

C.C.S. Spring Field Trip and A.G.M., 4 May 1996

John Burtniak has planned another exciting expedition for C.C.S. members, a one-day walking tour of the rather neglected canal-side towns of **Allanburg** (where the first sod was turned for the Welland Canal on 30 November, 1824) and **Port Robinson**. A description of this tour, and application form, are included in this mailing. Come and join us as we continue our exploration of our waterways heritage!

The **1996 Annual General Meeting** will be held during the lunch break — a notice of which, and the report of the Nominating Committee, are also enclosed.

* * * * *

C.C.S. UK '96 Trip

Twenty-nine members of the C.C.S. will spend two weeks in the UK in June, to help celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the **Inland Waterways Association**, and the launching of the **International Association for Inland Waterways**. The C.C.S. is a member of the I.A.I.W., and our up-coming President, **Bob Sparks**, will attend that meeting as a member of their Council.

REMINDER !! For members who have signed up for this excursion:

- Information Meeting on 13 April, 10.00 a.m.
- Brock University, Special Collections Room
- Slides of sites to be visited
- Information and Question Period
- Coffee and Conversation

Information is being mailed to those members who are unable to attend this meeting.

* * * * *

New Honour for C.C.S. Member John Burtniak

John Burtniak, a long-time C.C.S. member, Director, and former President, of the C.C.S., has recently been named a Director of our sister organization, the **American Canal Society**. Although John will not be an official delegate from the C.C.S. to the A.C.S., we have no doubt that he will ably represent our interests and views, and help to further the already cordial relationship between the two Societies. Congratulations, John — we know you'll keep the Maple Leaf flying!

World Canal Conference, Birmingham, England, 26-28 June 1996

An exciting programme has been developed by British Waterways for this Conference, which will form an important part of the celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the **Inland Waterways Association**. While the C.C.S. will not have an official presence at the British Waterways conference, our group will be participating in a number of events, including a Civic Reception on the evening of 26 June. Joining the C.C.S. delegation will be a group of 40 members of the **Friends of the Trent Severn Waterway**, groups from the **Australian Canal Society, Ireland and Europe**, and members of the **Canal Society of New Jersey**. Representatives of numerous **local waterways and canal organizations** will also be in attendance, bringing with them pieces of a giant Jig-Saw of British Canals, which will be publicly assembled as part of the celebrations. A rousing good time should be had by all.

* * * * *

Some travel tips for those attending visiting the UK this summer

Three bits of information which might be useful for any C.C.S. members planning to be in the UK this summer — either staying on after the C.C.S. UK '96 Tour, or independently later in the season.

Near Reading: a unique sight — a **turf-sided lock** on the **Kennet and Avon** canal, originally built in 1720, and believed to be the last survivor of its kind in Britain. **Garston Lock**, once but one of up a hundred such locks, after years of decay was threatened with being filled in and replaced by a new lock nearby. Fortunately, British Waterways accepted its uniqueness, and have been restoring it, using special grasses and water meadow flowers to turf the lock walls.

Manchester: Harry Ramsden's, a well known fish-and-chips chain, has opened a new jetty on the river Irwell at its Water Street premises. They now offer a package, for parties of 25 or more, of a 50-minute return cruise to Salford Quays, followed by a fish & chips meal, available Tuesday to Sunday, 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. There is also an extended 2-hour cruise. For information, call 0161-832-9144.

Birmingham: British Waterways has made agreements with four Birmingham boat operators to improve trips for visitors. The operators are:

Ackers, with two boats running from the mooring point outside The Glasworks on Gas Street;

Birmingham & Midland Carrying Co., one boat, from Regency Wharf;

Second City Canal Cruises, two boats, from Regency Wharf & Holliday Wharf;

Earle Wightman, with two trip boats and a day hire boat, operating from outside the International Convention Centre.

Information from Clive Oliver at British Waterways Bilston office, Tel. 019-2-409-010

Fort Frances Canal : One of Canada's Few Unfinished Public Works

Robert F. Legget

[Reprinted from the Canadian Civil Engineer]

The history of Canadian engineering presents many cases of great works that were proposed but never built. This is not very surprising since the construction of public works has always been closely associated with local political developments, even though Lord Durham warned against this practice well over a century ago.

In contrast, this country does not contain many examples of major works that were started but never finished, even though there have been many works that were built, used for a time, and then abandoned and removed — railway lines in particular.

One of the few unfinished works that may still be seen in Canada can be found in the town of Fort Frances, in the far west of Ontario. Located on the international boundary, facing the US town of International Falls, Fort Francis stands at the exit from Rainy Lake on the banks of the Rainy River which flows west until it joins the Lake of the Woods.

The location was therefore an important one in the days when this was a part of the route by water from the east to the west of Canada. The town's name is a constant reminder of its association with the Hudson's Bay Company, Frances having been Sir George Simpson's young English wife.

There were falls on the river at this location, as is so often the case at outflows from lakes within the Shield country of Canada, falls that necessitated a portage and the loading and unloading of all the canoes and other craft that passed in the days of water travel.

The period when the Dawson Road from Prince Arthur's Landing to the Red River Settlement was in active use probably saw this water traffic at its peak. As part of the economy measures followed by the Liberal administration of Alexander Mackenzie between 1873 and 1878, the Dawson Road was regarded as a substitute for railways over this long stretch from the Lakehead to the Red River.

Even when extension of the first railway lines was considered, it was still thought that they could run as far as the trans-shipment points for the water route, at its eastern and western ends. Although today such a proposal will appear almost ludicrous, especially to younger Canadians, it was an indication of the importance still attached to water travel in Canada a century ago.

It was not, therefore, at all surprising that improvement of this inland navigation at the Fort Frances falls should have been given serious consideration. The idea of a short canal and lock was the obvious solution and this project was therefore planned and designed. Construction started in 1876 with the excavation of the necessary 800-foot canal in which the lock would be located, the Canadian shore of the river being the location selected.

A lock measuring 200 feet by 38 feet, with five feet six inches of water over its sills at low water, was proposed, together with the necessary berthing wharves, the rock cut being generally 40 feet wide.

By the end of 1878 excavation was substantially complete with work on the lock and lock gates ready to proceed. There was, however, a general election that fall, as a result of which the Mackenzie Government was defeated and Sir John A. MacDonald led the Conservatives back into power. They were pledged, in effect, to build the Canadian Pacific Railway and as a railway, not as an "amphibious route" as the Mackenzie proposal had been dubbed. It was, somewhat naturally, called other things as well.

Work on the Fort Frances Canal was therefore stopped, and has not yet resumed. A total amount of \$288,278.51 had been spent on the works. This has not been entirely wasted since the channel has been used for the discharge of waste water from an adjacent paper mill since 1905. The excavation may clearly be seen as one crosses over the bridge from Fort Frances to International Falls.

Quite naturally, there have been numerous suggestions over the years, for the completion of the proposed canal, or for the use of the channel in connection with some type of lift lock. The earlier proposals are conveniently summarized in the famous report of the International Joint Commission on the Lake of the Woods (into which the Rainy River drains) published in 1917.

I was kindly reminded of this report by Mrs. Kersten Mueller, the Librarian of the Fort Frances Public Library, who also provided me with other historical information of much interest. There was established, for example, a Western Canal Company in 1911 with authority to carry out improvements from five miles east of Fort Frances to five miles west of the Long Sault, a small rapid further down Rainy River.

Nothing, however, was done and so the canal remains today as merely a waste water channel. Indicative of the blighted hopes was the removal during the second world war of a movable span in the international bridge that had been there since 1902. This may not be the end of the story, however, since local interest in the possible completion of the canal has never really disappeared. Until the first world war there used to be regular steamers sailing from Fort Frances to Kenora, despite the difficulty of navigating the Rainy River at times. It has often been pointed out that, with the lock at Fort Frances completed, and possibly a minor improvement at the Long Sault, a two hundred mile, unimpeded waterway through some of the most beautiful lake country of Canada would be created.

With the building and operation of pleasure craft being, as it is reported to be, one of the fast growing industries of North America with the ever-growing attention to leisure pursuits, there would appear to be some reason to think that local proposals for the completion of this century-old canal may still prove to be warranted.

One can easily think of many works carried out in Canada in recent years at far greater expense than would be involved in the completion of the Fort Frances Canal, and the social benefits of these prospects appear to be at least equalled by the benefits that would accrue from finishing the canal, if not, indeed, surpassed.

* * * * *

THE ST. MARY'S CANAL

In 1888, the Department of Railways and Canals let out tenders for the construction of a canal at Sault Ste. Marie. Hugh Ryan and Company were the successful bidders and construction began in earnest in the spring of 1892. The entire system would be excavated to a length of 7294 feet from pier to pier. The lock itself would be built to a length of 900 feet and 60 feet in width and 18 feet 2 inches in depth. Facing stone for the lock walls was cut in Amherstburg and transported to the Soo by means of tug and barge, while the backing stone was excavated from quarries on Manitoulin Island and brought to the Soo on steamers.

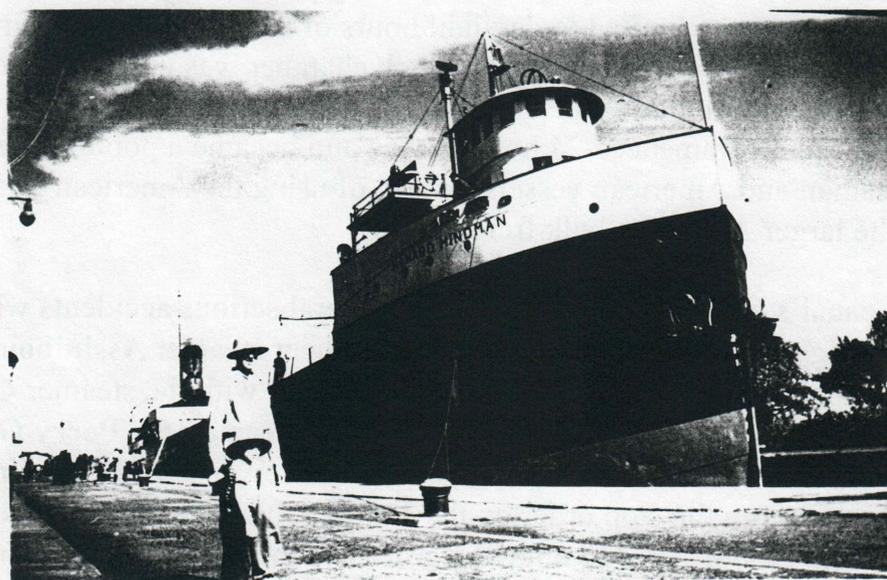
On September 7, 1895, the Canadian steamer **Majestic** officially opened the canal upbound under the command of Captain Peter Campbell. Although the canal was now open for business, it was limited to daylight hours of navigation for the first several months. Electric lighting of the banks and lock chamber was not complete, and also the marker buoys at the entrance to the channel had to be installed. Once this was all complete, the canal commenced 24 hour service and became a popular short cut for the smaller Canadian and American vessels instead of using the American locks which catered to the larger American bulk freighters.

During this canal's existence, there have been several serious accidents which have suspended navigation. On June 9, 1909, the passenger steamer **Assiniboia** was entering the lock downbound, to be followed in tandem lockage with the steamer **Crescent City**, which would tie up astern. Meanwhile, an upbound steamer, the **Perry G. Walker**, upbound below the lock, was attempting to make the lower wall and tie up. The Captain of the **Walker** rang up the stop order on the engine room telegraph but the engineer on duty in the engine room failed to obey the order and the **Perry G. Walker** plowed into the lower gates of the lock. As the upper gates were still open allowing the **Crescent City** to enter the lock, the surge of water released by the lower gate swept both the **Assiniboia** and **Crescent City** down through the lock out of control. Both captains finally got their ships back under control after sideswiping the upbound **Walker** and doing plate damage to each ship.

The canal itself was now a spillway and had to be dammed up at the mouth of the canal so that the damaged lock gates could be removed and refastened. The total cost of the accident was approximately \$50,000. and the canal was out of commission for ten days.

During the first and second world wars, armed guards were stationed at these locks to prevent saboteurs from destroying this system. The canal itself proved to be a cost-saving link for shippers headed for the Canadian Lakehead. The smaller lower canal vessels all used this waterway as the larger lakers, with more horsepower, would beat them to the American locks; thus a confrontation would be averted.

In the later years, as the smaller Canadian ships disappeared one by one, only Canadian tankers and the steel carrier **Yankcanuck** frequented this lock, along with the tour ships of the Soo area. In 1988, a collapse of the lock wall into the lock chamber shut down the canal and it has remained in this state to the present day, although there are attempts currently being made to re-open the lock with a shorter width restriction.



Howard Hindman Trans. Co.

*Canadian Soo locks.
7-10-49*

The above photograph shows the **Howard Hindman** of Owen Sound upbound in the Canadian Soo lock on July 10, 1949.

The International Shipmasters Association's Niagara Lodge is raffling off a trip for two on a Great Lakes freighter. The trip will commence at the Welland Canal eastbound or westbound (winners choice). The draw is to take place on Saturday, February 22, 1997 at the annual Shipmasters' Ball. Tickets are one dollar each or six tickets for five dollars. Society member Alan Sykes has tickets for sale. Contact Alan at: 12 Peach Tree Park, Fonthill, Ontario L0S 1E0.

Alan Sykes

Canal-Side Mill may form Core of New Development

The magnificent red sandstone structure known originally as **Merritton Mills, or Beaver Cotton Mills**, built on the bank of the Second Canal in Merritton around 1880, may come to life once more, if an application now before the City of St. Catharines is approved. The structure, currently owned by Domtar Fine Paper Company, has been abandoned since the 1950s, but its landmark smokestack still reminds us of its important role in the local economy. If zoning permission is granted, about half of the surviving structure — including that smokestack! — will be retained, and incorporated into new retail space, intended to house specialty retail shops and a theme restaurant. Plans also call for a clean-up of the surrounding area, to create a better linkage with the nearby Mountain Locks Park. It is also planned to set up displays to highlight remains of the First and Second Canals and spillway, which can still be seen nearby.

This project has the support of the St. Catharines Heritage Committee, and should be of considerable interest to all canal and heritage buffs. [Information from The Scribe (published by the St. Catharines Heritage Committee), Vol. 1, Issue 2.]

* * * * *

Welland Canals to get National Exposure

C.C.S. members outside the academic community may not be aware that Brock University will play host to hundreds of academics from a wide range of disciplines, from all parts of Canada and the United States, when some 281 of Canada's "Learned Societies" hold their annual meetings here, from 23 May to 7 June.

Among those societies will be the **Canadian Historical Association**, and two C.C.S. members, **Bobbie Styran** and **Rob Taylor**, will present a paper to the C.H.A., on the morning of **Friday 31 May**. Their paper will be entitled "The Great Swivel Link: The Welland Canal as an Integral Part of the St. Lawrence Waterway." The same session will include a paper on the **Sault Ste. Marie Canal**, to be presented by **Brian Osborne** and **Donald Swainson**, of **Queen's University** (neither, alas, members of the C.C.S., but perhaps we can persuade them to join!).

In conjunction with the morning session, there will be a bus tour of the **St. Catharines-Merritton-Thorold** areas of the Welland Canals, be conducted by **Bobbie and Rob** — to give at least some of our visitors from coast to coast an opportunity to see a part of our Canals heritage.

* * * * *

Port Weller Dry Dock to Celebrate 50th Anniversary

On 1 June the **Port Weller Dry Dock** will celebrate its 50th anniversary, and a number of activities are planned. The C.C.S. will be on hand with a display, and welcomes members to come along and share this happy occasion. The Dry Dock premises are not only located alongside the Welland Canal, but are, in fact, on the site of the Gate Yard which was built as part of the Welland Ship Canal, for the storage and maintenance of the canal gates. By 1946 the government no longer required the Gate Yard, and an 11-acre tract of government land was leased to Charles A. Ansell, a veteran manager with Muir Brothers Shipyard — and what is now the Port Weller Dry Dock was born.

The Canadian Canal Society

Executive Officers for 1995-96

Past President: Sheila Wilson
President: Norman Macdonald
Vice-President: Robert Sparks
Secretary: Doris Bates
Treasurer: Carol Gaspari

Send all correspondence for the **Canadian Canal Society** to:

Doris Bates, Secretary
Canadian Canal Society
P.O. Box 23016, Mid-Town Postal Outlet
124 Welland Ave.
St. Catharines, Ontario
L2R 7P6

Contributions for **Canals Canada** should be sent to:

Roberta Styran, Editor
35 Towering Heights Blvd., #509
St. Catharines, Ontario
L2T 3G8

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL

Please enrol me as a member of the **Canadian Canal Society**
I/ We enclose my/ our membership fee of \$ _____ Category _____

Individual	\$	10.00
Family		15.00
Institution		25.00
Contributing		25.00 or more

NAME: _____

TITLE: Mr. () Mrs. () Miss () Ms. () Dr. () Capt. () Other ()

ADDRESS: _____

PROVINCE (STATE): _____ POSTAL CODE: _____

PHONE: Home _____ Business _____ FAX _____

Please make cheques payable to the **Canadian Canal Society** and send with application to:

Secretary, Canadian Canal Society
P.O. Box 23016, Mid-Town Postal Outlet
124 Welland Ane.
St. Catharines, Ontario
L2R 7P6