

Towpath Times



Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association

www.meccainc.org

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Historic Preservation Through Canal Trail Development

By L. Neal Brady
Executive Director

Historic preservation advocates often are concerned that the development of enhanced multi-purpose use recreational trails on canal towpath will result in damage to the historic resources and reduce the historical significance of the linear transportation system. But the facts are that trail development can both preserve and enhance the significant resources through the identification, stabilization and restoration of these historic structures.

It has been proven that efforts for preserving structures and features without improving public access and developing a plan for effective utilization of the improved facilities has not been readily acceptable to funding entities and stakeholders.

There are numerous structures in the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor that have extensive historical significance and have great potential for rehabilitation. The structures can be effectively and efficiently converted to meet current occupancy standards for use as commercial and business space. Many of these buildings and resources are located on prime real estate located in the downtown areas of the communities that were once prosperous and active during the canal operation era.

The architectural design and facades of these historic buildings evoke their local commercial wealth and prominence in the once thriving business district. How can these structures be rehabilitated and the downtown areas of the canal communities be revitalized?



Often a decision to develop an improved trail along a historic canal results in the restoration of many of the original canal structures. Recreational opportunities provided through trail development has been a driving force behind many historic preservation and restoration projects across the county.

Increased access to the canal and canal related structures have lead to advocacy and support for preservation initiatives. Recreational use on the trails reawakens the past by providing the opportunity for local residents to rediscover their roots. A heightened sense of place and community pride

is developed within the residents. Their personal connection leads to an appreciation of the value of the historic resources.

What follows is the desire of the residents to know more of the historic significance of the structures. They will want to know what the structures were used for, how the internal machinery worked, when it was built and many other details that how the structures was used to influence commerce and business activity in the old canal community. The more the trail users learn about the canal corridor, the more it becomes not just a trail for recreation but more of a special place, a special place to live, raise a family and enjoy the benefits of active community with a high quality of life.

It becomes a place that people that reside outside the community just dream about living in such a special community. The historic structures and features in the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor exist because they once supported vibrant local economies.

We all need to become advocates to preserve and enhance these historic structures. These historic resources with improved access and broad based education and interpretation for our corridor citizens will reflect the "sense of place" for our future generations who will call their Canal Corridor Community, "Home".

Park District Receives Grant for Canal Trail

Two miles of Miami-Erie Canal Trail in Auglaize County will receive surface improvements thanks to funding from the voter-approved Clean Ohio Fund.

The Heritage Trails Park District will receive \$94,000 from the Clean Ohio Trail Fund, which will go toward two miles of trail improvements from Lock 14 to 40-Acre Pond.

The Heritage Trails Park District recently entered into a lease agreement with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, converting the refurbished Lock 14 area and two miles of canal towpath into a public park.

Lock 14 Park was recently enhanced with a parking lot on the east side of the lock. Heritage Trails Park Commissioners are also planning for a building at the park



for the storage of maintenance equipment.

The trail improvement is expected to mirror the improvements currently under way on the towpath trail north of St. Marys.

Improvements call for a 10-foot wide crushed stone path with a solid base and bank support.

The St. Marys path is being improved from the Municipal Power Plant north to the U.S. 33 overpass.

“We’re excited about the linking these improvements in the future,” said Heritage Trails Park Commissioner David Stilwell. “Our first goal is to complete enhanced recreational trail from St. Marys to Lock 14. From there we hope to continue to make improvements to Deep Cut and beyond.”

Stilwell said improved public accessibility to the trail will be a valuable asset for the citizens of Auglaize County.

“With the new trail head at Lock 14, we have some very exciting possibilities for future development,” Stilwell added.

NB Historical Society Plans “Canal Boat Experience”

The New Bremen Historical Association is selling tickets for an “Evening Canal Boat Experience” aboard the General Harrison Canal Boat at the Piqua Historical Area. The event will be held Saturday July 30, 2005 beginning at 6 p.m.

The Canal Boat Ride and Reception is being offered as a fundraiser for the New Bremen Historical Association in its efforts to financially support the rehabilitation of Lock 1 North in the community.

The event will provide history buffs and canal enthusiasts a chance to travel back in time and experience how people and goods were transported on the Miami and Erie Canal.

A limited number of tickets are

available for this “Evening Canal Boat Experience.” For additional information and to purchase tickets contact Dru Meyer at 419-629-3495.



General Harrison Canal Boat at Piqua Historical Area.

Dedication Planned for National Trails Day

National Trails Day®



June 4, 2005

The one-mile long compacted stone walk path currently under construction extending from High Street in St. Marys north to the U.S. Rt. 33 bypass on the historic Miami and Erie Canal Towpath is planned to be dedicated in celebration of 2005 National Trails Day which is June 4, 2005.

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

National Trails Day is a great day to open this trail section that will provide quality recreational opportunities for families and individuals residing and working in the downtown St. Marys area.

The trail 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.

National Trails Day (NTD) brings greater awareness to trails, along with their many benefits and pleasures. Whether the event involves one trail or a variety of activities, NTD is a wonderful

opportunity to introduce people to trails. Many new trail users become dedicated to trails and their preservation once they get out and learn about them and they realize the many volunteer and paid hours required for creating the trails.

The theme "Take the Path to a Healthier You" relates trail activities to improved health. Improve your health by getting outdoors on a trail. With the extremely high obesity rates in the US, trails can become the pathways to better health. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, regular physical activity, including trail use, is very beneficial for preventing or controlling many diseases.

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.

Toledo Metroparks Sponsoring Toledo-to-Cincy Canal Tour

Metroparks of Toledo will be sponsoring a Miami-Erie Canal Bus Trip, Saturday and Sunday, May 14 and 15, 2005.

The tour will begin at the Wildwood Preserve, Toledo OH, on Saturday May 14, at 7:30 a.m.

Enjoy a two-day journey following the route of the old Miami and Erie Canal from Toledo to Cincinnati. Stops and sites include a ride on "The Volunteer" at Providence Metropark then on to Napoleon,

Florida, Defiance, Junction, Delphos, Spencerville, St. Mary's, New Bremen, Lockington, Piqua, Troy, Tipp City, and Hamilton.

Included in the cost of the tour: motor coach transportation, hotel, two continental breakfasts, two lunches, one dinner, snacks, museum fees and boat ride tickets.

The cost for MECCA members is only \$150 per person. Reservations and fee required by April 23. Call 419-407-9741.



METROPARKS
TOLEDO AREA

Your Clean, Safe, Natural Places To Be

Delphos Canal Clean Up

By Sue Lang

The third community-sponsored clean up of the Miami and Erie Canal in Delphos during the last 8 months was held February 12, 2005 from 8:30 am to 12:30 p.m.. An enthusiastic and hard-working group of 55 volunteers cleared over 300 trees from the east and west banks of the canal between 7th and 10th streets.

Two Delphos area tree maintenance companies greatly assisted with the efforts. Noonan Tree Services and Kevin Moore Tree Services donated industrial-sized chippers to break down the tree and brush debris. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources also provided a chipper and manpower to cut down the trees. Steve Dorsten, supervisor with ODNR, Division of Water, said that he has never seen more businesses come together to support a clean up effort.

The Delphos Canal Commission, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Water, the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association and the City of Delphos sponsored this successful clean up in Delphos. The next clean up is scheduled in the Spring 2005.



Canal in Delphos “before” and “after” Delphos Canal Commission Clean up of brush along the canal banks in the city.

City of Sidney Nets Grant for Canal Bike/Walkway

The City of Sidney recently received notification of the Ohio Department of Transportation’s acceptance of a grant application to fund 80 percent of a \$300,000 bike/walkway.

If everything works out as planned, the city will be able to extend the community trail system 3,400 feet along the west shore line of the Miami River on the towpath of the Miami and Erie Canal Sidney Feeder. This new Sidney path will start at the south end of Sidney’s Graceland Cemetery, extend downstream through heavily wooded nature area, and connect to a new subdivision located on the south

end of town.

This project was made possible by a number of parties, most notably the extraordinary coordination and cooperation of the Sidney Cargill plant. The local plant employees’ fund contributed \$10,000 which was matched to corporate’s \$10,000 contribution. In addition, the employees agreed to become responsible for in-kind labor valued at an additional \$15,000.

The proposed project is the most recent phase of an overall city plan to expand the existing bike/walkway system linking residential areas to

all of the city’s numerous parks and recreation areas. Ultimately, this path could be connected south and west along the Miami River intersecting with the Miami and Erie Canal, the Buckeye Trail and be accessible to the Johnston Farm Historic Site.

The project was supported by a number of “Canal Partners” including the Shelby County Historic Society, Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association, Ohio State University Extension Office, the Miami Conservancy District, the Shelby County Parks District and the Piqua Historic Area State Memorial.

Appropriations requests Forwarded to Congressman Oxley

A total of six Appropriations Request Questionnaires were completed and forwarded to United States Congressman Mike Oxley's (R- Findlay) for consideration for funding projects in the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor in fiscal year 2006 Federal Budget.

The Appropriations Questionnaires included a request to study the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor for feasibility and suitability to receive National Heritage Area designation. This request is for the completion of a comprehensive study to include analysis and documentation to assess the features and attributes in the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor.

The US Department of Interior would grant the designation if significant historical and cultural attributes were recognized in the Canal Corridor after the completion of the study.

Other requests included potential canal restoration projects in the Delphos community and in Lockington in Shelby County, recreational trail development in Auglaize and Allen Counties, and a hydrologic study on the Miami and Erie Canal Summit in Auglaize and Shelby Counties.

“Journey in Time” With the New Bremen Historical Assoc.

The New Bremen Historical Association is publishing a collection of historic black and white photos of structures, bridges, maps, plats, leases and other points of interest in the New Bremen area.

The 60-page, soft cover book titled, “New Bremen- Journey in Time” will be available mid-April. The book will be available for purchase at several local business and offices including; The Crown Store; The Artist Touch; New Bremen Coffee Company and Books; Southwestern Auglaize County Chamber of Commerce; and at the New Bremen Historical Museum.

Contact Dru Meyer at 419-629-3495 for more information.

MECCA Board Member Spotlight

Sue Lang, 47, was born and raised in Delphos, Ohio and returned to Delphos in December 2003 after a 25-year hiatus, spent mainly in Philadelphia where she was a CPA. Sue has served as Treasurer on the Board of Directors of CASA Youth Advocates, as Activity Director on the University of Michigan Alumni Association Board of Directors, and as Treasurer on the Board of Directors of the Domestic Abuse Project. In her spare time, Sue was a Big Sister to a twelve year old in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters organization. Sue's hobbies included tennis, both as a participant and spectator, walking and reading.



Sue Lang

Since returning from Philadelphia to help with her mother, Sue has chaired the Delphos Canal Clean Up Committee and has directed three Delphos area community-wide canal clean up efforts in the last eight months. The committee has drafted a white paper on the hydraulic and aesthetical issues of the Miami and Erie Canal in the Delphos area. The report was presented to local, state and federal legislators. Sue also chairs the Delphos Canal Development Committee that was formed in November 2004 at a “Stakeholders” meeting. The committee is working to create a shared vision and draft a Strategic Plan for the development and enhancement of the Miami and Erie Canal in the Delphos community. The efforts will be directed toward increasing the economic, social and municipal well being of the community and its citizenry.

Sue has met with federal and state legislators over the course of the year to make them aware of the grass roots movement underway for the development of the Miami and Erie Canal, not only in Delphos, but also for the entire 59-mile Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor. She has personally communicated with United States Congressmen Oxley and Gillmor and Ohio State Representatives Willamowski and Hoops to keep her elected representatives fully informed of the development efforts on the Canal in the Delphos area.

Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association Organizational Update

By L. Neal Brady
Executive Director

The Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association (MECCA) is a not-for-profit organization with the purpose of stimulating public interest and support for the preservation, protection, development and enhancement of the historical, natural, and recreational resources that exist along the Miami and Erie Canal. The "Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor" currently exists from the Johnson Historical Farm in Miami County to Delphos in Allen and Van Wert Counties.

MECCA is working to fulfill its mission by promoting and developing educational programs that interpret the natural, historical and recreational resources in the corridor. Two promotional brochures were printed and distributed. "Travel Back in Time" is a visitor's guide to canal locks, museums, parks and hiking trails in the historic and scenic Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor. A tri-fold map of the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor was re-printed with the support of a mini-grant awarded from the Ohio Department of Transportation, Scenic Byways Program. This map brochure highlights the Miami and Erie Canal Scenic Byway that follows S.R. 66 from Piqua to Delphos as well as the 59-mile Miami and Erie Canal Towpath Trail. The map provides locations of many historic canal locks and aqueducts, bridges, parks and other features.

During the past year, MECCA Board of Trustees conducted bi-monthly meetings that were open to the public. A quarterly newsletter was distributed to MECCA Members and Corridor Partners highlighting the numerous enhancement projects along the corridor. In fulfilling the goals of the organization, a part-time Executive Director directed the work of MECCA. Goals include developing strong working relationships with corridor partners, facilitating and assisting



MECCA Contact information

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in coordinating local efforts in the development of canal corridor plans, and meeting with government and business leaders to enhance the quality of life along the corridor.

In meeting these goals, Informational Stakeholder's meetings were conducted in Shelby County and Delphos to discuss problems and propose potential resolutions to canal related issues in their local areas. MECCA was also actively engaged in canal clean-ups, planning, and restoration efforts with several communities in the Corridor.

A reference guide, "Resource Plan-Future of the Miami and Erie Canal" was created to assist in communicating the vision of MECCA. The plan was developed with the support and in partnership with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. The plan identifies issues facing the corridor from opportunities to constraints. This document will assist governmental and local leaders in the development of local community corridor plans that will be used in creating a comprehensive master plan for the entire Canal Corridor.

In October, MECCA had the opportunity to provide Congressman Mike Oxley a tour of the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor from

New Bremen to Delphos. The tour was designed for the Congressman to view some of the many projects in the Corridor and make him aware of the impact of the Canal on the local communities.

MECCA established a Canal Interpretative and Administrative Office in New Bremen at 130 South Washington Street. An Open House was conducted in September with over 125 individuals visiting the facility on that day. The facility maintains numerous interpretative exhibits, artifacts and photographs that present the history of the construction and operation of the canal and the local communities.

2004 was a year of transition and growth for MECCA that brought much recognition to the Canal Corridor highlighting the many potentials for development and enhancement. In the future years, MECCA will continue its work building local partnerships and promoting the region as a travel and tourism destination.

Schedule of Corridor Events

MECCA Board of Trustees Meeting
May 18, 2005, 6:30 p.m.
MECCA Office, New Bremen

Ohio Walking for Fitness Day
May 19, 2005, Noon
New Bremen Pavilion

National Trails Day Event
Stone Walk Path on Towpath Trail
Dedication in St. Marys
June 4, 2005

Delphos Area Canal Mini-Clean Up
Late June

New Bremen Historical Association
Summer Picnic
June 5, 2005, 12 noon to 3 p.m.
New Bremen Historical Museum

Evening Canal Boat Experience
July 30, 2005
New Bremen Historical Association
Contact: Deloris Steinecker 419-629-2685

Scenic Byway Links Miami-Erie Canal Landmarks



The Miami and Erie Canal Scenic Byway route follows St. Rt. 66 from the Piqua Historical Area in Miami County to Delphos in Allen and Van Wert Counties. This Byway is one of 21 designated Byways in Ohio and was designated in November 1999.

Following the Byway, travelers can observe the numerous historic sites and structures, communities and sections of the second longest contiguous portion on canal in the United States. Much of the actual canal can be seen from the designated roadway.

The “view shed” along the 57 mile Miami and Erie Canal Scenic Byway provides a representative look of the culture and social landscape of the region.

The byway visitor experience entails observing the prosperous, well-maintained farms and rural canal communities and the German influence that settled the region.

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
- Office Signage
- Canal Educational Display

MECCA “Thank You”

- RE/MAX Select, Barbara and Lowell Ziegenbusch - printing of the “Towpath Times” newsletter
- NKTelco - Installation of internet access to the MECCA Office.
- American Legion Post 323, St. Marys - Operation funding support.
- American Legion Post, New Bremen - Operation funding support.

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
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