

AMERICAN CANALS

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THE AMERICAN CANAL SOCIETY

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Dedicated to Historic Canal Research, Preservation, and Parks

Spring 2003

From the President

By David G. Barber

One of the best preserved of America's towpath canals is the Delaware Division Canal running north from tidewater at Bristol, PA, along the west side of the Delaware River, to the Lehigh River at South Easton, PA. The canal closed to navigation in 1931 at the onset of the great depression.

Immediately after its close, the southern basin at Bristol was seen as wasted space and was filled in by the Corps of Engineers, encouraged by the leaders of Bristol, with dredging spoil from the Delaware River, and made into a parking lot. In the early 1950s, a wide section just north of the basin was filled in by the local school district without permission and a school was built on it. A little farther north and also in the early 1950s, a siphon culvert and a parking lot for a new shopping center replaced a section of the canal. Farther north, just after World War II, a railroad branch line and a highway were built across the canal (a state park) to provide access to the then new Fairless steel works. These access ways were built without bridges, despite bridges having been built over the adjacent railroad mainline and a highway. Also, some piers and the toe of the abutment fill of the new US Route 1 bridge at Morrisville were placed in the prism. There are reports that these obstructions were



The Basin at Market Harborough on the Grand Union Canal, Leicester Section. Find out more about Dave and Audrey Barber's trip in the story beginning on page 5. Photo by David Barber.

done intentionally as steps towards the eventual filling in of the canal.

In New Hope, PA, a pipe culvert in Lock 10 and a fill over it replaced a dangerous bridge. That solved the traffic problem at minimum cost. Several local roads north and south of Morrisville also cross the canal on culverts at towpath height.

Today, the steel works is closed and the shopping center has been torn down and is being redeveloped. Now, anyone who would so abuse this "navigable waterway" without a bunch of "mother may I's", is hauled into court by the Corps of Engineers. Despite much agitation and concern about water flowing in the entire canal, however, the waterway is still being thought about as a series of small sections

rather than as a total system. As long as we talk just about hiking trails and picnic areas, the sectional view will continue. Ironically, the southern end of the canal is now included in three planned regional hiking trails.

Boating doesn't work with the segmental approach. If we start making the goal being able to travel this navigation canal by boat from tidewater to South Easton, the discussion changes. Boating is concerned about water in the entire distance. Boating involves a clear channel, working locks, and bridges with sufficient clearance. With boating, we have to defend the entire system. Boating also provides the numbers and resources to defend the resource. The Boat Owners

(continued on page sixteen)

American Canals

BULLETIN OF THE
AMERICAN CANAL SOCIETY

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

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HOW THE CANALS LOOKED — BEFORE WATER WAS LET INTO THEM

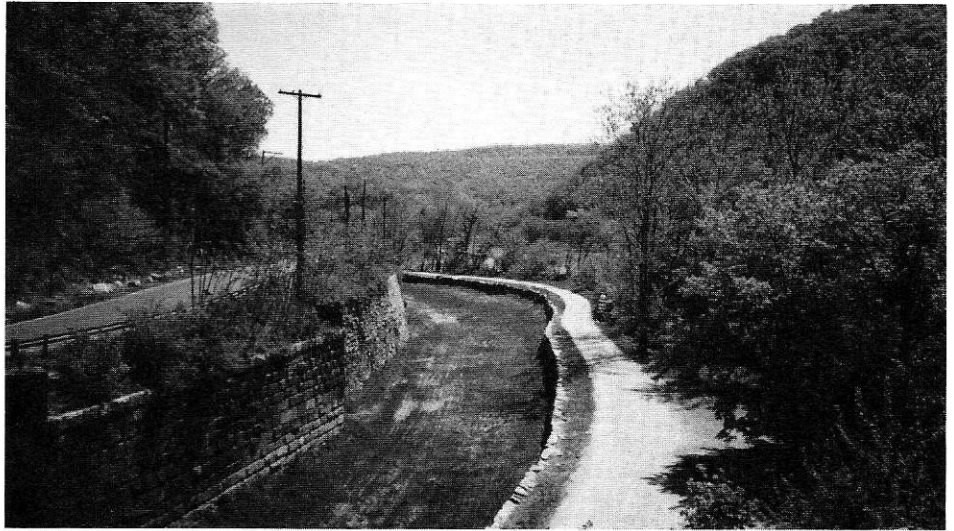
by Bruce J. Russell

America's towpath canals were constructed from the 1790s to the late 1840s. These were the years prior to the development of silver halide photography, a process that is still in use today, but one that will soon be eclipsed by digital technology. As a result, no pictorial record exists showing what the canals looked like before water was permitted to enter them, an event often attended with great ceremony.

There are no photos showing horse and mule teams drawing wagons filled with heavy stones for locks and dams. There are no pictures showing gangs of laborers, often mainly recent immigrants or farmers supplementing their incomes, removing tons of earth to excavate a prism 4-5 feet deep, or using a gigantic stump puller to extract the remains of felled trees.

Instead, all we possess are written reports describing everything from the initial surveys to the damming of streams to create reservoirs to supply the summit levels. These accounts are fascinating reading. Unfortunately, the old maxim that "a picture is worth a thousand words" was as true in the 1830s as it is today. Without question, the building of a canal attracted a tremendous amount of interest and many people came out to watch.

Several years ago the 184.5-mile long Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, running from Washington, D.C. to Cumberland, Maryland, suffered severe damage



C&O Canal in Maryland, opposite Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. Reconstruction is now 90% complete. Photo by Bruce Russell, April 2001.

from flooding during a hurricane. Several sections that had contained water were washed away. As a result, it was no longer possible for canoeists to make short trips. For a brief period, the National Park Service, which owns the waterway, was undecided as to whether it would underwrite the substantial expense of repairing the damage. Ultimately, the park service agreed to spend the money, and for the past few years, restoration has been taking place at several locations. This has often meant retrieving the washed away stones and repositioning them.

At a point in Maryland directly opposite historic Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, the C&O Canal has undergone major repairs. As of April 2001, the work was nearly done. Since no water had as yet been permitted to flow into the canal prism, it looked much as it must have in the mid to late 1840s, before regular navigation began.

The C&O Canal was opened in stages and was the last major towpath canal built in the United States. Digging began in Wash-

ington, and as each segment was finished, water was let in and boats began carrying varied cargoes.

From time to time, the westward progression of the work was halted, mainly due to lack of money. Ironically, when the C&O Canal was finally completed to Cumberland in 1850, the parallel Baltimore & Ohio Railroad had arrived several years before.

During the 19th century, the canal survived mainly as a coal hauler, generating a modest profit and providing jobs for locktenders and boatmen.

During the Civil War the canal suffered damage that was quickly repaired. Armies from Virginia crossed the C&O twice—on the way to Antietam in 1862 and to Gettysburg in 1863.

By 1900 the waterway was in serious decline with over half of its boats idle due to lack of business. Railroad competition finally administered the coup de grace in 1924. An effort to convert the abandoned C&O into a highway parallel to the Potomac River was thwarted in the 1950s and today it has been preserved as a linear park. Two sections are watered



C&O Canal, opposite Harpers Ferry. Restoration of the towpath and the retaining wall is finished. All that's missing is the 4-5 feet of water. Photo by Bruce Russell, April 2001.

and offer boat rides to the public. One is in the Georgetown section of Washington and the other is in Great Falls, Maryland. Efforts are underway to establish rides in other areas.

In the two accompanying photographs, both taken across the river from Harpers Ferry, the waterway appears much as it must have during the final weeks before its opening. On one side, the towpath is clearly visible. On the opposite side one can see retaining walls constructed of dressed and undressed stone. Wherever possible, these stones were obtained from adjacent rock outcroppings. The area in and around Harpers Ferry was once filled with stone quarries; furthermore, the completed C&O Canal was used to transport the stones for the construction of many of the capital's 19th century public buildings, such as the Smithsonian Institution and the U.S. Treasury.

From these photographs, one can also see the shallow depth of the canal. Many people assumed that canals were deeper than they actually were. In reality, an average-size man could stand with his feet on the bottom and his head

and shoulders above the surface. Nevertheless, many drownings occurred in part because in the 19th century, not everyone knew how to swim. In some cases, however, those who drowned in canals were drunk when they fell in.

Fully loaded canalboats cleared the bottom by inches, and scraping occurred frequently. During droughts, when water levels were low, navigation for fully loaded vessels was not possible. Consequently many towpath canals had a system of "feeder channels" that led from artificial reservoirs where water was stored until late summer when it was needed. The C&O Canal, on the other hand, paralleled the Potomac River for its entire distance and obtained water from the river at various locations. Apparently there was always enough to ensure a constant depth throughout the entire boating season.

A trip to Harpers Ferry is definitely rewarding for the canal enthusiast. Seeing the C&O Canal under reconstruction is almost like watching it being built almost two centuries ago. On weekdays, one can observe the stone masons go-

ing about their tasks, using chisels and hammers to shape the rocks into components of walls and lock chambers.

Also at Harpers Ferry one can see the remains of the Shenandoah Canal; it paralleled its namesake river here, near its confluence with the Potomac. This waterway was primarily used for power rather than for navigation. Several mills and factories along this canal used a system of waterwheels, belts, and shafts. Most of these structures were destroyed during the Civil War when Harpers Ferry changed hands no less than six times. Nevertheless, their ruins are of interest to industrial archeologists and canal aficionados alike. Civil War buffs will also find much to capture their imaginations in Harpers Ferry.

EARL LEIBY, LED RESTORATION OF THE UNION CANAL TUNNEL

[excerpted from the Lebanon (PA)
Daily News]

Lebanon County has lost one of its great community servants, and a piece of our culture has gone with him.

Earl P. Leiby, 76, died on Wednesday, March 5, at the Lebanon Veterans Administration Medical Center, where he had been for about a month.

The operator of a local farming business, Earl influenced many lives during his 60 years of volunteer service to the Boy Scouts and the Lebanon County Historical Society; he was a

(continued on page thirteen)

The Leicester Ring

by David G. Barber

In contrast to our American towpath canals, which were out of service by the early 1930s, England's system of narrow canals survived as commercial waterways until after World War II. Then a determined group of volunteers prevented the elimination of the system leading to the present, extensive network of recreational waterways. As the various canals connect at numerous points, it is possible to cruise several different rings. All you need to do is rent a boat and you're off. Previously, we had traveled the Warwickshire Ring and in 2001 we cruised the Avon Ring. So in July of 2002 my wife and I decided to travel the less cruised Leicester Ring.

After several days touring in London, we traveled by rail to Rugby where a short taxi ride brought us to Rugby Basin. Departing London early to avoid the risk of any delay en route, we naturally had none and arrived early, just after lunchtime. Since we were early, the boat was still being serviced, so we parked our luggage next to a shady picnic table at the base and read for a while.

Soon, our boat was ready for us and we embarked on *Harold*, spending some time unpacking and stowing our suitcases. In a short while, one of the staff gave us our orientation and after having a few minor deficiencies corrected, we were off.

Rugby Basin is at the end of an arm of the Oxford Canal, which had originally been the mainline before the route was straightened in the 1830s improvements. The arm itself is narrow and has pri-



Overview showing the large number of vessels moored in the Braunston Basin on the Grand Union Canal. Photo by David Barber.

vate moorings along the towpath. So we began our journey out to the mainline at very slow speed. At the junction, we had to wait for several passing boats before crossing into the winding hole to get enough space to make the 270-degree turn to go towards Braunston.

After turning, we proceeded across two aqueducts, one over a narrow road and one over the River Avon, to another junction between the original and newer routes of the canal. Here we tied up for the night, as the mooring is very close to a large supermarket where we could stock up for the trip ahead. When we visited this location several years ago on the Warwickshire Ring, we had to use mooring stakes. Now, there are mooring rings along the towpath. Several other boats were also tied up.

The following morning, we began the trip in earnest, cruising through the Rugby area and then climbing the three steps at Hillmorton Double Locks. Though the city is all around, the canal seems quite remote. After the locks, we continued along

the Oxford Canal, arriving at Braunston Turn near mid-day.

Braunston claims to be the heart of the canal system and there are many boats all about and a large marina. Continuing straight ahead at the junction, we entered the Grand Union Canal and new territory for us. We tied up just beyond the marina entrance for lunch and the visited the marina shop and the canal shop at the lower lock. Here also, I pick up a boat horn that I had arranged to be delivered here for me through email messages.

Continuing on, we motored slowly past a long line of moored boats and entered the lower of five wide locks without any waiting. As we were alone in the wide lock, and there was no down traffic, we waited for a second boat to catch up to us before locking up the flight. I had originally planned to stop for the day at the top of the flight, but since it was still early afternoon, we continued on through the 2,042-yard-long Braunston Tunnel. Long tunnels such as this one are always disorientating,



Upper Five Foxton Locks on the Grand Union Canal, Leicester Section. Photo by David Barber.

especially when passing boats going the other way. But eventually, we emerged and reached Norton Junction, where we turned left and tied up for the night. At this junction, the Grand Union mainline continues straight ahead toward London, while we followed the Leicester Line northward. The canal from Norton Junction to the base of the Foxton Locks was built as the Grand Union Canal and has narrow locks.

The next morning began rainy as we motored to the base of the Watford Locks where we found a notice that they were closed for repairs until 1 PM. After taking on water, we learned that we could lock up through the lower locks and the four staircase locks as the work was on the upper most lock. We arrived at the basin between the staircase and the upper lock as the work crew was finishing work on the upper paddles. So we got to see what they had done, plus an entirely empty lock chamber and the removal of the stop planks to refill the lock. We even got to be used as the test boat for the first lockage.

Once we were able to continue, we were on the canal's summit level, eventually passing through

the 1,528-yard-long Chirk Tunnel. A few hours later, we passed over a small "aqueduct" which was actually a culvert and turned right onto the Welford Arm. We followed this very rural branch into the town, passing up a final lock of small lift to reach the highest elevation of the trip. The end of the arm was surprisingly busy with a British Waterways office and a large marina. There was also an excellent pub. After supper, we walked into the village.

The following morning began with turning and watering the boat

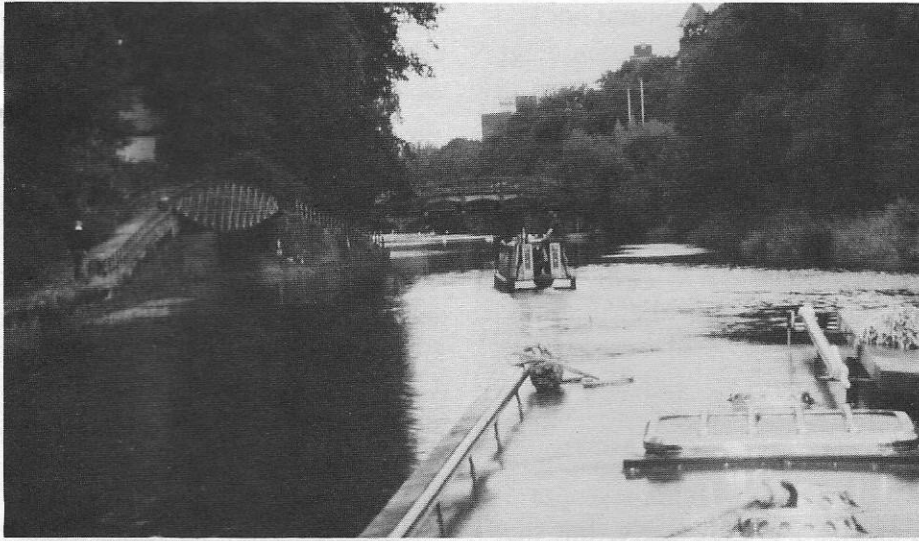
and then cruising back down the arm to the main canal. Here we turned north again, and soon passed through 1,170-yard Husbands Bosworth Tunnel. The morning was not the best of the trip, as it rained most of the time. But properly rain-suited up, we continued on, reaching the top of Foxton Locks at lunchtime.

Here, I managed to annoy the lockkeeper by tying up for lunch instead of entering the lock. The signs said to get permission before entering the lock. As I didn't contact him, I assumed that he would realize that I didn't wish to lock down at that time. There was no way I was going to operate ten locks without lunch. But, apparently he needed a boat to lock down, as there had been little down traffic that morning. So he expressed displeasure when I did ask for permission to lock down an hour later. But after an apology, we proceeded down the flight of ten narrow locks (in two flights of five each) which is quite spectacular (and a lot of work).

At the base of the locks, we



The Camden Locks on the Regents Canal in London. Photo by David Barber.



Boating on the River Soar at Leicester. Grand Union Canal, Leicester Section. Photo by David Barber.

stopped to visit the canal shop and then proceed along the Market Harborough Arm to the town of that name. This arm was originally built as the mainline of the canal, but the canal company ran out of money upon reaching Market Harborough. The line up Foxton Locks to Norton Junction was built instead and this part of the canal became a branch. On the way, we found it to have lots of floating weeds and to be very curvy. The curves were very numerous near the end of this section.

Entering the town, the canal becomes clear and very neat, ending in a large basin with many moored rental boats. Turning in the basin proved difficult as I tried to be gentle and was rewarded by being blown into the moored boats. A second try with more power produced better results. We then moored just outside the basin and walked into town to visit a bank machine. After viewing some of the local pubs, we decided that the Italian restaurant at the basin was our best bet for supper. The basin is interesting as it is higher than the town, and the area

around it has been redeveloped with new apartments and small offices. The basin itself was the site of the first National Festival of the Inland Waterways Assn.

The next morning, we returned to Foxton where we watered up and continued on through the 881-yard Saddington Tunnel to Kibworth Top Lock for lunch. On the Market Harborough Arm, just before the junction at Foxton, is Bridge 4, a manual swing bridge. When we reached it, the crew of another boat going the other way had just opened it. They were nice enough to hold it open for us and a third boat.

Kibworth Top Lock was the first wide lock after Foxton, a standard that would continue to beyond Trent Junction. At Market Harborough, we had agreed with the crew of another boat to pair up along this stretch. We had passed them at Foxton, but they caught up to us just as we were finishing lunch. So we began to attack locks with vigor and made good time. In the late afternoon, we reached Kilby Bridge and stopped there for the

night, as there was a pub at hand.

Since we had first met up with the other boat at Watford, they had been giving us reports of flooding on the Soar around Leicester. This was a potential problem, as high water would close the river to navigation. We had also been warned about not spending time in Leicester due to vandalism. So together with the other boat, we got an early start to the day and passed down the river through Leicester while eating lunch. The river had also dropped enough so as not to prevent our passage. The vandal problem is sad as Leicester has a very nice riverfront with many mooring rings, but no boats. With two boats working as a team and no stops, we reached Mountsorrel that afternoon, putting us $\frac{3}{4}$ of a day ahead of plan.

(This story will be concluded in the summer issue.)

Oklahoma City's Bricktown Canal Reopens

Perhaps one of the most unexpected places to find a canal boat ride is Oklahoma City! In one of the most extensive downtown revitalization projects in the country, the city has re-established a mile-long section of the Bricktown Canal. The waterway and its reconstructed "river walk" are part of a development that includes a new minor league ballpark, a library, and a 20,000-seat sports arena. Water taxis take visitors under the highway to a waterfall-and-forested park area. The canal, which opened in July 1999, features many canal-side restaurants and public art projects.

CANAL BUFFS HALL OF FAME

William J. "Captain Bill"
McKelvey Jr.

by S. David Phraner

In what was to be the first of many feature articles about the exploits and achievements of Bill McKelvey, the May 8, 1952, issue of the Bloomfield (NJ) *Independent Press* said of him, "He is a good example of interest, ingenuity..... and persistence." At the time, he was 12 years old.

I met Bill during this time at our junior high school in Bloomfield, NJ, where he helped revive our school's model railroad club. His limitless enthusiasm for full-sized trains manifested itself on his first railfan trip behind steam on the Wharton & Northern Railroad. I admired Bill's "nothing is impossible" and "let's do it" attitude. Everything is within his reach.

He convinced me to accompany him on his next rail enthusiast's trip, a 450-mile, open-window, 20-hour ordeal behind steam, through the Pennsylvania coal regions. One can imagine our cinder and coal dust appearance returning home at 1:00 am. It would be the first of countless times that Bill seemed to thrive on fatigue, discomfort, and dirt, but with undiminished resolve.

Though our lives took separate courses over the next three decades, I was always aware of Bill's successive achievements. When we reconnected in our 50s, Bill convinced my wife, our children, my brother and sister-in-law, and me to join one of his famous Canal Society of NJ excursions on the English and

Welsh canals. He got me hooked on canals, but I was to challenge him to even greater exertions in his leadership to create a Transportation Heritage Center for the State of New Jersey. More about that later.

Born in an era of great expectations (1939 World's Fair) and trepidation (eve of World War II), William J. McKelvey, Jr., was the second oldest of three offspring. He developed an interest in railroads and transportation history quite early, but that was not his only interest. At seven, he won first prize in a hobby show at his elementary school. The next year, "Billy" as his 90+ Mom still calls him, joined a paper drive sponsored by his Ampere Parkway Community Church. He collected four tons of salvage paper! Little known by his present admirers is Bill's perfect attendance record for over seven years in Sunday school. Later as a young adult of 17, he was to become a deacon at that same church.

Thus, before the age of ten, Bill displayed the traits for

which he is still well known: indefatigable persistence and obsessive "stuff" collecting. When aged 10, Bill earned money doing chores and collecting/selling papers to exclusively finance his first railroad scheme, an HO-scale tabletop model pike. Characteristic of his present attention to detail and meticulous accounting, Bill spent \$93.42 on kits and parts to assemble his railroad. What he couldn't buy, he made from salvage materials.

Growing up in the fifties meant hot rods and dates with bobbysoxers for most teenage males, and Bill was no different. This is the only period of his life in which his hobbies became subordinate to social activities. Bill soon learned to integrate the social, avocational, and professional aspects of his busy schedule. After finishing high school, Bill joined the Army, serving at a difficult period of strife between 1957 and 1960. His tour included Korea and William Beaumont Army Hospital in El Paso, Texas, where he served as an Engineer Assistant.

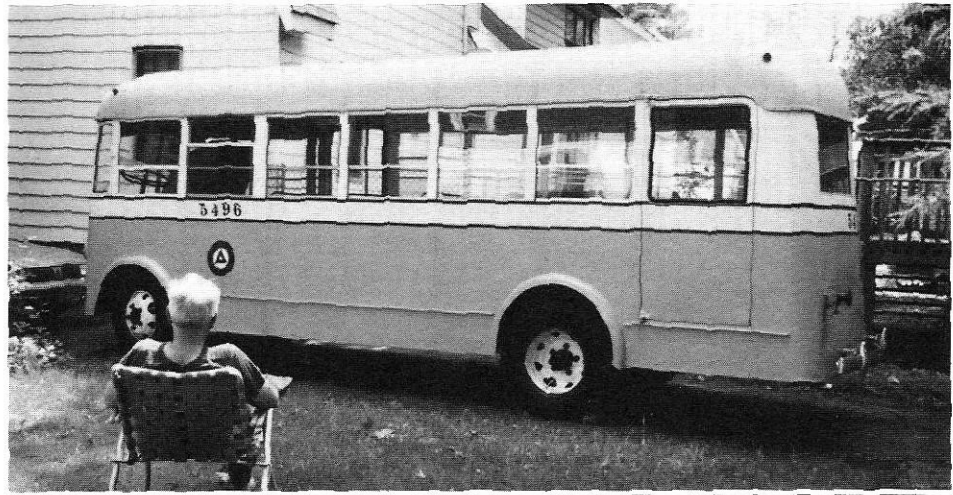


Bill McKelvey (third from left) is an extraordinary organizer of trips and events, such as this excursion for the United Railroad Historical Society. Photo by David Phraner.

Next, he entered Upsala College as a Business Administration major. His interest in safety led him into the insurance field. He completed courses in industrial safety at New York University, following up with fire protection technology courses at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. Between 1963 and 1969, Bill grew his professional safety specialist and fire inspector responsibilities into a supervisory role with a staff of seventeen field inspectors. His responsibilities included corporate safety programs and training for major clients of his firm.

He achieved his Certified Safety Professional status in 1973 and kept his certification current till he retired in 1998. He was active in the American Society of Safety Engineers, NJ Chapter, as a professional member and as its president. He achieved certification as a Hazard Control Manager, Master Level, and served in the American Society of Industrial Hygienists and Society of Fire Protection Engineers. He became a Senior Representative with CIGNA Loss Control Services where he worked with environmental health and impairment liability issues. There, he specialized in National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and OSHA standards and compliance.

The capstone of his career was a stint as Senior Railroad Specialist with CIGNA. In this position, Bill was "forced" to travel around the continent, visiting various railroads, advising them and evaluating the safety practices of each railroad's operations and physical plant. He re-



Bill has an amazing gift for securing donations to the NJ Transportation Heritage Center. Here he surveys the vintage Yellow Coach, model 733, that he restored and donated to the NJTHC. Photo by Dave Phraner.

tired as an independent Loss Control Consultant, specializing in railroads, rapid transit, and light rail properties.

All of this professional experience was to prove valuable in Bill's pro-bono work for the canal societies and for the NJ Transportation Heritage Center.

All the time his professional career was advancing, Bill's avocational enthusiasm was churning. His interest in railroad history and technology expanded into curiosity about other modes of transport. He thus contracted the canal enthusiast bug. His specialties broadened beyond transportation into large machinery, industrial archeology, automatic musical instruments and horns and whistles. He joined organizations devoted to the study and preservation of these intriguing instruments and devices. In the case of horns and whistles, finding no organization to channel interest, Bill and his friend Jack Hardman co-founded the Horn and Whistle Society.

McKelvey is still a popular name on the lecture circuit with illustrated presentations on a wide variety of subjects ranging from Canals Here and Abroad,

Operation Sail, and the World Trade Center to Trolleys and Interurbans, Ocean Liners, Earth-moving Equipment, Windjammers, Steam Traction Engines, (his) Purchase, Restoration and Donation of a 1937 Yellow Coach Bus, Railroad Wrecks, Accidents and Collisions, ... on and on...

Bill McKelvey's work for the preservation of canals and their history is well known. He became a life member of the American Canal Society. He served as a Director and Vice President for that organization and is active as chairman of the Society's Canal Boat Committee. He is a Director and life member of the Canal Society of New Jersey. He is also a life member of the Pennsylvania Canal Society. His local affiliations include serving as past president of the Engineer Society of Montclair, the only non-engineer to hold that office.

Bill McKelvey is perhaps best known in canal and railroad circles as an event coordinator and overseas study tour leader, interpreting canals, railways and other industrial archeology in England, France, the Netherlands, Wales, and Ireland. He has planned and executed ten successful canal



Bill as a collector of all things railroad, canal, and everything else. Photo by David Phraner.

study tours overseas for the Canal Society of New Jersey.

In 1976, Bill was key to the successful return of navigation to the Delaware & Raritan Canal. Sponsored by the Canal Society of NJ, a lifeboat disguised as a D&R canal boat and pulled by an outboard motorboat disguised as a 4-mule team, took first place as the best float at the Raritan River Festival. Later Bill helped plan a D&R Canal commemoration featuring rides on the canal in a vintage mahogany Chris-Craft, an authentic New England whaleboat, and several steam launches.

Books. Bill buys, sells, publishes, authors, and, if time permits, reads books. His most popular authored titles include *The Delaware & Raritan Canal: A Photographic History* (1975); *Champlain to Chesapeake: A Canal Era Pictorial Cruise* (1978); and *Lehigh Valley Transit Company's' Liberty Bell Route* (1989). He has no fewer than 13 books on canal, public transport and railroad subjects in various research and documentation stages. He publishes the books that he writes and has published others' books on the

Erie Canal and Schuylkill navigation.

Years ago, Bill used his sales skills by establishing Canal Captain's Press to market his and hundreds of other titles in canal and comprehensive transportation history and technology. Recently, Bill endowed the non-profit Friends of the NJ Transportation Heritage Center with the entire assets of his Canal Captain's Press. This gift included the entire book inventory of the business. If that were not generous enough, Bill volunteers to manage the mail order and counter book sales on behalf of the Heritage Center.

He now single-handedly edits and produces a 12-page, double column, (NJ) *Transport Heritage* (TH) six times a year. Bill writes most of the material in TH. His articles range from one-paragraph status reports on equipment preservation and archival donations to campaigns in support of the institutional travails of the Heritage Center. His series on Phillipsburg (where the Heritage Center is planned) and other carefully researched chronologies of New Jersey transport history, run from 20 to 30 or more installments in TH. Obviously, Bill is indifferent to contemporary television offerings and other leisure time pursuits.

Most of Bill's current energies are directed at helping to establish a long overdue surface transportation Heritage Center for the State of New Jersey. One of my most fortunate inspirations was suggesting to Bill that he get involved in the soon-to-be-formed Friends of the NJ Heritage Center (then known as the Friends of the NJ RR and Transportation

Museum). From then on, having Bill on board was like trying to contain a tempest in a Morris Canal boat feed box. He is a charter member of "Friends." He succeeded me as secretary and then President for multiple terms. His leadership in "Friends" marked steady progress toward achieving the Heritage Center and maturation of the Friends organization into a professional museum support group. His advocacy for the Heritage Center, (which features an important New Jersey canals component) ranges from interim custodian (and collector) of artifacts and newsletter editor, to organizer and manager of Friends of the Heritage Center annual symposiums (this year is the thirteenth) at Drew University, delegate to United (NJ) Railroad Historical Society (the other support group for the Heritage Center) and tireless general worker.

Appeals to Bill for help never go unanswered. He's a loyal friend and a steadfast advocate for canal study, preservation, restoration and yes, even vintage canal operation.

For all of these reasons, I nominate Bill McKelvey to the American Canal Society's Canal Buffs Hall of Fame.



In his role as a rescuer, he brought this 1906 trolley car back from Lisbon. Photo by D. Phraner.

A CANALER'S WEEKEND DELIGHT IN READING, PA.

by Linda J. Barth

A weekend in eastern Pennsylvania affords four delightful stops for history buffs and canal enthusiasts alike: two museums, a B&B, and a restaurant.

As we drew near to Reading, we unexpectedly saw a sign directing us to Daniel Boone's Birthplace, in Birdsboro. Who knew that this famous American frontiersman got his start in eastern Pennsylvania? The Daniel Boone Homestead interprets the life of early English and German settlers in Berks County. We visited the Boone House, where Daniel was born in 1734, as well as the log house, sawmill, blacksmith shop, and barn, complete with clucking chickens and woolly sheep. To our great astonishment, the entire park was filled with trailers and campers, as this was the annual Patriot Days Youth Encampment weekend. Scouts and their families mingled with tourists exploring this historic, but not very well-known site.

Although the sawmill was not running during our visit, it is a working mill. As Marcia Houston, a part-time employee, explained, "A race brings water from our lake to run the sawmill. Recently it has cut timber to be used in the reconstruction of a hammer mill at the State Museum in the capital of Harrisburg."

Just north of the city of Reading, we stopped to stretch our legs with a walk along the Union Canal at the Berks County Heritage Center. This site showcases a variety of buildings, including the Gruber Wagon Works and the C.



The House on the Canal, a bed-and-breakfast along the Schuylkill Canal and Navigation, Reading, Pennsylvania. Photo by Robert H. Barth.

Howard Hiester Canal Center.

The Gruber Wagon Works survives as one of the most complete examples of an integrated rural manufactory. Erected in 1882 by Franklin H. Gruber, the wagon works evolved from a one-man shop, with a variety of specialized hand tools, into a family business, employing up to twenty men who used mass-production methods. Unlike a modern assembly process, wagon parts were transported back and forth between various rooms in order to complete a segment of the work.

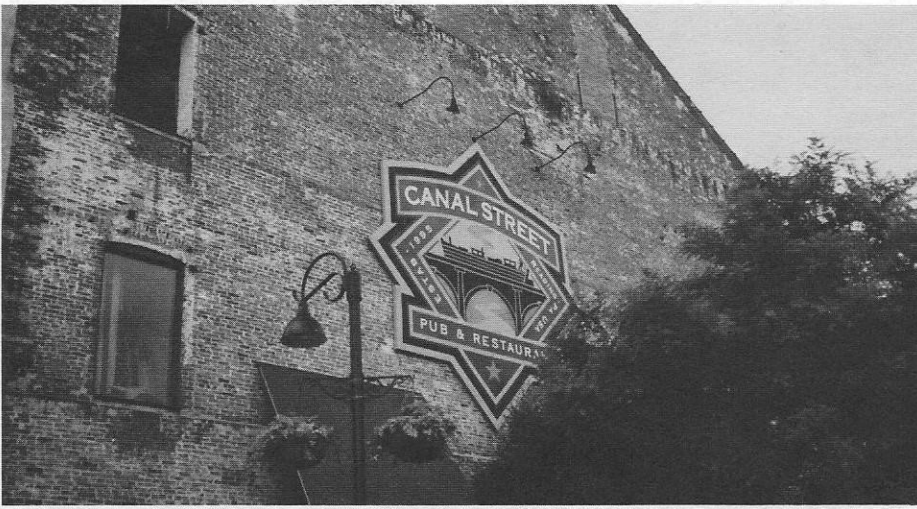
In the mid-1970s, the Army Corps of Engineers relocated the wagon works from its original location near Mt. Pleasant in order to create the Blue Marsh Lake Dam. In 1978, the building was designated a National Historical Landmark.

Through an extensive inventory including artifacts from the Schuylkill Navigation Company and the Hiester Boatyard, the C. Howard Hiester Canal Center presents the story of canal transportation and the important contribution the canal system made

to Berks County. The center comprises the largest private collection of 19th century canal memorabilia in America. Mr. Hiester gathered many artifacts from the section of the Schuylkill Canal between Reading and Philadelphia. He accumulated a wealth of memorabilia, including the houseboat *Mildred*, a toll collection booth, and the pilot-house from the tugboat *Dolphin*.

Visitors to the Heritage Center can also tour Wertz's Covered Bridge, the Deppen Cemetery, Melcher's Grist Mill, the Salad and Herb Garden, and the Reeser Farm House.

After spending the day touring, we were glad to follow the Schuylkill River to find our overnight accommodations at The House on the Canal, a bed and breakfast on River Road. This historic 1750 home fronts on the river which was part of the Schuylkill Canal and Navigation. Hosts Wanda and Bob Yenser purchased the property in 1985, restored it to its original condition, and decorated it with lovely collectibles and period furniture. A short walk past the



The logo of the Canal Street Pub, Reading, Pennsylvania, shows the Allegheny Creek Aqueduct on the Schuylkill Canal. Photo by Robert H. Barth.

newer Felix Dam takes guests to Lock #42 and two historic dams that diverted water into the canal.

After checking in, we decided to head to downtown Reading for a meal and brew at the Canal Street Pub and Restaurant on, of course, Canal Street. Owner Jake Bausher brews Fancy Pants IPA (India Pale Ale) and Strong Ale, as well as stouts and other beers, depending on the season.

Entrees range from burgers to pasta, and steaks to seafood. "The pub's logo," Jake told us, "features a canalboat crossing the Allegheny Creek aqueduct on the Schuylkill Canal and Navigation."

The pub occupies the former Reading Hardware Company building, a business that shipped goods along the canal from Jackson's Lock, now buried a short distance away. In the early 1950s, Reading Hardware closed its doors. Over the years, other businesses rented its space, until, in 1995, the Baushers and McShanes joined forces to create the Neversink Brewery and Canal Street Pub and Restaurant.

Renovation began in January 1996 with the grand opening later that year. The Canal Street Pub and Restaurant combines an unusual atmosphere with great food and great beer.

While driving around the city, we glanced up at Mt. Penn and asked ourselves, "What is a Japanese pagoda doing in the middle of Pennsylvania?" Of course, we had to drive up and inquire. It seems that in the early 1900s, William Abbott Witman bought ten acres on the southern tip of Mt. Penn to use as a quarry. The quarry so defaced the mountain that public criticism forced him to abandon the operation. Soon after, Witman saw a postcard of a Philippine pagoda. Fascinated by this oriental structure, and hoping to repair the damage he had caused, he hired Charles and James Matz to build a similar structure. Although he had planned the pagoda as a luxury hotel, that idea failed when Witman was denied a license to sell alcohol. After a series of private owners, the pagoda and the surrounding ten acres were sold to the City of

Reading for the sum of one dollar.

The seven-story red brick and tile structure, rising 886 feet above the city, was built in the style of the Shogun Dynasty. Its interior has red and yellow tile floors and a majestic oak staircase leading to the upper floors. A dolphin is poised on the rooftop and a Japanese temple gateway, or *torii*, graces the entrance.

By the 1960s, weather, fire and the ravages of time had taken their toll and the pagoda was in desperate need of repair and restoration. In 1969, Pagoda-Skyline, Inc., composed of private citizens, was designated as the fund-raising group to renew the pagoda and develop Mt. Penn as a public recreation area.

The next morning, we awakened from a peaceful sleep in the quiet neighborhood along the river and took a walk upstream, laugh



Reading's famous Pagoda atop Mount Penn. Photo by Robert H. Barth.

READING, PA (continued)

ing at the antics of the many rabbits playing there. Having worked up a hearty appetite, we enjoyed Wanda's delicious breakfast, served on the front porch, overlooking the river and the Yenser's beautifully landscaped lawn.

As we said good-bye and headed off to explore more of Pennsylvania's backroads, we knew that we would remember this delightful weekend for a long time to come.

The Daniel Boone Homestead is open Tues.-Sat. 9-5, Sun. noon-5 ; 610-582-4900.

The Berks County Heritage Center is open from May 1 through the last Sunday in October, Tuesday-Saturday, 10-4, Sundays and summer holidays, 12-5; 610-374-8839.

The House on the Canal, 4020 River Road, Reading, Pennsylvania 19605; 610-921-3015; www.houseonthecanal.com.

The Canal Street Pub & Restaurant, 535 Canal Street, Reading, Pennsylvania; 610-374-7544; www.canalstpub.com

EARL LEIBY

(continued from page four)

board member for more than 30 years and president for 20 years.

One of his greatest accomplishments was initiating work to restore the Union Canal Tunnel and developing the land around it into a park. Lois Meily, president of the Friends of the Union Canal Tunnel Park, recalled Leiby as a warm and gentle man with a quick wit.

"I would have to say he was our inspiration initially for the work that has been done on the Union Canal, the tunnel and the park," said Meily. "He always dreamed of seeing that tunnel
One of the first boats to go through the tunnel after it was

cleared of debris and repaired was the *Earl P. Leiby*. It had been handcrafted by friends of Leiby in recognition of his work in restoring the tunnel, the second oldest in the U.S.

A model of the barge was presented to Leiby in 2000 when the Friends of Union Canal Tunnel Park and the Lebanon County Historical Society gathered to pay tribute to him. It was a special night during which friends poked fun at Leiby and he, characteristically, poked right back.

Jim Schucker, secretary of the historical society and the director of development for Friends of the Union Canal Tunnel Park, recalled the evening.

"I am so glad he could enjoy that night and see their recognition," said Schucker. "It is one thing to say you are going to build a boat, but to actually do it is another. I'm so glad that was done.....He had many rides in that boat."

If history -- especially Lebanon County history -- was one of Leiby's passions, the other, undoubtedly, was Boy Scouting. As a young man he earned the Eagle Scout award. As an adult, he served as a troop leader. He was honored with the Silver Beaver Award, the highest BSA volunteer award for service.

Pete Silldorff, a long-time scouter, described Leiby as "an anchor of the community. What Earl has left to this community is this awesome legacy of all the young boys who would grow in the Scout spirit, to live by a code of conduct that would ensure to the community men of character with a strong sense of service to their fellow-man."

It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like (1850s) Delphi

Although every aspect will not be completed, the Delphia (IN) Canal Association plans a grand opening of the Canal Center at Canal Park on July 4 and 5, 2003. Since the outside façades are based on photographs of the downtown square in 1850 — the canal era — as you approach the new center, you will have the sensation of going back in time.

Brick laying was barely finished last year before cold snowy weather set in. Windows and most doors are in place, and the balcony is finished on the building originally called the Buford House. From the balcony, visitors can overlook the canal itself and the future site of the canal boat landing.

During winter, much of the work moved inside. Volunteers have been working to finish the canal boat cabin exhibit, the full-scale replica of a lock gate, and other exhibits. Looking through the cabin windows, visitors will see heavy rough-sawn timbers, giving the illusion that the boat is inside a wooden lock.

To complete the rustic doorway, workers elevated a massive 1840s wooden bridge timber into place atop the two uprights. This hand-hewn oak timber, with distinguishing ax marks made by a much earlier craftsman, was found at the bottom of the canal in Delphi's Canal Park during dredging activities in 2001. It was one of several timbers left submerged since a wooden arch bridge over the canal at present-day Washington Street collapsed in 1873.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Mr. Barber,

I strongly support your sentiments as expressed in your first "From the President" letter!! I've been hoping for a long time that the ACS would take an attitude like this, and now my wish is granted.

"Preserve through navigation" should become the new ACS rallying cry. I see no reason that we in the US can't make actual functional use of our canals like the British and Canadians. I've often pondered why we don't, and I've come to the conclusion that it is just a mind set, a variation of "learned helplessness." Along with your comments to the effect that it wouldn't be that difficult in many cases is the fact that the dirt work involved in historic canals is a drop in the bucket compared to (say) a modern interstate highway.

So I think it's just a matter of changing people's attitudes. And you have made a good start. Keep at them.

It's also an unusual coincidence that before your letter appeared I sent a brief item to *American Canals* proposing small locks that could be used to get small boats back on canals, either permanently or as interim service pending full scale restoration. And I've often wondered why we in the States don't tout the Rideau as an example. Is it some sort of national pride thing at work? You've probably been there, but although I'd heard of it for years, I did not realize it was completely functional until last spring when I found it on the internet. *American Canals* needs

to run a big piece or series on the Rideau.

I am an aspiring screenwriter. I'd like to write a script some day on a canal subject. That could raise public interest, hopefully. If you have any story angles, let me know. So far I don't, although in the current climate of renewed patriotism, the overall struggle of building the Erie might have some appeal.

Unfortunately I have no money nor political influence. All I can do is say I'm with you and that I think you're right.

Good fortune to you as President.

Best regards,
Mark Beech
Member, ACS

CANAL BOAT RESEARCH: YOUR HELP IS NEEDED!

The Lake Champlain Maritime Museum (LCMM) is constructing the sailing canal boat *Lois McClure* on the Burlington (VT) Waterfront. LCMM archaeologist Scott McLaughlin is uncovering the history of the people who lived and worked on Lake Champlain's canal boats.

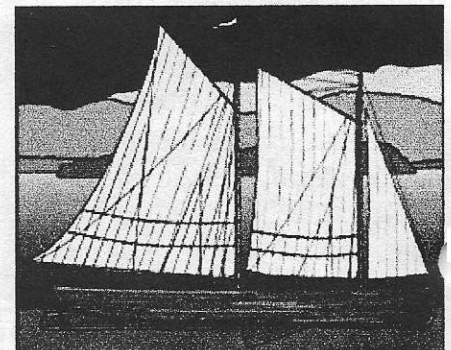
For the past two years, Scott has been researching the household strategies, social networks, and culture of the lake's canalers for a Ph.D. dissertation in anthropology from Binghamton University. Scott has located thousands of documents relating to the construction and operation of the lake's canal boats, from which he will reconstruct the canalers' largely forgotten way of

life.

Nearly 4000 canal boats called Lake Champlain home from 1819 to 1940. The community of mariners that operated these boats likely numbered greater than 10,000. Scott is exploring every facet of the lives of the canalers. While customs records, newspaper notices, and canal records make it relatively easy to trace the movement, growth, and decline of the canaler's way of life, the day-to-day experiences, aspirations, and family life has proven more difficult to recreate. Diaries, letters, and ships' logs are rare; of those that exist, most probably remain in family hands.

Scott has created an extensive database containing details about the lake's canal boat shipwrights, owners, and captains; you can find it on the museum's website: www.lcmm.org. Please look at the list of canalers. If you have any information about any of them, please contact the museum by phone (802-475-2022) or by email at cohn@lcmm.org.

The *Lois McClure* is modeled after the "1862" class *General Butler* and the *O.J. Walker*, two historic shipwrecks located within 1/2 of a mile of the construction site.



2003 CANAL CALENDAR

Now through September 28 — Middlesex Canal Museum and Visitors Center will be open on weekends: Saturday and Sunday, noon to 4 pm; 978-670-2740.

May 4 — Annual meeting, Middlesex Canal Assn., MA, 3 pm; 978-251-4971.

May 10 — Lewis & Clark Festival, Lee Park, Downtown Charlottesville, VA; 434-985-2425.

May 16 — Canal Society of New Jersey meeting: slide talk on the Society's first English canal tour; 908-722-9556.

May 17 - Canoe the Canal, Old Santee Canal Park; see ospreys, alligators and other surprises; 843-899-5200.

May 17-18 — Canalfest, Cumberland, MD; 301-759-3197.

May 18 — Bike Hike with Charlie and Rob on the Delaware Canal, 1 pm; meet at Virginia Forrest Recreation Area, 1 mile north of Centre Bridge, PA. Learn about the Hendricks Island archeology project, as well as other Delaware River islands. Round trip, 8 miles; 215-862-2021.

June 2-7 — Through bike trip, C&O Canal, Georgetown-Cumberland; 301-223-7010.

June 7 — Second Annual Wild and Scenic Riverfest along the Sudbury, Assabet and Concord rivers in Massachusetts; 978-670-2740.

June 9-10 — New York State Canal Conference in Utica; 585-387-0099.

June 14 — 8th Annual Waterloo Canal Day, 11 am-5 pm; Canal Society of NJ; Ride Molly the Mule and listen to musicians, including Roy Justice, George Ward, and the Golden Eagle String Band; 908-722-9556.

June 21 — Joint meeting of the Canal Society of New York State and the Canadian Canal Society, on the Rideau Canal; 585-387-0099.

June 29 — Schuylkill Canal Day, 10 am-5 pm, Lock 60, Mont Clare, PA; music, food, kayaking, fishing, and a Canal Joust! 610-917-0021.

July 4 — 175th Anniversary of the ground-breaking for the C&O Canal; time, place TBA; 301-739-4200.

July 18-August 3 — Bus tour of canal sites in Germany and Poland; visit the Elblag Canal with its working inclined planes; Canal Society of NJ; tour leader Fred Heide at 973-376-4763.

July 26 — Jazz, Blues and BBQ at Hugh Moore Park, Easton, PA; 2-hr. dinner cruise on board *Josiah White II*; 610-559-6613.

August 8-11 — New River Gorge Batteau Festival begins near Sandstone, VA; 434-977-3733.

August 23 — Touch of Venice at Hugh Moore Park, Easton, PA; 2-hr. dinner cruise on board *Josiah White II*; 610-559-6613.

August 23-24 — Canal Days, Williamsport, MD, C&O; 301-223-7010. 301-739-4200

September 13 — Canawlers Day, D&H Canal Historical Society, 12-4 pm, High Falls, NY; 845-687-9311.

September 13-20 — Elderhostel at Chittenango Landing (NY): Adventure on New York's Erie Canal; 315-687-3801.

September 24-26 — World Canals Conference, Edinburgh, Scotland; www.worldcanalsconference.org.

September 28 — Walk along the Lehigh Navigation with Director Charles Derr; at Hugh Moore Park, Easton, PA; 610-559-6613.

October 7-9 — Canal Society of Indiana cruise on the Erie Canal; 260-432-0279.

October 8-13 — Through bike trip, C&O Canal, Georgetown-Cumberland; 301-223-7010.

October 10-12 — ACS meeting in Lowell, MA. See story in the Winter issue for details; 978-670-2740.

October 11 — Canal Society of New York State fall meeting: Reservoirs of the Adirondacks; 585-387-0099.

October 10-13 — Canal Heritage Days, Middlesex (MA) Canal and Lowell National Historic Park; 978-670-2740.

October 19 — Walnutport (PA) Canal Festival, Lehigh Canal, noon-6pm; 610-760-9906.

President's Letter (continued)

Association of the United States has over 500,000 members.

So, what about the problems mentioned above?

One interesting fact is that the entire canal, including the intrusions, is still owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as the Delaware Canal State Park. The parking lot built on the Bristol Basin was built for the Bristol downtown. The downtown was there because of the canal. The parking area is large and most of what could be a minimum width canal route is not under the pavement. Wouldn't it be a boost to the area if a sixty-foot strip along the south edge of the parking lot became a canal again?

The school might be seen as a problem. But, fifty-year-old schools are obsolete and being replaced everywhere. His school has numerous additions and many modular classrooms. How about replacing it on a different site?

That leads to the shopping center, which is also obsolete and now being replaced by a Home Depot and other stores. Home Depot and the redeveloper had an opportunity to fix a fifty-year old mistake. Instead, they have shown a great lack of imagination despite local agitation. How about replacing the siphon culverted canal with a restored canal and park? Dealing with the entrance road, which crosses the canal below towpath grade, will be expensive, but the gain would be great. It could be eliminated or even run under the canal and the adjacent US Route 13. Home Depot would even be able to brag about it.

Progress is being made. Last year, the concrete aqueduct at Point Pleasant was replaced with a wooden one of navigable width. The new aqueduct has won several awards. Groundhog Lock was rebuilt, but without the lower gates. In March, I observed that the canal was watered its entire length, something I hadn't seen before. The U.S. Route 1 obstruction remains, however, despite a completed design and plans to do the work in 2001. As everywhere, the Friends of the Delaware Canal and the state park folks have had trouble securing funds to do all that is needed. This state park is the third most visited one in Pennsylvania. I have come to the conclusion that part of the problem is that we are thinking too small and asking for too little. Let's be up front now. **We want to boat from Bristol to Easton and soon!**

Recently, a retired national trucking company CEO proved my point. He didn't like having a dry canal past his retirement home at the northern end of the canal and didn't like what he learned when he asked questions. So he formed a non-profit corporation to support the canal and park. So far they have raised over \$ 4 million in private contributions. Their goal is \$ 30 million. With a big vision and the right people, a great deal is possible.

TOWPATH TIDBITS

Ohio Governor Bob Taft biked the towpath into Akron to announce a \$500,000 grant for the city. The money will be used to extend the **Towpath Trail**

from Cascade Locks through downtown Akron.

Locks #2 and 4 on the **Muskingum (OH) River** will be closed for repairs for all of 2003. The \$500,000 project should be completed in time for the 2004 boating season.

The **Maumee Valley Heritage Corridor** has developed a color brochure showing attractions from Fort Wayne to Lake Erie. Visit them at their new website, www.maumeevalleyheritage-corridor.org.

The **Canal Society of New Jersey's** museum at Waterloo Village now features working models of both an inclined plane and a lock. New Jersey's Morris Canal used 23 inclined planes to cross the state from Phillipsburg to Jersey City.

Betsy Daley, of the **Schuylkill Canal Association**, reports on the reconstruction of the sluice gate at Lock 60. By spring, water will again flow through this section of the prism. This gate will allow SCA to monitor the amount of water needed to maintain the level in the forebay and the canal. Lock 60 reconstruction can begin this summer.

Since the summer of 2001, youngsters from Virginia have sawed, hammered, drilled, and chiseled to build the *Discovery Virginia* replica keelboat. Sponsored by the **Lewis & Clark Exploratory Center** in Darden Park, Charlottesville, the project provides the youth with a sense of history and ownership.