

# AmericanCanals

Bulletin of the American Canal Society

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Fall 2012

## From the President

By David G. Barber

One of the sections of the internet that is most interesting is Youtube. The movies, that is. Some of the commentary in the background is less that worthless and needs to be ignored. But, if you want to visit canal sites that are a long drive away, it's very useful.

In northern Florida, you can lock through Buckman lock at the east end of the abandoned Cross Florida Barge Canal or view a 2009 video by Bergman Associates of the proposed construction of a small lock at Inglis at the canal's west end. If you search carefully, there is also a boat navigating up to the downstream gates of Eureka Lock, although the lock is not identified. Another video takes you on the dry roadway under the Ocklawaha River Bridge at Eureka, which was to span the canal just upstream of the Eureka Lock. That video begins showing (but not identifying) the wooden guide walls under the bridge that were to direct tows into the lock. Views into the lock are obscured by trees. Another video, by Ranger boats, begins at this bridge and goes downstream on the Ocklawaha River to Rodman Lake through many curves at 65 miles per hour. I'm not sure that those who fought the canal had high speed boats in mind. A little upstream of Eureka, you can lock through the Moss Bluff Lock in either kayaks or personal water craft.

In northern Michigan, there are videos of locking through the locks at Cheboygan and Alanson as well



During the June 3, 2012 Jubilee to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's 60 years on the British throne, thousands of vessels accompanied the royal yacht in a grand flotilla on the River Thames. Countless canal boats joined the grand parade.

Photo by Simon Judge. See p. 19 for more views.

as the Alanson swing bridge. In Madison, WI, you can lock through the Tenney Lock. In Maine, videos show the operation of the Songo River Lock as well as the swing bridges on either side. Videos also show the Charles River and Mystic River locks in Boston, MA. In New York, there are videos of the lower of the Saranac River locks, but I haven't found one of the upper lock.

Of course, the longer waterways such as the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Welland Canal, and various locks on the upper Mississippi River have videos. I have also found videos of the Chicago Harbor Lock and of the Thomas J. O'Brien Lock on the Calumet River. There are videos of the Rideau Waterway and the

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# American Canals

BULLETIN OF THE  
AMERICAN CANAL SOCIETY

Managing Editor: Linda J. Barth  
Contributing Editors: David G. Barber,  
William McKelvey, Betty Scott  
[www.americancanals.org](http://www.americancanals.org)

For memberships, subscriptions, change  
of address, and other business matters:  
c/o Charles W. Derr, 117 Main Street,  
Freemansburg, Pennsylvania 18017;  
[deruls@aol.com](mailto:deruls@aol.com); 610-691-0956.

For CANAL CALENDAR items and  
for news of local, state, and regional  
canal societies: c/o Linda J. Barth, 214  
North Bridge Street, Somerville, NJ  
08876; 908-722-7428; [barths@att.net](mailto:barths@att.net)

The objectives of the American Canal  
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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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of the National Canal Museum:  
2750 Hugh Moore Park Road,  
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## Officers

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Ballou Road, Hopedale, MA 01747;  
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American Canal Survey  
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Eden, NY 14057; 716-992-9069;  
[pjBartczak@earthlink.net](mailto:pjBartczak@earthlink.net)

**Linda J. Barth**, 214 N. Bridge St.,  
Somerville, NJ 08876; 908-722-  
7428; Editor, *American Canals*;  
[barths@att.net](mailto:barths@att.net)

**Robert H. Barth**, 214 N. Bridge St.,  
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Committee; [barths@att.net](mailto:barths@att.net)

**Carroll Gantz**, 817 Treeloft Trace,  
Seabrook Island, SC 29455-6116;  
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Committee; [carrgantz@bellsouth.net](mailto:carrgantz@bellsouth.net)

**George Hume**, #513 – 39 Parliament  
Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
M5A 4R2; 416-214-9331;  
[george.hume@rogers.com](mailto:george.hume@rogers.com)

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Ave., Rochester, NY 14626; 585-225-  
-0688; [crowns2@aol.com](mailto:crowns2@aol.com)

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## Committee

**Dan McCain**, 3198 North, 700 West,  
Delphi, IN 46923; 765-564-6297;  
[mccain@carlnet.org](mailto:mccain@carlnet.org)

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**Robert Sears**, 248 Tower Drive, Toronto,  
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285-7254; [dawnofdestiny@sympatico.ca](mailto:dawnofdestiny@sympatico.ca)

**Roger Squires**, 46 Elephant Lane, Roth-  
erithe, London SE16 4JD England; 020  
7232 0987; [rogersquires@btinternet.com](mailto:rogersquires@btinternet.com)

**Roberta Styran**, #509 - 35 Towering  
Heights Boulevard, St Catharines,  
Ontario L2T 3G8 Canada; 905-684-  
4882; [rstyran@becon.org](mailto:rstyran@becon.org)

**William Trout III**, 417 Phillips Street,  
Edenton NC 27932; 252-482-5946;

[Bill@vacanals.org](mailto:Bill@vacanals.org)

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8344; [towpathturner@aol.com](mailto:towpathturner@aol.com);

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Committee, Canal Boat Committee,  
Canal Engineering, Maintenance &  
Operations Committee;

[woodscanalone@aol.com](mailto:woodscanalone@aol.com)

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Drive, Berkeley Heights, NJ 07922;  
[wjmckelvey@hotmail.com](mailto:wjmckelvey@hotmail.com); 908-464-  
9335

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# Canal Milestones

By David Barber

One subject related to canals sees little print. I refer to milestones that were located along many canals just as there are mile markers along today's highways. But, milestones are small and easy to overlook as compared to larger structures such as locks and aqueducts.



Blackstone Canal Milepost 24 courtesy of the Worcester Historical Museum.

On my local Blackstone Canal, there were reportedly 45 granite milestones numbering uphill from tidewater in Providence, RI to just short of the terminal basin in Worcester, MA. Each marker was about eight inches square by five feet tall and had a top rounded side to side and from a high point at the front downward towards the back. About half of the height was buried in the ground. Given the dimensions, each would weigh just under 400 pounds. This makes casual movement unlikely.

Today, we know of seven. Number 24 is in the collection of

the Worcester Historical Museum (see photo). This marker seems to have an interesting history. Its original site is in Uxbridge. It is one of the few places in which the Providence & Worcester Railroad is actually on the towpath, and it should have been buried. But, apparently not. Maybe the railroad moved it to the edge of the canal prism when it built its fill. More recently, a contractor moved it to his garden in Millbury, where it resided for many years. Most recently his family loaned it to the museum. At some point, the bottom part was broken off.

Numbers 8, 18, 25, and 37 stand in place as they have done for over 184 years. Number 20 is out of the ground, lying face down at its site. Number 28 is mostly buried, face up at its site.

The others are unaccounted for. Some such as the northern five are in urban and industrial areas and have been overcome by development. Others have their sites covered by later filling. Still others are out in the woods with little disturbance of the area, but still missing. A few sites are densely covered by thorns and too painful to access. Of course, a marker felled by frost heaving and covered by decades of leaves is hard to find if you don't have a precise location.

There are other canals with remaining milestones. The Delaware & Raritan Canal has many concrete ones along its route. I believe the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal also has remaining milestones. Recently, I saw a photo printed by the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association showing an intact milestone on



Blackstone Canal Milepost 8 in place. Photo by the author

that canal. MECCA informs me that there are more along the route.

But, what about other canals? Have you seen numbered milestones along your local canal? If so, please tell us about them. Milestones don't get respect. But, they are fun to find.

(To report extant milestones, please contact the author; see page 2.)



The author at milepost 1/43 near Bordentown on the Delaware and Raritan Canal. Photo courtesy of Linda J. Barth

## **The long awaited Eureka Locks opened on June 2, 2012 -- from the Berlin Boat Club**

The Berlin Boat Club is proud to announce the reopening of the Eureka Lock. It has been a long road to reopen the lock to traffic for the first time since 2003 when the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) cancelled the lease with the Berlin Boat Club (BBC) to operate the lock after almost 50 years.

In 2010 the DNR entered into a lease agreement with the town of Rushford for the Eureka Lock and property, and plans went into high gear to determine work required to make the gates operable again. With the help of equipment from Magnum Products of Berlin, Berlin Water & Sewer, and the Berlin Fire Department, we pumped out 700,000 gallons of water to allow inspection of the lock. Fundraising began in earnest when it was determined that about \$300,000 would be required to do the job. The Berlin Boat Club would again operate and maintain the lock.

The project was to have started in the spring of 2011 and be done in order to open by July 4, 2011. Unusually high water delayed the start of the project until October. At that time, the lock was dewatered by BBC members. Contractor C.R. Meyer arrived on site November 1st. Work was completed December 23rd and club members christened the new gates on the lock floor Christmas Eve morning. The pumps were then pulled out, and the lock chamber was allowed to fill. Hard work by Berlin Boat Club members, support from other area boat clubs, Friends of the Fox, and other organizations has allowed the project to come to fruition. A donation from an anonymous benefactor, an interest-free loan, and monetary support from across the boating community has allowed the BBC to have the lock gates completely rebuilt, new concrete work done, the turnstiles refurbished, and a new parking area and lighting installed.

The timeline since 2003 . . . .

2003—DNR does not renew BBC's lease, and the lock is closed.

2004—Area hit with a major flood, which sets new 100-year flood limits.

2006—Citizens rally in protest to the DNR's plans to close the Eureka Lock permanently. Group begins looking into having the lock reopened.

2008—Area hit with another major flood.

2009—DNR orders lock house at Eureka torn down, saying that flooding weakened the structure and extensive mold covered the interior. They also fill in the septic and plug two wells.

2010— Campaign underway to find funds to repair and reopen the Eureka Lock.

2011—Major donor comes forward, and work begins to dewater and then repair, refurbish, and build lock gates, mechanisms, etc.

2012—Work done and club plans grand reopening of Eureka Lock, including reinstating historic Corn Roast in August.

We are a unique, one of a kind organization. To the best of our knowledge, we are the only club in the United States that operates and maintains a lock. Our goal is to keep the road to Berlin open by water and to improve navigation on the Upper Fox River. The lock will be open weekends from 9-8. Call 920-361-BOAT for the current status or to get an off-hours lockage (24-hour advanced notice required). The Berlin Boat Club operates the Eureka Lock at no charge for the lockage but gladly accepts donations. Visit [BerlinBoatClub.com](http://BerlinBoatClub.com) for additional information and pictures from start to finish.

The grand opening on June 30th coincided with the City of Berlin fireworks that evening at Riverside Park. We were happy to announce the resumption of Berlin Boat Club Corn Roast on August 10th & 11th at Riverside Park. Fun, food and games filled the 2-day event. Proceeds went go to the Eureka Lock project. The Berlin Car Cruzers held their car show that Sunday. Mooring and camping are available at the park on a first come, first served basis. For more information, contact Commodore Ed Kirchhoff, 920-361-0969 or board member Mike McMonigal, 920-361-1957. Thank you. Greg Bins, Secretary, Berlin Boat Club, [gbins@new.rr.com](mailto:gbins@new.rr.com), [greg.bins@wluk.com](mailto:greg.bins@wluk.com).

### **From the President** (continued from page one)

Trent Severn Waterway and especially of the Kirkfield and Peterborough lift locks and the Big Chute Marine Railway.

Furthermore, you can go overseas and cruise on various parts of the English canal system. For those interested in New Jersey's Morris Canal, there are videos of the inclined planes of Poland's Elblag Canal, which was modeled after the Morris.

## ACS Sales

**If you haven't checked the ACS website lately, you might not know that the society has the following items for sale:**

Best from American Canals #2	published 1984	\$4
Best from American Canals #5	published 1991	\$4
Best from American Canals #6	published 1993	\$5
Best from American Canals #7	published 1996	\$5
Best from American Canals #8	published 1998	\$6
American Canal Guide #1: West Coast	published 1974	\$1
American Canal Guide #2: South, NC to FL	published 1975	\$2
American Canal Guide #3: Lower MS & Gulf	published 1979	\$3
American Canal Guide #4: WV, KY, Ohio River	published 1988	\$3 (Copies Only)
American Canal Guide #5: DE, MD, VA	published 1992	\$3 (Copies Only)
20 year American Canals Index 1972-1992	published 1992	\$2
Canal Boat Construction Index (12 pages)	published 1992	\$2
Canal Terminology (100 pages) Hahn & Kemp	published 1998	\$15
A Picture-Journey Along the Penn. Main Line Canal	published 1993	\$10
ACS Burgee (blue on white cloth)		\$15
ACS cloth sew on patch (2"x3" red, white & blue)		\$3
"Save Your Local Canal" bumper sticker		\$1

**Shipping and handling:** first two items \$4; each additional item \$1. Checks payable to: American Canal Society. Send orders to: Robert H. Barth, 214 N. Bridge Street, Somerville, NJ 08876-1637; 908-722-7428; barths@att.net. Please call or email with questions.



### NORTH AMERICAN WATERWAY MAP AND INDEX ALMOST OUT OF STOCK — GET YOUR COPY BEFORE ITS TOO LATE

Cartographer David Edwards-May has produced a spectacular map of North American waterways, both active and historic. A new publication from Euromapping, this color map covers the USA and Canada from Sioux City on the Missouri in the west to Maine and Quebec in the east. It's ideal for Grand Circle cruise planning and exploring the routes and vestiges of the historic canals. With minute details, including locks, dams, and inclined planes, the map features enlarged insets of many sections, such as the example below of the Mid-Atlantic region. Scale 1:3.5 million.

**Buy your copy for \$26 + \$5 shipping (plus 7% sales tax for NJ residents). This price includes a 48-page, detailed index of every waterway on the map. You can order your copy by contacting Bob Barth at 908-722-7428 or [barths@att.net](mailto:barths@att.net).**

## THE LAST BRIDGE TENDER, by Betty Scott

*Dedicated to Frank Fekete, who gave me so much information during my research, taking me to see where the family lived in Griggstown, explaining the workings of the canal, and sharing family anecdotes.*

They are all gone now, as is the reason for their existence, but between 1834 and 1932 there was a unique task performed by a unique group of men in New Jersey on a unique method of transportation and commerce that belted our state. The task was tending the swing bridges along the Delaware & Raritan Canal.

The success of the Erie Canal, completed in 1825, provided the impetus for the system of inland waterways that, by 1840, totaled more than 4,000 miles. The Erie Canal had one problem, however; the bridges that carried roads across the waterway were stationary. This meant that passengers on the upper decks of packet boats had to either lie flat or hang from the side of the roof as the boats passed under the bridges. The Morris Canal had similar bridges. Begun in 1825 and opened in 1831, it crossed the highlands of New Jersey from Phillipsburg to Newark and later was extended to Jersey City. This canal, like the Erie, was built with stationary bridges, serving to limit the height of boats that could utilize this engineering marvel. Experience being the best teacher, the designers of the Delaware & Raritan Canal, opened in 1834, solved that problem by using swing bridges. As boat traffic approached, the bridges were pushed open to allow vessels to pass.



The bridgetender's home at Blackwells Mills on the Delaware and Raritan Canal, Somerset County, New Jersey. Photo by Robert H. Barth

This led to new professions. Men were hired to operate both the locks and the bridges, and homes were built to house them. The home occupied by the bridge tender at Blackwells Mills has been restored and is now operated by the Blackwells Mills Canal Association.

The last resident bridge tender at Blackwells Mills was Sandor Fekete. We will explore the life of this extraordinary man as seen through the eyes of those who knew him best.

As is true with most of us, different pictures of a person emerge as we learn of him from friends and family. Physically, he was barely five feet tall, but with a strength and stamina that belied his size. His granddaughter Theresa remembers him as benevolent and loving, his daughter-in-law as hard working, living in the old way, disdaining modern amenities. His neighbor Biff Heins paints much the same picture. His son Frank, who provided many details of his home life and some of his work experiences, gives us an insight into his personality. And all who knew him agree that he was a remarkable man indeed.



Kayakers at Blackwells Mills  
Photo by Valerie Chaucer-Levine

kitchen is the pump that was used to pump water into the sink and the coal stove with its built-in tank that provided hot water.

As you look into the front parlor you can imagine Mr. Fekete sitting, as he so often did, in his chair in front of the side door (kept locked because it was never used) beside the potbellied stove. With pipe in mouth and Bible in hand, he read by the light of a kerosene lamp. And if you try, you can almost smell the odor of the tobacco curing in a room upstairs, mixed with that of the kerosene lamps that provided the only light in the house.

The garden across the street is representative of the garden maintained by Mr. Fekete. As you inspect the grounds and garden, you might find some of the horseradish that was planted by the workboat crews along the canal. It was customary to plant horseradish, onions, and other seasonings that would be accessible to the workboat cooks as they passed.

The little building in the garden replaced the original bridgetender's shack, which was moved, attached to the rear of the house, and used for storage. And don't forget to glance at the "necessary" that was Sandor's sanitary facility! He eventually had to modify it by changing the seat to include a smaller hole when the grandchildren came along.

Sandor's story begins in Europe. Representatives of canal and railroad companies canvassed the European countryside in search of laborers. They found Sandor on an estate in Hungary where his family worked as woodcutters. Although living on the estate of a wealthy landowner, Sandor described his own home as a mud hut with a thatched roof and dirt floor. (Frank Fekete tells us that, while the majority of the felled trees were the property of the Lord of the Manor, the woodcutters were allowed to keep for their own use the smaller branches and limbs that they stripped from the trees.) The representatives of the railroad lured Sandor to America with a promise of gainful employment. And so, in 1906, at the age of 27, Sandor left his 25-year-old wife Theresa and two small children in Hungary and arrived in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Within a few years his life underwent major changes, both in his home and working conditions.

The change in his home environment came in a little over a year, as he had saved enough money to send for his wife and establish a home. She joined him here in 1907, but it would be fifteen years before the couple would be reunited with their two oldest children.

Immediately upon his arrival in America, Sandor went to work on the canal. His first job was that of a laborer, assigned to the task of laying brick and breaking up rocks that were too large to be moved. Before long, his boss, who he described to his granddaughter Theresa as a very big, very strong, very loud Irishman, being pleased with his work, recommended Sandor for the job of supervisor on the work boat *Relief*. These boats traveled the length of the canal, inspecting the waterway and performing necessary repairs. Sandor was soon promoted to foreman of the entire twenty-eight-man work crew. But even though the work wasn't as arduous as what he had been doing, he wasn't happy because, being obligated to live on the boat, he had very little time to spend with his growing family. Annie, born in 1909, was his first child born in America. Three more girls and two boys were yet to come. While he lived on the boat, his wife and children occupied an apartment on Conduct Street in New Brunswick. Here she and the children no doubt enjoyed looking out over the river and canal, probably watching for her husband to pass by as he went about his duties.

In 1916, perhaps by request, because he was now a family man and the father of young children, Sandor was transferred from the work boat to a new position in Griggstown. He became the locktender.

Griggstown, a short distance along the canal to the south of the Blackwells Mills Canal House, was home to the mulletenders' barracks, a swing bridge adjacent to the barracks, and a canal lock, which was located about ½ mile upstream of the barracks and bridge. Locktending, when Sandor was hired for the position, was a twenty-four-hour-a-day job, shared by Sandor and a man name Mr. Slover. The two alternated twelve-hour



Day lilies along the canal in Blackwells Mills.  
Photo by Robert H. Barth

shifts, two weeks on days, and two weeks on nights.

Locktending was an art, an operation that had to be done with precision. The locktender could detect an approaching vessel by the rise in the depth of the water, due to the release of the water from the lock farther up the canal. The boats were guided along a wharf at the lock to keep them from hitting the bank. To stop the boat, the mulletender snubbed it; that is, he wrapped the line (rope) around a snubbing post near the lock wall and pulled it to slow the boat and stop. When the vessel was inside the chamber, the locktender closed the gates. He then opened the wickets (small doors in the gates) to allow water to flow into or out of the lock. When the water level inside the lock equaled the level outside the gates, he opened the gates; the mules were hitched and they pulled the vessel out to continue its journey.

The first of the three canal houses in which the Fekete family lived was next to the Griggstown lock. The canal company built homes for the people who tended the locks and swing bridges. While the houses had been built with nearly identical interiors, their exteriors differed in that some were stone, others clapboard. Initially they had been built with cooking fireplaces that were walled up in later years. The Feketes discovered this quite by accident. One evening as the family sat to dinner in the kitchen of the Griggstown locktender's house, they smelled smoke. A chimney fire was discovered. In order to put it out, Sandor broke through the wall, revealing the fireplace. No significant damage was done by the fire, but Mrs. Fekete soon began to complain



about the draft that the opening had created, so Sandor replaced the wall.

The house occupied a little more than an acre, large enough to allow the family to keep a cow and raise chickens and a few pigs to supplement Sandor's income and provide for his growing family. This was where he planted the first of the beautiful gardens, in which he grew many different vegetables and flowers. And this is where his children grew up in an atmosphere that those of us today might find hard to imagine: a

perpetual summer camp, fishing, swimming, and camping along the banks of the canal.

Now the father of eight children, Sandor worked hard to provide for his family and took advantage of every opportunity for gain. The boats passing along the canal moved slowly, allowing plenty of opportunity for conversation between the men on shore and those aboard the vessels. One day, Sandor got into a conversation with a boatman who was towing a barge carrying some very large pigs to market. The conversation became a challenge when



the boatman, who doubted the comparatively diminutive Sandor's ability to handle the pigs, told him if he could pick up one of the weighty animals and put it on the canal bank, he could keep it. Sandor did it. The boatman became very upset at this, saying the pigs weren't his and that he would have to pay for it if Sandor kept it. So, having proved his point, Sandor returned the animal.

Working from "can see to can't see" as was the custom in the old world and one that Sandor maintained all his life left little time for recreation. The Fekete family did, however, enjoy music, and both Sandor Sr. and Sandor Jr. played the harmonica. Their musical entertainments were enhanced for a time when they were given a pump organ that Sandor learned to play by ear. When the family moved to their second Griggstown house, however, the organ was left behind; the bellows no longer worked, rendering it inoperable.

There was plenty of work to fill the hours of the day, with the operation of the bridge and the small farm. Yet Sandor, a compulsive workman, constantly looked for additional chores.

So, perhaps because he had developed an aversion to large rocks early in his American career, he decided that a huge boulder near the house, even though it wasn't causing any problems, was an annoyance and should be disposed of. To accomplish this, he dug a huge hole next to the obstruction, pushed it into the hole, and buried it.

1922 was an eventful year for the Feketes. Sandor became a naturalized citizen on April 13 and, later that year Theresa and

Sandor were finally reunited with their two older children, Mary, then 19, and Sandor Jr., 16. How excited their parents must have been to be together with the children they had last seen when Sandor Jr. was an infant and Mary a toddler. Five more children had been born to the couple over the years, with the sixth yet to come. The family was to number ten.

Sandor was never one to pass up an opportunity to put his time to good use and supplement his income. This was particularly true during the late 1920s when the stock market crashed. Frank, now in his early teens, had been working as a groundskeeper for the Joseph Sterling family, who owned a seven-acre tract a short distance down the road from the lock. Mr. Sterling was a well-to-do lawyer with offices in New York. Relatively unaffected by the financial chaos, the Sterlings were able to retain their large property, and even make improvements on it. Sandor, who had learned stonework during his years on the canal

work boat, was contracted to build a wall along the property. Frank collected and transported the stones from the surrounding hills, and his father did the construction. That wall, along with the two pillars that mark the beginning of the driveway, are on the property today.

The major depression that began in the late 1920s changed the lives of many, Sandor and his family among them. In 1928, in an effort to downsize expenses relative to the operation of the canal, the company determined that the Griggstown lock and swing bridge were close enough together so that one man could take care of both of them. As a result, Sandor became both the lock and bridge tender. They moved into the small house that still sits next to the bridge near the bank of the canal, across from the Mule Tenders Barracks.

In part, the lease for the Griggstown house reads, "*This Agreement, made the second day of October, 192\_ (sic) between the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, lessee of the works and*



Swing bridge model at the now-closed museum in Griggstown; it was made by Mr. Cunningham and lost in a flood.

*property of the United New Jersey Railroad and Canal Company ---- and Sandor Fekete, Bridge tender--,(description of property at draw-bridge #19) --To hold the same until the lessee as tenant at will of this lessor at and for the rent or sum of One and 00/000 (\$1.00) per year to begin in the First day of September, 1928, and to be paid annually in advance of the first day of September thereafter."*

A very interesting typewritten sentence was added to the paragraph in the lease describing the obligations of the Lessee. It reads, *"That the lessee shall and will not use gasoline stoves or use or keep gasoline in any form on the said premises (sic)."* Since gasoline stoves were nonexistent, it can only be assumed that because Sandor had a Model T Ford at the time, the railroad company anticipated the possibility of extra gasoline for use in his car being stored in or near the house.

In 1930 Sandor was transferred to Blackwells Mills as its bridge tender, and the family moved again. It was to be Sandor's last move. Here, in the Blackwells Mills Canal House, he would live the remainder of his life, and it is here that we see his last years clearly through the eyes of his friends and family.

Six people comprised Sandor's family when they moved into the Blackwells Mills Canal House. By the time he was transferred to this location, some of his children had already left the nest. Four family members remained. Frank, his brother Sandor, and two of his sisters shared the home with their parents.



Life during the depression was hard, but Sandor supplemented his income here as well by raising vegetables and flowers in the weed-free garden for which he became locally famous.

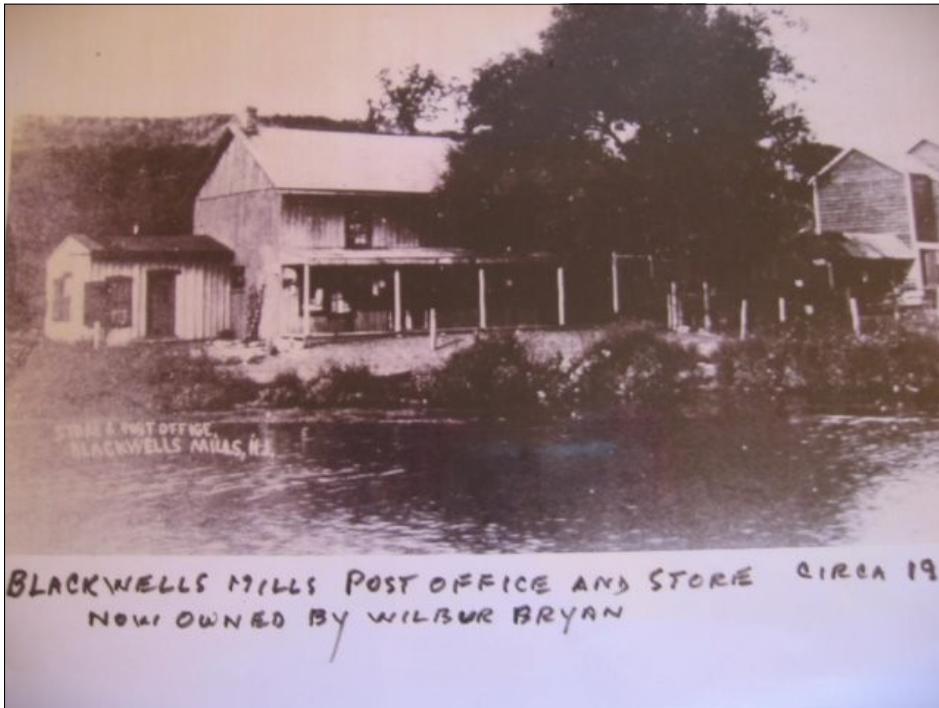
With the advent of steam-powered vessels, a new form of traffic utilized the canal. Operators of pleasure boats used the waterway for recreational purposes. Commercial vessels moved all manner of goods across the state, including equipment for use in three wars. Seen passing down the canal were two sub chasers, an airplane and the *Holland VI*, the first successful United States submarine, built in Elizabethport in 1897.

Between about 1925 and 1932 there was still much activity on the canal. 1929 was the peak year for pleasure boats, when almost a thousand private vessels enjoyed the quiet waters of the canal. During this period Sandor probably waited in the little shack that still sits on the canal

bank, watching for approaching vessels that would necessitate the opening of the bridge.

A description of how the bridge operated is found in *Franklin Township, Somerset County, N.J.- A History*, by William B. Brahms. He explains: "When a bell rang, the gate on the west bank would be closed. Then, the tender would open the bridge by pushing a 10-foot pole and walking the bridge, which was balanced on three sets of 8-inch iron wheels. The wheels moved along a track on a turntable that swung the bridge to one side. Sometimes the bridge needed a good push to get it started. The bridge itself served as a railing on the east side of the canal to prevent horses or carts from falling into the water." No doubt it was one of Sandor's duties to see that the swing bridge mechanism was in good working order, so that the need for the "a good push" was kept to a minimum.

The little canalside shack has a historical significance of its own. It was once the railroad ticket office at Voorhees Station. Some



years before Sandor's arrival, it was brought to Blackwells Mills to replace the original bridgetender's hut. During a period of renovation some years earlier, the original hut was moved across the street and attached to the main house to provide storage space. The new hut, its small size notwithstanding, did contain some amenities, such as a pot-bellied stove and a comfortable chair. Sandor doubtless spent some quiet time here, enjoying the view from the bay windows that afforded him excellent visibility of the canal in both directions.

At the end of 1932, with the railroad becoming a cheaper and more efficient means of transporting freight, the canal was closed. Soon its bridges were permanently fixed, and the bridgetender was out of a job. Sandor began a new career with the railroad, where he remained until his retirement at age 60 in 1939. Because the canal company and the railroad were joint companies, he was given a notarized document that gave him the right to remain on the property

as long as the taxes were paid and the property kept in good condition. For many years he had been paying rent in the princely amount of \$1.00 per year to the railroad. This continued for the remainder of his life.

Life for the Feketes was proceeding at its normal pace until one morning in 1940 when an event occurred that devastated Sandor and changed his life forever. As his wife arose and began to dress for the day, she suddenly collapsed and fell to the floor. Sandor ran across the street to the home of Hap Heins to call the doctor, asking him to come quickly, as he feared his wife was dead. Upon examination, Doctor Cooper, whom it seems was sadly lacking in bedside manner, commented, "Yep, she's dead, all right. Dead as a doornail." Apparently 59-year-old Theresa was the victim of a blood clot resulting from phlebitis. Shortly thereafter, Sandor found himself alone. Sandor Jr. (who had returned home following a divorce) remarried, and

Margaret (who was the last to leave the nest and the first of his children to die), moved out. Perhaps he preferred it that way.

Sandor had grown up without any of the modern amenities and maintained the same simple lifestyle to the end of his days. Even though the previous residents had wired the house for electricity and used a generator, he refused to take advantage of the convenience, preferring to maintain the old ways. His sanitary facility remained the "necessary," his brooms and fly swatters were handmade, and his vegetables were home preserved. He made wine from the grapes he grew. His one concession to modern conveniences was his Model T Ford.

Sandor went to bed at dusk and rose with the sun. Many of us require coffee or tea to start the day, but Sandor's beverage of choice was a glass of his homemade wine; it contained extra sugar that increased its potency and was laced with black pepper. He lived off the land, trapping muskrats for their pelts, which he cured and sold, and other animals for their meat. He probed the swampy ground in search of turtles that were destined for the soup pot.

There were times, however, when these practices posed some dangers. His daughter-in-law told of an incident when he got stuck in mud up to his waist, but managed to extricate himself. Checking his traps could have cost him his life one winter when he fell into the canal near his grapevines. Somehow stuck, he was rescued sometime later by Biff Heins. The grounds and wooded surroundings held dangers as well. Sandor's son Frank said his father was once attacked and injured by a deer. He

was found and driven home by passersby. His granddaughter Theresa described the scar that Sandor said came from the bite of a copperhead snake. (This may have been a slight exaggeration, however, since, while his son Frank remembers the snakebite, *he* said it was a garter snake.)

In any case, Sandor was extremely annoyed that the snake got away. His remarkable resilience became apparent again when he suffered an attack of appendicitis and passed out in the garden from the pain. He was taken to the hospital, but refused to stay. As soon as he felt better, he got dressed and walked all the way home, contending that if he was going to die, he wanted to do it at home. But that was not his time. He would go on and outlive his youngest child by three years. His daughter Margaret was killed in an auto accident in 1967.

Even in his later years, Sandor remained somewhat of a workaholic. His gardens were immaculate. When he wasn't working there, he found other tasks, one of which is difficult for us, with our modern machines and mechanical tools, to conceive of. At the age of 50, he dug out, by hand, a large section of the hill beside the Heins home. This excavation was done to make room for the construction of the barn that still stands near the house, nestled against the hillside. Sandor used a pick and shovel to loosen the dirt, and then pushed it in a wheelbarrow across the gravel roadway, where he spread it over the swampy ground. This provided enough fill to support an art studio for Hap Heins. The barn still stands, as does the artist's studio, built by Hap from the lumber in two dilapidated structures that were on

the property when it was purchased. The studio is now used by Biff Heins, Hap's talented and renowned son.

Sandor had a forceful personality and was quick to anger, especially in his younger years. Frank remembers an incident in which his father became upset with him and began chasing him around the house. Frank ran upstairs and out onto the roof and began talking down through the chimney. He was very much amused when his Dad couldn't figure out where the voice was coming from.

When the children married and the grandchildren arrived, the family used the bridge tender's house as their personal playground. They enjoyed what they called "the swimming hole" by the culvert across from the former park headquarters and fished from the bridge.

The water was clean and clear, suitable for both swimming and fishing in the summer and skating in the winter. Sandor's disposition had mellowed by then, but he was still possessive of his property and careful with his tools. He intimidated one grandson who was severely reprimanded for not cleaning and putting away the gardening tools.

With his family, Sandor remained something of an outside observer. He carefully supervised the children, but did not participate in their activities. But fishermen who frequented the canal and people who came to purchase his exceptional homegrown vegetables found him friendly and pleasant (perhaps because he knew he wouldn't have to put up with them for long).

Once the children had moved away, Sandor's only companion was his dog. There was always one at his heels. It is uncertain how many he had over the years, but he named each of them "Tootsie." One dog of whom Sandor was particularly fond, fell into the canal and drowned; Sandor never replaced him.

His lifestyle and solitude may have given rise to a rumor that this weird old man had money secreted in the house. Anne Fekete, during her interview with Jim Moise in 1988, described how someone broke into the house, robbed Sandor, and left him bound and tied to a chair. Biff Heins found him in that condition the following day.

The proximity of the house to the canal, while convenient for the bridge tenders, also could lead to problems. Flooding was an ever-present concern, whether it was the basement crawl space, where Sandor kept at least one turtle ready to be prepared for consumption, or of the house itself. During the severe flooding resulting from Tropical Storm Doria, Sandor was, with extreme reluctance, removed from the house by boat. By the time the storm ended, the water had risen to the second step of the staircase leading to the second floor.

In 1970, the end of an era came with the death of Sandor Fekete, the last bridge tender, at the age of 92. He succumbed to mouth cancer, no doubt caused by the homegrown tobacco that he cured and smoked and exacerbated by the pulling of his own tooth. Memories of him survive, as does his home, now carefully tended by the dedicated members of the Blackwells Mills Canal House Association.

# WELLAND CANAL AERIALS

by David G. Barber

Aerial photos of the entire earth are available on Google Earth and are often valuable in investigating canals. The current view, however, is not all that is available. On the top of the Google Earth page is a tool bar. Near the middle of that tool bar is a small clock. Click on the clock and you will see a horizontal time line at the top of the page. Use the arrows at each end of the time line to see earlier views of the same image. Some of these may have been taken in the winter without leaves on the trees, giving a better view of the ground. Often these views go back ten or twenty years.

In the case of the Welland Canal and its feeder, however, views from 1934 are available. They show all the locks of the second, third, and fourth canal, as well as the feeder. Many of the second, third, and feeder locks are now filled in. You can also see the bridges that used to cross the fourth canal and have now been removed.

These early aerials are most unusual and valuable in understanding these canals.



See next page



## “THE GOLDEN AGE OF CANALS”

The Canal Society of Indiana (CSI) newsletter, *The Hoosier Packet*, posted an alert about an interesting video produced in England for a BBC program. Entitled, “The Golden Age of Canals,” the film tells the story of the end of commercial shipping on England’s canals, how they fell into disrepair, and how individual citizens united to save them.

Caroline and Bob Schmidt of CSI recommend it. The show is almost two hours long and can be viewed at



[www.thevideochannel.net/play.php?id=1305752171](http://www.thevideochannel.net/play.php?id=1305752171)

## DELPHI CANAL VOLUNTEERS BUILD A PIVOT BRIDGE

The MWF\* club at the Wabash and Erie Canal Park in Delphi, Indiana is always looking for a new project. The members have constructed countless structures at the park, including a guard lock, a dock, scale shed, lime kiln, and a “pull me” boat (see photo below). The club is named for the days of the week during which they work: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

The newest attraction is a movable pivot bridge (called a swing bridge on some canals).



Brice, Jim, and Tom on the pivot bridge. ►

Roy working on the cabling for the bridge. ▼



In 2009 the Wabash & Erie had this electric boat created for the park. It was made by Scarano Boat Building in Albany, New York. Photo, Robert H. Barth. All others courtesy of Dan McCain.

On the next page you can see a map of the Wabash & Erie Canal Park. All of the structures along the waterway were built to fulfill the vision: “The Dream is Coming True.”

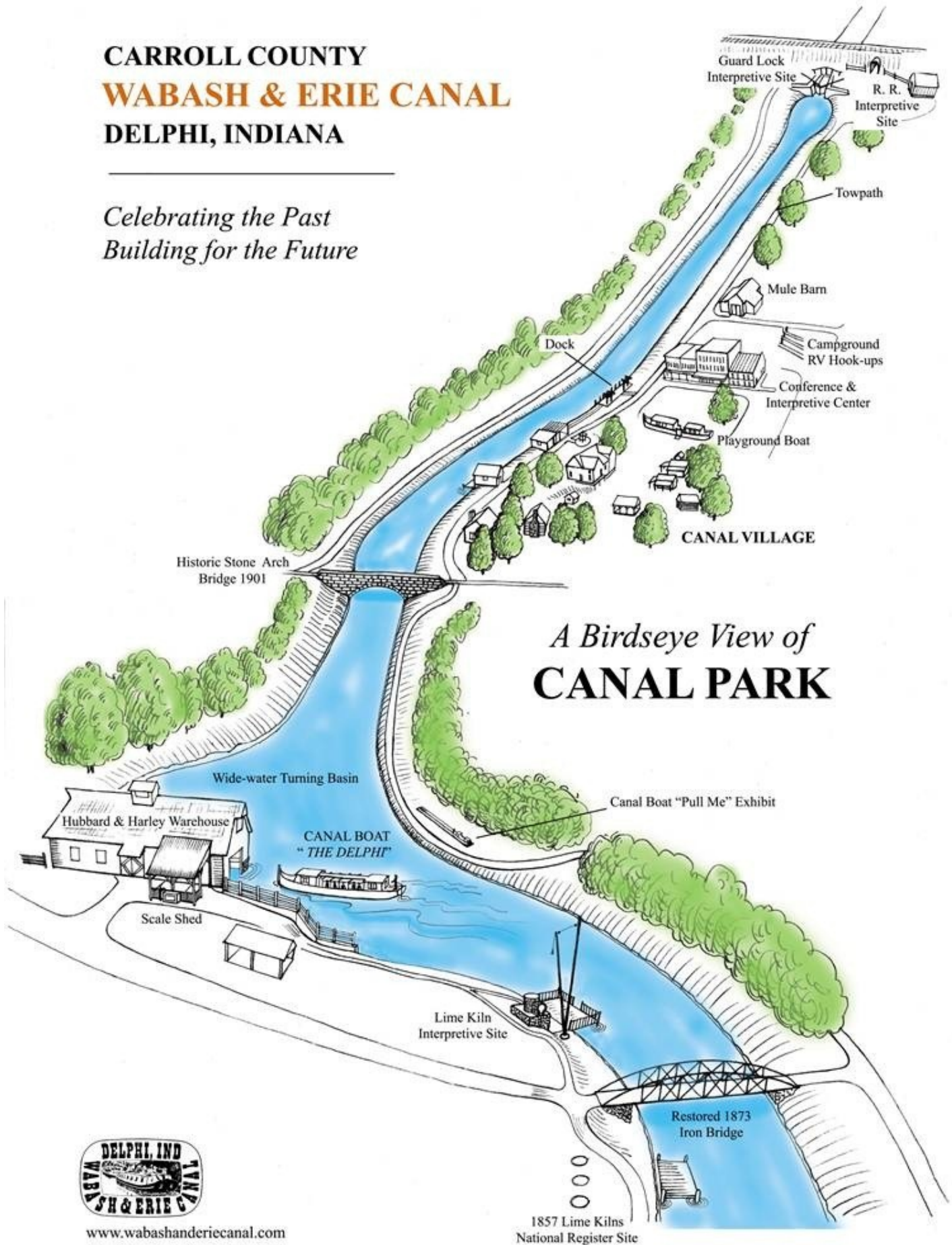
\* The club is so-named because the volunteers work at the park on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, hence MWF.



The “Push Me, Pull Me” canal boat at the park attracts a lot of attention from young and old alike.

**CARROLL COUNTY**  
**WABASH & ERIE CANAL**  
**DELPHI, INDIANA**

*Celebrating the Past*  
*Building for the Future*



*A Birdseye View of*  
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# Liberty Historic Railway, Inc.

An IRS designated 501(c)(3), Non-Profit, Public-Benefit, New Jersey Corporation

Website: [www.LHRy.org](http://www.LHRy.org)

William J. "Capt. Bill" McKelvey, Chairman, 103 Dogwood Lane, Berkeley Heights, NJ 07922

Phone: 908-464-9335 E-mail: [wjmckelvey@hotmail.com](mailto:wjmckelvey@hotmail.com)

## What Ever Happened to Capt. Bill McKelvey?

Many readers of *American Canals* probably remember this retired ACS director emeritus and former vice president. In the past he was very active, not only in ACS but also the Canal Society of New Jersey, where he is the most senior active director. McKelvey led over a dozen canal study trips to the UK, Wales, Ireland, France, Holland, and Canada for the CSNJ. These trips and his extensive research also resulted in many illustrated color slide programs. He also authored/edited many articles and five books. His Canal Captain's Press has published and sold books since 1975. Unfortunately, the CCP books are all out of print.

Capt. Bill recently communicated his appreciation and praise for the continuing editorial excellence of *American Canals* and for keeping canal history, research, and interpretation alive. He salutes the dedication of longtime President Dave Barber, the editor, and the other authors and was impressed by the quality of articles and "The Groningen Declaration."

With reference to the ACS Sales list on pg. 6 of the summer issue, McKelvey advises that he still has copies of *Best from American Canals* # 1, 3, & 4, as well as *Columbia - Philadelphia Railroad* available for \$5 each; plus *Towpaths to Tugboats*, *Canallers Songbook*, and *Canals of NY State* available for \$10 each. Shipping per order (any number of copies) is \$5. Please note that he has many other scarce titles available as well.

So what did happen to Capt. Bill? The short, easy answer is to Google "Capt. Bill McKelvey" on the internet and you should come up with the text of his 2004 John Augustus Roebling Award from the Society for Industrial Archeology, Roebling Chapter. The longer answer is that he was deeply involved with the Friends of the New Jersey Transportation Heritage Center as founding director, president emeritus, newsletter editor, annual symposium coordinator, curator, book salesman, etc. for twenty-two years, retiring in 2011.

For the last three years, he has been chairman of the nonprofit Liberty Historic Railway ([www.LHRy.org](http://www.LHRy.org)). The LHRy has focused on the stabilization and restoration of the historic Central Railroad of New Jersey, Jersey City Terminal train shed in Liberty State Park; provision of a trolley shuttle to connect parts of the park with the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail System; and construction of tracks to permit display of restored rail equipment that once used the terminal. He is also a director of the United Railroad Historical Society of New Jersey and chair of its site committee. And, you should not be surprised, he owns a 45-ton diesel electric locomotive.

Bill spent thirty-five years in the insurance safety and loss control business, retiring as an independent railroad, rapid transit, and light rail loss control consultant in 1998. He retains life memberships in ACS, CSNJ, Rough & Tumble Engineers Historical Association, and the Sierra Club. McKelvey continues to do volunteer work for several railway and transport related clubs. He works on canal oral history and is getting his slide shows digitized. Contact him at 908-464-9335 or 103 Dogwood Lane, Berkeley Heights, NJ 07922 or [wjmckelvey@hotmail.com](mailto:wjmckelvey@hotmail.com).



In 1995, Bill McKelvey posed at the Griggstown Museum with the canal boat scoop that he loaned to the museum. Photo: Robert H. Barth

## C&O Canal National Historical Park Preserves the Cushwa Warehouse in Williamsport, Maryland

Over the last several months, the C&O Canal National Historical Park has undertaken efforts to preserve the two-hundred-year-old Cushwa Warehouse in Williamsport, Maryland. C&O Canal maintenance staff have been refurbishing and painting the warehouse so that the building will reflect its appearance during the years when it served as a canal warehouse. In order to paint the southwest warehouse wall that stands over the Cushwa turning basin, maintenance staff had to create intricate scaffolding

The Cushwa Warehouse predates the C&O Canal and was originally built between 1790 and 1810. The warehouse was a significant part of the trade industry in Washington County, Maryland while housing bricks, flour, and various types of feed. Once the canal opened in the 1830s, the warehouse expanded and became a larger transportation hub due to the turning basin adjacent to the historic building. Today, the Cushwa Warehouse is home to the C&O Canal Williamsport Visitor Center and features canal exhibits and films, as well as a museum shop.

The National Park Service strives to preserve and protect the beauty of America's cultural and natural resources. Refurbishing of the Cushwa Warehouse and preserving the cultural landscape along the canal accomplishes that mission by protecting our nation's treasures for future generations to enjoy!



## CONGRATULATIONS TO ROGER SQUIRES AND DI MURRELL

The canal community extends congratulations to ACS director Roger Squires, a founding member of Inland Waterways International (IWI), who was awarded the British Empire Medal in the 2012 Queen's Birthday Honours. This award recognizes his lifetime commitment to promoting the United Kingdom's historic canals

and rivers, particularly the waterways of the London area. Roger has been a life member of Inland Waterways Association (IWA) for over 30 years and was its deputy national chairman until September 2009 and chairman of its Navigation Committee until 2010. He was a trustee of the association and chairman of its London region from November 2000 to September 2009.



British Empire Medal

Roger is a trustee of the London Canal Museum, a member of the London Waterways Commission, and a UK Director of the American Canal Society. He has been a leading organizer of Inland Waterways International since its founding, an organizer of the World Canals Conference (responsible for bringing it to Liverpool in 2007), and ambassador for the UK waterways through Europe and America, all at his own expense and initiative. He was commodore of St. Pancras Cruising Club for ten years.

Di Murrell, an IWI council member, was awarded the prestigious Sophie Coe Memorial Prize for Food History at the Oxford Symposium for Food and Cookery. Her essay, "Food on the Move," describes some of the ways in which the working boatmen who used to transport freight on the waterways of England fed themselves and their families. If you would like to read the essay, you will find it posted on Di's website, [www.foodieafloat.com](http://www.foodieafloat.com). Look under "Writings." The essay will appear in the periodical *Petit Propos Culinaire*, which is published and obtainable from Prospect Books.

## CANAL BOOKSHELF

**NEW BOOK  
AVAILABLE**



**THE  
COTSWOLD CANALS  
TOWPATH GUIDE**  
THE STROUDWATER NAVIGATION  
Michael Handford



### COTSWOLD CANALS TOWPATH GUIDE THE STROUDWATER NAVIGATION

The Stroudwater Navigation was a canal linking Stroud to the Severn Estuary near Gloucester. At Wallbridge near Stroud it connected to the Thames & Severn Canal to form a link between the River Thames and the River Severn. It passed through a total of thirteen locks and was eight miles in length. The canal was opened in 1779 and operated until it was formally abandoned in 1954.

In 2001 the Cotswold Canals Partnership was formed to restore the Stroudwater Navigation from Stonehouse to Stroud.

Michael Handford's history of the Stroudwater was first published in the 1970s; this completely revised new edition has been published to reflect the restoration work that has taken place since then. Complete with 100 black-and-white illustrations, many of which are published here for the first time, this book will bring the restoration story up to date.

Paperback, £12.99. ISBN 978-1-84868-843-8. Amberley Publishing, [www.amberley-books.com](http://www.amberley-books.com); tel: +44(0)1453 847800.

### More views of canal boats in the Queen's Flotilla



Top photos by Roger Squires



◀ The *Hazelnut*; photo by Tim Lewis. ▲  
*Spider*; photo by Nick Moulds. ▶

## CANALENDER

**October 13** - Come to Old Santee Canal Park for a beautiful canoe trip through historic Biggin Swamp and the Santee Canal. See wading birds, reptiles, and other wildlife; learn the historical significance of the first canal built in America. 10 a.m.-noon. \$15. Register by October 12. Meet at the Interpretive Center. Moncks Corner, SC; 843-899-5200.

**October 19-22**—Pennsylvania Canal Society's tour of the Pine Grove extension of the Union Canal. Contact: Bill Lampert, [indnbll@yahoo.com](mailto:indnbll@yahoo.com).

**October 21** - Joint MCA-AMC Fall Middlesex Canal Walk. Meet at 1:30 pm at the Middlesex Canal Museum and Visitor Center in the Faulkner Mill in North Billerica. The 3-4-mile walk will be on generally level wooded terrain and streets, rain or shine. The route follows the canal south of the Concord River. Visit a guard lock, an anchor stone for the floating bridge, and many stretches of canal, some still watered. The Museum, Visitor Center and bookstore open, 12:00-4:00. No dogs, please. 978-670-2740. Robert Winters 617- 661-9230; [robert@middlesexcanal.org](mailto:robert@middlesexcanal.org)), Roger Hagopian, 781-861-7868.

**October 21** - Miami & Erie Canal Corridor Association's "Walk With Nature." Enjoy a crisp fall day along the Towpath Trail as you walk from St. Marys to Glynwood Road (or to shorten waiting time, the other way around) and take a bus back to your starting point. Along the hike you can enjoy the Fall Festival in Memorial Park, the Pioneer Encampment, car show, music, food, and entertainment. Free and fun for the entire family. Contact: Neal Brady at 419-733-6451 or [meccadirector@nktelco.net](mailto:meccadirector@nktelco.net).

**November 4** - The Middlesex Canal Association celebrates its 50th anniversary with a van tour of the canal. Tour includes dinner in the Baldwin Mansion, home of the canal builder, and birthday cake at the canal museum. Celebrants will be driven to and from their hotel in Boston or Lowell, Massachusetts. Preferred hotels and rates will be posted in October. The tour will leave the mu-

seum, 71 Faulkner St, Billerica MA at 10 am and return at 4 pm for cake and ice cream. Dinner at 2 pm will be served by Sichuan Garden II, located in the Baldwin Mansion, 2 Alfred St, Woburn MA 01801. \$50/person. Send check, payable to the Middlesex Canal Association, to the MCA, P.O. Box 333, Billerica MA 01821, before October 22nd; include an email address or contact phone number. 978-670-2740; [jj@middlesexcanal.org](mailto:jj@middlesexcanal.org).

**November 8, 2012** - Miami & Erie Canal Corridor Association will hold a Canal Diggers Affair at St. Marys Eagles. Social Hour at 6 PM, Dinner at 6:30 PM. Entertainment, live and silent auctions, raffles, cash bar. Dinner: \$25/person. Contact: Neal Brady at 419-733-6451 or [meccadirector@nktelco.net](mailto:meccadirector@nktelco.net).

**November 17** - 10 am. Walk NJ's D&R Canal Feeder from Trenton's Cadwalader Park to the junction at Old Rose Street (2.3 miles). Contact Bill Valocchi, 609-989-1931 or [barths@att.net](mailto:barths@att.net).

**March 2, 2013** - Canal Society of NY State Symposium and Winter Meeting at Monroe Community College, Rochester. Follow this link for "Call for Papers," [www.newyorkcanals.org/explore\\_symposium.htm](http://www.newyorkcanals.org/explore_symposium.htm)

**April 5-7, 2013** - The Canal Society of Indiana spring tour of the Wabash & Erie Canal, Attica to Montezuma, Indiana. HQ: Sleep Inn, Danville, Illinois. See canal remains, murals, a covered bridge, a war memorial museum, a waterfall, and much more on this three-day adventure. More information to follow. 260-432-0279.

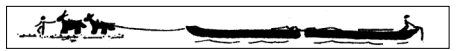
**April 26-28, 2013** - Canal Society of NY State's spring tour of the D&H Canal Northern End, Kingston to Port Hyxson. In addition to exciting 19th century canal sites, including a Roebling canal aqueduct remnant, we will see the Hudson River port at Roundout where it

meets the river and the historic Rosendale cement industry, a canal museum, and a maritime museum. A boat trip to a Hudson lighthouse and up the Roundout is possible as well. See [www.newyorkcanals.org](http://www.newyorkcanals.org).

**September 16--19, 2013** - The World Canals Conference in Toulouse, France on the Canal du Midi, a World Heritage site.

**September 20-22** - The Canal Societies of Indiana and Ohio will sponsor a trip to Delphi, Indiana.

**2014** - 2014 World Canals Conference, Navigli Lombardi, Milan, Italy.



### New Canal Boat, *Lil' Diamond III*, Based in Herkimer, NY

A new 65-foot-long, 130-passenger tour boat made its maiden voyage in August to its home port at Herkimer.

The *Lil' Diamond III*, owned by Erie Canal Cruises and built by Scarano Boat Building Inc. in Albany, is the third and largest vessel at the Herkimer base.

Capt. Jerry Gertz said, "Thanks to the incredible design and boat building expertise of the Scarano team, we now have a wonderful new vessel which will help us introduce even more people to the history, beauty, and fun of today's Erie Canal." The vessel will be available for regular Erie Canal boat tours and special charters.

For more information, please contact Capt. Jerry Gertz at 315-866-5989 or visit Erie Canal Cruises at [www.eriecanalcruises.com](http://www.eriecanalcruises.com). For more information on Scarano Boat Building Inc., visit [www.scaranoboat.com](http://www.scaranoboat.com). Scarano Boat Building, Inc. is located at 194 South Port Road, Albany, NY 12202.

For updates and information, visit [www.canals.ny.gov](http://www.canals.ny.gov)