

Towpath Times



Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association

www.meccainc.org

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

June 6 was a great day on the Miami and Erie Canal. Sunshine and a cool breeze greeted the 85 people who attended the dedication of a section of Towpath Trail in Auglaize County in celebration of National Trails Day.

Clean Ohio Funds and a match from the Heritage Trails Park District have made the redevelopment of two miles of Towpath Trail from Glynwood Road north to Lock 14 Park possible. This project repairs eroded areas, clears and levels the towpath, and tops off the trail with 9" of crushed and compacted stone giving the Towpath Trail new birth.

Taking part in the dedication were Auglaize County Probate Judge Mark Spees and County Commissioner Doug Spencer. Noble Township Trustee Jim Johns, Steve Dorsten with ODNR and Neal Brady the Director of MECCA also said a few words. Capping this historic moment were Heritage Trails Park District President Dave Stilwell and Director Allison Brady. To officially open the trail five members of the Noble Township Sodbusters 4-H Club cut the ribbon.

Newly printed maps of the Towpath Trail provided by The Evening Leader were handed out as part of the Auglaize Outdoors Show held in the Noble Township Hall. This show highlighted outdoor events, conservation activities,

and opportunities for families to get outside and play. There was also a 5K walk/run event, part of the partnership with Grand Lake Health System.

The Heritage Trails Park District is dedicated to opening towpath trail in Auglaize County. This is the first section of what is hoped to be many miles of recreation trail to come. What was developed 160 years ago for transportation and commerce is now being given new life for hikers, cyclist, canoeist and kayakers.



Auglaize Outdoor Show featuring many exhibitors highlight National Trails Day at The Noble Township Hall.



Auglaize County officials and Noble Sodbuster 4-H members gather for the ribbon-cutting of the new Lock 14 Towpath Trail.

Lockkeeper's House Now Under Construction

A ground breaking ceremony was conducted Monday Aug. 3, 2009 at Lock 1 for the Lockkeepers House. More than 95 individuals celebrated the future as the past is being remembered in the construction of a Visitor and Welcome Center at the heart of the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor in New Bremen.

Actual construction has begun in excavating for the foundation of the three story facility that will look similar to the exterior of the structure that stood on the site until

the mid 1960's. The approximate 3,500 square foot structure interior will provide office space for the Southwestern Auglaize County Chamber of Commerce and MECCA, canal history display areas, and community meeting areas. This facility will not only be a community asset but also a great focal point for visitors interested in the history of the canal.

The structure will have white lap board siding, metal roofing, stone foundation, wood interior wood

floors and interior paint schemes that reflect the timeframe of the original Lockkeeper's House.

Baumer Construction of Minster is the general contractor overseeing the project. Regal Plumbing, Area Energy and Electric and Selhorst Concrete will be performing the specific trade work.

The Lockkeepers House is anticipated to be completed April 2010.



Participating in the ground breaking were (front l-r) MECCA Trustees Ben Richard, Tom Fledderjohann, Dave Cahill, Linda Bernard, and MECCA Executive Director Neal Brady. (Back) Steve Dorsten, Canal Supervisor, Ohio Department of Natural Resources



At the Lockkeepers House Ground-breaking, local New Bremen sculptor Wanda Lee exhibited a bronze sculpture, "Partners". The sculpture is the model of a planned full size bronze sculpture that will be placed along the canal by the New Bremen Historic Association.



MECCA had displays and programs at both the Auglaize and Shelby County Fairs this summer.



Spencerville Streetscape Program Nearing Completion

*Submitted by Sean Chapman
Spencerville Village Administrator*

The Spencerville Streetscape started on July 20, 2009 and is scheduled to be completed by Sept. 30, 2009. The project has had a couple of minor issues that may push the completion date into October.

Hume Supply, Inc of Lima is the general contractor for the estimated \$1.2 million project. Drainage components are being completed on the west side of Broadway Street (St. Rt. 66) and then new curb and gutter will be installed. Additionally, Miller Cable will begin the electrical work on both the new and existing upgrades to the downtown electrical service. The footer and foundation work will soon be started for the historic canal information center that will be situated on the canal bank at Third Street.

It is estimated that the west side will be completed by mid September and work will begin on the east side of Broadway Street with drainage, curb and sidewalk work.



Streetscape work progressing in downtown Spencerville.

Minster Canal Projects Moving Forward

*Submitted by Don Harrod
Minster Village Administrator*

The Village of Minster continues to move forward with two major projects that will ultimately give the community a fresh look. First, the Village Council recently initiated steps to improve the Miami and Erie Canal from First Street to St. Rt. 119.



Miami-Erie Canal in the village of Minster.

Council authorized the Mayor to submit a ditch improvement petition to the Auglaize County Commissioners to have brush and trash removed. In addition, Council is requesting that a deepened outlet for subsurface drainage be provided, erosion control structures be installed and the banks of the canal be stabilized. The Auglaize County Commissioners will be holding several public hearings in the coming months to discuss the ditch petition and the public is encouraged to attend these hearings to offer comments.

The second project that will alter the look of the community is the Fourth Street Reconstruction and Streetscape Project. This project will involve the complete reconstruction of Fourth Street from Ohio Street to St. Rt. 66 (Main St.). In addition, the project will include the installation of brick pavers, trees, landscaping and new street lighting. A portion of these streetscape improvements is being funded through the Ohio Department of Transportation's Transportation Enhancement Program. While this project will not occur until 2011, the Council Street Committee continues to work with Choice One Engineering and Garmann/Miller Architects-Engineers to develop plans for the project.

Canal Projects Taking Shape in St. Marys

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

St. Mary's area residents are excited about the canal-related renovation and construction projects occurring in uptown St. Marys.

The concrete structural work for the Lock 13 renovations was recently finished, with the water flow returning to the Miami-Erie Canal just prior to the city's annual SummerFest celebration. The Lock 13 concrete and the basin area leading up to the Lock were both recapped with a new concrete surface.

The next step in the lock rehabilitation process is for City Council approval to have Hoge Lumber Company construct the lock doors on both ends of the lock. The oak lock doors will be attached to the

concrete wall area at the north end of the lock and will be constructed in an open position at the south end. The St. Marys Foundry, Inc., is helping with the design and construction of the metal components of the Lock Rehabilitation Project.

The lock rehabilitation is part of the overall strategy the City of St. Marys is undertaking to enhance the areas near the Miami-Erie Canal in the uptown area. The overall focus of the project is to offer connectivity with enhanced walking trails and "gathering areas" from K.C. Geiger Park into the uptown area. The canal-related First Financial Bank Project on the east side of the canal on Spring Street is going strong with the new building under construction with a completion date of November 1, 2009.

To the north of the new bank

building, the municipal parking lot will feature views of the Lock 13 area and will provide vehicular connectivity between High Street to the north and Spring Street to the south.

Additional pedestrian walkways will soon be constructed on the west side of Lock 13 that will feature paver bricks and period style lighting and landscaping. The pavers will match the areas already completed in the tunnel under Spring Street and will be complimented by additional matching paver bricks and landscaping that will be installed near the Clock Tower in Memorial Park. The City of St. Marys is also considering ideas that will enhance the concrete "great wall" that has been constructed on the east side of the Lock to serve as the retaining wall for the municipal parking lot.

The area north of High Street, adjacent to the canal, is scheduled for rehabilitation in the Fall of 2009 or Spring of 2010. An all new paved access road and parking/trail head area to the canal towpath will be constructed in the area between the Miami-Erie Canal and the St. Marys River. The area near the Canal will once again feature pedestrian walkways with paver bricks, lighting, and observation decks overlooking the Canal at the tumbles area. Additional features will include new signage highlighting historical aspects of the Canal and landscaping. The N. High Street rehab work will be funded by utilizing local community development grant (CDBG) funds.

Future work near the canal includes the replacement of the High Street Bridge in 2012. The City of St. Marys is also investigating grant opportunities to tear down the Municipal Power Plant building which is no longer in operation and lies adjacent to the Canal.



Water fills Lock 13 in uptown St. Marys

Long Distance Hikers Trek The Buckeye Trail

Seasoned long distance hikers Joyce and Peter Cottrell spent their summer hiking the Buckeye Trail and finished on August 10, 2009. Joyce and Peter are from New Hampshire but are really at home on the trail. They have previously hiked the entire Appalachian Trail and coast to coast on the American Discovery Trail. They have now added the 1,444 mile Buckeye Trail to their accomplishments. It took them 80 days to complete this goal. The Cottrell's were seen on the Miami and Erie Canal through Auglaize County in mid June. The Miami and Erie Canal Towpath Trail is part of Buckeye Trail that encircles Ohio and the North County National Scenic Trail that extends through seven states from New York to North Dakota.



Joyce and Peter Cottrell at the end of their 80-day hike.

Trail Development a Rewarding Investment

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

Much of the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath Trail remains unfinished as it runs through the scenic hilly sections overlooking the Loramie Creek Valley in Shelby County connecting historic towns and points of interest.

Some segments of the towpath have over time become county roadway. Some sections are just a single track through a field or a long a wood line. Then some sections are paved with compacted stone. The vision, though, is to some day have a continuous corridor traversing the western part of the state connecting with paved bicycle trails in Miami County from the south and then north to Toledo on Lake Erie. Currently, there are trail segments that are missing and obstacles that need to be resolved, but the vision is there.

Trails and greenways have been recognized to have multi-fold benefits in economic terms, wellness and general quality of life.

Promoting the concept of economic viability has apparent results to the economic results to the communities in increased tourism, new development and business. Applying the multiplier effect, the way a dollar spent keeps moving through the economy, a dollar spent in the community can have an annual benefit of 3 to 8 times the value of the one dollar. Further investment in additional capacities such as hotels and restaurants becomes necessary as the historic recreational greenway is a unifying feature.

With increases in diseases and ailments related to inactivity, use of trails for commuting to work and school is an effective way to combat this inactivity. Offering a secure

and well marked trail linkage will encourage bicycling and walking and surely result in a generally healthier community.

Trails, greenways and historic structures are ways to connect people and generations together. Older individuals recall how the canal and adjacent resources was a special place in their youth. You can hear many stories of how the canal was a vital part of the community before the swimming pools, developed playgrounds and activities areas that exist today in our communities. The canal was place to swim, fish, and observe wildlife such as frogs, snakes and turtles.

The towpath was the link to the next community, a transportation linkage to visit friends and family. Trail development projects are vital community infrastructure and rewarding investments.

Final Layer for Lock 14 Park's Towpath Trail

*Submitted by Steve Dorsten
Ohio Department of Natural Resources*

The final layer of crushed limestone has been laid on the Towpath Trail of the Heritage Trail Park District. This is the layer we have been looking for since the start of the trail project in the winter of 2007-2008. This final layer of #10 stone (fine sand-like stone) tops the two three-inch layers of compacted #411 grade stone. To stabilize these 8

inches of stone a 10-foot wide base of geo-textile fabric was first laid down.

Prior to laying down stone we removed all nuisance trees, brush, and stumps. We then spent considerable energy rebuilding the canal bank to its original dimensions with compacted clay soil. Finally a protective covering of rip rap stone (large rock) was applied to the canal bank for stabilization and erosion control.



Completed section of Towpath Trail near Lock 14 Park.

The trail has remained open throughout construction. A steady increase in hikers, bikers and nature lovers has been observed as work progressed. Numerous positive comments have been received as workers stop to allow trail users to pass the construction area and continue along.

The two-mile trail from Glynwood Road (40 acre pond) to Lock 14 is funded through a State of Ohio Clean Ohio Trails Grant. The grant application and administration of the fund is through the Heritage Trail Park District. The Division of Parks and Recreation Canal Lands Unit of Grand Lake St. Marys performs the construction in partnership with the Heritage Trails Park District.

The final stone paving was completed in September 2009. There is no better time to see the Towpath Trail than in the fall. Come out and see this new project for yourself.

Lake Loramie Museum Plans Grand Opening

The Lake Loramie Heritage Museum located at the old State Park Office on St. Rt. 362 just north of the campground will have its Grand Opening Saturday, Sept. 19 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, Sept. 20, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Friends of the museum are busy preparing a wide variety of artifacts, stories, photographs, and exhibits highlighting the diverse history of the Lake Loramie area. The facility is open to the public at no charge. Partner's in Recognition has donated all of the attractive signage on the outside of the building.

For further information contact Charlotte Smith at 419-628-2024 or lynncharsmith@roadrunner.com



Lake Loramie Heritage Museum located in former park office building.



The St. Marys Beautification Committee Volunteer Cleanup Day was held on Saturday August 22, 2009. A total of 24 volunteers of which 15 were Ohio National Guardsmen worked in picking up trash and debris from Memorial Park through and along the Miami and Erie Canal to KC Geiger Park. Numerous bags of trash and two dump truck loads of trees and branches were removed from the canal in the clean up effort.

Bloody Bridge Parking Lot

The Heritage Trails Park District and the Ohio Department of Transportation have begun design work for the construction of a drive and installation of a parking lot between St. Rt. 66 (Scenic Byway) and the Miami and Erie Canal, north of Kossuth Road. The parking lot will provide off-road parking for visitors to the Bloody Bridge Monument and provide access to the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath Trail. The project site is owned by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and leased to the Heritage Trails Park District. The project is will be fully State-funded at an estimated cost of \$26,300.

Pilgrimage to MECCA

The Canal Society of Indiana is hosting "Pilgrimage to MECCA", Tour of the Miami and Erie Canal, St. Marys to Piqua Oct. 16-18, 2009. Headquarters for the tour is the Country Hearth Inn & Suites, 1410 Commerce Drive, in St. Marys.

The schedule for the tour includes registration, dinner, exhibits, book sale and pre-tour slide show at the Speedway Lanes in New Bremen on Friday Evening. Saturday will be a full day guided bus tour from Grand Lake St. Marys guard lock to Lock 7 in Miami County with numerous stops and lunch along the way. A Saturday evening Banquet will be held at the New Bremen Senior Center with a presentation by MECCA Executive Director, Neal Brady. Sunday morning activities include local guided tours and participating in the annual Walk with Nature in St. Marys. For additional information contact Bob and Carolyn Schmidt at indcanal@aol.com or meccadirector@nktelco.net.

Trail Could Lead to New School

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

The Miami and Erie Canal underpass of U.S. 33 to the west of St. Rt. 66 is one of three alternative corridors being reviewed for improvement as a trail linkage to the new St. Marys high school/middle school complex. Poggemeyer Design Group, Inc. of Bowling Green has completed a study that was a conceptual evaluation of providing safe, attractive and handicapped accessible pedestrian and bicycle link to the main residential areas of the City of St. Marys and the new school campus. The canal trail proposal would require improvement of the U.S. 33 underpass and construction of a paved trail .86 miles in length from the Canal Towpath along the north side of U.S. 33 and crossing St. Rt. 66 to the school location. The other two proposals involve connecting city streets on the south side of U.S. 33 with freeway overpass bridges to the school complex.



SummerFest Hike north of St. Marys attract many.

Barbecue/Auction for Shelby PD

The Friends of the Shelby County Park District are again hosting a Barbecue in the Park and Lawn and Garden Auction on Saturday September 26, 2009 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. This year will include numerous exhibits and educational displays that focus on outdoor recreation and environmental protection issues.

Miami-Erie Canal Corridor Events

Shelby County Park District Barbecue, September 26, 2009
Minster OctoberFest, October 2 - 4, 2009
Pilgrimage to MECCA, Canal Tour October 16-18, 2009
Walk with Nature, Oct. 18, 2009, St. Marys Memorial Park
MECCA Bi-monthly Board Meeting, November 18, 2009

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 _____

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