

AMERICAN CANALS

BULLETIN OF
THE AMERICAN CANAL SOCIETY

Vol. XXIX, No. 1

Dedicated to Historic Canal Research, Preservation, and Parks

Winter 2000

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Greetings! As I sit writing this, we still have a few days before the new millennium, so that is uppermost in my mind—the American Canal Society in the 2000s! By the time you read this we'll have been in that “next thousand years” for over a month. How are we doing? Are we all working toward increasing the membership of the A.C.S.? More importantly, are we all working toward increasing the worth and fun of our society to new members and old alike?

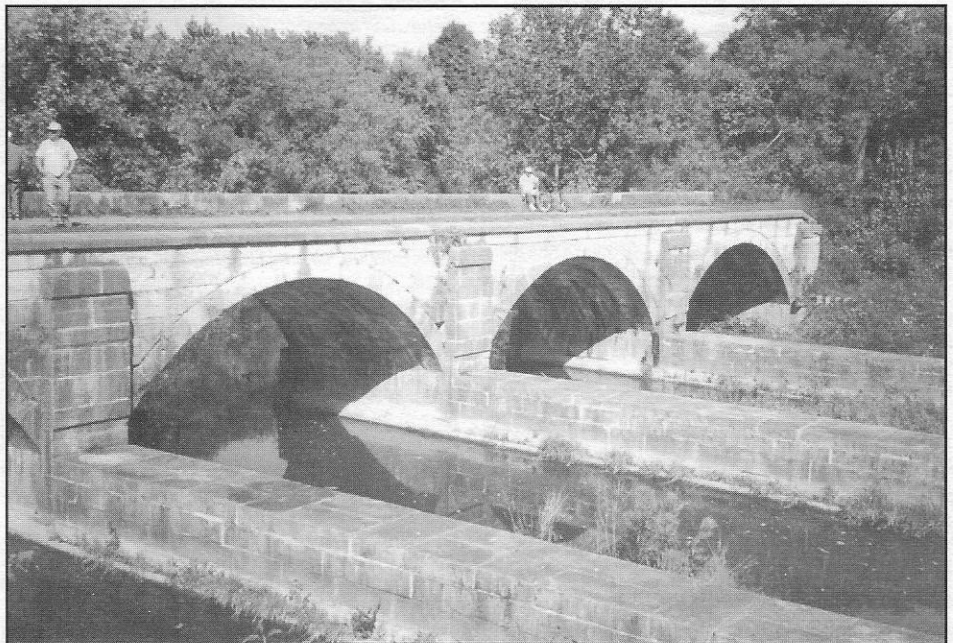
I'd like to have our members, both old and new, contact me with ideas, comments, suggestions—even criticisms—anything to help make our society better, more fun, and more useful. Until I hear your ideas, however, here are a few of my own.

Our own Bill Shank is about to “hang em up” as editor and publisher of *The Best of American Canals*. Good job, Bill – Well done! That series of publications has been a prime source of new members for us. I'd like your comments—should we see if it can be continued? If it is, I'd like to suggest that a publications committee see to its content, preparation, publication and distribution. Or does there already exist a publications setup that would like to take this project on? I'd like to hear from someone about that.

I would like to see David Ross, the editor of *American Canals*, continue to do exclusively what he does best, edit *American Canals*. He, of course, can make suggestions for inclusions into any future *Best From American Canals*, but he has enough work with his primary job.

The next World Canals Conference will be held in Rochester, New York, the week of September 10. We will probably hold at least an informal membership meeting sometime during that conference so we'd like to see as many of our members attend as can. We've just

ERIE CANAL TREASURE AT CAMILLUS



Nine Mile Creek aqueduct. The arches carried the towpath; the trough rested on the adjoining abutments. (Story on pages 8-11)

Photo by Bruce J. Russell

gotten preliminary information regarding that conference so far, but it holds every promise of being an outstanding one.

I'd like to repeat an idea I touched on in my last President's Letter and say that one of the things I would like the American Canal Society to be in the new millennium is a storehouse of canal-related historical and engineering data that can be used by other organizations and political entities (such as Canal Corridors) when they wish to restore, rebuild or refashion canal artifacts, structures and lands. I believe that, with our active committees and dedicated member-researchers, we have a good base to do that job.

Vice President David Barber is building a “no-frills” canal boat that can be constructed in sections in a basement or garage and floated in a restored bit of canal for considerably less than the cost of a historically accurate replica.

He states that, “the first thing is to get people out onto canals, as economically as possible.” I agree. Dave has already contacted Jim Kuth who is considering a “no-frills” canal boat for a possible rebuilt canal terminus in the Cleveland, Ohio area.

I would also like our membership's comments on an idea I have on initiating a “Canal Buffs Hall of Fame.” There are a number of people in our canal

American Canals welcomes Associate Editor Kate Mulligan to its staff. A professional writer and editor based in Washington, D.C., Kate has made several contributions to these pages in the past. Her presence at the helm gives assurance that the direction of *American Canals* as it moves into the 21st century will not remain exclusively a hobby of elderly white males.

American Canals

BULLETIN OF THE AMERICAN CANAL SOCIETY

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Associate Editor: **Kate Mulligan**

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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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ISSN 0740-588X

PRESIDENT'S LETTER (CONT.)

hobby who have never received the national fame they richly deserve. One such man is the late Ted Findley, co-founder and first president of the Canal Society of Ohio. Ted did a great deal to further the ideas and goals of this canal hobby of ours in Ohio and the neighboring states of Indiana and Pennsylvania. Ted died in May of 1968 and many have forgotten him. I am preparing a short biography of Ted for a future issue of *American Canals* that I hope will kick off our "Canal Buffs Hall of Fame." You are all welcome to make your own nominations by sending appropriate biographies to me.

On a personal note, I've been trying to locate sources for American canal boat models. I've seen advertisements for two British narrow boats, and would hope that models of some U.S. or Canadian prototypes exist. I would also like to locate sources (for next year, of course) of U.S. canal-motif calendars and/or Christmas cards. Any leads would be greatly appreciated.

Till next time, Headway to you!!!



CANAL CALENDAR

February 27–March 3, 2000. Elderhostel: "Northwest Alabama's Tennessee River Dams," Joe Wheeler State Resort Park near Rogersville, Alabama. Contact: Elderhostel (877) 426-8056; fax (877) 426-2166.

March 4, 2000. C.&O. Canal Association annual meeting. Clarion Hotel & Conference Center, 17 Lowe Dr., Shepherdstown WV, 1 p.m.; happy hour 4:30 p.m.; dinner 5:30 p.m. Contact: (301) 983-0825.

March 8, 2000. 3rd Ellsworth B. Shank Historical Lecture: Tom Davis on "What Are We Learning from the Excavations at Old Baltimore?" 7 p.m. at Havre de Grace (MD) Middle School Media Center. Contact: Susquehanna Museum of Havre de Grace, (410) 939-5780.

March 16, 2000. National Canal Museum Spring Lecture Series: Emory Kemp on "The Great Kanawha Navigation System," 7:30 p.m. in Two Rivers Landing Auditorium. Contact: (610) 559-6613.

March 18, 2000. 19th annual Canal History and Technology Symposium, William E. Simon Center for Economics and Business Administration, Lafayette College, Easton, PA. Contact: National Canal Museum, (610) 559-6613.

March 18-19, 2000. C.&O. Canal Association Continuing Hike Series. Park at Carderock, hike from Thompsons Boat House Saturday, from Pennyfield Lock Sunday, 10 a.m. Contact: Pat White (301) 977-5628.

March 21–April 2, 2000. Canal Society of Indiana, annual meeting and spring tour, "Passage thru Peru." HQ: Best Western Circus City Inn, 650 Hwy 31S, Peru, IN. 46970. (765) 473-8800. Contact: Bob and Carolyn Schmidt, (219) 436-8676.

March 26-31, 2000. Elderhostel: "Dams, Locks and Waterways—Building the Tennessee Tombigbee," Pickwick Landing State Resort Park near Savannah, Tennessee. Contact: Elderhostel (877) 426-8056; fax (877) 426-2166.

April 8-9, 2000. C.&O. Canal Association Continuing Hike Series. Park at Pennyfield Saturday, Whites Ferry Sunday; hike from Sycamore Landing both days. Contact: Pat White (301) 977-5628.

April 12, 2000. 4th Ellsworth B. Shank Historical Lecture: Jeff Miller on "Recollections of Conditions at Havre de Grace Just Prior to the British Attack in 1813 and the Events during the Attack," 7 p.m. at Havre de Grace (MD) Middle School Media Center. Contact: Susquehanna Museum of Havre de Grace, (410) 939-5780.

April 20, 2000. Annual Dinner Meeting, Susquehanna Museum of Havre de Grace (MD), 6 p.m. at Bayou Restaurant. Contact: (410) 939-5780.

April 20, 2000. National Canal Museum Spring Lecture Series: Capt. Bill McKelvey on "Railroads along New Jersey's Delaware and Raritan Canal," 7:30 p.m. in Two Rivers Landing Auditorium. Contact: (610) 559-6613.

April 29, 2000. Justice William O. Douglas Hike, Hancock area, details T.B.A. Contact: (301) 983-0825.

May 5-6, 2000. Pennsylvania Canal Society spring field trip: Juniata Canal. Contact: Bob Keintz, (717) 697-2283, Zip Zimmerman, (215) 993-5525, or Charles Glanville, (610) 431-0731.

May 6, 2000. Canal Society of Ohio spring tour. Ohio & Erie Canal Corridor from Clinton to Navarre. Contact: Larry Turner, 11619 Frazee Rd., Doylestown, OH. 44230-9768, ph. (330) 658-6371.

May 6-7, 2000. Re-enactment of the Attack on Havre de Grace during the War of 1812." Contact: Susquehanna Museum of Havre de Grace (MD), (410) 939-5780.

May 10, 2000. 5th Ellsworth B. Shank Historical Lecture: Ellsworth B. Shank on "The Plot to Overthrow F.D.R.—an Evaluation of the Plot Based upon Local History," 7 p.m. at Havre de Grace (MD) Middle School Media Center. Contact: Susquehanna Museum of Havre de Grace, (410) 939-5780.

(Continued on page 11)

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William H. Shank, editor and publisher.

American Canal Guides,

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Web page address:

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

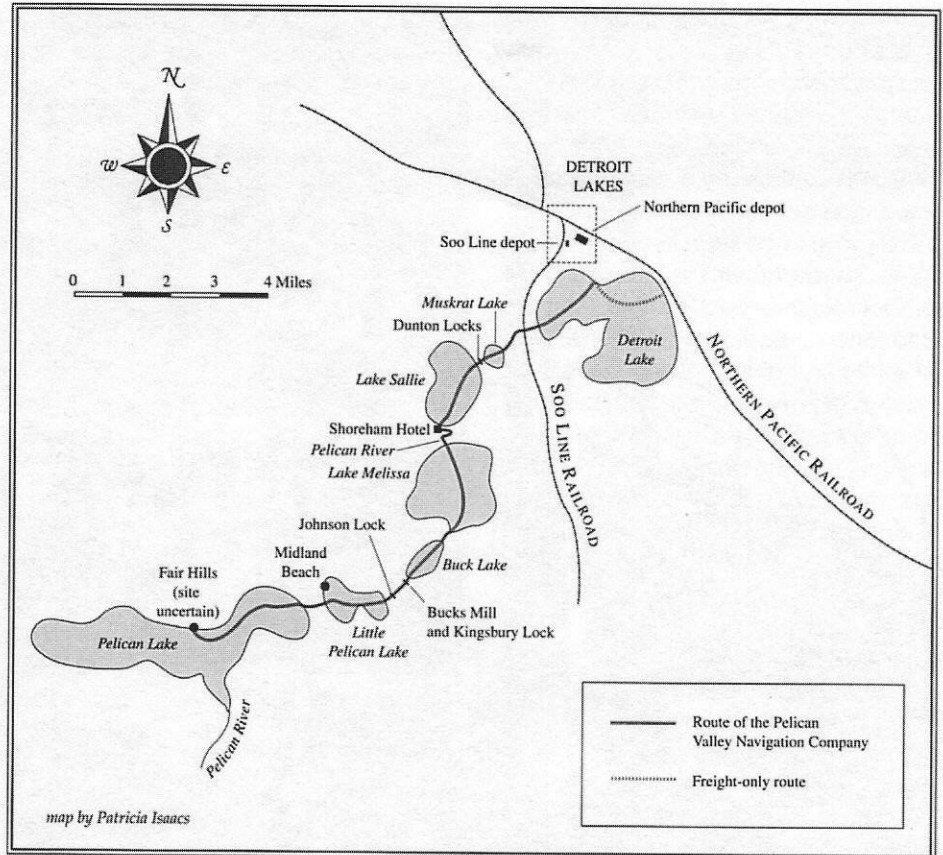
THE PELICAN VALLEY NAVIGATION COMPANY

by Aaron Isaacs

[This material first appeared in *Minnegazette* (the journal of the Minnesota Transportation Museum), Summer 1999, pp. 21-34. It is reprinted by permission of the publisher and the author. We are grateful to them and to A.C.S. member Eric L. Eaton, who called it to our attention.]

At the Clay County Historical Society in Moorhead, I chanced upon three photos of small, launch-like steamboats, one of which was clearly negotiating a lock. I had stumbled onto the Pelican River Navigation Company, which served Detroit Lake and a chain of four adjacent lakes, all connected by the Pelican River. The river being quite inadequate for navigation, and the lakes being at different water levels, the company had dredged the river and built three sets of locks to reach its destination. There was no other operation in the state quite like it. The company survived under the same owner from 1889 to 1918. Now here was a story.

A visit to the Becker County Historical Society in Detroit Lakes uncovered a wealth of information and a large number of fine photos. I'm grateful to Director Becky Olerud for her help and generosity.

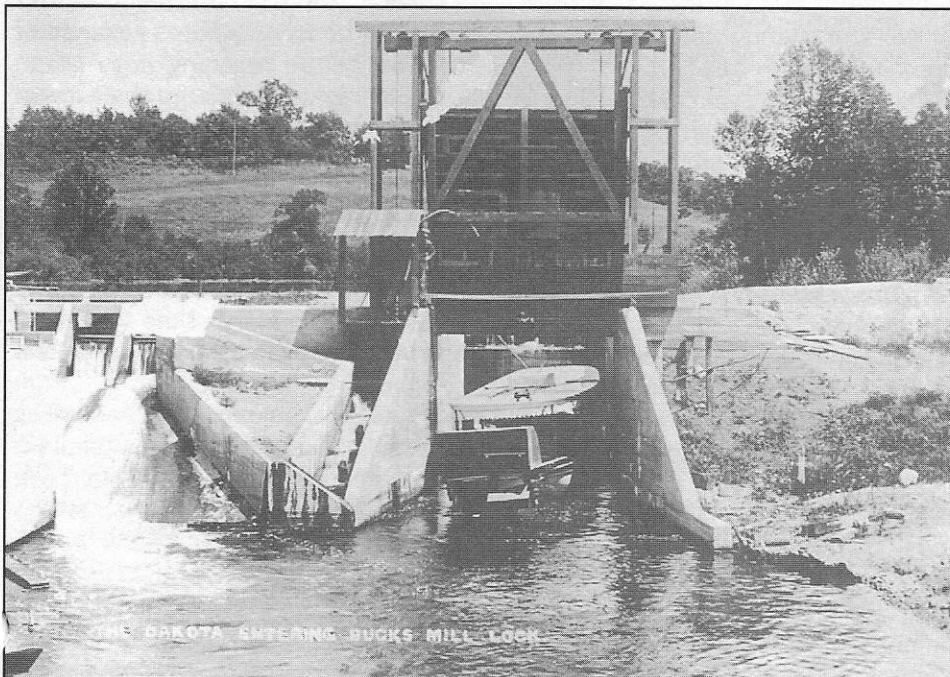


The Northern Pacific reached Detroit (as it was known then) from Duluth in 1871. However, it wasn't until the connecting line from Minneapolis to Sauk Rapids opened in 1884 that the tourist traffic took off. The Soo Line opened its line in 1903. The trains brought southerners, easterners and Twin

Citians in search of a cool place to spend the summer. The lake region around Detroit soon became a favored destination.

Flowing out of Detroit Lake to the southwest, short pieces of the Pelican River connect a string of five large and two small lakes. It was only a matter of time before someone tried to turn in into a continuous waterway. The first abortive attempt was the Detroit Lake and Pelican River Slack Water Navigation Company, incorporated in 1881. Its stated goal was to run the length of the Pelican to the Red River at Breckenridge. It remained a paper company. However its president, John K. West, was not to be deterred. In 1886 he launched a barge that ran on Detroit Lake.

In 1888 West tried again, and this time was successful. Flowing out of Detroit Lake 1.5 mile southwest of the downtown dock, the Pelican River was shallow and choked with marsh grass. West temporarily drained it by damming the Detroit Lake outlet. Once the water was gone, he dredged a one mile channel along the river west toward Lake Sallie, passing through a wide marsh called Muskrat Lake. During 1889, at the east shore of Lake Sallie, he built a dam and a lock with a 5 foot 11 inch drop. The



Dakota entering Bucks Mill Lock, headed upstream. Note mill dam at left, and locktender peering down from his control shed.

(Photo from Becker County Historical Society)



Mayflower being lowered at Dunton Locks. All locks on the waterway had guillotine gates.

(Photo from Becker County Historical Society)

location became known as Dunton Locks, for the company's financier, Frederick W. Dunton. During the steamboat era, this was the location of the Dunton Locks resort, complete with hotel, cabins and a night club.

Once into Lake Sallie, it was a quick run across almost two miles of open water to Shoreham, a small resort community located at the lake's southernmost point. The Shoreham Hotel and dining room sat right next to the boat dock. The maiden voyage by the *Lady of the Lake* took place on July 25, 1889. In 1891, the company carried 4,000 round trip passengers between Detroit Lakes and Shoreham. Although service continued beyond it, Shoreham was the company's primary destination over the years. Beyond Shoreham, boats negotiated the narrow, shallow S-curving channel of the Pelican River across a narrow isthmus into Lake Melissa, which was nine inches lower than Lake

Sallie. The channel required frequent dredging to keep it open.

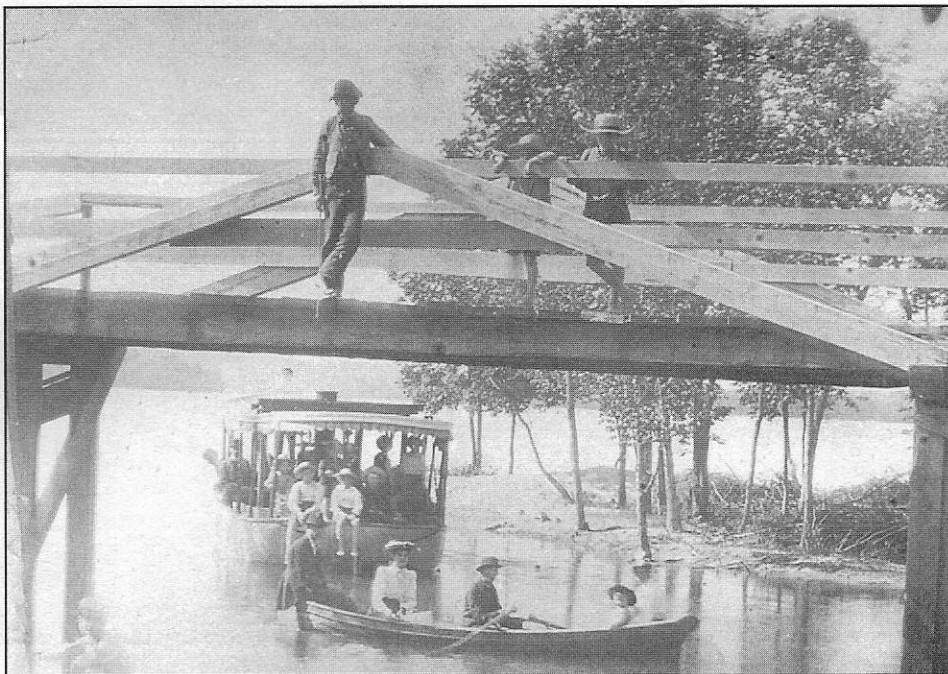
After steaming over Lake Melissa for 1.5 miles north to south, boats entered the next stretch of the Pelican River. After a short distance it widened into a mill pond, backed up for about a mile behind the dam at Bucks Mill. The company's boats first reached the flour mill in June 1891. This remained the end of navigation until 1908, when a lock with a 12-foot drop was built. The river extends for over a mile below the dam before opening into Little Pelican Lake. This stretch was also dredged, a difficult job through clay that required the use of dynamite. A half mile before reaching Little Pelican Lake, another lock was built with a three-foot drop, named Johnson Lock. The company's terminal on Little Pelican was the Pelican Inn, located on the southwest shore.

After crossing a mile of Little Pelican

Lake, the boats negotiated yet another channel before reaching Big Pelican Lake. It is the largest in the chain, measuring 5 miles east to west by 1 mile north to south. It is unclear whether the boats traveled all the way to the lakes west end, but they apparently served multiple points on the shoreline. Old maps show landings on the north shore.

Here's a summary of the total mileage from Detroit to the entrance of Pelican Lake:

Segment	Miles
On Detroit Lake	1.42
Pelican River to Lake Sallie	1.04
On Lake Sallie	1.8
Pelican River to Lake Melissa	.19
On Lake Melissa	1.7
Pelican River to Little Pelican Lake	3.03
On Little Pelican Lake	1.04
Pelican River to Big Pelican Lake	.38
On Big Pelican Lake-approx.	2.0
Total	12.6



The bridge at Shoreham, possibly in the 1890s
 (Photo by R.D. Ryerson, from the Becker County Historical Society)

The company carried both passengers and freight. Rail passengers debarked at either the NP or Soo Line depots and traveled by carriage the mile to the dock at the foot of Washington Avenue. Although the schedule changed somewhat through the years, the norm was three round trips from Detroit to Shoreham, and less service beyond. The running time to Shoreham was 60 minutes for 4.26 miles, or 4 mph.

After the 1908 extension beyond Bucks Mill to Big Pelican Lake, two boats were employed. The somewhat larger *Mayflower* shuttled between Detroit and Shoreham. The smaller *Dakota* left Detroit at 8 AM for Pelican Lake. From there it made a midday shuttle trip to Shoreham, where it met the *Mayflower's* second trip. Returning to Pelican Lake, its last trip of the day ran through to Detroit. The one way trip of about ten miles took three hours, or 3 mph.

The boats also hauled freight, primarily lumber for railroad ties and locomotive fuel. The NP established a siding on the northeast shore of Detroit Lake called West's Spur, for transloading onto rail cars. For freight, the line employed barges, which were either pushed or pulled by the steamboat. They had to be locked through separately. For at least several years they carried the U.S. Mail.

During its history the company em-

ployed a total of nine boats. All were small launches with canopies, constrained in size by the locks. They seated 35-40 passengers. Except for the *Robert Fulton* and *Dakota*, rather awkward looking stern wheelers, all were screw propelled. The *Mayflower* employed twin screws. In about 1912, the steamboats *Mayflower* and *Dakota* were replaced by the gasoline engined *Shoreham* and *Pelican*, which could be operated by a single crew member. It also appears that *Waterwitch* was converted from steam to internal combustion. Here is the boat roster, as far as we know it:

<i>Lady of the Lake</i>	1889-1902
<i>Robert Fulton</i>	1895-?
<i>Luzon</i>	1901
<i>Mayflower</i>	1902-1912?
<i>Waterwitch</i>	1908-1918
<i>Dakota</i>	1908-1912?
<i>Shoreham</i>	1912?-1918
<i>Pelican</i>	1912?-1918

Predictably, the company's fortunes declined rapidly with the coming of roads and the automobile. Because of the locks, the boats were quite slow. Today, the three hour trip to Pelican Lake can be driven in 20-30 minutes. The company ceased operations in 1918. The boats were scuttled in Muskrat Lake and reportedly are still there today. During World War II, the sunken hulls were stripped of metal for the war-

time scrap drives.

A visitor to the area today can still find traces of the steamboat line and its era. Detroit Lakes' two railroad depots are intact and in reasonable good condition. The NP depot hosts Amtrak, but in the middle of the night. Dunton Locks is the name of a well marked county park on the original site. The old wood lock was replaced in 1937 by a concrete lock and adjacent narrow spillway, constructed by the WPA. Although a text at the historical society says that the lock can be used, that appeared impossible to me. Instead, a cable powered portage railroad, perhaps 100 feet long, has been constructed to lift boats between the river and Lake Sallie.

The village of Shoreham is largely intact. The main part of the hotel is gone, but its heavily modified dining room remains, along with the church, store and other vintage buildings. The twisting stream between Lakes Sallie and Melissa looks much the same. However, the original humpbacked wooden bridge was replaced in the 1930s by a flat span over a large culvert, restricting access to small boats only. There is a lock at the entrance to Lake Melissa that was installed after the steamboats quit.

Bucks Mill has been replaced by a tavern and restaurant. The dam is still there, and below it are the deteriorated concrete walls of the lock. Finally, there is a large collection of good vintage photos at the Becker County Historical Society.

THE FARMINGTON CANAL

[Editor's note. This article is believed not to have been published previously, but it has been around for quite a while. An apparent consensus among L. K. Porritt, Alison H. Smith, Jo Dyer Wells, and Arthur W. Sweeton III, attributes it to Daniel T. Dyer, who lived between 1853 and 1924. It was presumably written sometime between those years, probably nearer the latter than the former. Thanks to Arthur Sweeton for sharing it with us.]

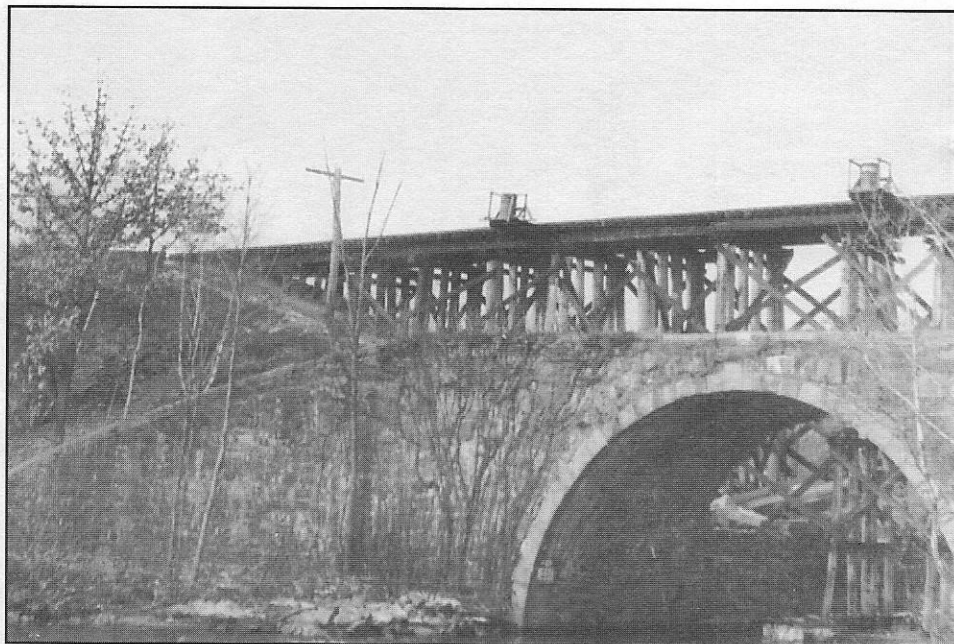
It has been my good fortune this past year to assist a civil engineer during my spare time. My work has been, for the most part, in Farmington. There doing my surveying, I came across many traces of the old Farmington Canal; and later it became my task to draw maps

showing the route of this canal, for a history of Farmington which is now being written. For this I poured over interesting old records and maps. I found the story of the canal so interesting that I am going to try to give you a few of its highlights.

This canal was part of the eighty-seven mile long canal which extended from New Haven, Connecticut to Northampton, Massachusetts, and which served the people of this section from 1828 to 1848.

The route of this canal was in a general way that now followed by the College Highway. This section contained practically the same towns then as now, though, of course, they were smaller and separated by long stretches of woodland. Still, there were many farms, and where there was water power, small factories; so it was a producing section, but there was no outlet for its products. True, there were roads connecting the various towns, but they were the roads of that day, deep in the dust in the summer, buried under snow in the winter, and nearly impassable during the spring mud. At that time, the railroads had not come to Connecticut.

Now the towns on the Connecticut River were sending their goods to the big centers by boat. So it was natural for the inland towns to wish that they also could make use of water transportation. This did seem within the realm



Farmington Canal culvert over the Salmon River
1940 photo from the files of Arthur W. Sweeton III

of the possible, as a number of canals had been built throughout the country, including the one in Connecticut at the Enfield Rapids; and the Erie Canal, in process of construction, was attracting much attention.

The businessmen of New Haven took up and helped on the idea, for they felt that a canal would bring to New Haven the inland goods needed for the New York trade already built up by the steamboat lines in Long Island Sound.

Records show that these business-

men dreamed wild dreams, not only of a main canal system that was to stretch from New Haven to Northampton and thence northward to the St. Lawrence River, but also of numerous little side canals. One of these was to go through Collinsville and New Hartford to Colebrook, there someday to connect with the Erie Canal. How it was to get over the Green Mountains was apparently too much even for a dream.

After the Erie Canal opened in 1822, these dreams began to crystalize. Representatives from seventeen interested towns met in Farmington on January 29, 1822 to discuss the building of a canal. They decided that the time had come for action and pledged \$1,000 for preliminary surveys. A company was formed, and matters progressed so rapidly that four months later the state legislature granted this company permission not only to construct and operate a canal from Long Island Sound to the Massachusetts boundary at Southwick, but also to construct a branch up the Farmington Valley through Collinsville to Colebrook. The next year the Massachusetts legislature granted a company permission to extend the canal through Massachusetts. Later, both Vermont and New Hampshire gave similar grants to extend the canal to the Canadian border. As a matter of fact, only the section from New Haven to Northampton was ever completed.

In Connecticut, two methods of fi-



Piers and abutment of the Farmington Canal aqueduct crossing the Farmington River

Photo about 1940, from the files of Arthur W. Sweeton III

nancing this great project were used. First, subscription books were sold, and then, as a further measure, The Mechanics Bank of New Haven was incorporated.

On July 4, 1825, ground was officially broken at the state line. That there was widespread enthusiasm over the project was shown by the fact that three thousand people assembled at Granby and marched in a parade two miles long to the state line, where Governor Wolcott turned over the first shovelful of earth. It is said that in so doing he broke the handle of the shovel. Perhaps this should have been taken as an omen of the fate that was to befall the canal. But it did not dampen the enthusiasm at the time.

It is hard for us, accustomed to modern methods of construction, to realize the magnitude of this undertaking. The canal was to be an eighty-seven mile long ditch, four feet deep, twenty feet wide at the bottom, and thirty-four to thirty-six feet wide at the top, with a towpath ten feet wide on one side and a berm bank on the other. The bulk of the work was done by Irish laborers, using picks, shovels, and wheelbarrows, though horses and oxen were used to pull scrapers and plows as needed.

There were two major problems which confronted the engineers. The first was how to maintain a sufficient amount of water in the canal. This was solved by leading all streams at the right level into it. The Farmington River, damned just below Unionville, was a chief source of water supply, and the feeder canal carrying the water to the main canal was planned to be part of the extension going through Collinsville to Colebrook.

The second problem was how to carry the canal over roads and across rivers and streams not of the proper nature to be led into it. This problem was solved by the construction of wooden bridges and culverts which carried the canal over the roads or small streams, and by the construction of aqueducts to carry it over large streams and rivers.

These aqueducts were real engineering achievements for those days. There were eight of them in all, six in Massachusetts and two in Connecticut. Strange as it may seem there are no plans now existing to indicate how they

were built, and the only remains of these aqueducts left are in Farmington where the canal crossed The Farmington River. Here a number of stone piers are standing, which give evidence of being constructed to support a trough five or six feet deep and at least twelve feet wide with a towpath running beside it.

Another achievement was the construction of some sixty locks. Although one now traveling over the College Highway, from New Haven to the Congamond Ponds, probably does not sense a great rise in height, there is a rise of 221 feet, and the canal made use of twenty-eight locks for this distance. The canal took full advantage of the Congamond Ponds. To get the towpath across there, floating platforms were built and anchored to the bottom. On one occasion pranksters set a platform loose thus causing a great deal of trouble.

The building of the canal stimulated other types of construction, such as the building of relay stations and taverns. As the canal became an established means of transportation, factories sprang up near by. Warehouses, wharves, and basins were built at lading and unloading points. All this brought about a building era in which business in the entire state boomed.

The official opening of the canal was, most appropriately, at Farmington where the canal had had its origin. On November 10, 1828, a boat carrying high officials left Farmington, and started on its way toward New Haven, amid great festivities—bells were rung, cannons were fired, and a band played. Within a short time the section from Farmington to Northampton was open and boats traveled the entire distance continuously. These boats, for the most part, carried freight, although a few transported passengers for a time.

The canal was quite a novelty for people who lived within riding distance of it, and families for miles around looked forward all the week to a drive to the canal of Sunday afternoon to see the boats go by. It was also a convenience for those living near it; people went to church or to town meetings by canal. The citizens of Farmington became so proud of it that they advertised their town as "The Port of Farmington," and a three-story brick inn was built to accommodate travelers. This building

is now the main building of the Porter School.

At first the success of the canal seemed assured, but the upkeep proved more expensive than had been planned for. Freshets caused much damage. Seepage was severe enough in some places to require the lining of the canal with clay, and droughts hindered, even to the extent of drying up the entire canal in the summer of 1843. Then farmers, whose land had been cut by the canal, proved unfriendly, and sometimes did malicious damage.

Other things also worked against the success of the canal. The railroad had now become firmly established in Connecticut. Those backing the canal saw the handwriting on the wall and applied to the state legislature for an amendment to their charter giving them permission to construct a railroad over the section controlled by their charter. Work was begun in January, 1847. For a while the canal and railroad operated side by side. But in 1848, the canal boats docked for the last time. Thus ended the canal system in Connecticut, after a brief career of twenty years.

At first thought, it might seem that the canal had been a failure. But it had served a very real purpose. It had opened up a nearly isolated section of the state by furnishing it with a means of transportation. It had created a market for agricultural and industrial products, which resulted in the building of factories, and the development of industries. It had also served as a bond to bring the peoples of different sections of the state into a closer union.

In these ways it had been a success.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Mr. Ross

Re Mr. Zimmerman's report on the 1999 World Canals Conference (American Canals XXVIII-4, Autumn 1999, pp. 2-6), boarding the Eurostar train in London is done from Waterloo Station, not Wellington.

Sincerely,

Rose Thompson

207 Weaver Drive

Glenshaw, Pa. 15116-1424

EDITOR'S NOTE

Actually, there doesn't seem to be a Wellington Station in London. Maybe there's a Wellington plaque at Waterloo—check it out on your next visit, Zip.

CANAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK FALL FIELD TRIP

by Bruce J. Russell - Contributing Editor

With several hundred members, the Canal Society of New York State continues to sponsor two field trips each year. The autumn trip of 1999 concentrated on remains of the Erie Canal in the Syracuse area, including the towns of Jordan and Camillus.

The events spanned three days from Friday, October 1st to Sunday the 3rd. Optional early-bird field trips were offered during the day on Friday. One trip was to Enlarged Erie Canal Lock #50, known locally as Gere's Lock since it bordered on the property of a farmer with this name. It was originally built in 1850.

Gere's Lock initially possessed a single chamber, now known as the north one. Since traffic was heavy, boats often had to wait until vessels proceeding in the opposite direction had cleared. Consequently work began in 1852 on a second chamber to eliminate the bottleneck. The job was completed in 1853.

Gere's Lock was the first on the enlarged Erie system to have one of its two stone chambers doubled in length. This occurred in 1884. The waterway was starting to feel the effects of railroad competition. One way of increasing efficiency and keeping costs down was to operate with two boats in tandem, coupled together as a unit. During the 1870s more and more operators adopted this practice. Apparently the 1884 lengthening of Gere's Lock was successful, since the majority of others on the enlarged Erie received similar treatment between 1885 and the late 1890s.

Headquarters for the C.S.N.Y.'s fall weekend was one of the Holiday Inns in the greater Syracuse area. On Friday night following the "early bird" activities, an illustrated lecture with slides was presented. Its purpose was to describe and give the history of the places to be visited on the following day's bus tour. The assembly of the materials for this fascinating presentation was the result of work done by C.S.N.Y. members David and Elizabeth Beebe, Craig Williams, and president Thomas Grasso. Additional credit goes to Craig Williams for putting together a fact-and-photo-filled guide book covering all as-



Historical marker dedicated during the C.S.N.Y. fall 1999 field trip. Above, with Sims Store in background; below, the reverse side, with Elizabeth Beebe, Thomas Grasso, and David Beebe

pects of the weekend's activities. Particularly intriguing are the before-and-after pictures of canalside scenes.

On Saturday morning, two chartered buses departed from the Holiday Inn to visit the sites listed on the program. Fortunately the weather was perfect for such a trip—blue sky and bright sunshine.

The first stop was in the small town of Baldwinsville, N.Y. Here are located the filled-in remains of the Baldwin Canal, originally dug in 1808, making it 17 years older than the Erie Canal. It provided to the town access for boats from the Sen-

eca River, which was then used for navigation and had a towing path alongside it.

When Dr. Jonas Baldwin, a prominent physician and merchant, settled in the area, it was known as McHarrie's Rift. Here the waters of the Seneca passed over a small falls or rapids. Dr. Baldwin recognized that this was an ideal source of water power to turn the wheels of mills. He therefore conceived the canal as a means of moving water to industrial sites in addition to its transportation function.

Dr. Baldwin first had to obtain authori-

zation from the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company and the New York State legislature, which gave him a 20-year exclusive right to collect tolls

The 3/4-mile waterway was six feet deep and twenty feet wide, with two locks. One had an 80 and the other an 115 foot chamber. During its first year it handled 65 vessels. As the project prospered, the town was renamed Baldwinsville. Over the years, traffic increased, and the tolls collected made the Baldwin family even richer.

In 1831 major improvements were made to the tiny Baldwin Canal. It's two locks were reconstructed and lengthened to 90 feet. However tolls were also sharply increased, and by the late 1840s there were complaints from local shippers and boat owners. Eventually the state enacted legislation authorizing purchase of the waterway from the Baldwin family. This occurred in 1850.

In the 1890s decline once more set in. Railroads now served Baldwinsville, and they captured most of the traffic that was previously handled by boats. Between 1910 and 1918 the bed of the Seneca River was transformed into the New York State Barge Canal. By then all commercial business on the Baldwin Canal had vanished. The Barge Canal Authority therefore erected a guard gate across the entrance of the smaller waterway, ending forever the possibility of navigation on it.

The Baldwin Canal survived for many

years but by the 1960s had become a dirty and smelly public nuisance, being used as an illegal dumping ground for refuse. In 1965 the decision was made by the town council to drain it. Within six months nothing remained. Several years later a plaque was erected telling the story of the Baldwin Canal.

While in Baldwinsville the group likewise visited the 19th century Mercer Mill, Barge Canal Lock #24, and a 1912 vintage power plant, constructed as part of the Barge Canal system. Lock #24 is the third busiest in the system. Finished in 1910, it was the first to open. It's also distinctive because its chamber is lined with wrought iron plates.

About 21 miles west of Syracuse along the route of the enlarged Erie Canal, is the so-called "Jordan Summit". Because of the geography of the region, the waterway had to ascend approximately 12 feet and then drop back down to the level of the Seneca River. While at the higher elevation it passed through the villages of Jordan and Camillus, N.Y. Hence the name "Jordan Summit." (The true summit is located much further east in Rome, N.Y.)

Proceeding from east to west, Lock #50, the previously mentioned Gere's Lock, brought vessels to the summit. Locks #51 and #52 brought them back down again as they continued towards Buffalo.

Our tour made a stop at the abandoned Lock #51 whose lift was 5.7 feet.

Built in 1853 as part of the enlargement of the original Erie Canal, it survives in almost perfect condition and is situated a few feet from a parallel highway. It possesses two chambers. The one which normally handled boats headed west was enlarged to double length in 1887.

Because Locks #52 and #51 never had their chambers widened from 18 to 20 feet, boats entering them experienced a tight fit. Those proceeding eastward were also moving against the current, which increased the difficulty of getting into the chamber. Initially block and tackle were utilized to help them "make a squeeze." However, this necessitated the hiring of strong men to pull on the ropes. A better method had to be devised. In the 1870s canal engineer Denison Richmond came up with a solution. A turbine was installed between the locks to supply power to the ropes moving vessels into the locks. In other words, water from the canal was harnessed to provide mechanical energy to haul boats weighing up to 480 tons into the enlarged chambers. Lock #52 received its turbine in 1880, Lock #51 in 1881.

After leaving Lock #51, the buses proceeded into the town of Jordan, N.Y. Here the attraction was the aqueduct spanning Skaneateles Creek, still in remarkably good condition. Built between 1838 and 1841, of locally quarried white limestone, it consists of four arches. Although the wooden trough which carried the canal over the creek rotted away in the years following closure, everything else appears to be intact. Its original cost was \$31,000 dollars!

Surrounding the aqueduct is a municipal park. The contours of the bank of the long-vanished canal are still evident. Old photographs of Jordan also reveal that there was once a boat-building yard here.

Jordan was the first community in New York State to develop a canal park. Over the years many others have followed this example.

Close to the Jordan Aqueduct is the site of an even older stone one which carried the first Erie Canal across Skaneateles Creek from 1825 until 1841. Nothing survives of its stonework above ground, but its foundations remain in place. For a number of years following the opening of the enlarged



The Skaneateles Creek aqueduct. The metal footbridge to the left is a modern feature of the surrounding municipal park.

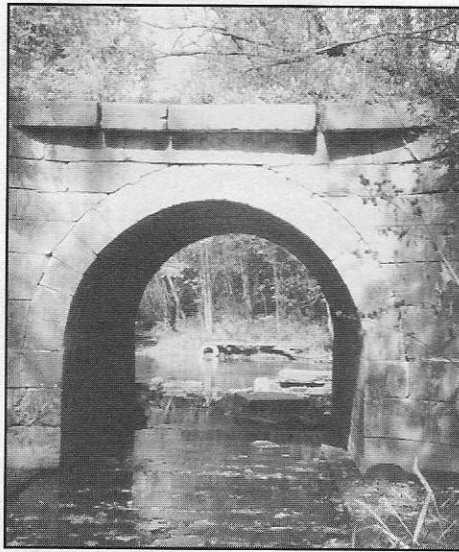
Erie in Jordan, the old canal was utilized as a feeder. Because the segment of the enlarged Erie from Jordan to Camillus constituted a summit, a steady supply of water was required to replace what was lost each time locks #50 and #51 were opened.

When the first Erie Canal was completed through Jordan it received water directly from Carpenter's Brook, a natural stream. During the 1830s, when it was decided to replace the original waterway with a wider and deeper one, the engineers tapped fast-flowing Carpenters Brook about a mile out of town. A separate, quarter mile long, nonnavigable feeder was dug for this purpose. Its remains were viewed by tour participants. The actual point where it entered the enlarged Erie is still visible.

After furnishing water to the feeder, Carpenter's Brook continued along a winding, meandering course until it passed beneath the enlarged Erie through a rounded arch, stone culvert. Although it dates from 1845, it's still in perfect condition. Similar arches built later using poured concrete are now disintegrating.

Adjacent to this culvert is a waste weir, built at the same time. This was a control device which, when opened, permitted excess water to exit the prism and flow back into Carpenter's Brook. Although the usual problem of man-made waterways was having sufficient water, there were times when, due to flooding and heavy rainfall, too much existed. This could damage the earthen banks, especially if it overflowed them. Thus waste weirs were built at strategic points which could be opened to permit surplus water to be released, often into an adjacent creek or stream. In addition, following the end of the boating season in early December, canals were drained so that routine maintenance could be performed on the locks and other structures. Waste weirs were employed for this purpose.

On our way to the Camillus Elks Club, where a buffet style "canalers lunch" was served, our tour buses ran alongside the remains of the original Erie Canal. In spite of 155 years of erosion, it was still possible to make out the sides of the prism. Following lunch the buses proceeded to Camillus Canal Park. Camillus is a suburb of Syracuse located approximately 10 miles west of



The 1845 culvert that took Carpenters Brook under the canal. The waste weir is to the left.

its downtown. This was a typical upstate New York canal village. Since it was situated on the Jordan summit segment it lacked locks. What it did possess was a canalside store and a magnificent four-arch stone aqueduct spanning Nine Mile Creek. When navigation ceased in 1918, and the water was drained from the canal for the last time, the area surrounding it was simply forgotten. Then, during the 1960s, the residents of Camillus, in common with those of many other upstate New York towns, began to rediscover their history. Gradually the idea of a canal park arose. It would incorporate a portion of the abandoned waterway as well as the aqueduct over Nine Mile Creek. This structure, like its counterpart in Jordan, remained in surprisingly good condition. Although its wooden trough had long ago rotted away, the stonework was fully intact, a testimony to the skill of its builders.

The Camillus Canal Park, sometimes referred to as Camillus Landing, was created in 1971, encompassing about 5 miles of the abandoned waterway. Initial work at the site involved clearing of the towpath so it could be used by hikers and walkers. This was accomplished during the early 1970s. Once this occurred and people began to view the remnants of the old waterway there arose an even greater desire to experience and even recreate the past. At some point the notion of putting water back into the canal was suggested. It won unanimous approval from the city fathers. An engineering survey was done, and it was deemed feasible.

Water was permitted to enter the restored canal bed in 1976, and once a depth of six to seven feet was reached it looked much as it did in its heyday when a steady procession of wooden freight boats passed by each day. Several years earlier a similar park with rewatering of the same canal had been created in Rome, about 80 miles east of Camillus. Known as Erie Canal Village, it's been extremely successful.

At the time of rewatering it was also decided to add a replica of a mid-19th century canal store. This structure would not only add authenticity to the site, but would function as a museum and visitors' center.

In the Camillus area a store run by the Sims family had served the needs of boatmen for many decades. Fortunately it had also been photographed prior to being destroyed by fire in 1963. Therefore the architects employed by Camillus Canal Park were able to design a wooden structure which approximated the appearance of its predecessor. The restored Sims store opened in 1976. Now known as the Sims Store Museum, it's been expanded in order to provide additional space for maps and other exhibits.

Camillus's Erie Canal Park was an immediate success. Eventually it was decided to offer actual rides on the waterway. Initially a battery powered, pontoon type craft was acquired which could carry about 15 people. Departing from the wharf directly in front of the museum, it traveled west for about two miles to the dam. Due to the popularity of this trip, a second vessel was later purchased. During the 1990s a third boat arrived on the scene.

The C.S. of N.Y. has, for the past several years, erected historic markers at various locations along the canal network. This year one was placed in front of the Sims Store Museum. Its topic is the aqueduct spanning Nine Mile Creek.

Present at the unveiling ceremony were Thomas Grasso, president of the C.S. of N.Y., Dr. David Beebe and his wife Elizabeth, long-time members of the society and responsible for much of what had been accomplished at Camillus Erie Canal Park, and Mary Anne Coogan, the town supervisor. She praised the organization and its dedicated members who have done so much to promote New York's canal heri-

tage. She noted that prior to 1970 the area now comprising the canal park was practically a refuse pit. Her talk touched on future plans for the park which involve a complete restoration of the Nine Mile Creek Aqueduct so that boats can once again pass over it. They will then continue westward for another mile along a segment of the prism which will be rewatered. A round of applause was given at the conclusion of her speech.

Restoration of the Nine Mile Creek aqueduct is the major goal of the Camillus Canal Society, and especially of Dr. Beebe and his wife, who are spearheading the effort. The estimated price tag is about a half million dollars. Much of this has already been raised or pledged. Federal government sources have agreed to spend approximately \$300,000. Another \$100,000 has been obtained locally.

Unfortunately a controversy is now delaying the actual start of construction. What needs to be done is to replace the trough which carried the water of the canal over the aqueduct's support piers. The question regards what materials to use. Historic preservationists believe that only wooden timbers will do since they were used from 1842 until 1918. Others want to be more practical and reconstruct the trough with steel I beams and modern reinforced concrete. Both positions have merit and eventually a decision will be rendered.

The final stop on the day's tour was the barge canal harbor and terminal complex in Syracuse. Its original purpose was to handle freight arriving and departing via the barge canal which had replaced the enlarged Erie in 1918. However very little freight was ever handled at the facility. In 1924 a report was issued which stated that the freight terminals built at various locations along the N.Y. State Barge Canal were handling minuscule amounts of cargo and ought not to be kept in operation. Gradually they were shut down, and the buildings put to other uses.

In a few years everything remaining of the complex is supposed to be relocated elsewhere on the barge canal system, and the land redeveloped with new housing and shopping malls. However it's possible that a marina may be included for use by pleasure craft. The N.Y. State Barge Canal no longer handles commercial vessels.

Later in the evening, following a banquet at the Holiday Inn, John Zmarthie, chief engineer of the barge canal's Syracuse Division, gave an informative talk about his career on the waterway. He stressed the fact that until 1992, when the waterway was reorganized as a separate corporation within the New York State Thruway Authority, it was cash starved. Its budget was a mere 5 million dollars per year which was inadequate to catch up on deferred maintenance plus make long overdue improvements. Now the annual budget is 30 million dollars and a great deal is being accomplished. He enumerated what's happened so far, and what can be expected in the early years of the 21st century. A C.S. of N.Y. member himself, Mr. Zmarthie is proud of the fact that he is helping to make canals an important part of the Empire State's future.

The fall field trip of the New York State Canal Society, which also included a boat ride on the Barge Canal on Sunday, October 3, was very successful and included a wide range of activities. Progress is certainly being made in keeping alive the spirit of the old 19th century towpath canals, and there is no longer any danger that their 20th successor will be shut down.



The excursion boat *Ontario* at Camillus Canal Park, designed after steamboats used on the canal a century ago.

Material submitted to AMERICAN CANALS for publication should be double-spaced and on one side of the paper only.

(CANAL CALENDAR CON'T)

May 12-14, 2000. Virginia Canals & Navigations Society, annual meeting, Richmond. Contact: Wyn Price, (804) 254-2725.

May 20-21, 2000. Canal Fest, Cumberland MD. Contact: Mary Ann Moen (301) 759-3197.

May 20-21, 2000. C.&O. Canal Association Continuing Hike Series. Park at Whites Ferry Saturday, Brunswick Sunday; hike from Noland's Ferry 10 a.m. both days. Contact: Pat White (301) 977-5628.

May 23-26, 2000. Conference on River Lot restoration and development and tour of region starting from Toulouse. About £425. Contact: I.W.I., 20 Quayside, Bridgewater, Somerset TA6 3TA, England.

June 10-11, 2000. C.&O. Canal Association Continuing Hike Series. Park at Dargan Bend, hike from Brunswick Saturday, from Shepherdstown Sunday, 10 a.m. Contact: Pat White (301) 977-5628.

June 17, 2000. C.&O. Canal Association canoe trip from Violette's Lock to Great Falls. Contact: Carl Linden (301) 229-2398 or Ken Rollins (804) 448-2934.

June 24, 2000. Evening of Wine and Jazz, with auction, Susquehanna Museum of Havre de Grace (MD), \$25 admission. Contact: (410) 939-5780.

August 26-27, 2000. Williamsport C.&O. Canal Days. Contact: Tom and Linda Perry (301) 223-7010.

September 9, 2000. Annual General Meeting, Inland Waterways International, Rochester N.Y. Contact: I.W.I., 20 Quayside, Bridgewater, Somerset TA6 3TA, England.

September 9-10, 2000. C.&O. Canal Association Continuing Hike Series. Park at Shepherdstown Saturday, Dam 4 picnic area Sunday; hike from Taylors Landing 10 a.m. both days. Contact Pat White (301) 977-5628.

September 9-10, 2000. Hancock (MD) Canal Days/ Canal Apple Days. Contact: John Popenoe (301) 678-6379.

September 10-15, 2000. World Canals Conference, Rochester N.Y. Contact: P.O. Box 227, East Rochester N.Y. 14445. email: triversorg@acninc.net.

September 16, 2000. Lock House Days and Senior Citizens' Festival, Susquehanna Museum at Havre de Grace, Erie and Conestogo Sts., 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Contact: (410) 939-9928 or (410) 939-5780.

September 16-17, 2000. C.&O. Canal Association day trip canoe weekend on the Monocacy River. Saturday: Rte. 40 to St. Rte. 80. Sunday: St. Rte. 80 to Monocacy Aqueduct. Contact: Carl Linden (301) 229-2398 or Ken Rollins (804) 448-2934.

September 30-October 8, 2000. Inland Waterways International annual tour, a cruise on the Rhône from Lyon to Chalon-sur-Saône, with side trips. About £450. Contact: I.W.I., 20 Quayside, Bridgewater, Somerset TA6 3TA, England.

October 9-14, 2000. C.&O. Canal Association through bike trip, Georgetown to Cumberland. Contact: Tom Perry (301) 223-7010.

October 14-15, 2000. C.&O. Canal Association annual overnight Paw Paw Bend canoe trip. Contact: Carl Linden (301) 229-2398 or Ken Rollins (804) 448-2934.

October 28, 2000. C.&O. Canal Association Annual Heritage Hike, near Shepherdstown, details T.B.A. Contact: (301) 983-0825.

November 11, 2000. C.&O. Canal Association Continuing Hike Series. Park at Williamsport Visitor Center Saturday, 4 Locks Sunday; hike from Williamsport 10 a.m. both days. Contact: Pat White (301) 977-5628.

December 2, 2000. C.&O. Canal Association Annual Frostbite Hike. Contact: Ken Rollins (804) 448-2934.

December 9-10, 2000. Christmas Boutique, Lock House, Susquehanna Museum at Havre de Grace (MD). Contact: (410) 939-5780.

(Continued on page 12)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir:

I am researching a Canal Engineer named James Geddes. I recently acquired about 16 letters, a pamphlet and other associated letters related to Mr. James Geddes of Onandaga N.Y. and in particular several written from Geddes N.Y. These letters are of a personal nature, and written to his nephew and family settling in the Michigan Territory. One of the items presented to his brother Robert, is a pamphlet relative to a Canal study in Ohio. Published in 1823. One letter in 1794 discusses the Salt Industry in Onandaga N.Y. and also James Geddes at this time. If at all pos-

sible, I would like to know or get copies on anything you may have relative to James Geddes.

Sincerely,

Stuart A. Goldman
5 Chapelgate Road
Canton, MA 02021
(781) 828-5353

Dear David:

I note your comment in the latest *American Canals* concerning abbreviations and videos. While it may be obscure, it is important for anyone who is attracted by the large number of British canal videos.

The important point is that in the

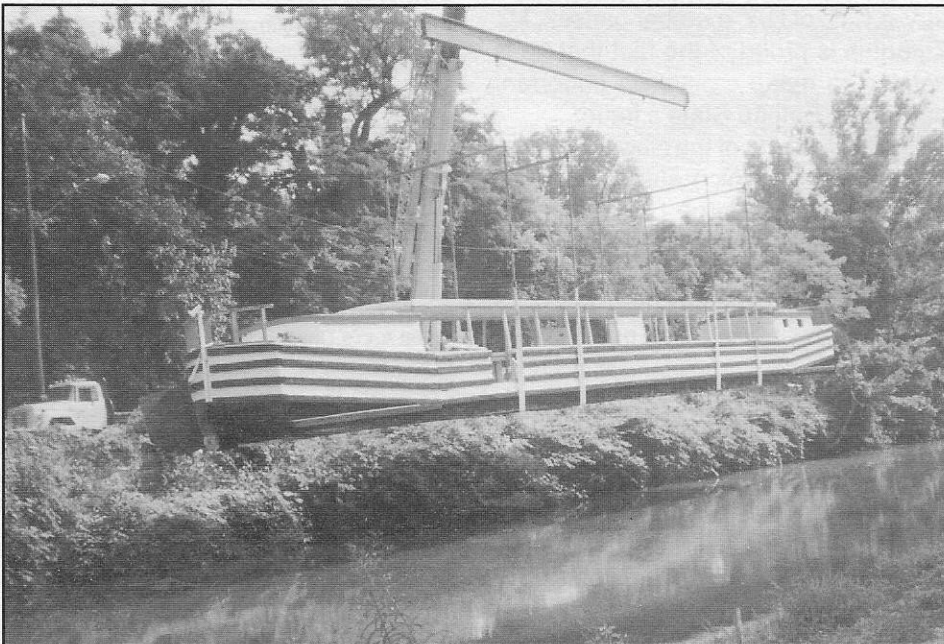
world, there are two standards used for videos and a tape made for one will not work in the other. In the US and Japan, the standard is set by the National Television Standards Committee (N.T.S.C.). In Europe, Hong Kong, and the Middle East, the standard is P.A.L. (I don't know what it stands for.)

So if you aren't careful when you order a video from Europe, it won't play in a US video player.

Some British companies such as VideoActive, produce tapes in both formats. This would also apply to boat hire companies targeting the US market. But, one has to ask and specify N.T.S.C. format when placing an order.

Sincerely,

Dave Barber
16 Ballou Road
Hopedale, MA 01747-1833



THE GEORGETOWN COMES HOME

by David M. Johnson

The C&O Canal National Historical Park's canalboat *Georgetown* returned to its regular berth at Foundry Mall in Georgetown, D.C., on July 24th, following a major rebuilding at Washburn's Boatyard in Solomons, Maryland. The boat had been out of service since it was severely damaged by juvenile arsonists in September 1998.

The 24-ton boat was brought by truck from the yard to a location on Canal Road just upstream from the intersection with Foxhall Road. (Canal Road was closed that day for repairs by the D.C. highway department, so the launching did not interfere with traffic.) A heavy crane lifted the boat from the trailer and gently lowered it into the canal. The boat was then pulled by its mules back to its mooring between locks 3 and 4.

The *Georgetown* was originally donated to the park about twenty years ago by the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation,

to replace the *Canal Clipper* after that boat was moved to Great Falls. The Cafritz Foundation and the National Park Foundation assisted with contracting and funding the repairs through an insurance policy they maintained on the boat. As rebuilt, it more closely resembles a historic C&O canalboat. It is painted white with red trim on the cabins and blue bumper boards on the hull. The after cabin has been furnished to replicate the captain's living quarters.

The *Georgetown* resumed its public trip schedule about a week after the launch. One-hour mule-drawn cruises depart from the Georgetown Visitors Center. For ride information, please call (202) 653-5190. The park's other boat, *Canal Clipper*, continues to operate at Great Falls Tavern. Call (301) 299-3613 for information. The operating season for both boats is April through October.

CANALS AND WATERWAYS IN BRITISH CRIME FICTION: A FURTHER FOOTNOTE

In my previous writings on this subject for *American Canals* [Vols. XXVII, No. 3, pp. 3-4 and XXVIII, No. 1, p. 10] I omitted mention of the work of Margery Allingham (1904-66), the creator of Albert Campion. References to transportation in her work are many and varied, especially to railways and aviation; nor does she forget canals, specifically London's Regent's [Grand Union] Canal, which receives brief mentions in *More Work For The Undertaker* (Heinemann, 1948) and *Hide My Eyes* (Chatto & Windus, 1958), and a considerably longer one in *Death of a Ghost* (Heinemann, 1934), which is largely set adjacent to the canal basin, just north of Paddington railway station, known as Little Venice.

Philip L. Scowcroft
8 Rowan Mount
Doncaster
S. Yorks DN2 5PJ
England

(Canal Calendar concluded from page 11)

December 31, 2000. C.&O. Canal Association New Years Eve hike, location T.B.A. Contact: (301) 983-0825.

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 editors' desk no later than April 1st, 2000.