



American Canals

The Bulletin of the American Canal Society
www.americancanals.org

Dedicated to the Study of North American Canals and Waterways
Vol.LIII No.3 Our 52nd Year Summer 2024

Rare Shipment on the Erie Canal

by Michael Riley

For those who live along the active federal waterways, it might be difficult to understand the excitement that a single shipment by barge can cause, but this is what happened across New York State during the month of July as a tow with two barges carrying an oversized load slowly made its way along the entire length of the Erie Canal. The move was performed by Carver Marine Towing, which is a division of the Carver Companies of Coeymans, NY.

To show how rare this move was, the last time Carver moved a shipment along the New York State Barge Canal was in 2017, when two barges with over-sized tanks were delivered to Rochester Brewing. What made this year's movement almost historic was that it was the first time a commercial barge and tug had used the canal west of Rochester in decades.

As designed in 1905, the Barge Canal had a depth of 12 feet. This depth, along with the size of the locks, allowed for loads of 2000-tons. In the 1930s, the federal government began a project to dredge the Oswego and Erie to 14 feet east of the Three Rivers junction and also raised all the bridges to provide a 20-foot clearance. This increased the capacity to about 2500-tons. West of Three Rivers (which is north of Syracuse), the canal was left with the 12-foot depth and bridges built with minimum of 15.5 foot clearance. As the canal route west of Three Rivers is quite winding with tight bends, the Erie Canal-

Oswego Canal-Lake Ontario-Welland Canal route offered faster transit times. The faster detour west limited shipments along the western Erie to destination only loads and most through traffic was eliminated. As traffic declined, so did the push to maintain the 12-foot depth and over the years, the depth (and capacity) of the canal has decreased to about 9 feet.



The CMT Otter with barge in lock 25.

While the 220-ton bridge was not considered to be heavy, it was oversized. The bridge sections were loaded into two 195-foot-long hopper barges that offered adjustable ballast so that the depth of draft could be changed as conditions warranted. The barges were set up

in a push tow with the 62-foot-long pusher tug *CMT Otter*. (CMT is Carver Marine Towing). This created a tow that was 452 feet long. As the Barge Canal locks are 328 feet long, this meant that each lockage would require that the first barge be pushed into the lock, uncoupled, and the tug and second barge backed out. The first barge was then pulled out with the lock's capstans and brute man-power. The second barge and tug were then locked through and recoupled, and the tow went along its way. This gave canal watchers and other onlookers ample time to see the operation up close.

When the Barge Canal was constructed in the early

Continues on page 3

American Canals

The Bulletin of the American Canal Society

Website- www.americancanals.org

Facebook-www.facebook.com/AmericanCanals

For news items, submissions, memberships, subscriptions, change of address, and other business matters, contact; Michael Riley, POB 302, Port Byron, NY, 13140 (315) 704-8874 or americancanals@gmail.com

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 American Canals is included with ACS membership. Regular single membership \$25; Family Membership \$35. Single copies of American Canals, \$3.

Copyright © 2024 by the American Canal Society. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. ISSN 0740-588X.

Deadline for materials. American Canals is published quarterly. Every effort is made to include new materials in the next issue. 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.

In This Issue

Rare Shipment on the Erie Canal	1
An Update From Ottawa, Illinois	4
Early Navigation of the Chenango River	5
Canal Boys	6
The Canal Society Guidebook	7
Canal Tidbits and News	10
Fitting Out	12

Officers:

President: Michael Riley, 38 Green Street, POB 302, Port Byron, NY 13140; 315-704-8874; mriley20@twcny.rr.com
Vice President: Martha Capwell-Fox, 2750 Hugh Moore Park Road, Easton, PA 18042; 610-923-3548 ext 237, archives@delawareandlehigh.org

Recording Secretary: Michael E. Morthorst, 6914 Ohio Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45236; 513-791-6481; Canal Society of Ohio, gongoozler@fuse.net

Directors and Affiliations

Paul Bartczak: Eden, NY; Canal Society of NYS; pjbartczak@earthlink.net

Robert Barth: Somerville, NJ; Canal Society of NJ, PCS, D&R Canal Watch; rbarth321@aol.com

Brian Coffield, Virginia Canals and Navigations Soc, Troy, VA; brian@vacanals.org

Charles Derr, deruls@aol.com

William Gerber: York, PA; wegerber@gmail.com

George Hume: Toronto, CAN; george.hume@rogers.com

Dan McCain: Delphi, IN; Wabash and Erie Canal Park; dan.mccain@gmail.com

Robert Schmidt: Fort Wayne, IN; Canal Society of Indiana; indcanal@aol.com

Larry Turner: Doylestown, OH; Canal Society of Ohio; towpathturner@aol.com

Director Emeritus

William J. McKelvey, Jr: Berkeley Heights, NJ; wjmckelvey@hotmail.com

Have you visited the American Canal Society website? The American Canals newsletters are available as pdf files and an index is available to help you find the subject of your interest.

Rare Shipment Continues

1900s, most tows were made up with tugs towing barges by way of a long hawser. The barges of the period had a live aboard crew and were steerable by way of a rudder. This allowed a tug to pull 2, 3 or 4 barges around tight curves that are found in western New York. "Towing" evolved over time with tugs pushing single barges. Thus, the long double tow had to be broken down to get through narrow and tighter areas of the canal. This resulted in many trips back and forth as the *CMT Otter* left one barge and moved the other along the canal to a safe location. It then returned for the second barge, and leapfrogged the other. It was likely easier on the crew as they did not need to repeatedly uncouple and pull one barge out of the locks by hand. In the end, it was decided to leave one barge at lock 33 and move one to Buffalo. One goal was to make a showing at the Tonawanda Canal Fest and then reach Buffalo on July 16. July 16, otherwise known as 716 day, is a day of local celebrations. (716 is the local area code.) After some celebrations in Buffalo, the *CMT Otter* returned for the second barge and finished the shipment on July 20. The tug and barges then began the long trip of leapfrogging back to Albany, giving everyone the chance to see the tow once again. They reached the home port on the

Hudson River almost a month after leaving.

While followed closely by thousands of people, the trip made clear that if the canal is to be used for large loads, the state will need to provide more dredging. There were no reports of the tug running aground with its 7 foot 6 inch draft, the barges did hit bottom when ballasted down to 9 feet as to pass under bridges and guard gates. The bridge sections at 110 tons per barge were no where near the capacity of what the barges could handle. It was the air-draft that was the primary concern. It would be interesting to hear a postmortem of the trip and hear if all the parties involved felt it was worth the effort and time to make this movement, as the shipment could have been easily and quickly moved along the St. Lawrence Seaway. So it is clear that someone saw this as a great PR event for the NYS Canal Corporation and Carver Marine Towing, which it was.

The entire trip was documented by many social media posts using drones, video and stills to capture seemingly every minute of the trip. The Carver Companies social media was very good at providing daily updates and estimated arrival times, linking to all the various posts, and returning comments and likes. Their website can be found at carvercompanies.com.



The CMT Otter passes under an original Barge Canal bridge.

Photos by author.

An Update From Ottawa, Illinois

By Arnold Bandstra

It has been a couple years since we put water back into the canal at Ottawa, Illinois, on the Illinois and Michigan Canal. Now we are in a management and maintenance mode. You may recall that the section we rewatered in Ottawa is just 0.55 miles long. It is a small portion of the original 96-mile canal that runs from Chicago to LaSalle, IL. The section is the part of the canal within the city limits of Ottawa that is mixed commercial and residential. The interesting features are the only remaining toll collector's office (there were four originally), a 460-foot long aqueduct, a feeder canal from a water source about four miles away, and a side canal to a hydraulic basin for industrial docking of barges and hydro-turbines for various mills.

We are part of the tourism destination of Ottawa. In fact, here is the description written in our tourism magazine for this summer. "One of the most exciting and authentic spots to encounter the history of the I&M Canal is located at the entrance to downtown Ottawa. The tollhouse building, right off of Columbus Street, is the only surviving original structure along the canal, and undoubtedly the most diligently preserved. This quaint one-room museum shows guests what the day-to-day life of a locktender in the 1850s was like, from sunrise to sundown. Told through a collection of original artifacts, dioramas and historical documents, you're bound to walk away learning something new."

We have volunteers available every Sunday from 11 to 3pm through the summer. Also, in August we host an annual Canal Day where we have costumed interpreters, food, historic trade demonstrations, games and crafts for children, and live music.

The canal project is not without some remaining work to do. One home adjacent to the canal has experienced increased pumping of basement seepage that needs to be solved. Algae growth has become a large problem for aesthetics as well as impeding recreational activities.



Early Navigation of the Chenango River

By Richard F. Palmer

Decades before the Chenango Canal was built, large boats called “arks” transported lumber, shingles, and other commodities out of Sherburne down the Chenango River and beyond to distant points such as Harrisburg and Baltimore. This commonality of water navigation existed in the early days with many south-flowing waterways in upstate New York, including the Delaware, Susquehanna, Tioughnioga, Chemung,, Canisteo, Conhocton and Tioga rivers. Ninety miles long, the Chenango is a tributary of the Susquehanna river. It was declared s public highway in 1803 by Chapter 102, Laws of New York.

Daniel P. Fitch, a veteran raftsman, said the first ark on the Chenango river was built and launched in 1803, a short distance north of the village of Sherburne. Nathaniel Austin and his brother were engaged in the enterprise. Fitch wrote:

“The anxiety of the people to make the river available for purposes of navigation was such that they voted a tax upon the town, to clear it of obstructions. The launching of the ark was a gala day. Men, women, and children turned out to witness the performance. When the famous ark was afloat, they must have a ride.

“Like the Ark of old, it was soon filled with living creatures, even a dog. With towing, setting and pulling by the willows, they were enabled to ascend the river towards half a mile.

“Like boys after tugging and hauling their sleds to the top of the hill, they were well paid for their toil, by riding down again. It was freighted chiefly with pine staves and shingles, which did not prove as remunerative as they anticipated; and they found more difficulty in keeping the channel of the river than they expected, especially when it was on the rise.”

Arks consisted of a frame of three squared timbers, each 8 by 12 inches, the two on the outside being 55 feet

long and the center piece, 75 to 90 feet long. These were laid parallel and evenly spaced so that an overall width of 16 feet was attained. They were joined together by shorter pieces on the bow and stern. Similar timbers joined the outside frames with the center, thus making bow and stern sheer to make better sailing. The frame was then planked completely, caulked as tightly as possible, turned over and placed in the water with the planked side down. Studding four or five feet long was then mortised into the outside timbers and planked on the outside to the ends. The ark, except at the bow and stern and a small place midships for the cabin, was covered with boards that protected the cargo and provided a smooth walk for the crew while operating and steering the craft. They were a

cousin of the more common Durham boats.

A solid oak post was placed at each end in which was imbedded a stout oak pin upon which hung the oars used to steer the craft. The oars were made from straight, light dry pine pieces, 30 feet long, with a groove in the end into which was inserted a blade made from a plank 15 feet

long and 18 to 20 inches wide. The oars were balanced upon the oar pin in such a manner that they could be easily handled. The blade dipped slightly into the water.

There were one or two other arks built at Sherburne near the south line of the town. One was loaded with grain that was damaged during the voyage, becoming a total loss. These vessels only made one way trips and were dismantled at their destination and the lumber sold, and the crews walked home. Mr. Austin and his son Seymour, while on this expedition, were both stricken with the yellow fever. The father died but the son recovered.

Nathaniel Austin was born September 15, 1764 in Sheffield, Berkshire county, Mass. and died May 6, 1803



Simulation of an early cargo vessel used on early waterways.

Continues on page 6

Early Navigation continues

at Chenango Forks where he was buried. He and his wife, Humilis (Owen), raised 10 children. He originally settled in Sherburne in 1793, having purchased 150 acres there. He and his brother, Stephen, were partners for many years and raised sheep. They purchased 150 acres of land in what is now Sherburne, New York in 1793. Stephen and Nathaniel were also both original members of the Sherburne Library in 1800.

Austin's ark enterprise evolved from a petition he sent to the New York State Legislature, seeking to levy a tax on the various towns along the Chenango River to pay for the waterway to be deepened and improved to create clear navigation to ports to the south such as Baltimore, Maryland. Early water transportation was very common on the larger streams in upstate New York in pioneer times including the Delaware, Tioughnioga, Chemung and Canisteo rivers. The arks and rafts converged on the Susquehanna River at what is now Athens, Pa. The Chenango River connects with the Tioughnioga at Chenango Forks. Binghamton, once called Chenango Point, was where watercraft rendezvoused for their trips south.

An interesting story is told of Nathaniel that occurred prior to his coming to Sherburne. He was involved in the Shay's Rebellion insurrection over debt collection in Massachusetts in 1786-1787, was arrested and sentenced to be hanged. While confined in prison at Springfield, Mass., his wife came the night before he was to have been executed, to make a farewell visit. She exchanged her cloak and hood with him, and in the evening twilight called to the keeper to be released. Her husband walked out unsuspected and made his escape. She remained quiet until he escaped and was beyond danger of being recaptured. The jailer, finding he had no legal authority to detain her, allowed her to depart.

Regarding Sherburne itself, there are two stories as how the name originated. One more accepted is it was after the tune "Sherburne," written by Daniel Read in 1783. The other is it was named for the Rev. James S. Sherburne who came to this area from Connecticut about 1790 and was a prominent minister. He died February 29, 1821, aged 80 years, 3 months and 17 days and is buried in the old East Hill Cemetery near Sherburne.

Sources

Fitch, Daniel P., *Reminiscences*, Plaindealer, Bath, N.Y., March 12, 1887
Reminiscences, Anecdotes and Statistics of the Early Settlers and the 'Olden Time' in the Town of Sherburne, Chenango County, N.Y. by Joel Hatch Jr., Utica, 1862.
Who Named Sherburne? Binghamton Press, June 5, 1958;
The Name of Sherburne, Brookfield Courier, March 1, 1908.
The Descendants of Richard Austin of Charlestown, Massachusetts by Liz Austin Carlin, 1995.

Historical Newspaper Articles Canal Boys

Oswego Palladium Friday, April 18, 1851

The opening of canal navigation has brought a large number of boatmen and canal drivers into the city in search of employment, and horses, the motive power of this branch of inland commerce, are again called into active requisition along the line of this great thoroughfare.

Where all the canal boys come from is a mystery. In the fall when the great "Clinton ditch" closes up as tight as a drum, they are thrown out of employment, and disappear during the long winter; but in the spring, they swarm like bees - though unlike these busy insects, they are not noted for their industrious habits.

They are readily distinguished from other boys, for there is something peculiar in the deportment of the chevaliers of the tow-path that makes them different from any other class of boys. They are, in fact, a community by themselves - avoided and despised by their fellow youth.

But after all the ridicule and abuse to which they are subjected, these poor canalers are a useful and necessary class of people, and are, on the whole, about as moral as could be expected from the nature of their occupation, and demoralizing influences thrown around them.

Their moral destitution should rather excite our commiseration and sympathy than our contempt, and we rejoice to hear that well directed efforts are being made in the western cities to improve their condition.

The Canal Society Guidebook

By Michael Riley

Note- This article is about guidebooks authored by canal society volunteers. They have been printed and distributed in fairly low numbers, which can make them difficult to find if you are not aware of them. The more "formal" guides that have been authored, printed and even sold with professional help are not included.

One day when I was visiting the Canal Society of NYS Samuel Center in Port Byron, NY, Park Director Dan Wiles was showing me their stacks of society guidebooks as he mentioned that as people have passing away, or have begun to clean house and downsize, many old guidebooks were being returned. So it might be an excellent time to reintroduce the guidebook to a newer generation of canal researchers as these guides can contain some wonderful information not found in other sources. And, if you never have attended a society study tour, you might not be aware of the guides, as they were printed with a limited run and handed out during trip registration. Extra copies were often given away to the tour stop hosts as a thank you, and if there were more, they were sold locally at society events. In this way, these guides often had a publication run of less than 200 or even 100.

As my beginnings were with the CSNYS, I had naturally thought that the guidebook was a staple of the society weekend tours. And it was, as at each registration, the participant would receive their name tag, registration materials and the tour guidebook. It was only when I began to attend tours hosted by other groups that I realized that guide book was not always a given.

So what is a society trip guidebook and how does it differ from the typical guidebook that you might find in a book store?

For decades, the biannual canal society field trip, or as Thomas Grasso liked to call them, the "study tour," was a staple of what most of the state societies did. Each spring and fall, a weekend trip would be planned to make an "on the ground" study of a selected canal section. The trip would cover anywhere from five to nine stops, or whatever was reasonable for an eight-hour day. The stops focused on what was present, what was safe, and what could accommodate a bus or a number of cars. Sometimes, the bus would quickly drop people off at a trail and then pick them up a mile or so down the line. As the bus rolled along, the trip host or chairperson would

give a quick history and overview of the next stop knowing that most folks would scatter for photos when they unloaded at the stop.

If the hosting organization used them, the guidebook could be used to give background and context to the trip. It might have maps and photos that each person could closely look at instead of having the guide hold up or pass around images. Depending on the author, the books might include basic facts such as maps, canal profile, lock lift, construction and use dates, who was the engineer, and so



on. The guides were focused on the sites that would be visited during the tour, and were not always a comprehensive history of the canal. In short, the guide could serve as a recap of the weekend tour.

As with all society publications, the guides can be divided into two periods which might be titled; "before desktop publishing" and "after desktop publishing." In

Continues on page 8

Guidebooks continues

short, the power of home computer and publishing software has greatly revolutionized the guidebook. In the “before” times, the guidebook was often a bunch of single-sided typed pages, and hand-drawn maps and diagrams, some poorly copied photos. These were mostly taken from the hosts knowledge, personal collection, and perhaps what could be found at local libraries and historical societies. They were copied at the nearest photocopier and then stapled together. Over the years these were somewhat improved and expanded by using a local print shop who could offer a bit better quality and bind the books with glue or use plastic spirals.

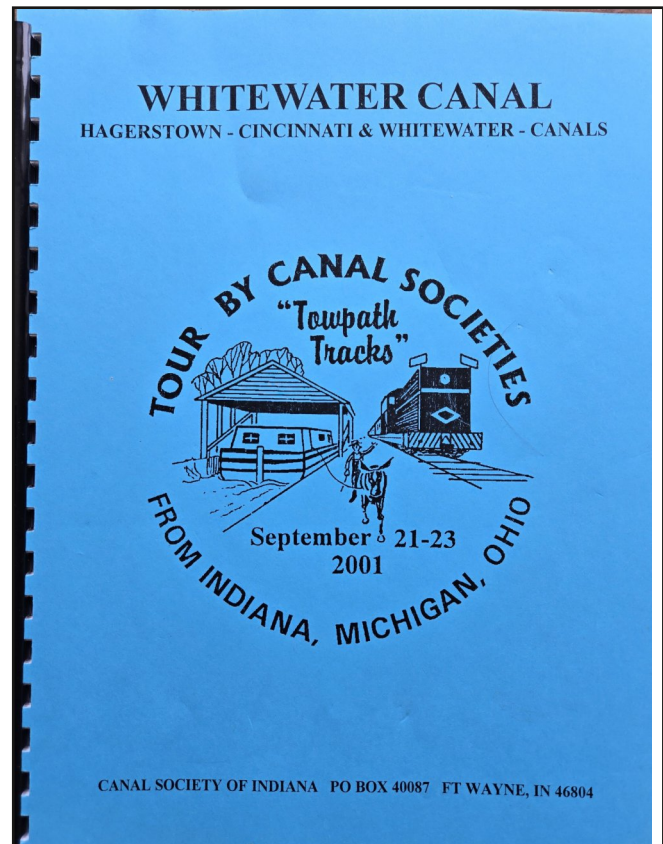
Once computers became a part of the household, the authors had a bit more flexibility, and a lot more power, to put out a more complete and professional quality guidebook. Images became clearer with higher quality paper, two-sided pages became standard, and later the use of color was introduced. With the internet and resources such as digital newspapers and so on, the author could conduct a lot of research from their home and thus enrich the amount of information included. Given all this, all guidebooks tend to reflect their authors and their enthusiasm and knowledge of the study area. It can take many hours of study, writing, editing, checking and rechecking, to craft a decent guidebook, and many trip hosts didn’t have the time, or desire, to do the work. All the guides are in the 8.5 x 11 inch format. As most of these societies have hosted trips for more than 50 years, many sites have been visited and revisited. It can be helpful to review all the tour guides to see how sites have changed over the years and what new research has been conducted.

It might be helpful to note that many trips were co-sponsored with neighboring societies, so if you can’t find a guide in the state you are researching, check the state next door to see if they printed a guide.

With all this in mind, I pulled out the many guidebooks that I have in the ACS archives. Here is a summary of what I found.

Canal Society of New York State – The first guide was printed in 1961 for the tour of the Cayuga and Seneca Canal. The early guides are mostly a road log of stops and hand drawn maps that can be very detailed. Beginning in 1980 the guides featured a geology overview by Thomas Grasso, and the amount of content about doubles with 25 to 30 pages. In 1987 the society printed the first 50 page guide, and in 1990 the guide topped the 100 page mark. The first guide to feature

color was with the 2009 Erie Canal Aqueducts tour. The society also published guides for their out of state trips to the Morris Canal in 2002, the Rideau Canal in 2003, the Portage Railroad in 2006 and the C&O in 2014. All the guidebooks have been scanned but none are available as digital downloads. The society has a fairly complete collection of paper copies available for purchase. A listing of their trips can be found on the ACS website.



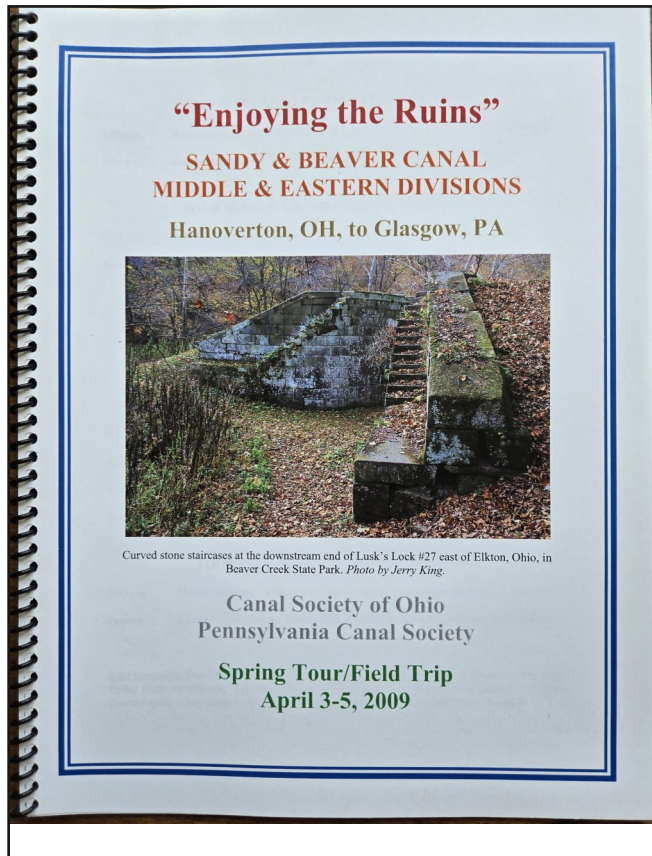
Canal Society of Indiana – The society has been hosting study tours since 1982; however, the first published guide was in 1998 with the tour of the Wabash and Erie. Even then, not every trip has a guide. The guides have benefited greatly by having Carolyn Schmidt as the sole editor, and the results are a very uniform style and appearance from trip to trip. These guides are simply fantastic resources and should not be overlooked as they are very comprehensive in what information they contain.

The society has also hosted or co-hosted trips into Ohio eleven times and each of these has a guide. The guides are available online as digital downloads on the website with quite a nice organization by year, county, and canal.

Continues on page 9

Canal Society of Ohio – I could only find a few copies of guidebooks from the CSO in the ACS archives. So I reached out to Michael Morthorst, CSO president, to see how often the society printed guidebooks for the study tours. He reports that the CSO did print guidebooks for their trips and his own collection dates back to 1988.

In the guides that I have I see the typical variation of quality and content. For example, the 2019 Spring Tour (Circleville to Chillicothe) is quite detailed with 108



pages that include history, maps, and photos. The guide was printed in cooperation with the Chillicothe Restoration Foundation and the quality of the guide certainly reflects that partnership. The other guides in the ACS collection follow the typical format of: introduction, tour stops, maps and references. These have plastic covers, wire or plastic spiral bindings, and average 15 to 30 pages.

Michael notes that there is no central repository for the back issues; however, the CSO website states that reprints of some guides are available by request.

Pennsylvania Canal Society – The PCS and the CSNYS share founding members and thus share some guidebook history. Early examples of the guides include a list of stops and some helpful “explainer” drawings/maps. All

the examples I have are in the typical 8.5 x 11 inch format. There was no comprehensive listing of trips or guides available, so I pulled out the back issues of Canal Currents and created a list. With the help of PCS President Doug Logan, the list is now complete and available on the website. As for an archive, I would expect that the National Canal Museum in Easton has most copies.

Other canal groups and societies have tackled the question of a guidebook in the more traditional manner by publishing a comprehensive guide of the entire canal. These guides are usually printed in greater numbers and can be sold at book stores and museums, thus they receive a bit more attention, although you are unlikely to find them on Amazon. But they can still reflect the local knowledge of the author and in that way be very useful to the researcher.

The Virginia Canals and Navigations Society has published 21 “atlases.” These are in a 8.5 x 14 inch format that allow for a very nice presentation of the maps, which are the main feature of the guide. Most of the information is presented by using topographical maps, overlaid with text blocks and arrows pointing to numerous sites. The information found between the map pages contains articles on history, people, boats, geology, suggested highway markers, historic articles and recollections and a lot more. These guides were written mostly by Dr. William Trout and include wisdom from his lifetime of study.

The Middlesex Canal Association has a very good canal guide authored by Burt VerPlank. The guide uses a 8.5 x 5 inch format and takes the reader along a tour of the 30 miles of canal from south to north. Large fold out maps make this guide very easy to read and understand as you seek sites hidden in the urban environment of the Middlesex.

In conclusion, these small production study-tour guidebooks can be a rich source of information that might not be found elsewhere. Most come with a decent list of references that could also be useful in directing further research. However, finding them, or just a listing of them, can be a challenge. Be sure to seek them out by contacting the state canal society, local historical societies, libraries and archives.

Canal Tidbits and News

The **Duck Creek Covered Aqueduct on the Whitewater Canal** at Metamora, Indiana, will be given temporary repairs after it was damaged during a storm event in early July. The DNR (Department of Natural Resources) is planning on long-term repairs in the future. The aqueduct was placed on the National Register in 2014 and is the only one of its kind in the United States.

A **state of the art waterway barricade** will be built on the Des Plaines River in Joliet, Illinois. This is being built with the goal to stop the movement of invasive species, notably the Asian Carp, into the Great Lakes. Previous attempts have failed to stop the migration of the fish which has now been found within seven miles of the lake. The Brandon Road project, as it has been named, will include additional locks and other barriers, and will cost \$1.1 billion. No construction timeline was given.

The **Fox River Navigational System Authority** announced that the Menasha Lock will remain closed for the foreseeable future as plans for an electronic barrier designed to stop the movement of the invasive round goby were scrapped. The \$7 million construction costs of the barrier and the projected \$300,000 yearly operation costs made the project unfeasible. The lock,

which was the busiest on the Fox River navigation, was closed in 2015.

In related news, **round goby DNA** was found in the Hudson River above Lock C-2 on the Champlain Canal. Although no fish have been found, the DNA was enough for New York State to change the operation of the Champlain Canal locks. Lockages at C-1 to C-4 are limited to three times a day and all locks are being double flushed.

The brand new **Seaway Visitor Center at the Eisenhower Lock** was closed after a heavy rainfall caused leaks that damaged the interior of the building on June 6. The building was closed for six days while repairs were made. The building has been reopened.

The **Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Area** celebrated its 40th anniversary on August 4, 2024. The website notes that, “the Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Area is the first of its kind: a national park of communities, not federal land. Based around the I&M Canal, which connected the Illinois River to Lake Michigan creating an all-water, inland route from the East Coast to the Gulf of Mexico, our National Heritage Area is made up of 60 cities and towns, from Chicago to



The Seneca Chief in the Commercial Slip at Buffalo. Photo courtesy of Ted Olsen.

LaSalle-Peru, who owe their growth to the canal.”

The **Buffalo Maritime Center** successfully launched the replica packet boat *Seneca Chief* on May 7th into the waters of Lake Erie. Over the summer it has been going through sea trials as the crew gets ready for the big trip through the canal system in 2025 to help celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Erie Canal. You can follow along on the *Seneca Chief*'s adventures on the Buffalo Maritime Center social media and website. Photo courtesy of Ted Olsen.

We get letters!

We received a nice note from **Ms. Sarah Webster Vodrey**, the granddaughter of William Vodrey, who was the co-author of The Sandy and Beaver Canal history. She writes:

Growing up in East Liverpool, Ohio and the unincorporated village of Fredericktown to its north, I was aware my whole life of the Sandy & Beaver Canal which ran right through next to the village, along the wild and scenic river Little Beaver Creek. It also helped to be the granddaughter of William Henry Vodrey III who lived walking distance from us. With his antiques dealer turned friend R. Max Gard, he co-authored the definitive book on the canal.

The two friends began an early May tradition of taking a day off work and hiking through land my family owns. They invited their friends and the Max Gard

William Vodrey Hike was born. Though they've been gone for many years, my father Jackman Stroud Vodrey has kept it going in their memory and it is attended by 25-30 people from the tri-state area and around Ohio every second Wednesday in May, beginning and ending in the unincorporated village of Fredericktown. If you and some others wish to join us next year you're welcome to be back in touch next spring. Father will be 90 by then so each year is a new chance to keep it up or lay it to rest.

The father and son were two in a multigenerational group of altruistic history lovers who also shared with my father Jackman S. Vodrey the impulse to preserve and document local history. Lucky for Columbiana County, these three lawyers also had and dedicated their personal resources to this end while inspiring others in their sphere to do so too. My generation and our children are grateful and motivated to keep up the family dedication to history and good works. My brother William F. B. Vodrey is a Civil War buff, reenactor, and speaker on the subject in his free time. He's a judge in Cleveland. My sister Catherine S. Vodrey is an author of a number of books. I ran the Museum of Ceramics in East Liverpool for twelve years, the creation of which my grandfather spearheaded in the decade preceding his 1979 death.

Very best wishes to you!

Sarah



Do you recognize this lock? Drop us a note if you do. From the CSNYS Collection.

Historical Newspaper Articles

Fitting Out

Oswego Commercial Times Saturday, March 16, 1861

This morning we noticed with great pleasure, that a considerable impulse had taken place in several branches. Long strings of caulkers, with their tools and implements, were on the move, as well as painters with their troublesome buckets, followed by ship carpenters and a variety of others, evidently engaged in some of the many branches of labor that here find activity in the spring.

They all look happy, and the busy click of their hammers today, with the chorus of the sailors in the harbor, as they refit and overhaul, is music that all can appreciate as an indication of a speedy activity in business, and a consequent buoyancy in monetary affairs.

Oswego Commercial Times Thursday, Oct. 8, 1863

For Canal Navigation. - A new and handsome craft, the Billy Clark, graces our harbor, which has just been launched from the yard of Messrs Lee, Navagh & LeFevre, by which firm she is owned. She is 96 feet long; breadth of beam, 17 feet and 6 inches; depth of hold, 9 feet. Her actual capacity is about 9,000 bushels, but limited by the depth of water in the canal to 7,400. She is "all oak," and will stand the wear and tear of navigation on the "raging canal." Her cabins are fitted up in a ver neat and commodious style, and exhibit good taste in their painting and graining

Oswego Commercial Times Wednesday, April 15th 1863.

The Canal.-Boatmen and forwarders are busy in preparing their boats for the coming season of canal navigation. Carpenters, caulkers, and painters find employment for their services in rendering "seaworthy" and decorative these mediums for transportation through our inland waters.

The sound of the mallet and caulking iron resound through the basin above the iron bridge and under factory level. Several boats are already loaded and are now lying at the entrance of the lower lock. Many boatmen have taken up their residence on their boats, and are only awaiting the official opening of the canal to start for the tide water.

The Oswego Canal is reported in good condition, and every little if any repairs are necessary to place it in condition for immediate navigation. The early departure

of our lake fleet, with their anticipated prompt return, will bring hither freight in abundance, and boatman may reasonably expect remunerative prices for transportation. The reimposition of tolls on the Canadian canals by the Provincial authorities, will bring the carrying trade by the mercantile marine of the Provinces on a level with our own, an Oswego, with her at the advantages for reaching tide water, must divert the large trade which for the past two seasons has been carried on between the West and the ports of Kingston and Montreal.

Rochester Daily Democrat Wednesday, April 20, 1842

This is the day for the opening of the canal. The laborers were scratching for life for the season of the empty ditch, which is so soon to be the great thoroughfare for the commerce and wealth of the great west.

The new aqueduct is ready for use, and the several jobs on the enlargement through the city so near finished, as to afford the much needed additional facilities for the transition and halting of boats, which have formerly crowded together here and annoyed each other exceedingly.

The weather has been unfavorable for putting the canal in readiness, and we should not be surprised if we should not find the water in it as early an hour as was expected.

We thank Richard Palmer for these transcriptions.

We have a limited number of
The Sandy and Beaver Canal
by R. Max Gard and William H. Vodrey
This is a 1952 paperback reprint
with maps
\$20.00 plus \$3.00 SH
If Interested, send an email to
americancanals@gmail.com