

Kuenning Dicke Park to Open in May

Submitted by Tom Kuenning

The 67-acre Kuenning Dicke Natural Area along the canal between Lock One in New Bremen and Lock Two is developing rapidly into a peaceful destination for local walkers, hikers and people biking along the canal corridor. The New Bremen Foundation is planning a dedication ceremony on Memorial Day, May 26, 2008, which will open the area for public use.

Just three short years ago the Natural Area was side-by-side parcels of farmland owned by Tom Kuenning and the Jim Dicke family. It is nestled between the Wirth Ditch on the west and the Miami and Erie Canal on the east. Since the land was partially donated to and partially purchased by the New Bremen Foundation, its conversion into a natural area has been moving forward swiftly. In the first year, a three acre, 25-foot deep lake was constructed behind an earthen dam that blends into the contours of the surrounding land. The lake was stocked with a variety of fish while it was still filling from normal runoff. The lake is now filled, and from the thousands of minnows seen swimming under the recent ice cover, it is on its way to being a premier local fishing hole. Fishing in the lake will be catch and release.

During the past two years more than 400 native trees, some with trunks over six inches in diameter, have been planted in the natural area intended for a return of native forests. Other parts of the natural area will be developed into prairie tracts that were also originally found in this part of Ohio. With the emergence of wildlife cover on the land,



A three-acre fishing lake is one of many natural features in the Kuenning Dicke Natural Area, which is slated to formally open May 26, 2008.

native animals are quickly returning. Already spotted in the natural area are numerous rabbits, and field mice and with them the return of several species of raptors. Deer and wild turkeys have also been observed by people that are walking through the area on the rough trails that have been mowed. Hopefully, the quail and pheasants will soon be back.

A gravel parking lot is in place on the north side of the natural area just off the Lock Two Road. From there it is just a short walk to the lake, the trails of the natural area, and the towpath. Just west of the towpath along the canal a primitive campsite for hikers along the Miami and Erie Canal trail has been graded, seeded and mowed. No motor vehicles are permitted on the towpath or in the natural area.

The New Bremen Foundation plans to continue development of the Kuenning Dicke Natural Area for use by a full spectrum of the public for recreation and the study of nature. Key to this will be construction of a paved trail that will serpentine roughly around the perimeter of the natural area and along the towpath. From this main trail, various unpaved side trails will be maintained. The parking lot will be paved. The primitive campsite will also be developed further with a picnic table or two and eventually a three sided shelter for campers. The prairie areas will be seeded with native prairie plants. A well is in place and soon a small pump house will be built to provide a reliable supply of water. Over the longer term, the New Bremen Foundation hopes to build a nature center at the site. Key to the pace of these future developments is additional donations to the tax deductible, public, New Bremen Foundation Park Fund, P.O. Box 97, New Bremen, OH 45869.



Work has begun on trails through the prairie areas of the Kuenning Dicke Natural Area.



Walkway construction in Sidney along the feeder canal. The path is now open with plans for additional trail in the future.

Walkway Opens in Sidney

*Submitted by Steve Stilwell
Sidney City Manager
MECCA Board of Trustees*

This fall, the City of Sidney constructed a 3400 foot asphalt path along the towpath of the former Sidney Feeder Canal, with the support of the Ohio Department of Transportation, Enhancement Program (\$284,200), City local funds totaling \$58,500 and the generosity of Cargill Corporation (\$10,000 from Local plant, \$10,000 corporate foundation and \$10,000 in-kind contribution).

This section of path begins at the southwest corner of Sidney's Graceland Cemetery and parallels the Miami River in a southwesterly direction. This path can be accessed either from Graceland Cemetery or from the Maple Leaf Subdivision or, for walkers only, along Westlake Drive.

In 2010, again with the assistance of Ohio Department of Transportation Enhancement Grant (\$342,200), the second section of approximately 4000 feet will be improved south to the City's south corporate boundary,

almost two-thirds of the way to Vandemark Road.

A bit of history is in order. In the 1840's, the Sidney Feeder Canal was built to move Miami River water at a higher elevation to serve the Lockington Locks. It also provided the City of Sidney and Port Jefferson with canal boat access to transport goods and materials.

This canal path on the feeder canal was built on the side of a 100 foot ± slope along the south border of the City of Sidney. This is a heavily wooded section, home of a large number of native species of birds, mammals and other animal life. It is also a lineal strip preserving natural vegetation, including spring wildflowers, mushrooms, hardwoods, papaw trees, etc. The path also provides direct access to the many Miami River fishing locations as the river flows toward the City of Piqua.

Plans are being made to celebrate the grand opening of Sidney's new section of the path during the National Trail Day on June 7, 2008. Further information will be forthcoming as it is developed.

Heritage Trails P.D. Hires Ex. Director

A new era for Auglaize County has been ushered in by the Heritage Trails Park District. The Board of Park Commissioners is pleased to announce the hiring of Allison Brady to serve as the Executive Director for the Park District starting December 2007.



The Heritage Trails Park

District was formed in 1996 under Ohio Revised Code, section 1545 and by order of Probate Judge Mark Spees. The current Park Commissioners are Dave Stilwell, Jim Heinrich and Frank C. Murray. These men serve as volunteers concerned about preservation of natural and recreation areas in Auglaize County.

The name "Heritage Trails" comes from Auglaize County's rich history of transportation routes, ranging from Indian hunting trails, to canals and interstate highways. These trails continue to bring prosperity to our county, and the Heritage Trails Park District can provide the vehicle to bring added value to our county and its citizens.

The Heritage Trails Park District has established parks at Deep Cut and Lock 14 along the Miami and Erie Canal. The Park District is currently administrating a \$125,000 grant for a multi-purpose trail linking Lock 14 Park to Glynwood Road and 40 Acre Pond.

Allison Brady comes to us with 23 years of experience in park and recreation management. She has served as the Park District Director of Medina County and has experience in park development. More recently she directed 4-H Camp Palmer for the Ohio State University Extension raising funds to modernize the facility. Her experience in outdoor recreation, planning and land preservation will be a great asset to the Heritage Trails Park District.

Towpath Gets Facelift in Preparation for Trail

*Submitted by Steve Dorsten
ODNR, Division of Water*

Dirt, dirt and more dirt is what is needed to rebuild the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath to its original shape before the 10-foot wide limestone path can be constructed North of 40-Acre Pond.

The Division of Water, St. Marys Office staff in partnership with the Heritage Trail Park District of Auglaize County is rebuilding the canal bank between Glynwood Road and Brewer Road. Time and weather has eroded some sections of the towpath and canal banks to a width of only five to six feet.

Currently, it is not possible to get maintenance equipment through the sections on the towpath. Once the towpath is rebuilt to the correct dimensions, a layer of rip rap or 12" to 18" stone will be placed along the waters edge to prevent the canal bank from washing away again.

In this section, the canal banks are elevated above the adjacent lands creating essentially a dam or dike. These banks maintained a sufficient water level to permit

canal boat traffic. A minimum of four feet of water was required to carry a loaded canal boat.

Typically Mother Nature doesn't allow the digging and hauling of clay dirt in mid-January. The opportunity to acquire and haul fill dirt to the trail site arose when the City of St. Marys began the construction of a new waste water treatment plant. Excess material can be taken from the construction site as long as the canal banks remain frozen sufficiently to support a loaded dump truck. In 2007, more than 100 truckloads of material was hauled and dumped.



ODNR, Division of Water is rebuilding towpath along a 2.1 mile stretch as part of a Clean Ohio Trails Grant received by the Heritage Trails Park District.

This winter as conditions have been favorable, 90 loads of material have been moved in the last week of January. Yet there is still more to be done. Approximately 500 linear feet of canal bank will require material.

Grubbing of trees and brush is also being performed to establish clearance for equipment. Work will continue through out the year. The project scope includes the limestone path stretching from Glynwood Rd. (40 Acre) to Lock 14 a distance of 2.1 miles all within the Heritage Trails Park District.

Stoner Ditch Improvements

*Submitted by Steve Dorsten
ODNR, Division of Water*

Auglaize County Engineer's Office is partnering on another project with Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water. The Stoner Ditch Project is located five miles north of St. Marys, more specifically at the toe of the east canal bank running parallel for a distance of 1,260 feet. The improved drainage ditch is designed to be located away from the bottom of the canal bank with a maintenance road to be established adjacent to the canal bank. Construction also involves brush and tree clearing, creation of brush wildlife habitat and erosion control. The project is designed to increase water flow, stabilize the canal bank, reduce flooding and protect the adjacent wetlands.

Boatman's Breakaway Planned For March 16

The Delphos Canal Commission, Boatman's Breakaway will be Sunday, March 16, 2008 at the Delphos Eagles.

The annual benefit gathering will offer a great dinner and entertainment will begin at 6 p.m. A \$20 per person donation is requested. Call 419-692-9217 for reservations to this event.

The Boatman's Breakaway is a celebration of a canal era time when the ice would break on the frozen canal. At that time the canal boat captain and crew could breakaway from their winter mooring and make way on the canal moving good, supplies, and passengers. Join the Delphos Canal Commission as they continue to celebrate their canal heritage.

Walk With Nature Attracts 600 Hikers

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

On Sunday Oct. 21 approximately 600 walkers enjoyed a brisk sunny walk along the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath in the St. Marys and New Bremen area.

This annual organized hike has been conducted for 39 years and was coordinated by Eldon Montague in the early years. In 1989, The St. Marys Area Chamber of Commerce and the St. Marys Kiwanis Club took on the walk as a community project. In 1997 the walk merged with the New Bremen - New Knoxville Rotary Club Canal Walk. This year's walk was the ninth consecutive years of the combined walk and was co-chaired by Rotarian Tom Fledderjohann and Kiwanian Stan Davis.

Steve Dorsten, Supervisor with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water established the registration table in Memorial Park at the entrance to the "Belle of St. Marys" canal boat.

Members offered bottled water and hot dogs as refreshments to the walkers.

Tom Fledderjohann anchored the southern end of the walk route and discussed the history as well as the much potentials for development the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor offers today.



Hikers pause near St. Rt. 219 for canal history lesson.

Stan Davis greeted participants at the Canal Boat and provided historical perspective of the Canal in the community. His fellow Kiwanis

Forty Acre Pond at Glynwood Road was the north terminus, where Leroy Goodwin greeted participants and provided historic and natural description of the canal structure. The St. Marys City School System provided bus transportation with stops at Glynwood Road, Memorial Park in St. Marys and at the Canal intersection on State Route 219. Numerous Kiwanis

members were stationed at various locations along the trail to assure all participants had a positive experience in this annual event.

Historic Signage Sought for Famous Canal "Junction"

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

The village of Junction in the canal era was thought to be a town that would grow to a major metropolitan area. Junction was appropriately named as the town developed at the location where the Miami and Erie Canal joined with the Wabash and Erie Canal. It was a significant place of commerce and trade as goods came from the north, the south and the west on the canal transportation system.

Currently, the canal prism is somewhat visible but there are no informational or interpretative signs that reflect the importance of the community during the canal era. This could change as Jerry D. Price of Junction is spearheading an effort to have a historical marker placed at the confluence of the Miami and Erie and Wabash and Erie Canals. Jerry wife's family has lived on the banks of the Miami and Erie Canal for more than 150 years and believes it should be recognized for its historical significance.

The Ohio Historical Society issues markers, which have to meet several requirements. The place or individual on the marker must have made a significant historical contribution, embody the distinctive characteristics of a period and more.

MECCA is supportive of the placement of any type of

interpretative and historical signage in Junction. The project would bring greater recognition to the community and the historic canal systems. The Buckeye Trail Association has been actively working on the Towpath Trail in the Junction area. Several miles of towpath trail has been cleared of brush and trees providing access to the historic structures in the area. Flat Fork Creek Aqueduct, mile markers and Lock 32 are accessible and share the story of the hard work required to build the canal system.



Traffic jam during canal days in Junction, Ohio.



Work Continues Along M-E Canal in St. Marys

*Submitted by Todd Fleagle
Manager of Industrial and Community Development
City of St. Marys*

Contractors have installed a new deep trench 21” sewer line on both sides of the Canal in Uptown St. Marys. The sewer replacement is the first step in preparing for new developments planned near the Miami and Erie Canal.

The City of St. Marys currently has a contractor working on replacing the Utility and Tax building parking structure on the west side of the canal with the new structure scheduled to be completed in the Spring of 2008. The new structure is being constructed to allow a pedestrian walkway to be built to connect Memorial Park (in Uptown St. Marys) to the towpath area to the north towards Forty Acre Pond and beyond.

The sewer replacement also permits the re-development of the parcel east of the Canal, where First Financial Bank plans to construct a new banking center. Engineering issues are still being finalized for the new banking center which will provide a drive-thru lane from High Street (across from St. Marys Hardware) to Spring Street. The new bank will face Spring Street.

In addition, Lock 13, which was exposed after being covered by portions of the Cotton Mill building for over 60 years, is undergoing renovations. The City of St. Marys has cut the deteriorated edges of the cement surface and will pour new concrete for a final cap. Plans are also being developed to build lock doors on the renovated Lock 13 walls.

The City of St. Marys has received approval to utilize local CDBG RLF account funds for the planned re-development of the Canal area north of High Street. Environmental abatement and demolition of the Cotton Mill Powerhouse Building has already occurred at the site. Now a new access road and parking lot will be constructed near the footprint of the old building that will serve as a trail head for the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath area.

The parking lot will also be large enough to serve the planned re-development of the Cotton Mill site that lies between High Street and Spring Street adjacent to Lock 13. Other North High Street canal area developments to be built in 2008 include a cement walkway with historic type lighting to be constructed on the west side of the Canal, landscape buffers, and new signage to depict the historic features of the canal.

Seventeen MVOC members spent the day enjoying each other's company and exploring the Miami Erie Canal in Auglaize County. Back row from left: Kathy Hemmerick, Julie Webb, Mike Nelson, Steve Demmy, Jeremiah Stager, Dave Todd, Gary Mount, Andy Niekamp, Dwight Gehring, Donna Gehring. Kneeling from left: Linda Clevenger, Lindy McDonough. Front row from left: Sue Demmy, Catanya Stager, Sandy Todd, Ella Himes, Sharon Mullins.

Outdoor Club Tours Canal

Submitted By Andy Niekamp

On November 18, 2007, 17 members from the Miami Valley Outdoor Club in Dayton, Ohio spent the day touring areas of the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor in Auglaize County. The “Canal Trek” outing involved hiking along three sections of the canal towpath and visiting other areas of the canal and traveling the Canal Corridor in two passenger vans.

The day started at 9 a.m. at the Minster Youth Center for a viewing of the video titled “Ohio Canal’s Era.” The video gave the group a good lesson of the history of the Miami and Erie Canal and an appreciation for its importance. From there the group drove along the canal in Minster and hiked along the towpath from St. Rt. 119 to Lock 1 in New Bremen. The group was quite impressed with the recently restored Lock 1 North.

The group took a tour of the New Bremen History Museum and saw several canal era artifacts and photos. After lunch at Fireside Pub in New Bremen the group hiked the canal towpath section from St. Rt. 219 to Quellhorst Road. Along the way the group saw Lock 8 North, the sites of Locks 7 & 9 North and two stone canal mile markers. The group was pleasantly surprised with the impressive Lock 8 North.

The group then took a driving tour to see Grand Lake St. Marys, the bulkhead lock and the feeder canal. The final hiking section was along the towpath was from K.C. Geiger Park to Memorial Park in Saint Marys. In Memorial Park the group boarded the Belle of Saint Marys canal boat reproduction. The remainder of trip involved a driving tour to see Lock 14 North, Bloody Bridge and Six Mile Creek Aqueduct. The day ended with a visit to MECCA's front porch to see the canal display. Many thanks to Rick Thien, Greg Bergman, Delores Stienecker and Tom Rammel for helping out with the Canal Trek.



Newly acquired mules, Kit and Jake, will be pulling the General Harrison Canal Boat at the Piqua Historical Area.



General Harrison Canal Boat Gets New Power

For several years, mules Jack and Jim have worked pulling the General Harrison canalboat through the waters of the Miami and Erie Canal that is a part of the Ohio Historical Society's Piqua Historical Area.

Their efforts have acquainted thousands of visitors to the time when mules pulled boats, and Ohio moved at four miles per hour. Unfortunately, Jim contracted a viral infection that has made it necessary for retirement to loom in his immediate future. Thus the search for a replacement span (team) began.

A new span of twelve-year-old mules was located south of Lancaster, Ohio near Nelsonville in very rural Hocking County. Herman and Martha McGrady, known locally as Snuffy and Mert, owned the mules.

Kit and Jake had been their "pets" for several years and had been used in parades pulling a wagon and making visits to schools in south central Ohio.

Their recent "employment" seemed to make them a perfect match for the needs of the Piqua Historical Area.

Mules are born of a female horse with a donkey as the sire. Kit and Jake are from a Belgium mare and have the appearance of a small draft horse. Because of their Belgium ancestry they should prove to be even-tempered, hard working animals.

On Saturday, January 5, 2008 Kit and Jake made the journey by trailer to their new home in Piqua. They are currently sharing the pasture with Jack and Jim, and seem to be fitting into the Miami County landscape very well.

"We plan to begin the training process for Kit and Jake this winter. We will have to acquaint them with what they will need to do in order to provide the pull for our canal boat," said Piqua Historical Area Site Manager Andy Hite. "We will begin by putting them in harness and asking them to pull

logs. Next, they will be harnessed to something a bit more mobile, and lastly they will be asked to pull the canal boat."

Visitors will be able to meet Kit and Jake when they assume the duties of pulling the General Harrison when the Ohio Historical Society's Piqua Historical Area reopens on April 2, 2008. They will be providing three canal boat rides daily Wednesday through Sunday at 12:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m., and 4 p.m..

"Even though Jim and Jack are headed to retirement that does not mean that they are being forgotten. They have become a part of our site, and we still care about, and for them," Hite said. "We likely will search for a new home for our Jim and Jack where they can be cared for and remain around people."

"They have become 'people mules' and we don't want to take that away from them," Hite added.

Centennial Park Update

Submitted by Bill Wentz

Past President: New Bremen-New Knoxville Rotary

The New Bremen New Knoxville Rotary Club is finalizing plans for a spring construction of Phase 1 of the Rotary Centennial Park Project. The project site is located at the intersection of State Route 274 and State Route 66 in New Bremen. The project will compliment the Lock 1 Park project being undertaken by the Village of New Bremen and the New Bremen Historical Association.

The proposed Centennial Park will be situated in the northwest corner of Washington and Monroe Streets in downtown New Bremen. The project will commemorate the century mark of the founding of Rotary International. The local Rotary Club wanted to do something in the area to recognize the accomplishments of 100 years of Rotary. The New Bremen Village and the New Bremen Historical Association were restoring the locks on the south side of Monroe Street and this just seemed to fit.

The park's proposed layout, completed by Freytag and Associates out of Sidney, is a continuation of the ongoing Lock One Restoration Project. The park's centerpiece will feature a portion of the canal and is designed to match the construction on the south side of the street. It then gives way to a "canal lawn," a grassy area following the canal's original path through the area. The entire area will then be landscaped. A brick walkway that resembles the towpath and gas lighting is an option for Phase 2 of the project.

Delphos Improvements Planned

Submitted by Lou Homan

MECCA Trustee

The Delphos Veterans Council is developing plans and coordinating with the ODNR, Division of Water on improving and stabilizing canal banks in the community. The canal section under consideration is adjacent to the Veterans Memorial between Main Street and 5th Street, north of Lock 23. The plans include restoration of the canal banks to the original contour and stabilization with the placement of stone to reduce shoreline erosion.

The Delphos Canal Commission was granted \$29,500 from the Arnold C. Dienstberger Foundation Inc. The grant award is for new windows in the Museum's old bank building section. Numerous improvements are planned to the museum as funding permits. The second floor renovation is underway and an elevator will be installed. Upon completion of these two major projects the additional display areas will exhibit currently stored canal exhibits such as the remnants of the "Marguerite" canal boat

MECCA 2007 in Review

By L. Neal Brady

Executive Director

Miami-Erie Canal Corridor Association

MECCA worked to educate the local citizens of the valuable assets right here in the region, communicated with state and federal entities of the plans and goals of communities and advocated for funding and support of these projects. There were efforts to assist local government entities and organizations with the development of project plans. Marketing and promoting the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor as a travel and tourism and recreational destination area was given a high priority.

Highlights of the 2007 operational year:

- Membership level increased by 57 percent with a 13 percent increase in revenue.
- National Trails Day Celebration in early June. The New Bremen – Minster Walk Path was recognized as a valuable asset linking the communities.
- Hosted The Great Ohio Bicycle Adventure (GOBA) Tour participants in New Bremen. More than 125 cyclists stopped in the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Center.
- The "Towpath Trek" Program was initiated with more than 225 commemorative "Towpath Trek Pins" awarded to walkers and cyclists that experienced the Canal Corridor. The Dannon Company supported this efforts to encourage individuals to "Step out to Better Health" on the Towpath Trail.
- The "Towpath Times" newsletter became a full color informational promotional document. Three issues, each at 2100 copies, were printed and distributed.
- A successful relationship building program resulted in new relationships with business, corporations and local organizations. Established relationships were strengthened. MECCA supported the Buckeye Trail Association in their efforts to open canal towpath trail through Shelby, Putnam, Paulding, Defiance and Henry Counties.
- Conducted a "Partnership Dinner" for the education of elected Officials and community leaders bringing awareness to the numerous projects in the Corridor and build upon the efforts to link the corridor.

Financial Expenses in 2007

Total Expenses (excluding in-kind contributions)	\$24,020
Staff (Salary, benefits, payroll taxes)	\$9,160
Administrative Overhead (rent, supplies, etc.)	\$7,130
Communications/Outreach/Development	\$7,010

2007 Revenues

Total Revenues (w/o in-kind value)	\$29,279
Memberships < \$250	\$9,839
Donations > \$250	\$19,000
Other income (sales, interest)	\$440
In-Kind Support	\$5,218
(est. value of travel expenses, internet and telephone service)	

Upcoming Canal Corridor Events



March 16: Delphos Canal Commission Boatman's Breakaway.

March 19: MECCA Board of Trustees Meeting, 7 p.m. at Canal Heritage Center/MECCA Office.

April 20: Delphos Canal Commission Annual Meeting at the Canal Commission Museum.

May 21: MECCA Board of Trustees Meeting, 7 p.m. at Canal Heritage Center/MECCA Office.

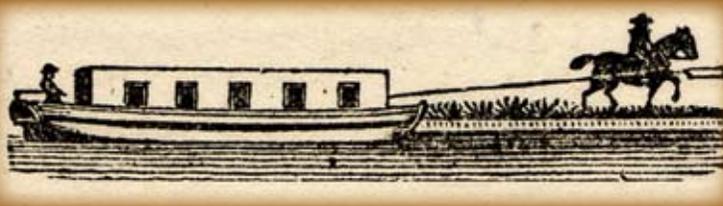
May 26: Dedication of Kuenning –Dicke Nature Park at park near New Bremen.

June 7: National Trails Day Celebration -- Dedication of Sidney Feeder Trail.

July 16: MECCA Board of Trustees Meeting, 7 p.m. at Canal Heritage Center/MECCA Office.

Sept. 17: MECCA Board of Trustees Meeting, 7 p.m. at Canal Heritage Center/MECCA Office.

Nov. 19: MECCA Board of Trustees Meeting, 7 p.m. at Canal Heritage Center/MECCA Office.



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