

Canals Canada

Newsletter of the Canadian Canal Society

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

Board of Directors

DUTY CALLS!!!

Here is a call for members of a very special type. There is an urgent need for members who can give great blocks of time to the Canadian Canal Society to help it in its activities. There are plenty of interesting jobs to be done, however the Board of Directors are for the most part family men and women with full time jobs and heavy demands on their time. What we need are ladies and/or gentlemen of independent means, an abiding interest in canals and canal activities, and the skill and time to carry out one or more of these jobs. If you would like to write letters, handle publicity, prepare historical pieces or edit the newsletter for the society, please contact a Board member or the President and specify your interest.

In addition to these essential jobs, the Society requires individuals who are willing to serve as Board of Directors members and hold the executive offices of the Society. If you are interested in holding a seat on the Board or would like to contribute to the Society by being an elected officer please submit your name to the President prior to the upcoming General Meeting.

To give you a specific idea of the jobs which need filling we have prepared the following brief job descriptions:

Promotion Committee Chairman - This is a very important job as the greatest task facing a fledgling organization is to become known by a wide variety of people. The job would entail writing promotional pieces such as press releases, notices and pamphlets and maintaining a mailing list. As well the Chairman would be on the lookout for other methods of creating a greater awareness of the Society and its goals and activities.

Newsletter Editor - This job involves writing some articles for the newsletter and interesting others in making contributions as well. For the most part the position is a coordinating one with some permanent features forming the backbone of the newsletter. Preparation and printing are also the responsibility of the editor. Mailing is handled by the Secretary.

Calendar of Events Editor - The Calendar of Events is an important feature of the newsletter which to date has not come into being. The C. of E. Editor would have to keep in touch with the various canal administration and preservation agencies to prepare schedules showing their upcoming activities. These would be placed in every issue of the newsletter.

Canals Historian(s) - We need people to do research into various aspects of canals in Canada. The work of these historians would be published either in the Research Notes section of the newsletter or under separate cover.

Research Notes and News

A LITTLE KNOWN CANAL AT HUNTSVILLE by Alexandria Greaves, Peterborough, Ontario.

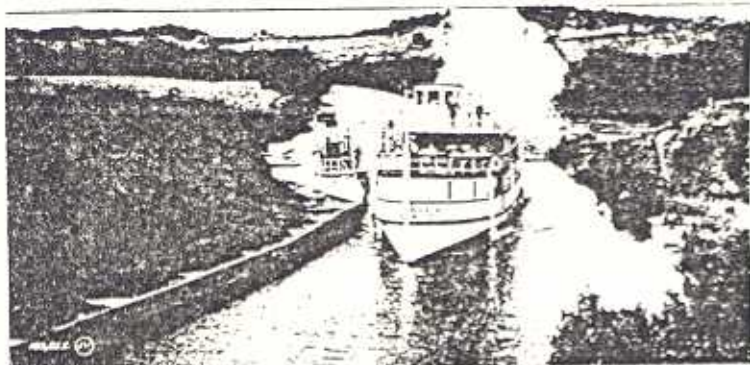
In mid March of this year, while on a brief holiday in the Huntsville area with a friend, I happened upon a little known canal system which ran between Port Sydney on the south end of Mary Lake and Lake of Bays. Our attention was first drawn by a road sign which read 'Canal Road'. Needless to say we were intrigued. Following the gravel road we came upon a rusty old bridge which crossed what appeared to be a creek. On closer examination, we could see piles along the side of this 'creek'. It became obvious that the creek was actually a man-made structure, in fact a canal.

The owners of the lodge where we were staying confirmed that this was the canal which ran between Fairy Lake and Peninsula Lake. To satisfy our curiosity, they suggested that we contact Mr. Jack Laycock, a retired school principal, who has a large collection of steam boat memorabilia. He told us about locks which are situated on the north branch of the Muskoka River just south of Huntsville. We visited the locks and found them to be in good working condition. These locks built between 1873 and 1875, opened navigation from Port Sydney to Huntsville. At that time, Barrie was the head of the railroad and travel north from there was via the Muskoka Road to Gravenhurst or the Brunel Road to Port Sydney. The canal was the only means of transportation from Port Sydney to Huntsville until 1885 when a road was pushed through.

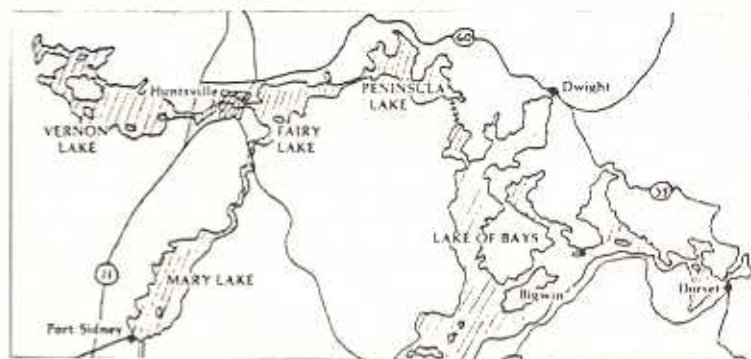
At the Huntsville Public Library I found a few references to the canal between Fairy Lake and Peninsula Lake but there were many references to the locks. In 1886 the canal between the two lakes was constructed for a cost of \$25,000. The wooden piles, which are still extant, were driven to protect the bank from erosion caused by the wake of the steamers as they plied the canal.

A canal between Lake of Bays and Peninsula Lake was proposed but rejected because of a difference in elevation of 150 feet and the obvious engineering difficulties that this differential would cause. A gravel road was built in 1887 over which passengers and freight were hauled by wagon. In 1900 a charter was granted to build a steam railway over this portage and it was completed in 1904. The Huntsville and Lake of Bays Navigation Company, which owned the canal, locks and railway, flourished with the development of numerous resort hotels on Lake of Bays. Steam Boats were the only means of transportation to many of these hotels until the 1930's. The railway which is only a mile and a quarter long, and the shortest in the world, operated until 1959.

For further information about this canal system, I recommend a book we discovered in the Dorset General Store in Dorset, By Steam Boat and Steam Train, written by Niall MacKay (Boston Mills Press, 1982.). This book tells the story of the canals and railway and contains numerous photographs of the steam boats and trains used between 1877 and 1959.



The S.S. ALGONQUIN entering the canal between Fairy and Peninsula Lakes (Ontario)
Archives Acc. 13889-14B)



RESEARCH NOTES AND NEWS (continued)Annual Meeting scheduled for July

The 1983 Annual Meeting is now confirmed for the weekend of July 15 - 16 in Fenelon Falls. You will find a registration form with this copy of the newsletter. The format will be very similar to that followed at the very successful meeting held in Kingston last October. On Friday, July 15, there will be a registration hour followed by a presentation by Meredith Reeve a Trent Severn Waterway interpreter. On the Saturday there will be a business meeting the theme of which is "More Members - More Participation". As well there will be an election of officers for the coming year. Around mid-morning there will be a tour of three locks in the Fenelon Falls area including Fenelon Falls Lock, Lindsay Lock and Bobcaygeon Lock. An additional but optional visit may be paid to the Kirkfield Hydraulic Liftlock.

The Board of Directors have selected Fenelon Falls for the site of the meeting because the Village of Fenelon Falls is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the construction of the lock. The Village has a special schedule of events planned for the entire month of July. This will be an excellent opportunity for Society members to participate in the celebrations. The meeting promises to be an interesting and enjoyable time so make sure you register now! For more details, contact Don Smithies.

Bobcaygeon Celebrates 150th Anniversary of Lock

The community of Bobcaygeon is celebrating the 150th anniversary of the construction of the lock works connecting Sturgeon and Pigeon Lakes. This was the first lock in what has grown to be the Trent Severn Waterway. A summer of events has been planned running from June to September. Of special interest is a resource centre which will house historical displays. For more information contact the Bobcaygeon Chamber of Commerce.

Late Opening for Trent Severn Waterway

Unusually heavy rainfall in the Haliburton Highlands watershed and over the entire central Ontario region led to the delayed opening of much of the Trent Severn Waterway. Flows through dams and in rivers and narrow channels were too high to permit safe boating. The Waterway was officially opened on May 28th, at a special ceremony held at the Peterborough Hydraulic Lift Lock. A flotilla of boats, the Sea Cadet Band, the firing of artillery and muskets and a surprise visit by a hard hat diver all added to the festive atmosphere. The opening was combined with the traditional Heritage Weekend activities sponsored by the Peterborough Centennial Museum. This year the joint venture was called "Lift Locks and Flintlocks".

Interesting Plans for a Fall Society Meeting

While William Hamilton Merritt is recognized most for his construction of the Welland Canal, he was also quite successful in promoting numerous other canals and public works throughout the country. One of his lesser known schemes was the Grand River Canal, opened in 1834.

Extending from Port Maitland on Lake Erie to Brantford in the hinterland of the Province, the Grand River Canal was intended to provide a major link with other proposed canal systems in Ontario. Unfortunately the full potential of this dream was never realized - - although the canal did develop the agricultural, mineral and timber resources of the area as well as furthering the settlement of the region.

The Canadian Canal Society and the St. Catharines Historical Museum are combining efforts for a coach tour of the canal system. It will feature several stops to view the channels and lock remnants of the Canal as well as historic remains of some communities and former communities that lined the Grand River. Early mills will be highlighted as well as the entrepreneurs who made them possible.

While a date must still be confirmed, the tour is expected to take place either early in September or late in October. Further details will be made available in the near future.

IF YOU HAVE SOME NEWS OR HISTORY TO CONTRIBUTE PLEASE SUBMIT IT TO THE EDITOR!!!!!!

Personalities

J. Hayward Madden

J. Hayward Madden, the CCS Vice President, devotes a good deal of time to the preservation and study of canals after completing a long and interesting career as a social worker. His social work career began in the first years of the Great Depression, included overseas work with the Red Cross during WWII and spanned the '50's and '60's with service in the U.S. Veterans Administration. Since his retirement in the late 1960's, Hayward and his wife have devoted much of their time to genealogy and canal research, including travels on the canals of the U.S., Canada, England, Wales, Scotland, France, Holland and Sweden. In addition to these travels, Hayward enjoys his life in the country and lists birdwatching as one of his favourite pastimes.

In addition to his role with the CCS, Hayward serves on the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Canal Society and the American Canal Society. A young organization such as the CCS has a great deal to learn from a man of Hayward's experience and knowledge.

Rob Taylor

In addition to his role as Secretary for the CCS, Rob Taylor has a very full and active role in historical preservation in general. Rob has been an Associate professor with the History Department at Brock University since 1966 and in 1982 became Chairman of the History Department. Rob has been very active with the Welland Canal Preservation Association since its inception in 1977 and after serving as a member of the Board of Directors for three years was named an Honourary Founding Patron in 1980 in recognition of his service. He contributed to the W.C.P.A. in the production of audio visual programs and still serves as an historic advisor to that group. Rob has also served on the St. Catharines Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee. Rob is currently writing a picture history of the Welland Canal and is looking for historic photographs which could help him in his work. Fortunately for Rob, his wife Anne and son John are also interested in things historical and participate actively in heritage work. Rob does take time out from his research to do some swimming, photography and listen to opera. His efforts as CCS Secretary are appreciated.

President's Report

The election of a new President will take place at the upcoming annual meeting. As you may recall I was elected to the post on an interim basis by the Board at the last meeting a little over a year ago. Perhaps then as my last duty I will report on the CCS activities of the past year.

Considering our small membership and the lack of a previously established Provincial organization to rely on I think we have had a successful first 12 months. Membership has been a great concern and under the stewardship of Hayward Madden a membership brochure has been created and has been in circulation since the fall. In October of 1982 we also had a very good members meeting in Kingston which included a tour of a portion of the Rideau.

Rob Taylor and George Carl, our treasurer, have done a good job in developing a small reserve fund with which the CCS can undertake its programs. We are trying to establish a staggered election of Directors so that a small number of positions will become available each year. At the upcoming meeting some of these posts will be filled. The Directors are putting forward names but nominations will also be accepted from the floor. I wish to thank all of the individuals who have served the CCS in the past year. I would also wish to thank Marvin Kriluk, our legal advisor, who has agreed to continue on in this role.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the upcoming general meeting and urge you to attend if possible. As well bear in mind the possibility of the fall meeting in St. Catharines.

Donald A. Smithies, President CCS