat.
    2. Subsistence agricultural practices could be replaced by productive agricultural practices. Farmers could market their surplus crops at reasonable prices, as shipping could be done on canal boats.
    3. Farmers could use their excess profits to purchase goods. These could be shipped in on canal boats at reasonable prices
  - c. Success of the Erie Canal and its opening in 1825 spread "Canal Fever" across Indiana.
    1. Many urged that the Erie Canal could be extended into Indiana by way of a Wabash and Erie Canal. Many foresaw great economic opportunity.
    2. From the time of the opening of the Erie Canal until 1837 the United States was in a period of rapid economic growth and prosperity
3. The Funding
  - a. May 26, 1824 - Congress granted 90' on each side of a proposed canal for the purpose of connecting the Wabash and the Miami of Lake Erie. (approx 7 miles)
  - b. Amidst the celebrations of the opening of the Erie Canal, the state of Indiana asked Congress to be more generous in their offer.
  - c. March 2, 1827 - Congress authorized a half-million-acre land grant to allow Indiana to finance construction of the canal
  - d. January 9, 1832 - Indiana legislature authorized the formation of a canal commission with the authority to borrow \$200,000 to start construction.
  - e. July 4, 1835 - 32 mile section of the canal opened for traffic from Fort Wayne to Huntington
  - f. HAND OUT ITEM #6: "MAMMOTH INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS ACT" approved by General Assembly January 27, 1836.
  - g. HAND OUT ITEM #7: "HISTORIC CANALS OF INDIANA"  
Have students color over the canals that were proposed and built and, using another color, shade in canals that were proposed and not built. Have students research how many of the Mammoth Internal Improvements Act projects were actually completed. (Use the Historic Canals of Indiana for some of the answers)

### DAY 3: CONSTRUCTION OF THE CANAL

- I. HAND OUT ITEM #8: "EARLY YEARS DOCUMENT 71 - CANAL WORKERS BROADSIDE (1837)"
  - a. Have students get into small groups. Itemize the benefits received by workers who were employed by the Central Canal Company. Have students ask parents or other adults about benefits received by construction workers today. Have students in the group compare responses for 1990 with list for 1837.
  - b. Have students review the location of the Central Canal
- II. HAND OUT ITEM #9: CANAL DAYS IN INDIANA"  
Have students read and do activities
- III. OPTIONAL: The Wabash and Erie Canal in Fountain County (Use maps)
  1. Hand out copies of map of Warren and Fountain Counties (not included) and use maps as guide to the following article.
  2. HAND OUT ITEM #10: "THE WABASH AND ERIE CANAL"  
Have students pantomime the "Attica-Covington War." What was the result of this episode? (Use an other information from this article)
  3. Have students work in groups to construct a canal boat and a canal lock. Use a shoe box for the lock and poster board for the boat. Students can demonstrate how the boat travels through the canal
- IV. HAND OUT ITEM #11: THE CLEARANCE RECORDS AT COVINGTON  
Students can determine the types of boats and cargos that travelled along the Wabash and Erie Canal.
- V. Teacher can read aloud small segments of "THROUGH INDIANA BY STAGECOACH AND CANAL BOAT: THE 1843 TRAVEL JOURNAL OF CHARLES H. TITUS" which appeared in the Indiana Magazine of History, September 1989.
- VI. GAME: 6 students can play on each gameboard. Each will start from a different place on the map. The objective is to be the first to reach Williamsport. The year is 1847 and the Wabash and Erie Canal has just been opened as far as Covington. Students play by drawing a card for the type of transportation they are using. (My students constructed a game using an enlarged map of the early routes in Indiana. It was glued inside a manila folder and an equal number of spaces from outside Indiana to Williamsport were drawn on the map. Appropriate cards were made. For exmaple, boat overturned took one extra day, lose one turn.)

### DAY 4: THE DELCINE AND FALL OF THE CANAL ERA

- I. The Mammoth Internal Improvements Bill - What went wrong? Ask students to speculate about the effects of this bill. Some comments could be:
  - a. less than 500,000 Hoosiers, who paid annual taxes of \$75,000, had contracted a debt in excess of \$10,000,000
  - b. too many projects were started at one time; it would have been better to get one project completed and earning money. Also competition was keen for labor and materials.
  - c. no supervision of the overall financial picture. Clearly, some people got very rich at the state's expense. The state also lost its credit rating with investors when debts were not paid.
  - d. the rosy financial picture of 1836 turned into a bleak financial picture with the Panic of 1837.

II. How did it all end?

- a. 1838 - bills could not be paid and work stopped
- b. 1839 - Indiana faced bankruptcy
- c. 1841 - the Wabash and Erie Canal reached the mouth of the Tippecanoe River, the terminus of the 1827 federal land grant to Indiana
- d. 1842 - the General Assembly authorized the construction of the Wabash and Erie Canal to Terre Haute
- e. 1843 - Ohio completed her portion of the Canal that extended from the Indiana line to Lake Erie
- f. 1847 - Years of indecision concerning the massive state debt ended when the General Assembly approved the so-called "Butler Bills." The state agreed to pay through increased taxation one half of the debt. The amount totaled \$6,732,880. The state also relinquished control of the Wabash and Erie Canal. It was deeded to bondholders, but they, in turn, had to agree to complete the canal to Evansville. In 1853 the Wabash and Erie Canal was actually completed to the Ohio River.
- g. HAND OUT ITEM #12: "SPECIAL CANAL STOCK", another document testifying to the change in ownership of the Wabash and Erie Canal

III. What happened to the other canals?

- a. Whitewater Canal - it was completed in 1846 (a total of 76 miles) by private interests. By 1865 a railroad ran parallel to it, rendering it virtually useless.
- b. Central Canal - the completed fragments were sold to private interests
- c. No other canals were completed

IV. STUDENT ACTIVITIES:

- a. HAND OUT ITEM #13: "MAIN ROUTES OF TRAVEL INTO THE OLD NORTHWEST, 1850" or ITEM #14: "EARLY TRANSPORTATION ROUTES IN INDIANA" or "EARLY TRANSPORTATION IN INDIANA" from Our Indiana Heritage.
- b. HAND OUT ITEM #15: "POPULATION OF INDIANA IN 1840, 1850, AND 1860." Using calculators, have students figure the percentage population increases for various counties. Color code a large map of Indiana such as Transportation Routes Circa Major 1835-1850" to see if there is any correlation between the Wabash and Erie Canal and population changes.

DAY 5: END OF CANAL ERA

- I. Put on wall a long sheet of bulletin board paper. Have students take marking pens and write on the papers all the benefits of the canal period. On another sheet of bulletin board paper, have students write comments about the problems of the canals.
- II. 1872 - the "Rocky Mountain" canal boat left Lodi in Parke County and made it all the way to Toledo, Ohio. This was the last boat to clear such a distance. Shorter hauls continued to made, however.
- III. Show slides, "INDIANA CANALS" (Listed in bibliography)
- IV. Canal Society of Indiana, an organization for information on canals.
- V. Effect on Indiana Government
  - a. constitution of 1851
  - b. "no debt" provision
  - c. How does this affect the credit rating of Indiana?

The following is a list of the items a pioneer family would need if they came to central Indiana in the 1820's and 1830's:

## TOOLS

ITEM #1

felling axe  
broad axe  
cross-cut saw  
planes  
draw knife  
chisels  
hammers  
shovels  
wedges  
free  
augers or bits  
adzes  
saws  
cant hook  
square  
files  
sharpening stone  
hatchets

plows- made of wood with steel point  
hoes  
reaping hooks  
harrow  
bags or barrels for storage  
chains  
forks and rakes (made of wood)  
scythe

## ANIMALS

horses - plus harness or oxen  
cow for milk  
pigs for meat  
chickens (usually later)  
geese (usually later) for down  
sheep - wool

## SUPPLIES

seeds (corn, wheat, buckwheat, garden seed)  
salt  
gun, gunpowder, lead  
flour  
corn meal  
salted meat

## HOUSEHOLD GOODS

pots and kettles (cast iron)  
Dutch oven (cast iron)  
knives  
crockery - jugs, bowls, jars  
spoons - laddles and dippers  
candles - molds  
spinning wheels  
    one for spinning flax  
    one for spinning wool  
loom (only if you had room)  
seeds for herb garden  
starts for flowers and shrubs  
blankets and bedding  
sewing needles and scissors  
chests with clothes in them  
dishes  
clock - maybe  
family Bible (2 or 3 other books)  
furniture - beds, chairs, cupboards

PLUS A WAGON TO BRING ALL OF THIS TO WARREN COUNTY

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47791