

American Canals

The Bulletin of the American Canal Society

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Dedicated to Historic Canals, Canal Research, and Parks

Summer 2019

The Erie Canal Sings

A New Book from Dr. William Hullfish with Dave Ruch

The Erie Canal Sings; A Musical History of New York's Grand Waterway, by Dr. William (Bill) Hullfish with Dave Ruch

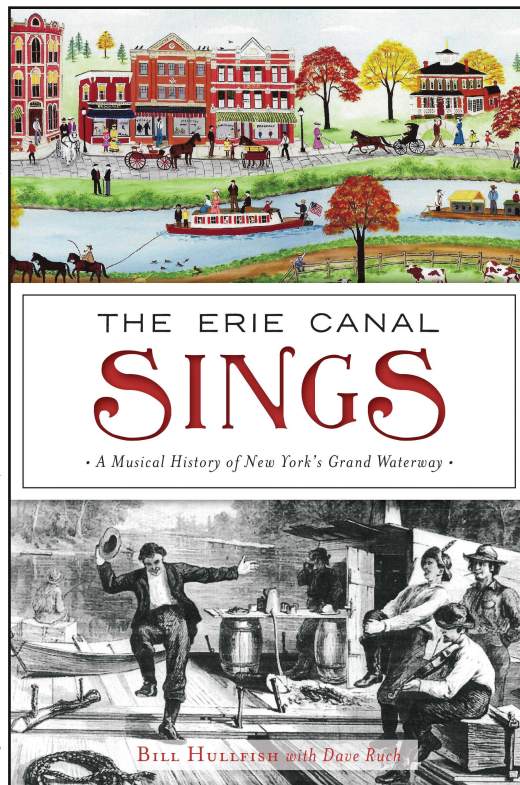
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All too often, any new book about the historic canals is basically a rehash of the same old same old. After all, there are only so many ways we can learn about how Dewitt Clinton was the father of the Erie Canal. It is the rare pleasure when an author takes another road and takes a deep dive into a completely new area of study. Carol Sheriff's The Artificial River is one of these books where you begin to learn something new from page number one. And so it is with The Erie Canal Sings. This is a totally new look at something that has been there in plain sight all along, the songs of the canallers. But be cautioned and don't let the title mislead you. This is a book about many canals in many states, not just the Erie. Everyone will find something of home in this book.

In his introduction, Dr. Hullfish states that he has been collecting and performing these canal songs for over fifty years. His prior work, The Canaller's Songbook, continues to be used by canal groups and folk musicians far and wide. It only makes sense that after singing these tunes for all these years, he has finally written a book to answer the questions: "Who wrote them, Who sang them, and What did they mean?"

Let me share my bias. I am not a musician. I can not carry a tune, nor do I particularly enjoy listening to music. I rarely pay attention on those occasions when a wandering troubadour happens to cross my path. I was really quite ready to not like this book. But I was wrong, this is a marvelous little read. It will introduce you to songs you have never heard about, and reintroduce you to old favorites. However, this is not a songbook. If you are looking for the full lyrics of these songs, go hunt up a copy of The Canaller's Songbook. The Erie Canal Sings is a full-on history book presented in a very light and easy manner. You will learn about the songs and poems that were used by the canal workers and entertainers of the canal period. This is a nice change in canal scholarship as there are so many times that we get lost in the details of canal history that we forget that at its core, it is always a history of the people. Who built the canals, who ran the boats, who worked the locks and so much more. And many of these people used these songs because they were happy, sad, afraid, or to reassure their animal teams.

Yes, of course, Bill gets into the big daddy of all canal songs. He calls it, "America's Canal Song." This of course is "Low Bridge" by Thomas Allen. This song is sung by every 4th grade class, at every canal event, and on every canal boat ride. It is either loved or hated by canal enthusiasts, but it is inescapable. It even



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For Canal Calendar items and news of local, state, and regional canal societies: Contact Michael Riley. (see address below)

The objectives of the American Canal Society are to encourage the preservation, restoration, interpretation, and use of the historical navigation 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.

An annual subscription of four issues of the American Canals is included with ACS membership. Regular single membership \$25; Family Membership \$35; Life Membership \$500. Single copies of American Canals, \$3.

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Deadline: Material for our next issue must be on the editor's desk no later than September 5, 2019. Contact Michael Riley. Materials submitted to American Canals for publication should be typed and double spaced or sent by email in MS WORD or Libre WRITER format. You may send actual photographs, which will be scanned and returned, or digital versions may be emailed.

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President's Message

Back in 1994 when I was the new guy on our Canal Society of NYS trips, it was expected that the group would fill two buses. Having 80 or 90 or even 100 trip participants was not the exception, it was the norm. Today, finding 45 to fill one bus can be difficult, and as a result, many of our groups are partnering with others to hold joint trips. And it isn't just tours; overall membership is declining. An article from the American Association of State and Local History, dated November 14, 2016, speaks to the decline in membership and what might be done about it. As listed, there are several causes to this decline but the two main ones are; 1) there are fewer younger folks around as population numbers decline, and 2) the sense of nostalgia is not as strong as people move around and lose contact with their local history. It is all bad news? No. But we must be flexible and willing to change. Be sure to offer family friendly programs, be more digital, and be more inclusive. Recognize that many cultures helped to build the nation, and we should be celebrating all these contributions.

The digital component rings true. As I look around the web at the many canal-related websites, there are such a diversity of old and new layouts being used. (To be fair, our own ACS website was just as guilty, with the old 1990s "html" layout of lists and clickable links. We are working to update and make it a bit more user friendly.) There are a lot of websites out there to help you understand what is "good" and what is "bad" and why. Take a look at <https://blog.rankingbyseo.com/bad-websites/> and see how your site stacks up. Then take a look at the websites of larger institutions who can afford to employ web designers to see what is attractive. With the free themes available through Wordpress and others, you can cheaply update your look and refresh your message. A couple of other things you can do are to ask your kids or grandkids to take a look and see what they say. Also, make sure that your site allows analytics and review the behavior of your viewers.

It is nice to see groups trying new things to get new people to turn out. Elsewhere in this issue is a

recap of the latest CSNYS tour, which was held on a Thursday – Friday. Although this might limit who can take time off to attend, it also opens new possibilities to get into businesses that are not open on weekends. It also hearkened back to the days when field trip attendees drove between sites in long carpools. If your group is trying new things, share with us so we can share with others.

This issue has notice of a number of new canal books. Dr. Hullfish takes us through a music journey of the canals through his *Erie Canal Sings*. Terry Woods was kind enough to review my new book on bridge dams. We also have notice about new books from Dick Palmer and David Edwards May.

Our annual ballot for the election of directors is included with this issue. If you accept the slate as presented, no action is required. If you have been around for a bit, you will recognize that all the names are people who have been around for many years. Some go back decades. We are struggling to find new people to fill these positions and while I am thankful that these folks keep hanging in there, I know that many would happily retire if offered the chance. I will say that when compared to the other organizations I belong to, being a board member of the ACS is an easy and low-pressure task. I say this because for most of us, serving on the ACS board is an extension of what we are already doing with our local group or state society. Please think about helping out so we can continue to move this group forward toward our 50th anniversary.

Mike

Trip Review

On June 6 and 7, 2019, the Canal Society of New York State Toured Kingston and Albany

As all canal groups watch with alarm as the number of tour participants decline year to year, we are looking “outside the box” for something new. There is an opportunity here to take some chances and try out some ideas that perhaps have been kicking about in the back corners of the brain.

The history of the society tour might be worthy of its own article, but it might be that the Canal Society of New York State (CSNYS) set the standard that most tend to follow with the weekend tour. For a number of years, the standard format has been the Saturday bus tour, bookmarked with Friday early

bird tours and a Sunday morning trip. On Saturday night, a more formal dinner with speaker typically fills out the day. The hotel acts as the headquarters and meeting space, and although the renting of the individual rooms is left to the participant, a block of rooms is negotiated as part of the package. To cap

it off, some offer a guidebook to the package to help the participants follow along and gain additional insights.

In past years, a CSNYS trip could attract enough participants to fill two buses and host over 100 for the dinner. However, these numbers have been declining as many of the older more stalwart attendees age off and are not replaced with younger folks. A typical trip is now budgeted to break even with 35 registrations, which can price out some folks who cannot afford to spend \$500 for a weekend

event.

With this in mind, for the spring trip, the CSNYS hosted what was titled: Not your Normal Spring 2019 Field Trip. The tour was scheduled for a Thursday and Friday and was set to coincide with the Hudson River Maritime Museum lighthouse tour on Thursday night. Attendees were left to their own to seek out hotels and all meals; and all travel was by individual car, with carpooling strongly suggested. The participants could pick and choose between stops, but paid a minimum tour registration fee regardless, and everyone was required to pre-register. There was no guidebook printed. To ease travel between sites, the trip was held in the Kingston area on one day, and the Albany area the

next. Since the first tour was at 10am, we traveled

Wednesday night to a Kingston hotel of our choosing so we would be fresh for the trip.

The trip began in Kingston with a stop at the Feeney Shipyard, which has been located along the banks of the



The new Solaris, a solar powered tour boat, takes visitors to the Rondout Lighthouse.

Rondout since 1904. Unfortunately, Tom Feeney the 5th, who is now the current generation of ownership, was unable to meet us as planned. We noted the site of the shipyard by gathering at the main entrance and then after a brief talk and look around, we proceeded to a higher vantage point on the south side of the river. The shipyard has recently expanded to an old stone quarry, which lies across the river. From this high bluff, we were able to take in the entire shipyard safely. After learning about the family history and the history of the shipyard, we were then free to look around until the early

afternoon.

Lower Kingston, or what is called Rondout, is a very compact neighborhood located along the river. It is very easy to take in many sites and find interesting places to eat within an easy walk. After lunch and a bit of a walk, we gathered at the Hudson River Maritime Museum. Half of the group boarded the Solaris, a newly rebuilt all electric launch, for a short cruise to the nearby Rondout Lighthouse. The other half of the group was given a walking tour around the area and a visit to the new Wooden Boat School. This working classroom teaches the craft of wooden boat building to old and young. The walking tour and the many other activities of the HRMM can be found on their website. After the walk, there was time to look through the wonderful museum. And then it was time for the second group's boat ride and lighthouse tour.

The Rondout Lighthouse sits at the confluence of the Rondout and Hudson River, at the end of a long breakwall. The tide at this point of the Hudson is about 4 feet, so at times it would be possible to walk out to the lighthouse, and when the tide is high, the breakwall disappears under the waves. The lighthouse was built in 1915 and was the third to mark the Rondout channel. It

was built to house a keeper and his family and remains in very good shape. It is currently managed by the HRMM and tours are offered throughout the season. The tour includes a history of the Rondout lighthouses, the families that staffed them, and a full tour including a climb up the tower to gain a great view of the river. After the tour, we returned to the museum and then were off for a drink and dinner before the evening cruise.

The evening cruise was aboard the Rip Van Winkle, a large tour boat that operates from Lower Kingston. In addition to the cruise, there was also a

series of talks about the history of the Hudson River lighthouses, with a slide show. Unfortunately, the bright light made it impossible to see the slides, but the speakers were able to work around this small issue. A few years back, the society had taken a cruise on this ship, which traveled much further down the Hudson allowing us to see more. This cruise only traveled downstream to the Esopus Meadows lighthouse and then back. However, the weather was very nice and everyone enjoyed the tour.

The next day (Friday), we headed north to the Albany area, about a 45-minute trip. The first stop was at the Matton Shipyard, which is located on Peebles Island and is overseen by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. The shipyard is located at the confluence of the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers and operated between 1916 and 1983. It is now a fenced off area with three or four wooden

buildings in various phases of disrepair. Andy Kitzmann, who works for the Heritage Corridor, gave us a tour of the site. The organization owns the property and has plans to reconstruct the site as a public access point to the Hudson River, bearing in mind that the area



The Rondout Lighthouse sits at the entrance to the Rondout River.

floods easily and that any construction will need to be flood resistant or can survive after being flooded. Being an industrial site, there is much remediation and clean up that needs to take place before any construction can occur. More on the plans can be viewed on the Corridor's website.

Then it was off to the New York State Museum in downtown Albany. We had a couple hours to kill, so we found parking and walked around the concourse that runs under the State buildings. Lunch was found at a new food court and then we

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News From Around the Canal Community

Canal Boat Fundrasier a Splashingly Big Success!

On a beautiful sunny and warm day in May, the D&R Canal Watch hosted a canal boat dinner cruise at Hugh Moore Park in Easton, Pennsylvania. Fifty friends and members of the Watch experienced a mule-pulled ride along the Lehigh Canal with the added fun of being raised and lowered in the Abbott Street lock. Traveling troubadour Roy Justice entertained the passengers with canal history and songs, including the crowd-pleasing “The Cat Came Back.” Many in the crowd had never been inside a canal lock and were excited to learn what it is like to be raised and lowered by the power of the water.

The event was held to raise funds for the restoration of the bridgetender’s station in East Millstone. This is the structure next to the bridgetender’s house. The bridgetender would wait in the station until he heard the sound of the conch shell, signaling the approach of a canal boat. Then he would stop the road traffic (horses and wagons, later cars and trucks) and swing the bridge to the side. For the restoration, suggested by Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park Superintendent Patricia Kalleser, the station would be moved off its foundation, restored, and then replaced. We hope that the project will be done before the Amwell Road/Route 514 bridge over the canal is replaced. - Linda Barth



The Canal Society of Indiana Delivers New Signs

The Canal Society of Indiana is working on marking canal sites with 4-foot-wide by 2-foot-high signs with clear white lettering on a dark brown background. In early June Bob Schmidt, CSI president, picked up 8 new signs near Cincinnati, Ohio. He delivered one to Preston Richardt in Warrick County for the W & E Canal's Pigeon Creek Reservoir; one to Sam Ligget in Vigo County for the W&E Canal near Riley; and six to Tom Castaldi in Fort Wayne. Tom is delivering these six signs for the Aboite Aqueduct No. 2 in Fort Wayne, Allen County; Wabash River Feeder Dam No. 1 in Huntington, Huntington County; Wabash River Feeder Dam No. 2 in Lagro, Wabash County; Wabash River Feeder Dam No. 3 in Peru, Miami County; Eel River Aqueduct No. 5 in Logansport, Cass County; and Wabash River Feeder Dam No. 4 in Pittsburg, Carroll County. The counties are then erecting them. They should be up in the next few weeks. While out traveling this summer, look for this new signage. We hope these signs create awareness of Indiana's canal heritage. Attached are photos of two of these markers. - Carolyn Schmidt



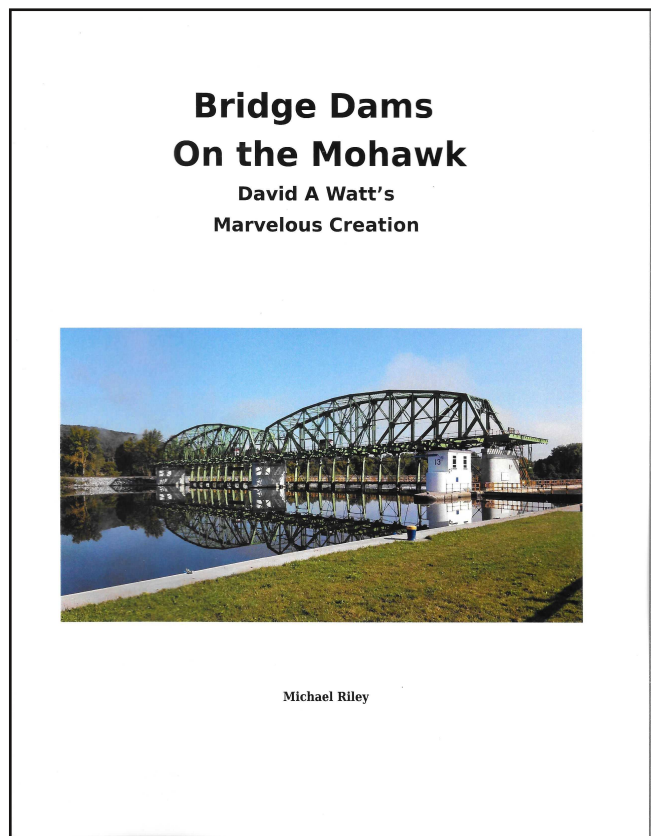
Middlesex Canal Museum Gains Approvals

The board of the Middlesex Canal Association appeared before their local Zoning Board of Appeals to request a variance that would allow them to convert an existing empty building into their new museum. Currently, the Association rents space to house their museum, but recent rent increases have made this arrangement no long viable. The Association wished to move into a nearby empty and somewhat derelict brick building, but needed to complete a number of engineering studies to ensure that the structure was sound enough for a public space. With the needed studies in hand, the Association was seeking permission to convert the building into a museum, with an observation deck and a footbridge to a nearby parking lot. They were granted their special permit by the ZBA and were congratulated by the ZBA members for their hard work in moving this project forward. By the time of this printing, the Association will have presented before the Conservation Commission. - editor

Book Review

Michael Riley, long time Jack of all Trades with the Canal Society of New York State and currently President of The American Canal Society, has written a new book. And, as expected, it is a good one.

Its title, Bridge Dams On The Mohawk, sounds like a niche piece, primarily suited for reading by persons with an engineering bent. It does satisfy that desire anyone might ever have to know nearly everything about the genesis and history of that specific type of engineering structure. However, the contents of this intensely researched and breezily written book provides much more than that.



The book contains a great deal of data and interesting information on the plan, design, and construction of the New York State Barge Canal (with all its modern refinements such as individual electric plants for each lock, canalization of various natural watercourses, rather than a separately dug channel – of which these unique movable dams on the Mohawk River, were an integral part). The meat

of the book though, of course, is a great deal of information on the engineering, construction and required retrofitting of the title piece – Bridge Dams on the Mohawk.

It also contains a history on the genesis of bridge dam design (along with histories of the prominent engineers involved) and continues looking at that specific engineering structure through currently modern times.

The book is relatively short, 59 pages of text, but those pages are chock full of data and information. One hundred and ten detailed footnotes testify to the fact of the intense research that went into this effort. The book also contains more than forty black & white and colored photographs (as that mode of photography became available) and sketches depicting nearly all the engineering structures described or merely mentioned in the book.

One unique section of the book that captured my particular interest was how the first dam and lock structure erected on the Mohawk got a literal “Baptism of Water”, by experiencing (and withstanding) the infamous 1913 flood.

A great and informative read for anyone with even a passing interest in artificial waterway history or significant historical Civil Engineering. - Terry K. Woods

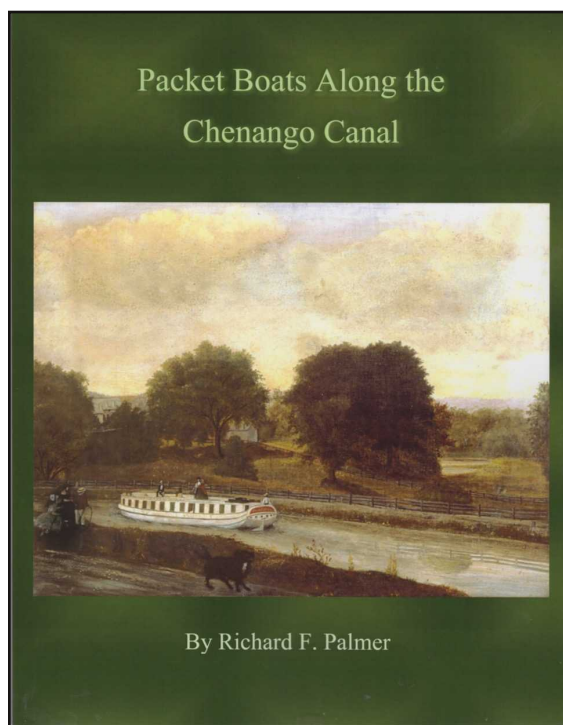
This book is only available by mail order at this time. Contact Mike Riley at mriley20@twcny.rr.com or visit the [Bridge Dams On the Mohawk facebook page](#).

More Books

Packet Boats Along the Chenango Canal

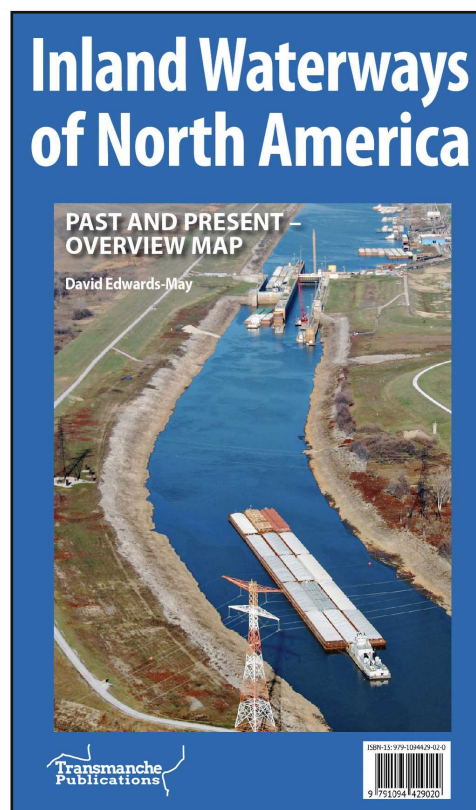
Richard Palmer is a prolific author who has written many articles for the CSNYS Bottoming Out, American Canals, The Canal Times, and many newspapers. His newest book is Packet Boat Along the Chenango Canal. The 97 mile Chenango ran between Utica and Binghamton. It was opened in 1834 and operated up to 1878.

The 50 page book is available from the Chenango County Historical Society for \$16.00. You can write the society at 45 Rexford St, Norwich, NY, 13815. Or by way of their Facebook page. Search for @chenangohist.



North American Inland Waterways Map

The second edition of the North American Inland Waterways map, covering the entire network of inland waterways throughout the USA and Canada, is now available. It Includes historic and current navigable waterways. Ideal for users of inland water transport and scholars, 'Great Loop' cruise planning and exploring the routes and vestiges of the historic canals. The large folded map covers USA and Canada from Sioux City on the Missouri in the west to Maine and Quebec in the east, and from Lake Superior to southern Florida, with enlargements for the canals of New York State and Ontario, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, the Columbia-Snake Rivers, Nova Scotia, the navigable rivers in California and the Red River around Winnipeg. The map was first published in 2005. This map of North American Inland Waterways will assist the inland waterway user, educator, researcher, appreciator and bystander in pursuing their particular interests for years to come. Dimensions open: 47½ by 34¼ in, folded 6¾ by 11½ in. Scale 1:2 900 000 (enlargement 1:1 700 000).



ACS News

American Canal Society Website and More ACS News

As I mentioned in the President's Message, I have been doing some maintenance on the ACS website. To be certain, a lot of what is being completed will be unseen by the user. You might see that we now have two domain addresses as I have added americancanalsociety.org. Both will now work and will take you to our new host where you will find our updated website. Over the last few months, your board has taken a look at our expenses and decided that we needed to find a less expensive hosting platform. I was delighted to find someone who offered to help me with the daunting task of saving and moving the thousands of pages of materials that David Barber had posted on the old website. The one thing I didn't want to do was lose or have to recreate all that great information. Throughout this exercise, I have discovered a few things that I think might be useful to your organization.

The first bit of wisdom that I would like to pass along is that you need to have more than one person with the basic information about your organization's website. Although it is highly likely that one person has stepped forward to do all of the website work, you want others to have a way in. If they alone have the login and password information, and they get mad, move on, or the dreaded other, your organization will be left without access. For example, we had to ask Audrey for David's death certificate, provide a copy of his obituary, and a notarized letter asking to have access to the website. And yet with the other host, all we had to do was call and ask. So set up a Dropbox account (it is free), or make a few others the website owners. You can have more than one admin on a website. And do the same for all your social media accounts.

The website was David's creation and as you might expect, it contains a tremendous amount of

information. If you logged onto the home page, you were overwhelmed with lists of clickable links to all this information. As I mentioned prior, this was the older HTML website model which was very popular in the early days. Many still use this format, likely due to the desire to stick with what works. But it is not attractive and can be difficult to navigate. You get maybe two seconds to make an impression before someone clicks away. So I have installed a drop down menu which I hope will make things a bit easier to find.

I would ask that if you have never taken the time to go through the website, take a look. The Canal Data Sheets are a fantastic resource. This was a project of the early ACS members to document what structures were still in existence at that time. They offer a great snapshot of canal preservation. All the issues of American Canals from 1972 to 2016 are there as downloadable pdf files. In addition, the master indexes are available to make it easier to locate a particular topic. There are listings showing canals by state. And more. In short there is a lot on there. There are also links to other sites, and some of these no longer work, and as I find them, I try to update or delete them.

One of my goals for the website is to have a interactive map that will allow us to mark canal sites on a Google Maps interface. I would have found this useful as my wife and I explored the midwest. I later found out that we passed by some very nice sites. Do you have ideas? Let me know if you like what you see, or if you find outdated info.

If you check out the Canalendar on the back page, you will see that the annual ACS meeting will take place on Friday the 18th of October. Our ACS Vice President Martha Capwell Fox, who is the Director at the National Canal Museum has offered to give us a behind the scenes tour before our business meeting. If you are in the area, please stop in and see what we do.

appears in the 1935 film "The Farmer Takes a Wife" being sung by the crew of an 1850s canal boat, even though it wasn't written until the beginning of the 20th Century. Bill goes into the history of the song and it's author, and in doing so, he tries to clear up many misconceptions. You will even learn the truth about if it was "fifteen miles" or "fifteen years" on the E-ri-e Canal. In the end, you will learn that it was not a song of the 1850s canal boatmen, but a song of nostalgia, recalling what was being lost as the old Erie disappeared and the new Barge Canal was built.

There is the obligatory history of the canal, keeping in mind that not everyone who picks up this book will be up to date on their canal history. So in order to give some context, Bill spends a short chapter on Erie Canal history, but of course, it is seen through some verse. This is nicely done. Other chapters will take you through the life of the canaller, and then into what happened as the canals began to fade away.

This is a nice light summertime read. For those of you who can carry a tune, you will likely hum or sing your way through this musical journey as you learn some new and interesting facts. Thanks to Dr. Hullfish, who has indeed given us a refreshingly new book. I congratulate him for giving us all another way to learn about our canal history. I also thank Arcadia and The History Press for publishing it. You will not be disappointed.

Note that Dr. Hullfish is a member of the American Canal Society. This review was written by Michael Riley.

took in the view from the top of the Corning Tower, the tallest structure in Albany, which offers a great view to the north, south, and east. It is free and a treat that should not be passed up when you are on the State complex.

We headed up to the NYS Museum and spent some time looking around before our guided tour of the Enterprising Waters exhibit. The museum is large and has something for everyone, and a full day can be spent walking around the many exhibits. Brad Utter, the Senior Historian at the museum, gave us a

detailed tour of the Erie Canal exhibit, providing us with many behind-the-scenes tidbits. It covers the full timeline of the canal, from the pre-canal days up through the Barge Canal. It will be closing at the end of October 2019.

We then headed back south about 15 miles to the Port of Coeymans. This port is operated by the Carver group and was in the news for its work as an assembly area for large components on the new Tappen Zee bridge. The port is expansive, covering many hundreds of acres, and we were treated to a guided tour by Steve, Matt, and Jenna. The facility owns it's own buses, which we boarded for a toured of the site. Steve Kelly provided us with many details about how the site, which was a brickyard for many decades, became the Port of Coeymans and how it has rapidly grown over the last few years. To start with, we saw a barge of broken cement from the old Tappen Zee being unloaded to be ground for reuse. On the tour we saw stockpiles of ground glass, gypsum, table and road salt. We also saw (and smelled) a new medical marijuana growing facility. As Steve said, the Port and the employment it offers has served to bring new life to the area. He also noted that the future looks very good for increased commerical marine traffic. For us canal folks, we learned that this was the company that had built the "Glass Barge" which toured the state in 2018. They had also moved the Genesse Brewing beer tanks through the canal system in the spring of 2017.

This was the last stop on our tour and we headed home. All seemed to agree that we had found the tour very interesting and fun. In all, about 48 people had registered to take part in at least one of the stops. The average group size was about 30 or less. Some people took in just one stop, while a majority took in four to five of the site visits. A majority of the group was older and retired, although a few, such as my wife and I, took the time off work to attend. It was well worth it. As for costs, it worked out to be about the same as a weekend tour for us. We still needed two nights stay in a hotel, along with two lunches and dinners. There was some savings for the registration, but this was off set by increased spending on our meals. All in all, it was a very good trip and perhaps a new model something different. If your group has tried new ways to present a tour, let us know.

-Michael Riley

Canal Comments

By Terry Woods

CANAL COMMENTS #169, from Januaray 2019

A couple of months ago, I was surfing the Internet trying to get some items on the Pennsylvania & Ohio Canal and ran across an article written in April of 1999 about the 'discovery' in 1987 of the remains of Lock 4 of the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal in Pittsburgh.

This struck a cord as the committee that was attempting to do something with the recovered remains of that lock held a big canal event in Pittsburgh in, I believe, late spring of 1988. I had presented a paper on Pearl Nye in March of 1988 at the Annual Symposium on Canal History and Technology at Lafayette College in Easton, Pa. There, the historian for the National Canal Museum asked me to give a presentation in Pittsburgh a couple of months later for the "Pittsburgh Locks Committee." I did and my wife and I were wined and dined greatly and the committee members showed a lot of enthusiasm. Then I heard nothing until that squib on the Internet.

Here is a short column on the history, to date, of the Pittsburgh Locks Project. Anybody out there know anything more about this project? There is a sketch of the latest proposal on the Internet.

I have mixed feelings about recreating a canal structure in an area other than where it was originally. I am as excited as any amateur archaeologist when I discover an artifact that wasn't known before, but the real interest for me in studying Ohio's and the Nation's canal era is the actions and reactions of the people involved. The canal structures have always been a bit secondary to me. And, if you remove lock stones from a lock, what are they other than stones?

PITTSBURGH'S CANAL LOCK NO. 4

Pennsylvania's Main Line Canal was completed from Philadelphia to Allegheny City, now the North Side of Pittsburgh, by 1834. From that time on, for over three decades, the canal gave this great city an initial impetus toward its future greatness.

The western end of Pennsylvania's Main Line Canal came down into what is now 21st century Pittsburgh, North Side, beside the Allegheny River from Freeport and ran between Canal Street and LaCock Street (named after Pennsylvania's first Canal Commissioner). Just past Federal Street, the canal turned left and headed along the river, directly through the current home of the Pittsburgh Pirates National League Baseball Team (PNC Park). Lock 1 would be located directly beneath right field. Lock No. 2 under home plate. Runners heading from home to first would have been running (or walking) on top of the old towpath, deep below.

In 1987, workmen "discovered" the remains of Lift Lock No 4 of the canal during excavations for the I-279-north tunnel under the Norfolk & Western railroad. The lock wasn't entirely complete as the top four courses of its double stone-walled chamber had been removed during the railroad's original construction. Also, the Weigh Lock that had been located next to the lift lock was partially destroyed some years later when a sanitary sewer line was run through its site.

When the remains of lock 4 were located, archaeologists were called in and the site was carefully excavated. Over 200 hand-hewed stone blocks were tagged and removed. Also recovered were a nearly complete wooden lock gate, iron work, wood planking, plus a number of foundation timbers. At the time, local archeologist Ron Carlisle called the discovery "the greatest Archaeological find since the uncovering of Fort Pitt." The hope, initially, was to reconstruct the lock somewhere in the city along the river in a suitable park setting so the public could see and enjoy an important part of Pittsburgh's early history.

GAI Consultants compiled the report since the project was federally funded. The Historic Engineering Record website has photos of the excavation. The stones were tagged with the numbers relating to the sketch (now in the GAI report) made before the lock was dismantled. Then

the stones were shipped to the City Maintenance Yard on Ridge Avenue, North side for storage. The wood was shipped to University Park, a University of Pittsburgh Research Facility that was a former Gulf Oil Laboratory. Carnegie Museum personnel sprayed the wooden artifacts with the preservative Polyethylene Glycol, and coated the metal artifacts with a preservative that chemically bonds with Iron Oxide to form a black, protective coating.

That same year, 1987, a nonprofit citizen's group, the "Committee on Pittsburgh Archaeology and History," was formed and took over ownership of the Lock 4 artifacts. This committee had plans drawn and pursued proposals for the construction of a park facility near the Allegheny River. To this end, they held at least one large event in Pittsburgh to publicize their efforts, which included meeting with city, county, neighborhood foundation and historic preservation groups. But city administration changes, bureaucratic shuffling, a dearth of funding, and a general lack of a feeling of urgency among the necessary officials caused the project to wither over the years.

In a Post-Gazette article written in May 1999, author Robert J. Feikema gave a brief, but detailed accounting of the Pittsburgh Locks project and made the recommendation that salvaged stones from the walls of Lock 4, then residing in a 1,500-square-foot Pittsburgh Northside Park be used in the façade of the then proposed new Pirates baseball stadium.

This recommendation was apparently never followed as up-dated information has recently been received from David Wright of the Pennsylvania Canal Society. According to Dave, the committee formed to reconstruct the lock was not successful in finding sufficient interest and funds and was disbanded. The wooden artifacts were moved to a warehouse at the Heinz History Center, formerly the Miller Printing Company. When that building was needed for an Arts and Entertainment Theater, the wooden artifacts were moved again to under the 40th Street Bridge in Millvale with the hope to display them in Millvale Riverside Park. Although that council's president tried to devise a plan to incorporate those artifacts into their park shelter, he did not get the support he needed, so they were disposed of. Some of the lock stone blocks were used by the city for stream erosion control on bike

paths in Shenley Park. The rest were moved to the PennDOT maintenance yard in Collier Township where they remain.

More recently, a North Side community development organization met with City Councilwoman Darlene Harris, who represents the North Side, with a plan for using city funds to hire an architect to draw up a plan for a lock display incorporating the remaining Lock 4 stone blocks. The North Side Committee selected a site to build two parallel walls of lock stones along each side of Three Rivers Heritage Trail just east of the Sixteenth Street Bridge. To date, however, little progress has been made on that plan.

There are a couple of discrepancies between Dave's information and that from Robert's 1999 article, but it appears some of the Lock 4 stones are still available for future work. If the end of this story ever happens, for good or bad, I hope someone thinks to notify me.

Want to know more?

Check out
Penna Canal Locks Unearthed
in the
May 1987
Issue #61 of
American Canals.

Historical Newspaper Archives

The Standard

August 7, 1875

The Lost Canal Records Found

Ever since the discovery that certain of the canal records needed by the canal investigation commission were lost, strayed or stolen, Col. John B. Yates, division engineer, in whose office the records sought, in ordinary course of things, to have been found has been hard at work, assisted by a corps of searchers in endeavoring to discover their whereabouts. Two weeks ago he made formal returns to the commission that two books for which they made inquiry could not be found, and then, instead of abandoning the search, he continued it with renewed diligence. For the past few days George M. Barnes, of this city, and Samuel Moak of Schenectady, both of the engineer's department, have given their whole attention to the search by order of Col. Yates, and yesterday afternoon they succeeded in finding the missing documents. All the books in the office of the engineer, and there is a big pile of them, had been carefully gone over and indexed without striking the trail of the ones that were wanted. At a late hour yesterday afternoon it occurred to Mr. Barnes that he would overhaul the contents of the store room opening into the office. Doing so he came across, in one corner, a box hidden from view by a large stove, and sundry ash pans which kept it close company. The box was dragged out into the light and opened, and lo, as a part of its dusty contents, appeared the missing records. The employees of the office were much elated at the discovery, and lost no time in communicating the news to the investigating commission.

Col. Yates was not in town when the finding occurred, he having gone out on the canal in pursuit of a piece of information which he thought might throw some light on the probable whereabouts of the records, it appears it had come to his knowledge that Gen. Hughes, of Sandy Hill, had had occasion to refer to one of the missing books last winter, and in order that he might leave no stone unturned, he went to Sandy Hill Thursday morning to see the Colonel.

Soon as the books turned up he was telegraphed for and his anxiety ended.

The box in question contained the following books and papers:

Final Account book B, containing the final accounts of the following contracts; Construction of Hewett's Lock on the Champlain Canal, George Dinsmore, contractor; enlargement of guard lock at Cohoes, S.V. Boomer, contractor; construction of Flinn's lock on the Champlain canal, N. Stanton Gere, contractor; construction of wooden and iron tow-path and road bridges over the Mohawk at Cohoes, A.C. Belden, contractor; stone dam across the Hudson River at For Miller bridge, H.D. Dennison, contractor.

Book T, part 2. Enlargement of the Champlain canal at Bemns Heights, Emmet Flager, contractor; work on Fish creek, Champlain canal.

Book 59, part 5. Improvement of the Champlain canal at the five mile level, Chas. Nichols contractor; construction of bridge at Fort Ann, Champlain canal, J.B. Buck, contractor; construction of bridge at Fort Edward, Champlain canal, Charles Vandecar, contractor; construction of bridge at the combined locks, Whitehall, James P. Buck, contractor; improvement of the Champlain canal from the south end of Guard lock, above Schuyterville, to Bullard's Bend, H. D. Denison, contractor.

Book 1, part 2. Construction of McIntyre street bridge, Fort Edward, over the Champlain canal, James P. Buck, contractor; construction of farm bridge at Fort Ann, over the Champlain canal, Willard Johnson, contractor; enlargement of the Champlain canal below Schuylerville and Bullard's Bend, N.L. Osborne, contractor.

In addition to these final account books, the box contained a journal for 1862 of D. C. Jenne, division engineer, made up of official communications to the canal board, estimates, etc; a letter copy book, an index book, two original estimate books, nine field books, and a number of check rolls, abstracts of division engineer's reports, bills and receipts.

The office of the division engineer in this city has been twice changed during the past few years, first from the state hall to Pearl street, and next to the present location in the American Express building, opposite the Delavan House. The last change was made early in May of the present year, and one of the many boxes containing books relating to canal matters on reaching the new quarters was, in the hurry of moving, thrown into the store room. Once there it was lost sight of until it was brought to light yesterday afternoon. All parties are to be congratulated that the lost is found and the long search ended.

The following article is from the Pittsburg Gazette of the 12th inst. The Canal here spoken of is one of the two works which unite the Ohio and Pennsylvania State Canals.

The Mahoning Canal.- Scarcely a day passes during which we do not receive additional evidence of the importance and indispensableness of this work. It is only two or three days since we published an extract from a Cleveland paper, mentioning that, on a single day in the last week of April, three thousand barrels of flour had arrived at that place from the interior of Ohio. If the Mahoning Canal had been opened, every barrel of this flour would have passed through Pittsburg, and been far on its way to Philadelphia before Buffalo harbor was accessible. If the Sandy and Beaver Canal had been in successful operation, all this flour might have been in Philadelphia before the harbor of Buffalo was clear of ice. For it must be admitted that, for the trade from the southern part of the Ohio Canal, that route is most eligible.

Yesterday we published a notice of Chicago, the thriving town at the south end of Lake Michigan. Persons, well acquainted with its localities confidently predict that it is destined to be one of the greatest cities of the west.

As it grows, its trade must also increase, and that trade will undoubtedly pursue the Mahoning route to Pittsburg and the seaboard. It is not necessary now to use any arguments to prove the correctness of this position. Five or ten years ago the advantages of this more westerly and southerly route, the disadvantages

which Buffalo harbor labored under were not well understood; but now every Pennsylvanian understands the matter.

But the following article from the Fort Wayne Sentinel, is calculated to give to reflecting persons a more adequate conception of the importance of our Mahoning Canal than either of those matters to which we have referred.

“Walbash and Erie Canal- The Fort Wayne Ind. Sentinel, of the 18th ult. States that a corps of Engineers were engaged in locating the line of the Walbash and Erie Canal, from that place to the Ohip line. The part of the canal which runs through the State of Ohio, is to be surveyed and located the present month; and it is stated that the work will be put under contract as soon as the boundary question between Ohio and Michigan is settled.”

Here is a canal penetrating more than two hundred miles into a country of exceeding fertility, a country, too, from which the access to a market is at present very difficult, and to which this canal will be the easiest and speedious route. This, however, is not all, there is another canal to intersect this and to extend from the point of intersection southwardly, by Dayton to the Ohio river. A large portion of the country along and near this work will also pursue the route by the lake and the Mahoning canal to a market. So that through the Maumee Bay alone, will be poured upon the Lake Erie the trace of a country almost as large as South Carolina. Great progress has already been made towards the completion of both the canals, the Dayton and the Walbash. These are only two of the many canals which will be made to discharge upon the Lakes the produce of the surrounding regions.

Let any person look back ten years, and notice the increase in the trade of the lake country in that time, and then only bear in mind that the increase must be still more rapid during the next ten years, and some adequate conception may be formed of the lake trade at that time.

The whole of this immense trade will seek the Mahoning canal as the preferable route, and it will be only after that canal is surcharged, that any portion of the trade will seek another channel.

Canalendar

September 13-15, 2019; Canal Society of Ohio and Canal Society of Indiana; Fall Field Trip Following the National Road, Springfield OH to Richmond, IN. Headquartered in Springfield,, Ohio. This trip will follow the route of the National Road between Springfield and Cambridge City. Learn how the building of this road influenced the Indiana canals. www.indcanal.org

September 16-18, 2019; World Canals Conference 2019, Yangzhou, China;
www.wcc2019china.com

October 18-20, 2019: Pennsylvania Canal Society and Canal Society of New Jersey Fall Field Trip, The Morris Canal between Hopatcong State Park to the Phillipsburg Arch, including Plane 9 West. Note that the American Canal Society Annual meeting will take place on Friday the 18 as part of this weekend. www.pacanalsociety.org

November 1-2, 2019: Canal Society of New York State Fall Field Trip, Headquartered in Fayetteville, NY (near Syracuse). Canal sites around Fayetteville and the reservoirs of Cazenovia, DeRuyter, and Erieville. www.newyorkcanals.org

April 16-18, 2020: Canal Society of Indiana; Spring Trip, Gibson / Warrick and Vanderburgh County. www.indcanal.org

September 13-17, 2020; World Canals Conference 2020, Leipzig, Germany;
www.wccleipzig2020.com

August 30-Sept 2, 2021; World Canals Conference 2021, C&O Canal, Hagerstown, MD,
www.candocanal.org/WCC

For more information about these events, check the organization's website and / or their Facebook page. Additional information is also available on the American Canal Society Facebook page.

Support your local and national canal society.
Please be sure that your dues are paid.