

Canals  
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Canaux du  
Canada

Newsletter of The Canadian Canal Society/Société des Canaux du Canada

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## President's Message

Through the efforts of Board members **George Hume, Bob Sears, John Burtiak** and **Norm Macdonald**, the C.C.S. pulled off another delightful excursion — this time to the Gravenhurst-Huntsville area in the Muskokas. Many thanks to these four members for their efforts in making this visit such a success (report in the Spring issue of the *Newsletter*).

I was pleased to see a large contingent of members present at Lock 3 on Friday August 6, to celebrate the 170th anniversary of the turning of the first sod of the First Welland Canal, the 67th anniversary of the opening of the Fourth Welland (present) Canal, which is part of the St. Lawrence Seaway, and the 40th anniversary of the opening of the Seaway. The triple commemorative ceremony, hosted by the Niagara Region, was well attended by both political representatives and business leaders of the marine industry. It was also appropriate to have the C.C.S. acknowledged by the Region's Chairperson.

The Welland Canals Foundation will again be celebrating William Hamilton Merritt Day at Lock 3 on Monday November 29 at 10 a.m. Algoma Central Marine, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary, will provide one of their vessels for this ceremony.

Our second Social Afternoon get-together was held at the St. Catharines Museum on Sunday November 14 (see notice p. 4). Both of these "socials" have proved popular with our members, and we intend to continue them from time to time.

At this time I would like to thank all members for supporting the Society. Your comments are always encouraged and welcomed — please remember that this is YOUR Society, and you are needed to make it successful! Happy Holidays! **Al Sykes**

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### 1999-2000 Executive elected at A.G.M.

The Society's A.G.M. was held on the bus en route to Erie, Penna., and the following were elected to the Executive:

Immediate Past President	Bob Sparks
President	Al Sykes
Vice-President	George Hume
Treasurer	Carol Gaspari
Secretary	Doris Bates

## Springfield Trip and A.G.M. —5 June 1999

5 June was a bright sunny day that could be termed "hot" — particularly when the bus air conditioner refused to cooperate for the two-hour ride to Erie, Pennsylvania! Fortunately the driver was able to fix the problem after our arrival in Erie. In spite of this period of discomfort the members looked forward to their exploration of Erie and the community of Girard, both located on the Erie Extension Canal, which linked the Ohio River with Lake Erie.

As usual, we met at Brock University, then headed for the Queen Elizabeth Way, opened by Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, on 7 June 1939, to Niagara Falls. The final stretch to Fort Erie was completed in 1956. On entering Fort Erie John Burtiniak pointed out that the Bowen Road Bridge was the last of the original QEW bridges still intact. No doubt the twinning of the Peace Bridge and the development of "super highways" to support NAFTA trade will lead to the demise of this structure.

Our destination was Erie, Penna., third largest city in the state. A saltwater sea on the East and a freshwater sea on the Northwest border the flanks of Pennsylvania. The natural protection of the Presque' Isle peninsula made Erie a logical place for a port. Because of this maritime connection and the part it was to play in the War of 1812, our first visit was to the Erie Maritime Museum, where **John Scheloske**, a museum guide, gave us a lively oral history of the War of 1812, after which we viewed the exhibits, including a mid-ship section of the *Lawrence* showing battle damage caused by cannon fire. Following our orientation we moved outside to tour the *Niagara* guided by **Marine** and **Jack**, who conveyed a sense of shipboard life. A truer sense of this life was to be seen all around as the crew prepared the ship for another summer's activities: a visual reminder of the difference between a working ship and a preserved ship.

Our allotted time at the Maritime Museum passed far too quickly, then members adjourned to the Pufferbelly for lunch. At the Pufferbelly, **Mary Ellen Sinclair**, who had taken the time to print a special personalized menu for the C.C.S., greeted members. The restaurant is located in a former 1907 fire hall that had served the community until 1979, and fittingly preserves its history. We were delighted to find old maps on the wall, indicating the line taken by the Erie Extension Canal, and members spoke highly of the excellent food and service at the Pufferbelly.

After lunch **Sarah Thompson** of the Erie County Historical Society met us at the restaurant. Leading us to the Historical Society Museum she took a few moments to point out the historical buildings along the route. At the Museum members viewed a display on Erie's contribution to the war effort during World War Two. Also, more maps were on display showing the canal route in Erie County and within Erie. Adjacent to the Museum is the Cashier's House, dating from 1839, and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

After an all-too-short visit there, we boarded the bus to go on to Girard, Penna. — one of the many towns which prospered during the canal era, 1845-1871. Sarah had arranged for **Stephanie Wincik** to join us in Girard, so that we could split into two groups to explore the town. Members examined the architecture of the community, and in particular explored the Rush S. Battles House. Some members trekked across a field to view the former line of the canal. Though there is little left of the canal itself, it has left a rich collection of buildings to commemorate an important period in the growth of the community.



After leaving Girard the bus took us to Platea, where members could observe the line of the canal where, in a distance of two miles, 28 locks were built to overcome the change in elevation. Then on to the interstate for the return trip to St. Catharines.

A special "thank-you" to the Pennsylvania Canal Society, which had conducted a field trip of the Erie Extension Canal in April. **Zip Zimmerman**, President of the Pennsylvania Canal Society, kindly made available a selection of documents from that field trip, which served to provide the historical context required to understand the role of the canal in the area's development.

Time and distance constraints made it difficult to explore more fully the history of Erie and Erie County. However, a number of members vowed to return and see more of this historic area.

**Bob Sears**

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**Book Review — Goaded to Madness: The Battle of Slabtown.** By Paul Hutchinson and Michael Power (St. Catharines: Slabtown Press, 1999). 52 pages, illus. paperbound.

There are many stories about the Welland Canals. One of these, the so-called "Battle of Slabtown" involved Irish workers on the Second Canal. Paul Hutchinson and Michael Power have written the first in-depth study of the last great battle between Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants along the Welland. The conflict took place in front of Duffin's Inn, on 12 July 1849, at Slabtown, the nickname for the shantytown of Centreville (later the village of Merriton, now part of St. Catharines). The book, filled with strikes, riots and memorable characters, is thoroughly researched, documented and illustrated, and places the Battle of Slabtown within the context of disturbances which began in 1842. It features Father William Patrick McDonagh, a dominant figure both before and after the Battle of Slabtown, who was also responsible for the building of the church that became the Cathedral of St. Catherine of Alexandria in St. Catharines. This little book throws an interesting light on part of the Welland's history, and is well worth acquiring for one's canal library.

Available from: Paul Hutchinson  
141 Bradley Street  
St. Catharines, Ont. L2T 1R8

Cost: \$9.00 + \$1.50 for postage

**John Burtiniak**

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### **Board Members 1999-2000**

Art Adams  
John Burtiniak  
David Cramm  
Patricia French

George Huber  
Ken Mackenzie  
Peter McKenna  
Jim Purdie

Roberta Styran  
Robert Sears  
Wes Turner

## - C.C.S. "Social" — Sunday, 14 November 1999

The Fall Social was held at the St. Catharines Museum, with about 25 members and several curious and interested museum visitors, spending a pleasant afternoon sharing stories and pictures about canals, the Great Lakes, and the boats that plied these waters.

As with the first Social, held in the spring, the Fall Social was well received, and we assure the membership that others will be held in the future.

The Museum's Burgoyne Room was a comfortable and appropriate meeting place, with chairs, tables, projectors, and coffee, tea and cookies available. Several members brought postcards, photographs, pamphlets and slides for showing and sharing. Included were two albums of photos of the Fourth Welland Canal and of Great Lakers freighters and harbour scenes, a collection of Great Lakes passenger steamer timetables and brochures, some photographs and pamphlets. The highlight was President **Al Sykes'** slide presentation: one set of Great Lakes passenger steamers, and the other of accidents and disasters in the Welland Canal and on the Lakes.

Hats off to **Al Sykes** for suggesting the Socials as get-togethers between our two regular spring and fall membership meetings and tours, and to **Ken Mackenzie** for arranging the meeting place for both Socials. Watch for the notice of the Spring Social, and plan to attend! Meet old friends and make new ones, while extending your knowledge of canals and waterways!

**John Burtniak**

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### Welcome to New Members of the C.C.S.:

J.N. (Jake) Dick  
3858 Brookside Drive  
VINELAND, Ont.  
L0R 2C0  
e-mail: jndick@sympatico.ca

Terry K. Woods  
6939 Eastham Circle  
CANTON, Ohio  
44708  
U.S.A.

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### Ireland 2001: World Canals Conference

**Des Leyden**, recently elected Chairman of Inland Waterways International, assures me that he will soon have a plan for our proposed trip to Ireland for the Conference 8-22 May 2001. The tour will take place following the Conference (9-11 May), and there are still places available for a few more people. Full details will be sent when available to those who have already expressed an interest in this trip, and will be sent on request to anyone else. They will also be included in the Spring 2000 *Newsletter* for the information of the general membership. At the moment we have 14 committed members, and could accommodate another half dozen or so. For schedule of payments, please see the last *Newsletter* or contact Carol Gaspari. Given the Irish reputation for hospitality, the history of Dublin and Belfast, and the beauty of the countryside, this should be an informative, enjoyable and truly memorable trip. Sign up now and enjoy the fun!

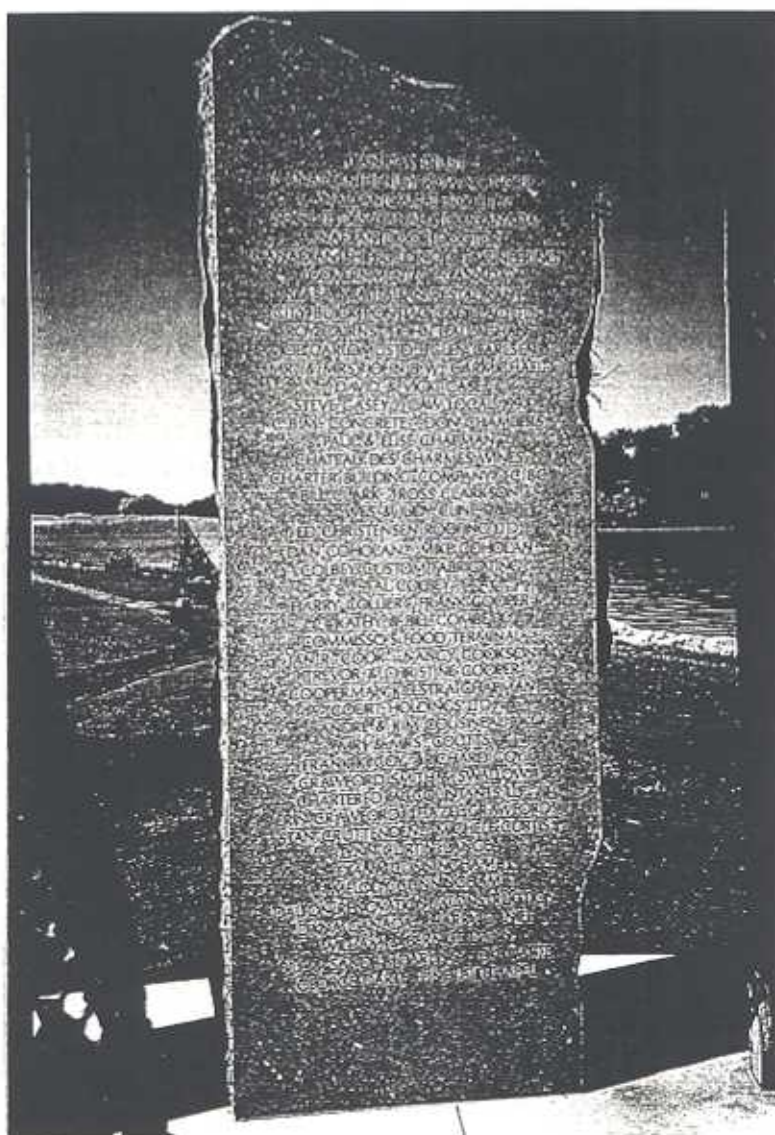
**Bobbie Styran**



## C.C.S. Contribution to Henley Improvements Commemorated

Some time ago the C.C.S. executive agreed to contribute to the work of improving the Henley rowing course in Martindale Pond, in anticipation of the World Rowing Championships. As a result of the campaign, the Henley course was dredged to the regulation depth of 3.5 metres, and expanded from six to eight lanes, with new starting gates and a new course marker system. The finish-line tower and grandstand were renovated and new docks were installed, parking lots and roads were repaved, and new sewers and electrical supply lines were installed.

To mark the successful completion of these improvements, a monument consisting of eight stone slabs was erected, called "The Heavy Eight" after the rowing crews, and unveiled at Rennie Park. The 1,125-kilogram granite slabs (each 5 m tall) were inscribed with the names of the more than 400 organizations and individuals who contributed to the campaign. C.C.S. Treasurer **Carol Gaspari** was on hand to make sure that the C.C.S.' contribution was officially recorded (see accompanying photograph). Thank you, Carol!



## Schedule of World Canals Conferences

- 2000 10-15 Sept.** Rochester, N.Y. Further information may be obtained from Tom Grasso, e-mail: tgrasso@rochester.rr.com
- The C.C.S. plans a trip to coincide with at least one day of the Conference. Several members of the C.C.S. executive will attend the entire Conference, and other members would be welcomed.
- 2001 9-11 May** Dublin/Belfast, Ireland. As already indicated, the C.C.S. is planning a trip to Ireland to coincide with this Conference, including a week-10 day tour of Irish waterways by boat and bus. Further details when available.
- 2002 TBA** Lachine Canal, Montreal area — further details when available. The C.C.S. will organize a trip to coincide with the Conference, details to depend on what is included in the Conference field trips.
- 2003 TBA** Scotland, probably Forth & Clyde Canal. At the moment, the C.C.S. is not planning a trip to coincide with this Conference. However, any members wishing to attend should watch the *Newsletter* where information will be made available as received.
- 2004 late May/early June** St. Catharines. Further information as plans develop!

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### High Costs Prevent Display of Erie Canal Wall

Hopes that a recently dug-up section of the old Erie Canal might form part of an Inner Harbor project at Buffalo were buried — at least for now, because of high costs. Plans to develop the Inner Harbor and re-open the Commercial Slip at its original site to attract tourists to the area, at a cost of \$27.1 million, include a new 14,000 sq. ft. Naval Museum. It is now intended to adjust the design to ensure that the old Canal wall will not be disturbed during construction. But hopes to have the **35** ft. section of wall on permanent display have had to be shelved. The wall lies up to twelve feet beneath ground level and its top stones are only a few inches above water level. Any area created for its display would have to be waterproofed or require constant pumping. It is believed that this section of wall is near the site where Governor DeWitt Clinton set out in 1825 to bring the waters of Lake Erie to New York harbor - that is, to officially open the Erie Canal.

By re-burying the section of wall, it will be preserved for the future — as was Lock 24 of the First Welland Canal, when funds for its display proved prohibitive. Such artifacts require access only through climate-controlled buildings with appropriate viewing areas, in order to preserve both the masonry and any timber structures associated with them. It is hoped that at some point in the future, funds may become available to re-excavate, and display in proper surroundings, this remnant of New York State's historic first Erie Canal — Clinton's Ditch. [Editor's note: from articles from the Buffalo *News* courtesy of C.C.S. member **Ken Mackenzie**]



## Canal News from Britain

Two major canal restoration projects are under way in Great Britain: a Millennium Wheel to connect the restored Forth and Clyde Canal with the Union Canal, and a £3.3 million grant to complete restoration of the Anderton Boat Lift in England. C.C.S. members who went to the UK in 1996 will recall the Anderton lift, built in 1875, the first of its kind anywhere in the world, and out of commission since 1983. British Waterways is delighted at the grant, which will leave only another £1 million to find, of the estimated £7 million required to complete the job. While commercial traffic between the Trent & Mersey Canal and the River Weaver is no longer a likelihood, the tourist potential of the area is considerable. While later lifts were built on the Continent, the design of the Anderton lift "was never bettered," according to Drek Cochrane, British Waterways regional director.

The Millennium Wheel is intended to raise and lower pleasure boats from one level to the other, at the point where the Forth and Clyde connects with the Union. Both canals are undergoing restoration, and it is hoped that all the work will be completed in time for a joint conference of the American Society of Civil Engineers and the Institution of Civil Engineers of Great Britain in 2000. The estimated cost of the work is \$126 million (US), most of which has already been raised. By joining the two canals, the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow will once again be connected by water, as they were through the 19th century. Restoring the link for pleasure craft will enhance the tourist potential throughout the area, and the sheer scale and uniqueness of the Wheel will make it a visible magnet.

[Editor's note: information on Anderton from an articles in the London *Times* 31 March 1999; on the Wheel from the ASCE *Newsletter* of May 1999, the latter supplied by C.C.S. member Dave Cramm.]

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### HELP ! Our Web-site is in urgent need of a Web-Master !

We are still in need of someone to take on our Web-site! Any C.C.S. member who has the requisite skills and is willing to undertake the task will be most warmly welcomed ! The Board will be happy to provide up-dated information at regular intervals to any volunteer. It should not be an onerous task, as the changes will be mostly regarding up-coming events, and possibly responding to enquiries from users (although it is probable that most of these would be transferred to an appropriate member of the Executive).

So, if you have the knowledge and the interest, do please let us know. If you can, and will, contact Bobbie Styran at the address given on the back page of this *Newsletter* or at her e-mail address: [rstyran@freenet.npiec.on.ca](mailto:rstyran@freenet.npiec.on.ca)

Looking forward to "hearing" a voice from cyberspace !

## The Canadian Canal Society

Executive Officers for 1999-2000

Past President	Robert Sparks
President	Al Sykes
Vice-President	George Hume
Secretary	Doris Bates
Treasurer	Carol Gaspari

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E-mail: [r3tyran@freenet.npiec.on.ca](mailto:r3tyran@freenet.npiec.on.ca) [no attachments, please]

### APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Please enrol me as a member of the **Canadian Canal Society**

I/We enclose my/our membership fee of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Category \_\_\_\_\_

Individual	\$ 15.00
Family	20.00
Institution	30.00
Contributing	30.00 or more

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