

AMERICAN CANALS

BULLETIN OF
THE AMERICAN CANAL SOCIETY

Vol. XXVII, No. 4 [107]

Dedicated to Historic Canal Research, Preservation, and Parks

Autumn 1998

PRESIDENT'S LETTER NO. 5

Greetings! I don't usually use this spot as a soapbox, but this time I think I will. Recently, two members of The Canal Society of Ohio informed me that a highway relocation in Coshocton County, Ohio, just a dozen miles or so up the Walhonding River Valley from the restored canal town of Roscoe, was threatening the existence of a Walhonding Canal culvert. Now the Walhonding Canal was built as the first step in a waterway to the interior wheat country of Ohio, but the extensions never materialized due to the financial panics of 1837 and 1840. Perhaps due to the depressed financial conditions of the time, the stonework on this waterway is easily the finest in the state.

Back in the 60s a rash of highway building destroyed a great many of the structures on Ohio's main canals, but the last 30 years have been relatively quiet. Now the highway bulldozers are out in force again, throughout the country—not just in Ohio.

Maybe the historical climate has changed. Maybe some of these structures can be saved. I'm aware that often the best route for a highway is the same route picked by the early canal engineers and a lock structure will literally be sitting "in the way of progress." Many times, though, advance knowledge of the existence of a canal structure will give the highway planners time to devise an economic solution that will result in the new highway (or sewage disposal plant, or shopping center, or whatever) and the canal structure.

In order to do this advance planning, though, the particular agency involved needs to know what canal structures are where. I urge us, ACS members and members of the local and state canal societies, to contact the various state and local agencies and offer assistance on



The Mikron Theatre Company in one of its waterway revues

knowledge about the existence of canal structures and assistance with the preplanning. Here, I believe, cooperation is the key word, not confrontation!

The ACS and its committees are here to help. If a letter to a particular agency from me might carry some weight, let me know. Get some publicity from *American Canals*, get help from our listings of historic American canals and structures, from our Engineering Design Committee, et cetera.

By all means let's have those modern highways, the new sewage plants, and maybe even a tastefully designed shopping mall. But let's also keep our canal structures—our "highway to the past."

Now I think I'll step down off this soapbox before I get a nose bleed and say, . . . Till next time, HEADWAY TO YOU!!!

Larry K. Woods

WATERWAY THEATER GROUP PLANS U.S. TOUR

The Mikron Theatre Company has been traveling the waterways, mostly of England, for the past 27 years. Their productions, often on waterway-related themes, are presented on riverbanks, in parks, or in such waterside facilities as pubs and village halls. Many of the shows are musical. When possible, they tour on board their narrowboat, *Tyseley*.

In the past, they have ventured abroad as far as France and Belgium. They now hope to discover the New World, and (perhaps more importantly) to be discovered by it. Spring or autumn of 1999 or 2000 are the suggested time frames.

For this to become a reality, the group needs organizational help and sponsorship. Sponsorships might be for particular segments of the tour—canal parks and

(Continued on Page 2)

American Canals

BULLETIN OF THE AMERICAN CANAL SOCIETY

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The objectives of the American Canal Society are to encourage the preservation, restoration, interpretation, and use of the historical navigational canals of the Americas; to save threatened canals; and to provide an exchange of canal information. Manuscripts and other correspondence consistent with these objectives are welcome.

Annual subscription to *American Canals* is automatic with A.C.S. Membership. Annual dues: \$20.00. Single copies \$3.00. Four issues per year.

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A.C.S. SALES

Limited quantities of the following American Canal Society products are still available. Place orders with Keith W. Kroon, 2240 Ridgeway Ave., Rochester, New York 14626. Make check payable to American Canal Society. Add \$1 shipping charge for up to 3 items, \$2 for 4 or more items, except as noted.

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The American Canal Guide pt. 4, West Virginia, Kentucky & Ohio River \$3.00
The American Canal Guide pt. 5, Virginia, Delaware, Maryland & D.C. \$3.00
Canal lock print by Ben Dale - an 8½x11½ color print of a packet boat at a lock on the Middlesex Canal \$2.00.

(Concluded from Page 1)

museums, waterway cruises, anniversary celebrations, et cetera. Any offers and suggestions will be appreciated. Interested persons and organizations should get in touch with

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Mikron Theatre Company
Marsden Mechanics

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Marsden, Huddersfield HD7 6BW
England
Phone and Fax no. 01484 843701

CANAL CALENDAR

November 29, 1998. Holiday gift boutique, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Delaware & Hudson Canal Park Visitor Center, Cuddebackville, New York. Contact: (914) 754-8870.

February 14-19, 1999. Elderhostel, "Historical Development of the I&M Canal," Illinois Valley Community College, Starved Rock State Park. Contact: (617) 426-8055.

February 26-27, 1999. Illinois Valley Symphony Concert featuring Illinois & Michigan Canal and water themes. Contact: I&M Canal Volunteers, c/o Robert Whalen, 1900 Chartres St., LaSalle, Ill. 61301

May 29, 1999. Lock House Days, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Lock House grounds at Erie and Conestogo Sts., Havre de Grace, Md. Games, rides, crafts, refreshments, historical presentations, and more. Contact: Susquehanna Museum, P.O. Box 253, Havre de Grace, Md. 21078.

June 26, 1999. Evening of Wine and Jazz, Lock House grounds at Erie and Conestogo Sts., Havre de Grace, Md. Refreshments, music, and an auction. \$25 per person. Contact: Susquehanna Museum, P.O. Box 253, Havre de Grace, Md. 21078.

July 17, 1999. A.C.S. membership and directors meetings, National Canal Museum, 30 Centre Sq., Easton, Pa. Contact: Terry Woods, (330) 832-4621.

August 10-15, 1999. Cruise of the Trent-Severn Waterway, Kingston to Peterborough, Ontario, sponsored by Canal Society of New Jersey. \$800 per person, reservation deadline 31 December 1998. Contact for information: Linda Barth, (908) 722-7428.

September 18, 1999. Senior Citizen Reception and Concert, 2 p.m., Lock House grounds at Erie and Conestogo Sts., Havre de Grace, Md. Music, tours, refreshments. Contact: Susquehanna Museum, P.O. Box 253, Havre de Grace, Md. 21078.

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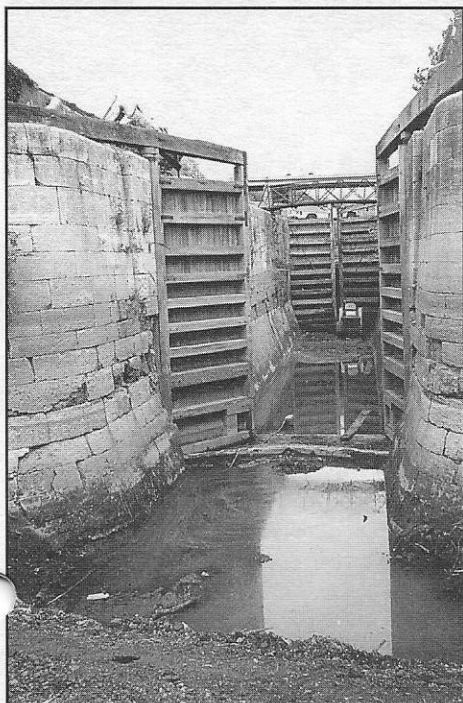
www.blacksheep.org/canals/ACS/acs.html

THE 1998 WORLD CANALS CONFERENCE JOLIET, ILLINOIS THE ILLINOIS AND MICHIGAN CANAL

By Nancy Dunnivant

Our conference began on September 15, 1998 at Joliet, Illinois, celebrating the sesquicentennial of the completion of the I&M canal in 1848, and the tenth anniversary of the World Canals Conferences, which began here on the I&M Canal in 1988. We were welcomed to the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor at a reception in the exhibit room of the hotel sponsored by the Channahon Chamber of Commerce. Volunteer interpreters were there in costume portraying canalers of bygone days. Each one of them milled around speaking to groups as if we all were in the eighteen hundreds. That was great fun!

Wednesday we all had to make choices—two different workshops to attend. Your reporter chose the “Joliet Walking Tour.” It began at the Will-Joliet Bicentennial Park along the Des Plaines River. The park is situated where the earliest center of commerce was. Plaques mounted on boulders mark sites of wonderful stone buildings that once stood there but were demolished by one of the owners. On a stone retaining wall about 500 yards from the river a mural depicts the area as it looked in the eighteen hundreds.



I&M Canal Lock #14 at LaSalle



“Canalers” dressed for their rôles at the convention hotel

Leaving the Des Plaines River and its beautiful bridges, we continued our walking tour to include downtown Joliet. What a thrill it was to see the beautiful buildings, which were built of the yellow limestone that had been quarried here and shipped on the canal. The magnificent Rialto Theater was breathtaking. It was rebuilt after a fire. The owners wanted it to be their best. It embodied significant architectural features copied from several outstanding European landmarks. It was and still is, after needed restoration, their finest.

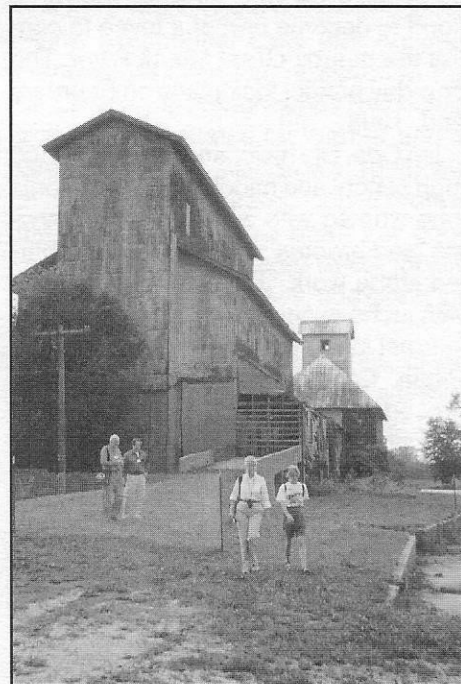
The other Wednesday morning session was held at Lewis University where our long-time ACS Director, John Lamb, provided tours of his I&M Canal archives, and Tom Grasso, Rory Robinson, and others presented talks on “How American Canals Built States and Cities.”

In the afternoon I took the bike tour from LaSalle to Utica. At LaSalle work was in progress on Lock #14, the first I&M Canal lock to be restored. Along the canal trail at “split rock,” Toni Balsley, interpreter, took us back to the canal days when she recounted the story of the Irish canal workers and their leaders who were constantly fighting.

In the evening we visited Lockport’s canal, historic village, and the Gaylord Building, which is owned by the National Trust, our host for the evening. In the gallery of the Gaylord Building we were privileged to hear Edward Ranney and author Emily Harris discuss their book, “Prairie Passage,” on the I&M Canal

Corridor. After dinner we were welcomed by David Carr, Dinner and Program Moderator; Susan Mogerman, for the State of Illinois; James Mann, The National Trust, and Ann Hintze, Executive Director of the Gaylord Building Historic Site. Dr. Michael Conzen was the principal speaker. His subject was “The Illinois and Michigan Canal: Historical and Landscape Highlights.”

The General Session was held on Thursday morning. The focus was on Historic Canals; Public, Private, or Public/Private?” The speakers included Jerry Adelman of the Canal Corridor As



The Seneca grain elevator

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SWEDISH CANAL PAID HOMAGE BY AMERICAN ENGINEERS

Sweden's Gota Canal has been designated as an International Historic Civil Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers. The recognition ceremony took place during an A.S.C.E. Scandinavian field trip in June 1998.

First conceived in the 16th century, the Gota Canal was eventually built between 1810 and 1832. The project was directed by Baltzer von Platen, in consultation with Thomas Telford, first president of the Institution of Civil Engineers in London.

The Gota Canal is the man-made portion of a waterway that crosses Sweden from Göteborg on the southwest coast to Stockholm on the east. Its construction employed 60,000 workers and involved the building of 58 locks and 65 bridges.

[Information for this report was furnished by A.C.S. director Arthur W. Sweeton III.]

UNCOVER-THE-LOCK DAY

by Nancy S. Gulick

Historical enthusiasts were invited to participate in a crash program to uncover Lock 9 south¹ on the Miami & Erie Canal in the heart of the city of Piqua, Ohio. Lock 9 south, built in 1839, had been covered with fill after the 1913 flood to become part of a levee to control the nearby Great Miami River. The one-day project took place on February 2nd, 1998.

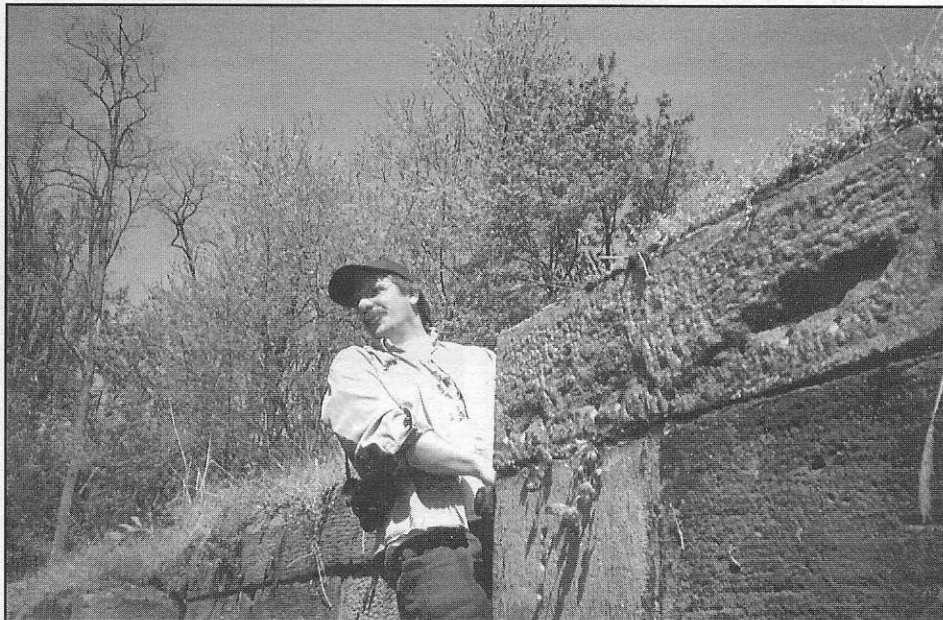
Jim Oda, city historian, supervised 100 high school and middle school students who worked with wheelbarrows, shovels, and brooms to reveal the long-buried stone work. Jim Oda, experienced with archaeological digs, has a long-time interest in the canal as it came through Piqua. Each group kept notes on the procedure which included saving and describing all artifacts uncovered that might relate back to the canal era. Interested citizens, including canal society members Ray Zunk, Bob Potts, Nancy Gulick, Bob Mueller, and Mark Renwick, participated in the project or watched it unfold. During the three-hour process, the top course of stone on both lock walls was revealed.

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PENNSYLVANIA CANAL SOCIETY TOURS EASTERN DIVISION, MAINLINE CANAL

by Bruce Russell, Contributing Editor

On April 18th, 1998, the Pennsylvania Canal Society conducted its annual spring field trip along the 43 miles of the Eastern Division of the Pennsylvania Mainline Canal from Clark's Ferry to Columbia. The tour was led by Bob Keintz, with logistics organized by Zip Zimmerman. The following are a few of its many highlights.



Tour leader Bob Keintz explains how the lock chambers were put together, using well-formed sandstone blocks and hydraulic cement. From Middletown to Columbia, there are seven locks of the Eastern Division still in fine shape.



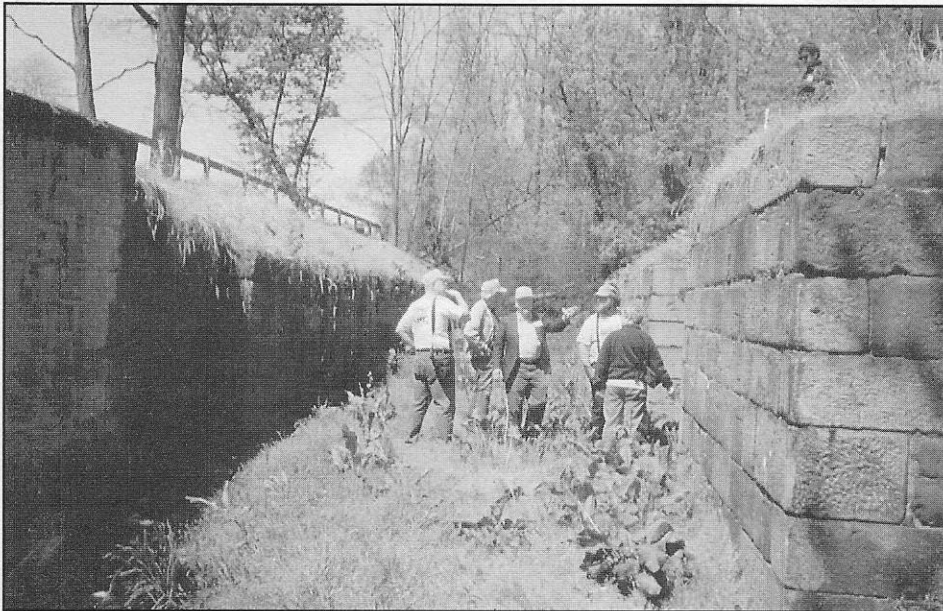
In Middletown, where the Eastern Division of the Mainline system and the privately-owned Union Canal merged, almost nothing from the canal era remains except this side wall of the outlet lock. This permitted boats to enter and leave the Union Canal and enter Swatara Creek. On the opposite side of the creek was a repair yard and basin. Where the Union Canal was at this location is now a city park.

The Original plan called for the Eastern Division to end at this point, and for traffic to continue east via the Union Canal to Reading, and thence via the Schuylkill Navigation to Philadelphia. However, it was subsequently decided to avoid this route entirely for two reasons. The first was the small size of the Union Canal's locks, less than half that of the Eastern Division. This would have meant transferring cargo from wide to narrow vessels, a costly and time-consuming process. The second was the existence of 93 lift locks, a further time-consuming factor.



A careful examination of the second photograph on the preceding page reveals ties connecting some of the blocks to their neighbors. This close-up view brings these into focus. The coping stones at the top of the lock chambers on the canals of Pennsylvania often had these iron clamps for reinforcement.

During the 1830's there was tremendous pressure to get the canals of Pennsylvania in operation to compete with New York's Erie, which had been draining off commerce from the Keystone State since 1825. Separate portions of the system were put up for bid, and in general, construction contracts were awarded to the lowest bidder, who was then required to have the job done within a set time limit. Under such pressure of time and money, lock chambers in some cases were initially constructed out of cheap rubble stone lined with wooden planking. Later on, however, these were rebuilt of dressed stone.



Middletown Lock, a few miles south of the town of Middletown, is one of seven in the 17-mile stretch that runs alongside the Susquehanna River between Middletown and Columbia, with an average lift of about eight feet. Most are in reasonably good condition. Likewise, the canal's prism is clearly visible and in some locations still contains water. Unfortunately, it's also filled with trees and other forms of plant life.

Middletown Lock was built about 1833, and was in continuous use until 1900. It is perfectly preserved, with all stones in perfect alignment. Unfortunately, the lock tender's house which stood alongside has disappeared. This must have been a wonderful lock to be assigned to, especially during the summer, with breezes blowing off the adjacent Susquehanna River.

(Continued on Page 6)

(Continued from Uncover-the-Lock, page 4)

The lock walls, since further uncovered to the depth of 3-4 feet, will serve as the focal point for Piqua's newest park—to be called *Lock Nine Park*. Complete excavation is not possible as the lock chamber is now part of the route of a municipal sewer line. Situated on the bank of the Great Miami River, the park will have "history wall" containing aluminum etchings interpreting the history of transportation in the area, from Indian trails and canoes through the canal era and up to the railroad era. An abandoned rail bridge in the park will be transformed into a viewing platform overlooking the river, nearby railtracks and commercial sites.

¹ Apparently locks were numbered in separate series, north and south, from Lock #1 at the summit.

BRITISH CANAL CRIME FICTION

In our last issue (vol. XXVII no. 3), Philip Scowcroft reported on the various rôles played by canals in British crime fiction. Although one classic genre of British crime fiction is the locked-room mystery, none of the works cited belonged to this category. Since locked rooms are by their nature indoors, while canals of the same necessity exist in the open air, it might seem that there was a gulf here which could not be bridged.

One exceptional case has recently come to our attention, however. In Peter Lovesey's *Bloodhounds* (published in the United States by Warner and in Great Britain by Little, Brown, 1996), the mysteriously penetrated locked room is the cabin of a narrow boat. For good measure, it is penetrated twice, for two distinct criminal purposes, one being the classic purpose of murder.

The boat, used as a residence, is described as normally moored on a feeder canal, historically used for coal from Somerset mines, to the Kennet and Avon Canal in Bath. An important clue is also found in the main canal near the Avoncliff Aqueduct. No doubt Mr. Scowcroft and any number of other readers can advise us whether these are real places or as fictitious as the events making up the mystery.

—DFR

FREDERICA KLEIST

We have been advised of the death of Frederica Kleist. No details were available at press time.

Frederica was a long-time member of the A.C.S. board of directors and contributor to this bulletin. More significantly, however, she was probably the leading advocate and historian of Wisconsin's Portage Canal. The Portage Canal connected the headwaters of the eastward-flowing Fox River and the westward-flowing Wisconsin River, and was thus the keystone of a connection between Lake Michigan at Green Bay and the Mississippi River at Prairie du Chien. Canalization of the Wisconsin River was never undertaken, however, so only the eastern half of the waterway became an operational reality.

Nevertheless, the Portage Canal and the canalization works on the Fox River still exist, in no small measure because of the dedication and diligence of Frederica Kleist. Her death leaves a gap in the ranks of historical canal preservationists which will be keenly felt.

12 MPH ON THE ERIE CANAL!

Rochester, June, 1835

On Saturday, some forty or fifty of our citizens took a ride upon one of the new line of packet boats designed to run between this city and Buffalo. The boat is made considerably narrower than the ordinary packets, is exceedingly light, and finished in the most elegant manner. It is a sample of the workmanship of our enterprising fellow citizen, S.C. Jones, who has for some time, we understand, being of opinion that a boat might be so constructed as to be drawn by horse power at the rate of ten or twelve miles to the hour. The test on Saturday was a delightful realization of the fact.

Although the horses were unaccustomed to the business, and for four or five miles of the distance were exceedingly fractious and hard to manage, the ride was completed in two hours and thirty-four minutes, a distance of twenty-four miles, including changes of horses and a short stop at Spenser's Basin.

It is found by experiments that when the boat is propelled at the rate of seven and a half or eight miles to the hour, it rides upon the swell, creates less commotion in the

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This view shows the southern end of Middletown Lock, with the excellent state of the 165-year-old stonework clearly visible, along with the scenic beauty of the riverside location. Prior to the building of this stretch of canal in 1833, wooden arks were floated down the Susquehanna to points on Chesapeake Bay. Here they were emptied of their coal or other cargo, and then disassembled and sold for lumber. Unfortunately, many arks broke up when they struck snags, boulders, or other hazards concealed beneath the river's surface. The artificial canal was thus more practical but probably slower.

Several of the small towns containing lock chambers have created miniparks where people can sit and relax. Because of its excellent state of preservation, and the fact that it passes mostly through undeveloped land, this entire 17-mile stretch could readily be made into a canal park, with journeys of up to half a day offered to tourists on a restored canal.



Next stop on the tour was the so-called "Mystery Lock," at Collins. Never completed or used, it sits parallel to a fully-built chamber. Why two 90-foot-long lock chambers were constructed side by side at this location remains an enigma. There are several possible explanations. One is that a second chamber was needed to permit vessels to pass in opposite directions without one having to wait for the other to lock through. Collins might have been the busiest point on the Middletown-Columbia segment, and hence the logical place to install a double chamber. It's also possible that this was the start of a scheme to construct twin chambers at all of the locks on this particular stretch. Such a project might have begun to be put into effect just before the loss of business to the parallel railroad eliminated its justification. On the other hand, some canal scholars think the mystery lock was intended to be a weighlock.

NOTES FROM THE NAVIGABLE CANALS COMMITTEE

by our roving correspondent

Captain Addison Austin

The Ortona Lock, just below my home on the Caloosahatchee River (Okeechobee Waterway), has been closed for maintenance. It should have reopened by the time this goes to press.

The Rideau Canal in Canada is as good as ever, but the price for passage has gone a bit high. However, there are many choices for number of locks and length of time. Still a good cruise.

The Erie Canal in New York is, perhaps, better than ever. No problem finding fuel this trip. People and locks are all great under the new corporation. This one is now toll, but fairly cheap, also with several price choices. Still a problem finding groceries. There is one major N.Y. problem, that being the police. They seem to think out-of-state cars and boats are the answer to their posting of impressive statistics. I was stopped on land and sea and told I was traveling at untrue speeds (49 m.p.h. through town in an RV while in a line of traffic). At one point in a fleet of boats at near idle speed in a narrow passage, a 25-foot state police boat zigzagged through at full speed and wake in chase of something or other—total nonsense.

(Concluded from Page 6) **12 MPH ON THE ERIE CANAL** canal, than the common packets at four miles to the hour, and requires, we believe, about the same power to draw it. An enterprising company has been formed to run a daily boat of this size to Buffalo, leaving Rochester after breakfast and going through by daylight, a distance of ninety-five miles! This will be "going ahead" on the "rail road principle", and those who are going from this to Buffalo, or from Buffalo here, we think it will not be difficult to say how they will go.

Hazard's Register of Pennsylvania, June 27, 1835. Submitted by William Dzombak

ACS MEETING—1999

Have you got a 1999 calendar yet? If so, it's time to start marking it up. If not, it's time to start looking for one.

The 1999 membership and directors meetings of the American Canal Society will be at the National Canal Museum in Easton, Pennsylvania, on Saturday, the 17th of July. Further details will be announced later. For now, all you need to do is reserve the date.



The last extant lock on the tour was the Falmouth Lock. This is the largest lock in the system, 180 feet long instead of 90 feet like the others. Two boats tied together could pass through it during a single lockage. In order to increase revenue, two standard-size Mainline canal boats were sometimes operated in tandem. One crew could thus handle twice as much coal or lumber as with a regular vessel. Falmouth Lock might have been the model for future lengthening of all the chambers from Columbia to Middletown, to accommodate such tandem tows. However, it was never duplicated and remains unique.

This was also the most remote lock on the tour, requiring participants to hike almost a mile through bushes and woods from where the bus was parked. Several tour participants elected not to make this trek, perhaps reasoning that when you've seen one lock you've seen 'em all. For those who got there, however, it was a worthwhile experience.



Several of the locks of the Eastern Division are being damaged because trees and other vegetation aren't being removed. At the Falmouth Lock, this tree is slowly dislodging the capstone of the chamber.

The final stop on the tour was Columbia, now a small community on the banks of the Susquehanna River. Filled with what were once working-class homes of mid-to-late-nineteenth century origin, it is now gradually undergoing gentrification.

Few artifacts of the canal era remain in Columbia, but it had an important place in that unique combination of rail and water transport that was Pennsylvania's Mainline Canal. Passengers and freight destined for Pittsburg were put aboard canal boats sitting on railroad flatcars in Philadelphia, one boat riding on two cars. Horses, stationary steam engines, and in later years locomotives, moved the vessels overland to Columbia and down an inclined plane to the water.

CANAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK 1998 SPRING FIELD TRIP. PART 2: THE ONEIDA RIVER

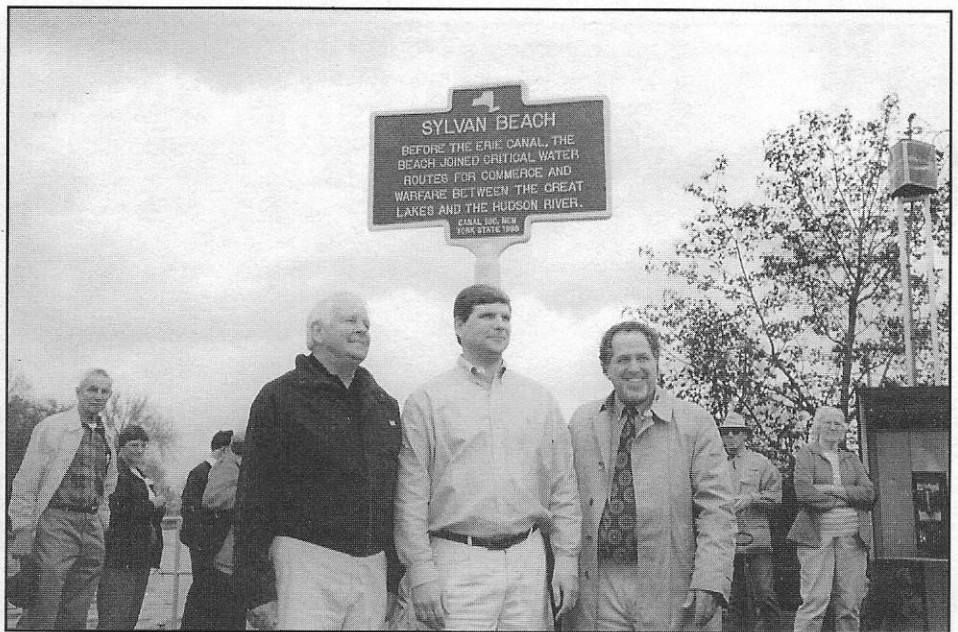
By Bruce J. Russell, Contributing Editor

[In the 1830's, an alternative to the Oswego canal was constructed, connecting the eastern end of the Erie Canal to Oswego on Lake Ontario by way of Oneida Lake, the Oneida River, and a canal between the Erie Canal and the lake. A principal advantage was that over a considerable part of the route, canal boats could be moved by steam tugboats rather than by mule, effecting a significant saving of time. Sites along this route were visited last May on a field trip of N.Y. canal society. Sites at the canal end were dealt with in Part 1 of this report, which appeared in our last issue.]

The steam tows which departed from the eastern shore of Oneida Lake traveled approximately 22 miles west to the port of Brewerton, where the lake narrows into its outlet, the Oneida River. From ten to twenty canal boats coming off the *Old Oneida Lake Canal* (1835-1863) were normally handled by one tug, owned by the *Oneida Lake & River Steamboat Company*, founded in 1838. All of its vessels were side wheelers with wood-burning boilers, very tall smokestacks, and shallow draft. The average length of the four tugs owned by the company—the *Oneida*, *Oswego*, *Madison*, and *Onondaga*—was 125 feet.

From Brewerton the tugs and their accompanying canal boats traveled approximately 14 miles west along the Oneida River to Three Rivers Point, the junction of the Oneida, Seneca, and Oswego rivers. Here the tows were broken apart and the boats reunited with their mules. The cost of being towed across the lake was \$10 per vessel. By laying out this sum the boatmen were able to eliminate a much more lengthy trip via the mainline Erie Canal, saving tolls and wear and tear on the animals as well as time. Total journey time was shorter by at least 36 hours. Then as now time meant money.

From Three Rivers Point the canal boats proceeded north using the Oswego Canal which paralleled the river of the same name to Oswego. The Oswego Canal was dug in the early years of the 19th century. Separating from the Erie at Syracuse, it ran north for about 40 miles and lasted until 1917 when it



In the foreground, from left to right, Edward McCarthy, mayor of Sylvan Beach, Mathew Behrman, director of the New York State Canal Corporation, and Thomas Grasso, president of the Canal Society of New York, at the dedication of the Sylvan Beach historical marker

was replaced by the Oswego Division of the New York State Barge Canal system.

Until the late 1830s, the Oneida River was barely navigable, and then only at times of high water. This was the result of its many twists and turns, rocky bottom, and fluctuating depth. Rafts frequently struck hidden rocks and broke apart, as did shallow draft boats. However, it was obvious that if improvements were made its usefulness would increase dramatically, and large volumes of cargo could be handled. Initially the task involved removal of rocks and other obstructions, often by dynamiting them, so that small steamboats with a draft of only three feet could be used to tow canal boats coming from Oneida Lake.

It was subsequently realized that if two locks and dams were constructed, the water in the Oneida River could be raised 4 to 5 feet, enabling much larger steam tugs to travel upon it. In 1847 the New York State Legislature appropriated the necessary funds for construction at Caughdenoy and Oak Orchard. The locks were considered enormous for their time, with dimensions of 120 by 30 feet, double those of a typical canal chamber. This size was sufficient to permit two boats to be passed through simultaneously—a major time saver. Furthermore they were of permanent stone masonry. Dressed blocks perfectly fitted together were used rather than

cheap rubble stone lined with wood planking. Construction began in 1839, but was interrupted a couple of times due to funding problems. In 1850 the locks, dams, and lock tenders' houses were finally finished.

The work done on the Oneida River from Brewerton to Three Rivers Point, a distance of about 14 miles, was known as the Oneida River Improvement. It wasn't a canal in the traditional sense because no artificial channel was involved. Likewise, because boats would be towed by steam tugs, there was no need for an adjacent towpath. In short, it was a canalized river, like significant segments of the Schuylkill and Lehigh canals. The major difference from the Oneida situation was that these did have parallel towpaths.

Beginning in 1850 steamboat tows entered the Oneida River at Brewerton and proceeded as far as Caughdenoy where the first dam was encountered. Here the tug repositioned itself behind its canal boats and delicately nudged them into the lock in pairs side by side. After they were through the wide chamber another tug began assembling them into a second formation which continued on to Oak Orchard lock where the procedure was repeated. It was believed to be more practical to have a tug at each end of the locks and only send the canal boats through than to use just one tug. The tug captains and lock tenders

knew how to work together swiftly, and getting long tows through the chambers was done in rapid sequence. This river navigation must have been an enormously interesting operation to observe during its peak period from 1850 until about 1860 when it started to decline.

Although the company's four tugs did not normally travel with their boats through the locks at Caughdenoy and Oak Orchard, they were perfectly capable of doing so. When they needed fuel a quick trip was made to Brewerton, where huge piles of wood were stacked. They also wintered in Brewerton.

The Oneida River Improvement did an enormous business from 1850 until 1857, when the enlargement of the Erie Canal was completed, enabling much bigger boats to use it. Since these weren't able to pass through the smaller locks of the Oneida Lake Canal, some traffic was lost to the traditional all-canal route via Syracuse. However a great deal of cargo continued to be sent to Oswego via the lake. The total volume remained impressive until the Old Oneida Lake Canal was permanently closed in 1863 on account of its continued lock collapses caused by cheap, inferior construction.

During the 1850s it must have been quite a sight to stand on the shore of Oneida Lake and observe the steam tows making their way across, the tall stacks of the tugs belching forth thick black smoke. The final vessel in the formation was usually the mule boat car-

rying the animals. During the season of navigation from early April to early December, several of these tows traveled each day. Many canal boat captains chose the Oneida route for their westward journey but the traditional all-canal one for their return. This may have been because they could pick up a load of salt in Syracuse and transport it to Albany and on to New York City. Consequently there was a slight imbalance in traffic patterns with more westward than eastward tows.

The shutdown of the Old Oneida Lake Canal marked the end of tows across Oneida Lake from Sylvan Beach to Brewerton and on to Three Rivers Point. The redundant steam tugs were gradually disposed of, but one, the *Oswego*, continued in operation until 1901. In 1865 the Oneida Lake & River Steamboat Company went out of existence but a successor organization acquired its remaining assets including the *Oswego*. It continued towing barges from the Oswego Canal to destinations on Oneida Lake, making use of the river improvement with its two locks at Caughdenoy and Oak Orchard. Many communities along the lake depended upon canal boats originating at various points on the New York State Canal system for deliveries of grain, coal, lumber, and other products. In addition they relied upon the boats to ship to market sand, crushed stone, and finished wood. However since this local business was so much less than the former through traf-

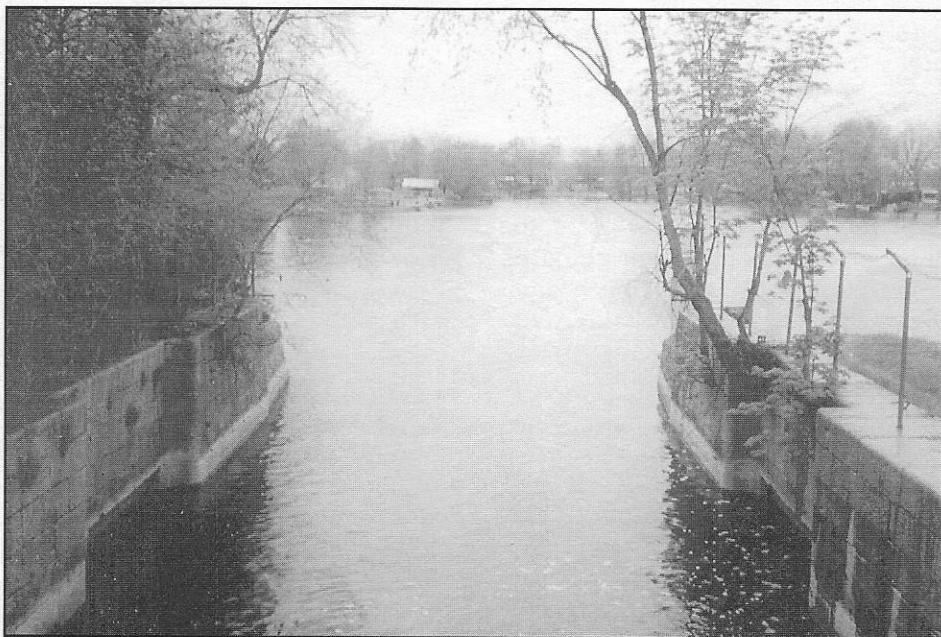
fic, one steam tug sufficed.

When the New Oneida Lake Canal opened in 1877 after years of procrastination and delay, during which time railroads gained a foothold in the Oneida Lake region, many still hoped it would lead to a resumption of the steamboat operation. Because this new waterway had much bigger dimensions, matching those of the Enlarged Erie Canal, some believed its success was a sure bet. However, the new canal, built across quicksand-laden soil, lasted only a year and a half and was abandoned. Its six locks were left with no function, and its seven-foot-deep prism was drained of water.

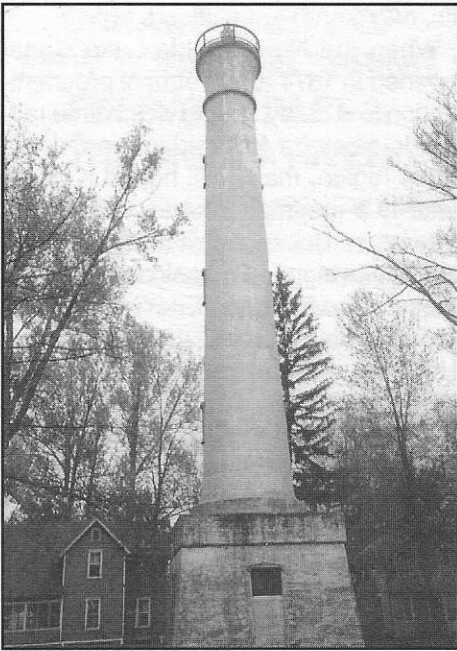
Many historians of the New York State Canal System speculate that if this waterway had opened in 1864 immediately following the closure of its predecessor, the traffic across Oneida Lake might have revived. By 1877, however, most potential shippers were using railroads to get their products to market.

The Oneida River Improvement remained in use until 1917, serving local traffic entering the lake from its western end at Brewerton. Although it lost money, the state continued to maintain the locks and perform other essential tasks such as dredging. Steam-powered excursion boats from Oswego and perhaps Syracuse occasionally passed through it to reach Oneida Lake which, during the closing years of the 19th century, became a popular vacation destination. After 1917 it was entirely supplanted by the New York State Barge Canal. This larger waterway incorporated portions of the older route, but also used entirely new, artificial channels to bypass loops in the natural river. For example, what's now call the Anthony Cut eliminated the entire segment through Caughdenoy. The lock and dam at Oak Orchard were simply removed and the river made wider and much deeper. Nevertheless, from 1850 until 1917 the Oneida River Improvement had served an important purpose, especially in its first decade before railroads arrived. No wonder it continues to hold a fascination not only for inland navigation and canal enthusiasts, but also for steamboat buffs.

The Canal Society at New York tour stopped at Caughdenoy to visit the still-intact 1840s stone lock, whose chamber is in a remarkable state of preservation. Among the locals it retains the



The solidly-built "Steamboat Lock" on the Oneida River remains intact, although its gates have been removed



The Oneida Lake lighthouse at Verona Beach. The square base originally housed propane cylinders

name "Steamboat Lock" because of its association with the previously-described navigation. When the bypass channel of the new canal opened in 1917, this lock ceased to serve a purpose. The original 1840s dam at Caughdenoy was replaced with a much larger one designed to keep the water in Oneida Lake at higher than normal levels. Because of occasional times when lake levels rose too quickly, there was a need for a bypass channel around the dam. The old "Steamboat Lock" was adapted for this purpose. Its gates were removed and in their place was installed a regulation device which can be opened to increase water flow through the chamber, or closed. When the dam was again replaced in 1952, the bypass channel was retained. During our stop we noticed that a small amount of water was flowing through it. It occurred to me that a historical marker ought to be placed at this location explaining the significance of "Steamboat Lock". The towing of canal boats across Oneida Lake and down the river using what would today be considered primitive steam vessels was a remarkable chapter in American history. It was certainly more interesting than watching today's tractor trailer rigs, each carrying the equivalent of one canal boat, whizzing along the roads.

After Caughdenoy, the two tour buses stopped at Brewerton where Oneida Lake narrows into the Oneida River.

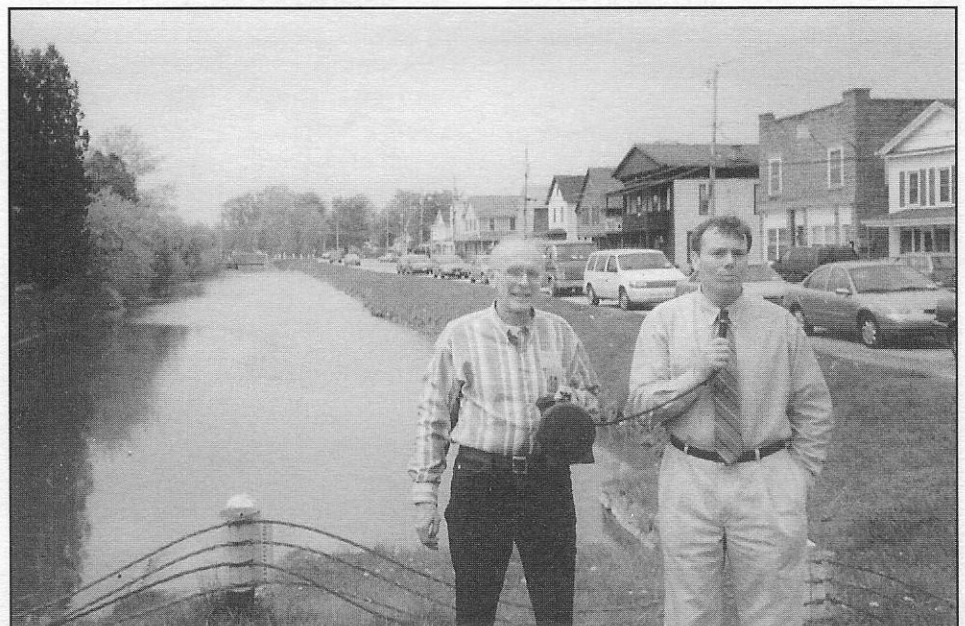
During the 19th Century this was an extremely busy port filled with taverns, boat-repair facilities, et cetera. Since it's on the route of the 1917 barge canal, some importance remains. An immense lighthouse used to guide boats coming off the lake into the mouth of the river was seen. It's one of three 85-foot-tall, reinforced-concrete structures. The other two are at Verona Beach on the eastern shore and at Frenchman's Island on the southern portion of Oneida Lake. They originally burned propane gas, but have since been converted to electricity. Their lenses are of the Fresnel type, and their beacon can be seen for a great distance. The New York State Barge Canal, crossing Oneida Lake in a bouy-marked channel which is continually dredged, has not seen any commercial traffic since 1994. The last freighter was the 230-foot-long *Day Peckinpah*, which transported bulk cement from Oswego to Rome, N.Y. Nevertheless, the state spends money to keep it open for pleasure craft.

The group also visited Barge Canal Lock #23, situated on the Anthony Cut, an artificial channel. The lock tender explained the workings of the mechanism. Originally all Barge Canal locks generated their own electric power using a turbine. Today commercial sources are used although the 1917-era generators remain operable as a back-up system. Lock #23 is the busiest on the entire route.

During the past decade, the Canal Society of New York has erected markers at various places along the Empire State's canal system. These explain the history and significance of each location. During the lunch break on May 2nd, a plaque was dedicated at Sylvan Beach. A ceremony involving Edward McCarthy, mayor of the resort community, Mathew Behrman, chief executive of New York State Canal Corporation, and Thomas Grasso, president of the canal society followed the unveiling of the marker. Tour participants then partook of an excellent lunch at an adjoining 19th century restaurant. Canal boatmen as well as steam tug crews once had their meals here. The name of the establishment is Yesterday's Royal.

The field trip centered around Oneida Lake was an interesting, educational, and informative journey for its 95 participants. Two obscure, short-lived waterways connecting the Erie Canal with the lake were visited and their story told. Likewise the towing of the barges was brought to life by the superb commentary of the tour guides, in the pages of the trip brochure with its excellent maps, and during the slide presentation given the previous night. Thomas Grasso, Craig Williams, Anita Cotrell, and David Beebe deserve credit for making this trip the outstanding success it was.

Dr. Beebe also conducted an "early bird" series of activities on the Friday preceding the Saturday bus tour. The



David Beebe (left), of the Canal Society of New York, and Brian Gazda, director of the Canastota Canal Museum, discuss plans for restoring the canalside area of Canastota to its 1870s appearance

main events were a canoe trip along a still watered section of the Enlarged Erie Canal from Canastota to Durhamville, about 5 miles, exploration of two stone aqueducts in an almost perfect state of preservation, the viewing of a former boatbuilding yard now occupied by a tavern and its parking lot, and a visit to the Canastota Canal Museum. Canastota was a major canal port during the 19th century, and most of the buildings from that era remain standing, with one of them housing the museum. The curator, Brian Gazda, outlined plans for the restoration of the Canastota waterfront to its 1860s appearance. Using old photographs, the task is expected to take up to four years, but the result should be well worth the effort.

World Canals Conference
(Continued from Page 3)

sociation who led the talks. Other speakers were Dan McCain of Delphi, Indiana who spoke on historic trails on the Wabash and Erie Canal; and Bernard Henderson, chairman of the British Waterways, who spoke on management of railroads as compared to canals. Donald Green, from the Clinton & Kalamazoo Canal in Michigan, presented a nice approach to research and study. He emphasized the importance of volunteers who faithfully work to make restoration a reality. Ron Oakley discussed the scope of the Inland Waterways International. Francois Bordry gave a presentation on the 1999 World Canals Con-



The I&M Canal's 150th birthday cake served at the Thursday evening barbeque dinner

ference, which will be held in northern France with a side trip into Belgium. It promises to be interesting. I hope many of you will be able to attend. Future Conferences: Rochester, N.Y. on Sept. 11-15, 2000; Dublin, Ireland in May 2001; Lachine Canal, Canada in 2002; Scotland's "Millenium Link" in 2003; and (tentatively) the Welland Canals in 2004 and The Delaware Valley and New Jersey in 2005.

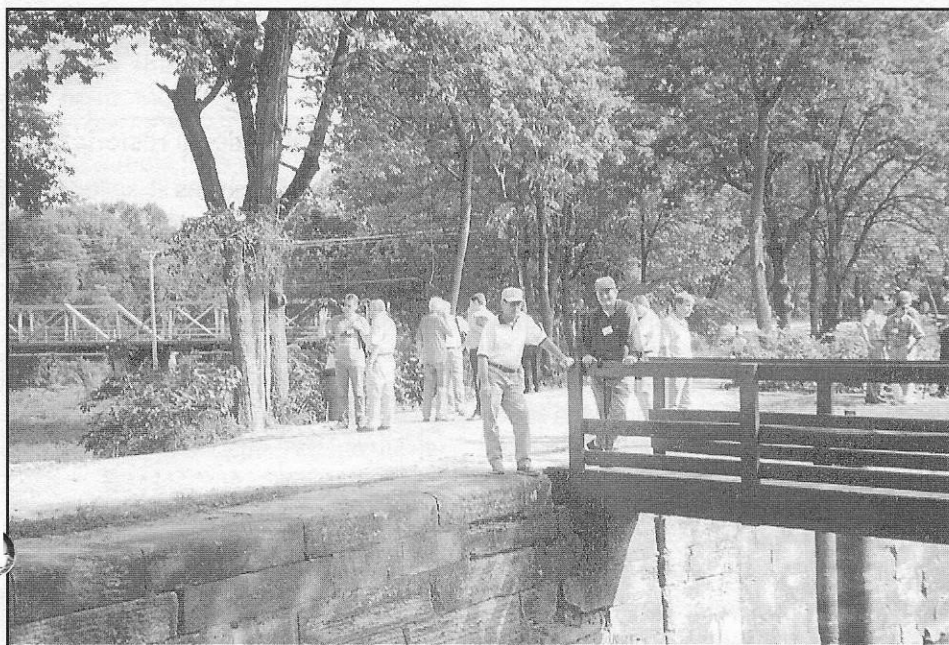
The American Canal Society held a well-attended general membership meeting. The A.C.S. board meeting was held in the evening at the LaSalle County Historical Society in Utica.

Thursday afternoon three locations were to be studied for site planning. Your reporter attended the Seneca grain elevator site, located on the north bank of the I&M Canal in Seneca where water traffic carried grain from the elevator, as well as pig iron, eggs, butter, hydraulic lime, salt, agriculture products, hides, wool, leather, and ice. Each boat was held responsible for any goods that fell into the canal. They had to stop and retrieve anything that fell into the canal or be responsible for any damage that might be done to the next boat. The grain elevator had corrugated metal on its sides but the restoration plan calls for the removal of the metal and returning to wood siding.

We moved to the library for our planning session to discuss possible uses for the grain elevator. Ron Vasile and Laurie Scott led the discussion. Many good suggestions were mentioned. Roger Squires had some excellent suggestions that I hope they will apply. The other planning groups covered the Sulphur Springs Hotel, and the Marseilles hydroelectric plant (1911-1988), which North American Hydro hopes to put back in operation.

That evening the barbecue dinner at the Carey Pavilion was sponsored by the Utica Canal Volunteers and LaSalle Canal Volunteers. Desert was a delicious cake decorated with a canal scene in honor of the canal's sesquicentennial.

Friday we enjoyed a ride on the tour boat Pride of the Heartland. We boarded



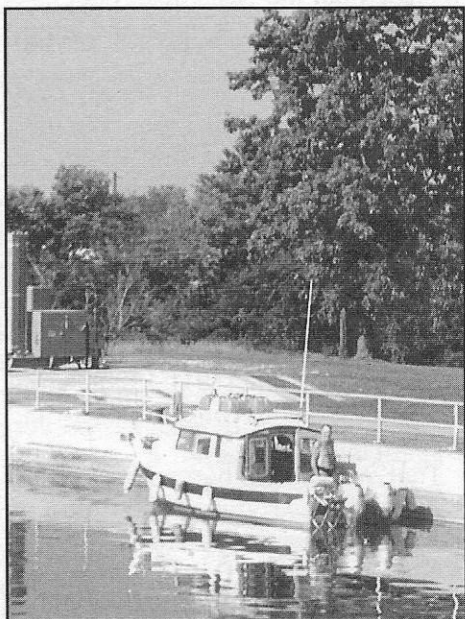
A.C.S. Secretary/Treasurer Charles Derr and other participants at I&M Lock #7, Channahon



Boarding *Pride of the Heartland* at Will-Joliet Bicentennial Park for a Des Plaines River cruise

at the Will-Joliet Park which lies by the Des Plaines River segment of the Illinois Waterway. In the Brandon Road Lock we were tied up to a floating bollard. Looking across the lock we saw a snappy boat whose lines were being held by our editor, David Ross. After our descent, he was the first out of the lock and soon out of sight as he speedily cut through the water! He was the only one at the conference who arrived by canal.

In the afternoon all of the workshops sounded intriguing. I opted for the "Coping with Disasters to Canals" session in



Editor David Ross on board the *Rosa Parks*, waiting to lock down with *Pride of the Heartland*

archaeology workshop? Get on the mailing list and make your views known through our ACS web page, archaeology section.)

Dinner was held in the beautiful Union Train Station at Joliet. Afterwards we viewed the outdoor murals nearby which depict the history of the area.

On Saturday we opted for the canal tour to Chicago, stopping at the Chicago Portage National Historic Site. The sculpture depicting the discovery of Joliet and Marquette was very impressive. Another stop was at the I&M "original site" in Chicago where a park is in the planning stages.

Chicago's Navy Pier was beautifully landscaped with a sculpture park and benches along the waterfront at Chicago's entrance lock. Many different boats lined the dock offering rides, even a water taxi. A four-masted schooner



The Joliet-Marquette sculpture at the Chicago Portage National Historic Site

Channahon. In 1996 sixteen inches of rain fell in a short period of time flooding the Fox and DuPage Rivers. The southwest one-third of the Channahon Dam was washed out, including the original abutment. There was also an opportunity to clean up the locks and conduct archaeological work on the lock and dam. Lock #7 will get much needed restoration and the bridge was improved by installing an old conveyor belt in the center to save it from the snow mobiles.

Another workshop on "Canal Boats: Archeology and Operations" was held in Morris, where the remains of seven I&M boats were exposed and studied in 1996. (Do we need a national canal ar-

was a beautiful sight as it sailed past the lighthouse out in the lake.

This was an interesting and entertaining visit to the Illinois and Michigan Canal Corridor and its environs!

SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS TO *AMERICAN CANALS*

If you are preparing material specifically for submission to *American Canals*, we ask that it be at least double spaced, on one side of the paper only, and with generous margins. Appropriate illustrations are invited.