

# Towpath Times



Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association

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

Volume 10 • Number 1 • Spring 2007

## Partnership Dinner Recognizes Involvement

By L. Neal Brady  
Executive Director

Miami-Erie Canal Corridor Association

Canal, Community, Commitment was the theme of the Miami and Erie Canal Partnership Dinner April 19, 2007 at the St. Marys Eagles Lodge. Sixty invited guests attended the event to see a report of the projects being planned and underway in the Heritage Corridor.

During the evening's program three founders of MECCA were recognized for their dedication and vision for the Heritage Corridor. Dave Stilwell and Kevin Haver were presented commemorative pen and pencil sets fashioned from wood taken from an original canal structure. Nick Van Schoyck was also recognized as one the founders 10 years ago.

Several were recognized as Corporate Heritage Corridor Partners of MECCA. Recipients at the event included New Bremen Community Improvement Corporation, St. Marys Community Improvement Corporation, and St. Marys Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie 767. Other Partners recognized included The Dannon Company, Fluidpower Assembly Corporation, and St. Marys American Legion Post 323.

The Canal, Community, Commitments presentations included information from Delphos, St. Marys and New Bremen. Executive Director Neal Brady gave an update on continuing canal restoration work in Delphos and the strategic planning efforts that have seen results in grant funding and project completion.

Todd Fleagle, Industrial and Community Development Manager for St. Marys updated the group on the future

plans for the developing the canal and Lock 13 in St. Marys. Fleagle discussed the potential for a restaurant to go into the first floor of the former Cotton Mill with a veranda overlooking Lock 13. The powerhouse across from the Cotton Mill will be razed for additional parking and First Financial Bank plans to construct a new bank east of Lock 13.



**Todd Fleagle, Industrial and Community Development Director for the City of St. Marys, gives an update of canal projects in the city.**

New Bremen Village Administrator Wayne York outlined restoration work nearing completion at Lock 1 at the intersection of SR 66 and SR 274. The Lock has been returned to its 1910 condition and landscaping design plans for the surrounding park area are being developed. Planners are also envisioning the reconstruction of the Lock Tenders' House that stood along the canal bank adjacent to the Lock. The New Bremen Historical Association has committed matching

funds for a transportation enhancement grant to construct the planned visitor center, museum and office space.

Dick Bartz, Chief of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water credited MECCA with taking the Canal Corridor vision to the next level and appreciated the partnerships that are seen with the entities along the Miami and Erie Canal.

Executive Director Neal Brady outlined the future plans and priorities of the organization. MECCA will continue to create and support grass roots canal corridor efforts to address local needs and plans for the canal in their communities. MECCA will promote the canal with programs events and activities. The Towpath Trek program was unveiled to the attendees. The walking/biking program encourages individuals and families to explore the Towpath Trail for better fitness and health.



**TRUSTEE RECOGNITION -- MECCA Executive Director Neal Brady (right) presents founding MECCA trustee Kevin Haver with a commemorative pen and pencil sets fashioned from wood taken from the original Six Mile Creek Aqueduct. Haver and MECCA founding Trustee Dave Stilwell were awarded the pen and pencil sets at the annual MECCA Partnership Dinner.**

## Spencerville Plans Improvements

*By Sean Chapman  
Spencerville Village Administrator*

The village of Spencerville has documented a four phase long term plan relative to transportation improvements in the community.

The first phase of The Spencerville Transportation Enhancement Project (STEP), termed the "Downtown Spencerville Street Light Replacement Project" was completed in 2001 with the installation of street lights in the business district.

The second phase, termed the "Downtown Spencerville Streetscape Project" involves scenic beautification to the downtown area. A grant of \$471,710 has been secured from the Ohio Department of Transportation, Transportation Enhancement Program for partial funding of this phase.

Additional aesthetic enhancements are scheduled along the Miami and Erie Canal at Third Street. This

Phase is scheduled for 2009 and is estimated at \$1.2 million.

Phase 3 and 4, termed "Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Enhancement Project" and Spencerville Walking Trail Improvement Project" involves scenic beautification and improved amenities along the canal corridor from Second to Fourth Street.

These phases include partnership with the Johnny Appleseed Park District to enhance the canal towpath trail from the Deep Cut Park south of the corporation limit and north to Old Acadia Park.

Additional pedestrian trails will connect the new school and community library. The trail network created will provide access for expanded recreational use on the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath Trail, provide safe routes to schools and improve walking access to business within the community. Phases 3 and 4 are proposed for completion in 2011-2012.

## Delphos Canal Commission Celebrates 20th Anniversary

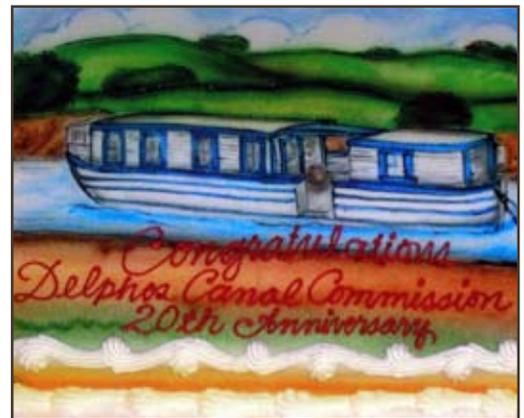
*By Louis Hohman  
Permanent Trustee  
Delphos Canal Commission*

The Delphos Canal Commission celebrated its 20th Anniversary with a Boatman's Breakaway Dinner and awards presentation on March 11, 2007 at the Delphos Eagles Lodge.

The annual "Breakaway Dinner" is a tradition to celebrate the canal era times when the ice in the canal would thaw and the canal boats could resume their travel. Canal commerce would be restored as boats moved goods, materials and passengers.

Canal Angel Awards were presented to Sue Lang, Chairperson of the Delphos Canal Restoration Committee, Steve Dorsten of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water and MECCA Executive Director Neal Brady.

The awards were in recognition of their work in the development of the Strategic Plan for the Restoration of the Miami and Erie Canal in the Greater Delphos Area and their involvement in the Canal Restoration Project in the Delphos.



**Artistic design on a cake that was enjoyed by those celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Delphos Canal Commission.**



**Recreational opportunities along the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath Trail will be a big part of the corridor's future**

# MECCA: The Future of the Corridor

*By L. Neal Brady  
Executive Director*

*Miami-Erie Canal Corridor Association*

The focus of the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association (MECCA) involves promoting connections in our communities. Just as the canal connected communities during the canal era, the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath Trail and a network of trails will connect people with places.

Being able to access cultural, historical, institutional and natural places make residents and visitors more engaged in valuing and caring for their communities. The trail system can offer a new way for citizens to get to know their community they live in and their neighbors. The Towpath Trail is designated as part of the 1,400 mile Buckeye Trail and the North Country National Scenic Trail that extends from New York to North Dakota. The Towpath Trail truly links cities communities, states and regions. Linear trail development can greatly increase recreational opportunities to a larger number of people at a much lower cost than acquiring large acreage parkland. Individuals and families benefit by using the trail for alternative recreational pursuits and activities. MECCA is working to open sections of the Miami and Erie Canal to connect more people and places.

MECCA continues to encourage environmental education in the local communities. Engaging and motivating youth as well as older individuals in conservation, trail building and stewardship in the Towpath Trail. Gaining individual involvement in canal clean-up efforts, special trail events and activities can create and build an appreciation of the natural as well as the historic resources that exist in the Corridor. Community awareness and commitment to the development of the Towpath Trail will increase the quality of life in the canal region. MECCA is supporting and

promoting local community canal projects.

Trails can be a significant part of a communities health and fitness. MECCA with the support of The Dannon Company is encouraging the recreational use of the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath Trail with the "Towpath Trek" Program. This educational and recreational program will help residents "step out to better health". It is believed a well planned trail network system can help counter unhealthy habits and trends. An increase in sedentary lifestyles has caused the overall health of our citizens to decline and results in increased health care cost. "Towpath Trek" encourages fitness in people of every ability, young and old and in-between. As individuals and families explore sections of the Towpath Trail, a lifestyle change focusing on better health and preventable disease can begin.

MECCA is working to build partnerships to gain mutual benefits for all concerned. The Towpath Trail and the Canal Greenway is a vital infrastructure for the region. Working with homebuilders and developers, state and local government, business and corporations, a feasibility study has been created. A comprehensive master plan is being developed. The plan will serve as a guide for a unified and coordinated vision of the recreational corridor. The completion and acceptance of an organized Towpath Trail plan will allow local governments to be more competitive for state, federal and grant funds for projects. As trail use expands in the communities, local business owners may see the advantage marketing to trail users and enthusiasts.

MECCA sees a valued future for the Towpath Trail. Local communities and the Park Districts are planning and completing projects that assure a high quality of life in the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor.

# Emergency Bank Repair Keeps Towpath Open

By Steve Dorsten  
ODNR, Division of Water

In September of 2006 it was noticed a section of the Miami and Erie Canal towpath was starting to slide into the St. Marys River bed. The site is located less than a mile north of U.S. 33 where the canal and river meet, separated solely by the towpath.

The St. Marys River over years of erosion undermined the 12 foot high canal bank removing the “base foundation” causing the failure. If a repair was not completed soon the bank would fail and the canal would flow into the river.

Using the consulting firm of BBC+M of Dublin, Ohio a repair design was formed. Bids were advertised and accepted for the project through ODNR Division of Engineering. The contract was awarded to Shinn Brothers of Celina, Ohio in January 2007.

Working in the winter conditions of February the contractor was able to remove all the trees and install rip rap



**Area of eroded canal bank that was slated for emergency repair.**

in the 400-foot of the slide area. Type “B” stone, large stones of 12” to 24” in size, was placed along the riverside of the towpath and type “D”, stone 6” to 12” in size, was placed along the canal water edge. Another area of similar potential failure was also stabilized. That site is located 1100’ north of

U.S. 33 and entails a length of 215’ of towpath.

The riprap has been installed leaving only the grading and seeding to be done when weather allows. The repair project is being funded through ODNR Division of Water.

## State Heritage Corridor Follows Miami-Erie Canal

By L. Neal Brady  
Executive Director  
Miami-Erie Canal Corridor Association

Designated by the Ohio Department of Development, a 59-mile section of canal corridor through Shelby, Auglaize and Allen Counties, the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor is a viable asset as a travel and tourism destination and provides an enhanced quality of life.

The canal setting and the towpath trail- the 59 mile section of canal from Piqua to Delphos and the 11 mile Sidney Feeder (Sidney to Lockington) is mostly intact and is available for public access. The numerous structures and the actual canal prism can be observed and the towpath can be hiked. Several sections of the trail has been improved and enhanced for bicycle access. Access to the trail provides individuals the opportunity to understand the historical significance of canal and instill an appreciation of the resource base.

The communities along the canal prospered by the commerce that moved on the waters. The water power that became available by the construction of the locks, spillways and ponds offered an opportunity for industries

and manufacturers to use the available water power to create goods that were sold and shipped to markets outside the local region. The strong cultures of the immigrants that moved into the region make the communities livable and sustain a high quality of life.

Construction of the Canal as the first interstate transportation system opened the wilderness of western Ohio. The Miami and Erie Canal was constructed through wetlands, swamps, along rivers, and on steep hillsides. The canal embankments created barriers to development by farmers and developers.

The canal was a linkage through the region that enabled individuals to extend out from the concentrated communities. The ease of transportation, workers with their families were able to live further from the developed community and still be able to easily acquire goods and services as they were needed.

The Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor is a unique region. With the many historic themes and amenities, the designated area deserves recognition, preservation, protection and development.

## Buckeye Trail Planning More Work on M-E Towpath

On June 8, 2006, representatives from ODNR, the Buckeye Trail Association and MECCA Executive Director Neal Brady toured and viewed several sections of the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath in Putnam, Paulding and Defiance Counties. The tour began in Ottoville with a driving tour to Junction and into Defiance County.

The Buckeye Trail association, under the direction of current President Herb Hulls and Statewide Trail Coordinator Rick Adamson, are interested in enhancing the quality and safety of the designated trail network through Paulding and Putnam Counties. To improve the trail network, it is anticipated that approximately 20-plus miles of trail that currently follows county roadways will be moved onto the State of Ohio owned canal towpath.

To aggressively pursue their goal, a crew of Buckeye Trail Volunteers worked on the canal trail in the Junction area July 2-6, 2006. More than six miles of towpath trail was opened for foot traffic beginning in southern Defiance Country south to Brown Township Road 38 in Paulding County. Their work continued through daily rainstorms and hot temperatures. The workers were extremely pleased with the length of trail opened, exceeding original expectations.

Additional trail project work is being planned for Putnam County in June. For more information visit the BTA web site at [www.buckeyetrail.org](http://www.buckeyetrail.org).



**Buckeye Trail Association President Herb Hulls (right) and Trail Coordinator James Sprague pause during work in Northwest Ohio converting abandoned towpath into hiking trail.**



**Tree removal begins for work on improved towpath trail.**

## Work Begins on Walk Path

*By Steve Dorsten  
ODNR, Division of Water*

Personnel from Division of Water St. Marys Office began the arduous task of removing trees, stumps and brush along the waters edge of the Miami and Erie Canal between Glynwood Rd. and Brewer Rd. The 3000-foot stretch of towpath is being prepared to accept a 10 foot wide crushed limestone walk path. It is necessary to rebuild the canal bank due to the deteriorating condition of the embankment and its close proximity to the St. Marys River. Preparatory work includes removal of woody vegetation, installing and compacting clay dirt to original canal bank design and lining the bank with riprap. The riprap is 6" to 12" quarried stone used to stabilize the earth embankment and prevent erosion.

The work is part of a larger project of laying a stone walk path from Glynwood Rd. to Lock 14 Park, a distance of 2 miles. Auglaize County's Heritage Trails Park District received a Recreational Trails Grant from the State of Ohio to fund the walk path project. Heritage Trails Park Board members David Stilwell, Frank Murray and Jim Heinrich will administer the funding while the installation will be performed by the Division of Water. Preparation work will be funded through Division of Water resources.

Brewer Road north to Lock 14 Park is a trough cut design or an excavation of dirt to create the canal bed versus the making of an embankment and impounding water above existing ground levels as is the case south of Brewer Road to Glynwood Road. The excavated section of the Miami and Erie Canal will take little preparation before the geotextile fabric and crushed limestone walk path is installed. A similar previous project was completed along the towpath last year from High St. in St. Marys to U.S. 33, a length of one mile.

# St. Marys Begins Work on Lock 13 Project



*By Todd Fleagle  
Manager of Indus. and Com. Development  
City of St. Marys*

The City of St. Marys has recently revealed an artist's rendition of the Lock 13 area of the Miami & Erie Canal in Uptown St. Marys. The rendition is the first marketing tool the City has developed to highlight plans to attract new business to the historic 32,000 square foot Cotton Mill building that lies adjacent to Canal Lock 13.

The overall plan for the area is to offer connectivity from the K.C. Geiger Park area, along the Canal into Memorial Park, and north to 40 Acre Pond. The plan north of High Street includes the demolition/abatement of the existing Cotton Mill Powerhouse, new curb and gutters, and the construction of a parking lot that will accommodate visitors along the Canal and to serve the redeveloped Cotton Mill building.

The area near the Lock will be landscaped to highlight the renovated building and to offer a pleasant appearance for the new banking center that First Financial Bank plans

to construct on the east side of the Lock 13 area. A new parking area is also being constructed to serve the City of St. Marys Utility/Tax building drive-thru window. The drive-thru will be constructed to permit pedestrian traffic from Memorial Park, under the Spring Street bridge, along the Lock, and under the High Street bridge to the stoned area near the City Power Plant.

The City is working with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources

(ODNR) for plans to renovate Lock 13. The interior walls of the Lock appear to be in excellent condition, with the tentative plans calling for recapping the deteriorated sections of the exposed concrete.

An investor group has already expressed interest in the main floor of the Cotton Mill building to place a quality sit-down style restaurant that will highlight the Cotton Mill and Miami & Erie Canal related history.

## Trees Planted at Kuenning - Dicke Natural Area

*By Brad Smith  
New Bremen Foundation*

The New Bremen Foundation has completed an aggressive tree planting program where more than 100 trees were planted in the park area. All trees species that were planted are native and found naturally in Ohio. Over the next several years, trees of different sizes will be planted and designated grass fields areas will be permitted to grow wild and over time revert to natural succession growth of woody vegetation. An entrance drive and parking areas has been developed on the north edge of the park accessed off of Lock 2 Road. The pond construction has been completed with the banks and shorelines planted with grasses. In summer 2007, paved walkways will be installed and a network of mowed trails will be established. Tom Kuenning is currently researching and collecting examples of monuments to be considered for installation at memorial sites within the Park. Work on plans and projects are moving forward with a formal dedication of the Kuenning - Dicke Natural Area on Memorial Day 2008.



**North and south views of Lock One and the Canal in downtown New Bremen. Work on the project continues.**

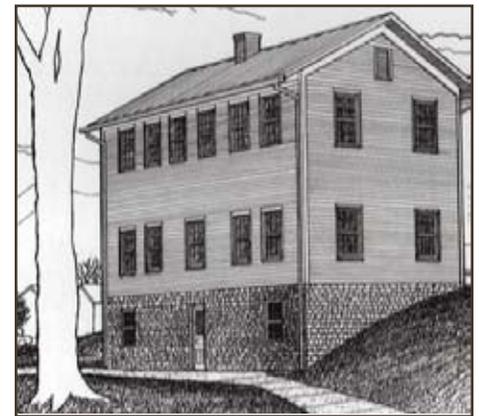
## **Lock 1 and Canal Renovation Nearing Completion**

The rebuilding of Lock One North is moving towards the final stages. The last of the concrete work was completed prior to winter. The wooden gates will be completed soon. The 22 foot long, 2000 pound beams used to open the gates are quite impressive and the last of that installation should be completed during May or June. This has been a very unusual project and Mote Engineering of Greenville has done an excellent job in designing a structure that should last longer than the 1910 lock.

Freytag and Associates of Sidney are working on the plans for the landscaping of the Lock One area in downtown New Bremen. A working group has been meeting with Freytag to be sure that the project achieves the maximum effect for historic interpretation, beautification and

off street parking. The landscaping work is targeted for summer and some interpretative signage is planned.

A related project came along as an afterthought. Since the canal would have to be drained for the Lock One North project anyway, it was the obvious time to remove nearly 3 foot of silt and restore the canal banks south to Plum Street, originally the location of a Bump Bridge. This first section was nearly completed in August and the neighborhood to the south requested that the canal work be extended south to the village corporation limits. The wet fall and warm winter were a hindrance and real progress wasn't made until the ground froze in late January. After decades of erosion, the towpath south of Plum Street had to be widened in order to get the construction equipment into the work areas.



**Proposed Lockkeepers house.**

The New Bremen Historic Association has announced a new project to build a full size replica of the Lockkeepers House in its original location on the west side of Lock One North. A grant application has been filed and if approved, the three story building will be used as a Canal Museum.

## **Recreation Opportunities Abound on the Miami and Erie Canal**

The Miami and Erie Canal Recreational Corridor is a linear landscape of significant and diverse character that becomes the ideal facility for outdoor recreation. The historic towpath is truly a thoroughfare that offers opportunities for recreational purposes.

The towpath of the Miami and Erie Trail from Piqua to Delphos is part of the Buckeye Trail and the North County National Scenic Trail. This trail provides the opportunity for hiking and horseback activities as well as non-motorized activities such as bicycling, and cross country skiing. The watered sections of the canal offer water based activities such as fishing and canoeing.

The recreational benefits of trails are obvious. Trails can promote the quality of life by promoting physical fitness, protecting and preserving wildlife habitat and creating a buffer between diverse adjacent land uses. This historic trail links the communities it helped to establish when the transportation system brought prosperity to western Ohio.

Today, this trail provides opportunities for interpretation where users can learn about nature, history and the culture of the region. MECCA is dedicated to raising awareness and public support of the abundant resources along the Miami and Erie Canal.

# TAX-DEDUCTIBLE GIVING TO MECCA

Many people consider making charitable contributions for income tax purposes. Remember, MECCA is a tax-exempt entity and contributions to it are tax deductible. Contributions can be in cash or "in kind". Appreciated stock can be given to a charity and the donor gets a charitable deduction for the fair market value of the stock on the date of the gift. If you are considering charitable gifts please consider a contribution to MECCA to help promote the historic canal corridor.

## Miami Erie Canal Corridor Association (MECCA) Membership/Donation Form



*Please check membership or donation level desired*

\$15 Individual..... \_\_\_\_\_ \$25 Family..... \_\_\_\_\_

\$50 Sponsor..... \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 Partner..... \_\_\_\_\_

\$250 Corridor Partner..... \_\_\_\_\_

One-time tax deductible contribution of..... \_\_\_\_\_

Total amount enclosed..... \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

*Clip and Mail This Form to: MECCA • P.O. Box 246 • New Bremen, Ohio • 45869*

**Miami Erie Canal Corridor Association  
130 S. Washington St.  
P.O. Box 246  
New Bremen, Ohio 45869**

**Presorted  
Standard  
US Postage Paid  
New Bremen, Ohio  
PERMIT #5  
Zipcode 45869**