

Towpath Times

Miami-Erie Canal Corridor Association

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Recreational Opportunities on the Canal

By **L. Neal Brady**
Executive Director,
MECCA

The Miami and Erie Canal Recreational Corridor is a linear landscape of significant and diverse character that becomes the ideal facility for outdoor recreation.



The historic towpath is truly a thoroughfare that offers opportunities for recreational purposes. The towpath of the Miami and Erie Trail from Piqua to Delphos is part of the Buckeye

Trail and the national North County National Scenic Trail.

This trail provides the opportunity for hiking and horseback activities as well as non-motorized activities such as bicycling, and cross county skiing.

The watered sections of the canal offer water based activities such as fishing and canoeing.

The recreational benefits of trails are obvious. Trails can promote the quality of life by promoting physical fitness, protecting and preserving wildlife habitat and creating a buffer between diverse adjacent land uses. This historic trail links and connects the communities

it helped to establish when the transportation system bought prosperity to western Ohio.

Today, this trail provides opportunities for interpretation where users can learn about nature, history and the culture of the region.

The Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association is dedicated to raising the awareness and public support of the abundant resources along the Miami and Erie Canal. Efforts are directed to develop a continuous multi-use trail on the Towpath Trail from Piqua to Delphos. Through this plan the canal will provide high quality outdoor recreational experiences for the public.

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**
- **Fax / Copier / Printer**
- **Office Signage**
- **Canal Educational Display**
- **Small refrigerator**

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.

Students Learn Canal History

By L. Neal Brady

Executive Director, MECCA

Mike Vanderhorst of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water at Grand Lake State Marys, and Executive Director Neal Brady presented canal history programs on May 20, 2004 to over 150 students at West School in St. Marys.

The programs included a slide presentation with pictures of the existing structures on the Miami and Erie Canal as well as old pictures of canal boats, communities and locks when the canal was operational.

A new exhibit was a model of a canal boat that was recently constructed by Mike Vanderhorst. The model was built to interpret the different types of canal boats that once hauled passengers, cargo and freight on the interstate transportation system.

The students had recently studied Ohio history and had visited the Johnson Historical Farm in Piqua. Many questions were directed to the presenters and the students' interest in the canal history was evident.

A priority of MECCA involves promoting and developing educational programs which interpret the natural, historical and recreational resources along the canal corridor. Educational programs for students will assist in building understanding of how the canal was a significant factor in the settlement of Western Ohio along the Miami and Erie Canal.

With an understanding of this history, a sense of pride may be instilled in these future citizens as they will be responsible for the protection and use of the canal related resources that exist.



Mike Vanderhorst with canal boat model.

Spencerville Students Get High Marks for Canal Project

Submitted By Pam Shumate

Using the team name "College Bound Cats", four eighth grade students from Spencerville entered a national competition sponsored by the Army.

Each team had to complete a project using science, math, and technology. Cameron Baker, Jon Griffin, Laura Wilker, and Luke Brenneman gained information from a community survey on what the community felt to be the biggest problem of the Village of Spencerville.

The results came back as the canal being the largest concern. A requirement of the competition was that the project had to affect the community in some way. One of the goals of the group was to bring more awareness of the canal to young people and adults alike.

These four students worked on this project for approximately four months. They submitted the project in February.

The "College Bound Cats" won the Innovation, Originality, and Creativity category for the 8th

grade level and each team member received a plaque, t-shirt, and a \$20 savings bond.

The team held a community meeting in April to present their findings to the community. They have had articles in various newspapers, and on WILO TV. MECCA was also in attendance at the meeting to aid in whatever way they could. Representatives from MECCA spoke with many people at the conclusion of the meeting.

What an accomplishment for these four students.

6-Mile Spillway Finished

By Steve Dorsten
ODNR Division of Water

Once again canal water can be seen tumbling over 6-mile spillway. The final Phase II Natureworks funded project has reached completion.

Renovations included anti-seep walls to stop leakage through the canal banks, new concrete repairs to stabilize the spillway, installation of a footbridge for access across the Miami and Erie Canal, water mixer to prevent freezing of the spillway and a stop log mechanism to allow the raising and lowering of water levels.

6-mile spillway is located five miles north of St Marys on the east side of St.Rt. 66.



New foot bridge crossing the canal at 6-Mile Spillway.



Renovations to the 6-Mile Spillway have been completed.

Every effort was made to keep the modernization and renovation from affecting the historical value and picturesque view of the spillway. Electric service lines were buried underground, the bridge and water mixer were offset from the spillway so to not obscure the view from S.R. 66.

Other Phase II projects included dredging in Spencerville, St. Marys Tumbles repair and Lock 14 renovation. The next Phase of Natureworks projects is replacement of Barrington Creek culverts under the Miami and Erie Grand Lake feeder, dredging of the feeder and repairs of the St. Marys River Aqueduct.

MECCA Meeting Schedule

The Board of Trustees of the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association meets bi-monthly generally the third Wednesday at 7 p.m. at the MECCA Office located at 130 S. Washington St. in New Bremen. The public is invited. Call L. Neal Brady, Executive Director at 419-733-6451 for more information.

Next scheduled meetings are:

July 21, 2004, 7 p.m

September 15, 2004, 7 p.m

November 17, 2004, 7 p.m

Learn About the Delphos Canal Commission

The Miami-Erie Canal travels through Delphos, Ohio for approximately two miles. A group of canal enthusiasts has been appointed by the Delphos Canal Commission to oversee the restoration and beautification of the canal in Delphos.

The group is working closely with MECCA to first restore the canal hydraulically and aesthetically, with economic development planned in the future.

Anybody interested in joining this group, contact Sue Lang, Delphos at suelouise1@aol.com or at 419-695-2636.

Ohio Byways Section Chief Visits Canal Corridor

Paul F. Staley, Section Chief of the Ohio Department of Transportation, Office of Travel Information and Scenic made a visit to the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor on May 26, 2004.

This was the first opportunity for Mr. Staley to tour the Miami and Erie Scenic Byway that was designated in November, 1999.

The first stop on the tour was the Johnson Farm State Historic Site and an early morning canal boat ride.

The tour then traveled north to observe the numerous historic

sites and structures, communities and sections of the second longest contiguous portion on canal in the United States.

Staley was impressed how much of the actual canal could be seen from the designated State Route 66 roadway.

The "view shed" along the 57.75 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.

Outdoor recreational opportunities exist on the towpath trail and at Grand Lake St. Marys and Lake Loramie State Parks.

Efforts are being made to install "Ohio Byway" signage along the designated route. For more information on the Miami and Erie Canal Scenic Byway and other Ohio Scenic Byways, go to www.byways.org and www.ohiobyways.com.

Splash Bash a Hit

By Steve Dorsten
ODNR Division of Water

About 500 enthusiastic 4th graders were treated to an educational day May 18 at the third annual Splash Bash in Findlay.

The 4th graders from area schools visited seven different stations throughout the day for 25-minute presentations on the many purposes of water. The theme for the day was the Miami and Erie Canal as a transportation route across Ohio connecting the Ohio River to Lake Erie.

Ben Richards, Johnny Appleseed Park District; Mike Vanderhorst, Dave Faler and Steve Dorsten of ODNR Division of Water, demonstrated how a canal lock operated raising and lowering canal boats. Models of different canal boats and canal artifacts were displayed in a "what is this used for?" question and answer session. Many issues were discussed and learned by



Demonstrations at the annual Splash Bash.

presenters and pupils alike.

Education of our young people will ensure the passage of our culture and heritage to future generations and hopefully kindle a spark to preserve and pass it along.

Schedule of Corridor Events

Save "Lock 1" Day
June 27, 2004, 12 - 4 p.m.
New Bremen

Delphos 4th of July Activities
July 3 & 4, 2004

Shelby County Fair, Sidney
July 26 - August 1, 2004

Auglaize County Fair, Wapak
August 2 - 7, 2004

Miami County Fair
August 13 - 19, 2004

Allen County Fair, Lima
August 20 - 28, 2004

Delphos Canal Clean-up Day
August 28, 2004

MECCA Canal Corridor Event,
New Bremen
September 11, 2004

Apple Festival, Sidney
September 11 & 12, 2004

Delphos Canal Days
September 17 - 19, 2004

Johnston Farm Activities

By Andy Hite

Site Manager, Piqua Historical Area State Memorial

Again this year the Johnston Farm in Piqua will be presenting a series of special events that highlight the focal points of the site. All of the events are planned with families in mind and offer them the opportunity to either visit the Johnston Farm for the first time, or reacquaint themselves with all this site at the southern end of our canal corridor has to offer. Of course no visit to the Johnston Farm is complete without a ride on the General Harrison of Piqua. This is a mule-drawn replica of a mixed cargo boat that would have plied the Miami and Erie Canal in the 1840's. This is an excellent way to better understand how the canals operated and what they meant to this part of Ohio.

Saturday, July 10, 2004, 9:30 am-5:00 pm, Sunday, July 11, 2004, Noon-5:00 pm

Five Flags Over Piqua

Join re-enactors as they gather to bring to life the military events on the Johnston Farm beginning with the establishment of the Pickawillany Village, including George Rogers Clark, Anthony Wayne, William Henry Harrison, and culminating with Camp Piqua in 1862.

Saturday, July 24, 9:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

The Miami and Erie Canal: South of the Summit

Canal Society of Ohio President Mike Morthorst and Johnston Farm Site Manager Andy Hite will lead a driving tour following the Miami and Erie Canal from Lockington Locks to Lock 14. Advanced registration is required. COST: \$15.00/adults, \$7.50/students to age 16, Ohio Historical Society members \$12.00 and \$4.50

Saturday, August 21, 2004, 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

An Evening of Music on the Canal

Ride the canal boat General Harrison and enjoy music from the time of Ohio's Canal Era as you travel our restored stretch of the Miami-Erie Canal. Light refreshments will be served to our passengers. Advanced registration is required. This event is a fundraiser that helps defray the cost of events featured this season at the Johnston Farm. COST: \$15.00/adults, \$10.00/students to age 16, Ohio Historical Society members \$10.00 and \$5.00

Saturday, September 25, 2004, 9:30 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Johnston Farm Fall Celebration

Many fall activities will be featured, including candle and soap making. Visitors can also watch demonstrators produce both apple butter and cider. Family games and rides on the canal boat General Harrison will help take visitors back to the time of John Johnston's Ohio. Tours of the Johnston Farmhouse and Historic Indian and Canal Museum should be included as a part of your day.

MECCA "Thank You"

- RE/MAX Select, Barbara and Lowell Ziegenbusch - printing of the "Towpath Times" newsletter
- Bright.Net, TSC - donation of office furniture and a computer
- Ohio Northern University- donation of conference tables and chairs
- Wayne York – donation of Conference table and literature displays rack
- Sonny and Sherry Brady – donation of office equipment and supplies
- Gary Aleshire – donation of canal memorabilia
- St. Marys Community Improvement Corporation
- St. Marys American Legion Post 323

Travel and Tourism in the Corridor

By L. Neal Brady

Executive Director, MECCA

The Ohio Department of Travel and Tourism states that Travel and Tourism is one of the top three industries in Ohio, creating more than 552,000 full-time equivalent jobs and \$1.5 billion in tax revenue for the State.

The statistics indicate that over 70 percent of tourists are considered day use travelers. The day use travelers desire "real life/real American" experiences. These experiences include visiting small towns and communities, rural farming areas, historic areas and unique attractions as well as shopping.

The trends indicate that learning, growth, and having fun are important to the traveler. They desire the freedom to personalize their experience by re-discovering the familiar and discovering the past.

The Miami and Erie Canal Corridor have many of the products and services that the day use traveler and the overnight tourist desire. The Miami and Erie Canal Scenic Byway extends from the Johnson Historic Farm to Delphos.

Traveling the Byway at their own pace, tourists can experience the historic canal towns and communities, the prosperous rural farms and numerous museums and historic sites.

MECCA is committed to build synergies in the Corridor to promote the many assets in the region. Let's continue to invite people into the area so they can explore and enjoy what West Central Ohio has to offer.

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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