

# Towpath Times



Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association

www.meccainc.org

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## MECCA Celebrates 10th Anniversary

By L. Neal Brady  
MECCA Executive Director

Back only a decade ago, several vision oriented individuals along the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor recognized a need to focus energy and efforts to stabilize, protect and develop the historic canal structure as a viable asset in the communities and region.

Historically, the Miami and Erie Canal was once the major economic engine that created commerce locally and brought prosperity to the region by moving finished goods, raw materials and supplies into and out of the region. The Canal with its abundant water power provided energy for machinery and equipment to produce manufactured goods that would be sold to markets only accessible by the canal.

With the shift in economic demands on the canal and related structures, the canal was in many incidences forgotten and was seen as abandoned asset with little value. The Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association (MECCA) was created in 1996 to build a shared vision for the long term protection and appreciation for the canal assets in west Central Ohio.

A description of MECCA taken from an early Strategic

Plan was as follows;

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.

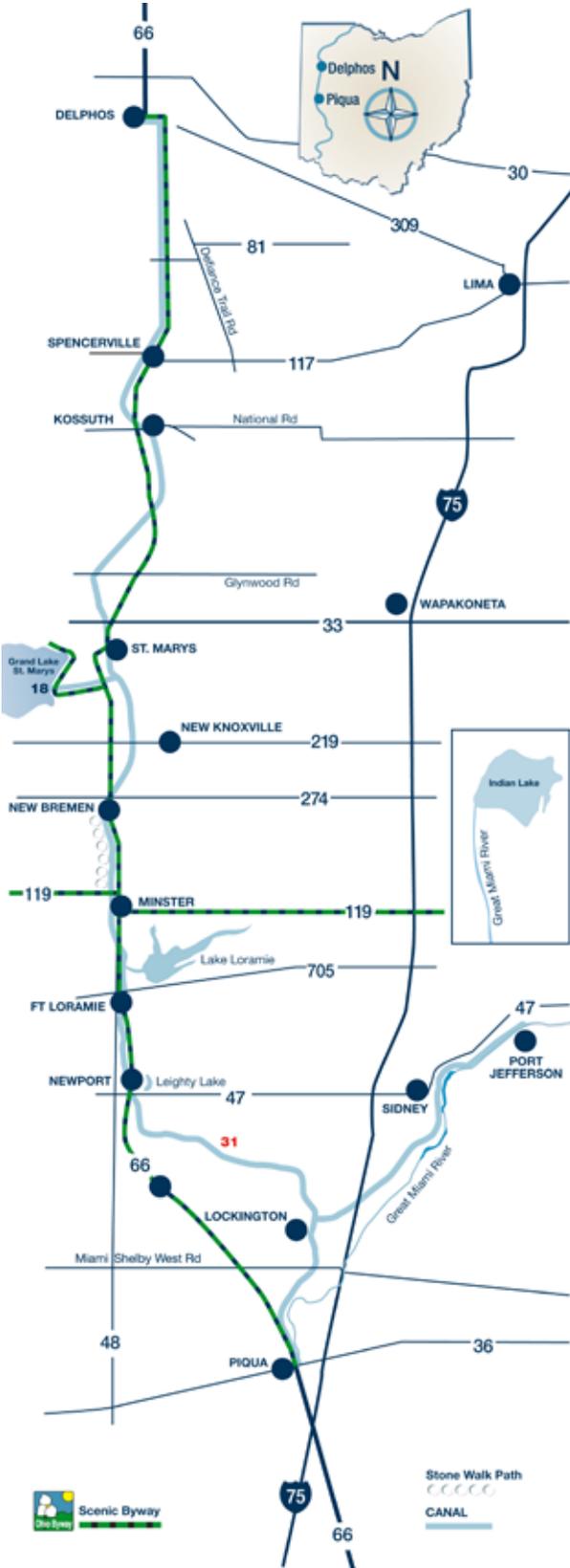
Since the creation of MECCA, there have been numerous benchmarks of success to move the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor into local, state and national recognition.

Under the direction of the Ohio Department of Development, Division of Travel and Tourism, Heritage Area Program, a feasibility study was conducted to compile information of the historical, cultural, natural and recreational assets of the region to determine the historical significance of the region.

After review, the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor was officially designated as a Ohio Heritage Area.

In 2002, upon completion of a feasibility study, State Route 66 from Johnson Farm in Miami

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# Anniversary

*Continued From Front Page*

County to Delphos in Van Wert and Allen County was officially designated as the Miami and Erie Canal Scenic Byway. Today the 59 mile Scenic Byway is signed and is recognized as a valued route where travelers can be immersed in the culture and social environments that exist along the route. Travelers have the opportunity observe the maintained and managed farms and fields as well as in the well cared-for small communities that developed as canal towns.

MECCA has been sharing the vision and building a coalition to promote the Corridor Concept. The framework of a regional master plan is now completed.

With partners and stakeholders in the canal 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 interpretative displays and enhance the quality of life in the corridor.

Much work has been done in the past 10 years in reaching the status the region enjoys today.

Work will continue in building grassroots coalitions and gain public involvement in the master plan. I hope that you see a value of the work of 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 Heritage Corridor.



**MECCA Center on corner of Washington and Plum streets in New Bremen.**

## New Sign Marks MECCA Site

*By L. Neal Brady  
MECCA Executive Director*

A Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Center sign was installed in late winter in front of the MECCA Administrative Office located at 130 S. Washington Street in New Bremen.

Designed and developed by Unique Awards in St. Marys, the two sided sign is attractive and compliments the community standards. The framework that is mounted on a canal lock stone was fabricated and affixed by MECCA Trustee Tom Fledderjohann.

The signage has brought much

attention to the Heritage Center as quantified by the marked increase in the number of visitors to the canal history displays on the enclosed front porch.

Visitors are offered to opportunity to sign in and also have access to several brochures of the Canal Corridor and New Bremen. Take the opportunity to stop by the Center as you are travel the Miami and Erie Canal Scenic Byway (SR 66). The front porch with the Canal Educational displays is always open. So bring a friend and learn more about how the canals were constructed and operated.

# Foundation to Develop Kuenning Dicke Park

The Trustees of the New Bremen Foundation has recently announced the development of the Kuenning Dicke Park located north of New Bremen American Legion Post 241, south of Lock Two Road and west of the Miami and Erie Canal. The Park will be sited on a 64 acre parcel recently acquired by the Foundation. The Park concept is the result of discussions between Tom Kuenning and James F. Dicke II and is named in honor of their respective families.

The park will be a nature preserve with a three acre pond, hiking trails, and a primitive camp site along the canal trail. It will be developed with trees and grasses native to Ohio, and will honor New Bremen veterans who served in various conflicts from the Civil War through the present war in Iraq. The Foundation plans to develop the property through a

combination of donations and Federal and state grants.

Representatives from the Foundation will work with members of MECCA, Buckeye Trail Association, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, as well as the New Bremen Village Council on this project. Construction has begun on the construction of the pond as well as parking areas. A formal dedication for the park is being planned for Memorial Day 2007.

The New Bremen Foundation was established in 1996 for the benefit of the residents of New Bremen and the surrounding area. For additional information on the Foundation or to donate to the Park Development Fund, contact Brad Smith at (419)629-2220, ext. 2310.





*Rip rap lines the towpath of the Miami-Erie Canal from St. Marys north to U.S. 33.*

## Rip Rap Phase Completed on St. Marys Trail

*By Steve Dorsten  
ODNR Division of Water*

Another major hurdle has been cleared on the St. Marys crushed limestone walk path project.

A total of 156 dump truck loads, carrying 1,100 tons of type “D” rip rap, was installed along the one-mile long stretch of the Miami and Erie Canal towpath from High Street in St. Marys north to where the canal intersects with U.S. Route 33.

Type “D” stone or special rip rap measures 8” to 12” in size. Rip rap is utilized on the canal banks to control erosion and stabilize the

earthen banks. Prior to this hurdle, two previous work phases were completed.

One phase involved the removal of trees, stumps, and brush on the towpath and canal embankments. The second phase involved the rebuilding, widening and compaction of soil of the historical canal banks.

This project phase required 200 tandem axle dump truck loads of clay soil. The clearing of trees and widening of the towpath was necessary to create the base of the compacted stone walkway.

The embankment re-building

which involved raising the elevation of the towpath will minimize the damage from the St. Marys River overtopping the towpath during flood stage events.

The next and final phase involve excavation on the canal bank and towpath and the installation of two three-inch layers of compacted “411” stone topped by one two-inch layer of compacted “9” fine stone.

Final grading, landscaping and grass seeding will complete the project in the next months. This project is funded through the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Recreational Trail Fund.

## New Trustees Added to MECCA Board

New Members to the MECCA Board of Trustees elected at the Annual Membership Meeting in January are;

Kelly Kill, Director of the St. Marys Area Chamber of Commerce  
Jim Coons, Director of the Southwest Auglaize County Chamber of Commerce  
Ben Richard, Project Manager, Johnny Appleseed Metropolitan Park District  
Kevin Bruin, Park Commissioner, Johnny Appleseed Park District

Trustees elected to serve as the Executive Board in 2006 are;

Stan Davis, President  
Richard Millhouse, Vice President  
Jim Coons, Secretary  
Nick Van Schoyck, Treasurer  
Andy Hite, Past President  
Steve Stilwell, At-Large Member

## Maumee Valley Heritage Corridor Board visits MECCA

Eleven members of the MVHC Board visited the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Center on April 1, 2006 as MECCA hosted the non profit organization's Spring Quarterly meeting.

After the meeting, the group visited the Bicycle Museum of America and the New Bremen Historical Museum and then traveled north on the Scenic Byway to the Delphos Canal Museum.

The Maumee Valley Heritage Corridor was incorporated in 1992 in Ohio and in 1993 in Indiana. Their Mission is to identify historic, natural, cultural and recreational resources in the Maumee River watershed, principally in those counties adjacent to the Maumee, and to increase public awareness of these resources and help protect them as necessary.

Accomplishments to date include initiating studies by the National Park Service that have led to Congressional designation of the Fallen Timbers Battlefield and Fort Miamis as an affiliated unit of the NPS; designation of 60 miles of roads along the Maumee River a Ohio Scenic Byway; publishing an annual calendar of heritage and cultural events; and increasing awareness of the many historical and cultural attractions in the Corridor.

Maumee Valley Heritage Corridor, Inc.

5100 W. Central Ave.

Toledo, OH 43615

<http://www.maumeevalleyheritagecorridor.org>

## Western Ohio True Value Hardware



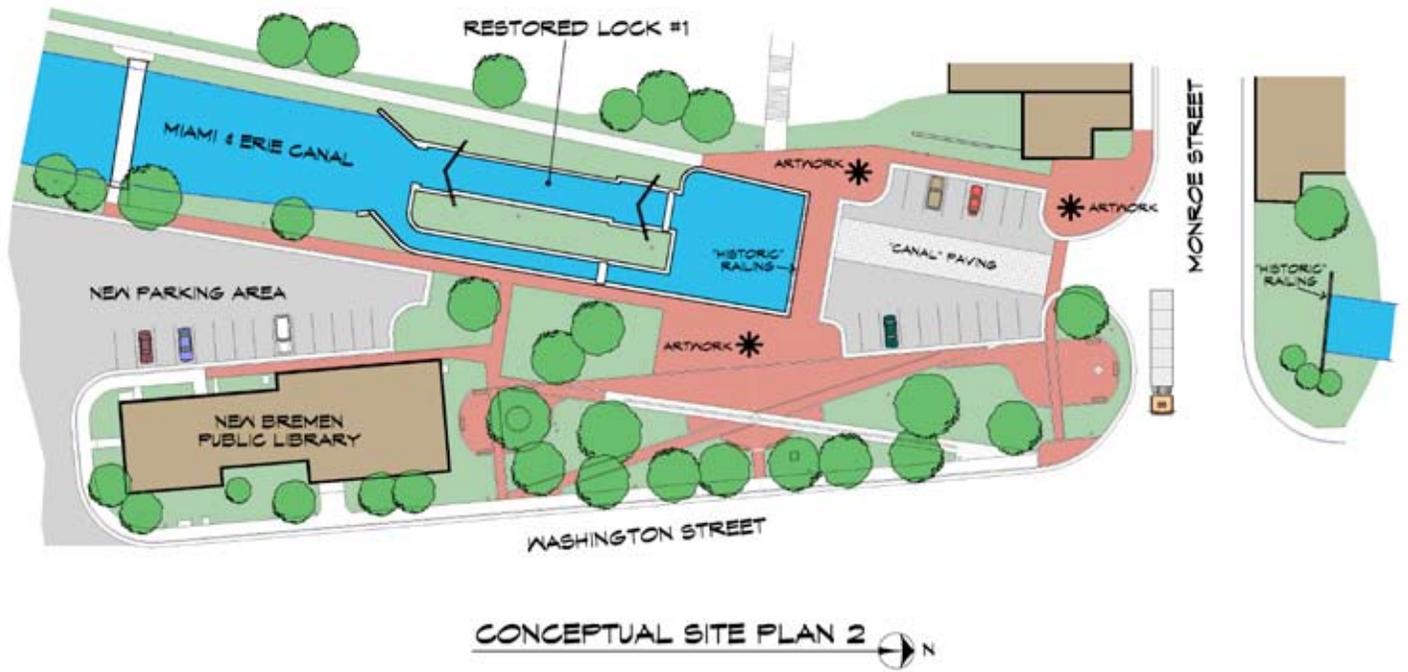
### Two Great Locations to Serve You!

**State Route 66  
Minster, Ohio 45865  
419-628-3804**

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**702 North Eastern Ave.  
St. Henry, Ohio 45883  
419-678-3828**

## MECCA "Thank You"

- RE/MAX Select, Barbara and Lowell Ziegenbusch - printing of the "Towpath Times" newsletter
- Special recognition to Dannon Company as becoming a Corporate Sponsor of MECCA.
- New Bremen- New Knoxville Rotary Club for donation of \$100 for the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Center sign recently installed at the MECCA Office in New Bremen.
- Western Ohio True Value Hardware for the donation of 20 folding chairs for the Heritage Center meeting room.of office equipment.



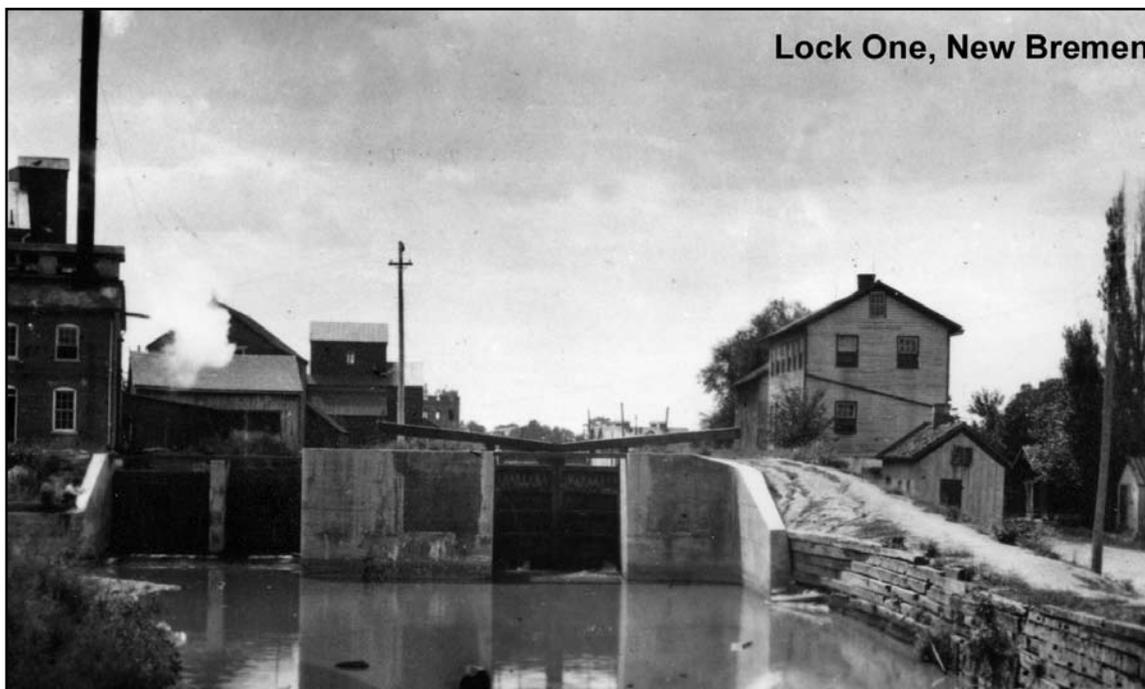
# Lock 1 Restoration Plans Move to Next Level

Work to restore the “1910 Era” concrete Lock 1 North will begin early this summer. Final plans have been developed by Mote and Associates of Greenville and invitations to bid will be released by May 1, 2006.

Freytag and Associates of Sidney have developed Conceptual Site Plans for Lock 1 Park Restoration Plans. The plan presented at a public meeting in January include

the landscaping of what is currently part of the municipal parking lot located near the intersection of SR 66 and SR 274.

Public areas are designed for installation of artwork and interpretative signage. Paving of the adjacent parking could highlight the location of the original Miami and Erie Canal.



## Glimpse From the Past

Photo shows Lock 1 in New Bremen not long after it was converted to concrete.



*(from left) Steve Dorsten of ODNR Division of Water, Sue Lang of the Delphos Canal Commission and Neal Brady of MECCA received the Community Impact Award.*

## Dominion East Ohio Honors Canal Cleanup in Delphos

Each year, Dominion East Ohio honors non-profit organizations that have made their communities better places to live, work and visit. The 2005 Community Impact Awards were given to 10 non profit organizations in Cleveland Feb. 7. A \$10, 000 award was given to the Delphos Canal Commission Cleanup Committee.

Receiving the award were Sue Lang, Chairperson of the Cleanup Committee; Neal Brady, Executive Director of MECCA and Cleanup Committee Member; and Steve Dorsten of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water Supervisor and Cleanup Committee Member.

In March 2004, members of the Delphos Canal Commission realized the city's crowning jewel needed some polishing. The Miami and Erie Canal, once an active waterway running for two miles through the heart of the Delphos was in a state of deterioration. After a two hour discussion of what the Commission wanted and could do to make a difference with the Canal, Lang volunteered to chair the Cleanup Committee and the Canal beautification process began in April 2004.

The Committee has come a long way since the initial meeting. Since the initiative began 400 volunteers have logged close to 3,000 hours to create open areas along the Canal, making up 18 city blocks in Delphos.

In 2005, more than 250 volunteers came together to perform 5 canal cleanup events. The volunteers picked up litter and moved debris from more than 12 blocks. Over 600 trees and shrubs were removed to help stabilize the banks.

The Canal Cleanup has sparked a renewed pride in Delphos. Three weeks before the city's annual Old Fashion Canal Days, more than 120 volunteers turned out to make sure the canal was ready to shine for all the visitors over the three day festival. Lang is proud of her committee and the volunteers that have made this project a resounding success.

## Schedule of Upcoming Corridor Events

- Buckeye Trail Association Annual Meeting, April 21-23, 2006 - Johnson Farm, Piqua
- Spring Tour of the Canal Society of Indiana, "Gateway to the East", (Miami) Wabash and Erie Canal: Toledo to Grand Rapids, May 4-7, 2006. Contact: Canal Society of Indiana, PO Box 40087, Ft. Wayne, IN 46804-0087, (260)432-0279
- MECCA Board of Trustees Meeting, May 17, 2006, MECCA Office
- National Trails Day, June 3, 2006 – The theme for 2006 is "Experience Your Outdoors." Local events will be scheduled.
- MECCA Board of Trustees Meeting, July 19, 2006, MECCA Office
- Fall Tour of the Canal Society of Ohio, "Piqua to Delphos", October 13-15, 2006. Contact: Canal Society of Ohio, 550 Copley Road, Akron, Ohio 44320

## MECCA Wish List

The following is needed for the operation of the Organization.

- **Financial support for monthly operating expenses**
- **Donations for Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Center sign**
- **Computer and office equipment for the MECCA Office and Heritage Center**
- **Advertising for Educational Materials.**

# 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 246 • New Bremen, Ohio • 45869*

**Miami Erie Canal Corridor Association  
130 S. Washington St.  
P.O. Box 246  
New Bremen, Ohio 45869**