

The St. Andrew's Lock on the Lower Red River, Lockport, Manitoba

THE LOWER RED RIVER, MANITOBA

by Colin Duquemin, Past President, The Canadian Canal Society

The lower Red River, Manitoba, could be called Canada's "Fur Trade Waterway". For 150 years the lower river witnessed fur trade exploration, exploitation and, finally, exhaustion. Thereafter, com-

mercial shipping replaced the canoe and York boat of the fur trade. Navigation on the river, particularly north of Winnipeg, was often hazardous due to irregular flow; this was sometimes too

much, and often in the summer months, too little -- especially in the vicinity of today's Lockport, where the Red River "rapids" were virtually impassable.

The French fur trader and explorer, La Verendrye, put the lower Red River on the map first for New France. In 1738, he built Fort Rouge at the junction of the Assiniboine with the Red River. The site of his crude blockhouse and stockade would become the heart of Winnipeg.

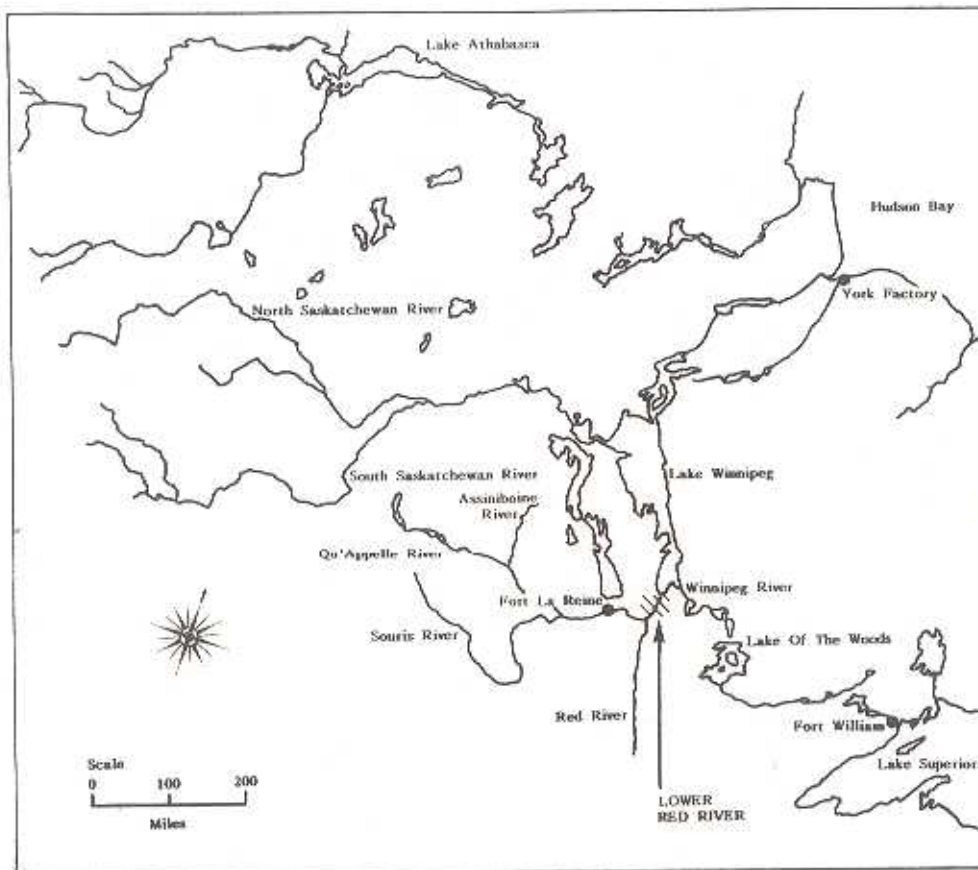
Le Verendrye pressed on, and established his westernmost post at, now, Portage La Prairie. Fort La Reine became the most important of La Verendrye's posts as a base for western exploration between 1738 and 1749. During this time Verendrye's party had to use the lower Red River as it returned to New France for supplies.

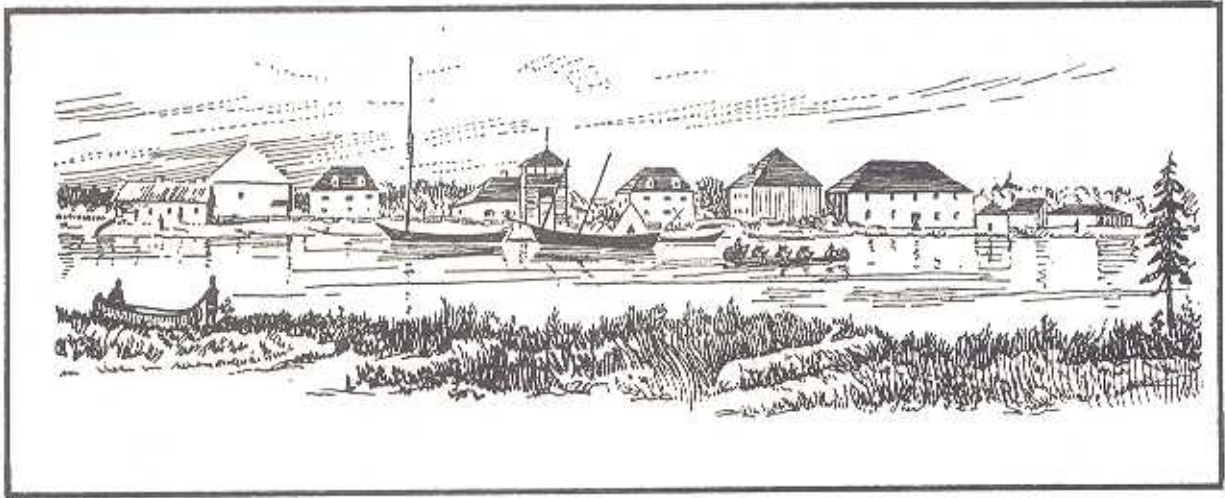
The lower Red River route was used by La Verendrye's successor, Leguardeur de St. Pierre, who sent an expedition up the North Saskatchewan to the foot of the Rocky Mountains in 1752. The

Montreal independents, Scots, English, and New Englanders, followed after 1760, when Britain replaced France as the colonial power in the east.

With the formation of the North West Company in 1784, the lower Red River carried the annual canoe brigades up and down as the fur trade diffused outwards on the Great Plains. When the North West Company built posts further up the Red River, the Qu'Appelle River and the Souris-Assiniboine system, the Hudson's Bay Company came south from York Factory to meet the competition head-on. The HBC often built its posts alongside or near those of its competitor, and it raced the Nor'Westers to market via the lower Red River. Once on Lake Winnipeg the Hudson's Bay Company freighters headed north for York Factory on Hudson Bay; the Nor'Westers turned up the Winnipeg River for the Lake of the Woods and Rainy Lake route to Fort William at the head of Lake Superior.

In 1810, the North West Company's Fort





Fort William: Western Headquarters of the Nor'Westers at the head of Lake Superior. (By C.W. Jefferys. Courtesy, Public Archives of Canada).

Gibraltar superseded the old Fort Rouge at the junction of the Assiniboine with the Red River. Two years later the HBC moved in and established Fort Douglas less than a mile north downstream on the Red River. Rivalry on the river, and elsewhere, ended when the North West Company was absorbed by "the Company" in 1821. Fort Gibraltar became the Fort Garry of the HBC.

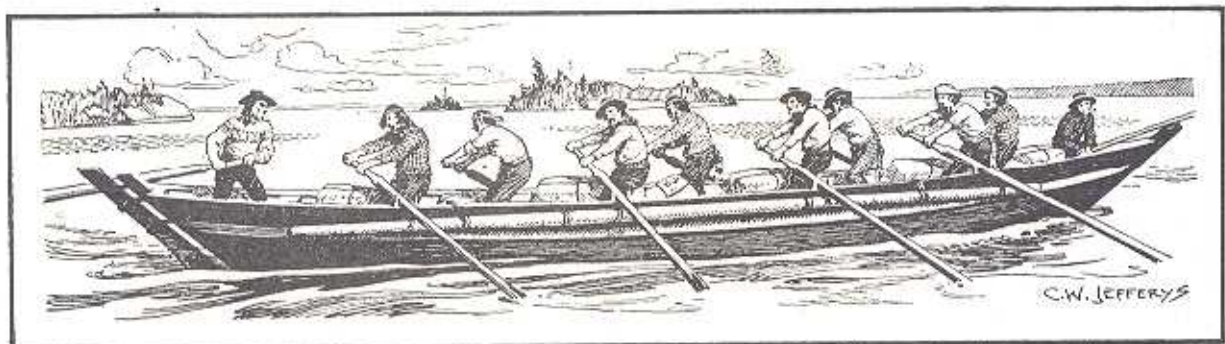
Barely 50 years later, the Hudson's Bay Company, which had controlled a fur trade in an empire to the west and north, bowed to political reality, and sold its territorial rights which were assumed by the Government of Canada. Within years, a change came over the Red River.

Being at the hub of water transportation

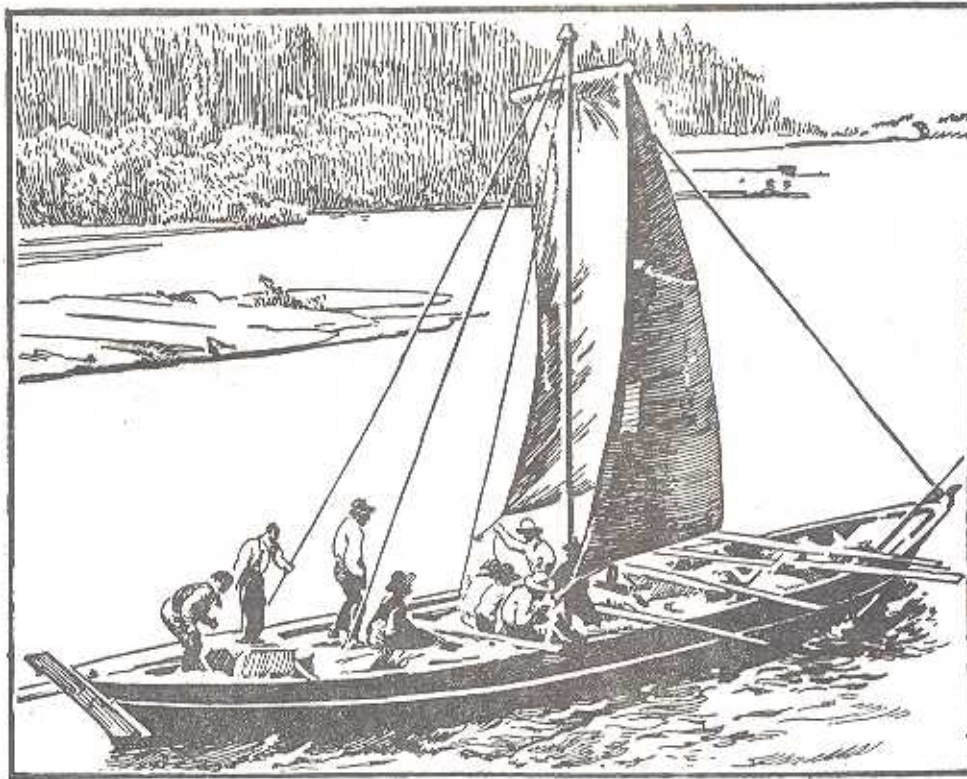
routes, Fort Garry had attracted settlement since the 1820's. The community spread northwards slowly, and this was continued down the Red River towards Lake Winnipeg where the narrow farm lots fronting on the river have left a discernible pattern on the landscape.

Indeed, to take the river road out of Winnipeg today is to take a journey through history. During the summer months it is possible to see an apparent flat-bottomed paddle-boat plying the river, and it takes but little imagination to see vessels of this kind replacing the York boats and canoes in the changing circumstances of the later 1800's.

The paddle boat captains, however, had



The versatile York boat under oars could transit the shallower rivers; flat-bottomed, it could be rolled over logs at a portage. (By C.W. Jefferys. Courtesy, Public Archives of Canada.)



Under sail, the York boat crossed lakes and deeper rivers. It could be found on Lake Winnipeg carrying cargo to Lower Fort Garry on the Lower Red River. (By C.W. Jefferys. Courtesy, Public Archives of Canada.)

their problems as they struggled with the seasonal vagaries of a fluctuating water regime. But approaching Lockport, South of Selkirk, and the old Red River "rapids", the means of overcoming navigational difficulties can be seen.

A bridge carrying a highway across the Red River at Lockport is first apparent; next, a control dam is observed as a part of the bridge structure. Approach closer still, and a lock comes into view.

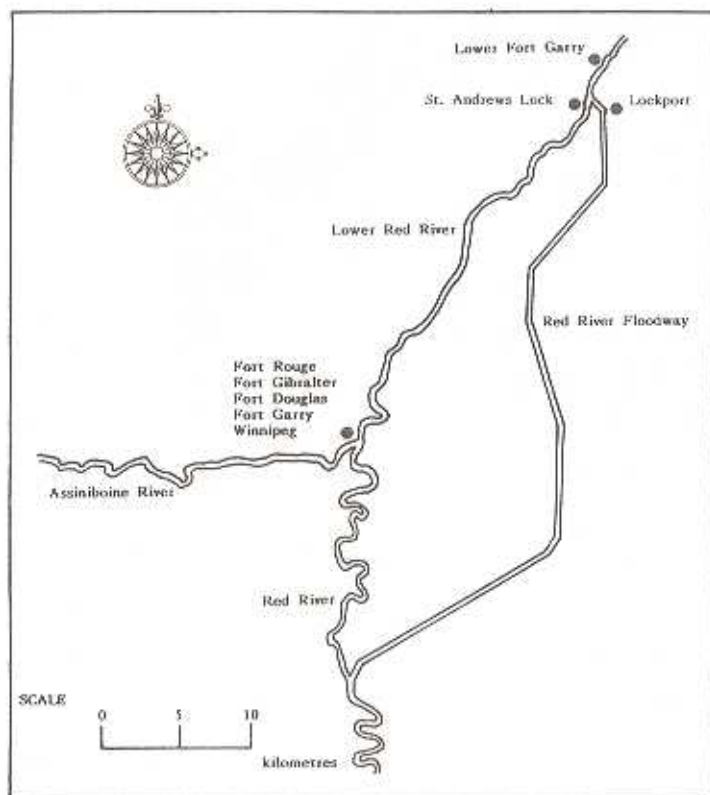
St. Andrews Lock was constructed during the years 1900 to 1905 by the Department of Public Works of Canada, and its operation now is still a responsibility of the federal government. The other structures were added subsequently, the bridge taking today's Manitoba Highway #44 over the river was completed in 1916.

The lock is 215 feet long and 46 feet wide. There are 10 feet of water over the sills. The St. Andrews lock is a

visitor attraction at Lockport, and this can be appreciated on a fine summer's day when pleasure craft are making passages up and down the river. There are still some service craft processed through the lock for the maintenance of facilities on local waters.

Fishermen are drawn to the approach walls downstream from the lock gates. They take their cue from the interesting white pelican which finds good fish feeding in the more turbulent waters on the north side of the control dam structure. There has, however, been a loss of white pelican habitat on the Prairies in recent years. Though the species is not yet endangered, a threat to the white pelican exists with each loss.

There are almost 250 years of history along the lower Red River, and 150 of them, are associated with the fur trade, York boats, and freight canoes. The



last 100 years have seen changes in river traffic and water management. The St. Andrews Lock, which was a direct result of the manipulation of flow in the lower Red River, has already played a major role in recreational boating; as the population of Winnipeg continues to grow there is good reason to believe that the lock will allow even more craft access to the navigable lakes and rivers downstream.

C.C.S. Receives Grant

The Canadian Canal Society/Société des Canaux du Canada has received a 1986 Heritage Organization Development Grant in the amount of \$319.05 from the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, Ontario. The Society is very pleased at this recognition and the assistance of the Ontario Government, Honourable Lily Munro, Minister of Citizenship and Culture. In the Minister's letter, announcing the grant, our Society was commended for its "efforts in preserving and promoting the heritage of our province."

WELLAND CANALS FOUNDATION PROGRAM

A large number of marine enthusiasts and history buffs gathered in St. Catharines this past October 2 and 3 to participate in a specially arranged information/education Welland Canal program sponsored by the Welland Canals Foundation in cooperation with the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority.

William A. O'Neil, Seaway Authority president, launched the William Hamilton Merritt Lecture Series at the beginning of the program speaking on, "The Contribution of the Welland Canals to Canadian Achievement". This lecture series will be an annual event sponsored by the Brock University Department of Geography and the Foundation.

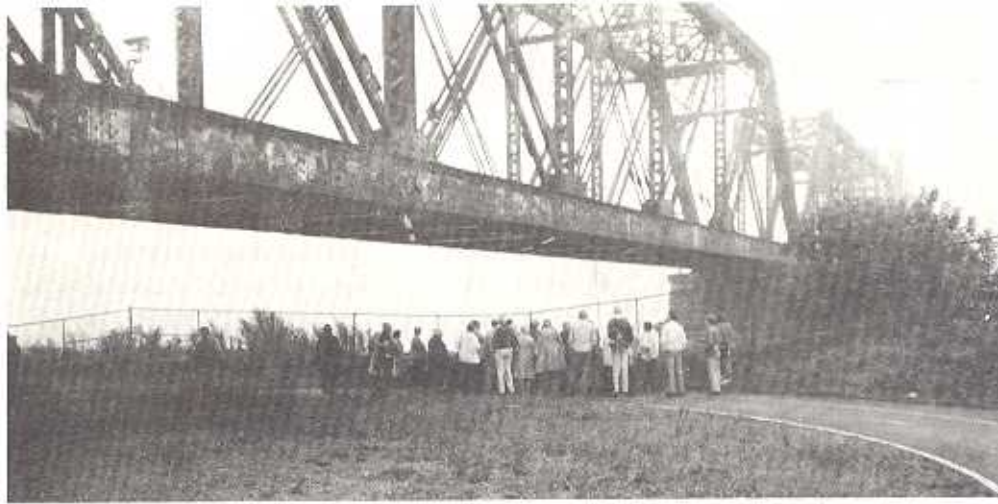
Other highlights included a tour of the traffic control centre adjacent to the twin flight locks of the Welland Canal, a breakfast meeting with Seaway President, Bill O'Neal and Bruce McLeod, recently appointed vice-president, western region,

Seaway Authority, a tour of the present canal, and a program featuring slides and films of current and historic scenes related to the Welland Canal.

The Welland Canals Foundation is a non-profit, public service organization that is the successor to the Welland Canals' 150th Anniversary Committee which in 1979 developed and co-ordinated the 150th anniversary of the first Welland Canal in 1829.

Interested individuals are invited to contact the Foundation at P.O. Box 745 St. Catharines, Ontario, L2R 6Y3, phone (416) 682-7203.





Members of the C.C.S. fall tour gather under the International Railway Bridge near the Black Rock Lock and Channel. The Bridge, connecting Fort Erie, Ontario, and Buffalo, New York, across the Niagara River, was opened in 1873 and acclaimed as an engineering triumph. Chief engineer for the project was Sir Casimir Gzowski who was later the first Chairman of the Niagara Parks Commission.

C.C.S. - A.C.S. SPRING MEETING, 1987

A great weekend for canal buffs is in preparation for May 15-17, 1987 as the Canadian and American Canal Societies hold a combined meeting in Syracuse, New York. Editor, Bill Shank, in a recent issue of American Canals, outlined the agenda:

Our headquarters will be the Ramada Inn in North Syracuse, where we will convene Friday evening for a wine and cheese party. Saturday we will spend several hours touring the renovated Erie Canal Museum, inspect their new canal boat, see a slide-tape show, and then be on our way for a bus-tour of the locks and levels on the little-known Oswego Canal, with lunch at the Canal Point Restaurant in Fulton. Saturday evening we will have a banquet at the Ramada, with a talk by Don Wilson, Erie Canal Museum Curator,

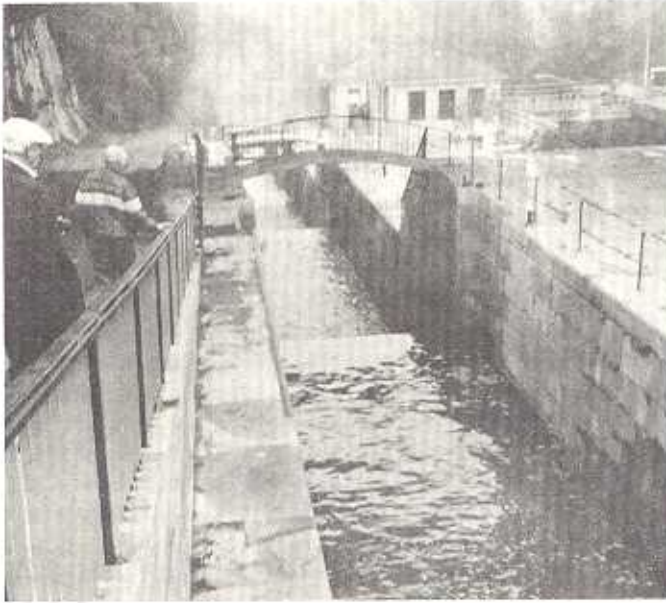
on the Erie Canal and entertainment by Dr. Bill Hullfish and his Canal String Ensemble.

Sunday we will spend in the Rome, New York area, where we will enjoy the facilities of the Erie Canal Village, ride their canal boat and narrow-gauge steam train, have lunch and spend the rest of the day at Fort Stanwix, or along the modern Erie Canal, hopefully passing through several of the locks by boat.

It is obvious that a great deal of effort has been made to present an enjoyable and informative weekend. Hopefully many of our Canadian Canal Society/Société des Canaux du Canada members will make plans to be a part of this very special event.

OPENING OF THE MONK PAVILLON
LACHINE CANAL

This past spring Parks Canada opened the Monk Pavillon in Montreal. The Pavillon contains an exposition relating some of the great moments in the history of the Lachine Canal. It is also a reception centre for visitors and cyclists wishing information on bike paths and other points of interest. The Pavillon is located at St. Joseph Boulevard and 7th Avenue, Montreal. Information: (514) 637-7433.



The "Main Event" of the very successful C.C.S. fall tour was a visit to historic Lockport, New York. Here several members of the group stand beside the flight locks of the old Erie Canal, constructed in 1825. A ride through the two newer (1918) locks, adjacent to the old, was a highlight of the day.

"THE BOOKSHELF"

Reviews by George Hume

Osborne, Brian S. and Donald Swainson, The Sault Ste. Marie Canal: A Chapter in the History of Great Lakes Transport, Ottawa, Parks Canada, 1986, ppl48, illus., paperback.

Sault Ste. Marie has held a special niche in the development of the transportation network of the Great Lakes. While not as daunting a problem as the developments to bypass the tremendous drop in water level at Niagara or the lengthy rapids of the upper St. Lawrence River, the Sault Ste. Marie Canal illustrates most vividly the technical and commercial changes which took place around the turn of the century.

The canal on the Canadian side at Sault Ste. Marie was conceived as a competitor to the successful routes along the U.S. side of the river. To compete it needed to be deep enough and wide enough to take the largest ships which could be conceived in the years before its completion in 1895. It also needed to be efficiently operated and capable of round-the-clock use. That it achieved its aims can be judged by the comparison of tonnage locked through over the early years, culminating in a peak of over 46 million tons in 1914. However, it was never to achieve the sustained greatness envisioned by its promoters. The Americans built their canals first and

enlarged them as the traffic increased so the Canadian heyday was limited to the initial twenty years.

Professors Osborne and Swainson have created a clear picture of the historical and commercial development of the Sault from the earliest times. They illustrate the innovation of the Canadian scheme, the first electrically operated canal as well as an early application of electric illumination, and explain how inches count, even in the movement of ships weighing thousands of tons.

The book provides compelling reading as well as an illustration of the foresight of the designers when an accident did interrupt the operation of the canal. If you have ever wondered whether safety precautions are overdone at modern canals you must read the graphic description of what happened when the lower lock gates were knocked out of a fully watered lock containing a good sized passenger ship and a lake freighter while the upper gates were still open.

Illustrations including contemporary photos, diagrams and maps add considerable interest to the book, but it is curious that there is no overall map of the area showing how the canal relates to the river and the shipping channels

or to its American competitors;

This shortcoming aside, the book shows how Canadian innovation can provide world class results but the ultimate lack of foresight and daring in the face of American competition leaves us with an interesting but overshadowed technological site.

Available in English or French from selected bookstores or the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services, Canada, Hull, Quebec, K1A 0S9 for \$7.50 in Canada and \$9.00 elsewhere. (Cheques should be payable to: Receiver General of Canada.)

Legget, Robert, Rideau Waterway, 2nd ed., Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1986, pp312, illus., cloth or paper.

Whether you are an armchair traveller or want a descriptive and historical companion to the charts and sailing instructions for a trip through the Rideau Canal, Dr. Legget's book provides an example of how such a dual purpose enterprise can be successfully completed. First written in 1955 and revised in 1972, this new edition lacks nothing in the way of painstaking research and rewriting to bring it completely up-to-date. All the new bridges, accesses and influences on the life and uses of the waterway are chronicled, but the book remains a flowing and picturesque account, a tribute to its 81 year old author who remains as much at home with the pen as he does with technical details and historic interpretation.

One gets the feeling when reading this book that this is Legget's Waterway as much as it is Colonel By's. His words make the building of it and the present operation come alive as if he (and the reader) were responsible for the meticulous masonry work, the current landscaping, the changes still being made to stabilize and improve the route. His words caress the stonework just as you imagine his hands have done.

This edition brings to the pages many more pictures and updates the references to companion charts and literature, but still leaves the reader wanting to know more about the background of the construction period and why Colonel By was treated so carelessly by his superiors in the aftermath of the completion of the canal. His techniques were innovative, he sought out materials and backed designs which were far ahead of anything being done on the North American continent and yet all this and the strategic importance which had led to the project were overlooked in the rush to criticize the costs. The waterway remains a monument to John By's creativity and organizational aptitude but our access to it is heightened and focussed by Dr. Legget's superb book.

Available in bookstores. Published by the University of Toronto Press, 63A St. George St. Toronto, Ont., M5S 1A6 or 33 East Tupper St., Buffalo, N.Y., 14203. Price in Canada: \$30.00 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

MUSKOGA CANAL LOCKS

By Bill MacLean

President, Canadian Canal Society

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An earlier article by Robert F. Legget (Vol.2, No.2, Nov.1985) refers to the canal locks at Port Carling, Huntville and Magnetawan, a unique feature being that all these facilities were built by, and continue to be operated by the Province of Ontario, and not by the Federal Government which is responsible for all other canals in Canada. Perhaps some historical background as to the origin of these little known locks and other canalization projects of the

Muskoka District would be of interest.

The first steanboat in Muskoka went into service in 1866, carrying passengers and freight between Gravenhurst and Bracebridge. The steamer was restricted to Lake Muskoka, being unable to sail beyond the rapids of the Indian River. To overcome this obstacle a second boat was soon placed in service above the rapids, on Lake Rosseau. The benefits of the steamer services soon became apparent and resulted in the then new Ontario Legislature undertaking the construction of a lock on the Indian River. A leading proponent of the project was Public Works Commissioner John Carling, and the settlement which sprang up around the lock site became known as Port Carling. A short canal to connect Lakes Rosseau and Joseph soon followed. This was located at Port Sandfield - John Sandfield MacDonald was Provincial Premier of the time. By 1875, when the railway had been extended north to Gravenhurst, the canals had opened up the entire chain of lakes for what would become the largest and most successful inland navigation fleet in Canada.

In contrast to Port Carling, where the steamers were already operating before a canal lock was built, construction of the lock at Huntsville was undertaken by the Province to encourage a steamboat service and thus promote settlement. Its completion provided a waterway extending from Mary Lake through Fairy Lake to the west end of Lake Vernon, a distance of 28 miles. A boat service was soon in operation, sailing out of Port Sydney on Mary Lake, which was reached overland from Bracebridge and was at that time gateway to the area. Similarly, Baysville was the gateway to Lake of Bays. It wasn't until the rail line arrived much later (1885) that Huntsville emerged as the hub of the local lakes. By 1888, steamers could also sail from Fairy Lake through a canal dredged along a creek into Peninsula Lake, from where it was only a short portage to Lake of Bays.

Continuing its policy of encouraging settlement of the north, the Ontario Government in 1883 approved construction of a lock on the Magnetawan River to provide a navigable waterway extending some 33 miles from Burks Falls to Ahmic Lake. Magnetawan village, being located

on the Nipissing Road running north from Lake Rosseau, was the commercial centre of the district until the railway reached Burks Falls in 1886.

The Muskoka Region developed into Ontario's premiere vacation area. It wasn't its beauty which attracted the early settlers, though. The thick forests suggested fertile soil which it was thought (optimistically) could be turned into rich farmland. A few adventurous tourists did trek into the wild and remote area from the earliest days, and soon the farmers were taking the occasional visitor for overnight lodging. Realizing that money could be earned in this manner - likely more than by farming - they began to expand their facilities. When the railways and steamer lines began to actively promote the district, Muskoka was ready for the influx of visitors. It had even been found that land cleared for farming made excellent sites for golf courses!

The history of the development of Muskoka is a well researched subject. The Region was blessed with natural waterways and well served by fleets of little steamboats. In fact, one such steamer - the SEGWUN - survives, and was restored to operation in excursion service in recent years. But the fact should not be overlooked that a vital contribution to the success of the steamboats, and indeed to the entire development of that Region was made by - the CANALS!

CANADIAN CANAL SOCIETY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It is with a great deal of pleasure and anticipation mixed with a feeling of trepidation that I make my first report to you as the new President of the Canadian Canal Society.

Looking back in the records I find that the inaugural meeting of CCS occurred as recently as May of 1982, and our young Society has certainly accomplished much in a short period of time. I am aware that it will be

a tough act to follow, and look forward to working with the Executive and Board Members to get on with the job.

One member who was actively involved in the formation and early years of the Society is our Immediate Past President, Peter Styromo; and on your behalf I would like to extend to him our appreciation for his efforts and leadership over the last year. It is most unfortunate for Peter, and for the Society, that the pressures of his regular duties made it impossible for him to carry on as President.

Our Fall '86 field trip took us "over the river" to view the section of the Erie Canal between Buffalo and Lockport, and served as a preview to next May when we will journey further beyond the border to visit sections of the Erie and Oswego Canals in the Syracuse area. This will be a joint meeting with the American Canal Society, and an ACS committee is busy fine tuning the plans. The preliminary outline indicates that this will be an outstanding event. So take note of the date - May 15 to 17, 1987 - that is Victoria Day weekend - and plan to be with us on that occasion.

High on the Board's agenda will be plans for future field trips. Unfortunately, the geographic location of many points of canal interest produces problems, including time requirements which could in turn result in costly outings. These will require careful consideration.

Before closing, there are several hardworking individuals who should be recognized for the outstanding contributions they have made to the Canadian Canal Society. First and foremost a tip of the old hat and our sincere thanks to John Burtniak. John handled the arrangements for the most excellent May outing and has followed it up with another winner in the Lockport trip. Also to Colin Duqueman and Sherman Zavitz for their assistance with the Lockport arrangements. And any organization requires stalwart individuals to look after the many and varied tasks which go with the position of Secretary and a Treasurer to keep a constant vigil over our financial health. We are indeed fortunate to have Bob Voaden and Ken MacKenzie handling these duties.

Finally, the continued enthusiastic support of you the Members is vital to the success of the Canadian Canal Society. May I suggest that a fine way of demonstrating this would be through recruiting new members with like or similar interests.

Bill MacLean

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Please enroll me as a member of the Canadian Canal Society.

I enclose my membership fee of \$ _____.

NAME

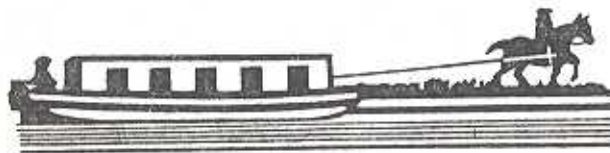
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Membership Fees: Individual \$10.00
Family \$15.00
Contributing \$25.00



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