

Towpath Times

Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association

www.meccainc.org

Volume 8 • Number 1 • January 2005

Trails, Greenways Spur Economic Benefits

By L. Neal Brady

Hiking has been noted to be one of America's fastest growing recreational activities. It is estimated that almost one-third of Americans are actively hiking.

There are predictions that indicate there will be steep increases in participation in backpacking and hiking in all areas of the country. Hiking has been associated with backcountry recreation. But as more trails are developed and improved near populated centers, communities are realizing the economic, social, and health benefits of trails and hiking.

There exists a substantial amount of academic and research work regarding the economic benefits of trails and greenways. There is evidence that support the fact that trails and greenways improve local economies in numerous ways.

A trail can guide both visitors and residents through neighborhoods, past interesting shops, enticing restaurants, and many other businesses. Revenue generated from these trail-related recreation and activities can provide substantial income and employment opportunities.

As we know and desire, viable com-

merce and creation of jobs is a major emphasis for any community. Well managed trails running through communities can foster substantial, sustainable economic activity through business development and tourism. Trails encourage the establishment of "clean" industries and businesses such as cafes, bike shops and bed & breakfasts in communities along the trail. Visitors spend money on food, beverages, and transportation to the trail.

Additionally, they spend funds on clothing, equipment and accessories. The local businesses and attractions

Continued on Next Page

MECCA's Open House a Big Success

More than 125 individuals visited the Open House for MECCA's new headquarters in New Bremen on Sept. 11, 2004.

Interpretative exhibits, artifacts, and photographs were on display to present the history of the canal and the canal communities.

Individuals and entities that provided displays and artifacts included; Rita Hoying and the Fort Loramie Historical Association, George Neargarder and the Auglaize County Historical Society, Delores Stienecker and the New Bremen Historical Society, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources- Division of Water, Sue Lang and The Delphos Canal Commission, Tom Fledderjohann, Lowell Ziegenbusch, Mervin Quellhorst, and the Johnson Historical Area.

Banners, flower arrangements and dining canopies, provided by Greg Myers, decorated the office building and yard area. Visitors enjoyed refreshments and

food items donated by Dannon and MECCA Board Members. This event was considered a great success creating an opportunity for the communities to become familiar with the work of MECCA.



Visitors to MECCA's Open House Sept. 11 in New Bremen.

Trails

Continued From Previous Page

are the direct recipients of the dollars that come into the area from these visitors. Over time, new businesses are created to satisfy the needs of visitors and users of the trail.

Trails and greenways increase the natural beauty of the communities. They have been shown to increase the property values and make adjacent properties easier to sell. In a 2002 survey of recent home buyers sponsored by the National Association of Realtors and the National Association of Home Builders, trails ranked as the second most important community amenity out of a list of 18 choices. Trails offer safe and enjoyable options for transportation. Trails are considered lifestyle enhancements that are usually included in the sales package for a property.

Communities in the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor are finding that the canal and historic structures along a developed trail and greenway are truly community trademarks. These trademarks are focal points of civic pride and key attractors of new residents and businesses. There is a strong cultural awareness and community identification that extends from the canal.

The parks, trails and open spaces in the canal corridor provide what many Americans seek. That is close to home recreational areas, community meeting places, historic preservation, educational experiences, natural landscapes, and beautification. Trails and greenways help build pride by ensuring their communities are good places to live with a high quality of life. The community is more attractive for young families to return to their home towns and raise their families.

These same attributes combine to make the canal corridor a travel and tourism destination area. Tourists and scenic byway travelers desire to experience the culture and historic interpretation of the region. A developed and enhanced multipurpose trail through the canal corridor can entice greater levels of travel and tourism into the area.

The benefits of trails in a community are not only economic in nature. Walking, biking, and hiking are a great physical activity that leads to healthier and longer life for the residents. The greenway with or without a trail provides wildlife habitat and travel corridors for migrating birds and animals. These same areas are hands-on environmental classrooms. People of ages can experience for themselves the dynamic natural world and not so far from their home. Trails and greenways help make communities more attractive and friendly places to live.

MECCA is working to promote and enhance the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor as a viable resource for the communities. Its efforts will continue to focus on private and public partnerships that positively impact individuals and communities, not only in recreational opportunities but also influencing economic and community development. There are numerous opportunities for community partners to leverage private, local, state, and federal investment to stimulate private sector economic development in the Canal Corridor. With the support of the membership and community organizations, the Board of Trustees envisions many great successes in the future. Please contact MECCA at 419-733-6451 to contribute with work, wisdom and wealth.



MECCA Display at the Auglaize County Fair.

MECCA at the Fair

By Steve Dorsten

Several members of the MECCA Board of Trustees and employees of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water manned a display booth at the 2004 Auglaize County Fair in Wapakoneta from August 2 through August 7.

A newly-constructed canal boat model was added to the display. The approximately 2 foot long model represents the type of boats that plied the canal waters transporting goods, supplies, and people. The model was created by Division of Water employees, Dave Failor and Mike Vanderhorst.

Many visitors to the booth shared stories of their childhood experiences growing up and playing in the water and along the canal. Of special interest were stories of overnight docking of canal boats at Yahl Pond and the log cabin at 40 acres Pond.

Auglaize County residents were also interested in the New Bremen Lock 1 Restoration Project and the Phase II Project work completed by The Division of Water at Lock 14, The St. Marys Tumbles, and The 6 Mile Aqueduct.

Thanks to all who stopped by and visited the Booth.

Lock 1 North Restoration Project Receives Funding

By L. Neal Brady

The Ohio Department of Transportation has officially approved a Transportation Enhancement Grant for the reconstruction of Lock 1 North in downtown New Bremen.

The grant amount is approved up to 80 percent of \$280,000 (\$210,000). The 20 percent dollar match will be leveraged by the

New Bremen Historical Society, made up from major contributions and fund raising efforts in the community.

The Village of New Bremen will manage the engineering and inspection of the construction project. Construction contracts are scheduled to be awarded in mid-April 2005.

The projected completion date of the re-construction is November 2005. Efforts and applications are being prepared to nominate and place Lock One North on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is maintained by the National Park Service and is part of the U.S. Department of Interior.

Scenic Byway Grant Approved

By L. Neal Brady

A \$5,000 matching grant was granted to the Miami-Erie Canal Corridor Association from the Ohio Department of Transportation, Scenic Byways Program.

The 20 percent hard dollar matching grant was awarded to reprint the tri-fold Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor brochure. Over 20,000 brochures were printed in August.

The brochure highlights the Miami and Erie Canal Scenic Byway Route, the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath Trail and provides location information for canal structures, features and other points of interest.

The brochures were distributed at the Shelby, Auglaize, Allen and Miami County fairs and other special events and activities in the Canal Corridor. Currently, \$500 in matching funds is needed to finalize and reimburse this grant process. Please contact meccadirector@bright.net for copies of this informative brochure or to assist in meeting the hard dollar match for this grant.



Lock One North in New Bremen is scheduled for a major restoration.

MECCA Needs You -- Volunteer Today

MECCA desires to develop an active volunteer program for the organization. The opportunities are endless. Individuals who wish to use their talents and skills to assist with the purposes of the not-for-profit organization can contact the Executive Director to volunteer.

Some opportunities available include,

- Establishing educational exhibits and displays at county fairs and community events
- Writing articles concerning Corridor events and activities
- Assisting with the "Towpath Times" newsletter mailing
- Supporting volunteer organizations associated with the Canal Corridor

Volunteering is an opportunity for personal growth. Your skills, talents and experiences can be an asset for the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association. For more information, contact Neal Brady at 419-733-6451 or meccadirector@bright.net.

Transitions

Brady Retires From ODNR

After 31 summer recreational seasons and more than 29 years of full-time service, MECCA Executive Director L. Neal Brady retired Dec. 1, 2004 from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation.

Neal worked at six different Ohio State Parks in several supervisory, management and administrative capacities and as a facilitator and trainer for numerous state entities in team building and strategic planning processes.

A highlight in the last two years was facilitating the Labor-Management Committee of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. The Committee cooperated in the development of interest based resolution of issues outside the negotiated labor contracts. The overall effectiveness of this committee lead to agency specific language in the negotiated contracts and policy development that has benefited both employees and the agency.

In November 2003, after more than two years of classroom and intra-agency project development work, Brady was awarded the designation of CPM, Certified Public Manager, by the National Certified Public Manager Consortium and The State of Ohio. In 2002, Brady was elected and served as Conference Chairman and Board Member of the Ohio Certified Public Manager Society

New Websites Online

The American Canal Society has a new website: www.americancanals.org. The site links to a few sites, including the Toledo Metroparks, Lockington Locks, Piqua Historical site and MECCA.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources Canal Lands Website is <http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/water/canals/default.htm>



Volunteers clear debris at a recent Canal Clean-Up Day in Delphos.

Delphos Hosts Stakeholders' Meeting

By Sue Lang

The Delphos Canal Commission sponsored a Stakeholders' meeting concerning the future of the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor in the greater Delphos community Nov. 16, 2004, at the Delphos Jefferson High School. In attendance were more than 40 interested parties with a stake in the canal.

The evening started off with a welcome from the chairperson of the Restoration Committee, Sue Lang. Ms. Lang continued with a discussion of the Restoration Committee's vision for the Miami and Erie Canal in the greater Delphos area. Fellow committee member, Lou Hohman shared a brief history of the Delphos Canal Commission and its purpose of historical preservation of the culture of the community. Bob Ebbeskotte, a Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association Trustee delivered a slide presentation of the history of the canal. MECCA Executive Director Neal Brady then gave a 30-minute power point presentation of the economic benefits of developing the canal as a recreational greenway.

After these prepared presentations, Greg Berquist and Neal Brady guided the group in a 45-minute discussion of the vision for the canal in the Delphos area. The group identified the numerous assets of Delphos community, the ideal situation with the canal as a community focal point, identified potentials for improving business and discussed a 5-10 year vision for the canal corridor.

A result of this successful community meeting was the formation of a twelve-member committee to explore the vision and the future of the Miami and Erie Canal in the community.



Canal Scenic Byway Signage Installed

By L. Neal Brady

Installation of signage designating the Miami and Erie Canal Scenic Byway was completed in October by the Ohio Department of Transportation. The Byway follows St. Rt. 66 and extends from the Johnson Historical Farm north of Piqua to Delphos, a total of 59 miles.

The standard "Ohio Byway" signs as pictured were erected on state routes before the intersection with the designated Byway Route and at numerous locations along the route. The Scenic Byway directs travelers through the canal communities of Newport, Fort Loramie, St. Marys, and Spencerville.

The canal prism and several canal related structures can be observed in the view shed of the Byway as well as many places of interest can be visited in the communities and along the Byway Route. These attributes along the Byway provides opportunities for travelers and tourists to experience the local culture and interpret the history of the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor. The Miami and Erie Canal Scenic Byway is one of 17 designated Ohio Scenic Byways. For additional information visit www.ohioyaways.com.

Stone Walkpath Progressing Near St. Marys

By Steve Dorsten

Work continues on the one-mile long compacted stone walkpath. Over 1000 feet of towpath have been regraded, banks re-sloped and stone rip rap placed for bank stabilization and erosion control.

A 10-foot wide compacted stone path will extend north of St. Marys from High Street to the U.S. 33 bypass on the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath. The project work is being completed by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water, St. Marys Office and in partnership with the City of St. Marys.

The construction of the compacted multi-purpose stone trail is funded through Ohio Recreational Trails Program administered through the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.



Stone walkway project near St. Marys.

MECCA Board Member Spotlight **Tom Fledderjohann**

Tom is a life long resident of the New Bremen area and currently lives on the family farm located adjacent to the canal at Lock 6 North.



Tom and his wife Diane are the 4th generation to live on the farm. His grandfather operated a water powered sawmill located at the lock and sawed timber that was used for the construction and repair of the numerous wood locks located between New Bremen and St. Marys.

Tom currently farms with his oldest of three sons and is a part time insurance salesman for the German Mutual Insurance Company.

Active in the New Bremen and the New Knoxville Historical Societies, Tom has always had a real interest in the canal and the operation as the commerce it brought developed the region. His desire to preserve and enhance the canal has influenced his work on the Lock 1 North Restoration Committee and his position on the MECCA Board.

Working as an active Trustee of MECCA and partnering with local organizations and committees,

Tom envisions a developed and enhanced Canal Corridor can be achieved. Tom states that there are real possibilities and potentials that will improve the quality of life for the residents as well as make the region a historical and recreational destination area. Tom has been a MECCA Trustee since January 2004.

Canal Resource Plan Completed

By L. Neal Brady

A reference guide, "Resource Plan - Future of the Miami and Erie Canal," has been created with the support and in partnership with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

The resources plan serves as a reference guide for those interested in the future of the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor. The plans and ideas detailed in the document resulted from site inventory and analysis by people with interest in the development of the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor.

The plan currently does not provide site specific architectural - engineering concepts but does identify issues facing the corridor, from opportunities to constraints, as well as observed trends.

The objectives and recommendations presented are aimed at preserving and enhancing the Miami and Erie Canal as a viable resources, developing its natural, historic and recreational resources from Delphos to Piqua.

The document is ready for printing and distribution. The 64-page full color document will be made available to elected officials and community partners as an initial step for the development of a comprehensive master plan for the entire canal corridor.

Cost of printing is approximately \$10 for each copy. Please contact meccadirector@bright.net if you are interested in a copy or interested in financially supporting the printing and distribution of the Resource Plan.



Breach in embankment at Leighty Lake near Newport.

ODNR Breaches Leighty Lake

By Steve Dorsten

Once again water flows out of 12.8-acre Leighty Lake into Loramie Creek. This past summer saw the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water, St. Marys Office created a 40' wide breach in the 15' high embankment to comply with dam safety regulations. This is the first step to stabilize the area from increased bank failure.

Shelby County governmental entities have taken the lead with other local stakeholders in the next steps in reaching the ultimate goal of restoring Leighty Lake and the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath Trail. The Trail exists on the crest of the embankment.

Further steps may require land purchase, moving and re-channeling of Loramie Creek, consulting work and engineering design. Leighty Lake with the Towpath Trail is considered a valued asset by the local Newport area residences and it is envisioned that many options are available to enhance that site for recreational uses.

National Trails Day, June 4, 2005

The 2005 National Trails Day theme, "Take the Path to a Healthier You", emphasizes critical health benefits provided by trail related activities.

In partnership with health practitioners, National Trails Day events can offer health seminars, blood pressure readings and much more. National Trails Day is also a great opportunity for families to enjoy their favorite or unfamiliar sections of the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath Trail together.

Click onto www.americanhiking.org for additional National Trails Day information.

Canal Society of Ohio Visits MECCA Office

By Andy Hite, Site Manager Piqua Historical Area & CSO Trustee

On Saturday, Nov. 13, 2004, 20 Trustees of the Canal Society of Ohio held their fall meeting at MECCA's offices in New Bremen.

The Canal Society of Ohio holds three Trustee meetings each year at different locations around Ohio. This was their first meeting in New Bremen since MECCA located their offices here. MECCA President and CSO Trustee Andy Hite acted as the host as CSO Trustees from across Ohio gathered to conduct their meeting in our facility.



OXLEY VISITS CANAL -- U.S. Rep. Michael Oxley was the guest of MECCA recently on a tour of the canal corridor in Auglaize and Allen Counties. Here Oxley speaks with MECCA officials on the Belle of St. Marys canal boat in St. Marys' Memorial Park.

MECCA Wish List

The following is needed for the operation of the Organization.

- **Financial support for monthly operating expenses**
- **Stackable or folding chairs for Office**
- **Telephone and answering machine**
- **Office Signage**
- **Canal Educational Display**

The CSO Trustees enjoyed the exhibits and artifacts that are now housed in New Bremen after the fall open house at the MECCA office. Many of the visitors expressed their appreciation for what MECCA is working to accomplish and were impressed with the quality of material on display in our offices. All of the visitors agreed that our location within a block of the canal and Lock 1 North makes this an ideal location for MECCA.

One highlight of the day's work was a presentation by MECCA and CSO member Tom Fledderjohann. Tom explained what is happening in New Bremen in regard to the restoration and preservation effort currently being aimed at Lock 1 North. The CSO Trustees were impressed with the scope of what is being undertaken, and coupled with the plans of the New Knoxville-New Bremen Rotary for the canal area in New Bremen felt that this was an outstanding way to help make more people aware of the impact Ohio's canals had on our state a century and a quarter ago.

CSO President Mike Morthorst said, "I am happy to be able to show our Trustees what this group is doing to help preserve and promote knowledge about Ohio's canals. I am certainly glad that we were able to meet here and see firsthand what MECCA is working to accomplish."

MECCA "Thank You"

- RE/MAX Select, Barbara and Lowell Ziegenbusch - printing of the "Towpath Times" newsletter

For the September 11, 2004 Open House, Interpretative Display Items:

- Marvin Quellhorst - Canal Era Skidpan
- Tom Fledderjohann and Lowell Ziegenbusch - Canal Shipping boxes
- Greg Myers - canopies and decorations

For Congressman Mike Oxley's Canal Tour on October 13, 2005:

- Transportation by Don Hauenstein and the Auglaize County Council on Aging
- Cliff Brady for the use of a small refrigerator for the Office.
- Warren Masonic Lodge of Piqua for the donation of a fax/ printer /copier.

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 it continue promoting the historic canal corridor.

Miami Erie Canal Corridor Association (MECCA) Membership/Donation Form



Please check membership or donation 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

**Miami Erie Canal Corridor Association
P.O. Box 722
St. Marys, Ohio 45885**