

Towpath Times



Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association

www.meccainc.org

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Trails Day Highlights Sidney Walkway

By L. Neal Brady
Executive Director
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On June 7, 2008 the American Hiking Society's National Trails Day was celebrated in the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor in Sidney with the opening and dedication of the recently completed Canal Feeder Walkway.

The approximately one mile asphalt path was completed in Fall 2008 with the support of the Ohio Department of Transportation, Transportation Enhancement Program (\$284,200), City local funds totaling \$58,500 and the generosity of the Cargill Corporation (\$10,000 from the local plant, \$10,000 corporate foundation and \$10,000 in-kind contribution).

The path of the Sidney Feeder Canal follows the towpath as it traverses along the side of a steep slope along the southern border of Sidney. The area is heavily wooded and home to a large number of native species of birds, mammals and other wildlife. This recreational greenway preserves the natural vegetation of the Great Miami River Valley.

The dedication and ribbon was emceed by Steve Stilwell, City Manager of Sidney and MECCA Board Member. Guest



Section of the recently-opened Sidney Canal Feeder Walkway.

speakers included Sidney Mayor Mike Barhorst; Shelby County Commissioner Larry Kleinhans; 12th District State Senator Keith Faber; Trip Brubaker, General Manager of Cargill; Steve Dorsten, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water; Donna Slagle of the Ohio Department of Transportation; and MECCA Executive Director Neal Brady. Each spoke of the importance of private and public partnerships that positively impact individuals and communities, not only in recreational opportunities but also influencing local economic and community development.

After the ribbon cutting ceremony, guests and attendees enjoyed the Walkpath that features numerous interpretative signs of canal history.

The signs were designed and installed by the Shelby County Historical Society.

This trail section of the canal towpath is one of four hikes comprising the "2008 Towpath Trek" program coordinated by MECCA. Individuals who hike all four featured trail sections are eligible to receive a special "Towpath Trek" award from MECCA.

For more information about the American Hiking Society, visit their website at www.americanhiking.org



Assisting with the Sidney Canal Feeder Walkway ribbon-cutting were (from left): Duane Gaier, Sidney Parks Department; Patrick Echemann, Sidney City Council Member; Sidney City Manager, Steve Stilwell (hidden); Senator Keith Faber, 12th District; Donna Slagle, Ohio Department of Transportation, District 7; Steve Dorsten, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water; Sidney Mayor Mike Barhorst; Trip Brubacher, General Manager, Cargill Corporation; Tom Miller, Sidney City Council Member; Frank Mariano, Sidney City Council Member; MECCA Executive Director Neal Brady; Shelby County Commissioner Larry Kleinhans; Shelby County Park District Director, Richard Millhouse; and Sidney Parks Director, Bob New



A bulldozer, partially funded by the Heritage Trails Park District, is being used trail construction on the Miami-Erie Canal towpath.

Dozer Rebuilds Towpath

*Submitted by Allison Brady
Executive Director
Heritage Trails Park District*

The old towpath once carried commerce into this rural area via canal boats now it will carry families outdoors, into nature and provide a healthy way to play.

The Heritage Trails Park District towpath trail project is underway with a little help from a large piece of equipment -- a bulldozer.

The trail project is located between Glynwood Road and Lock 14 Park and will be 2.1 miles in length. When completed later this year, the compact stone trail will be used for hiking, trail bicycles or winter cross country skiing and snow shoeing.

The trail is being built by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water and paid for with a grant from the Clean Ohio Trails Fund.

The Heritage Trails Park District received a grant for \$125,000 and will match with 20% of its own funds. Grant funding is paying for

half of the bulldozer which will be useful along the entire Miami and Erie Canal for years to come. The other half of the dozer price is being paid for by the Division of Water, Canal Land Funds

The Heritage Trails Park District received the Clean Ohio Trails funding to help connect sections of towpath trail in Auglaize County. Imagine in the future being able to hike or bike from Minster to Spencerville.

Only 2.1 miles will be improved at this time but the Board of Park Commissioners hopes to continue this park trail project and connect it with trails in towns and villages along the way.

The Heritage Trails Park District was created in 1996 to develop new and existing parks for the people of Auglaize County. Lock 14 Park and Deep Cut Park are the beginning of what will be a series of Auglaize County parks where nature and people can come together to enjoy and learn more about natural history.

Shelby County Park District to Seek Levy

The Commissioners of the Shelby County Park District have announced plans to place a 10-year, 0.5 mill levy on the November 4 general election ballot in Shelby County.

The levy if passed would generate \$447,538 a year for the operation of the park district.

The additional tax would be for the benefit of the Shelby County Park District for the operation, development, restoration and maintenance of the Miami and Erie Canal Trail, Bornhorst Woods, Renner Nature Preserve and Sanctuary, Lockington Reserve, Hardin Park and other current and future acquired recreational lands, waters or wetlands as well as conservation and preservation of the county's rural landscape.

Passage of the current levy would allow the Park District to update facilities and operate the lands for the benefit of the citizens of Shelby County. The Shelby County Park District is observing their 30th anniversary this year.

Renew MECCA Membership Now

The date in the top right of your mailing label indicates your last membership renewal or financial donation recorded for MECCA.

We thank you for your support. If a blue line is present on the label, no membership has been recorded for the 2008 calendar year. Help make a difference in the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor by completing the enclosed membership card and forwarding your tax deductible contribution to MECCA. Thank you!



MECCA Board President Tom Fledderjohann and Director Neal Brady accept the Stahr Award from Donna Grube of the Auglaize and Mercer Counties Convention and Visitors Bureau.

MECCA Nets Stahr Award

The Annual Auglaize and Mercer County Counties Convention and Visitors Bureau luncheon meeting and awards presentation was conducted April 10, 2008.

This year's Stahr Award was presented to the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association. The Stahr Award is given annually to a group, organization, or tourist industry company. The group or business is honored and recognized for its outstanding contributions to the development and promotion of tourism in the two county area.

Accepting the Stahr Award were MECCA President Tom Fledderjohann and MECCA Executive Director Neal Brady. The guest speaker at the luncheon was Amir Eylon, Director of Travel and Tourism of the Ohio Department of Development.



Amir Eylon, Director of Travel and Tourism of the Ohio Department of Development (center) inspects a Lock One interpretive sign with Tom Fledderjohann and Neal Brady.

Healthy Ohio Fitness Walk

Getting Healthy on the Towpath

The Fourth Annual Healthy Ohio Fitness Walk was held May 21, 2008 in St. Marys as part of a state wide effort to encourage 100,000 Ohioans to walk one mile.

Dozens of St. Marys residents participated in the walk sponsored by Grand Lake Health System. The walk features a two-mile section of towpath between K.C. Geiger Park and Spring Street on the Miami and Erie Canal.

The goal of the event was to promote health by getting individuals to walk. The event brought recognition and awareness of the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath Trail network and encouraged individuals to "Step Out to Better Health" on the Towpath Trail.



Participants of the Healthy Ohio Fitness Walk along the Miami-Erie Canal towpath in St. Marys.

MECCA "Thank You"

MECCA would like to say "Thank you" to the following generous contributors:

- Thanks to NKTELCO for internet access to the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Center.
- Thanks to Wayne Ziegenbusch for storing the Canal Boat Float.
- Thanks to Bright.net Ohio for hosting the www.meccainc.org website.

Spring Flooding Keeps ODNR Division of Water Crew Busy Repairing Canal Towpath

*Submitted by Steve Dorsten
ODNR, Division of Water*

This early Spring saw another 100-year flood event. It seems these events are coming every three years.

Once again flooding from the St. Marys River and the Maumee River topped the Miami-Erie Canal banks, creating major erosion damage. Approximately 75 feet of the Carl Chiles Walkpath in St. Marys and 800 feet of towpath in Grand Rapids were victims of the flood waters.

The Carl Chiles (compacted stone) Walkpath had to be completely rebuilt. Dump trucks moved in three loads of clay dirt to reshape the towpath, then three loads of stone sub-base, and finally four loads of compactable stone for the top layer were used to rebuild the trail.

The work was completed by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water St. Marys Office staff. Additionally the washout created several sandbars into the canal waterway. One major sandbar



Repaired canal towpath next to the Maumee River in Northwest Ohio.

extended 30 feet into the canal. Six loads of material were removed allowing water to effectively flow in the canal.

During flood events on the St. Marys River, flood waters filled the pedestrian access tile under U.S. Rt. 33. When the water receded, mud and debris from the adjacent fields are

deposited in the bottom of the tile. The St. Marys Office and volunteers from the St. Marys Beautification Committee removed the mud laden stone in the tile and replaced the base with clean stone. This work provides an enhanced, mud free walking experience for towpath trail users.

Rebuilding the towpath that extends from Mary Jane Thurston State Park to Grand Rapids, along the Maumee River required 16 dump truck loads of stone. This repair work involved placing materials to elevate low area on the trail to reduce the possibility of overtopping during the next 100-year flood event.

The Miami-Erie Canal coexists with adjacent rivers and creeks in western Ohio. The canal follows along the course of the rivers and in some instances as it was originally designed; river water enters the canal channel. As flooding occurs, canal bank damage is the result. The Division of Water uses techniques such as bank stabilization, elevating canal banks, erosion control, removing debris and blockages in their repair projects to minimize that damage.



ODNR Division of Water employees repair a washed-out section of the Carl Chiles Walkway north of St. Marys along the Miami-Erie Canal.

Volunteers Key to Canal Improvement Projects



Canal bank stabilization completed in Delphos.

Improvements Completed

*Submitted by Steve Dorsten
ODNR, Division of Water*

Delphos Veterans Council in partnership with the Delphos Canal Commission recently completed a canal bank stabilization project.

Coordinating efforts with the ODNR Division of Water, the Delphos Veterans Council contracted with Calvelage Excavating to perform the task. Canal banks adjacent to and the entire length of the Veterans Memorial between 3rd St. and 5th St. in Delphos were rebuilt, graded and stone placed for stabilization.

Grass seeding and a new layer of asphalt on the access also complimented the Memorial site. The Veterans Council wishes in the future to continue rebuilding and enhancing that area of the canal corridor.

Strategic Efforts of MECCA

- Pursue implementation of Resource Plan, Future of the Miami and Erie Canal. Work with communities to develop plans, support projects and increase public awareness of enhancement efforts.
- Facilitate local canal efforts and become more visible in all communities.
- Realize the completion of at least one physical project. Identify and prioritize key projects that connect the corridor and towpath. Educate elected officials and advocate for resources.
- Secure robust funding for the organization as well as projects in the corridor. Develop programs and projects that reflect the goals of corporate sponsors.
- Membership Growth (500 members are desired)
- Create and promote the Corridor as a travel and tourism destination area.
- Collaborate with organizations that inter-relate to local history, recreation and resource protection.



Clearing a pedestrian tunnel north of St. Marys.

*Submitted by Steve Dorsten
ODNR, Division of Water*

Five volunteers from the St. Marys Beautification Committee and Division of Water St. Marys Office on May 17, 2008 replaced stone lining the bottom of the access tile under U.S. Rt. 33 north of St. Marys. During the February flooding the St. Marys River overflowed its banks and streamed through the pedestrian walkway. Once the flood waters receded, dried dirt and debris from the adjacent field covered the stone creating a muddy walkway. Clean stone was installed to create a more pleasant walking experience.

Delphos also was the site of a volunteer day. Twenty five volunteers on behalf of the Delphos Canal Commission and the St. Marys Canal Office cleared 400 feet of towpath in Delphos. Clearing consisted of cutting, removing and chipping trees and brush from the canal bank for easier walking and visibility. The project area runs from Clime St. to Cleveland St.

More volunteer days are scheduled for the St. Marys and Delphos area.



Clearing brush along the canal banks in Delphos.

Buckeye Trail Association Volunteers Open New Towpath Trail in Northwest Ohio



The Buckeye Trail Association "Trail Crew" opens up new sections of off-road trail along the Miami-Erie Canal in Paulding County.

At the end of March and the first few days of April, of this year, the Trail Crew from the Buckeye Trail Association added 3.8 miles of off-road trail along the historic Miami and Erie Canal Towpath in Henry County east of Napoleon.

The Trail Crew is working its way through Mary Jane Thurston State Park. Work on the Towpath Trail has generated much interest and developed several partnerships in the Henry County and Napoleon area.

One such partnership involved the donation of treated lumber and materials to construct a wooden bridge over a drainage ditch. The bridge now connects sections of the Towpath Trail that were previously inaccessible. The bridge is 35 feet long and six feet wide to accommodate bicycle traffic.

Four volunteers assembled the bridge in one and half days. Initial site preparations were completed at a second bridge location. Donated utility poles will be installed to accommodate the 55-foot span. During the week, the regular camp location at Mary Jane Thurston State

Park suffered its worst flooding in years. Campers were relocated to the blacktop at the nearby Marina. After several nights of rain and high winds, the trail crew cut short the scheduled week of trail work.

A work Crew of 13 to 17 volunteers of the Buckeye Trail Association participated in a multi-day trail clearing and development in Paulding County from May 31 to June 5.

During the week, the crew relocated 2.5 miles of designated trail from the county road way to Miami and Erie Canal Towpath. The Towpath Trail was cleared of vegetation; tread way contours were cut, debris was removed and culverts were installed at waterway crossings. Due to the thick undergrowth, the workers could only see 10 to 15 feet as the trail was being cleared. The

work was completed to improve the Buckeye Trail and the North County National Scenic Trail by relocating the trail from along county roadways onto the Miami and Erie Canal.

When finished in Paulding County the Buckeye Trail will be nearly completely off-road and certified by the National Park Service and the North Country Trail.

Neal Brady, Executive Director for MECCA assisted and was impressed with the quality and dedication of all the good the volunteers who obviously knew what they were doing.

The work crew camped on a local farmer's nice side yard near Junction. A shower and flush toilet facilities were greatly appreciated. Thanks goodness for trail angels!

The Buckeye Trail Work Crew is scheduled to return to Paulding County Oct. 3-9, 2008. The work scheduled will be to clear and open trail on a few short sections which will achieve the goal of a continuous off-road trail through Paulding County.

For more information on the activities of the Buckeye Trail Association, go to www.buckeyetrail.org.



BTA State Trail Coordinator Rick Adamson, and MECCA Director Neal Brady inspect a new bridge constructed on the Buckeye Trail in Henry County.

Plans set for New Bremen Lockkeeper's House

*Submitted by Jim Coons
Secretary
MECCA Board of Trustees*

As reported in the Fall 2007 issue of the *Towpath Times*, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) has awarded Transportation Enhancement funds to reconstruct the Lockkeeper's House at Lock One North in New Bremen.

ODOT had previously awarded Transportation Enhancement money for the renovation of Lock One North, which was completed in November 2007.

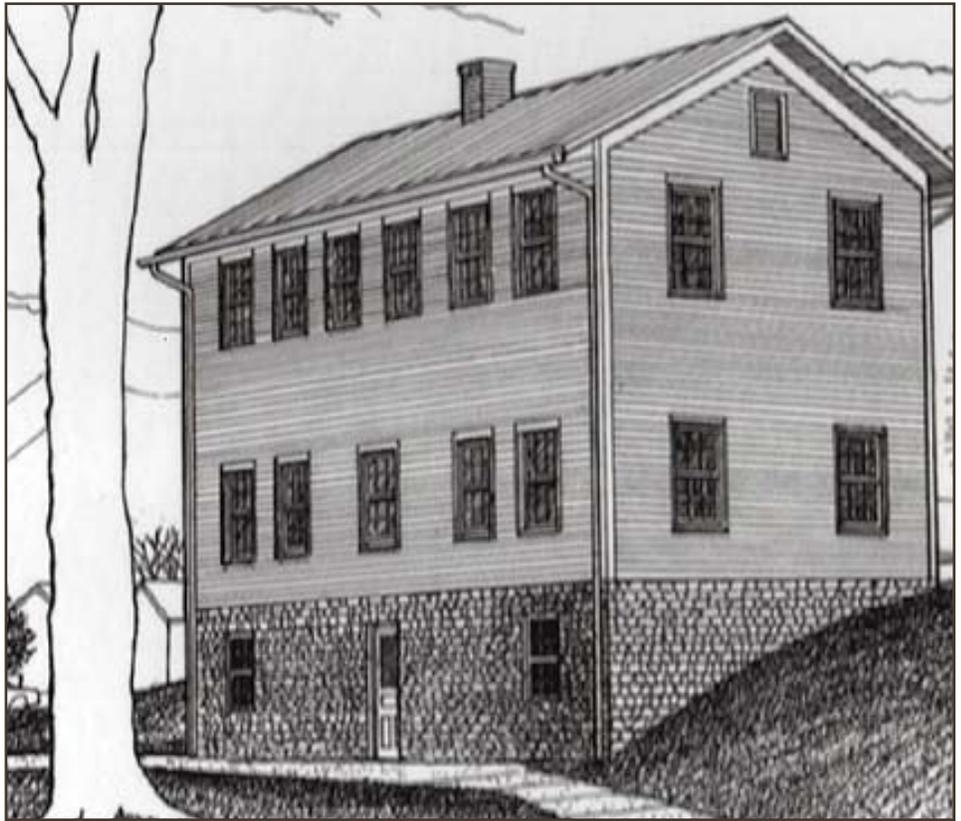
The former Lockkeeper's House (also known as the Thompson House) stood on the west side of Lock One North until the mid-1960's.

Before the building was destroyed, careful measurements and drawings were made, and photographs documented the original look and dimensions.

Garmann-Miller Associates of Minster will complete plans for the reconstruction using the drawings, notations and pictures of the former structure. During the renovation of Lock One North, the foundation for the old building was discovered, giving an exact location for the new structure to be built.

The reconstructed Lockkeeper's House will be 26' x 48' with three floors, totaling nearly 2500 sq. ft. of usable space. The main floor entry will be off the canal towpath, mechanical areas, restrooms and storage will occupy the lower floor and a large group meeting room will be on the top floor.

An elevator will be included in the building, giving handicap access to all floors. While modern construction methods will be used, efforts to recreate the style and feel of a canal-era building will be included.



Concept drawing for the Lock One Lockkeepers and Miami-Erie Canal Visitor's Center planned for Lock One North in New Bremen.

Plans for use of the building - which will be owned by the Village of New Bremen - call for the Southwestern Auglaize County Chamber of Commerce to have offices on the main floor, which will enable the building to be open during regular business hours. The upper floor meeting room can be used by the Chamber, Village Council and other community organizations for group meetings and presentations.

An office for the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association will be included. Functioning as a Visitor Center for the Miami and Erie Canal, the building will also house self-interpretive displays, canal exhibits and dioramas that will include artifacts and information from the New Bremen Historic Association, MECCA and private collections.

As announced by ODOT in September 2007, the Historic/

Scenic Transportation Enhancement Award for the Lockkeeper's House was \$479,600. This amount has been updated to \$522,000 to reflect anticipated construction costs when the project begins in the summer of 2009. Local matching funds of \$131,000 have been pledged by the New Bremen Historic Association. The group has already collected more than \$30,000 for the project, including memorial funds that were earmarked for this purpose.

MECCA Partners are invited to contribute to this effort, since the Lockkeeper's House in New Bremen will function as a Visitor Center for the entire Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor. Major donors and corporate contributions will be properly recognized. Contributions can be directed to the MECCA office, or to the New Bremen Historic Association at P.O. Box 73, New Bremen OH 45869.

Upcoming Canal Corridor Events



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

July 25-27: Celina Lake Festival

July 20-26: Shelby County Fair, Sidney.

July 28-Aug. 2: Auglaize County Fair, Wapakoneta.

Aug. 8-10: St. Marys SummerFest.

Aug. 15-17: BremenFest, New Bremen.

Aug. 16: An Evening of Feasting and Canawling, Johnson Farm, Piqua.

Aug. 29-30: Riverside Bluesfest, St. Marys.

Sept. 5-7: Sidney AppleFest.

Sept. 12-14: Lake Loramie State Park Fall Festival.

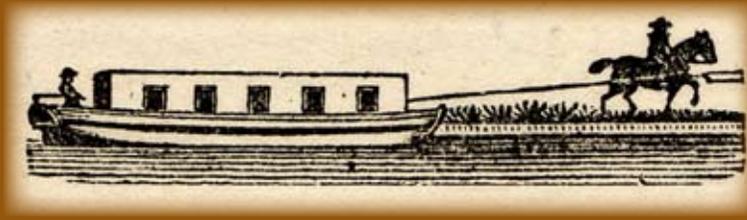
Sept. 17: MECCA Board of Trustees Meeting, 7 p.m. Site to be determined.

Sept. 18-21: Delphos Canal Days.

Sept. 20: Celebrating the Barn, Johnson Farm, Piqua.

Oct. 3-5: Minster Octoberfest.

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



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