

ALONG THE TOWPATH

VOLUME V NUMBER 1

May 1973

1973 MEMBERSHIP

All Association members are advised that this will be the last newsletter they can expect to receive if they are not fully paid, active members for 1973. Also, a resolution was passed in the April 1972 meeting requiring all Level Walkers to be Association members starting with the 1973 membership year. I regret to announce that several Level Walkers have not paid their 1973 dues and I will be required to delete them from the Level Walker list and reassign their sections if they do not pay by June 1, 1973. Dues are \$5.00 per year for regular membership, \$10.00 for Patron membership. If you are not certain as to your membership status, write to: Doug Greene, Treasurer; 10317 Brunswick Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland 20902. Membership checks made out to "C & O Canal Association" should be sent to Doug.

PEPCO AND THE C & O CANAL

AN INFORMATIVE HIKE

On June 2, 1973 at 2:00 p.m. Ed Wesely will lead an Association sponsored hike to the present Potomac Edison Power Company (PEPCO) generating facility at Dickerson, Maryland. We will see the present effects of the facility on the Canal, including tons of fly ash filling the canal bed, noise, fumes, acid water, etc. and Ed will brief us on the proposed expansion. The enclosed flyer provides details. The hike will begin at the Monocacy Aqueduct, from which we will walk the towpath to the PEPCO facility. All Association members are urged to attend and to bring your friends. Your Association officers have already visited this area and have seen how PEPCO is violating agreements relating to its present facility — we would like you to show the public's interest in the proposed expansion and to see for yourself what is happening.

1973 ANNUAL MEETING AND HIKE

The annual meeting of the Association was held at the Western Maryland Sportsman's Club on Friday, May 4, 1973. Approximately 40 members attended, including Justice William O. Douglas and his wife, Cathy. The Treasurer's report noted a rise in the Association's bank account from seven dollars to approximately a thousand dollars during the year. The President reported on Board activities, volunteer work on the Canal, and the Master Plan. He congratulated the Level Walkers for their flood reports. A resolution supporting the Cumberland amendment to the Canal Act was passed unanimously. The Level Walker Chairman reported on Level Walker activities during the year and, as Association representative to the Concerned Citizens for the Potomac National River, gave a resumé of Representative Gilbert Gude's proposed bill. Ed Wesely reported on the proposed PEPCO expansion and showed several slides of the deterioration which has occurred along the canal as a result of the present plant. The previously mentioned June 2 hike was unanimously supported by the membership present and a good turnout is hoped for. No officers were elected this year because of the by-laws change approved last year to provide three-year terms.

The Nineteenth Annual Reunion Hike, from Dam 4 to Shepherdstown, was somewhat spread out, with Justice Douglas starting at 8:15 and the last busload starting at 10:40, but a good time was had by all, including those who could not walk afterwards. The weather was perfect, the canal was rather clean thanks to the Boy Scouts' efforts of the week before, and the spring flowers were in profusion. The section was easily hiked but the destruction from last June's flood was still readily visible, including flood-borne debris above the hikers' heads even when the towpath was perhaps twenty five feet above the normal river level. The section hiked is very attractive on both sides of the river. A nice lunch was provided at Snyder's Landing.

The "Happy Hour" was held at Bernie Hillenbrand's farm overlooking the Canal and river. During the "Happy Hour" tours of his 230 year old plus house were given. The dinner meeting was at the Shepherd College dining hall. The meal was unlike any institutional meal any of us had had before - great food and more than most could eat, even after the 12 mile hike. After dinner Ed Wesely spoke to the 150 people present about the PEPCO expansion and the hike, Tom Hahn spoke about the American Canal Society, of which he is President, and Representative Gilbert Gude spoke about the Cumberland amendment to the Canal Act (he and Senator Mathias agreed, during lunch at Snyder's Landing, to present bills in the Senate and House for this amendment prior to Memorial Day) and about his Potomac National River Bill. The BBC film on the C&O Canal Act was shown following the meeting.

Our thanks to Bill Faylor and his staff who turned out in good numbers to provide assistance as needed to the approximately 300 hikers. They were well organized and prepared for any contingency.

THE POTOMAC NATIONAL RIVER

On June 10, 1973 at 10:00 a.m., a canoe trip will be sponsored by the Concerned Citizens for the Potomac National River. This trip will put in at Harpers Ferry and take out at Brunswick. The reason for the trip is to show citizen support for Representative Gilbert Gude's Potomac National River Bill to the officials attending. If you can canoe with us, welcome. If you simply can be present at one end or the other, please come along to show that you want the Potomac to remain as attractive as it is today.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

The Association is still sponsoring weekend volunteer work along the lower part of the Canal. If you can contribute a few hours on a Saturday morning occasionally, please call Judy Toth at (301) 229-8586. Bill Faylor, NPS Supervisor Seneca to Cumberland, is interested in supporting volunteer work and would welcome communications from any persons interested in working, supervising, or coordinating volunteers in any part of his area. He can be reached at: Antietam-C&O Canal Group; Box 158; Sharpsburg, Md. 21782, Telephone (301) 432-5124.

USEAGE OF THE POTOMAC RIVER

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources is soliciting information regarding recreational use of the Potomac River. Anyone wishing to respond to the items noted in the next paragraph should write to: Mr. William L. Jackson; Planning and Evaluation Section; Department of Natural Resources; Tawes State Office Building; 580 Taylor Avenue; Annapolis, Maryland 21401.

Indicate the Potomac River portion referred to. Note the recreational activities occurring in that portion (e.g., swimming, canoeing, kayaking, fishing from river bank, fishing from boat, power boating, water skiing, hunting, sneak boating, aesthetic viewing, other). Comments might include frequency, season, and affect on other users of the river area. Any other related comments you care to submit would be useful.

HIKIN' AND TALKIN'

Grant Conway will lead a hike on July 22, 1973 starting at 9:00 a.m. from the Sycamore Store (MacArthur Boulevard and Walhonding Road, between Brookmont and Glen Echo). He is calling it "Seven miles of hiking and eight hours of talking." He'll take you to Old Anglers Inn the hard way - on a physical tour of history.

For an example of what one can expect from Grant, copied below is a page on the history of the Hughes Hollow to Sycamore Landing section which he wrote for a hike he led this past winter.

The ponds at Hughes Hollow were started by the late Bernard Siegel, related to a large planned development on land acquired by Siegel in the 1950s. Blocked by local, state, and federal government agencies from channel access to the Potomac River, the project was abandoned. This land was then acquired by the State of Maryland for the McKee-Beshers Wildlife Management Area, planned for the flood plain from Seneca State Park to a point approximately two miles upriver from Hughes Hollow.

This land was patented in 1695 by Captain Richard Brightwell, who commanded the Little Falls garrison of the Potomac Rangers from 1693 until his death in 1698. Brightwell and his force of eight men ranged along the Potomac River to protect scattered settlers and travelers against renegade Indians. This 1086 acre tract, called "Brightwell's Hunting Quarters", extended from a point above Seneca to the vicinity of Edwards Ferry. Woods bison, deer, bear, and wolves were hunted.

His successors were operating a hunting club when they were forced to yield a right-of-way along the Potomac to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, 1829-30. The downriver boundary marker for the property was demolished during construction of the Canal. Outraged members restored a boundary marker at an unknown location in the canal bed at night-time, secret ceremony.

McKee-Beshers Wildlife Management Area is operated by the State of Maryland under a current multiple-use concept. A surprising number of deer were "harvested" in this area during the winter hunting season. Game birds are planted and "cropped". Formerly a popular bird watcher's habitat, this use has been allowed to deteriorate and game hunting has become the predominate use. Fewer tree swallow and bluebird boxes are erected, and the success of the bluebird project seems to have ended with the blast of a shotgun which destroyed the last occupied bluebird house in 1970.

The fields beyond were part of a farm with the house located near the ruins of the windmill and the barn where the red sandstone foundations formed a ramp where hay and corn were unloaded for hog and cattle fodder. The abandoned farmhouse, surrounded by poison ivy, is a nesting place for barn swallows.

From the farm buildings a dirt track runs through the open fields to the Winslow archeological site excavated 1958-61 by members of the Southwestern Branch of the Archeological Society of Maryland in the flat adjacent to the C & O Canal. The Winslow site was the location of an Indian village where 100 or more Indians once lived. Artifacts, scientifically removed, indicate a tribe classified as "woodland culture" or Indians who hunted with arrows and spears, captured fish, cultivated small plots of land, and turned out earthenware pots and clay pipes. Skeletons from thirteen burials, believed to date to the 15th century, were removed. Perhaps the most interesting find was the remains of a 19 year-old Indian girl near the skeleton of a small dog, which may have been her pet. The site has been restored to the depth of the surrounding land in accordance with the agreement between Brockett Muir, who owned the land at the time, and the archeologists.

Upstream 0.8 miles from the Horsepen Branch Hiker-Biker Overnighter, the flood scoured the bed of the canal and forced the collapse of the Horsepen Branch culvert, exposing the rock construction with keystone reinforcing device in the arch.

The footbridge over the canal at Sycamore Landing was overturned by Agnes Floods, but can be crossed with a modicum of dexterity.

CANAL ADVISORY COMMISSION

Nancy Long, Chairman of the C&O Canal Advisory Commission, has promised to report on Commission activities to date for an upcoming "Along the Towpath." Meanwhile, the next Commission meeting will be held June 23, 1973 10:00 a.m., at The National Capital Parks Bldg., 1100 Ohio Dr. S.W., Washington, D.C.
(Hain's Point)

LEVEL WALKERS MEET PARK SERVICE

On April 18 approximately 30 Level Walkers, representing sections upstream of Seneca, assembled at the Antietam Battlefield to talk with National Park Service personnel. Bill Failor, Superintendent, had a dozen of his staff on hand for the meeting. He discussed his organizational structure and introduced his personnel. His portion of the Canal is treated as a unit for visitor services and general management, but divided for maintenance with sub-district foremen in charge of the operations on specific portions of the Canal.

George Church, in charge of Visitor Services and Resource Management, described his wide scope of activities. He has Rangers under him who are responsible for assuring that the users of the Canal respect the Canal and each other. Within their protective jurisdiction are 31 hiker-bikers, three drive-in camps, responsibility for marking the Canal dams on the river, for which they are studying adequate buoy marking devices, and 162 miles of Canal. They expect to install a number of electronic trail counters (he assures us they will not be at all visible to the hiker) so they can more accurately calculate the amount of use the Canal gets. Education plays a large part in their activities and all N.P.S. personnel are instructed to answer whatever questions they can and to generally inform the users about the Canal and Park.

George Wink, acting Chief of Maintenance, told us that his total staff numbers 27 permanent and 25 seasonal personnel for their 162 miles of the canal. They estimate that they have to mow 333 acres of grass and service, on a daily basis, 205 camping units. In addition, they check, on a monthly basis, the water from all 39 wells to assure that the water is clean enough for drinking. He noted that all of the wells have been approved for use since Tropical Storm Agnes. However, occasionally one will fail a test and the handle will be removed, but it is then re-tested promptly and treated if need be. Other statistics for these 52 men include: 46 historic buildings and foundations, 50 footbridges, 17 vehicle bridges, 11 boat ramps, and 80 pit privies. With the small staff and the extra workload from the flooding, these men have been busy since the storm simply catching up, without having time to repair masonry, locks, etc. that would normally have come under their routine maintenance responsibilities. A good discussion of towpath surfacing materials came up. They are presently using a dirty Crusher Run #6 which, if uniform and dirty enough, packs down quite well. It is frequently not very uniform or dirty and it does not break down with use. All present agreed clay shale was superior - it will break down in the course of a winter and compacts into a solid, uniform surface which withstands run-off well. However, it is available only in limited locations along the canal, thereby limiting the practicality of its use on an economic basis.

John Reed, Interpretive Specialist, described plans for led hikes, hike and bike trips, evening programs, etc. this summer in an effort toward improved education. The Four Locks area is planned to become an environmental study area with volunteers and paid personnel to conduct courses.

If any Level Walker would like to lead a hike on his or any other section of the Canal, please write to John Reed at: Antietam-C&O Canal Group, Box 158, Sharpsburg, Md. 21782. You need to tell him when, where, and, if any, what your topic will be - history, nature, birding, etc. They need a month advance notice to publicise it. If you want to tell me about it, too, I'll see if I can put into "Along the Towpath" in time.

The meeting was apparently enjoyed by all participants and both sides learned quite a lot about the other's abilities and limitations. We hope to have more such meetings as appropriate. Do you have a recommendation for the night of the week? For that section, Antietam appears to be the most handy location.

CANAL USER INFORMATION

The Antietam-C&O Canal Group has been busy in recent months assembling information for visitors to the Canal Park. Their information sheets include "Hiking Along the Canal," "A Few Tips for a Safe and Enjoyable Bike Trip," "Canoeing in the Potomac River," "Campground Rules and Regulations," "Food Sources Along the C & O Canal," "Nearby Private Campgrounds," "Seneca to Williamsport," "Lodging, Seneca to Cumberland," "Public Boat Launching Ramps," "Nearby Recreational Equipment Rentals," and a nine book "Bibliography." A copy of the above papers plus whatever else they have prepared for free distribution about the Canal may be obtained by writing to: Antietam-C&O Canal Group; Box 158; Sharpsburg, Md. 21782. Thank you, N.P.S.!

TOWPATH NEWS

Ralph Donnelly has accepted assignment with Grant Conway as our Advisory Level Walker for History. Both of them could be called upon for advice on any part of the Canal, but generally Grant should be considered for historical advice downriver of Harpers Ferry and Ralph upriver. The same is true of our two new Engineering History advisors, Robert Dodds (downstream) and Charles Morrison (upstream). Bill Davies is our Geology advisor. He is hoping to publish a book on the geology of the Canal, you'll be kept posted. Napier Shelton has volunteered to provide advice on Ornithology. All of the above are Level Walkers in their own right and their addresses are available in the November 1972 Level Walker Directory with the exception of Napier Shelton, 1563 14th St., N.W., Washington, D. C. 20007. Do we have any volunteers for Flora and Fauna? What other categories would be appropriate? The above happens to be a complete listing to date of Advisory Level Walkers.

Marie Grenen is now co-Level Walker with Lyman Stucker on the Point of Rocks to Catoctin Aqueduct section. Senator J. Glenn Beall, Jr. has recently been assigned as Level Walker for the North Branch to Mexico Farms (Pipeline) section. Welcome aboard! Does anyone know the whereabouts of Craig Wolf? Mail to the Landover, Md. address I have for him is being returned with no forwarding address.

"I" in this newsletter is: Bruce Wood, Level Walker Chairman; 6200 Winnebago Road; Bethesda, Maryland 20016. Telephone (301) 229-5182.

LEVEL WALKER REPORTS

Mile

0.0 Georgetown to Lock 5, Bruce Wood has bicycled this portion of the Canal recently and has found conditions to be fair for biking, good for walking. At some points there is excess loose gravel and at others potholes which require walking one's bike.

5.0 Lock 5 to Cabin John Creek, Philip Stone reports considerable progress in repairing the flood damage in his section. He suggests a top dressing is needed to make biking enjoyable but that conditions are fair for the most part. Cabin John Creek is reported to be heavily polluted due to a break in the sewer line there. This break is being worked on. He reports a beaver near the Sycamore Island Bridge. There are also signs of beaver work and a small dam at about Mile 4. His user census shows 68 users this April, 21 last October, and 351 last April.

7.0 Glen Echo to Great Falls, Marilyn DeLoach, not a Level Walker, has sent a good report of the conditions for this area as of late 1972. She reports little towpath damage as far as Widewater, at least not enough to deter her hike. Upstream of Widewater she notes bare rocks near Lock 16, a ford being required near there, inability to walk next to the stop-gate levee, and the missing footbridges to Great Falls.

22.8 Seneca Aqueduct to Tenfoot Island, Eugene Weinbach remarks on the Spring flowers and general beauty of the section prior to Agnes versus the obvious damage in the area immediately following the flood. More recently, the breaks have been repaired for the most part, all of the fallen trees have been removed, and general conditions, while not as attractive as last Spring, are much improved.

25.0 Tenfeet Island to Sycamore Landing, Alan and Becky Hadin report that the casual observer would find the Winslow site (see page 3, under "Hikin' and Talkin'") impossible to locate and they suggest an information marker be placed there. The Sycamore Landing bridge was still out in April and crossing is possible only on haphazardly placed logs. Under usage they note a number of hikers and bikers picking the April wildflowers - Stop! I'd like to admire them, too.

30.8 Edwards Ferry to Fort Harrison Island, Napier Shelton reports the towpath to be in good shape with only one noticeable area of erosion. Charles Pearson, who lives at Broad Run, remembers canal boat days. Mr. Pearson complained about visitors crossing his pasture to reach the river and leaving his gate open, discarding trash, etc. in the process. Napier reports usage of the towpath in January to have consisted only of another Level Walker (not identified) but in April to be heavy around the boat ramp. His April bird list included goldfinches, purple finches, rusty blackbirds, white-throated sparrows, and cardinals. He also heard two barred owls and a ring-necked pheasant.

33.2 Fort Harrison Island to White Ferry, Dwight Sheesley, Sr. noted several downed trees which should be removed for easier hiking but that passage was possible anyway. Much wildlife activity was reported in this area, even with a wind-chill factor at the time of ten degrees below zero. Morris Green, Jr. recently completed the 50 mile hike in Washington County and is probably the oldest person to do so, at 64. He reports conditions to be excellent but that, in March, as reported by Dwight in February, the pump handle was missing on the Turtle Run Hiker-Biker.

42.2 Monocacy Aqueduct to Nolands Ferry, Ray Teele notes that the house on the aqueduct parking lot was removed by May 6. In April the picnic area was completely under water as was the Indian Flats Hiker-Biker. The Nolands Ferry road was flooded by an adjacent creek. The towpath contained a few deep ruts which could easily be filled in with existing dirt piles along the towpath. Baltimore Orioles, three vireo species, purple finches, and white-throated sparrows were in evidence.

58.0 Weverton to Lock 34, Marilyn DeLoach is at it again. Another useful report of about the same vintage as the earlier noted one. The towpath from Lock 31 is in good condition as far as Lock 32. One could then walk through a washout under Sandy Hook Bridge. Also at that time, the towpath under the railroad bridge was almost completely eroded. The Park Service reports that these portions of the towpath have been restored. From Lock 33 to Lock 34 the towpath again is in good condition but a severe washout upstream of Lock 34 prohibits passage. One must detour this break via a long, hard climb up Dargen Bend Road.

60.7 Harpers Ferry to Dam 3, Larry Harris has submitted an excellent report in which he remarks very completely on the physical and natural characteristics of his section. No, Larry, motorcycles are not permitted on the towpath and their operators should be reminded of this regulation. Non-motorized modes of transport are the only legal means by which it may be used. He notes that the prism and towpath have been well restored near Lock 33. However, one can still observe the "inside dope" of a lock's construction in the exposed masonry of that lock. He reports choke cherry, redbud, garlic mustard, mertensia, yellow loesestripe, and bane berry to be in blossom along the section he was able to walk in early May. The big breaks above lock 34 and Dam 3 remain so that only when the water is low can one use the towpath between them. Larry reports this section of the towpath to be in good shape from prior visits.

67.0 Mountain Lock to Antietam Aqueduct, Art Binney notes that the campgrounds at Mountain Lock and Antietam have been restored to full use since the flood. He reports the water from the spring at 67.83 to be safe for drinking but the spring at 68.25 to be unsafe as of May 4, 1973. These conditions may change with time. Woodchucks were reported to be more abundant than in the past. Migratory waterfowl were common in March and April.

72.8 Shepherdstown to Dam 4, the Nineteenth Annual Justice Douglas hike was along this area. The towpath conditions are excellent and the scenery beautiful.

105.0 Old Railroad Station to Dam 5, "Hooper" Wolfe notes few hikers, many fishers, many birds, and "tons" of sand along the river. His fellow walkers were "Just me, and God, and we communicated well."

136.6 Sideling Hill Aqueduct to Little Orleans, in the last newsletter Don Ramsey wondered if a cemetery near the aqueduct is Canal-related. Charles Morrison wrote to say that, if it is the one he is thinking about, it is a canal construction workers' cemetery. He said that he and his wife took note of the information on the stones and compared it with that in other local cemeteries. They concluded that this was where cholera victims were buried. A sign at this cemetery once read "Shades of Death." The land is now under the jurisdiction of the Boy Scouts and is kept clear of weeds by them.

164.8 Lock 68 to Oldtown, Bruce and Sherry Wood report the section to be again watered, thanks to a restored wood and earth fill dam in the lower lock pocket of Lock 68. The Potomac Forks Hiker-Biker is clean and the pump was operational in April. The towpath here is in excellent shape, not having been flooded in June. Usage was modest, consisting mainly of fishermen and Boy Scouts. Yellow-shafted Flickers, pileated woodpeckers, spotted sandpiper, kingfisher, great blue heron, and tree sparrow were among the birds sighted. Shad bush, spice bush, box elder, and maple were in flower in April.

1973 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____

Address _____

1973 Membership Category: Regular \$5.00 ☐

Patron \$10.00 ☐

Make Checks Payable to: C & O Canal Association

Mail Checks To:

Mr. Douglas Greene, Treasurer
10317 Brunswick Avenue

ALONG THE TOWPATH

1900 Bedford Street

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Mr. William Davies
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Falls Church, Virginia 22046