BOTTOMING OUT

USEFUL AND INTERESTING NOTES COLLECTED FOR THE MEMBERS OF

The Canal Society of New York State

No. 61

Winter / Spring 2015
The Canal Society of New York State brings together canal enthusiasts from across the state and world, to learn about the history, development and ongoing activities associated with the numerous canal systems found throughout the state. Its activities include: the protection of historic canal sites, and features; support for the revitalization of canals, the development of canal ports, recreational facilities, canal trails and other related amenities, and; the presentation or interpretation of canal history and related topics. Founded in Buffalo on October 13, 1956, the Canal Society is a not-for-profit educational organization, that provides a forum for visiting canal sites around the state and an opportunity for sharing information, and ideas relevant to preserving the history and traditions of the canal as well as promoting ideas for continued revitalization and development of it. Membership is open to individuals interested in learning more about the history of canals and supporting the revitalization of canals. Benefits include two issues of Bottoming Out per year, access to individuals with extensive knowledge of canals and the opportunity to participate in any of the field trips to canal sites throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe that are sponsored and run by the Canal Society.

Individual membership in the Society is $30/year and family membership is $40. You can visit the Society’s web site for detailed membership information or contact Anita Cottrell, Treasurer (see her entry in the list to the right).

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Please send in Microsoft Word® format.
On the Cover...
In this issue, we have the sad duty to recall the life of John Jermano, who passed this past year.

CONTENTS

In Memory; John Robert Jermano .................................................................4

The Beginnings of the Second Enlargement of the Erie Canal 1858-1895..........6

The Cayuga Seneca Canal Story, Part 2..........................................................15

A Look Back.....................................................................................................17

The C&O Canal..............................................................................................18

Mileposts: NYS Canals Through The Years..................................................22

Richard Palmer’s Newspaper Morgue...........................................................24

Port Byron Old Erie Canal Heritage Park....................................................26

The New York State Canal Conference Visits the Old Erie Canal Heritage Park....28

A Note to Readers
The Editorial staff welcomes your ideas and thoughts concerning the Bottoming Out. If you have ideas for articles that you would like to see covered, please pass them along. Or if you have corrections or additions concerning past articles, we also welcome your input. The discussion of history is greatly benefited when people are willing to put forth their thoughts and findings.

Submission Guidelines for Bottoming Out.
It is the intent of the Canal Society to provide its members and the canal community a scholarly journal, containing in-depth and well-researched articles. All authors or submitters should keep the following in mind:

1) All articles should contain as full a citation that is possible. The standard citation is the Chicago method, but there are times that this might not be possible. Our goal is to provide the canal community and other researchers with the best possible reference which could serve as the foundation for additional study.

2) You can also send in historic newspaper articles. If you run across an interesting piece from an old newspaper, you can submit it as long as you can provide the name of the paper and date of publication.

3) The Canal Society reserves the right to refuse any material we feel does not fit the mission of the Society.

4) In all cases, you must provide your name, address and email on all submitted material. This is required in case the editor of Bottoming Out needs more information or clarification.
In Memory
John Robert Jermano

John R. Jermano, 77, passed away peacefully on Friday, December 19, 2014, at Albany Medical Center. John was born in Ogdensburg, a son of the late Ross and Millie Evans Jermano.

He earned his bachelor's in civil engineering from the Catholic University of America in 1959, in Washington, D.C.

As a licensed professional engineer and licensed land surveyor, he was a New York State Department of Transportation resident engineer in Wayne County, and then county engineer of the Onondaga East Residency; and regional highway maintenance engineer of Region 8. He was the former director of New York State Canals, serving from May 1984 till June 1994. He was loved and admired by canallers far and wide. John oversaw the early days of the re-birth of New York's canals, and continued to be a friend and advocate of the state's waterways. John is a former winner of the Waterford Tugboat Roundup Canal Lifetime Achievement Award, along with many other significant awards and recognitions.

Part of his record of achievements includes:

Structure Inspections: Created the modern system of inspections for the 1800+ Canal structures, done by both engineering consultants and in-house.

Dams: He was the driving force behind the program to inspect in-depth and rehabilitate the 29 high hazard Canal dams, assuring that all deficiencies found by independent consultants were addressed.

Locks: expanded the lock rehabilitation program and changed the philosophy from modernization to preservation of historic components.

Promotion: Started (on a shoestring budget) the promotion of the Canal for recreation, including publishing promotional literature and advertising at boat shows in the eastern U.S.

State Agency: Initiated discussions on the future of the Canal within NYS-DOT, ending with in a management committee's recommendation to transfer the Canal to the Thruway Authority. Resulting legislation created the Canal Corporation and the Canal Recreationway Committee.

Prior to retiring from the state as the director of canals and the New York State Canal Corporation in 1994, he received the AASHTO President's Medal Award in 1992 and the New York State Canal Conference Spirit of the Canal Award in 1996.

Following retirement with the state, he was the director of quality management and engineering with Laberge Engineering and Consulting Group, Ltd., from 1996 to 2005. He was a member of the Albany Society of Engineers, American Council of Engineering Companies of New York, New York State Association of Transportation Engineers, and served on the Board of Directors of the State Council on Waterways and Canal Society of New York State.

He was a bridge member of the Lake George Power Squadron and the Mohawk-Hudson Council of Yacht Clubs. He was the rear commodore and historian of the Schenectady Yacht Club, where he was the proud owner of the Caprice Pilgrim Trawler. The Caprice was a wonderful tug, with a wonderful skipper.

He was an avid fan of the Syracuse University Orange basketball team. He was not only an avid music lover, but also as one friend said, “one heck of a pianist, especially piano jazz, his chords were was smooth and sweet as pudding”. Marcus Roberts was his favorite followed by Marian McPartland the great British pianist. Also Bill Evans and Dave Brubeck. The family added, “he also made the best meatballs from the old Jermano family recipe.”

John was a longtime parishioner of St. John the Evangelist and most recently attended St. Kateri Tekakwitha Parish in Schenectady with his daughter.

John was loved by his wife, family and various pets; and was known by all to be a caring, compassionate man and a great husband, father and friend to all. He was predeceased by his beloved wife and high school sweetheart Martha Jean (Guerin) Jermano, and his siblings, Ross (Lea) Jermano and Rosemary Neal. Survivors include his loving children, Catherine (Bill) Olohan, John (Scott Jerris) Jermano and Sarah Jermano; adoring grandchildren, Caitlin Olohan, Michael Olohan and Christopher Owen; siblings, Daniel (the late Janet) Jermano and F. Thomas (Idona) Jermano; he is also survived by many nieces, nephews and wonderful friends. John's family would like to thank the doctors and staff at NYOH and AMC for the loving care shown to John during his illness. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Tuesday, December 23 at St. Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, Rosa Road cam-

John was presented the Spirit of the Canal award in 2008. He is shown here accepting the award from David Kinyon (left), and Kal Wysokowski. Photo courtesy of David Kinyon.
Interment was at the Most Holy Redeemer Cemetery, Niskayuna.

Following his passing, Tom Grasso said of his good friend, “He was a good Christian - he lived it seven days a week not just on Sunday for one hour. He not only wove a rich tapestry of accomplishments in his professional life, but also in his personal life with Marty, his family and friends. He was humble, truthful, trustful, and kind. He was also intellectually brilliant, but he never waved that aspect like a flag. His laugh was contagious, when he really let out a belly laugh, his eyes would completely closed and he laughed so hard tears would flow down his cheeks.”

**John R Jermano Memorial Fund**


Photos courtesy by Thomas X. Grasso.
**Erie Canal**

The Beginnings of the Second Enlargement of the Erie Canal 1858-1895

Submitted by Michael Riley

**Introduction**

I think everyone understands that the Erie Canal has gone through many changes between the time it was first built in 1817-1825 and the building of the Barge Canal 1905-1918. When the canal was opened from Albany to Buffalo in 1825, it suffered from many imperfections that made the day to day operation and its use by the boaters difficult at times. The way the canal was constructed by following contours of the land, made for many twists and turns. In some areas, the land would slide into the canal bed. By 1834, the State decided to enlarge the canal from the four feet by forty feet dimensions to seven feet by seventy feet between Albany and Syracuse. By 1835, the State had decided to enlarge the canal all the way from Albany to Buffalo. The goals were many, but mostly centered around getting bigger boats on the canal. The locks were enlarged and doubled (two locks side by side), and new aqueducts were built. Since a larger canal needed more water, more reservoirs and feeders were constructed. This process of enlargement would last for the next twenty-seven years. Before the first enlargement was complete, there were calls for a still larger canal which would allow for larger loads. In time, this would be called the second enlargement, and that in turn would lead to the building of the Barge Canal. This article began its life as a look at the Second Enlargement of the Erie Canal. It has turned out to be an examination as to what factors led up to the Second Enlargement. As with everything about the canal, the more I dug into the history, the less clear things became.

When did the Second Enlargement Begin?

We can flip the question about the beginning of the Second Enlargement to read, “when did the first enlargement conclude?” In my research I am finding that an answer to this question is not as clear as one might think. One might look to Whitford and his order of chapters. He places the beginning of the second enlargement at the same time as the Nine Million Dollar Act of 1895, since the enlargement was written into the law. Another person might look to at when the shipper could move more tons of goods as an enlargement. So I set out to find a time when someone who had the power and the influence to make a call for a deeper canal, did so, and when. Certainly demands for a deeper canal are not the same as actual digging, but other things did take place as a result of these calls, and these increased the capacity. As a result of this study, I decided to use the beginning of steam on the canal as a mark in the timeline of enlargement projects.

**1858- The Steam Boat and a Deeper Canal**

It is difficult to pinpoint the date of the first steam powered canal boat, as many seem to claim the honor. It tends to circle around; “who built the first boat?” and “who built the first successful boat?” In early August of 1858, a trip was taken by New York State Governor King, Canal Commissioners Ruggles and Jaycox, and many others. They traveled to western New York to take part in a celebration of steam on the canal. They rode from Rochester to Buffalo in a flotilla of steam vessels that included; the PS Sternberg, the Charles Wack, the Governour King, and the SS Whallon.(1) In one of the many speeches he gave, Governor King told the crowds that the Sternberg was the first successful steam boat, and that the ongoing experiments with her and the others would show that steam was practical for use on the canals. He also said that it only remained for the State to, “Enlarge and deepen the canal, and make it what it was intended to be.” This was not a call to deepen the canal to more than seven feet; it was a call to deepen the canal to seven feet. Adding to the quote above, the Governor said, “Then you may put on the steam, and defy competition, from whatever source it may come.” The newspaper article went on to report that the boats often hit bottom on their tour, which is backed up by the annual reports of the time.(2)

Although the railroads had yet to surpass the canals in tonnage of goods carried, the men promoting the steam boats could see the future. In an extensive article about steam on the Erie Canal in Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine and Commercial Review, the writer said; “It should be borne in mind that the railways are ‘up to time’ under the shrewdest competitive management, whilst the canal managers and forwarders have stuck like leeches to the tow-path, until they have sucked the financial blood from this great artery, so that she requires powerful stimulants in loans to reinvigorate her; hence, it wants an energetic and expeditious policy to meet the activities of the railways and redeem her from the sluggish habits of the past.”(3) The point was that the railroad and the steam engine were evolving, while, even though the first enlargement process was ongoing, the canal had stopped growing. Clearly steam was the future, if only the canals would embrace it.

So let’s step away from the parade for a moment. One of the men on the Sternberg was temporarily appointed canal commissioner Samuel B Ruggles.(4) He was a member of the State Assembly in 1838, and a canal commissioner from 1839-1842. Ruggles was asked to fill the vacancy of Samuel Whallon. In this position, he learned first hand about the condition of the canals and the progress of the enlargement. In 1858, the enlargement had been going on since 1835. Even with the missed Stop and Tax years (1842-1847), the work had been going
on for eighteen years, and it was far from complete. He wrote that, “It was soon discovered that the Erie Canal, the enlargement of which had been supposed to be nearly complete, had not a uniform depth even of six feet of water, to which it had been limited during the progress of the enlargement, causing great dissatisfaction, delay and loss to the numerous persons engaged or interested in its navigation.”(5)

Let’s get back to the parade of steam in August. Unlike Governor King who looked to the future, Samuel Ruggles looked back, “I have not time to speak to you of the future of this great work, and I desire only further to allude to the past, by calling to mind those to whom we are indebted for the grand canal, which has brought to you and the State so full a measure of prosperity. Let me in parting, point you to one memorial of those benefactors who have passed away, and whose monuments we see all along the line of this canal. Yonder, (pointing to a single arch of the old aqueduct) stands a monument to their wise forecast and patriotism. Preserve that, fellow citizens, as a memorial of the triumphal accomplishment of a great enterprise.

In Europe, and among all civilized nations, a mouldering ruin like that, illustrative at once of the art and enterprise of the past, would be cherished with religious care. Let it be your aim to secure it from the vandal hand, and preserve it for your children to contemplate as a memento of the opening of a new era to internal commerce.”(6) This speech is interesting as it takes place during a tour of the new age of innovation, in which the central point is to push the State to finish the first enlargement. Ruggles is saying in effect, “The reason you are here is due in large part to the great canal. Let that arch be a reminder of this. Don’t forget it!” You read similar reminders through all the yearly Annual Reports, which all seem to start with a reminder of the past glory days of canals and the Empire State.

A push was made for the completion of the canal enlargement. Up to 1859, $29,800,000 had been spent on the enlargement. Engineers estimated that only one more million would finish the work. On April 19, 1859, the Legislature passed a bill, Chapter 495, which in part, gave money to survey the entire canal by boat, taking measurements of the actual depth, and publishing the results for all to see.

The 1860’s

Thomas Colden Ruggles was appointed to carry out the survey, the first taking place in 1860. A second test run was made in 1861. Ruggles found that the canal was between 5.9 to 6.7 feet deep. In addition, there were large earthen benches that stuck out into the channel, decreasing the width of the navigation channel and decreasing the amount of water in the canal. Ruggles also discovered that no surveys of the canal existed to aid him in his calculations of clearing out the canal channel. In the 1861 Annual Report, the same one in which T.C. Ruggles report was published, the Canal Commissioners were quick to point out that this testing was a waste of money. On April 10, 1862, the State Legislature also reacted to Ruggles report by passing Chapter 169 of 1862, which declared the canal’s first enlargement complete as of September 1, 1862. After September, if the canal was to be worked on, the money would need to come out of the general fund.

Whitford noted that the policy change “left the enlargement of the canals far from actual completion.”(8) As it stood in 1862, thirteen locks west of Syracuse only had one chamber; earthen benches remained along much of the canal; and over time, the canal had been getting shallower as soil, sewage, and trash filled up the canal prism. The depth was far from seven feet. And aside from the steam parade of 1858, little advancement was made in terms of non-animal towage.

The supporters of the canal only had to look to the loss of business to the railroads and see what the future held. In 1865, the canal hauled about a million more tons than the railroads. In 1867, the tonnage of freight moved by the canal and the railroad was about equal at about five and a half million tons. In 1868, the canal hauled slightly more, and then after that, the railroads pulled ahead, never to lose ground again. The railroads were improving their steam engines, making it possible to move more freight in each train. In 1869, the Westinghouse airbrake was introduced, and in 1873, the knuckle coupler was introduced. Meanwhile, the majority of boats on the Erie and other canals were being pulled by animal teams.

Little would happen along the canal during the next seven years. The locks west of Port Byron remained as singles. In his 1869 message, Governor Hoffman said it was the duty of the state to “foster and protect” the canal, and to restore it to full dimensions again, meaning seven feet of water.(9) In May 1869, money was given to restart the lock doubling.(10)

The 1870’s

The Governor repeated his message in 1870 and another $200,000 was given to the lock doubling effort.(11) The Canal Commissioner stated that another $126,000 was needed to finish the work. One of the reasons to support the canals was that they acted as a check on the railroad’s freight prices. Even if the canals were not carrying great amounts, the fact that they were in business helped to regulate prices.

It was recognized that steam had not made the inroads along the canal as the people on the 1858 parade had expected. And in 1871 the Governor pointed out that Canada was actively enlarging their canals to allow for larger boats. The State reacted by encouraging any sort of towing system, saying that they wanted to see the use of steam, caloric, electricity or any motor power other than animals for the propulsion of boats.(12)

In 1873, the newly elected Governor John Dix said that the State had been far too generous with its money over the Hoffman years and needed to make cuts. However, he did give his support for the canals and that the need to have full dimensions and steam. In 1874, Governor Dix mentioned the Canadian Canals and the fact that ships of 1600 tons will soon be using the St. Lawrence River. He said that the State must respond by providing a canal that will cheapen the cost of moving goods or the State will lose its place in commerce. However, he warned, 1874 was not a time to even think about a ship canal across the State. When Governor Dix gave his 1874 message, the world had been in a financial depression since September of 1873.

In 1873, people selected from around the state met to discuss changes to the New York State Constitution. One of
the big changes was to create the position of the Superintendent of Public Works, and to abolish the Canal Commissioners. Once recommended, and with the approval of the Legislature, the amendment would be placed on the fall ballot. However, even with the change favorably voted upon by the voters, the change from Canal Commissioners to Superintendent would not happen until 1876.

In 1875, newly elected Governor Tilden made very favorable comments toward the canals, saying that the canal had enough capacity to do the job asked of it and more, but that the canal needed to be cleaned out to seven foot. (13) His tone was measured, in light of the depression that was ongoing. “Economy from the best group of adaptations”, was his message. Then he wrote; “I may be excused for repeating here what I said in the Constitutional Convention eight years ago: “What the Erie Canal wants is more water in the prism- more water in the waterway. A great deal of it is not much more than six feet, and boats drag along over a little skim of water; whereas it ought to have a body of water larger and deeper even than was intended in the original project. Bring it up to seven feet- honest seven feet- and on all levels, wherever you can, bottoming it out; throw the excavation upon the banks; increase that seven feet toward eight feet, as you can do, progressively and economically. You may also take out the bench walls.”(14)

There are a couple of remarkable items in the Governors message. The first is that the Governor had made the argument for an honest seven feet in 1867, some five years after those in 1862 said the enlargement was complete, and here he was again making the argument again in 1875, some thirteen years after 1862. He also made statements concerning the way that boats move in the canal, and this message may be the first serious call for a canal deeper than seven feet. But in doing all this, he also made it clear; “No Rash Innovations.”(15) Complete the canal to seven feet, give steam a chance, study the results. In short, don’t do anything else in a time of depression.

Governor Tilden was not done. On March 19, 1875, he released a special message to the Legislature. He began by saying that he had received a communication from the boatman, forwarders, and others concerned with the business of the canals asking for cheaper tolls and ways to cheapen the movement of freight. He then said he started his own investigation into the canals of the State and had found that many millions of dollars had been spent on useless improvements and repairs. He said that the canal must be cleaned out and gradually deepened so the boat is moving through more water. (more on this later) He asked for a measurement of the canal depth. He then pointed out the fraud in the canal bidding system and said that engineers, contractors, and commissioners have been ripping off the State for years. He finished with, “It is clear that, under the present system of canal management, the people will not be relieved from taxation, the boatmen from high tolls, or the needed improvements of the Erie and Champlain Canals will be finished.”(16) As a result, the Legislature set up an investigating committee which was given a year to study the management of the canals and make a report.

The Governors special message had the intended effect. The New York Herald ran a full page devoted to the message, the need for investigations, and the need for seven feet of water. (17) Thurlow Weed, no friend of Tilden, gave his support to the Governor.

Samuel Ruggles, the ardent canal supporter and member of the New York State Chamber of Commerce, joined the fight for the canals. Maybe not surprisingly, in May, 1875, the Chamber hired Thomas Colden Ruggles to run his tests again, examining the speed of the boats on the canal, and the depth of water. Ruggles rode along on the “City of Utica”, a Baxter Steam Canal Transportation boat. He submitted his report to the Chamber on October 7, 1875.(18) Ruggles condensed his report down to three points; 1) that delays in navigation cause the boaters to waste money, 2) that in many places the canal is not more that thirty feet wide, and 3) that the boaters would be better served with eight feet of water. He also points out that in many places, the canal has not been improved since his 1861 survey. On March 30, 1876, the Chamber passed a resolution in favor of making the canal seven foot deep, and deepening where possible.

The Canal Ring

In 1876, Governor Tilden called for a special investigation of “the canal ring”, and the waste and fraud connected to canal work. The conclusions of this investigation had an impact on what happened next with the canal enlargement. It is not the purpose of this article to investigate what was called “the canal ring”. But it is important to note what happened as it has such a bearing on what would happen next.

In March, he Governor Tilden delivered the findings of the investigation; 1) almost fifteen million dollars had been spend over the last five years on canal repairs and improvements, 2) almost all the work done had little value to the State and was only done to enrich the contractors, 3) most of the bids and contracts were handed out illegally, 4) most of the work was useless. He then recommended that; 1) close all contracts, 2) make $400,000 available to close out any payments on closed contracts, 3) make $400,000 available to restore the canal so it could have seven feet of water, plus make $15,000 available for a complete survey of the canal, 4) use any unexpended balances left from prior appropriations on the Champlain Canal, 5) direct the canal board to come up with a set of recommendations for next year. These recommendations became law as Chapter 425 of 1876.(19) The “canal ring” had been broken.
When the 1876 fall elections rolled around, the voters had a chance to respond by way of the Constitutional changes recommended in 1873. They were well prepared to change the management structure of the canals. The State would have its first Superintendent of Public Works and the Canal Commissioners were to be gone. But change was to come slowly, and political shenanigans would postpone the appointment of the Superintendent until late January 1878.

In 1877, newly elected Governor Lucius Robinson pronounced that the fraud on the canal was gone but the boatmen had been harmed by the waste over the last years. Because of the ongoing depression, the only way to help the boatmen was to cut the tolls.

At the heart of the matter was moving more freight at a faster speed. Whether it was a horse boat or a steam boat, the owner needed to get from Buffalo to Albany or New York City as fast as he could with as many tons of goods as the canal would let him carry. What stopped him was the depth of the water and the size of the enlarged locks. No boat could be larger then 98 feet long and 17 feet wide, with a maximum draft of six and a half feet (if the canal had seven feet of water). This is why all the arguments made on behalf of the canal up to this point was to give the boaters a full seven feet of water, and to get the boats moving faster by allowing steam instead of animal towage.

It was unlikely that the State would enlarge the locks a second time, so every improvement had to work around the size restriction. Pennsylvanian William Frick developed a device to allow two full size Erie Canal boats to be coupled so that one crew could safely steer two boats. Most likely, he based this on what he saw some on the Pennsylvania canals, with two small boats coupled together using a hinge device. His invention created one very long boat so the owner could move 400 tons instead of 200 tons. This greatly saved time and money as one crew could move twice the amount, but at the locks, the boats had to be uncoupled, and each boat passed through on its own. So lockage time was at least twice as working a single boat. And the work load on the horse was almost doubled. So it made sense to promote the use of a steam powered boat to pull or push a non-powered boat.

To drive home this point, in 1877, State Engineer John Van Buren, went into great detail as to the workload of the canal horse. He reported that despite all the efforts to get steam on the canal, the primary movers of boats was still the canal horse. He then gave an overview of the costs of running a horse boat and a steamer, an overview of the Belgium system of towage, an overview of the Frick coupling system, and the workload of either animal or steam to move a boat in the canal. He wrote that the animals would be better served to be owned by a large company and used in stages along the canal with proper food and rest, and then he concluded by saying, “The condition in which the horses employed on the canals are kept is very bad economy, to say nothing of its being a disgrace to our civilization.”

In his 1878 message, Governor Robinson happily announced that traffic was up on the canal. All available boats were in use. The depression was over. However, since the State had cut tolls so deeply, the revenue in 1877 did not cover the cost of running the canal, which was higher because more boats were now using it. The State operated the canals under a constitutional article that said that the expenses for the coming year could not exceed the previous year’s revenues. If it did, the money had to be taken out of extraordinary repairs fund. With this restriction, the State had to make cuts to the upcoming years budget. The Governor stated that the new Superintendant of Public Works would be able to cut the annual budget in half from 1877 and run a successful canal.

No mention of improvements was made. No mention would be made in 1879 either, however, it may have been that the Governor was giving the new Superintendant some time to get his bearings. The Governor also had other concerns to occupy his time. In a time of consolidation and cuts, the State had spent over nine million dollars on new State Capitol building, which was far from finished. Parts of the Legislature had moved in to the parts that were usable. The Governor wished them well in their home, hoping that it would lead them to pass only wise and good laws, but he feared that the new building was built in the fashion of European Courts and would lead to more dishonesty and corruption, and he thought maybe the voters might wish that the earth would open and swallow it up.

**The Jervis Plan**

Soon after Van Buren’s report was made public in January of 1878, John Jervis wrote at length of the need for a canal railroad. This may have been in response to the various methods of towage that Van Buren reported on, which left out any sort of railroad/canal connection. In the 1878 “International Review” article titled “The Future of the Erie Canal”, he attempts to make the case for canal boats to be pulled by steam engines on rails that would run along the towpath. He stated that if the trains on rails were still pulled by horses as were the canal boats, the canal would be the dominate transportation of the times. However, since steam engines pulled train cars and horses pulled canal boats, the canal could not compete. Then he suggested that steam engines could tow five boats at one time. Nothing would come from this paper, other then the fact that a well respected engineer had weighed in onto the future of the Erie Canal and added some facts to the discussion.

**Sweet’s Tractive Force Study of 1878**

In the 1878 Annual Report, the report of Division Engineer Sweet included the results of a study he conducted for State Engineer Horatio Seymour Jr. The purpose of the study was to determine “the commercial value of the proposed improvement of the Erie Canal by deepening it a foot.” In his remarks, Sweet made reference to a survey of 1876, “which was undertaken for the purposes of this improvement”. This appears to point back to Governor Tilden’s address, and the resulting act of the legislature (chapter 425 of 1876), which authorized $15,000 for this study. Although Governor Tilden did not call for a deeper canal, it appears that Sweet’s instructions were to investigate this. Was this an improvement or an enlargement? Is this the start of the second enlargement?
Sweet’s tasks were; 1) to determine the cost to the State of enlarging the canal, and 2) to determine the savings to the boat owners if the canal was made eight feet deep. The first task was relatively straightforward. How much would it cost to either dig out the bottom of the canal another foot, or, raise the banks a foot? The second task was a bit more involved, and centered on determining how much energy was needed to move a canal boat in the narrow confines of a canal. This energy is called tractive force.

At its very basic level, a boat, whether it is being towed or pushed, will resist being moved. Whatever is pulling or pushing the boat, the animal or engine will need to overcome this resistance. The amount of water around and under the boat, the shape of the hull, the draft and length of the boat, the current, the shape of the canal, all affect the amount of force needed to move the boat. Both Engineers Sweet and VanBuren tried to quantify this force, although Sweet seems to have taken it a bit further. Interestingly, Sweet seems to have only looked at horse boats while VanBuren studied both. In the end, he wrote that if the canal was one foot deeper (eight feet), a boat could carry about 50 tons more, and still have less drag than the boats operating in the seven foot deep canal. (26)

**Seymour’s Plan**

In his first Annual Report, State Engineer Seymour outlined the challenges faced by the New York State canals. (27) Railroads and the Canadian canals were the major focus. Studies showed that the St. Lawrence route was a shorter route to Europe, and when complete, the locks along the Canadian border would allow much larger boats access to the Great Lakes. The Erie had to innovate and improve, or lose most of its water borne traffic to the Canadian canals. He then turned his focus to how to help the Erie Canal. For Seymour, it all came down to transportation and how to cheapen the cost of moving goods. He reasoned that the State could either increase tonnage, or increase speed. He noted Sweet’s study as to how to increase the size amount of tonnage a boat could move while decreasing the amount of time that a boat remained in transit across the state. He also suggested that locks could be lengthened and that machinery be installed on the locks to assist boats through the locks. He suggests deepening the canal to eight feet.

Deepening seems to suggest that the canal should be dug deeper. That is not what Seymour wanted to do. He wanted to raise the banks one foot. This could be done by adding a foot of earth to the top of the banks; adding some boards to the various feeder dams; and adding structure to the top of locks and aqueducts. Bridges might need to be raised. Digging out the bottom of the canal would be much more difficult as the floors of the locks and aqueducts would need to be reconstructed. And the culverts that passed under the canal might need to be lowered or reconstructed. But the main reason to add to the top of the canal was that this would greatly increase the amount of water in the canal prism, since the top of the canal was seventy feet wide, and the bottom was only fifty-two. More water meant reduced drag. This plan of improvement was called the Seymour Plan, a name that would stick up through the Nine Million Dollar Enlargement.

**1879- T.C. Ruggles and the Ten Foot Canal**

Inspired by the Jervis’ article, Thomas C Ruggles responded with his own argument for a deeper canal. Ruggles agreed that a extra foot of water in the canal would help, but an extra three feet would allow steamers to run faster at an improved economy.

“I will speak first of the length of boats, then of the bottom of the canal. All vessels that go by steam require length; they are now being made about ten times as long as broad. This makes room for machinery, for cabins, and for cargo. The only way left to do on the canals, as the locks would not admit longer boats than those in use, was to fasten one boat before the other, taking them apart at the locks. This in fact, has doubled the capacity of the steamer, and enabled the same crew to bring down twice the load for the same price, and has made steam a success. I recommended this plan in 1861, and left models with Auditor Benton. The plan was approved of by Governor Hunt and Canal Commissioner Hiram Gardner, and the press along the line of the canal. It was adopted in Illinois on a smaller canal than the Erie, and is now approved on the Erie. As I passed along the canal in 1875, captains of canal boats told me if one horse canal boat was fastened before another, the two were towed with less effort than separately.” (28) Ruggles made the case for a deeper canal and longer locks of twice the current length, if possible.

Ruggles seems to have then taken a step that others had not. He reached out to the newspapers who then used his facts and figures in various articles to publicize the idea. Not all the press was favorable, but many picked up on the idea of a deeper canal.

**The 1880’s**

After many years of Governors saying nothing about the future of the Erie Canal, in 1881 Governor Alonzo Cornell may have been forced by the soon to be completed enlarged canal of Canada. He said that the new Canadian canal rendered; “the future of the Erie Canal a subject of much concern, and well worthy of your intelligent consideration.” (29) He said that the State Engineer wanted to raise the banks to increase the water to eight feet, and then said that the Engineer goes into much greater detail in his Annual Report.

In the 1880 Annual Report, State Engineer Seymour devotes many pages to the question of a deeper canal. He outlined the “Danger To Our Commerce” by the St. Lawrence route. He wrote; “The British are so confident that they will wrest the trade of the west from us, that they have nearly completed works that will cost more than thirty millions of dollars. This is in addition to about twenty millions spent in early improvements, making about fifty millions paid out to gain the great prize they seek, the control of the carrying trade from the heart of our country to the markets of the world. They do not fear our railroads. While we are neglecting our water-routes, they spare no cost to perfect theirs.” (30)

He then moved into ways to improve the Erie Canal. He used letters from Engineer Van Richmond, George Geddes, and free tolls promoter Alonzo Richmond to emphasize the need for a deeper canal. In a sort of complicated tangle of letters, Alonzo asked Van
Richmond about the practicality of adding one foot to the banks and digging out the canal bottom, who then cited the opinion of George Geddes. Geddes endorsed the idea of a nine foot canal and then said; “The engines must be on the boats, and able to move them backward as well as forward, and for this reason, if for no other, all schemes of railroads on the banks of the canal, or cables laid along its bottom to move the boats, have appeared to me idle, and but divert the public mind from a full investigation of the true plan of improving our means of transportation.”(31) This was certainly a criticism of the Jervis Plan and the other towing plans. He closes with this statement; “The path of improvement is now so plainly marked out that it most certainly will be followed. The opinions of all experts, who have given investigation to this matter, may be said to be alike, and the time for prompt action has fully come. In addition to the financial advantages that would flow from the improvements you advocate, there is a moral consideration worth the attention of all lovers of men and animals. It will be a great advance in this direction, to give the galled and jaded horses and mules of the tow-path an honorable discharge from that service, and it would be a great thing to substitute for the drivers, facing storms and hardships on the bank, educated mechanics, managing steam engines in the comforts of sheltered cabins.”(32)

By law, the State Engineer was given the authority to make some improvements to help the canal without having to ask for an appropriation.(33) In 1880, machinery was installed into the Port Byron Lock #52, to assist in moving boats through the lock. Once the success at #52 was seen, the other four locks that lifted boats from the west were fitted out with the water powered machinery.(34) The State Engineer estimated that two and a half hours would be saved, which was part of his plan to increase the overall time that boats spent in transit.

In his message for 1882, Governor Cornell points out the obvious that by continued cutting of tolls, there was not enough revenue generated to cover the expenses of operating the canal. If the canals were to stay in operation, a new method of paying the bills would need to be found. The Legislature passed an act that would be presented to the voters in November that would abolish the tolls and raise the money needed from direct taxation.(35) This amendment passed and September 30, 1883 would be the last day that tolls would be collected on the canal.(36)

The last day of 1883 would end the service of Engineer Silas Seymour. Silas seems to have had held a different opinion of the canals than his predecessor Horatio Seymour. Silas’ Annual Report is full of gloom, from the washing of the banks from the passing steamers, to the filling of the canal bottom due to sediment and sewage, he stated that the idea of a free canal, even though it had only been in operation for a year, was a failure. He then gave three pages of his report extolling the expanding railroad system of the country, and why the canal was a drain. He wrote; “The last named alternative [selling the canals] would, in light of past experiences, appear to be the wisest of the three; for the reason that Pennsylvania, Ohio and other States, have found it for their interest to dispose of their canals; and thus reimburse their treasuries to some extent, for the capital invested in them; and there can be no doubt that the canals of this State can readily be sold for a sufficient amount, to liquidate the entire canal debt of the State; and thus relieve the people from the burden of any further taxation on that account.”(37) His last word about the subject was that “THE CANALS MUST GO”.(38) It was, as he wrote, his last official act to submit these opinions to the Governor and the Legislature.

Elnathan Sweet was to replace Seymour as the next State Engineer. Sweet, you will recall, wrote the report regarding the tractive force needed by the boats in 1878. Unlike Silas Seymour, who had been a railroad man most of his life, Sweet had worked for many years on the canals. He knew the difficulties faced by the State and the boatmen. The divide between the railroads and the canals had grown so that in 1884, the combined railroads had moved over twenty-two million tons, whereas the canal had moved just slightly over five million tons. Sweet is notable for his publication “The Radical Enlargement of the Artificial Water-way Between the Lakes and the Hudson River”.(39) Sweet proposed a ship canal one hundred feet wide and eighteen feet deep, with locks four hundred fifty feet long and sixty feet wide. Sweet wrote that it would need to step down from Lake Erie to the Hudson, so that water from Lake Erie could be used to fill its entire length. The valley of the Seneca River near Montezuma would have an embankment fifty feet high. From Utica to Albany, the canal would use a canalized Mohawk River. He not only proposed this idea through his Annual Report of 1885 (which covered 1884), but also submitted the idea to the American Society of Civil Engineers. It is amazing that some thought the idea grand for the fact that ships of war could be quickly moved into the Great Lakes in case Britain was to move their ships of war into the lakes.

(40) Others had opposing opinions, saying that as a nation, we should be using the St. Lawrence route, “If the same facilities, and even better, can be got by the expenditure of thirty-three millions [what the Canadian Canals had cost] than by the expenditure of two hundred millions, where is the ground for hesitation and doubt as to the course for prudent sensible men to adopt? Simply this- reluctance to depend in any way upon a foreign nation- pride in our own country- the sentiment which we call patriotism. If the object is to gratify this sentiment- to enforce a Chinese like national exclusion- to build up New York City- then by all means let us enlarge the Erie Canal. But if the object is, as we first stated it, to secure cheap, rapid and reliable transportation from the lakes to the seaboard, then let us take the route that God, the great engineer, has laid out for us.”(41) Sweet estimated the cost of his ship canal to be between $125 and $150 million dollars.

Sweet’s Ship Canal proposal was the last of the big ideas when it came to the canal. Sweet had Lock 50 lengthened so that two boats could be locked through at one time and after seeing the success seen at Lock 50, the effort to increase the capacity of the canal centered around lengthening the locks and dredging out the canal to return it to seven feet. Over the years, sediment, sewage, trash an anything else that could be poured or thrown into the canal decreased the working depth. It proved hard enough the keep seven
feet of water, let alone eight or nine feet.

The Governors seem to be ready to move on or perhaps away, from the canals. As we have seen, most at least made some mention of the canals in their yearly message. But with the canals free as of 1883, there seemed little reason to push for any improvements. Whittford made note of this, writing “The annual message of Governor Hill, covering the period of 1885, is worthy of note from the fact that it did not contain a single word of direct reference of the canals.”(42) Governor Hill did mention the canals in his 1885 message, where he said that no substantial improvements had been made in years.(43) But then after that, canals were absent from the messages covering 1886 to 1891.

The State Canal Union

This does not mean that the canals had lost all their friends and supporters. The State Canal Union was formed around 1885 to bring together interested parties and support the canals. Governor Seymour was the first president of the Union, replaced by George Clinton after Seymour’s death in 1886. In an interview in 1892, President Clinton said that, “The Union was formed for the purpose of lengthening the locks on the canal and deepening the channel so as to give two feet more water; also to clean it out and in part construct vertical walls. The great object was to give a broader and deeper bottom, making it nine instead of seven feet.”(44) The state-wide union would later try to organize smaller “local” canal unions that would advocate for canal improvements from a local perspective. It appears that the Union disbanded in the mid 1890’s.

The New York Produce Exchange

The New York Produce Exchange was a commodities exchange that could swing lots of power. It advocated for the canals, but, at times found itself in conflict with other pro-canal organizations that wanted lower grain elevator prices in New York and across the state. It is notable that TC Ruggles sent his proposal for a ten foot canal to this organization before he mailed it out to the media at large. When it came to the deepening of the canal, the Exchange was on the side of the canal men.

The 1890’s

1892 was the one hundred year celebration of the canals in New York, going back to the first small canals around the rapids of the Mohawk River. The men of the State Canal Union would seize upon this centennial to serve as a backdrop to the question of what to do with the canal system. The State Canal Union set a date of October 19, 1892 in Buffalo for men to gather to show their support. Canal Union President Clinton said that “the main object of the convention, is to arouse public interest in this matter of canal improvement and to make the convention in a sense educational.”(45) Over three hundred people attended the celebration.

For the first time in years, the 1892 Governor’s message mentioned canal improvements, continuing the lock lengthening project that had been going on since 1884. In the previous two years, little had been done as the Legislature had not given any money for the locks. In 1893 money was given to restart the work. The Governor also stated that he felt electricity should be used to propel the boats and asked for funding to install poles and wires along the canal. This was done under Chapter 499.

Again, in 1894, the Governor makes extensive comments about the canals, but takes an interesting twist. At first, he states that a ship canal is out of the question, then says that the lock lengthening project has been a failure and that even the deepening would be useless. Then he suggests that electricity is the way of the future and that the State should continue with the experiments and infrastructure started in the prior year.(46)

The question of the canals came to a head at the 1894 Constitutional Convention. Since the canals are written into the constitution, each convention gave the State the opportunity to make changes, such as the amendment to sell off many of the lateral canals in 1873. The canal men knew that this was their chance and held meetings to discuss the resolutions to be passed along to the Convention. They adopted the plan that had been in the works all along, the Seymour Plan.(47) Their estimate for the work of lengthening the remaining locks, and making the canal a uniform nine foot deep was between 10 and 12 million dollars. This plan was rejected and instead, the Legislature was given the power to enact laws in regard to the improvement of the canals. Article 7, section 10 of the NYS Constitution does not give any number in regards to the enlargement of the canal. It merely states; “The canals may be improved in such manner as the Legislature shall provide by law. A debt may be authorized for that purpose in the mode prescribed by section four of this article, or the cost of such improvement may be defrayed by the appropriation of funds from the state treasury, or by equitable annual tax.”(48) This was no change in the Constitution, as the Legislature held this power already, however, the question was put on the ballot as a sort of public referendum on the canals.

A investigating Canal Commission later wrote that before the convention, there was a “general impression” that the work could be done for seven to nine million. The convention delegates asked for a revised estimate from the State Engineer and gave him twelve days to estimate the entire work of deepening and enlarging the 350 miles of canal. Since the last survey of the canal was made in 1876, this is what the Engineer used. Without leaving the office, he estimated $11,573,000. As the Commission later wrote; “It was merely the best guess which the State Engineer could give, based upon such facts as he had at hand.”(49) For some reason, the Legislature, State Engineer and friends of the canal came to a nine million dollar figure for the Seymour Plan enlargement. The Commission wrote; “It was, in fact, an amount fixed without sufficient data and upon the theory that there would be no unusual difficulties and that the best plan was to do the work as cheaply as possible.”(50)

With the affirmative November vote, the canal men jumped into action, wishing to get their resolutions in order before the Legislature opened its 1895 session. A canal conference was held on December 21, where as the men resolved that; a liberal amount of money be allocated for the enlargement of the canals; that the money be
expended in 1895 and 96; a plan be made to continue and complete the work already in progress, with surveys and estimates; that bonds be secured in the least time, commensurate with the economy.(51)

1895

The next couple months would serve as the beginning of the second enlargement, and at the same time, mark the end of the second enlargement. At the beginning of the 1895 Legislature, newly elected Assemblyman Edward Clarkson introduced a bill that would allow the voters, who had just voted in favor of the canal enlargement, to vote again in the fall election. One might view this as a stalling tactic of the opponents of the canals, but Clarkson was a canal man. The newspapers reported, “Hon. Edward M. Clarkson, secretary of the Boat Owners and Commercial Association, was elected member of the assembly from the eighth assembly district, Brooklyn. He will make a capital worker for canal interests.”(52) Clarkson was also a member of the New York Produce Exchange.(53) The bill that Clarkson introduced was for nine million dollars, a sum that was attributed to the canal union.(54)

The first odd thing about this step is that the law did not require that the voters re-vote on a sum. The 1894 vote allowed the Legislature to move ahead with the enlargement as they saw fit, and never before had the Legislature gone to the people for a vote on a appropriation, even though millions had been spent on the canal improvements since 1884. The second odd thing is the nine million figure Clarkson chose, since it came from the canal interests. Even the State Engineer had reported that at least eleven and a half million would be needed. Other estimates ran even higher. Clarkson’s bill also required that Superintendent of Public Works be required to enlarge and improve the canals within three months of the issuing of bonds. And it said; “The work called for by this act shall be done in accordance with plans, specifications, and estimates prepared and approved by the State Engineer and Surveyor.”(55) The bill moved through the Legislature and was approved to move onto the voter at the fall election.

The canal men and other commercial interests met in June to plot their campaign to get the voters to give their approval a second time. The campaign worked, as enlargement was once again given the nod of the voters, with a majority of 250,000. The newspapers wrote; “The great improvement will begin this year, and three years’ time will see the completion of a wonderful change in the condition of the canals. It means work for idle workmen, a low rate for the transportation of merchandise, grain and coal, and a movement for the general prosperity of the State.”(56)

1896

With the approval of the voters, work could begin. However, before a shovel could be put to earth, much work had to take place. A survey of the canal had to be made, so that the engineers could decide what work was needed. Survey men had to be hired and trained, and assistant engineers hired. There were not enough available men on the civil service lists so more had to be found. The canal was divided into thirty bid sections, and into each section estimates for improvements had to be made. Test cores had to be taken to judge if the soil was rock, clay, or earth. Measurements had to be made as to whether to raise or lower the canal, what structures were present. An engineer and assistant was needed for each section. The estimates were complete, the work needed to be advertised in all the papers along the canal. And then the contractors would submit their bids, and from these, work was awarded. All this was supposed to take place within three months. It took a year.

By July 1896, it became clear that the work for the enlargement of the canal using the Seymour Plan would cost $13,500,000. And this did not include engineering, advertising or inspection, all things that the State had to do. The law as wrote did not apply to existing structures, say when a bridge had to be raised or if a culvert had to be rebuilt. In fact, all the structures that were in poor condition could not be repaired under this law.(57) And it was clear to the Superintendent that the canal would suffer if any part of it was disturbed. He wrote the banks were likely to collapse if any work was done around them, say digging out the bottom or adding soil to the top.(58) The State Engineer was told to make cuts to bring the work in alignment with the nine million.(59) Wholesale cuts were made to structures, bank work, excavations. And the work was bid out.

This article will continue in coming issues.

Member Outreach

Don’t be surprised if someone calls you and says that they are from the Canal Society Board. Over the coming months, members of the Board will be giving the membership a call just to say hi, ask for your opinions and comments, and update you on what is going on with the Port Byron project.

Although this project has been in the works for years, many in the membership don’t realize the scale of this project and what it could mean for the future of the Society and canal advocacy. It is understandable that we are excited, and we want to pass that excitement along to you.

Canal Society Calendar

We maintain a calendar of events on both the Facebook account and our website.

Be sure to check in to find out when the next Field Trip is scheduled and where we are going.

Guidebooks

We have a very complete collection of our Field Trip Guidebooks available for sale.

Beginning on the Little Falls Spring tour, the Society has begun to publish full color guidebooks. If you have not been able to attend the trips, you might wish to purchase these guidebooks for your collection. Check the Society webpage for more information.
References to Second Enlargement

(1) Albany Evening Journal, August 9, 1858
(5) Message of Governor Tilden from 1876.
(6) Steam on the Canal, Albany Evening Journal, August 9, 1858.
(7) I have not been able to ascertain if Samuel and Thomas Ruggles were related.
(9) Message of Governor Hoffman from 1869.
(11) Chapter 767 of 1870.
(12) Chapter 868 of 1871.
(13) At this time, Governors served two year terms.
(14) Message of Governor Tilden from 1875.
(15) Ibid, pg 745
(16) Ibid, pg 808
(17) New York Herald March 24, 1875
(19) Message of Governor Tilden from 1876.
(22) Message of Governor Robinson from 1878.
(23) Message of Governor Robinson from 1879.
(24) Jervis, John B., The Future of the Erie Canal, The International Review, New York, Volume 5, 1878, pg 379. John B Jervis was an engineer of note, with projects on the Erie Canal, the Delaware and Hudson, and many other civil works projects.
(26) Whitford, pg 327. It should be noted that the State Capital project was consuming a lot of the State budget and air in the room.
(29) Message of Governor Cornell from 1881.
(30) Annual Report of the State Engineer and Surveyor, Albany, 1880, pg 46. Ruggles may have been making repairs and improvements.
(31) Ibid, A letter from George Geddes to Engineer Seymour, pg 12
(32) Ibid, pgs 12-13
(33) Chapter 99 of 1880 allows the Superintendent of Public Works and the State Engineer to make repairs and improvements.
(34) Annual Report of the State Engineer and Surveyor, Albany, 1882, pg 140. This report covers 1881.
(35) Message of Governor Cornell from 1881.
Lateral Canals—
The Cayuga Seneca

The Cayuga and Seneca Canal Story - Part II
Submitted by Richard F. Palmer

It is a well known fact that the Seneca River was being navigated by commercial vessels long before this waterway was canalized. Sparse records indicate there was considerable commerce on Seneca Lake prior to 1800 - so much so that in the fall of 1796 Charles Williamson, the noted land speculator, built the sloop Alexander (later renamed the Seneca) to ply Seneca Lake to Salubria (Watkins Glen), at the head of the lake.

In regard to this vessel, Williamson said: "About this time sloop of about forty tons burden was put on the stocks, intended, when finished, to run as a packet between Geneva and Catherinestown (Havana, later Montour Falls) a small village at the head of the lake about 44 miles distant from Geneva. Towards the close of the season almost all the new buildings (in Geneva) were finished, and the sloop launched. The circumstances of the sloop, however, trifling in itself, was of sufficient importance to assemble several thousand people, and no circumstance having occurred to draw together the different settlements, the people composing them were not a little surprised to find themselves in a country containing so many inhabitants, and these so respectable. Natives of every state in the Union, and of every nation of Europe, were to be found in the assemblage, all ambitious of one object, the aggrandizement of the sloop being launched and prepared for service in the Genesee country."

John Widner of Geneva was at the launching of the sloop built at Mile Point. He said a sailor named Allen climbed the mast and during the launch as it swayed from side to side he kept performing antics which sent a thrill of horror through the vast assemblage. It was feared a terrible accident would occur as the result of his fill hardiness. But the sailor knew shad he was doing, and firmly kept his hold, being highly amused in his efforts to astonish the "land lubbers." The first captain was Robert Campbell. Later it was commanded by Andrew Dunn. The cost of construction, including rigging, was $2,204.28. This 40-ton vessel, built by Brown and Sheffield, was subsequently leased or chartered to the firm of Grieve & Moffat, of Geneva. Eventually it was sold and taken to Lake Erie. In 1813, a large schooner, the Robert Troup, was launched at Geneva. (1)

For the record an advertisement of this firm appeared in the Ontario Gazette, published in Geneva, on June 28, 1797:

Sloop Seneca

THE subscribers have chartered of Charles Williamson, Esq., the fast sailing sloop SENECA, are determined to have her Ply as a Packet, between Geneva and SALUBRIA, once every week. She will commence sailing on the first Tuesday in July next, and will regularly leave Geneva every Tuesday morning, and Salubria every Friday morning, wind and weather permitting. She will stop at Apple-Town, Norris's and Bailey's landings both going and returning:

Those who wish to have Grain, Goods, Merchandise, Lumber, or any kind of loading transported to and from any landing on the Seneca Lake, may depend on its being carried with less expense, and with more expedition and safety, than in any other Craft on the Lake.

GRIEVE & MOFFAT

Any vessel that could be fashioned from wood was used in waterborne commerce. The Geneva Gazette of Wednesday, June 1, 1814 reported:

"RAFT. On Monday arrived from the head of the Lake the largest Raft ever brought to this place. It is 150 feet long and 50 wide, and consists of 7,500 feet of square timber, 227 large pine saw logs, besides several thousand feet of boards, &c."

The story of the Mary and Hannah

Our story now fast forwards to 1823 to the time it was now possible to navigate the new canal system and rivers eastward from Seneca Lake to Albany. One of the most remarkable accomplishments was the sailing of a canal boat from Seneca Lake to New York City at that early period. The Seneca Farmer, a newspaper in the village of Waterloo, reported on Wednesday, October 29, 1823:

"The schooner rigged boat, Mary and Hannah, Capt. Jackson, passed through the locks at this village on Friday last, on her way to New York, laden with property of Messrs. John H. Osborne & Co. of Hector Falls, Tompkins County. This we believe is the first boat that has left Seneca Lake for that city, and there is more proud satisfaction in recording this event, than could be derived from the low, petty, engineering squabbles of of many. We wish her a prosperous voyage and a speedy return."

The following article from the New York Statesman of November 17, 1823 tells the story:

INLAND NAVIGATION

Arrived yesterday from the town of Hector, county of Tompkins, the schooner Mary and Hannah, of Factory Falls, Capt. Jackson, commander, and Mr. Osborn, supercargo. This is the first vessel which has reached the Port of New York through the western canal and brings a cargo consisting of 800 bushels of wheat, 3 tons of butter, and 4 barrels of beans, all of excellent quality, consigned to Philip Hart, jun. The Mary and Hannah is owned by Messrs. Jackson and Osborn, two enterprising farmers, living upon the borders of Seneca Lake. Mr. Jackson informed us this morning, that the lumber of the schooner is from his own forest; and that the vessel was built and rigged by himself, including the greater part of the iron work, blocks, cordage, &c. He is now also the navigator combining in his character the practical agriculturist, mechanic, shipbuilder and mariner. Such versatility of talent and ingenuity is seldom witnessed.

The town of Hector is situated on the southeastern extremity of Seneca lake, at the distance of 420 miles from this city. An average voyage will occupy 12 to 15 days. Produce may be brought at less than one half the expense which it cost before the canal was opened. The arrival of this vessel from a fertile agricultural district, in the interior of the state, is not less a subject of congratulation than of curiosity. Many witnesses called to examine her this morning at Coentie's slip. She will take in a return cargo and sail early in the present week, that she may arrive at her destined harbor before the canal is

15
frozen. It is an interesting fact that the Mary and Hannah bears the names of the wives of the two farmers by whom she was built."

Shipping concerns and merchants recognized this first such shipment as a worthy accomplishment and pressed the owners and their captain, Daniel Jackson, to stay at hand for a celebration of the event.

The party took place on November 24 at the New York Coffee House. Among the hundred or so attending was New York City Mayor Stephen Allen. Numerous toasts were raised to the Hector men and their adventure. Several were recorded in newspapers. (2)

The crowning event at the fete was the presentation of a silver urn, about 13 inches high. It was covered with embossed art work depicting the growing of wheat from sowing to harvest plus views of the city harbor with a variety of ships at dock. On one side is the legend: "Presented by the undernamed Manufacturers of flour in the City of New York, to John J. Osborne and Samuel S. Seeley, of the Town of Hector, Tompkins County, owners of the Boat Mary and Hannah, to commemorate their enterprise in having first navigated the Eastern Canal and Hudson River, from Seneca Lake to this City with a Cargo of Wheat in Bulk, New York, 1823." There are seven signatures added. The reverse is engraved with a view of the Mary and Hannah in New York harbor.

The original newspaper account lists Osborne and Jackson as the owners of the boat. But the inscription on the urn states that Osborn and Seely were the owners. Perhaps the reporter got the names wrong; certainly the men ordering the inscription on the urn would be careful to correctly list the owners. Or perhaps Jackson did build the boat and was a partner. According to a member of the Seely family, Mildred Parker Reese, who was a published author from Goshen, Daniel Jackson was "somehow" related to Seely. (The family name is spelled Seeley in cemetery records; Seely is found as an alternate spelling of Seeley, off and on.)

Frank Severne, an unofficial but careful historian and former publisher of the Watkins Review authored an article about the Mary and Hannah in Watkins Review in 1956. He referred to old newspaper reports that said the two women were wives of Seeley and Osborne but he didn't identify the papers. Genealogy files of the Schuyler County Historical Society list Mrs. Seeley as Hannah and Jackson's wife as Mary. (3)

In one deed, Hannah is mentioned as the wife of Samuel Seeley. In several deeds bearing John Osborne's name, no wife is mentioned. No will could be found for Samuel Seeley. There was one for John Osborne but he was already a widower, and his wife's name wasn't mentioned. Mrs. Osborne's name is not found in cemetery records. The 1850 and 1855 census records do not give Mrs. Osborne's given name. Since Mary was a common name, both Jackson and Osborne could have had wives with the same name.

Samuel Seeley had grist and cloth mills at Factory Falls in Tompkins County, (now Hector Falls in Schuyler County). The sails were made in that cloth mill which was started in 1801. (4)

The Mary and Hannah does not appear to have returned to Seneca Lake. Perhaps the vessel was difficult to handle in the canals and was sold for Hudson River traffic where her sails would have been more usable. The name may have been changed and the boat disappeared from notice.

The urn was passed down through the Seeley family for several generations but faded from view early in the 20th century until about 1940. Then, an anonymous donor presented it to the Albany Institute of History and Art.
Notes
Photograph of Mary and Hannah trophy was furnished by Albany Institute of History and Art.


* Salubria was changed to Watkins on Sept. 20, 1852 and to Watkins Glen on May 1, 1926. Apple Town was later named Kendalia, on the east side of Seneca Lake, south of Geneva. Norris' Landing was just south of Dresden. Bailey's Landing became Willard.

(2) The Story of the New York State Canals, Roy G. Finch, Albany, 1925, p. 5; Clippings pertinent to the event are in the files at the Geneva Historical Society along with other mementos of the Mary and Hannah. Some are preserved in the Schuyler County historical records, as well.


(4). Ibid; History of Tioga, Chemung, & Schuyler Counties by Everts & Ensign, 1871.

A Look Back

From Bottoming Out Issue #2, January 1957

The Canal Society of New York State was founded at Buffalo on Saturday, October 13, 1956, during the closing hours of the annual meeting of the New York State Historical Association.

Its Purposes: to bring together all persons and groups interested in the history of New York’s canals and their effect on the life and economy of the State; to provide a means for exchange of information and inquiry; and to act as an agency through which interest in the canals may be promoted and the preservation of records, relics, structures, sites and traces may be encouraged.

Three Officers were elected at Buffalo. DeWitt Clinton of Buffalo. A great-great grandson of the governor, is president. John S.N. Sprague, also of Buffalo is vice-president. Richard N. Wright of Syracuse, secretary-treasurer. A committee was named to meet with the officers and draw up a constitution, by-laws and plans of organization to submit at the next meetings of members.

Annual Dues were set at $5.00. Charter Membership is open until the January meeting. Everyone interested in canals is urged to join. Your Charter Member card will be cherished in future years. A special invitation goes to wives. We have already listed several family teams who enjoy studying and exploring together. Indications are that there will be close to 100 paid up members when we meet in January.

Final Organization Meetings is called for 2 pm Saturday, January 26th, at the Historical Building, 311 Montgomery Street, Syracuse. A Constitution and By-laws will be presented for members’ approval. Directors will be elected. The type and scope of possible Society activities will be discussed. A “Sampler” program will follow, designed to give a brief glimpse of half a dozen or so different studies, hobbies and techniques connected with canalling.

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From Bottoming Out Issue #15-16 1960

At the Annual Meeting of the Board held in Utica, October 22nd, William E. Cleary of New York City was elected president of the Society. Mr. Cleary succeeds DeWitt Clinton of Buffalo who has been president since the Society was organized in October 1956. Dr. David Ennis of Lyons was elected vice-president and Richard N. Wright of Syracuse was re-elected secretary-treasurer. W. Mansfield of Rochester was elected to the Board, succeeding Robert S. Rose.

A unanimous expression of deep appreciation was extended to Mr. Clinton for his loyalty and devotion to the Society throughout his four terms of office.

Like Mr. Clinton, great-great-grandson of the canal governor, Mr. Cleary is a member of a family long identified with New York State waterways. His grandfather, who began his career as a driver on the Delaware and Hudson canal, was the founder of a group of North River and Lake Champlain transportation companies. For many years he represented the Brooklyn district in Congress.

Mr. Cleary is executive vice-president of the New York Tow Boat Exchange and of the Harbor Carriers of the Port of New York. These marine trade associations are composed of over 100 companies operating more than 1400 vessels on the waters of New York Harbor and the Hudson River. Mr. Cleary also represents the carriers and shippers on the State Barge Canal system as executive secretary of the New York State Waterways Association and is secretary-treasurer of The American Waterways Operators, the national association of the inland waterways industry. He has been vice-president of the Canal Society since 1958.

Upon receiving the President’s gavel from DeWitt Clinton, Mr. Cleary addressed the Board: “I am very sensitive to this moment and I’ll tell you why. I think you know something about my background. My great-great-grandfather came over here from Ireland in 1842. He was employed as a foreman on the reconstruction of part of the Delaware and Hudson Canal. My grandfather was born in 1849 in Ellenville. He started driving on the D&H when he was ten years old. My own father was born on a canal boat in Cornell’s tow off Tarrytown.

“I am completely a canaller and I am happy that I have been elected president of this Society. I say that in all humility. My father died when I was very young. My grandfather was a father to me and I was a hero worshipper. I am sure that if William E. Cleary were here he would be very happy too.

“I want very much to carry on the work that DeWitt Clinton has moved forward so well. I intend to be thoroughly responsive to the wishes of the Board and to the wishes, as I understand them, of the membership. I will at all times welcome criticism and suggestions. I pledge you complete cooperation.

I hope that when I hand this gavel to someone else I will have done one-tenth the job that your retiring president has done.”
C&O Canal

Editors Note—In the Summer 2014 Issue of the Bottoming Out, we ran a review of the spring study trip to the C&O Canal. After the publication, we were contacted by Dr. Karen Gray who wanted to offer an update to the story on the creation of the C&O Park. Over the next few issues, we will print a series of articles from Dr. Gray, who writes for the C&O Association newsletter, “Along the Towpath”. Used with permission.

Accompanied by the Past
by Karen Gray

Part One
The Battle to Save the Canal: 1938—1954

When canal lands were acquired in 1938, the Park Service and others soon conceptualized those in the vicinity of Great Falls in particular, as park land that would be part of a larger project—the George Washington Memorial Parkway. (Mackintosh, 33) Consequently, prior to WWII, the CCC had been used to restore the lower 22 miles of the canal. The inclusion of the stretch above Great Falls to the inlet lock from Dam 2 (located beside Viollettes Lock) was necessary if the canal was to be watered in the Great Falls area and down to the next inlet at Lock 5.

Unfortunately, by the time the war ended, the work done by the CCC prior to the war was seriously damaged—to a great extent by a major flood in mid-October 1942. This made painfully clear the difficulties in maintaining even the lower 22 miles and brought to the fore the issue of what to do with the remaining 162 miles to Cumberland. Development as a park depended largely on whether the numbers of people who would use it justified the expense of making it into a park—for which there were no studies. In addition, beginning in 1945, there were the Corps of Engineers’ proposals for fourteen multi-purpose reservoirs on the Potomac and its tributaries that would have inundated much of the canal and largely eliminated the possibility of preserving it except as bits and pieces.

The idea of a parkway paralleling the canal and continuing the George Washington Memorial Parkway, had originally emerged in 1935 as a proposal considered by the Park Service and other agencies. Between 1945 and 1950 it re-emerged as Cumberland and the Corps of Engineers sought the release canal lands for a flood control program on the city’s waterfront. Needless to say, enthusiasm for a canal parkway in that part of the state was also spurred by the recognition that it offered an attractive alternative to the mountainous US 40 route between Hancock and Cumberland.

One result of the developing proposals was a study that produced a joint report for Congress in August 1950, by the National Park Service and Bureau of Public Roads. In an appendix to the report, Walter S. Sanderlin (whose doctoral dissertation on the history of the canal had been published in 1946 as The Great National Project) supported the parkway idea as “best adapted for the achievement of such varying objectives as the provision of recreation areas, the preservation of selected canal structures as historic sites, and the protection of the inherent beauty of the valley.” (Mackintosh, 58)

This report estimated the total costs for constructing the parkway at $17,107,700. However, even before the report was made official, J. Glenn Beall, representing Maryland’s sixth district in Congress, introduced a bill that would authorize the acceptance of lands from Maryland for a parkway. The bill included reference to the “present parkway lands” and in doing so essentially gave Congressional approval to the parkway. (Mackintosh, 58–59)

It was at this point that public dissent emerged, coming first from the Izaak Walton League. In a letter to NPS Assistant Director Conrad L. Wirth, the League informed the agency that its members were “quite incensed over the proposals of the National Park Service to build a road, or highway, along the C. and O. Canal” and declared that it “could serve a far greater value if kept in a natural state.” (Mackintosh, 59).

The National Parks Association then reviewed the parkway plan and issued a report in 1951 that—while not rejecting the parkway idea—did criticize it for lack of attention to the canal’s natural resources.

In May 1951, Maryland began its own study of the parkway proposal and in June the commission doing the study unanimously opposed it as interfering with Maryland’s own plans for developing the land along the Potomac. Going further, it advocated for the return of the canal lands to the state.

On March 27, 1953, legislation was passed that provided $350,000 for land acquisition between Hancock and Cumberland—but only when further legislation provided permanent easement rights for the use of water from the Potomac by Maryland, its subdivisions, businesses, and citizens. Such legislation, introduced by James Glenn Beall (who moved from the house to the Senate that year) and Rep. DeWitt S. Hyde, was signed into law August 1. As park historian, Barry Mackintosh put it: “The way now appeared ready for at least the sixty-mile parkway beyond Hancock.” (Mackintosh, 65)

But opposition from conservationists was growing. In 1953—a year before Justice William O. Douglas entered the debate—Irston R. Barnes, president of the Audubon Society of the District of Columbia and nature writer for the Washington Post, had written an article published January 11, 1953 and titled “C & O Canal Proposed as Recreation Park.” In it Barnes stated:

The prescription for the C. & O. Canal is obvious. The people of the valley have a priceless asset in the national park status of the canal. Let the National Park Service acquire the private lands between the canal and the river. Let the canal be restored as a highway for canoes, and perhaps for a few of the old barges. Let the towpath become a country lane for hikers and cyclists. Restore the canal and its locks and lockhouses to their nineteenth-century usefulness. Provide an abundance of small camp sites at intervals of a few miles, equipped with safe drinking water, Adirondack shelters, fireplaces, and simple sanitation facilities. Prepare the lockhouses as hostels for winter use….

A limited number of access roads to the canal would allow the motorist to escape from traffic and enjoy, but not destroy, the quiet beauty of the river country.

Anthony Wayne Smith, a CIO lawyer who was active member of the National Parks Association, wrote a similar article in April. On May 7, 1953,
the D.C. Audubon Society met at the home of Mrs. Gifford Pinchot to mobilize and organize opposition to the parkway proposal. Among the approximately 50 people who gathered there were Irston Barnes, Constant Southworth, and Howard Zahniser as well as Anthony Wayne Smith. Barnes then wrote an article for the summer issue of the National Parks Magazine, the journal of the National Parks Association. In it he criticized the NPS for lack of imagination and initiative and explained the threat posed by the parkway idea, asserting that “the only way to save the canal is through wide and vocal opposition to the plan, and thus to extricate the [National Park] Service from its own commitments [to the parkway proposal].”

In August Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. weighed in as an opponent of the parkway plan in a letter to Conrad Wirth, now Director of the NPS, who responded in an October letter. In it Wirth denied that the canal lands could “be considered a wilderness.” Wirth also insisted that “a program of sufficient magnitude to attract the support of great numbers of people is absolutely essential for the protection of the Potomac River from future dam projects which have been sponsored by the Corps of Engineers.”

The fact is that there was an already organized and dedicated opposition to the parkway when Douglas entered the fray with his letter to the Washington Post in January of 1954. Not surprisingly, all four of those named above who had been at the May 7, 1953 meeting were immediately on board with the hike. The hike, of course, brought in other conservationists and outdoorsmen, and put the controversy over the C&O Canal into newspapers and magazines across the country.

During the hike a Washington Post editorial on March 22 stated that “it is not impossible that these viewpoints [of a parkway and a natural area] can be reconciled”; and the Hagerstown Daily Mail and the Hagerstown Morning Herald on March 23 carried articles under headings that referred to the hikers talking compromise and the possibility of a meeting of the minds. As the Herald Mail wrote, citing Barnes and Douglas:

Some members of the party who originally favored a parkway now agree that many places along the canal should not be touched by the proposed highway. Others...who wanted to keep the canal untouched, now are beginning to understand it should be made more accessible.

Douglas, himself has said there is not room for a highway along the canal without spoiling the natural beauty of the area. But his own thoughts on developing the canal as a recreational area which could be used by “tens of thousands” include more access roads. When the editors returned after the hike, the effects of the interactions with nature, other hikers, and people turning out along the way to support one side or the other, had clearly resulted in movement in the paper’s editorial position. On March 31 it published an editorial titled “C & O Canal: A Report.” In it they stated:

We retain the conviction that the valley ought to be opened up. We believe, however, that a compromise is possible which will preserve large areas in their natural state and still make possible a parkway along some beautiful parts of the valley.

The editors noted that an important change in their position concerned their support for the 1950 NPS plan that had “called for a parkway along the towpath, and in some places along the bed of the old Chesapeake & Ohio Canal.” They now recognized both that “this would be a much bigger undertaking than we had supposed” and that “the cost of maintenance might be prohibitive.” Indeed, in the subsequent controversy the cost of fill in the canal prism to make it usable as a bed for the parkway became a significant issue.

“That many semi-wilderness stretches along the old canal ought not to be disturbed” was another theme they developed in the editorial that also championed “the magnificent 3000-foot tunnel near Paw Paw, which remains a monument to the architectural and engineering genius of 110 years ago” and the “preservation of the fine aqueducts at Licking Creek, Monocacy, and Seneca.”

They then made four proposals, beginning with a call for the Park Service plan to be substantially modified to avoid encroachment on the best of the natural areas. Noting the Park Service’s recent interest in a “walking parkway” they nevertheless asserted “the need for both types of parkway.”

The second proposal put an emphasis on picnic grounds and access roads and the restoration of the canal “as a canoe-way where feasible.” In the third, they called for “local communities to clean up the parts of the canal preserve and river front”—naming Brunswick and Hancock in particular. And in the fourth, they called for an investigation of the possibility “of obtaining matching funds from Maryland for access roads.” They noted that “both a walking trail and a parkway should spur tourist trade and should bring motels, hostels, and stores.”

The Post’s editorial concluded by urging their readers to “investigate for themselves the wonderful potential of this scenic attraction” and stated:

We think it possible to develop this resource so that it will serve as a boon to hikers as well as to those whose enjoyment of nature must be limited to a leisurely drive in an automobile.

After the Douglas—Washington Post hike, the idea of a mixed development that would combine parkway and access roads with the preservation of selected natural and historic resources, now had the Post’s editorial support along with that of many regional, governmental, and business voices. But this was NOT the position of most of the conservationists and outdoorsmen who had formed their opinion prior to the hike.

Part Two
The Battle to Save the Park,
April 1954–February 1955

In the 1940s the National Park Service faced two major threats to the canal lands in their care. The first was the Corps of Engineers’ proposal to build a series of 14 dams on the Potomac and its tributaries, which would have inundated much of the canal. The other was the pressure from Cumberland to build a road to their airport on the canal right—of-way, and to use the canal lands down river for a new highway that would avoid their current mountainous journey east—an idea strongly supported by Sen. J. Glenn Beall. In addition, by 1945 it was clear that the Corps flood control program on Cum-
berland’s riverfront would require the removal of Dam No. 8 and the burying of nearly a mile of canal and towpath under a high levee.

At the Washington end of the canal there was already a plan for George Washington parkways along both sides of the Potomac to Great Falls, and it was an open question as to how much the one on the District and Maryland side would use canal lands. The idea of an upriver extension was a natural development and as early as June 1943 National Capital Parks Superintendent Irving C. Root had shown a willingness to consider it in a meeting with Cumberland’s lawyer who was advocating for the road.

The strong opposition to the parkway idea that developed in the late 1940s and early 1950s—prior to Douglas’s entry into the fray—was covered in this column in June’s issue. During that time Irston R. Barnes of the Audubon Society of the District of Columbia and author of The Naturalist column for the Washington Post, served as the predominant spokesman for preserving the canal as a natural resource.

In those early years little mention was made of the historic structures or even of the need to significantly increase the canal’s recreational potential and accessibility, aside from improvements such as camping shelters that would be of use to hikers. When Justice William O. Douglas’s referred to “a wilderness area where man can be alone with his thoughts” in his January 19, 1954 Letter to the Editor of the Washington Post that led to the March hike, he was giving expression to the predominant vision of the canal by conservationists at the time.

However, the 1954 Douglas-Washington Post hike March 20–27, 1954 radically changed the nature of the controversy in three major ways. First, it brought nationally-known names into the canal preservationists’ camp. Second, it energized the local canal supporters and led to improvements in their organization; and third, it brought a new level of complexity, flexibility, and diversity to the thinking about the canal lands and the best way to use them.

On the Park Service side there was a new recognition of the importance of the keep-it-natural proponents and their arguments. In addition, among some of the NPS staff, there emerged a growing—or perhaps simply more open—appreciation for the anti-parkway thinking.

On the part of the keep-it-natural proponents, including Douglas, there was now a clear awareness that access and development of recreational resources must be significantly increased even though it would mean the loss of some of the “wilderness” character that had originally dominated the preservationists’ thinking.

Indicative of this were the emerging voices and proposals for some kind of new parkway or highway between Washington and Cumberland that was not restricted to the use of canal lands. In essence, the roadway question was beginning to be split off from that of the usage of canal lands, a development that opened up new possibilities and concepts regarding both.

The first of these “compromise” proposals hit the papers on March 28—the day after the hike ended. It had been developed by an ad hoc “C&O Canal Committee” of the Hagerstown Chamber of Commerce, and it would utilize the connecting state and county roads that run parallel and close to the Potomac River from Washington to Hancock. From Hancock, Route 40 would be used to the western foot of Sidling Hill Mountain and the route would then continue on a country road down to the Canal. Once it reached the canal a new road would be built on canal land as far as Paw Paw, where it would utilize Route 51 into Cumberland.”

The Chamber had also compiled a long list of advantages to their compromise, including that it satisfied Cumberland’s critical need for a non-mountainous route east at a much lower cost than that of building an entirely new, full-length parkway. In addition, it provided for canal access to be quite quickly enhanced and avoided the ways in which a parkway would compromise the significant recreation and tourism potential of the canal lands themselves.

On the last night of the Douglas-Washington Post Hike a C&O Canal Committee was formed with William O. Douglas as the chair and Howard Zahniser as secretary. Other members from the Washington area were, Irston Barnes, George F. Blackburn, William Davies, Robert Estabrook (editor of the Washington Post’s editorial pages), Bernard Frank, Lewis W. Shollenberger, and Anthony Wayne Smith. Three other members were from elsewhere in the country: Harvey Broome of Knoxville, Tennessee; Olaus J. Murie of Moose, Wyoming; and Sigurd Olson of Ely, Minnesota.

On April 22, 1954, Douglas sent to Interior Secretary Douglas McKay a letter with four major points drawn up by the C&O Canal Committee:

1) The Canal property should be preserved as a recreational and historical entity.
2) The Canal property should remain a unit of the National Park System, bearing some historic name, with a budget adequate for its maintenance and supervision.
3) The Canal property should be developed as a recreational area.
4) A parkway system should be developed from Cumberland, Maryland to Washington, D. C. following existing state, county, and federal aid roads where practicable, perhaps at places parallel to, but not on the canal proper. This should be located wherever possible on high ground, safe from damaging flood water, and follow routes from which spectacular views of the river can be obtained.

The letter specified that “the views of Mr. Robert Estabrook of the Washington Post, who is a member of the Committee, have been separately stated in the Post’s editorial, dated March 31, 1954.” That editorial recommended the NPS modify its 1950 parkway plan “to avoid encroachment on the best of the natural areas” and “to preserve as much as possible of the towpath and canal bed” while also increasing access roads and recreational facilities.

Of course other supporters were defending the parkway on canal lands. One such was Gilbert E. Perry, Mayor of Harpers Ferry, who declared in a March 31, 1954 letter to the editor of the Washington Post that “the potentialities of a motor parkway from Cumberland to Washington would create a scenic highway comparable to any in
Arguments then arose over such issues as the cost of fill in the canal prism to create the parkway and the fact that the parkway would share the canal’s historic vulnerability to floods. On May 25, 1954, Irston E. Barnes dedicated “The Naturalist” column to these points and put forward his own calculation of $30 million for the cost for fill (far above the NPS estimates).

On May 19, the Washington Post carried a response from Washington resident Alfred S. Trask under the heading “Arguments for Canal Parkway.” Trask noted errors and distortions in Barnes’ analysis and criticized parkway opponents for putting things in the NPS 1950 parkway proposal that aren’t there.

On May 5, 1954 the Washington Post covered an announcement by Senator Beall that Interior Secretary McKay had:

“reached a final decision on his attitude toward the [parkway] proposal and is now prepared to give the project his personal and departmental support.”

The Post noted that this was a project Beall had worked on for ten years. Beall’s announcement was based on statements in a letter he had received from McKay in which McKay said that he was anxious to complete the planning process so that work could begin on the Cumberland–Hancock section as soon as funds were appropriated. McKay also stated that “every precaution will be taken to insure that the parkway will not be destructive to the canal wherever it can be avoided.”

The Park Service, however, dissavowed Beall’s claim that the issue was resolved and NPS Assistant Director Conrad Wirth assured Olaus Murie in a letter that he had held up action until he could personally look into the issues raised by the parkway’s opponents. He also agreed with a suggestion Murie had made that the parkway should be titled the “Potomac River Parkway” rather than the C&O Canal Parkway.

On June 19, 1954, Douglas sent Interior Secretary McKay a report prepared by a parkway subcommittee of the C&O Canal Committee, accompanied by maps created by W. Frederick Freund. These highlighted roads below Hancock that could be used for a scenic route including canal access, as well as proposing a route from Hancock to Cumberland that would utilize the Old-town Road from US 40 down to the Pearre area (today called the Woodmont Road), and then west to Little Orleans and through the Green Ridge State Forest to route 51 and thence into Cumberland. This route was essentially the same as that in the Hagerstown Chamber of Commerce’s compromise proposal except that it used the Old-town Road rather than canal lands from Pearre to Paw Paw.

So the controversy would continue until January 1955 when Wirth finally appointed a committee to restudy the development of the canal from Great Falls to Cumberland. Serving on the committee was chief of the NPS Division of Cooperative Activities Ben H. Thompson, National Capital Parks Associate Superintendent Harry Thompson, Chief Naturalist John E. Doerr, Chief Historian Herbert Kahler, chief of the Division of Design Construction Thomas C. Vint, and assistant to the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service Lloyd Meehan.

The Committee considered the “Potomac Valley Recreation Project” that had been put forward by Anthony Wayne Smith and that called for development of the canal as a largely-wild hiking, biking, and canoeing route; and it looked at the recommendations of the C&O Canal Committee. It quickly realized, however, that the roadways below Hancock being recommended did not really have scenic parkway potential, and that using the bluffs above the river farther west would have been extremely expensive. It was clear that, as Barry Mackintosh put it: a “feasible and genuine parkway would have to accord generally with the 1950 plan.”

Proponents for the parkway such as Harry Thompson emphasized the importance of finding a solution that served “a full cross section of the public”—which he felt a parkway did—and Thomas Vint expressed his belief that without the parkway, the funds would not be available to acquire the property necessary to keep the entire river bank in public ownership.

In the end, a bare majority of the committee lined up against the parkway and in favor of making the towpath a “national trail” for hiking and biking, and for watering as much of the canal as possible. They emphasized the intimate nature of the canal right-of-way and contrasted it with the grand landscapes appropriate to parkways. They also expressed concern about the cost of land acquisition for a parkway that typically acquired significant land on both of its sides.

In addition to the idea of the towpath being a trail, the committee felt that Anthony Wayne Smith’s national recreation area idea was attractive. That proposal represented a flexible alternative that could encompass state parks and wildlife management areas and thus even provide for permit hunting.

The committee’s report contributed to the growing understanding of the weaknesses in the parkway plan.

Then in February 1955, Wirth met with Secretary McKay, Beall, and DeWitt S. Hyde (R-MD, 1953–59). Out of that meeting came an official endorsement of a Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park along with an associated but separate parkway west of Hancock. In April that idea was presented to a group of hikers marking the second anniversary of the Douglas hike, and was favorably received by them.

In the Spring of 1955, the proposal for a C&O Canal National Historical Park was simply another possibility thrown into the pot of special interests warring over how to use not just the canal lands but the river itself to whose fate the canal was inextricably linked. The story of the 15-year battle for the park that lies ahead of the canal proponents at this point remains to be told in a future articles.
1861

January 18
In Albany the Committee on Canals report against a bill to increase the number of Canal Appraisers, feel in the number in existence will soon catch up with the backlog of their work.

April
The U. S. Civil War is declared. Upon learning of Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers Lockport, NY's oyster saloon keeper William H. Bush posts a call for volunteers on the wall of his establishment seeking recruits to form a military company, to be lead by himself as captain. He will thus become the war's first official volunteer.

July 24
200 canal boats clear the Genesee Valley Canal from Olean to Oramel and ports below, due to earlier reservoir breaks.

October 29
John Selser of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, files a drawing at the U.S. Patent Office for an improvement in self-opening canal bridges to automatically raise a bridge when the prow of the canal boat strikes a water-level frame.

December
The extension of the Genesee Valley Canal is completed.

New York State
Tons of property moved on each canal: Erie: 2,500,782; Champlain: 681,157; Oswego: 1,080,076; Cayuga and Seneca: 98,678; Chemung: 226,051; Crooked Lake: 14,723; Chenango: 91,661; Genesee Valley: 94,329; Black River: 69,930; Oneida Lake: 30,060, Total: 4,507,635. ** Most of the Jordanian Level of the Genesee Valley Canal is through a swamp. ** A need is expressed for a reservoir tender's residence at North Lake Reservoir in the Adirondacks. The earliest documentation for one does not occur until 1875. ** State Engineer and Surveyor Van R. Richmond, builder of the Montezuma Aqueduct, complains of the removal of the bevel in the locks and the bench in the prisms of Enlarged Erie Canal. He claims the canal has the potential to deliver 5,220,000 tons to tidewater and this year saw only 2,500,782 tons transported - the Canal being a long way from achieving it's full potential. He offers a number of practical suggestions and is ignored. Belgium Brothers Alfred and Ernest Solvay devise an innovative process whereby bubbling carbon gas through ammonia and brine to create continuous soda ash. By January of 1884 the process will be utilized outside the Syracuse, NY, area at the Split Rock Limestone Operation, to create the byproduct for use in building aqueducts in Central New York.

1862

February 27
The Annual Appropriation for the canal debt and the maintenance of the canals for the fiscal year of 1962 is passed.

March 29
The New York State Engineer and Surveyor conveys a message to Albany regarding enlarging the locks on the Champlain Canal as a means of pubic defense and making gunboats available on the Great Lakes. The engineer is against the idea since it would require transporting the vessels through the Chamblay Canal and other Canadian canals around the rapids of the St. Lawrence River, possibly reducing traffic (and resulting revenue) on the Erie Canal.

April 3
Further debate on the completion of the Chenango Canal takes place in Albany.

April 22
The New York Legislature passes "An act to adapt the locks on the Erie and Oswego canals to permit the passage, adapt the canals of this State to the defense of the northern and northwestern lakes, enlarged tiers permitting the passage of vessels of war at least 25 feet wide, and 200 feet long, from the Hudson River into Lake Ontario and Erie. Jul 13 New York Representative Alfred Ely advocates the Erie and Oswego canal passages of vessels of war.

July 24
315 canal boats clear the Genesee Valley Canal from Olean to Oramel and ports below (last year it was 200 boats.) ** From this year on each Canal Commissioners Report lists wooden aqueduct trunks shoring up the Genesee Valley Canal Tunnel Slide Area of the Genesee River Gorge in the future Letchworth Park, occuring in 1817 - consisting of "glacial till" - are listed as 'decayed, unsafe and a case of Canal detention'.

New York State
Construction begins on Mohawk Street's Van Benthuysen Paper Mill on the canal in Cohoes. It will be completed in 1864. ** The summit level of the Genesee Valley Canal is closed for sixty days due to an insufficient supply of water. ** Canals: Tons of property moved on each canal: Erie: 647,318; Champlain: 1,063,157; Oswego: 1,063,413; Cayuga and Seneca: 125,659; Chemung: 243,628; Crooked Lake: 19,623; Chenango: 79,422; Genesee Valley: 129,974; Black River: 85,442; Total: 5,598,785. ** The
Genesee Valley Canal is opened to Millgrove. ** New York enters into contract for the the Genesee Valley Canal dam at Millgrove to be put into the proper condition and to be taken charge of by the state. ** The Genesee Valley Canal is completed and opened for navigation, any further construction ended. ** The Chenango Canal Lock 104 (Old Lock 28, Southern Division), is classified as the one of the six locks on the Chenango in the worst condition.

1863
April
New York passes an act authorizing the canal commissioners to raise the water in Oil Creek three feet and to build a dam across Ithaca Creek at the Ithaca feeder to raise and maintain, at an elevation of five feet above the bottom of the canal, the dams across the streams with parts of the canal designated as an extension of the Genesee Valley Canal.

July 20
The Genesee Valley Canal is closed due to two days (starting today) of flood damage north of Belfast.

July 24
391 canal boats clear the Genesee Valley Canal from Olean to Oramel and ports below (last years on this date it was 315 boats).

September 23.
A number of breaches occur. One, at Mount Morris requires 34,000 cubic yards of earth to repair. The Genesee Valley Canal north of Belfast is reopened.

New York State
For the second year in a row the summit level of the Genesee Valley Canal is closed for sixty days due to an insufficient supply of water. ** The dam at the Genesee Valley Canal's Oil Creek Reservoir is raised three feet. ** Canals: Tons of property moved on each canal: Erie: 2,955,302; Champlain: 878,920; Oswego: 992,173; Cayuga and Seneca: 119,704; Chemung: 307,151; Crooked Lake: 6,316; Chenango: 89,021; Genesee Valley: 971,411; Black River: 72,519. Total: 4,852,941. ** A lock tender's house is erected by the state at the guard lock at the Genesee Valley at the Allegheny River Guard Lock. ** Legislation is passed improving the Nine Mile Creek feeder of the Clinton's Ditch Canal at Camillus. ** The earth-filled dam creating the Oil Creek Reservoir north of Cuba, NY, is raised three feet. ** The Chenango Canal Extension is put up for bids by NYS. A bidding war will delay the project until 1865. ** Erie Canal Enlarged Lock 33 at St. Johnsville begins concerning engineers. They start calling for improvements and building on a nearly annual basis.

David Minor is a CSNYS Board member and runs Eagle Bytes Historical Research. His web site is http://home.eznet.net/~dminor. David also maintains the Crooked Lake Review website, where he has been posting many canal related newspaper articles. Copyright 2015. David Minor / Eagle Byte.
**Syracuse Standard**  
_1 May, 1865_

Canal Affairs. - Navigation on the "raging canal" begins at seven o'clock this morning. At dusk last evening the Syracuse Level was about two-thirds full, and boats were floating into a huddle in the neighborhood of the Collector’s office, preparatory to the first clearance. There is very little freight here to go either way, and we hear that the prospects of a brisk business in the way of freights generally at the opening are not considered flattering. The following is the corps of officials a the Syracuse office:

- E.A. Williams Collector, John H. Drake, 1st Clerk, Henry F. Stephens, 2d clerk; Seymour Dorwin, Clerk; Peter Way, Weighmaster; L.D. Loomis, Assistant; the other Assistant is not yet named; Amos B. Hough, Inspector.

**Havana Journal**  
_1 July 25, 1891_

From the Elmira Telegram

**The Old Chemung Canal - A Poet’s Trip Over An Abandoned Waterway.**

A Telegram Reporter alighted from a Northern Central train at Pine Valley, the other day, and trudged afoot over the line to towpath of the old Chemung canal as far as Ratville. This section is almost historical in canal affairs, for in this locality at one time 300 to 400 families claimed their residence, although from May 1 until the annual freeze up, their domiciles were canal boats.

Beginning at the Seneca Lake state breakwater, starting from Perry Bower's grocery and along the three-mile level to Havana, and thence to the summit just south of Pine Valley or the end of the forty-four locks, twenty years ago was the busiest thoroughfare for canalmen in this state. The topography of the country, the sinuous valley bounded on both sides by high sand and clay hills, and the proximity of a creek that grew to be a torrent in times of heavy rains, made maintenance of the canal an expensive matter to the state, but a "pudding," as the saying goes, for contractors.

Breaks in the banks were of common occurrence, and the bosses grew rich out of the state's losses. It used to be hinted that those old time contractors knew more than they ought to about the cause of the breaks and they trained rats to dig holes through the sections, which from leaks grew in breaks or crevasses that took weeks and months to repair. The principal industry that thrived in this locality in those "low bridge" days, of Chemung canal prosperity, was the canal grocery.

At Watkins Perry Bowers, Shoemake Swartwood, Bill V. Smith and others made fortunes out of selling groceries and wet goods to the boatmen. At Havana, John June, Uncle Hi Raymond and Tom Taylor carried on the canal groceries with more or less success. At Ratville, quite a pretentious huddle, twenty years ago, Edward H. Brewin sold groceries and liquors and died a year or so ago, leaving $40,000 to be divided among a number of heirs.

But at Millport was the great hub of groceries, flour mills and the headquarters of over two-thirds of the canalmen, contractors, "hoggies," (drivers) and a least a half-dozen boat yards and a couple of dry docks. When winter had closed up the canal this village was one of the liveliest in the whole state. Jesse Rhodes kept the hotel, assisted by his sons, Ben and Tom, and the hotel did a rushing business. Balls were frequent, and Millport was the objective point for miles around for the country boys to visit, just to try their hands at doing up some of the canal men, who had a record for leaving their meals half eaten in order to take a hand in a fight.

It is needless to say that the visitors usually got the worst of it. Jim Hulien, a little slim man, used to enjoy the reputation of licking twenty times his weight in wild cats. Jim was a second Dempsey, and had a knack of doing up men twice his own weight by a peculiar twisting left-hander. When he got through with his man the latter was generally a sorry looking specimen of bruised and lacerated physiognomy.

But fighting wasn't the only industry
that thrived in Millport in canal times. Frank Stull, Pliny Tanner, Charles Hall, William and Samuel Parsons built canal boats, sawmills, spoke, churn and wooden ware factories, and everybody in the valley made a good living while many got rich. One man living in Elmira today, worth at least half a million, made his first money on the Chemung Canal. Judge S.S. Taylor's father kept a model and successful hotel at Pine Valley, which is now known as Tompkinsville - five or six of that family living at the long trestle where the old canal was crooked as a corkscrew.

But the old time bustle and thrift is gone, and the citizens who hustled business a quarter of a century ago are either in their dotage or sitting on the edge of open graves waiting for the summons. Along the old ditch, flag and cattails grow luxuriantly. The stone work of the locks has been removed and the only reminiscences left, are perhaps a half-dozen shanties which were once occupied by lock-tenders, now fast crumbling into decay, or else uses as cow or pig sheds by some track laborer who lived hard by the waterway of commerce that made Elmira great among the villages of the time and afterwards a busy, bloomin' city.

The old canal groceries at Millport, where George Pratt and the Cogswells, Chauncey and Goold, made considerable money, have passed into desuetude, and the glories and shindigs of former days have departed forever. The old canal is now only a memory. The men who were instrumental in building it have nearly all passed away, but they are no more dead, rotten and forgotten than the canal, and the long white crafts, ycleft the Mary Jane, the Betsy Ann, whose sheer hulls have long since been chopped into stove wood or hauled off into other waters, where they have been logged or relegated to the graveyard, as hundreds of the old coal boats have inside the breakwater at the head of Seneca Lake. The "ge hipe" of the "hoggie" is heard no more, urging his mule along the towpath and the voice of the cook of the Sarah Jane singing, "All in the Downs the Fleet was Moored," has been exchanged for the the juggary of the bull frog and the croon of the peepers. The days of the red-shirted steers-

man, with arms tattooed like a sailor of the seas, are dropped behind an impenetrable screen, and the rush of the dammed waters from the reservoir at Gibson, near Corning, are heard no more flowing through Big Flats and the valley until they were lost in the blue expanse of Seneca Lake.

Pastoral peace and farm life are only seen along this once busy waterway of commerce, and where the canal grocer man once sold firewater, you occasionally read the sign, "milk shake" and you shake it, for no true canal man will taste anything milder than distilled rye. We bid the old canal adieu at Ratville and the steam bank to the railroad where a kindly wildcat takes us on for Millport and from which we are transferred to a passenger train, leaving the picturesque valley and the pretty girl who gave us a drink of cool water from a spring and acted as if she would gladly give us forty more, flying away from us like a poet's dream.

ZAMIEL.

*Note: Ratville was a nickname for a small canal community between Millport and Montour Falls also known as Croton and There is still a road off of Route 14 called Croton Road and it leads to a few houses along what was once the canal.

The bottom fell out' of the 'Tip Top' in Oswego harbor

More often than not, old wooden work vessels on the Oswego canal were not kept in the best of condition as was the case of a small stone scow by that name.

About 9 a.m. on July 31, 1882 the boat named Tip Top started from Bundyville on the Oswego river, with cargo of stones to be used in some harbor improvements. Aboard were John Richardson and Joseph Aker of Fulton and Artemus Burchim and Martin Herrick of Bundyville. Arriving in Oswego, she was taken in tow by the tug Steve H. Lyons.

When when just outside the light house the waves commenced dangerously rolling over her. Aker and Richardson held some planks up at the bow to keep the water from swamping the scow, but that proved useless. Aker jumped from the bow to the hawser, intending to work his way to the tug, a distance of 50 feet. He was immediately followed by Richardson and Herrick. Burchim stood about in the center of the scow on some stones, when the bottom fell out, dumping all four men into the water. Aker held on to the hawser and was pulled under by it. He said he thought he was only under a passing wave but after a short time it occurred to him that perhaps the scow had gone down.

He let go, rose to the surface and by the aid of a line and was pulled aboard the tug. Richardson let go of the hawser immediately when it was being pulled under and got hold of a plank from which he was taken by the tug. Burchim fell through the sides of the scow and when he came up, got on to the deck of the cabin. He was also picked up by the tug. Martin Herrick was not seen after the scow sank. He was presumed lost. He was 20 years old, married nearly a year and had child about a week old. He was a son-in-law of Artemus Burchim, the last man saved. A search was made for his body to no avail.

Capt. William Scott of the tug Lyons said he noticed the boat was rolling as they were going out of the river into the harbor, and he asked Herrick if they should turn back. Herrick replied that everything was fine and to go ahead. Capt. Scott says when she went down her bottom dropped right out and her sides fell apart. He backed the tug and got the three men. Herrick he said was at the pump and never once came to the surface.

Later in the day, Henry Munroe, out sailing, found a pocket book floating on the surface which later proved to have been the property of the drowned man.

Watkins Express
May 6, 1873

A new steam canal boat is being built in Havana, by Hall & Whitmore, in company with W.C. Gillespie. It is on an entirely new plan, and when completed will compete for the $100,000 offered by the State authorities. It will be of 224 tons burthen, and its average speed is estimated at three miles per hour.
Society News

Port Byron Old Erie Canal Heritage Park

In the summer issue, we reprinted a press release that announced the construction of a park built around enlarged Lock 52 and the Erie House.

You might recall that the plans for the park were outlined in the Summer/Fall 2011 issue of the Bottoming Out. In the fall of 2013, the Society learned that the Thruway / Canal Corp would be moving forward with the construction of the Park.

The Park is being built in phases over the next couple years. The first phase was the construction of a parking lot just to the west of enlarged Lock 52, and trails that allows people to walk through and around the lock chambers. Construction began in May of 2014 and wrapped up in November.

The next phase will be the stabilization of the Erie House, mule barn and blacksmith shop.
Photos – Opposite page

Top – Sign in parking lot of Park

Bottom – Looking east along Thruway and up through enlarged Lock 52. The Erie House is located just beyond the lock. Interpretive signs will guide visitors through lock.

This page

Top – Looking west along the old canal toward Lock 52. The Erie House is seen to the right.

Middle – The mule barn and blacksmith shop can be seen in this view. These will be relocated to their original positions. Tanner’s Drydock was located across the canal from the Erie House.

Bottom – A view of the parking lot and wetland areas. A smaller parking lot will allow visitors access to the Park from Route 31 and Port Byron.

Enlarged Lock 52

Enlarged Lock 52 replaced Clinton Ditch Lock 60, which was located in the grassy area seen across from the Erie House in the middle photo. From here, the canal descended to the west, crossing the Seneca River at Montezuma, about six miles to the west. This level of the canal crossed the Seneca River on the Montezuma Aqueduct. Lock 53 is 16 miles west of here in Clyde.

Lock 52 was one of five locks that lifted to the east, whereas all the other locks lifted the canal to the west. This caused considerable difficulty for the boats as they were entering the locks against the flow of water. Lock 52 was the first to receive the water powered machinery that helped pull boats into the chambers.

Lock 52 will be the center piece of the new Park.
The New York State Canal Conference Visits the Old Erie Canal Heritage Park

Submitted by Andrew Lauren

The New York State Canal Conference, held this past September, provided an exciting opportunity to showcase the work going on at Old Erie Canal Heritage Park at Port Byron. Two coach buses filled with conference attendees were able to see up close the extraordinary progress that has occurred, particularly with Lock 52. Even as we arrived there were construction trucks moving about. Led by President Tom Grasso, the walking tours around the site not only provided information about its past history but also the vision of the park that is quickly transforming from dream to reality. An unexpected highlight of the tour was the ability to go into the Erie House and explore. Seeing the work while driving by on Thruway did not prepare any of us for the thrill we all got from our leisurely stroll on the site itself.