

# Towpath Times

Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association

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

Volume 13 • Number 1 • Winter 2010



Work is progressing on the Lockkeeper's House at Lock One in New Bremen with an estimated completion date of May, 2010.

## Lockkeeper's House Nears Completion

By L. Neal Brady  
MECCA Executive Director

Work on the Lockkeeper's House is progressing. By mid January, the framing is up, windows installed and electrical and technology wiring is being installed.

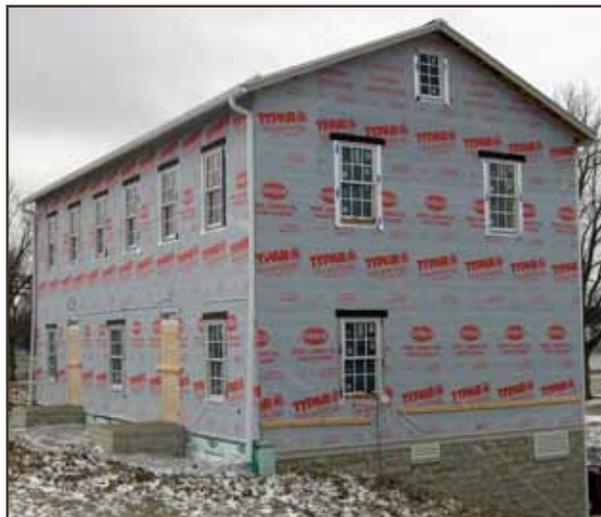
The public can see how the three story building is back in the local landscape. The Lockkeeper's House is located at Lock One in nearly the exact spot as the original and is almost the same size as the original.

Eighty percent of the construction costs, or \$522,000, is being paid by a federal Transportation Enhancement Grant from the Ohio Department of Transportation. The 20 percent local match of about \$130,000 was raised entirely by

the New Bremen Historic Association. The architectural fees are being paid by the Village of New Bremen. Construction should be completed by May 2010.

The Southwestern Auglaize County Chamber of Commerce and the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor

Association will occupy the building which will serve as the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor Visitors Center. The Center will tell the story of the Miami and Erie Canal which connected the Ohio at Cincinnati with Lake Erie at Toledo. The Lockkeeper's House is located at Lock One North, the highest lock as the canal stepped down to Lake Erie. The 23 mile Loramie Summit extended to Lock One South at Lockington where the canal stepped down to the Ohio River.





**MECCA Committee planning exhibits include: (from left) Neal Brady, MECCA; Scott Frey, Southwestern Auglaize County Chamber of Commerce Director; Tom Fledderjohann, MECCA Board President; Delores Stienecker, New Bremen Historic Association; Steve Dorsten, ODNR; Mary Ann Olding; and Georgia Kohart, author from Defiance**

## Exhibits, Displays Planned for Lockkeeper's House

*By L. Neal Brady  
MECCA Executive Director*

Several canal historians and enthusiasts have been meeting to establish a formal plan for telling the canal story in the Lockkeeper's House Visitors Center.

The Grant application and awarding of the \$522,000 Transportation Enhancement Grant from the Ohio Department of Transportation is focused on Scenic transportation enhancements. Specifically addressed was the scenic highway program and provisions for tourist and welcome center facilities. The Enhancement program promotes tourism and community development plans. The Miami and Erie Canal Lockkeeper's House Visitor Center will be a tourism destination where visitors will have the opportunity to view artifacts related to the canal and interpret the role of the canal system in the development of commerce and communities.

As Lock One North in New

Bremen is on the Scenic Byway (State Route 66), the Visitor Center is an integral project of the regional master plan which focuses on the enhancement of the community assets and marketing of the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor.

In planning exhibits and displays, several concepts of regional and local history are being reviewed. Educational and interpretative displays will offer information and history of canal technology and construction, the canal as an economic development and expansion of commerce, immigrant settlement and canal era life. Multimedia will be used to tell the canal story. Interactive computer exhibit programs, audio and video story telling presentations, display of artifacts and historic pictures and live presentations are being considered for development.

An important focus of the Miami and Erie Canal Visitor Center is a destination where visitors can gain current information of local

## Canal Trouble Spot Converted to Park

A 100 foot section of the Miami and Erie Canal on the corner of St. Rt. 274 and St. Rt. 66 has been enclosed with installation of large concrete culverts and then covered and landscaped with soil. The renovation projects resolved a problem with the west dike of the original canal embankment. The embankment had been evaluated and determined unstable with potential failure during high water events. A dry canal prism has been created with original canal era stones creating a retaining wall at the north end. The New Bremen - New Knoxville Rotary Club in cooperation with the Village of New Bremen and Freytag and Associates Landscape Architects, landscaping plans are being developed for this highly visible canal section. The project will be an extension of the landscaping design and features at the adjacent Lock One Park. Landscaping and installation of fixtures and features are scheduled for the Spring of 2010.

## Walk for Your Heart

A Valentine's 5K walk/run titled "Walk For Your Heart" is being planned for the Miami and Erie Canal towpath on Feb. 13, 2010 from 9 a.m. to 12 noon.

The walk/run will begin at Spring Street in St. Marys and proceed north on the towpath. The "Walk For Your Heart" is part of the Grand Lake Health System's Road to Fitness and is sponsored by the St. Marys Area Chamber of Commerce. For additional information contact the chamber of visit their website at [www.stmarysohio.org](http://www.stmarysohio.org).

## Thank You!

MECCA would like to thank the following partners for their support with our efforts.

- Tim Hemmelgarn, Owner/ Broker Re/Max Select for providing storage space for the Canal Boat Float.
- Wendy's Restaurant of New Bremen for donation of coffee cups for the Lockkeeper's Winter Canal Hike event.
- The Dannon Company for providing refreshments for participants of Canal Corridor Events.

# 'Walk With Nature' Notes 40th Anniversary

*Submitted by Steve Dorsten  
Ohio Department of Natural Resources*

A beautiful October 18th fall day greeted over 800 hikers for the 40th Annual "Walk with Nature". A ribbon cutting ceremony was conducted in the downtown St. Marys Memorial Park with Eldon "Monte" Montague, founder of the Walk with Nature, beginning the day of festivities. Monte commented how many great changes have occurred in 40 years from trimming branches with a hand trimmer to having a 10 foot wide mowed and trimmed path, starting the "Walk" at a distance of one mile to almost eight miles today.

Showcased was the newly renovated Lock 13 North, brick paver walkway extending from Memorial Park to High Street passing under the renovated Spring Street Archway Bridge and three miles of improved compacted stone trail of which two miles are part of the Heritage Trails Park District.

The event expanded to include a Fall Farmers Market, kid's activities / pumpkin painting, photo contest, beer tasting, music entertainment and tree identification game. Participants gathered at Memorial Park after the hike to enjoy chili soup, hotdogs, drinks and fun filled conversation and reminiscing.

Event sponsors were St. Marys Kiwanis Club, New Bremen-New Knoxville Rotary, Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association, St. Marys Chamber of Commerce, ODNR Division of Parks and Recreation - Canal Lands, and Heritage Trails Park District.



**Joining in on the ceremonial ribbon-cutting ceremony for the 40th Walk With Nature were (from left) Stan Davis, Jack Kuffner, Neal Brady, Eldon Montague, Kelly Kill, Steve Dorsten, and St. Marys Mayor Greg Freewalt.**



**Snow allows for different methods of transportation during the Second Annual Winter Canal Hike.**

## Winter Canal Hike a Hit

*By L. Neal Brady  
MECCA Executive Director*

When the route was marked in the early morning of Saturday Jan. 9, 2010, the temperature was a brisk 13 degrees. As the morning awoke and the sun broke through the temperature rose to 17. A beautiful day for the Second Annual Lockkeeper's Winter Canal Hike. More than 55 individuals participated in the Walk with 47 registering for the Grand Lake Health System's Road to Fitness Program. The Fitness Challenge is based on participation points. By achieving points at a series of hike, bike and walk programs in Auglaize County during the year, participants can win prizes and awards.

Participants began the hike at the Crown Pavilion in New Bremen. Some hiked to Minster to State Route 119 and returned to New Bremen. Several hikers took the trail north and looped through Kuenning-Dicke Park and back to New Bremen. Each route was about 5K in length. Other walkers began at their homes in Minster, hiked the Towpath Trail to New Bremen and then return to Minster. Hot refreshments and Dannon products were available at the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Center with support from Wendy's Restaurant, New Bremen.

The hike was sponsored by the New Bremen-New Knoxville Rotary Club, the Southwestern Auglaize County Chamber of Commerce, Heritage Trails Park District, Grand Lake Health System and the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association (MECCA).

Plans are being made for the January 2011 Winter Canal Hike. The Lockkeeper's House Visitors Center will be operational and will be the staging area for an extended hike program.

# Feeder Canal Path Extension Completed in Sidney

*Submitted by Steve Stilwell  
Sidney City Manager*

In October, 2009, the City of Sidney expanded the Feeder Canal Path Trail along the shores of the Miami River. The path extension connects a residential subdivision to the south terminus of the trail. This \$50,000 extension was a challenge to build due to the extreme steepness of the slope. It took the combined efforts of the City Engineer's Office and the contractor, Milligan Construction Company.

This trail access connection was made possible through the in-kind contributions of the subdivision developer, M & W Developers, who saw the value of connecting their residential

area to the City's recreational asset. This access to Westlake Drive answered a grant condition set by the Ohio Department of Transportation.

The second phase of the City's canal path south along the river to Vandemark Road has received funding from the Ohio Department of Transportation for 80% of project estimated costs of \$427,000. Phase II will add approximately 4900 lineal feet south of the existing path and will be built on the towpath from the historic Sidney Feeder Canal that provided water to the Miami & Erie Canal from Miami River access in Port Jefferson south to Lockington.

Bidding for Phase II is scheduled for

March, 2010 with completion planned for National Trails Day celebration in June 5, 2010. Phase III funding applications are underway with plans for completion in summer 2015.

In the future, this portion of the Miami & Erie Canal could be extended south to Lockington, with possible extensions with the Miami County trail system which currently ends south of Piqua.

Information concerning this project or other Sidney trail projects can be obtained from City Manager Steve Stilwell at 201 W. Poplar Street, Sidney, Ohio or [ssilwell@sidneyoh.com](mailto:ssilwell@sidneyoh.com).



**Construction of an expansion to the Feeder Canal Path Trail in Sidney.**



## Minster Project Moves Forward

*Submitted by Don Harrod  
Minster Village Administrator*

The Auglaize County Commissioners held a public meeting December 3, 2009 to discuss the Village of Minster's ditch petition request to locate, remove obstructions, provide a deepened outlet for subsurface drainage, install erosion control structures, and stabilize banks on a section of the Miami and Erie Canal. This public meeting was well attended by local property owners and local officials alike.

The outcome was a positive first step as the Commissioners found the benefit of the proposed project to outweigh the cost of the improvements and authorized the County Engineer to make surveys, develop plans and construction estimates for the proposed improvements. In addition, individual assessments will be developed for those areas lying outside of the Minster corporation limits. The Village of Minster will be assuming the assessment costs for all affected properties within the village corporation limits.

Once the County Commissioners receive the Engineer's reports, a final public hearing will be held. If the County Commissioners grant the petition, the Engineer will begin seeking bids for the work.

# Volunteers Jump into the Canal in Spencerville

Submitted by Rich Beebe  
The Journal-News

Volunteers were busy scrambling all over the banks of and into the Miami and Erie Canal in the morning of Saturday, October 17, 2009 removing several years worth of trash and brush which accumulated on the banks.

The volunteers, estimated to be about 80 strong, filled a dumpster with the trash, brush and limbs pulled from the canal and its banks.

Bob McCollum and Dan Dardio donned wading gear to go after the green growth which had accumulated on a major portion of the canal.

Using long-handled poles, they braved the cold, murky water to push the thick green slime to the



**Spencerville canal clean-up volunteers not afraid to get a little wet.**

banks, where other volunteers captured the thick growth and eventually placed it atop the bank so it could be removed later.

McCollum and Dardio were successful in removing about 200 yards worth of growth, which

represented almost all of the material found in the canal between Second Street and the spillway near the swimming pool.

Their efforts marked a first for local clean-up efforts, as never before had an attempt to remove the unattractive green growth been undertaken.

Needless to say, the cleaned, pruned banks, combined with visible water, left the canal looking much better than it did prior to the cleanup day.

After a chilly morning (32 degrees when work started) cleaning the canal, volunteers were treated to a lunch in The Village Restaurant, courtesy of Spencerville Subway, Chuffer's Drive-Thru, and The Villager. Additionally, Spencerville Service Club and Spencerville Quick Stop combined resources to give volunteers a coupon valid for a small pizza at Quick Stop.

A dumpster was provided for the project by Bowersock Hauling.

Volunteers from several youth organizations joined their older neighbors for the project. Local Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts, along with 20 members of the FFA added their energies to the endeavor.



**The Spencerville Streetscape started in July 2009 with installation of curbs and gutter, installation of electrical service, and paving of Broadway Street (State Route 66, the Scenic Byway). The Canal Information Center, (above) is situated on the canal bank at Third Street.**

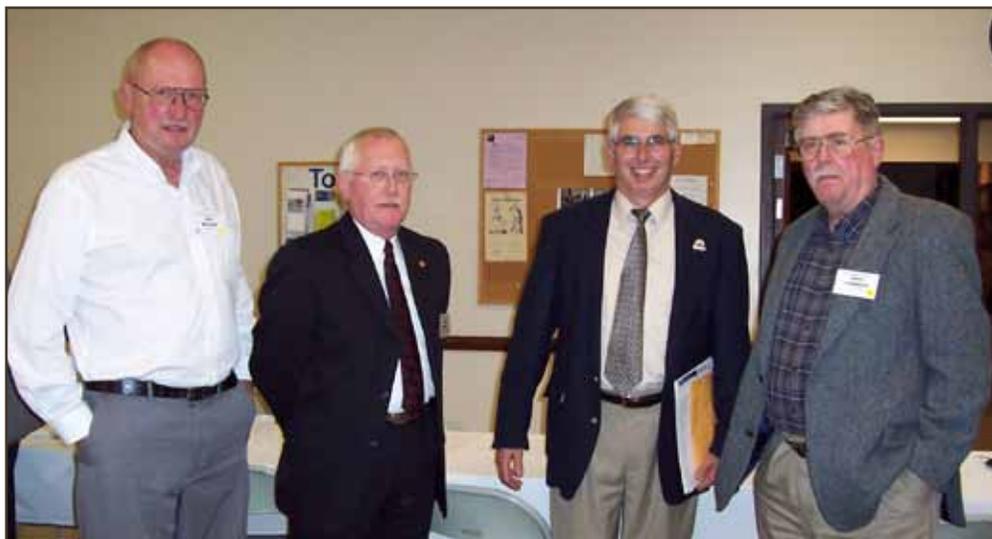
# Indiana Group Tours Miami-Erie Canal

*Submitted by Andy Hite  
Piqua Historical Area*

October 16-18, 2009 saw gongoozlers from the Indiana Canal Society pay a visit to the Miami and Erie Canal for a weekend of canawling. The tour headquartered at Country Hearth Inn & Suites in St. Marys as a group of 52 Hoosiers, Buckeyes and others came to visit some of the many canal sites that are a part of the MECCA corridor. Included in this group were eleven of the directors and their spouses of the American Canal Society.

The weekend began with a visit Friday afternoon to the New Knoxville Historical Society Heritage Center where Diana and Tom Fledderjohann shared the story of the area with the visitors. On Friday evening Canal Society of Ohio President Mike Morthorst along with CSO Trustee Andy Hite presented an overview of what the group would see on the Saturday tour.

The Saturday tour began with a stop at Six Mile Aqueduct where Steve Dorsten joined the group and explained the restoration projects that have brought several sites back to life. Other sites and stops on the morning portion of the tour included Spencerville and Deep Cut, Lock 14 North, and 40 Acre Pond. The group then proceeded to St. Marys where the group stretched their legs and visited the site of Lock 12 North, Lock 13 North, St. Marys (Reservoir) Mill, and the Tumbles. Two more stops before lunch, were at the



**Among those attending the canal tour were: (from left) Dan McCain, Wabash and Erie Canal Association; Bob Sears of Toronto, Canada who is an American Canal Society director; Neal Brady, MECCA Executive Director; and Dave Johnson from Bethesda, Maryland who is the Secretary for the American Canal Society.**

Bulkhead Lock and around the lake to Behm's Lighthouse.

The afternoon included stops at Lake Loramie, The Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Center (MECCA Office), Lock 1 North, and Diane and Tom Fledderjohann's home to visit the Lock 6 North location. The Saturday portion of the tour concluded with a stop and visit to Lock 8 North. This was a most impressive stop for many on the tour as they were treated to the sight of a nearly intact stone lock, something that is not common in Indiana, but that we tend to take for granted due to the rich canal resources on our corridor.

At the conclusion of the tour on Saturday there was a dinner, which was followed by keynote speaker Neal Brady, who shared both the accomplishments and goals of MECCA with those in attendance.

The tour concluded on Sunday morning with a tour of the Lockington Locks complex by Johnston Farm site manager Andy Hite. Like Lock 8 North, this was something many from Indiana had not seen before. The group walked along all five of the locks and even ventured down to Loramie Creek and the crossing of both the Piqua Hydraulic Canal and the later interurban line.

By the conclusion of this trip, those who attended all had a better understanding of the efforts that both Hoosiers and Buckeyes expended in creating their respective canal systems as well as the wealth of canal resources that exist in the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor.



**ODNR's Steve Dorsten shares details about the restoration recently completed at Six-Mile Creek Aqueduct.**

# *A Note of Thanks From the Canal Society of Indiana*



October 19, 2009

Neal Brady  
PO Box 246  
New Bremen, Ohio 45869-0246

Dear Neal,

The Canal Society of Indiana extends its sincere thanks to you for your help in making our "Pilgrimage to MECCA" tour of the Miami and Erie Canal on October 16-18 a huge success. We were anxious to impress our eastern American Canal Society director guests with mid-western canal remains, restoration, and usage as well as mid-western hospitality. We did it with your help and many extremely well informed docents. Those attending the tour came from Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and even Toronto, Canada.

Canawlers braved the blustery wind to see not only wonderful remains of canal locks/fixtures and canal reservoirs, but also those that had been restored and have educational interpretive signage. They learned how the canal/reservoir water is managed today by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, how trails are being developed on the old towpath, and how partnering with corporations and communities can attain a common goal and improve the quality of life for residents. The canal corridor shows how rivalry between communities can be an asset in that each community does not want to fall behind that of another in appearance. They also learned how religion and strong ethnic backgrounds played a large part in the development of the string of towns along the canal.

We especially want to congratulate M.E.C.C.A. for using the canal as the string that connects this necklace of small towns. We hope in the future more "beads" can be added to the necklace.

Thank you so much for speaking about M.E.C.C.A. at our Saturday evening banquet and for hosting us at M.E.C.C.A. headquarters. We also liked receiving the goodies bags with literature, pins and tattoos. We hope to return when the locktender's house is completed and see the exhibits that are placed in it.

Sincerely,

*Carolyn I. Schmidt*  
Carolyn I. Schmidt  
Editor/Tour planning committee

# 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

PRESORTED  
 STANDARD  
 US Postage Paid  
 New Bremen, Ohio  
 PERMIT #18  
 ZIP code 45869

Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association  
 130 S. Washington St.  
 P.O. Box 246  
 New Bremen, Ohio 45869  
 Return Address Requested