

Canals Canada

Newsletter of the Canadian Canal Society

Issue No. 1 January 1983

P.O. Box 1652, St. Catharines, Ontario. L2R 7K1

President's Report

The Canadian Canal Society was formed in May of 1982 at a meeting in St. Catharines. The Society really owes its birth to two people, John Seymour and Lou Cahill. John Seymour, a prominent canal historian from the Welland Region, suggested to his colleagues in the Welland Canal Foundation and others involved in canal history that a society linking the various organizations interested in canals in Canada should be formed. It was Lou Cahill who undertook to organize meetings of interested individuals beginning in the fall of 1981.

Professor Wes Turner of Brock University was named chairman of the steering committee and a small number of persons representing various canal interests in Ontario put together a constitution and by-laws. A founding meeting was organized by the committee and was held on May 1, 1982 in Port Dalhousie. We are very grateful to Prof. Turner for his able chairmanship and to him and his colleagues for the formation of the Society. Now, only a little more than a year since the first meeting of the steering committee, we have two members meetings behind us and the beginnings of a functioning Society.

Quite aside from the dry work of studying the constitution and by-laws and organizing the first Board of Directors, the meeting in Port Dalhousie was an extremely enjoyable one including a tour of the 1832 sections of the Welland Canal still visible and a delightful look at the old homes and historic sites of the town of Port Dalhousie, now part of St. Catharines. Mr. and Mrs. MacKenzie led the group on this walking tour which by itself would have made a visit to this delightful section worthwhile.

On October 8 and 9, the fall members meeting was hosted by Maurice Smith, a member of the CCS Board and Director of the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes, Kingston. This



Dr. Wes Turner (left) and Mr. Don Smithies, President of the CCS and Manager of the Peterborough Museum and Archives, at the old Lock No.1 of the second Welland Canal in Port Dalhousie.

historic building has been refitted from its original function as the shipyards on the Kingston waterfront to a modern and well designed museum. The original structure of the building remains much as it was for the past century, but the inside has been transformed to several interesting galleries and already a number of exhibits which both inform and entertain the visitor.

Continued....

President's Report (continued)

Following a reception and presentation on the Rideau Canal, on the occasion of its 150th anniversary, by Brian Tychie of Parks Canada, there was a members' meeting on Saturday morning. This was followed by a very interesting presentation on the Wolfe Island Canal by Dr. George Richardson of Queen's University. This little known canal first dreamed of in the 1830's and constructed in the 1850's only functioned until 1892. Having no locks and being very short in length, as it crossed the narrowest width of Wolfe Island, it fell into disuse as economics changed.

The afternoon program permitted one of the last trips on the Rideau Canal in its 150th anniversary year. The trip between the Narrows Locks and Rideau Ferry took 2½ hours in steadily worsening weather conditions. Preceding this trip was a delightful tour of the Lockmaster's House, the Blacksmith's Shop and the dam at Jones Falls.

This has truly been a memorable year for members of the Canadian Canal Society and 1983 should bring similar experiences. Plans are now being formulated for the spring '83 members' meeting proposed for June 3 and 4, 1983, at Bobcaygeon and Fenelon Falls which are celebrating the 150th and 100th anniversaries respectively of the construction of Trent Severn locks and works. This promises to be another interesting meeting.

Don Smithies
President

Newsletters

One of the privileges of membership in the Canadian Canal Society is the receipt of newsletters of which this is the first. It is projected that the newsletter will be published quarterly. The purpose of the newsletter is to provide information on Society events, happenings being sponsored by canal organizations throughout Canada, historical and technical data, and other items of interest. The editors hope to develop a regular series of articles dealing with current publications, research, calendar of events, President's report and personality profiles. If you have any suggestions for articles or if you are aware of interesting information about Canadian Canals and their activities please contact the editors at the address provided on page one. We want your input. Contributions from the readers will make the newsletter more enjoyable for all.

Personalities

This column entitled 'Personalities' is an opportunity for readers to gain some background information on members of the Board of Directors, fellow members and other individuals involved with canals in Canada.

V.N. (Peter) Styrmo - A jack of all trades in his youth, Peter Styrmo loves to putter around his log home near Aurora, Ontario. The grounds and buildings around this lovely wooded retreat seem to need constant attention and a wealth of mechanical devices. The maintenance of his holding would do credit to a construction company. In his spare time, Peter has been employed by the Toronto Historical Board once in the 1960's and again since 1981. In the interim, Peter served as Provincial Museum Adviser watching over the development of smaller museums for 16 years and seeing his advisory group grow from 1 to 8 persons with an operating grant program second to none in Canada. Always a practical man with a great sense of humour, Peter has done more for Ontario's museum in the past two decades than any other single person. We are pleased to have him with us.

Personalities (continued)

Don Smithies - Don must be one of Canada's great romantics. How else can you define an individual whose two abiding interests are sailing and history. An avid sailor since his teens, Don has sailed and cruised Ontario's inland waterways for two decades. This close familiarity with canals and waterways has combined with his love of history and as a result Don's interest in and knowledge of canals has become more than just marginal. As well as being Curator of the Trent Severn Waterway Museum, Don is also the Manager of the Peterborough Centennial Museum and Archives. Born and raised in Kingston, Don graduated from the Royal Military College in 1958 and obtained a Bachelor of Arts in History from Queen's University. After serving in the armed forces Don joined the planning team for the Ontario Science Centre in 1964. Subsequent to that, he has worked with Janus Museum Consultants and as Training Coordinator and later Executive Director of the Canadian Museum Association. Don brings a wealth of expertise to his role as President of the CCS.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors were elected at the May meeting held in Port Dalhousie. Since that time they have been meeting regularly to chart the course of the Society. They bring a rich variety of experience and interest to their positions. Sub-committees have been established to look into specific areas of endeavour. The Board members are listed below.

EXECUTIVE

President

Donald A. Smithies
Peterborough, Ont.

Vice-President

J. Hayward Madden
Livonia, New York

Secretary

Robert R. Taylor
St. Catharines, Ont.

Treasurer

George M. Carl
Port Colborne, Ont.

MEMBERS

Fred Addis
Port Colborne, Ont.

Christopher Andreae
Parkhill, Ont.



Some of the Board gathered outside of Dalhousie House at the May '82 meeting in Port Dalhousie. From left to right are: Heather Ott, Peter Styrmo, George Carl (Treasurer), Don Smithies (Pres.) Robert Taylor (Secretary), Hayward Madden (Vice Pres.) and Michelle Greenwald.

Michelle Greenwald
Toronto, Ont.

Thomas Hahn
Sheperdstown, N.Y.

John N. Jackson
St. Catharines, Ont.

Marvin D. Kriluch
St. Catharines, Ont.

Heather Ott
Port Colborne, Ont.

Maurice Smith
Kingston, Ont.

Peter Styrmo
Toronto, Ont.

American Canal Society

The American Canal Society has been in existence for many years. American Canals their regular bulletin provides readers with an interesting look at canals in the U.S.A. and Canada. Louis Cahill is the Director for Canada on the Society's Board

American Canal Society (continued)

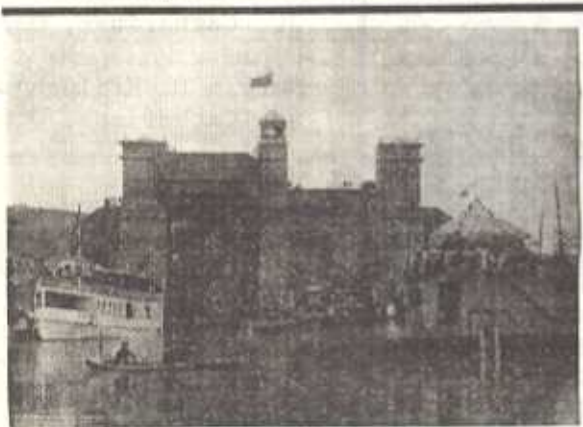
of Director's. Subscriptions to the bulletin can be arranged by writing to the ACS editorial address at Box 310, Shepherdstown, West Virginia, 25443. The American Canal Society is "dedicated to historic canal research, preservation and parks". This objective is not dissimilar to the raison d'etre of the CCS and members will find the ACS bulletin to be of general interest.

Research Notes and News

The purpose of this column is to pass on to CCS members references to research and canal activities which have come to the attention of members and the editorial staff. Should you become aware of any news items or information relevant to the history or technology of Canadian Canals, please pass on the information to the editor. In the case of lengthy reports, these can be distributed through other means than the newsletter. Size is not a constraint. We are specifically interested in research projects, trips and activities by members or other canal oriented groups.

The Marine Museum of the Great Lakes in Kingston has opened a gallery display about Garden Island. Now a tranquil summer place, this tiny island once had 750 inhabitants involved in the transportation and commercial activities of the Calvin family. Many of the ships built here in the mid-nineteenth century carried Canada's commerce on the Great Lakes and through her canals. The growing library at the museum also is of interest to history buffs. The resources of the library and in particular its archival collection which includes the important drawings of the Canada Steamship Lines is worth exploration.

The exact dimensions and lifts of a number of locks are discussed in the most recent issue of American Canals. Included in this discussion is the famous Peterborough Lift Lock. The article dispels a long held myth about the lift lock.



The Peterborough Lift Lock on the Trent Severn Waterway shortly after its construction. The Lift Lock is A National Historic Site and remains a popular tourist attraction.

Many people hold that the lock is the highest in the world. This is not true. There are many locks with higher lift in North America and in Europe. However, the Peterborough Lift Lock with its 65 feet of vertical lift, is the highest hydraulic lock operated by rams ever to have been built. The lock can also boast other claims to fame. At the time of its construction in 1904, the lock was the largest free standing concrete structure in the world. Also, as a point of interest, the Lift Lock is made completely without reinforcing rod. At the time of its construction, considerable criticism was levelled against its builders for this design aspect. However, recent testing has shown that the structure is completely solid and will endure for a long time to come.

Final Word...

As with any organization, the future strength of the CCS lies in the participation and number of members. If you have a contribution to make to the newsletter please contact the editors. Also, why not get a friend to become a member? Membership is the key to a successful volunteer society.