

Towpath Times



Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association

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Historic Signage Marks Canal “Junction”

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

On Saturday, October 18, 2008, an Ohio Historical Society Historical Marker was dedicated in the Northwest Ohio community of Junction.

The importance of the once bustling canal village of Junction was given its due.

Junction was platted in 1842 and was expected to grow to the size and importance of Toledo and Fort Wayne during the canal era. But the canal system lapsed into disuse as a result of the railroads; the once thriving community became all but forgotten.

Today, the Buckeye Trail and the North Country National Scenic Trail follows the canal through Paulding County and Junction.



The placement and dedication of the marker will provide the opportunity for the public and the local residents to celebrate the rich history and share stories of the canal experience of the region.

The Ohio Historical Markers identify, commemorate and honor the important people, places and events that have contributed to the state's development.

The Ohio Historical Markers Program, administered by the Ohio

Historical Society, is a vital educational tool, informing residents and visitors about significant aspects of Ohio's past.



Presenters at the Dedication of the Miami-Erie & Wabash-Erie Canal Marker included (from left), Dick Kudner, Maumee Valley Heritage Corridor Association; Greg Wisniewski, Buckeye Trail Association; Neal Brady, Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association; Steve Dorsten, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water; Georgia Kohart, local resident and author; J.D. Britton, Ohio Historical Society; Les Weidenhamer, John Paulding Historical Society and Jerry Price, resident who spearheaded the project.



The Dannon Company teamed up with MECCA for canal displays and a "Healthy Kids" Day at the Auglaize County Fair.

MECCA at the Fair

MECCA maintained an informational exhibit at the 2008 Auglaize County Fair in cooperation with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water.

The Fair ran from July 27 through August 2. On Wednesday July 29, The Dannon Company, a Canal Corridor Partner, sponsored Kid's Activity Day at the Fair.

MECCA and several additional health, fitness and family organizations participated with Dannon to provide a wide variety of fun activities for youth and families. Activities included a magician, balloon animals, games and arts and crafts.

A "fun activity" was having your picture taken as a Miami and Erie Canal Kid. Numerous youth as well as many adults enjoyed the opportunity to see "what you would look like" as a canal kid or mule.

Jane Eber of the Southwestern Auglaize County Chamber of Commerce developed the artwork and painted the panels for MECCA. Many thanks go to Jane for her artwork and support of the organization.

MECCA also featured the Canal Boat display and Canal Kids profiles at the Lake Loramie State Park Fall Festival on September 12 -14, 2008.

Minster Historical Society Opening New Museum

*Submitted by Robert H. Thieman
Minster Historical Society*

After many months of refurbishing the former Magellan's Travel Agency building on West Fourth St. in Minster, the Minster Historical Society has finally settled into our new location and wonderful museum.

Our task was substantial but with the help of numerous and generous local donors, we installed new oak flooring, applied three coats of paint, installed musical and electronic security, architectural and museum display lighting, custom-built cabinetry, and handicap-accessible restrooms and storage closets.

We, of course, have our continually operating genealogy room and data base along with a special "Heroes Room" which we are most proud of.

Our planned official opening celebration will be in early spring

of 2009. Everyone will be advised of these planned festivities and we certainly welcome all of you to attend. Presently, you are welcome anytime. We are open on Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Our history will cover military, government, industry, church, sports, and early canal among others.

We are currently looking for additional artifacts, historical papers and photographs from years long ago.

Those of you, who are aware of any opportunities that may be available on loan, please call MECCA or the Minster Historical Society.

We are very excited and we hope we can contribute to and participate in the mission and share the vision of the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor.



Children pose in the Miami and Erie Canal Kids cutout, which was part of the youth activities display at the Auglaize County Fair.

Blazing a New Trail



*Submitted by Steve Dorsten
ODNR, Division of Water*

The sounds of a bulldozer, backhoe and chainsaws have been replaced with the sounds of a paver and dump truck, as 1300' of Towpath Trail between Glynwood Road 40 and C. R. 66A sport a new look with a 3" layer of compacted crushed stone on a layer of geo-textile fabric.

Two additional layers of compacted stone will complete the new trail surface. The next layer of material will be smaller stone mixed with fines (sandy material). The final layer will be a 2" topping of fine sand-like stone.

Preparation work was completed earlier, which included the removal of trees and brush,

hauling and compacting clay dirt to rebuild the canal embankment. The towpath was reconstructed to the original dimensions and canal bank was stabilized at the waters edge with rip rap (8" to 12" rock) for erosion control.

The compacted limestone trail will measure 10 feet wide with a one foot shoulder on each side and extend from Glynwood Rd to Lock 14 -- a distance of 2.1 miles.

The entire section of trail is within the Heritage Trails Park District of Auglaize County.

This is a joint project between The Heritage Trails Park District and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water and is funded in part through the Clean Ohio Trail Fund.



**Ohio Department of Natural Resources,
Division of Water employees begin paving the
Heritage Trails Park District towpath trail.**



Filling up for a Canal Days toast to begin the annual Delphos festival.

Heritage Trails Park District Expanding

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

Parks are growing in Auglaize County connecting our history of the past with our plans for the future.

The Heritage Trails Park District has increased its parks by leasing additional Miami and Erie Canal lands from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. The park district already holds leases for Lock 14 Park and 2 miles of towpath trail south connecting to Glynwood Road. They also lease Deep Cut Park in cooperation with Johnny Appleseed Metropolitan Park District.

The new lease management agreement will connect all the parcels from Deep Cut Park south to Glynwood Road. The Heritage Trails Park District plans to develop one long trail by seeking grant funding for Towpath Trail improvements. Grant projects would include restoration of the towpath, removal of trees on the bank of the canal, installing stone trail base, development of parking lots and signs along the trail

Renew MECCA Membership for '09

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 in 2009 with your membership. Please complete a membership card and forward your tax deductible contribution to MECCA.

Thank you!

“Toast of the City” Uncorks Delphos Canal Days

Nearly 300 people raised a glass at the Second Annual “Toast of the City” event that kicked off Delphos Canal Days held the weekend of July 18-21, 2008.

The “Toast” theme was “Jazz it Up,” and the event was held under the big top tent with lively jazz entertainment, great social interaction and delicious food presented by local restaurants and refreshments provided Heidelberg Distributing.

It was a beautiful and enjoyable evening that included presentations of community history and a tour of recently renovated historical structures in the downtown area.

The Trustees of the Delphos Canal Commission were the “Grand Marshals” of the weekend activities. At the Toast event, MECCA Director Neal Brady had the honor to recognize and praise the Delphos community for its canal clean up efforts and project work in the canal community.

Winter Canal Hike Planned

On January 10, 2009, a 5 K “Winter Canal Hike” on the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath Trail between Lock Two and Minster is scheduled. Start time will be from 9 to 10 a.m. and completion by 12:30 p.m.

This “Winter Canal Hike” is a recognized “Road to Fitness” activity of the Grand Lake Health System. The Hike is coordinated by MECCA, the New Bremen Historic Association, Minster Historical Society, the Southwestern Auglaize County Chamber of Commerce, the Village of New Bremen, and the New Bremen-New Knoxville Rotary Club. Be sure to put this “winter fitness activity” on your calendar.



With both natural and historic significance, “the Tumbles” in St. Marys is always an interesting stop for hikers.

Nature and History Combine on St. Marys Walks

*Submitted by Kelly Kill
Executive Director
St. Marys Area Chamber of Commerce*

On Sunday Oct. 19 from noon until 4 p.m., the 40th Annual Walk with Nature was held along the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath in the St. Marys area.

The walk was sponsored by the St. Marys Area Chamber of Commerce, the St. Marys Kiwanis Club, the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association (MECCA), The Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water and the New Bremen - New Knoxville Rotary Club.

Walkers had the opportunity to walk north 3.5 miles to Glynwood Road at 40 Acre Pond and the south 4 miles to St. Rt. 219. Buses shuttled walkers back to the Memorial Park at regular intervals.

The Kiwanis Club provided refreshments with hot dogs and a donation of bottled water from the Joint Township District Memorial Hospital, and the Division of Water offered a fun tree identification activity to do while on the walk. Tom Fortman also provided some wild animals (stuffed of course) along the canal for the enjoyment of the participants.

In addition to the annual Walk with Nature, the St. Marys Chamber of Commerce repeated the Historic Walk in downtown St. Marys. The Historic Walk was offered at this time due to the inclement weather that shortened the scheduled activities on the original date.

The Walk began at 1 p.m. with registration on the Gazebo in Memorial Park. Four groups were

formed and taken by guides to the various historical spots where speakers discussed the spots' historical significance.

Also that day, George Nearingard, local historian, was on hand to sell and sign his new book, “Auglaize County in Postcard Images” and the St. Marys Historical Playing Cards were also on sale.



The historic Reservoir Mills on High Street in St. Marys was a stop on the recent Historic Walk. The Mill got its power from the upper canal run.

Bridging the Trail

*Submitted by Rick Adamson
BTA, State Trail Coordinator*

There have been three fiberglass bridges constructed on the Miami and Erie Canal towpath by the Renegade Chapter of the Buckeye Trail Association, located in Napoleon.

These three bridges are connecting long segments of the Buckeye Trail that have previously been constructed but not yet opened to the general public. The bridges range in length from 45 to 50 feet and are six feet in width.

This bridge width standard accommodates bicycles as well as foot traffic. This standard was a result of an agreement with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources for allowing the BTA to move their trail from county roads to the much safer, more scenic and definitely more historic canal towpath.

The Henry County Parks Board received a grant of \$50,000 for the purchase of the bridges and the Renegade Chapter constructed them on site.

In the past four years the Buckeye Trail Association's "Trail Crew" has constructed and opened more than 28 miles of towpath trail. There is about 70 more miles of trail to clear through Putnam, Paulding, Defiance and Henry Counties.

The Trail Crew has averaged about 7 miles per year conducting two work parties per year. Each work party has been 4-5 days in length. The BTA schedules about 12 major work parties per year around the state. All work parties for 2009 are scheduled and are on the web site at www.buckeyetrail.org.

In southern Paulding County, an old time swinging bridge will be constructed over Blue Creek. A swinging bridge was chosen to keep in the same time period as the canals themselves. The span will be 145 feet long plus approaches. It was engineered by the senior engineering class at Ohio Northern University as one of their 2007 class projects. American Electric Power Company has pledged \$10,000 towards the construction costs and LaFarge Cement has pledged required cement materials required for foundations and anchors.



(standing left to right) Mary Hamilton, Jim Runk, Earl Garn, Herb Hulls and Les Weidenhamer who is leading the charge in Paulding County doing much work behind the scenes talking to private land owners and local government officials. Seated is Joe Shetter.

BTA Opens New Off-Road Towpath Trail in Paulding Co.

The Buckeye Trail Association conducted a work party to clear and maintain the Buckeye Trail in Paulding County, October 3-8, 2008.

The work undertaken was to achieve the goal of a continuous off-road trail through the county. The work crew camped at facilities in the community of Oakwood and worked both to the north and south of the community.

Special efforts were directed to the trail in the Junction area in final preparations for the dedication of the Historical Marker on the towpath trail at the intersection of the Miami and Erie and the Wabash and Erie Canals.

A footbridge was installed on a towpath section of the Buckeye Trail over a washout in southern Paulding County near TR 187 in Washington Township. The work was completed by the Boy Scout Troop of Oakwood.

Lowe's of Defiance furnished all decking material, railing lumber and

fasteners required to complete the bridge. Les Weidenhamer of the John Paulding Historical Society and a BTA Volunteer coordinated the project.



New bridge in Paulding County.

Lockkeeper's House Set for Early 2010 Opening

*Submitted by Jim Coons
Secretary
MECCA Board of Trustees*

As previously reported in the *Towpath Times*, a reconstructed Lockkeeper's House will become a reality in New Bremen in 2009-2010. This new structure will embody the theme "The Past is our Future" as the story of the Miami and Erie Canal unfolds through self-guided interpretive displays, information distribution, and public meetings and workshops.

A combined effort of the Village of New Bremen, MECCA, New Bremen Historic Association and Southwestern Auglaize County Chamber of Commerce, the frame building will include a basement and two floors above, each totaling over 1200 square feet. Every effort will be made to reproduce the look and feel of the canal era, including a metal roof, clapboard siding, small-pane windows, and a stonework foundation appearance.

Inside the building, offices for the Chamber of Commerce will occupy the first floor, at the level of the canal towpath adjacent to Lock One North. In addition, the main floor will welcome visitors with canal artifacts, video displays, local information, and a lobby area.

The MECCA Director's office will be located on the second floor along with a meeting room. The room has been designed to allow for additional canal displays, conference and public meeting facilities, and small-group meetings and projects. Plans call for wood flooring and beamed ceilings with a variety of audio-visual resources available for displays and meetings, and kitchenette facilities.

The basement will house handicap-accessible restrooms and mechanical services along with storage space. All floors will be accessible by elevator as well as stairs.

Garmann/Miller Associates of Minster has listened carefully and worked closely with the Village and participating organizations to design a facility that will meet the needs of all concerned. Plans have been submitted to the State of Ohio for their review and approval. A number of "green" technology systems will be utilized in the construction of the Lockkeeper's House.

Funding for the building will come from an Ohio Department of Transportation enhancement grant, totaling over \$500,000. ODOT

previously provided the Village with grant funds to reconstruct Lock One North to its 1910 appearance. Local matching funds of approximately \$131,000 are being secured by the New Bremen Historic Association.

State money will be released in the summer of 2009, with construction beginning immediately thereafter. Occupancy of the building is anticipated by early 2010.

MECCA Partners are invited to contribute to this effort, which will be a giant step forward for the organization. Contributions of any amount can be directed to the MECCA office or to the New Bremen Historic Association at P.O. Box 73, New Bremen, Ohio 45869.

Culvert Keeps Canal Water Flowing



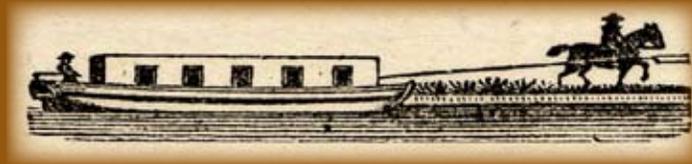
Allen County Ditch No. 1202 culvert has recently been replaced allowing canal waters to flow north towards Delphos. The project was completed as a joint effort of the Allen County Engineer's Office, City of Delphos, Village of Spencerville and ODNR Division of Water. The culvert is located at the north edge

of Spencerville and conveys ditch waters under the Miami and Erie Canal. The original culvert structure was deteriorated and had collapsed draining water out of the canal. This structure was replaced with a 4 foot by 10 foot concrete box culvert. The project was completed by Brenneman Excavating of Elida.

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 (a goal of 500 members)
- 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.



Annual MECCA Membership Meeting ~ Jan. 28, 2009 at the MECCA Office
All Members are Encouraged to Attend and Participate

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