
Towpath Times

Miami-Erie Canal Corridor Association

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MECCA Opens Office With New Director

The Miami-Erie Canal Corridor Association (MECCA) has recently announced the implementation of two major organizational goals.

MECCA's Board of Trustees recently hired an independent part-time director and approved entering into a lease agreement for the organization's first permanent office.

Long-time MECCA board member and employee with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks, Neal Brady has assumed the role of Executive Director for the organization.

Brady will be working on a part-time basis to help facilitate the goals of the organization.

In addition, MECCA is moving into and establishing an office located in New Bremen at 130 S. Washington Street just one-half block from the canal and two blocks from Lock One. The Office has a large area to facilitate meetings as well as floor and wall space to display canal artifacts.

Previously administrative functions for MECCA were conducted under the leadership of Ben Richard, who provided inkind services through a valuable donation by the Johnny Appleseed Metro Parks.

"I'm not sure where this organization would be without the generous support we have received from Ben and the Johnny Appleseed Metro

Parks," said former MECCA President and Board Member Dave Stilwell. "On behalf of MECCA, I would like to thank Ben Richard, and the Park Commissioners and all of the staff at Johnny Appleseed for the commitment they have made to the success of MECCA.

"We understood from the beginning that their donation was not permanent," Stilwell added. "The Johnny Appleseed Metro Parks will continue to be a valuable corridor partner with MECCA, and together we will continue to unlock the unlimited potential of the Miami-Erie Canal Corridor in Western Ohio."

Neal Brady Begins Tenure as MECCA Executive Director

By L. Neal Brady
Executive Director

When I was growing up in the Hocking River Valley around Logan, Ohio I was intrigued with the big ditch that was alongside the railroad track. I remember playing with the neighbor friends and later hunting the linear areas with my father.

The wide swale of the of the old Hocking Canal and sandstone structures that were once locks and aqueducts were great locations to explore. Since that time, my interest in linear recreational corridors has grown.

Working with the Ohio State Parks system for over 28 years, I have had the opportunity to be part of the development and management of recreation trails that directly affect the quality of life in a community. After receiving an undergraduate degree from The Ohio State University in 1975, I returned to school and in 1999 was awarded an MBA in Management from The Wright State University, Lake Campus MBA



Neal Brady

2000 Program. Over the past 2 years I have participated in project and class work from The Ohio State University, John Glenn Institute for Public Service

and Public Policy and have gained the certification of Ohio Certified Public Manager.

Being active in public recreation in the region, I served as Park Manager at Lake Loramie State Park from 1981 to 1995, during which time served as a Park Board Commissioner for the Shelby County Park District. Currently, I work at Indian Lake State Park and have been active as a Board Member of MECCA until accepting the part-time position of Executive Director.

The future of the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor is in the hands of all of us that believe the corridor will continue to be an asset of our communities. We have long recognized the abandoned canal land as a valuable fragment of the local culture that could be bought back into use. By envisioning that future and working together we can protect, develop and interpret the canal and enhance the quality of life for the public.

Let's work together to Open and Connect the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor.

ODNR's Lock 14 Project Completed

After many changes to the original plans and the unending rainfall, the Lock 14 Natureworks Project is complete. The original plans called for the deteriorating concrete to be chipped away and capped with new. But as the chipping began it was discovered that the old concrete was filled with large rocks and debris thus creating a honeycomb affect. This created the situation to remove all the concrete and a total re-pour of the walls.

The contractor, Jutte Construction Company from Fort Recovery, customized their forms to give the concrete walls the appearance of stone blocks. 400 cubic yards of concrete and 20 tons of re-rod were used in the construction.



Lock 14 North, located 5 miles North of St. Marys West of St. Rt. 66 on Lock 14 Rd, now boasts a pedestrian bridge on the upstream end of the lock, stone parking lots on the towpath and sidespillway sides, landscaping, seeding and bank protection.

A stop log mechanism was installed also to provide the option of raising or lowering water levels upstream.

This renovation is part of Phase II ODNR Division of Water Natureworks funded projects that included Spencerville dredging, St. Marys Tumbles re-hab of which are also completed and the renovation of 6-mile spillway which is under construction.

HELP!

With the opening of its new office in New Bremen, MECCA is seeking donations to help furnish the facility. Listed below are a few items that would be helpful. Anyone wishing to donate an item is encouraged to contact MECCA at meccadirector@bright.net.

- Desks and chairs
- Conference table
- Folding tables
- Folding/stackable chairs
- Telephone/answering machine
- Computer/fax/copier/printer
- Digital camera
- Signage/displays/bulletin boards
- File cabinets/office supplies
- Easels and flipchart holder
- Dry erase marker boards
- Floor displays and display fixtures



St. Marys Kiwanians and Division of Water Employees joined forces to remove fallen tree branches and trimming brush from a three mile section of the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath from St. Marys to 40 Acre Pond on Oct. 11, 2003. A Labor Day weekend tornado passing through the area downed and damaged trees along the path. Division of Water employees spent 2 weeks with chainsaws and heavy equipment clearing the aftermath of the storm. The Volunteer Cleanup day was necessary to help clear the canal corridor prior to the annual St. Marys Kiwanis "Walk with Nature."



Locking Thru on “The Volunteer”

MECCA Board members and friends recently visited Providence Metro Park near Grand Rapids Ohio.

The trip included a ride on the Canal boat “The Volunteer” complete with “living history” guides. The boat went through a working lock and turned around at the Isaac Ludwig Mill. The Mill functions with waterpower, sawing wood and grinding grain.

Find out more about the park at:
www.metroparkstoledo.com/canal.html



Delphos High School Seniors Take Historic Tour

On September 20 the Delphos Rotary Club sponsored its Sixth Annual Historic Tour of Delphos for the city's high school seniors.

The tour highlighted numerous historic sites and buildings around Delphos including several sites on or associated with the Miami and Erie Canal.

In the morning the students learned how the canal affected early Delphos history and visited several canal era buildings and sites. Of special interest was Lock 24 at Stadium Park. Students gathered around the well preserved stone lock to learn how a lock was built and operated. The grooves worn into the stones at the edge of the lock by ropes used to secure a canal boat as it locked through caught the students attention.

This was tangible evidence to them that this lock was the site of great activity in the 19th century. Other morning highlights included the railroad yards, Ricker Bros. lumber



Some of the students and guides taking the Delphos Canal Tour.

yards and canal era warehouse that now serves as the city's offices.

After dinner at the park the students toured downtown Delphos. Along with visiting the city's two museums, the students also stopped at the site of Lock 23 and Eagle Mills, a flour mill built on the canal berm that shipped its product on the canal. Emphasis was placed on the fact that much of Delphos' downtown and industrial sites were built on or near the canal to facilitate easy shipping of the finished product in and out of town.

Other highlights of the afternoon tour were the ca. 1860 Dienstberger house, the Ostendorf Hotel and the Civil War memorial and Leslie Peltier Historical Marker at the Delphos Public Library.

Fourteen guides and more than 150 high school seniors enjoyed the tour on a cool but sunny, autumn day. Following the tour many of the students commented that they had no idea that so much had gone on in their small hometown.

Allen County 4-H Club Enjoys Horseback Ride on Towpath

On a sunny Oct 5, 2003 Sunday afternoon, 40 participants of the Allen County Classic showman 4-H Club enjoyed the 2nd annual horseback ride. Riders began their eight-mile trek along the Miami and Erie Canal Trail at Brewer Rd., Noble Twp house headed North to Deep Cut Park. The ride revealed such historical treasures of the Miami and Erie Canal as the newly renovated Lock 14, Bloody Bridge, 6-Mile Creek Spillway (now under renovation) and



Deep Cut. A stop over was made in Kossuth to water the horses and give pause to the riders. Patches, Pins and brochures were distributed to all by MECCA and the Division of Water. At Deep Cut Park all were treated to a hot lunch of hot dogs and chili soup. Prior to the 2nd annual ride the Allen County 4-H's participated in a group volunteer cleanup day on their ride corridor, through a volunteer agreement with ODNR Division of Water. A volunteer agreement allows an organization the opportunity to perform their activities such as litter cleanup or brush removal on State of Ohio Canal Lands.

Ohio Canal Society Tours Miami County

By Andy Hite

Executive Director

Piqua Historical Area

The weekend of October 17-19, 2003 saw 60 gongoozlers from Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Washington converge on Piqua, Ohio for a trip South of the Summit on the Miami and Erie Canal. MECCA Vice President and CSO Trustee Andy Hite led a tour that focused on canal sites from Lockington Locks to Lock 14s.

The tour highlighted the canal resources accessible to the public in Miami County. Stops along the route included a walking tour over the path of the canal in downtown Piqua conducted by local historian Jim Oda. The group also visited Lock Nine Park while on their hike. The next stop was at the newly renovated Twin Arch Culvert on 25A south of Piqua.

The group also enjoyed the rare treat of viewing Lock 12s in Troy. This lock is preserved in the basement of one of the Hobart buildings that was constructed on top of the path of the canal there. The lock is in excellent condition and afforded the participants the opportunity to view the backside of the lock walls to better understand how the locks were constructed. From here the group continued south for a hike along the towpath from Lock 13s to Lock 14s.

These locks are now easily accessible thanks to the bike path initiatives being undertaken in Miami County. Between the two locks are stone features of two aqueducts that are still in excellent condition as well. In both structures the foundation timbers are visible and one aqueduct still has some of the floor plankings visible on top of the foundation timbers. The highlight of this part of the tour was the discovery of an arched culvert that has, over time, been all but buried. This culvert does not show up on the survey maps of the canal. A ride on the canal boat General Harrison then helped tour members put all they had seen together as they were able to actually travel on the canal.

The day concluded with a banquet featuring a slide presentation by Piqua resident John Carpenter who detailed the work he performed over thirty years ago to restore and rewater the section of canal maintained and operated by the Ohio Historical Society at the Johnston Farm.

Sunday the group toured parts of the Piqua Hydraulic canal in order to understand that the canals in Ohio provided much more than simply a waterway for canal boat traffic.

For more information about canal structures in Miami County you can contact Andy Hite at the Piqua Historical Area State Memorial at 1-800-752-2619 or at johnstonfarm@mail2.wesnet.com



Many walkers came out to enjoy the annual "Walk With Nature."

Walk With Nature Attracts Hundreds

The 34th annual "Walk with Nature" held on Oct. 19, 2003 welcomed 400 walkers and several dozen dogs who enjoyed a beautifully sunny Fall day on the Miami and Erie Canal. Participants could walk the six-mile stretch of the Miami and Erie Towpath from St. Rt. 219 to 40 Acre Pond Glynwood Rd., or segments of their choosing with bus stops at St. Rt. 219, Memorial Park and 40 Acre Pond. Hikers came from many local areas and as far away as California, Oregon and Utah. Brochures, interpretive signage and personnel were provided at several historical sites as Lock 8, St. Marys River Aqueduct, Memorial Park and Belle of St. Marys Canal Boat. Sponsors of the "Walk" include St. Marys Kiwanis, New Bremen/New Knoxville Rotary, Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association (MECCA), ODNR Division of Water and the St. Marys Chamber of Commerce.

From the Executive Director

By L. Neal Brady

Executive Director

A Heritage Recreational Corridor is a linear landscape of significant and diverse character that becomes the focus of public and private partnerships to preserve, enhance and interpret the cultural, historical, natural and recreational resources within to create a sense of place, promote economic growth and enhance the image and quality of life in the region. This is the Description of MECCA taken from the Strategic Plan of MECCA of November 1998.

Over the past few weeks, several friends and acquaintances have greeted me with their congratulations on my appointment as the Executive Director of this organization. As the conversations continued, I would relay the vision and purpose of MECCA to the individual. I would also share that there is major work that lies ahead for MECCA as an organization.

In the near future a framework of a regional master plan will be completed. With corridor partners and stakeholders in the corridor, MECCA will work to facilitate completing the master plan in the individual communities. Planning will then continue to implement the master plans to build trails, renovate historic structures, install signage, add interpretive displays and enhance the quality of life in the corridor. Much work has been completed thanks to the efforts of the Board of Trustees, Past Executive Director Ben Richard, MECCA members, and the many volunteers and partners of this organization. These individuals will continue to work to develop additional grass roots coalitions and gain public involvement in the master plan. I hope that you see the value of the work MECCA is doing and will join us as a member. With your support we can continue to make great strides in realizing a regional vision for the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor.

MECCA YEAR-END GIVING

During the last part of the calendar year 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 year-end charitable gifts please consider a contribution to MECCA to help it continue promoting the historic canal corridor.

Miami Erie Canal Corridor Association (MECCA) Membership Form



Please check membership level desired

\$10 Individual..... _____ \$20 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 722 • St. Marys, Ohio • 45885

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