

AMERICAN CANALS

BULLETIN OF
THE AMERICAN CANAL SOCIETY

Vol. XXVIII, No. 3

Dedicated to Historic Canal Research, Preservation, and Parks

Summer 1999

PRESIDENT'S LETTER NO. 8

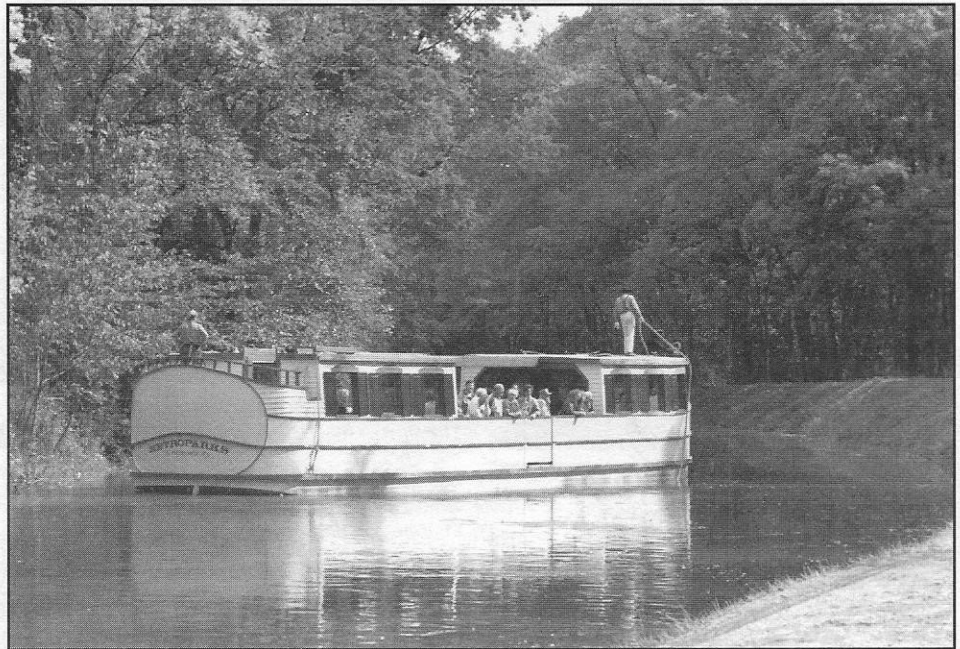
Greetings! As I sit writing this letter, it is late June and, here in Ohio at least, we seem to be caught in the throes of a severe drought. We often experience these droughts in deep summer, both droughts of moisture and of energy. Many of us, myself included, find it difficult to do much more than the necessary things, or the frivolous, or the pleasurable things, during the hot, lazy summer months.

Though lazy, this summer has been busy from a personal standpoint. I hadn't intended to attend the World Canals Conference in June and had asked "Zip" Zimmerman and all our members who attended to be our official representatives in my last President's Letter. Then, as luck would have it, the company I work for—The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company—sent me to Europe (Luxembourg) the same week as the conference. It turned out, however that I was too busy (I was in the plant every day but Sunday, June 13) to get to the conference (about four hours away by car) or even get in phone contact with "Zip". So close yet so far.

"Zip" is writing a report of his impressions of the conference for *American Canals*, but I'd like to hear the impressions of all those ACS members who attended. [See editor's note below.] I'll learn better what went on and, if they warrant, I'll condense what I receive and mention the high points in my next President's Letter. So drop me a line or phone with those impressions.

During early 1998 a small group of canal enthusiasts in Ohio located some wooden remains in the Tuscarawas River just above Clinton, Ohio, where the Ohio & Erie Canal crossed the river in slackwater. They hoped they had found the remains of a canal boat. None of the experts they brought in to look at the remains, however, were able to give

LIVING HISTORY: SLOW BOATS TO NOWHERE



The Volunteer keeps the 19th century alive on the Miami & Erie Canal (see story p. 3)

a definitively positive identification. Finally, this past June, John Briley, manager of the Ohio Historical Society's Ohio River Museum in Marietta, gave a positive identification. In his expert opinion, these remains are those of an early Ohio & Erie canal boat. Local members of the Canal Society of Ohio are now interested and plan a more extensive archaeological dig of the area and adjacent river bank.

There is a great deal going on with the local and regional canal societies and regional canal corridor groups. We would like to become more active in assisting these efforts with our committees. We have formed a Liaison Committee to work with the local canal societies and a Parks Committee to work, in part, with the corridor groups. We need new chairmen and additional members for both of these committees. I hope to be able to appoint new chairmen for these committees at our yearly

membership meeting to be held this September 11 at the National Canal Museum in Easton Pennsylvania. Hope to see you all there.

Till then, Headway to you!!!

Perry K. Woods

EDITOR'S NOTE

The report by special correspondent Zimmerman had not reached us by press time, but see the report by contributing editor Dave Barber beginning on page 8, below.

We hope to have the Zimmerman report as well as some photographic coverage of the W.C.C. and I.W.I. June meetings in our Autumn 1999 issue.

American Canals

BULLETIN OF THE AMERICAN CANAL SOCIETY

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Contributing Editors: **David G. Barber**

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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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CANAL CALENDAR

Now through October, 1999. Guided tours of the Lehigh Canal lockhouse in Walnutport PA every Sunday afternoon from 1 to 4 p.m. Contact (610) 767-5817.

September 11, 1999. Cavorting on the Canal, Zoar OH, sponsored by Ohio & Erie Canal Corridor Coalition. Contact: (330) 434-5657.

September 11, 1999. Va. Can. & Nav. Soc., A Day on the Patowmack Canal. Contact: (757) 826-1137.

September 11, 1999. A.C.S. annual meetings: Board of Directors at 10:00 a.m., membership at 1 p.m., at the National Canal Museum, Easton, Pa. Contact: Terry Woods, (330) 832-4621.

September 11, 1999. Waterloo Village, Byram Township, and the Morris Canal: entertainment, history, 19th century canal lore, and interpretive walks. 1-3 p.m. at the Canal Soc. of N.J. Museum, Waterloo Village. Contact: Can. Soc. of N.J. (908) 722-9556.

September 11-12, 1999. Hancock (Md.) Canal Apple Days. Contact: Tom and Linda Perry, (301) 233-7010.

September 16, 1999. Hugh Moore Historical Park and Museums and Pa. Can. Soc. Fall Lecture Series: #1, "The History and Restoration of the Allegheny Portage Railroad," Diane Garcia. 7:30 p.m., Two Rivers Landing Auditorium, Easton, Pa. Contact: Nat. Can. Museum (610) 559-6613.

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.

September 18, 1999. Canal Park/Trails workday, Wabash & Erie Canal Park, Delphi IN. Free lunch. Contact: Dan McCain, (765) 564-6297.

September 18, 1999. Delaware & Raritan Canal bus tour, Bulls Island to Bordentown. \$23, payable to Canal Soc. of NJ. Contact: Bob or Linda Barth, (908) 722-7428.

September 18, 1999. D.&H. Canal Historical Soc. Canawler's Day and raffle. 1-5 p.m., High Falls, N.Y. Contact: Sue Paterson (914) 687-4834.

September 18, 1999. Ferndale Festival, Appomattox Riverside Park (Va.), 10 a.m. -4 p.m. Batteau rides and other attractions. Contact: Nancy Dunnivant (252) 482-5946.

September 18-19, 1999. C & O Canal Assn. annual overnight PawPaw Bends canoe trip. Contact: Carl Linden, (301) 229-2398, or Ken Rollins (804) 448-2934.

September 19-24, 1999. D&H Elderhostel: "Boats, Planes, Trolleys & Trains," Williams Lake Hotel, High Falls, N.Y. Contact: Delaware and Hudson Canal Historical Soc., P.O. Box 23, Mohonk Rd., High Falls, N.Y. 12440; (914) 687-9311.

September 25-October 23, 1999. Delaware Canal Walk every Saturday. Guided tour along all 60 miles of canal. Contact: Susan Taylor, Friends of the Delaware Canal, 145 S. Main St., New Hope, Pa. 18938; (215) 862-2021.

September 26, 1999. C & O Canal Continuing Hike Series: from Lock 56 (Pearre) up to Sidling Hill Aqueduct, beginning at 10:30 a.m. Contact: Pat White, (301) 977-5628.

October 1-3, 1999. Canal Soc. of NY State fall field trip. From headquarters at the Farrell Rd. Holiday Inn in Syracuse, the weekend will feature visits to locks, aqueducts, and other sites including the state's only restored navigable aqueduct at Camillus, as well as a boat trip on Onondaga Lake and the Oswego Canal. Contact: Dave Beebe, 109 East Way, Camillus NY. 13031.

October 2-3, 1999. Berks County Heritage Festival, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., 2201 Tulpehocken Rd, Wyomissing, Pa. Features canal tenders living history program both days. Contact: Berks Co. Heritage Center (610) 374-8839.

October 3, 1999. Apple pancake breakfast, D.&H. Canal Park Visitor Center, Cuddebackville, N.Y. 8 a.m.-noon. \$4; children under 12 \$2.50. Contact: Neversink Valley Area Museum (914) 754-8870.

October 9-14, 1999. C & O Canal Thru Bicycle Trip. Contact: Tom Perry, (301) 223-7010.

October 15-17, 1999. Canal Festival, Walnutport Canal Ass., Walnutport PA. Contact: (610) 767-5817.

October 21, 1999. Hugh Moore Historical Park and Museums and Pa. Can. Soc. Fall Lecture Series: #2, "Palmerton, Pa. Then and Now," Betsy Burnhauser. 7:30 p.m., Two Rivers Landing Auditorium, Easton, Pa. Contact: Nat. Can. Museum (610) 559-6613.

October 22-23, 1999. Pennsylvania Canal Soc. fall field trip. Boat and bus tour of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. Contact: Zip Zimmerman, (215) 493-5525.

October 22-23, 1999. Can. Soc. of Indiana Fall Tour. Indianapolis; details to be announced. Contact: C.S.I., P.O. Box 4008, Ft. Wayne, Ind. 46804.

October 24, 1999. C & O Canal heritage hike near Cumberland. Details to be announced.

October 26-31, 1999. D&H Elderhostel: "Five Favorite Romantic and Industrial Landscapes in the Hudson Valley," Williams Lake Hotel, High Falls, N.Y. Contact: Delaware and Hudson Canal Historical Soc., P.O. Box 23, High Falls, N.Y. 12440; (914) 687-9311.

October 30, 1999. Deer Creek/Halloween walk, Wabash & Erie Canal Park, Delphi IN. Contact: Dan McCain, (765) 564-6297.

October 30, 1999. Halloween at the Canal, Camillus Erie Canal Park, Camillus, N.Y. Details to be announced. Contact: John Settineri (315) 672-5110.

November 13, 1999. Symposium on D & R Canal history and technology. Prallsville Mill Complex. Canal Soc. of NJ, NJ Historical Commission, and D & R Canal Commission. Contact: (908) 722-7428.

Continued on Pg. 10

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Web page address:

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

CANAL BOAT RIDES

by Carroll Gantz

For those who yearn to experience the leisurely glide of a 19th century canal boat through still water beside a rural towpath, with sturdy mules or horses as motive power, these are times rich with opportunity to do so. From Maryland to Indiana, a dozen or more operational canal boats provide visitors with just such an experience, some with an added attraction—passage through a working lock. Increasingly, these are not merely boat rides on historical remnants of the once-vast canal system, but include boat designs, materials, and crew members historically authentic to the canal era, to help recreate the aura of life and times 175 years ago.

Such reincarnations of canal history are a relatively recent phenomenon. Thirty years ago, canal boat rides, if they existed at all, were more recreational than historical. The concept of authentic boat replica design began with the launch of *St. Helena II*, in Canal Fulton, Ohio in 1970. This 65-foot completely-wooden boat, built by volunteers, followed the style and construction of typical 19th century freight boats of Ohio, with open cargo bays and deck cabins for crew and mules. Crew members and docents of *St. Helena II* dressed in costumes of the period. Other Ohio boats soon followed Canal Fulton's lead, and today, nearly 200,000 passengers ride canal boats yearly, experiencing history through active recreation of it.

You can be among them. Here is a sampling of interesting operational sites. Most also offer senior tour groups and student field trips, in addition to individual ticket sales.

Ohio & Erie Canal

St. Helena III, Canal Fulton, Ohio, launched 1991, is operated by the Canal Fulton Heritage Society, on a 1.25-mile stretch of the Ohio & Erie Canal, seven days a week, June through August, and weekends only in May, September, and October. The 60-foot boat, powered by two horses, is of typical Ohio freight boat design similar to *St. Helena II* (see above), with a ferro-cement hull. Charges are \$6.50 adults, \$5.50 seniors, and \$4.50 children. Capacity is about 50, and the ride is about 45 minutes. Groups up to 25 are charged \$120 per hour, and those above

that are charged \$4.50 for adults and \$3.50 for children. There is a lock (Lock 4) where the boat turns around, but it is currently not operable. A small canal museum near the boat landing is free with the purchase of boat tickets, and the town center is also near the boat landing. Canal Fulton is located between Akron and Canton, Ohio, about 60 miles south of Cleveland, not far off I-77. The site has had boat operations since 1970.

Monticello III, launched in 1993, is operated at the Historic Roscoe Village site in Coshocton, Ohio, on a 1/2-mile portion of the Ohio & Erie Canal, daily between Memorial Day and Labor Day, and on weekends until mid-October. The 74-foot boat has a capacity of 100, and is towed by two horses. It operates from 1 to 5 p.m., on the hour, for a 40-minute ride with no locks. The design is generally of a packet style, with fully open sides. Tickets for the cruise are \$5.00 adults, \$4.50 seniors, and \$2.50 children, or free as part of a tour ticket for all attractions in Roscoe Village, which also has shopping and dining in five restaurants. Coshocton is 75 miles east of Columbus and 120 miles south of Cleveland. The site has had boat operations since 1972.

Miami & Erie Canal

The Volunteer (see page one), launched in 1994, is operated in Grand Rapids, Ohio, as part of the Providence Metropark, about 25 miles south of Toledo. It runs from May through the last

weekend in October, weather permitting. The design, a steel hull with wooden superstructure, is 60 feet long, carries 75, and follows the typical Ohio freight boat style. Adults are charged \$4.00, seniors \$3.00, and children \$2.00. The ride is 45 minutes, with a 10 minute stop to travel through a lock, and passes a working grist mill during the 1 mile trip. The authentic boat is pulled by a tandem team of mules. Crew members in historic dress will take you back to 1876 as you travel down the Miami and Erie Canal. Senior Days give seniors a \$1.00 discount, and there are a number of Family Days, which include events such as kite-making and fishing with cane poles.

The General Harrison, launched 1973, is operated as part of the Piqua Historical Site, in Piqua, Ohio, on the Miami and Erie Canal. Piqua is 30 miles north of Dayton, and 80 miles west of Columbus, along I-75. Season is from Memorial Day to Labor Day and on weekends in the fall. Three rides per day are offered: noon, 2:30 p.m., and 4:00 p.m. Pricing for the ride is packaged along with admission to the entire Piqua Historical Site, which included small historical exhibits and many independently-operated shops. Adults pay \$5.00 and students \$1.25, with discounts for seniors. The 70-foot wooden boat carries 85, and is of a typical 1840 Ohio freight boat style. It is pulled by two mules for a 40-minute, one-mile ride. A lock is at the turnaround, but is not currently operable.



The General Harrison on the Miami & Erie Canal



The Josiah White II on the Lehigh Canal

Crew includes a historical interpreter on board.

Whitewater Canal, Indiana

The *Ben Franklin III*, launched in 1990, is operated as part of the Whitewater Canal State Historic Site in Metamora, Indiana, which is halfway between Indianapolis and Cincinnati in Franklin County. It operates from May 1st to October 31st, weather permitting. Four rides per day are offered from June through September, hourly from noon to 4:00 p.m. Cost is \$1.00 per person, with children under three, free. In May and October, two rides are made daily. The one-mile, 30-minute ride takes passengers through an aqueduct and covered bridge, towed by two American-Belgian horses. There are no locks. The fiberglass boat, a replica of a typical Ohio freight boat, is 75 feet long, and carries 80 passengers and three crew members. The site has had boat operations since 1980. Whitewater Park also offers the adjacent downtown area of Metamora with 120 shops and a historic mill. A shuttle service operates a 3.5 mile run at the historic site. A steam train, which runs once a day, brings visitors from Connersville, 17 miles away, and stays 2 hours in Metamora before returning. The one-hour train ride costs between \$8 and \$12 per person.

Lehigh Canal, Pennsylvania

The *Josiah White II*, launched in 1993, is operated on the Lehigh Canal in Easton, Pennsylvania as part of the Hugh Moore Historical Park and Muse-

ums, which includes the National Canal Museum, Locktender's House Museum, and a Library/Archives. Easton is located at the confluence of the Delaware and Lehigh Rivers near Allentown and Bethlehem. All sites are easily accessible from I-78 and State Route 22.

Admission, including the Locktender's House Museum, is Adults \$5.00, Seniors \$4.50, children (ages 3-15) \$3.00, and children under 3 are free. The 40 minute, 1-1/2 mile mule-drawn ride takes 2 turns, one as it reaches the Locktender's House and dam. The de-

sign, a steel hull with wooden superstructure, is 50 feet long and can carry 120 passengers on upper and lower decks combined.

The boat operates 6 days a week from early May until Memorial Day, 7 days a week until Labor Day, and week-ends only through the end of September. Special fall foliage rides are scheduled in early October or you may charter the boat for special events and parties. These rides can be designed to include a catered meal, an entertainer, or a trip through a working lift lock. Reservations are required. The site has had boat operations since 1978.

Delaware Canal, Pennsylvania

The New Hope Canal Boat Company in New Hope, Pennsylvania, operates two identical aluminum-hulled boats, the *Myfanwy Davis Jenkins* and the *Priscilla Jean Pitcher*. New Hope is located on the Delaware Canal, in central Bucks County, 30 miles north of Philadelphia. The site is within the area of the Delaware Canal State Park, which stretches from Easton to Bristol along the Delaware River. Operations begin in April, when the rides are offered on weekends only. The season begins in earnest on the 1st of May with four scheduled departures seven days a week; the times are noon, 1:30, 3:00 and 4:30. The 2.2-mile mule-drawn journey between two non-operating locks takes 1 1/4 hours. Charges for this unique trip are \$7.95



Priscilla Jean Pitcher on the Delaware Canal

Photo by Lee Urba.

for adults and \$6.25 for children over 6 (those under 6 are free.) The vessels are USCG-certified to carry 88 passengers. However, the vessels are just the right size for 30 to 50 people to enjoy a private party or special event. Staff includes a mule-tender, captain, and historical interpreter/folk singer. Since there is no room in the canal to turn around, the boats are double-ended with specially designed rudders on the south and north ends. The site has had boat operations since the early 1950s.

Pennsylvania Main Line Canal

The *Locust*, launched in 1974, is operated on the Juniata Division of the Main Line Canal, by the Locust Campground, 7 miles west of Lewistown, Pennsylvania off Route 22. The 1-hour ride of 1 1/2 miles traverses no locks. The steel-hulled boat, powered by motor, carries 50 passengers and is designed along the general lines of a packet boat. Rides are available only by charter, at \$5.00 per person, with a \$75 minimum charge. Call 717-248-3974.

Chesapeake and Ohio Canal

The *Canal Clipper*, launched 1976, is operated by the National Park Service at Great Falls Tavern & Canal Museum, 11710 MacArthur Blvd., Potomac, Maryland, on the C&O Canal, near Washington, DC. Operations begin with spring schedules, April-May, when it operates Monday through Friday at 3:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday at 11:30, 1:30, 3:00 and 4:30 p.m. June 1-13, there are rides at 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, and on weekends at 11:30, 1:30 and 3:00. June 16 through September 6, there are 3 trips a day Wednesday through Sunday, at 11:30, 1:30 and 3:00 p.m. Fall schedules, September 9 through October 31, are the same as those June 1-13. The mule-drawn ride is for 1 hour, and includes a trip through Lock #20. Charges are \$7.50 for adults (ages 15-61), \$6.00 for seniors, \$4.00 for children (ages 4-14), with children 3 and under, free. The boat follows the style of a typical C&O freight boat, is about 80 feet long, with a ferro-cement hull. The boat is the third of the same name in operation there since 1941.

The *Georgetown*, launched in 1982, is also operated by the NPS, in Georgetown, DC, on the C&O Canal. The boat is 87 feet long, in the typical

C&O freight boat style, with fiberglass hull. Typical mule-drawn ride including passage through a lock takes 1 hour. Unfortunately, the boat was badly burned by vandals during the 1998 season, and is under repair. Operations were intended to be resumed in June 1999, but this should be verified by calling 202-653-5190.

Erie Canal, New York

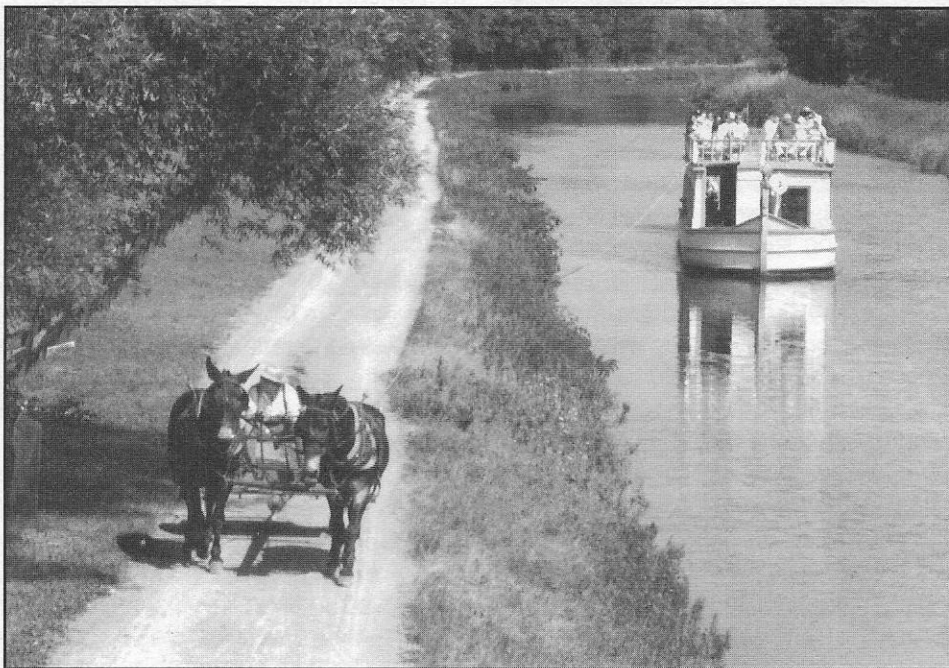
The *Chief Engineer of Rome*, formerly the *Independence*, launched in 1973, is operated by Erie Canal Village in

AMERICAN CANAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETINGS

**September 11, 1999
Easton, Pennsylvania
National Canal Museum**

**Board of Directors, 10:00 a.m.
Membership, 1:00 p.m.**

**Contact: Terry Woods
(330) 832-4621**



The Chief Engineer of Rome on the Erie Canal

Rome, N.Y., on the enlarged Erie Canal, built 1836-1862. Erie Canal Village is a re-creation of a mid-1800s canal town, and includes a number of museums and attractions, including a canal museum, the Harden Carriage Museum, the New York State Museum of Cheese, a narrow-gauge railroad, Bennett's Tavern, a blacksmith shop, the Shull Victorian House, a canal general Store, the Crosby House and a one-room school house, a gift shop, and a snack bar. The 70-foot wooden mule-drawn boat carries 125 passengers on two deck levels, and is a replica of a typical Erie Canal packet boat. The 40-minute ride covers one mile, and an on-board docent describes the canal era. The season is from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Operations are from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, and 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekends. Fees are \$3.00 per per-

son, or \$2.50, if a ticket for the Village is purchased (\$6.00 adults, \$5.00 seniors, and \$4.00 children ages 4-17).

Future Boat Construction

There are a number of canal boat constructions in the planning stages. Those considering such constructions who wish to insure historical accuracy and successful operations should follow a few basic guidelines. First, engage professional planning and marketing services, so that you can develop an appropriate business strategy and can be assured of sound financial resources and returns. Second, engage professional boat design services, so that the proportions and styles are consistent with historical records, photos, or authentic plans of boats in your specific region. Finally, make sure that the construction processes, materials and finishes are consistent with those which would have been used in the 19th cen-

tury, or, at least, appear to be. These steps will insure that the canal experience you provide the public will be one of historical authenticity and worthy of our national canal heritage. Like any quality restorations of historical sites and structures, canal boats reconstructions should pay close attention to the emotional re-creation of the past, the entire reason for their construction. Regarding a canal boat ride primarily as a recreational activity, and treating the historical aspects only cosmetically, can result not only in a disservice to the canal heritage, but in operational failure, because the public, expecting a truly emotional historical experience, may be severely disappointed.

Credits

Information used in this article was researched by Economics Research Associates, 20 East Jackson Blvd, Suite 1200, Chicago, IL, 312-427-3855, which provides marketing and planning services for recreational and tourist development. The author, of Carroll Gantz Design, 817 Treeloft Trace, Seabrook Island, SC, 843-768-3780, is a member of ACS, provides canal boat design services and canal boat prints, and was the designer and construction supervisor of *St. Helena II*, of Canal Fulton, Ohio.

Let your fellow canalists know what's going on in your local, state, or regional society. Send reports and pictures to
AMERICAN CANALS.

BOOK REVIEW

Walter H. Niehoff II, *The Reincarnation of the Switch Back Gravity Railroad* (published by author, 708 Mirador Rd., Vestal, N.Y. 13850-3129, 1995).

Reviewed by John W. Riegel

Any question as to why a book on a railroad should be reviewed in *American Canals* is easily answered: the railroad was built with but one purpose in mind: to feed a canal. The canal in question was the Lehigh Canal, extending from Mauch Chunk, Pa., (now known as Jim Thorpe) to Easton, where the Delaware Canal took loaded boats to Trenton, N.J. and tidewater.

In fact, both railroad and canal construction depended upon an earlier development—the discovery of “hard coal” (anthracite) near Summit Hill, some 9

miles from Mauch Chunk, and the exploitation of this source of heat and energy by Josiah White, an indefatigable promoter thereof. As early as 1792, a wagon road was built from the mines of Summit Hill to Mauch Chunk. There the Lehigh River when damned to collect spring rains until, when the dams were broken, barges could ride the resulting freshets to Easton.

By 1818 the transport and sale of anthracite had grown to an extent encouraging a graveled road and improved navigation under the aegis of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company. But the road was often impassible during periods of bad weather, and in 1827 White determined on a railroad, using the technology of wooden rails strapped with iron bars. Likewise, the employment of dams and freshets was suspended by construction of the Lehigh Canal which, when completed in June of 1829, “ruined this fun”, according to our author.

With all due respect to the canal connection, without which there would never have been such a railroad, the book is essentially a railway study. But canal lovers may rejoice in the author's brief coverage of the dependence of many of our earliest railways on canal connections or promotion. Thus, the nearest similar operation to that of the “Switch Back Gravity Railroad” was the gravity-run line of the Delaware & Hudson Canal Company, built in 1826-1829. This road's first locomotive was delivered to the railroad by the Delaware & Hudson canal, and it's trial operation is generally regarded as that of the first steam locomotive in America. And railroad historians will point out that the extension of railway mileage by the parent canal company eventually linked Scranton, Pa., and Binghamton, New York, with Albany, and further extended northward toward Montreal, and included substantial mileage in southern Quebec. And all of this, until the early 1900s, operated and advertised under the name of “The Delaware and Hudson Canal Company Railroad”!

Indeed, all of the eventual major eastern truckline railroads were substantially influenced by preexisting canals or canal routes. The northernmost of these, the New York Central, followed closely the layout of the Erie Canal and benefited from the enormous growth of population and enterprise occasioned by

its completion across central New York State. The Erie Railroad was provided as a substitute for a canal across the hilly southern tier of New York counties, and its original termini on the Hudson River and Lake Erie clearly indicated a waterway-oriented project. The Pennsylvania Railroad followed, and later included, railway sections from the Main Line canal. And the Baltimore and Ohio was built as a railway throughout only because Baltimore recognized that a canal from its port to the Ohio river was just not a possibility.

In fact, the Mauch Chunk switch back was a unique and fascinating operation on its own. It required steam powered inclined planes at each end to raise and lower loads and empties, but relied on gravity over relatively gentle but continuous grades to reach the mines westward with empty cars, and then to carry loaded cars to the return incline at its canal-barge destination.

Quite unlooked-for in its initial promotion was the fascination of passengers with this industrial operation. Starting with interested local residents, the operators quickly recognized the need for passenger-oriented equipment and operation, and as early as 1829 were hauling excursionists.

So popular did this feature become that in the 19th century Mauch Chunk, far nearer eastern centers of population, was rivaling Niagara Falls as a tourist and honeymoon destination. (Your reviewer's maternal grandparents honeymooned in Mauch Chunk and “rode the gravity” in the late 1800s.) Publicized as “The Switzerland of America”, the region and the gravity railroad lasted, as did the Lehigh Canal, into the 1930s, when the combination of publicly-built highways and the depression put an end to such picturesque and peaceful operations.

Walter Niehoff offers a complete and readable history and careful description of the line, its inclines, and the reason for its naming as a “Switch Back.” He also quotes extensively from a late nineteenth century tourist's description of a ride on this line, with many good illustrations. Finally, the book covers the “architecture” of the operating model of the line, beautifully designed and built by author Niehoff, and a remarkably interesting biography of Josiah White, wherein details of operations before and

during the Lehigh Canal epoch are well worth reading by any dedicated canal enthusiast. Indeed these last sixteen pages especially may be considered a "must" for any serious canal historian hitherto unacquainted with the origin, promotion, and operation of the Lehigh Canal (let alone its feeding railroad) in the early 19th century.

NEW YORK'S INFLUENCE ON THE OHIO CANAL SYSTEM

by Larry Turner

Naturally, it all started with George Washington. His military exploits took him up the Hudson, the Potomac, and many other rivers of the east. His influence led to the establishment of the Army Corps of Engineers (he gave the government the land for Fort Belvoir, which is adjacent to his home at Mount Vernon) and West Point, the first engineer school in the nation. In his "retirement years" he floated down the Ohio River from Fort Pitt and claimed almost a quarter of the southeast section of Ohio for his heritage, although ineffectually. He recommended the Erie Canal path of New York, recognized the Portage path of Ohio, the final link between Lake Erie and the Ohio River, and the future navigation potential of the Ohio River as a means of opening up the nation's western territory. Lewis and Clark started their venture by almost walking down the Ohio, the same route that George took during wetter weather.

General Sullivan conceived the idea of uniting the Ontario and Susquehanna rivers from the head of Seneca Lake to the Chemung River during his expedition against the Iroquois in 1779, and wrote to Washington on the subject. James Geddes later surveyed the route, in 1812. In 1797 General Schuyler and William Weston, an English engineer, made a tour of New York and by 1798 a corporation was formed to construct a canal around Niagara from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario. Hence, the New York and Ohio connection began.

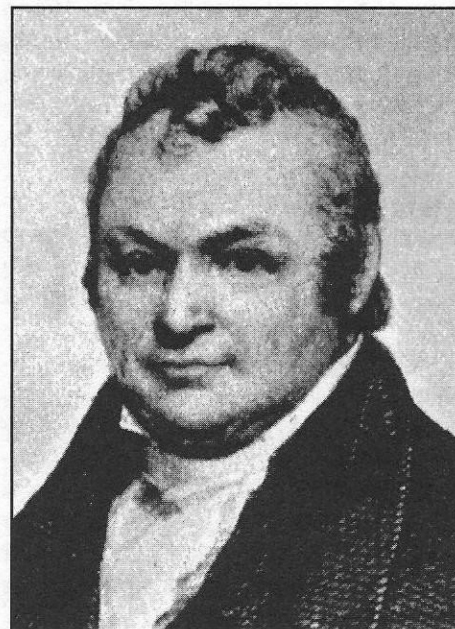
A New York canal was proposed in 1807 from the Hudson River to Lake Erie—the same year the Cuyahoga-to-Muskingum River route was being discussed in Ohio, to connect Lake Erie to the Ohio River via the Portage path, which was used by the Indians and mili-

tary. A state lottery was proposed to finance this endeavor, which failed to generate sufficient revenue. It was Thomas Worthington, a Senator from Ohio, who introduced the resolution which brought about the "Gallatin Report of 1808," which recommended national transportation improvements, but, after the costs were estimated, at each state's own expense.

President Madison vetoed New York's request for federal funding and New York fell back upon its own resources. By 1812, Governor Clinton recommended that New York cease trying to get help from Congress and build the canal itself. The New York Legislature accordingly authorized the purchase of the Western-Inland Navigation Company's rights. On the 4th of July, 1817, America began its biggest construction project.

Meanwhile, back in Ohio, Ethan Allen Brown of Cincinnati, then Judge of the Supreme Court, wrote Dewitt Clinton about the possibility of a canal system in Ohio. In 1817, Thomas Worthington became governor of Ohio and wrote to Secretary of the Treasury Crawford, urging the desirability of a canal between the Ohio River and Lake Erie. Prices of Ohio commodities were much more reliable if they were shipped to New York rather than down the Ohio River, around or over the falls, and down the Mississippi River to New Orleans.

Steamboats, developed in New York, started plying the Ohio River out of Pittsburgh and Cincinnati. By 1818, Judge Brown was elected Governor of the State of Ohio, and in his inaugural address made a strong appeal for canals. His first attempt was branded "Brown's Folly" and was thwarted, but finally in 1822 he succeeded in getting a commission to study the problem. The seven-member commission authorized \$6,000 to employ a competent engineer and James Geddes, of Oneida, New York, was granted \$1,500 and all expenses for one year of his time. Geddes, though a judge by training, was experienced in canal construction since 1811. He had worked on the Champlain Canal, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, and the Cumberland and Oxford Canal, and was to become consulting engineer in 1828 on the Pennsylvania system. Geddes arrived in Cleveland on April 25, 1822, and began operations on May



James Geddes

2nd. He proceeded eastward and examined the elevations between the Cuyahoga and the Grand River systems, accompanied by General Simon Perkins, of Warren. This became the general course of the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal. Perkins also had much land in the Akron area, on what became the final route of the Ohio and Erie canal, Ohio's first major canal project. Alfred Kelly, the eventual "Father of Ohio's Canal System," conducted Geddes south down the Cuyahoga River, over the Portage Path (the north-south watershed divide), and down the Tuscarawas River to the Muskingum. Kelly, also a lawyer and from Cleveland, was originally from New York had many things in common with Geddes. Geddes went on to Columbus to look at the Black River, Killbuck, and Sandusky areas, but found them lacking water without the use of the Cuyahoga, which was almost 50 miles away, as a feeder. By the end of 1822, Geddes was exhausted from his work in Ohio, as was Kelly. In December, Geddes submitted his report to Ohio's commissioners and was glad to get back to his home state. He had surveyed 900 miles in eight months, and five routes had been examined: Mahoning and Grand River; Cuyahoga and Muskingum; Scioto and Sandusky; Black and Muskingum; and Maumee and Miami rivers. He recommended that branch canals be considered, and saw the Cuyahoga as the main source of feed water for any canal constructed

toward the interior of the state. When the commission reconvened to prepare a thirty-three page recommendation to the legislature, it proposed the Cleveland-Akron-Portsmouth route. Geddes had found the critical line across the Licking summit which allowed the north and central routes to unite and come to termination at Portsmouth, satisfying most of the engineering requirements for the system.

In the year of 1823, New York engineers were not too fond of Ohio. Geddes stayed away from Ohio but trained many who would follow him in his yet expanding profession. Seymour Skiff, a New York engineer, came to Ohio, and after 14 days on the job, died of malaria (or something). He was replaced by another New Yorker, William Price.

Many in the state demanded that the commission's conclusions be reexamined, so Senator Brown traveled to procure a disinterested, experienced engineer (of course from New York—where else?) and came back with David S. Bates. Engineer Bates' reaudit confirmed the proposed route. He also helped locate the Louisville and Portland

Canal on the Ohio River.

Micajah Williams and Kelly, Ohio's two commissioners, went to New York for their blessings (and hopefully a loan or two), and David Bates and Nathan S. Roberts did the first survey of the Miami Canal for Williams, who was from Cincinnati and coveted the New York market.

The canal bill was studied for three more years, and passed in February of 1825, about the time of completion of New York's Erie Canal. De Witt Clinton reached Cleveland on the last day of June and turned over the first spade of dirt at Newark, Ohio, on July 4th, 1825. He was also at the ceremonies at the start of the Miami Canal and helped Governor Ethen Allen Brown and the Ohio Canal Commission obtain \$4.5 million in eastern capital. Loans were taken in New York by banking houses such as John Jacob Astor, William G. Buckmore, and Prime, Ward, and King. There was an initial loan of \$400,000 at 5 percent for the start of construction in 1825, and Astor took \$800,000 of the million dollars issued in 1826 at 6 percent. The completion of the canal from Cleveland to Akron in 1827 helped the commissioners sell another \$1.2 million in bonds at premium.

Ohio still needed more New York trained engineers. Geddes helped train the Ohio engineer, Samuel Forrer. Seneca Lapham and his sons Darius and Increase came to Ohio from New York, as did many of the Irish canal laborers. Seneca worked for Bates, and Increase lived in Columbus and worked under Francis Cleveland near Chillicothe, Ohio, until that section was completed. Darius became assistant engineer on the Ohio and Erie in 1829 and the superintendent on the Miami. He later designed the Cincinnati and Whitewater, connecting Ohio and Indiana, and finally became collector of tolls in Cincinnati.

Canal building peaked in the mid 1830s, with passage of Ohio's Loan Law in 1836, the enlargement of the Erie Canal in New York, and the mountain crossings in Pennsylvania. By 1835, 86,000 barrels of flour, 98,000 bushels of wheat, and over 2,500,000 staves were recorded as shipped from Ohio to New York. Oak trees, abundant in Ohio, and wanting to be removed for farming, were being shipped to New York as pipe staves. The Lamphams were visited by

Canvass White and George T. Olmstead, friends from the Erie, and William Jerome from the Champlain Canal of New York.

Then came the Panic of 1837, followed by a further slump in 1839. In 1839, the Portsmouth Dry Dock and Steam Boat Basin Company was formed at the terminus of the Ohio and Erie at Portsmouth—financed by John J. Astor.

Also during the depression of 1837, the syndicate of Prime, Ward, and King of New York took another half-million dollars worth of Ohio canal bonds at 6 percent. By 1840 however, Ohio's credit had fallen so low that her stock could not be sold—even in New York. In 1841 Kelly tried again, but to no avail, and he became the father to the system by using his personal holdings (as only a father would) to back the necessary loans. In 1842, Kelly borrowed still more money, pledging the balance of his amassed fortune.

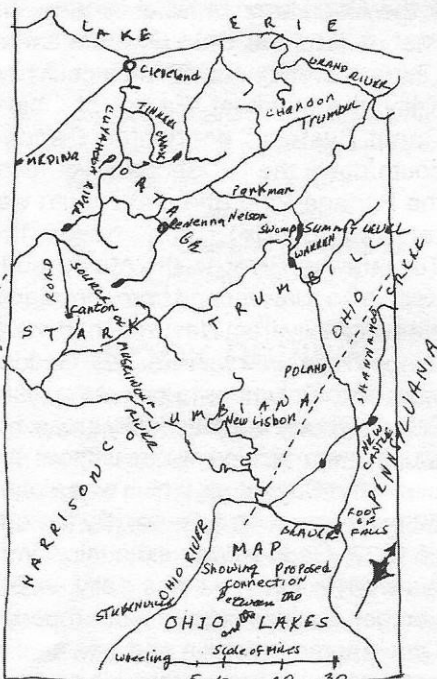
As the Canal Era in Ohio wound down, Alfred Kelly moved from Cleveland and retired in Columbus, doing well in the railroad business. In 1861 the State of Ohio leased its canal system to private contractors and the Civil War began. The New York-Ohio connection continued, however. Many New Yorkers served next to Ohioans in the war, and President Grant was born in Ohio and buried in New York. New Yorkers were involved in railroads and Lake Erie shipping in Ohio, and this continued until George Steinbrenner moved from the Lorain shipyards to become owner of the New York Yankees. Somehow, I am sure that the New York-Ohio connection continues today.

CANAUX '99

by David G. Barber

World Canals Conference

Having been to the last three World Canals Conferences and visited one earlier, I had wanted to attend the '99 event in Lille, France, and neighboring Belgium. However, until the last day for registration, it didn't look like I would be able to spare the time. However, life is unpredictable, and I suddenly found that I would have the time free. So in one day, I made plane reservations and sent out faxes for conference and room reservations. The process was rapidly completed despite fax numbers that didn't work and other problems.



Copy by Larry Turner of a map drawn by James Geddes in 1822, now in the collection of Geddes papers in the Cornell University Library. In the original, it is described as "Shewing the proposed connexion between the Ohio and the lakes."

Although the conference didn't begin until Monday, I flew out of Boston on Friday evening to get a better fare and to allow me a day to recover from jet lag. On arrival in Brussels, Belgium, Saturday morning, I soon had tickets on the express train into the city where I changed to the Eurostar express to Lille, France. On boarding the Eurostar, I did not realize that it was a reserved seat train and had a little trouble reading my ticket and finding my proper seat. But that was soon figured out with help from the other passengers.

Arriving in Lille on a day of perfect weather, I decided to walk to my hotel rather than trying to figure out the taxis or subway system. I had memorized the map at the station and was doing OK on my navigation (but with some doubts) when I encountered the tourist office at about the halfway point. They provided a handy mid-course correction and a map of the city, and I was soon at the Holiday Inn.

After checking in at about noon, I went out to find a sandwich for lunch and then decided to walk towards the water from the Place de la République along the Boulevard de la Liberté. Along the boulevard was a series of large signs commemorating significant moments in the city's history. Upon reaching the water, I found that I was at the older canal by the city and at the historic masonry lock, the Ecluse de la Bare. This lock is in working order with a bridge into the local park spanning its foot, but is not used today. It is the starting point of canal cruises on a pontoon boat, which was about to leave on a three-hour cruise. However, I was tired from travel, and elected to hold off on cruises until Sunday afternoon when three one-hour cruises were offered. Instead, I walked along the old canal to its western junction with the modern waterway, passing en route a crew making preparations for the conference. I then returned to my hotel via a parallel route.

On Sunday, I awoke to rain, but this soon cleared, and I walked to mass in a nearby, very gothic church. I returned to the hotel to change into better walking clothes and grab my camera and set back out to the canal and lock for photos. I then continued counterclockwise around the island formed by the old and new canals, passing a couple of historic lift bridges. At the eastern junction of the

two canals, I came upon the modern lock, which was much larger than the older one. After photographing it from several angles, I continued west along the new canal, but soon saw three péniches (300 metric ton capacity, self-propelled canal boats) approaching in convoy, and returned to the lock to watch them lock through together. The lock was designed for 1,350 metric ton craft and clearly could have held six or more of the péniches.

After they left I continued west to the other canal junction, and then back along the older canal, where I soon encountered several conference attendees from England (who had come by boat) and Ireland as well as New York. I also learned that there would be a meeting of the Inland Waterways International that evening, and that on the following morning we were expected to take the subway to the Lille University for the initial conference meetings despite having been told that a bus would pick us up. I then withdrew to a local sidewalk cafe for lunch, followed by the one-hour cruise along the old and new canals passing the Port of Lille in the process. Following dinner in the hotel, I attended the IWI Annual General Meeting (see below) and then all adjourned to the hotel bar until it closed.

On Monday morning, I got an early start on breakfast (as all experienced canal society members know to do) and headed off with a group of others to the nearby République subway station and a direct train to the university. The system is new and the ride quick, but any unfamiliar subway is always confusing. At the university, guides and signs soon brought us to the correct building in plenty of time. Some of those who waited for the bus couldn't get on and arrived late.

The morning was devoted to welcoming speeches and a series of presentations on river tourism. Headsets were provided at this and all other venues for simultaneous translation into English or French as appropriate. We then boarded buses and were transferred to the Hôtel de Ville (city hall) where we were greeted by the deputy mayor, and had a buffet, stand-up lunch. We then split into five groups for afternoon tours. My group first went to a town to the west where we were shown a typical church with square steeple and the feudal-era

town architecture. This was followed by a visit to a hilltop town built on one of the three hills in the otherwise flat countryside. Leaving there, we soon found ourselves at Watten boarding the tour boat Iris on the Canal de Neufosse, which we cruised along while listening to four presentations on tourism. After the second one, we took a break during which the boat entered a lock. Despite the captain telling everyone that only 10 people could be on the top deck at once, everyone evacuated the cabin when we entered the lock. I elected to compromise and view things from the stern deck rather than the top deck. This was a large lock and used sector gates. It also has a third set so that only one third or two thirds of the chamber could be used if desired.

On leaving this lock, we soon came to the Ascenseur des Fontinettes at Arques. This is a péniche-sized vertical hydraulic lift much like those in Canada and Belgium. It replaced a series of locks, but in turn has been replaced by a modern lock of the 1,350-ton size. While the lift lock is out of service, it has been preserved as a museum. On this lift, the chamber gates were of the guillotine type as in Belgium while the center guide towers were brick structures as contrasted to the concrete ones at Peterborough, Ontario and the steel ones in Belgium and at Kirkfield, Ontario. During our visit to the lift, light refreshments were served in the garden. We then returned to our hotels for a short break and then were picked up to go to the park along the old canal where cocktails and dinner were served in a tent.

On Tuesday morning, we were bused back to the tent for our morning series of talks, and then proceeded on to Wambrechies where different groups toured either the historic Genièvre gin distillery, a streetcar museum, or a toy museum, all on the bank of the canal. The mayor then greeted us. Following this, we then bused into Belgium where we had lunch in Thieu next to Ascenseur #4 on the Canal du Centre.

The original 300-ton capacity canal climbs the 73-meter ridge to its summit level with two locks and four hydraulic lifts. The system is in the process of being enlarged to the 1,350-ton standard, and the locks and lifts will be replaced by a new counterbalanced lift

that will do the whole elevation change in one step. At present, the new canal below the lifts is in service and connected to the old line by a junction lock that bypasses the two locks. The new lift is almost complete as well as the upper level connecting aqueducts, but the canal above and another aqueduct spanning a highway and stream are still under construction. When the new canal is complete in two years, the older lifts and their associated portion of the old canal are to be kept in service for tourism as well as for their historic value.

The operation of the lifts is similar to that of Canadian lifts, with more water in the upper chamber driving its supporting piston down and thereby raising the other chamber via a connecting pipe. Notable differences from Canada were that the gates on the chambers and canals were of the guillotine type, and that valves in the upper reach gates and the lower chamber gates allowed water to be added to the descending chamber or released from the rising chamber during travel. The speed of movement was also slower than in Canada. Reportedly, Belgium completed the upper lift (#1) before the end of the 19th century, while the occupying Germans during the First World War completed the other three. The upper lift has a brick upper abutment that connects to the lift by a steel aqueduct spanning a road, while the others have a masonry upper abutment that is right next to the lift, and the roadway tunnels through the abutment in masonry.

After lunch, we reconvened in an adjacent tent for more presentations. When the afternoon break came, I had temporarily had my fill of talks, so I set off down the old canal to visit the old Lock #1, which is now out of service. It is just downstream of an abandoned concrete factory. On the lock house at this lock, I noted a signboard showing that it was 990 meters to Lock 2. So with enough time, I naturally walked there and back also. While the canal, including these locks and below them, is now out of service, it is being retained in water as a parkway.

At the conclusion of the afternoon sessions, we all boarded buses to be taken to our preselected hotels to register, dump our suitcases, and get back on the buses rapidly to go to Ascenseur #3. At the foot of this lift, we boarded one of

three dinner boats (Fontinettes, Peterborough, and Scaldis) for a slow dinner cruise down to and through Ascenseur #4. En route, we passed through a swing bridge and two lift bridges, and each bridge had a bridge house in the canal's style. The descent of the lift was done after dark so we could observe the colored lighting that has been added to the lift as a nighttime accent.

On Wednesday morning, we returned to Ascenseur #4 for the final group of presentations, followed by lunch. After lunch, we were all given hardhats and taken by tour train to the new funicular barge lift at Stepy-Thieu, where we watched the movement of a chamber from bottom to top and then toured the lift itself, including the machine room, control room, and lower canal. Work on this lift is nearing completion with various finishing touches underway.

Following this tour, we were bused to the Ronquieres inclined plane where we got to visit the bottom of the plane and be bused past its sides and summit. This was followed by a visit to Ascenseur #1 and a walk down the towpath to the Cantine des Italiens, a former camp for immigrant workers from Italy, now a museum and snack bar. The conference then concluded with a visit to the engraving center museum in La Louvière, a welcome by that mayor, and final remarks including a presentation about next year's conference in Rochester, New York.

For those who had time, there were optional tours on Thursday to Bruges, a twelfth century Belgium port city near the North Sea, or a tour of the closed Canal de Roubaix in France. I took the Bruges tour, which was quite interesting.

On Friday, I got up early and walked to the railroad station in Mons, took a direct train back to Brussels airport, and flew home. The interesting thing about the trip from the hotel to the station is that on the tour buses it was quite some distance due to avoiding of narrow streets. On foot, it was only about a half-mile direct walk.

Inland Waterways International

On arriving for the 1999 World Canals Conference, I was informed that the 1999 Annual General Meeting of the Inland Waterways International was to be held at 8:30 that evening. As a member

with time available, I made sure to attend.

The meeting began with apologies for the lack of notice and for absences, and then proceeded to the minutes of the last general meeting on July 18, 1998. This was followed by the reports of chairman David Stevenson, the treasurer, and the membership secretary. The main point here was that while the organization is in the black, it is there due to the profits of tours and needs more memberships. The slate of nominations to Council was then read and approved. It was also announced that Desmond Leyden of Ireland would become the chairman at the next meeting of Council.

The subject was then raised as to the merits of having separate European and American sections to facilitate communications. I stated that I thought that an American section would just be a competitor to the American Canal Society and not advance the objective of worldwide communication between canal organizations and individuals. This was generally accepted and no desire for further action on this idea was expressed.

The editor of *World Wide Waterways* then discussed his efforts and requested articles on canals from outside the United Kingdom. He is also interested in photos. Language and format of submission are not important.

Then there was a report and discussion on efforts to procure charity status for I.W.I. in the U.K. Basically, this has not gone ahead. Most did not see merit to spending large amounts of time on this.

There was also a request for help in staffing and set up of stands of I.W.I at various boat shows in the U.K.

The meeting then adjourned with an announcement that the next A.G.M. would be held the evening before the next World Canals Conference in Rochester, New York next year.

CANAL CALENDAR—Continued from Pg. 2

November 18, 1999. Hugh Moore Historical Park and Museums and Pa. Can. Soc. Fall Lecture Series: #3, "The Johanna Furnace Iron Plantation," Susan Fellman Jacob. 7:30 p.m., Two Rivers Landing Auditorium, Easton, Pa. Contact: Nat. Can. Museum (610) 559-6613.

November 20-21, 1999. Open house at Leesport Lock House. 10 a.m.—4 p.m. Saturday; noon—4 p.m. Sunday. Contact: Erin Clouser, Berks Co. Heritage Center, Wyomissing, Pa. (610) 374-8839.

November 28, 1999. C & O Canal Continuing Hike Series, from White's Ferry down, beginning at 10:30 a.m. Contact: Pat White, (301) 977-5628.

November 28, 1999. Last Minute Holiday Gift Boutique, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., D.&H. Canal Park Visitor Center, Cuddebackville, N.Y. Contact: Neversink Valley Area Museum (914) 754-8870.

December 4, 1999. C & O Canal Assn. Annual Frostbite Hike, location T.B.A. Contact: Ken Rollins, (804) 448-2934.

December 11-12, 1999. Christmas Boutique at the Susquehanna Museum, Lock House, Havre de Grace MD. Contact: Bob Magee, (410) 272-0819.

December 26-27, 1999. Annual Christmas walks, Wabash & Erie Canal Park, Delphi IN. Contact: Dan McCain, (765) 564-6297.

December 31, 1999. C & O Canal New Year's Eve hike. Details to be announced.

May 12-30, 2001. Ireland 2001 and World Canals Conference, a Canal Soc. of NJ tour including a cruise of the Royal Canal and participation in the World Canals Conference in Dublin. Early reservations are advised because of anticipated high demand for a limited number of canal boats. Contact: Bill McKelvey, (908) 464-9335.

DEADLINE: Material for our next issue must be on the editor's desk no later than October 1st, 1999.

CLIPS FROM THE PAST

During its heyday, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal ferried pioneers to the frontier. Today, a canal boat takes explorers back in time.

by Kate Mulligan

[This article first appeared in *Mid-Atlantic Travel*, spring/summer 1999 issue.]

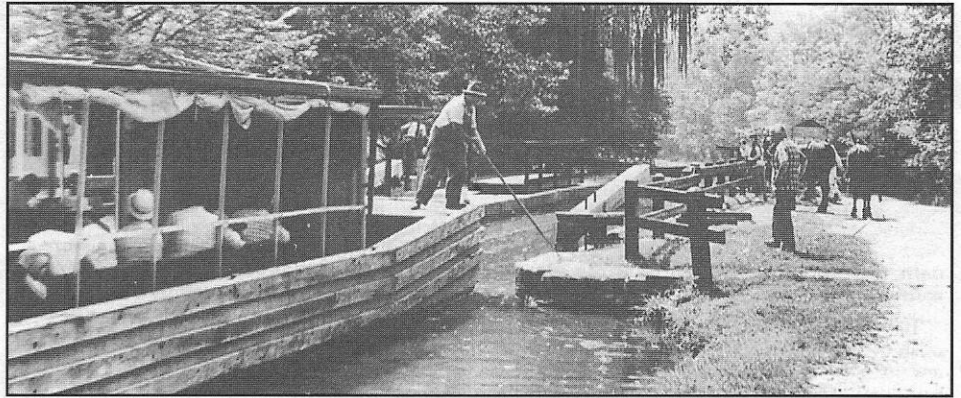
The wail of a canal horn wafts through the air at the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, near Potomac, Maryland. Eighty-eight fourth graders and one middle-aged reporter find seats on the *Canal Clipper* for a journey that will take us a few short miles up the canal and about 150 years back in time.

We're joined by park ranger Rosemary Pfeiffer, who cries out, "Hey lock!" as soon we're settled on board. That yell was the traditional notice to locktenders that a canal boat had arrived and was ready to float from one level of the canal to another. Costumed rangers quickly lift the lockgate, allowing water to flow into the area and raising the boat so it can travel upstream.

"Think of what happens when you're in a bathtub and you add water," says Pfeiffer. "A rubber duck floats upward with the change of water level."

"Wheeeee!" say her passengers.

The *Canal Clipper*, a replica of a 19th-century canal boat, travels only about a mile upstream, whereupon it turns around and heads back. But it has in-



Canal Clipper at the Tavern Lock, Great Falls.

roduced thousands of people to the fascinating story of westward expansion by water. Today Pfeiffer plays to her young audience by beginning with a story about family life on a canal boat.

"When a child was 6 years old, he had his first job," she says. "Children walked along the canal towpath guiding the mules that pulled the canal boat. Six to eight children might have shared living quarters with their parents and two mules."

Ducks and a few canoeists paddle beside the boat. The pace is leisurely, but Pfeiffer has a lot of history to cover during the 60-minute round trip.

In the 18th century, George Washington dreamed of a water route that would open up trade with Ohio, then regarded as the Western frontier, she says. He and others commissioned a series of canals that circumvented the most treacherous rapids in the Potomac River, but those early entrepreneurs soon realized they would need a full-length canal.

The project got under way on July 4, 1828, when President John Quincy Adams turned the first shovel of dirt for the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. On that same day, however, Charles Carroll was also breaking ground in Baltimore for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The two companies battled to become the primary shipping route westward, until 1842 when the railroad won the race by reaching the small town of Cumberland in western Maryland. Canal company officials gave up their hope of reaching the Ohio valley and opened the 186-mile canal to Cumberland in 1850.

After the canal boat turns around, Pfeiffer begins the tale of the canal's 20th-century rebirth as a national park.

"William O. Douglas gets a lot of the credit for saving the canal area from

development," she says. In the 1950s, Douglas found the deserted towpath a favorite place to retreat from his responsibilities as a Supreme Court Justice. When plans were announced in 1954 to turn the canal bed into a scenic highway, he wrote the editors of the *Washington Post*, challenging them to walk the full length of the canal towpath with him to discover "a place not yet marred by the roar of wheels and the sound of horns."

Nearly 40 reporters and environmentalists set out on the journey. Only nine actually completed the trip, but the trek generated lots of publicity and rallied support from the Post's editors and the general public. For nearly 20 years, thousands of canal fans gathered every year for well-publicized reunion walks along the towpath, until Congress finally bowed to the pressure and created the park in 1971.

We dock a few yards from Great Falls Tavern Visitors Center. In the 19th century, this plain white building hosted canal travelers, who paid 25 cents for a night's lodging in a bunk in the men's or women's quarters on the second floor. Today, the complex offers changing displays about canal history and serves as a launching point for exploring the area. The nearby Billy Goat Trail is a rugged four-mile loop that requires hikers to scramble over rocks, but it offers beautiful vistas of Mather Gorge and the tumultuous Potomac River. For easier access to the river, take a short walk over a series of bridges leading to Olmsted Island. The island contains one of the best-preserved examples of a bedrock terrace forest and also offers a stunning view of Great Falls.

Another way to explore the area is to sign on for "Sights and Sounds of the Seasons," a popular nature walk that

leaves from the tavern four times a month. The voices of experience are your guides: 89-year-old Helen Johnston, 80-year-old Betty Bushell and 78-year-old Betty Henson have been leading the slow-paced stroll for more than 25 years. The three self-trained naturalists have outlasted several park superintendents to become legendary figures along the towpath.

Are they bored by the familiar terrain? Not at all. "The one thing that characterizes this place is change," says Johnston. Before each walk, she hands out lists of seasonal flowers and birds and shows slides of what is likely to be found along the trail. Most of the participants on the midweek jaunt I joined were retirees, who spent time catching up with each other as well as on the changes in the park's vegetation. On the Saturday excursions, young parents push kids along in strollers or keep step with their toddlers.

We're at the most popular spot of a beloved park. In fact, officials estimate that 80 percent of the park's 3 million annual visits are limited to a 15-mile stretch of the towpath that extends from Georgetown in downtown Washington, D.C., to the Great Falls Tavern Visitors Center. The more than 170 miles of canal towpath that lie beyond the Grand Central Station Visitors Center offer more subtle attractions: small towns reminiscent of "Mayberry" from the "Andy Griffith Show;" graceful examples of 19th-century engineering feats; and miles of deserted towpath.

There's no better guide to the less-traveled sections of the towpath than Thom Perry, who walks to the canal from his home in Williamsport, a small town located midway between Georgetown and Cumberland. For 30 years, he has led groups on bike trips along the towpath and now offers an annual through bike trip for the C&O Canal Association.

What is Perry's favorite spot? "The Paw Paw Tunnel," he says. "Kids love it." No surprises there. You'll need a flashlight to walk through the 3,118-foot, brick-lined edifice. Flash its beam on the limestone formations on the tunnel walls. It's fun, in a spooky kind of way, but the tunnel is also a testament to the sheer perseverance of the early canal builders. Originally priced at \$33,500, the tunnel ended up costing more than \$600,000 and taking 14 years to com-

plete.

Paw Paw Tunnel, which is located in a rural area near the Green Ridge State Forest, is also a good place to come to grips with the human cost of the canal. Pfeiffer says, "The canal company went to Europe to recruit workers and made lots of empty promises to get them to come to the United States. Often, the men didn't get paid, and when they tried to run away, the owners dragged them back." Irish workmen building the tunnel rebelled after going for months without pay. State militia stormed one of their camps, tearing down their shanties and arresting rioters. Fifteen rioters were convicted of assault with intent to kill, but were later pardoned by the governor after a public outcry.

Today, Williamsport, Perry's hometown, boasts one of the prettiest stretches of the park, where it's almost possible to forget this violent bit of canal history. Travelers along the towpath enter Williamsport over a beautiful aqueduct at the junction of Conococheague Creek and the Potomac River. A nearby visitors center features a video made from the only film footage of the canal in operation. It shows a canal boat pulled by mules, a pipe-smoking canoeist with a handlebar mustache and scenes of turn-of-the-century Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

Take a short walk from the canal and you'll be in the heart of the downtown area. There's a tale of thwarted dreams behind the town's beautiful wide streets. In the late 18th century, Williamsport residents had high hopes that their small town would be selected as the nation's capital, and they built roads that would be wide enough for any amount of pomp and ceremony. George Washington was feted by the local luminaries, but voted instead for the city farther down the Potomac.

Williamsport had its heyday after the canal opened in 1835. It had two water sources—the Potomac River and Conococheague Creek—that led to the establishment of mills and other commercial enterprises. Victor Cushwa established a prosperous company dealing in coal, cement, plaster and fertilizers in 1874 and other businesses developed around the canal trade. The Cushwa warehouse now serves as the park's visitors center.

To get a sense of Williamsport life to-

day, stop off at the American Legion Hall, which serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. A canal mural circles the dining room, where the food is plentiful, fattening, and inexpensive. For \$15, the "oyster feed" (a local institution) offers raw and steamed oysters, oyster stew and two fried oyster and ham sandwiches. Locals gather at the bar to gamble on a game called "jars." I managed to win \$20, although I couldn't quite understand the rules.

My final stop was Cumberland, the town in western Maryland where the canal ends. The failure of the canal company officials to press on to Ohio turned this frontier outpost into a 19th-century boom town. Visit Baltimore Street, the city's pedestrian mall in the downtown area, to get a sense of what Cumberland was like in its prime. At one end of the mall is a three-story building, embellished with arched windows and ornate sculptures, that once housed Gross Brothers Department store. A bank building at the corner of Baltimore and South Liberty streets features turrets, Spanish-tile roof, Romanesque arches and two carved lions.

At History House, in the residential area of the historic district, there are brochures available, including "A Self-Guided Walk into History." The house was built in 1867 for Josiah Gordon, then president of the C&O Canal Company. Today, it has nine period rooms as well as collections of costumes, rare books and medical instruments. Bank presidents, judges, a congressman and other notables had homes on this tree-lined street during the canal era.

In May 1998, Dick Pfefferkorn, executive director of the Canal Place Authority, inaugurated CanalFest-Cumberland to celebrate the history of the canal.

"Our goal was historical authenticity," he says, and begins to recite a list of the event's attractions. "We had a 19th-century civilian encampment, living history presentations of canal life, period artisans, horse-drawn trolley rides, historic exhibits, walking tours led by a canal boat captain and interpretive bike rides along the canal."

Pfefferkorn promises that the second annual CanalFest-Cumberland, scheduled for May 15-16, will be even better, and will allow visitors to encounter a legacy passed along 150 years ago.