

Towpath Times



Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association

www.meccainc.org

Volume 8 • Number 4 • Winter 2006

Canal Resources Deserving of Recognition

By L. Neal Brady
MECCA Executive Director

There are key resources in the designated Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor that make the region a viable asset as a travel and tourism destination and provide an enhanced quality of life for the residents.

- The canal setting and the Towpath Trail -- the 59-mile section of canal from Piqua to Delphos and the 11-mile Sidney Feeder (Sidney to Lockington) is mostly intact and

is available for public access. The numerous structures and the actual canal prism can be observed and the towpath can be hiked. Several sections of the Towpath Trail has been improved and enhanced for bicycle access. Access by the Towpath Trail provides individuals the opportunity to understand the historical significance of canal and instill an appreciation of the resource base. Greater understanding of the assets will lead to increased protection and development of the canal related structures and the adjacent amenities.



Historic structures like the Lockington Locks (above) and recreational trail systems are just a few of the many resources the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor has to offer.



MECCA 2006 Annual Membership Meeting Set

The Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association's 2006 Membership Meeting will be held Wednesday Jan. 18, 2006 at 6:30 p.m. at the MECCA Administrative Office and Canal Heritage Center. The Center is located at 130 S. Washington St. in New Bremen, two blocks south of SR 274.

There will be a review of the accomplishments of MECCA in 2005, election of officers for the 2006 year and opportunities for members to network with fellow members and leaders of the organization. Please note this date on your calendars and plan to attend. Immediately following the Annual Meeting, the bimonthly board of trustees meeting will be held which the membership and the public is always invited to attend.

- Urban settings with close association to the canal and its legacy of transportation, industrial, commercial and community development. The communities along the canal prospered by the commerce that moved on the waters. The water power that became available by the construction of the locks, spillways and ponds offered an opportunity for industries and manufacturers to use the available water power to manufacture goods locally, and more importantly, ship to markets outside the region. The strong cultures of the immigrants that moved into the region make the communities livable and sustain a high quality of life.

Continued on Next Page

Resources

Continued From Front Page

- **Rural and natural settings along the canal.** Construction of the canal as the first interstate transportation system opened the wilderness of western Ohio. The Miami and Erie Canal was constructed through wetlands, swamps, along rivers, and on steep hillsides. The canal embankments created barriers to development by farmers and developers. These barriers have resulted in unique protected habitats that have changed very little in the past 150 years. The canal was a linkage through the region that enabled individuals to extend out from the concentrated communities. The ease of transportation, workers with their families were able to live further from the developed community and still be able to easily acquire goods and services as they were needed.

- **The Miami and Erie Canal Scenic Byway, the Land of the Cross Tipped Churches Scenic Byway, and the Lincoln Highway Scenic Byway.** These three designated scenic byways provide travelers the opportunity to gain access into Ohio's Historic West. Today's baby-boomer generation and others desire to learn by experiencing the culture and social behavior of the region. The "view shed" along Scenic Byways 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.

The Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor deserves recognition, preservation, protection and development. MECCA is working to "share the vision" of a national recognized recreational corridor and greenway. You are invited to help "open and connect the Miami and Erie Canal." Become a member and support the efforts of MECCA



Canal banks in Delphos have been cleared of weeds and debris.

Canal Cleanup Makes Impact

*By Sue Lang, Chairperson
Delphos Canal Cleanup Committee*

The two-mile cleanup of the Miami and Erie Canal in Delphos Aug. 20 was a great success! Under a sweltering sun, more than 120 determined volunteers worked very hard to clear the banks of the canal from Lock 24 in Stadium Park to Clime Street in South Delphos of trash, litter, debris, weeds and trees. Just north of Cleveland Street on both the east and west banks over 100 trees were removed. At Lock 23, the volunteers pulled out a 10-speed bicycle and car tires amongst the trash. Most spectacular were the weeds that were pulled or whacked by the 120 volunteers. More than 100 trash bags of weeds were collected by the volunteers and disposed of at the dump.

I encourage every resident of Delphos and the surrounding area to make a tour of the canal bridges in Delphos – 10th, 7th, 5th, 3rd, 2nd, 1st, Cleveland and Clime - so that you can see firsthand the outstanding job that these 120 volunteers did. Their contributions to the beauty

and habitat of the canal are second to none. To a man, woman and child, the volunteers came to lunch at noon exhausted from their hard and hot work. They truly made a difference.

This year our major cleanup had a new wrinkle. A scavenger hunt was held. The volunteers finding the most interesting and unique objects in the canal or on its banks were awarded cash prizes. This added excitement and motivation to the cleanup especially for the children. First place went to Zach Ricker who found an oak plank with square nails affixed to it that was at some point attached to the dock at Cleveland Street. He won \$25. Zach graciously donated the plank to the Delphos Canal Commission.

This was the start of the second year of cleanups. During the 2004-2005 season (June 2004 – April 2005), we held five cleanups clearing 16 blocks of trees and brush making the canal an open vista reminiscent of the 1850s. Over 250 volunteers helped accomplish this goal. Working together, the people of the Delphos area can accomplish great things.

Delphos Rotary Club Sponsors Historic Tour

More than 150 Delphos high school seniors got a brief glimpse of their city's rich history at the 10th annual Rotary Club Historic Tour of Delphos. A dozen volunteer tour guides led the students on an all day walking tour of the city, showcasing well known historic sites and highlighting other sites less well known.

The tour was the brainchild of Joann Smith of the Delphos Rotary Club and was formed as an effort to expose our community's youth, albeit briefly, to their community's history before they leave for college, some never to return.

The day started with an assembly at Jefferson High School where an assortment of speakers laid the foundation for the tour with brief overviews of the city's founding and growth and the tour itself. The balance of the morning was spent exploring the city's north end and its railroad and canal heritage. Highlights were the long defunct rail yards and the Miami and Erie Canal's Lock 24 where a presentation was given on lock construction and operation. Students were encouraged to close their eyes and imagine, just for a moment, that it was 1870 and a canal boat from Minster was locking through. Or it was 1845 and the last remnant of the Miami Indian tribe was passing through Delphos on the canal, being forcibly removed to a reservation in Kansas. During the entire tour emphasis was placed on the fact that real people lived



Delphos students view canal lock.

and worked at the various sites and that some of these people may have been our ancestors. Students were told that their ancestors were part of Delphos history and they themselves are part of Delphos history today.

At noon the Rotary Club sponsored a picnic dinner after which the groups boarded buses for a ride downtown for the afternoon portion of the tour. Along the way highlights included the Lincoln Highway; the city's oldest building -- an 1845 township school; the city's oldest cemetery, home to Civil War veterans and canal boat captains; the house Zane Grey lived in when he played semi-pro baseball in Delphos

in the 1890's; and Brookhaven, the home of world famous astronomer Leslie Peltier.

Downtown Delphos was the focus of the afternoon. The postal museum and Canal Museum gave students and guides alike a chance to see, up close, real history. The Civil War era Dienstberger House was a highlight of the afternoon as students were told that as they passed through the door they were standing in the exact spot a Civil War soldier was standing when he returned home 140 years ago after five years of bloody battle. The tour ended at the public library, site of the city's first park, Civil War Veteran's Memorial and the Leslie Peltier Historic Marker. The memorial was set to be removed the next day to the new Veterans Memorial giving the students the opportunity to be the last class to see the memorial in its original location.



Glimpse From the Past

Photo from the 1950s shows Lock 12 before it was covered up for a parking lot east of Chestnut Street in St. Marys.

More digging at Lock 1

Representatives from the Village of New Bremen, the New Bremen Historical Association, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources – Division of Water, and MECCA were on hand to observe additional exploratory excavations at the Lock 1 North in the months of October and November.

The excavations located the original retaining walls on the east side of the Lock and at the lower level which is now under the parking lot north of the lock.

An important find was the concrete spillway that controlled the water elevation and provided water control for the industries that operated at the Lock. The spillway with a steel wicket gate appears to be in excellent condition as it has been covered by the asphalt parking lot for many years. It is hoped that this spillway and gate structure can be fully utilized in the rehabilitation project that is expected to begin in Spring 2006.



Wicket gate uncovered during dig at Lock 1.

Trail Projects Gaining Momentum in Sidney

By L. Steve Stilwell
City of Sidney City Manager

On Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2005, Sidney Mayor Frank J. Mariano joined with representatives of ConAgra Foods, a local food processing firm, to cut the ribbon on the new Julia Lamb walking track.

This facility had hosted Sidney football games for approximately 60 years until 2004. The property was recently leased to the City of Sidney for a community park. ConAgra Foods, recognizing the community need, graciously contributed \$5,000 toward the walking track.

This path, located directly adjacent to the Miami River and other City park grounds, will be part of the pedestrian walkway inventory for many years to come.

Further south, along the Miami River, the City is designing an upgrade of 3400 lineal feet of the canal feeder lineal pathway for construction

anticipated for the summer of 2007.

Earlier in August, Governor Bob Taft announced that the City was one of 25 communities to receive a total of \$13 million in federal transportation enhancement funds from the Ohio Department of Transportation.

The City's "Canal Path" project will cost approximately \$392,000. The City's share is approximately \$72,000, matched with a \$35,000 contribution from a local Cargill facility, part of which was contributed by the Cargill Foundation.

The Sidney canal feeder towpath will be upgraded to a 10-foot wide asphalt trail allowing the community access along the Miami River and celebrating the history of the canal days in Sidney and Shelby County.

This improvement will be located upstream and north of 17 acres of riverfront property, soon to be acquired by the City of Sidney. This secondary parcel includes 2900 lineal

feet of the Sidney feeder canal and will be purchased using a \$65,000 grant from the Ohio Public Works Commission, as matched to a \$36,000 grant from M & W Development, a private corporation specializing in quality residential subdivisions and homes.

M & W recognized the importance of preserving the history of the region, providing public access to the shores of the Miami River, and enhancing the marketability of their properties located directly adjacent to the Sidney canal feeder.

It is anticipated that the property in question can be transferred from M & W to the City of Sidney by the end of calendar year 2005.

The City of Sidney and Shelby County continue to look at different ways to preserving the rich cultural heritage represented by the Miami Erie Canal Corridor.

Work Continues on St. Marys Walk Path

By Steve Dorsten
ODNR Division of Water

Major hurdles have been overcome towards the final completion of the one-mile stone walk path along the Miami and Erie Towpath, north of St. Marys to the SR 33 Bypass.

In the project planning stages and prior to beginning the Walkpath construction, the trail development was viewed as actually four separate projects:

- Clearing and grubbing of trees and brush; A large portion of the Miami and Erie Towpath and the specifically the walkpath construction zone is elevated. The canal embankments rising above the adjacent land makes it a levee by definition. Vegetative growth of trees and brush become a detriment to soil structure and stability. Brush and heavy vegetative cover creates a quality habitat for burrowing animals. The holes used by these animals create conduits through the embankments that deteriorate the integrity of the bank. Trees on these levees form shallow root structures and topple during storms. The uprooted trees dislodge large chunks of earth further changing the integrity of the levee.
- Stabilizing the towpath; More than two hundred tandem axle dump trucks of clay soil has been hauled, leveled and compacted along the towpath. This material has been used to widen the bank to accept



Miami and Erie Canal towpath prepared for gravel paving.

a ten-foot wide walk path and solidify the base slope. The St. Marys River parallels the towpath. At times when the river is above normal flow (flood condition) the waters will overtop the canal banks. The rushing waters will actually wash out sections of the towpath. Re-establishing the bank integrity and elevating the towpath to compensate for high flows is a necessity. These two completed projects signal great progress and by far have been the most time consuming of the four identified projects.

The remaining two projects under construction portions include;

- Rip Rapping or laying Type “D” stone along the canal waters edge to control erosion
- The installation of the crushed limestone on the entire length of the walkpath and on the parking area. This work is approximately 1/3 complete. The crushed limestone path will consist of two layers of three inches of type #411 compacted stone topped with a two inch layer of a finer #9 compacted stone.

Mother Nature has dictated our ability and time to work on this project. As with any construction and maintenance operations program, responding to other “emergency” projects is necessary and required. Even with all the priority tasks that demand the time of the Maintenance Staff at the Ohio Department of Natural Resources – Division of Water – St. Marys Office, the projected date of completion of the Carl Chiles Walkpath is Spring 2006.



ODNR Division of Water employees clear brush from towpath bank.

Hundreds Enjoy Walk With Nature



The 35th annual "Walk with Nature" was conducted on October 16, 2005. More than 400 walkers with 35 pets enjoyed the warm fall afternoon with the fall foliage still near at its peak color.

This was Leroy Goodwin's first year as the chairman of the annual event. Co-chairman George Nearing had guided the efforts for numerous previous years and remained fully involved in the activities. The event was sponsored and coordinated by the St. Marys Kiwanis

Club, Ohio Department of Natural Resources- Division of Water, the St. Marys Area Chamber of Commerce, the New Bremen- New Knoxville Rotary Club, and Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association (MECCA). The St. Marys City Schools provided transportation as needed for the hikers. Hikers had the opportunity to walk the Towpath Trail north from St. Marys to 40 Acres Pond or South to SR 219. Leroy Goodwin is looking to expand the activities and increase participation at future walks scheduled for the 3rd Sunday in October annually.

Delphos Canal Development Committee Sets Goals

The Delphos Canal Development Committee was formed in November 2004 at a community meeting discussing the future of Delphos and the Miami and Erie Canal.

A 13-member committee was formed and took on as its mission to define and draft a plan by which the Miami and Erie Canal can increase the economic, social and municipal well being of Delphos and the surrounding area, and the citizenry.

The committee has met monthly since January 2005 and drafted the following as a vision statement: To create a canal corridor which

complements properties adjacent to the canal and the Delphos area by installing trails, hydraulic restoration and dredging. The purpose of this action is for the canal to become a useful asset to the community.

The six goals the committee has created include:

- 1) Establishment of structural and hydraulic integrity of the canal.
- 2) Creation and identification of a system of multi-use transportation corridors and public use areas linked to the project area.
- 3) Provide fiscal ideology for the improvement and ongoing

maintenance of the Miami and Erie Canal.

- 4) Encourage economic development along the Miami and Erie Canal in the planned project area.
- 5) Improve the appearance of the Miami and Erie Canal in the planned project area.
- 6) Educate the public on the historical, cultural, geographical and environmental of the Miami and Erie Canal in the planned project area.

Future meetings will discuss the steps needed to be taken to accomplish the goals.



MECCA Executive Director Neal Brady and Delphos Canal Commission Trustee Lou Holhman accepted the check from Dienstberger Foundation Trustee Rick Miller.

Dienstberger Grant Awarded

On Tuesday, Dec. 6, 2005 The Arnold C. Dienstberger Foundation awarded the Delphos Canal Cleanup Committee of the Delphos Canal Commission a grant of \$8,500 to continue its work in the cleanup and restoration of the Miami and Erie Canal in the Delphos Community.

Chairperson of the Committee and MECCA Trustee, Sue Lang applied for the funding after leading seven successful volunteer cleanup events in the Community. The funds will be used to remove trees and vegetation between Fifth Street and Seventh Street.

National Trails Day Planning

National Trails Day of the American Hiking Society is scheduled for June 3, 2006.

In 2006, American Hiking will celebrate its 30th anniversary. To coincide with the festivities and American Hiking's new initiatives, the slogan for NTD 2006, "Experience Your Outdoors," speaks to all Americans and encourages them to get outside, get active, and experience the wonders of trails in their own communities and throughout the country.

MECCA will again plan to participate in the National Event.

"Experience Your Outdoors" gives NTD a personal message to all individuals and includes all varieties of recreational uses. National Trails Day events:

- Develop awareness and understanding for one's self and relationships with others
- Encourage responsibility and stewardship
- Build a sense of community
- Develop consciousness and respect for the environment
- Increase the desire for recreation
- Enhance quality of life
- Provide exercise, relaxation, and enjoyment

Schedule of Corridor Events

- MECCA Annual Membership Meeting
January 18, 2006 – New Bremen
MECCA Office
- Board of Trustees Meeting will immediately follow.
- Buckeye Trail Association Annual Meeting, April 21-23, 2006 - Johnson Farm, Piqua
- MECCA Board of Trustees Meeting, May 17, 2006, MECCA Office
- National Trails Day, June 3, 2006 – Local events will be scheduled
- MECCA Board of Trustees Meeting, July 19, 2006, MECCA Office

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
- Eagles Lodge, St. Marys - Operational funding support.
- St. Marys Community Improvement Corporation -- financial support.
- First Choice Consultant Company -- donation of office equipment.

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**