

C&O Canal Association

along the towpath ...

concerned with the conservation of the natural and
historical environment of the C&O Canal and the Potomac River Basin

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Editor: Blanca Poteat

R.D. #1

Dickerson, Maryland 20753

What's Ahead



CALENDAR

February 21 - Wednesday
7:30 pm

March 2 - Friday
7:30 pm

March 10 - Saturday
10:00 am

Date to be announced

Public Meeting
North Branch/Cumberland Development
Concept Plan
Allegany Community College
Annual Hike Meeting
Anyone interested is invited to attend
Glen Echo Town Hall
C&O Advisory Commission Meeting
Field trip 10-12
Meeting 1-4:30
Glen Echo Town Hall
C & O Canal Association Board
Of Directors Meeting

C & O Canal National Historical Park Events

February 17 - Saturday
2:00 pm Great Falls Tavern

February 18 - Sunday
2:00 pm Great Falls Tavern

February 19 - Monday
2:00 pm Great Falls Tavern

February 24 - Saturday
10:00 am Great Falls Tavern

February 24 - Saturday
2:00 pm Great Falls Tavern

February 25 - Sunday

February 28 - Wednesday

River Sense - Get Some

The Great Falls, Maryland, River Safety Team
will provide tips on equipment, instruction,
and demonstrations of rescue equipment.
Great Falls Tavern Film Festival
Nature films will be shown every Sunday.

George Washington's Canal

The story of Washington's skirting canals on
the Potomac and their eventual evolution into
the C & O Canal.

Sights and Sounds of Winter

A 20 minute slide show and 1½ hour walk with
volunteer park naturalists.

What? The Barge is at Great Falls, Maryland
The hows, whys and wherefores of moving a
barge from Georgetown to Great Falls.

Great Falls Tavern Film Festival
see February 18

Sights and Sounds of Winter
see February 24

1979 ANNUAL REUNION HIKE

Your 1979 Annual Hike Committee proudly announces that the hike plans are nearly complete and we anticipate a very successful hike in April. We have received expressions of interest from many prospective hikers. We have made arrangements in Cumberland, Williamsport and Washington for Banquets and in the first two cities for hotel rooms. We are arranging details with various auxiliaries and church groups along the canal regarding meal provision for the hikers. The only factor that has not yet been arranged is the need for good weather during the April 16-28 hike. If anyone can assist us with this, please let us know.

The minimum estimated total cost for hikers will be \$125.00. This includes transportation, the three banquets, and all meals excepting breakfast in Cumberland, dinner and breakfast in Hancock, and breakfast in Williamsport, where we will avail ourselves of local restaurants.

In addition, advance payment will be requested for the Cumberland and Williamsport hotel rooms if you want the Association to make reservations for you.

We hope \$125.00 will cover the costs, but we may have to return to the hikers if it does not.

No support can be provided for part-distance hikers. If someone wishes to come along for only a few days or a week, they will have to be completely independent of the full-distance group. If two or more people wish to get together and sign up for the whole hike, with each coming separately from the others, we will accept one check from such a group with the understanding that only one can be supported at any one time.

Only the first 50 persons to send in the \$125.00 can register for the hike. We will accept others only on a conditional basis that someone among the first 50 cannot participate. Refunds will be made after April 1 only if there is a replacement or only for the amount not already committed for that hiker.

Full payment of the \$125.00 will be required before anyone joins the full distance group for support purposes.

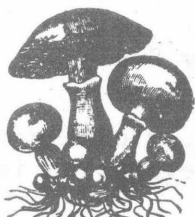
BANQUET PLANS

Separate reservations will be accepted for each banquet and the final day's lunch. Please indicate which banquets you will attend and the number of reservations you wish. Payment will be required prior to April 1 for the banquets and, again, refunds can be considered after that date only if there is someone else in need of the reservation.

Please use the enclosed form to make the necessary hike reservations.

Checks should be made out to "C&O Canal Association" and sent to:

Ms. M. E. Johns
6233 18th Road N.
Arlington, VA 22205



There will be a meeting of interested persons to discuss the full-distance hike on Friday, March 2, in the Glen Echo Town Hall at 7:30 p.m. If you have signed up already, welcome to the meeting. If you have not signed up but are interested in possibly signing up, welcome. If you do not plan to join the group support-wise but wish to hike along, welcome. Another meeting will be held in early April for hikers only to discuss hike details and to answer last minute questions.

Canal Walls in Georgetown
to be Repaired

William R. Failor, Superintendent
C&O Canal National Historical Park

The section of the Canal through Georgetown is the oldest section of the C&O Canal National Historical Park. Soon after President John Quincy Adams broke ground for the canal at Little Falls on July 4, 1828, construction of the 184½-mile canal began in Georgetown. It reached Cumberland in 1850, 22 years later, after many obstacles due to financial, labor and flooding difficulties.

The canal section in Georgetown is very important to present-day operations because it is accessible to more people than any other section of the Canal Park. The Georgetown section has become the focal point for thousands of visitors; and the renewal and redevelopment of sections of Georgetown adjacent to the canal. Indeed, what was once the "backyards" (the Canal) of many properties along the canal is now becoming the "frontyards" of these properties, places to admire and enjoy.

The masonry walls of the canal through Georgetown have been deteriorating badly over the past 40 years since this section was restored in the late 1930's. Deterioration is the result of lack of continuing maintenance and preservation over the years of the historic features comprising the canal system.

Work is scheduled to begin this spring to upgrade the canal walls and locks in Georgetown to bring them to an acceptable standard so that they may be maintained by routine annual maintenance in the future. The project will cover the area of approximately 1.1 miles from Rock Creek to Foundry Branch, a small stream which runs under the canal near the intersection of Canal and Foxhall Roads.

The total construction program, estimated to last for two years, contemplates the repair and preservation of Locks 1, 2, 3 and 4 and the stone masonry walls that form the canal prism throughout the length of the project area.

The preservation and revitalization of the stone walls is critical to the protection of this watered section of the canal. In many places, silt deposits, which have been accumulating for years, has covered the base of the walls. This silt will have to be excavated in order to examine the foundations of the walls and soil characteristics of the canal itself. It is possible to observe these silt conditions now since the canal through Georgetown has been drained in preparation for the construction work, and to cooperate with contract work which is currently underway in the development of Georgetown Park and other developments taking place adjacent to the canal.

Most of the work in removal of silt and repairs to the canal walls will take place within the canal, which means that there should be ample opportunity for "sidewalk Superintendents" to observe work activities. Continuity of the towpath for hiking and biking will generally be maintained. There will be periods, however, when the towpath will be closed when the work presents a safety hazard to visitors. Alternate routes for bikers will be planned in cooperation with the District of Columbia.

It is suggested, however, that bikers consider using sections of the towpath outside of the Georgetown area for continued biking enjoyment of the canal park resources.

It is anticipated that the project will cost \$2,200,000.

The interpretive barge "the Canal Clipper" which has operated from Lock 3, between 30th and Thomas Jefferson Streets, for the last two seasons, has been moved to Great Falls for operation during the 1979 and 1980 seasons while the Georgetown walls are being repaired. The barge will be berthed below the Great Falls Tavern and will "lock through" Lock 20, located in front of the Tavern as part of the interpretive tour. It will proceed up the canal toward Swains Lock, and return.

The barge trips at Great Falls will be an interesting contrast through a natural environment of the canal as opposed to the urban environment of Georgetown.

It is anticipated that the barge will maintain basically the same schedule as in the past - weekends only (Friday thru Sunday) from April 13 to June 1 and September 3 to October 28; and six days per week Tuesday thru Sunday from June 1 to September 3. Night charters will be available. Complete schedules will be printed in the next issue of Towline and in National Capital Region KIOSK. Call 202/299-2026 for additional information.

C & O CANAL ADVISORY COMMISSION

Saturday, March 10, 1979
Glen Echo Town Hall

10 am

From 10 am to 12 noon, those attending will have a field trip planned by the Montgomery County representatives. After lunch at the Glen Echo Town Hall, the meeting will be called to order at 1 pm. Among the matters to be discussed:

- Wayside Interpretive Exhibit Plan - Palisades
- Development Concept Plan status - Great Falls
- Sewer treatment pipeline - Cabin John
- Parcels recommended for acquisition - Georgetown
- Rockwood tract - Potomac

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

by Nancy Long

C & O Canal NHP Planning Process -- The General Plan for the C & O Canal National Historical Park, adopted in January 1976, requires the undertaking of specific detailed plans for each of the 32 areas established by the General Plan's zoning system. These detailed plans, known in current planning terminology as development concept plans (DCP), have been initiated for two areas -- the Great Falls Zone A extending from Old Angler's Inn to Swain's Lock, and the North Branch/Cumberland area which includes a 1.2 mile Zone A at North Branch, a 7.9 mile Zone C from Lock 75 to the Terminus, and a 1 mile Zone B at the Terminus. The North Branch/Cumberland DCP is just underway; one public planning session has been held, and another is planned for Wednesday, February 21 at 7:30 pm at Allegany Community College.

The Great Falls DCP final draft is virtually complete, requiring only in-house National Park Service review before a public hearing is held in the late spring or early summer. Two public planning sessions have been held. A hearing date has not been set at this time. Prior to the hearing, there will be an opportunity for public review of the draft DCP. Further information concerning locations for review of the draft, and the hearing date will be made available to Association members either through Along the Towpath or by special notice.

The Great Falls DCP will present five planning alternatives from which final development plans will be selected. The alternatives range from the status quo presented in Alternative 1 to heavy development described in Alternative 5. The General Plan contains the following statement concerning the Great Falls Zone A: "The numerous diverse attractions in the Great Falls area produce visitor overcrowding and circulation problems which must be resolved." However, Alternative 5 appears to provide for additional overcrowding rather than to resolve existing overcrowding problems. Because the Great Falls DCP is the first to be completed, and is therefore a precedent for future DCP planning on the Canal, it should have been undertaken and completed not only with the special nature of the C & O Canal in mind, but also with the particular care and attention required for a precedent-setting document. Instead, it appears to have been accomplished in haste without due consideration to all planning considerations and C & O Canal-oriented sensitivities. The Association's Board of Directors and Officers will review the Great Falls DCP prior to the public hearing, and will present testimony at the hearing. I urge Association members to review the document during the review period, and to submit comments to me in writing before the hearing, as well as offer individual testimony themselves if they so choose.

The planning process for the North Branch/Cumberland area should be carefully monitored by Association members; all who are able to attend planning sessions are encouraged to do so.

The National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, approved November 10, 1978, contains the following language with respect to the C & O Canal NHP: "Section 8 (b) of the Act of January 8, 1971 is amended by changing \$20,400,000 to \$28,400,000. The boundaries of the park are revised to include approximately 600 additional acres, provided, however, that such additions shall not include any properties located between 30th Street and Thomas Jefferson Street in the northwest section of the District of Columbia." The 600 acres refer to the abandoned Western Maryland Railroad right-of-way from Hancock to below Cumberland. Section 8 (b) of the C & O Canal Development Act refers to the land acquisition dollar ceiling originally authorized in Public Law 91-664 which established the C & O Canal National Historical Park.

Williamsport Canal Project -- It was reported at the December 1978 meeting of the C & O Canal NHP Commission that the Canal project at Williamsport is proceeding well. Silt has been removed from about half a mile of Canal, the Canal banks have been sloped and will be seeded in the spring, the stone wall has been stabilized, and water has been channeled into the project area. It is not too early to mention Williamsport's "C & O Canal Days," usually held for three days in the latter part of August. Association members who attended last year enjoyed the many events, including the demonstrations and sales of handmade art and craft items, the parade, and the Sunday afternoon bluegrass concert in the city park staged by the Tri-State Bluegrass Association. The National Park Service provided interpretive programs along the Canal, and Ed Wesely sang songs and told Canal stories at Lock 44. And don't forget to ask Mel Kaplan about the Indian Village.

President's Column (continued)

The Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB) has printed a set of maps entitled "The Potomac River and the C & O Canal." According to the ICPRB publication The Reporter, the map set "is selling like hotcakes, and soon may have to be reprinted to keep up with demand. By spring, we expect to have them in most bookstores along the Potomac, as well as in parks and recreational centers. The maps show, in great detail, historic and recreational sites along 90 miles of the Potomac, from Georgetown to Antietam Creek. They are printed on high-quality paper in three colors, and folded into an attractive case that can easily fit into pockets or glove compartments. Extensive descriptions and notes tell the story of the Potomac's important role in history -- and its vast potential for recreation. For a copy of the maps, send a check for \$4.00 to ICPRB, Public Information Office, 1055 First Street, Rockville, Maryland 20850. ICPRB will pay the postage."

The Abner Cloud House, restored with a \$150,000 special Congressional appropriation, has been occupied by a Washington, D. C. chapter of the Colonial Dames of America for about one year, according to a National Park Service spokesman. In exchange for a ten-year permit to use the building as their headquarters, the Dames contributed \$16,000 for interior restoration of the first and second floors of the two-story building located at Fletcher's Boat House on the berm side of the Canal. The NPS C & O Canal staff operates a small interpretive area on the ground-floor (basement) level. Public access to the building is restricted to the basement entrance; the main entrance at the first floor level is closed to the public, except during public tours, and is reserved at all other times as access only for the Dames. By the terms of their permit, the Dames are required to open their headquarters to the public no less than six times annually. During the first year of their occupancy, the house has not been open to the public because, according to NPS, it was not ready for public tours. A schedule for a series of open-house tours for 1979 has now been announced, as follows: the first Thursdays of April, May, June, October, November, and December, during the hours of 11:00 am to 3:00 pm. The Dames' ten-year permit is renewable for another ten years at its expiration date.

The Potomac Valley League of Montgomery County, an umbrella organization representing 24 citizens' associations and one municipality in the area extending from the DC line to Great Falls and from the Potomac River to River Road, has initiated a study project to determine whether this geographical area should be designated a suburban conservation area. The study is expected to produce a draft planning document, A Prototype Conservation Area Plan. To determine whether conservation area designation would be desirable, PVL is seeking comments from its members as well as from groups having a substantial interest in the Potomac Palisades in Montgomery County. The Association has been asked to participate, and I will soon appoint a committee to work with PVL in this effort. Assisting with the project are the Montgomery County Planning Board and graduate students in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at George Washington University. Grant support has been received from the National Endowment for the Arts and from the Maryland Historical Trust.



LEVEL WALKERS

Chairman: Lyman Stucker

We welcome our new Level Walkers:

Charles and Sylvia Diss
David Palmeter
Leo Rowan

Terry Haddy
Jean Fulton
Mary Karraker

The level walker reports we are receiving are interesting and appreciated. They are an excellent source of information for both the Association and the Park Service. From some sections we have not received a report for a long time, however, and we still need level walkers upstream from Hancock.

November 5 - Forty people shared a beautiful day on our walk to Fort Duncan and Maryland Heights. The leader, John Frye, presented an interesting historical sketch of the area.

December 2 - More than forty Level Walkers and visitors met at the Great Falls Tavern for the scheduled meeting. William Failor, Park superintendent, presented interesting facts concerning current and projected work on the Canal. Ken Rollins discussed our annual walk for 1979 and showed beautiful slides at the close of the meeting. The Park's hospitality was greatly appreciated.

The next Level Walker meeting will be "upstream" - date to be announced.

Like following wildlife tracks in the winter, these selections from the good LW reports give interesting glimpses of the unheralded life on the towpath. Ed.

LEVEL WALKER REPORTS IN BRIEF

Harrison's Island to White's Ferry

Morris M. Green, Jr.
December 31, 1978

Despite recent, heavy rain, towpath surface was in very good condition. It was easy to see that many portions had recently received applications of crushed stone, which may have been necessary for the movement of construction equipment to the culvert at 34.8 which is being repaired. Also, a temporary (?) steel pipe culvert has been installed at 33.8.

The Turtle Run Hiker Biker camp area was in good condition. The handle was not on the pump, which I assume is because tests have shown water is unfit for drinking. (The NPS turns off the water in freezing weather. Ed.) There was a good supply of large diameter firewood, but wedges and an axe would be needed to split it to usable size. I believe the NPS should develop some procedure under which the public could harvest firewood for home heating from the dead trees along the berm side of the Canal. These trees are rotting away while we are importing oil from the Mid-East for home heating.

Because of rain, I met no one during my five mile walk. At White's Ferry I met two couples who had just come off the towpath and were waiting for friends to come in autos to take them home.

There were very few birds in the rain, but I saw a flicker, some cardinals and juncos, and heard a pileated woodpecker.

McMahon's (Charles') Mill to Lock 43

Leander B. Lovell
November 2, 1978

My visit was a beautiful fall day in the upper 60's, and the towpath was undated with leaves. Many winter resident birds were in evidence. Beyond milepost 93 a deer crossed the towpath at the Potomac Fish and Game Club, and several pheasants crossed into the patch of corn on the river side.

The condition of the towpath from miles 89 to 93 was the same as reported in July. The 3/4 mile of towpath upstream from McMahon's Mill has deteriorated badly and is getting worse. Clearly the anticipated remedial work was not undertaken this past summer, and at this rate the section will hardly be walkable when the 1979 full-length hike takes place.

Historical note - The curve of the Potomac and the C & O Canal within mileages 89 to 92 (Dellinger's Neck) was, in the 17th and 18th centuries, a part of the "Manor of Conegocheigue", a tract of 10,688 acres owned by Lord Baltimore. From the river the tract extended north and east, covering present Downsville, St. James, and Williamsport Station (but not Williamsport itself). "Conegocheigue" was, no doubt, an early spelling of Conococheague from the creek of that name which joins the Potomac at Williamsport and the west branch of which has its source in the Kittatinnies north of the tunnels on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. The name is attributed by early settlers to the Indians meaning "long indeed, very long indeed", an appropriate description of the creek.

In the 1760's the then Lord Baltimore, residing in England, set up a Commission to dispose of his manors. John M. Jordan, a London merchant, was one of the commissioners, and Lord Baltimore gave him the Conococheague tract. He stipulated that Jordan and his heirs and assigns pay yearly "at our City of St. Marys at the feast of Saint Michael the Arch Angel the rent of one arrow". The Manor already had tenants who paid rent to the Lord Proprietor but were granted rights of possession which they were able to convey as in a deed. It is believed there were some 80 tenements with 71 tenants, nine of whom owned more than one tenement, when Jordan acquired the property. The tenancies were mostly from 100 to 200 acres in size. All but 15 contained a house of some kind, typically about 30 x 20 feet, built of round logs and with a stone chimney, although some were of brick. A "cabin roof" was a common part of the structure, made of "splitting trees into pieces which they lay one upon another for a cover. It saves the expense of nails and is said to be as tight as clapboards." The information covering the Conococheague tenancies is derived from a 1767 document acquired from the Canadian Archives. This recently discovered document indicates a number of the lots also had other structures such as barns and stables; and there were small orchards and other evidence of farming activity. Accepted opinion prior to the discovery of this document was that this part of the county had been abandoned by settlers a decade earlier because of the Indian peril.

This property was next acquired by Samuel Ringgold about 1792 when, at age 30, he brought his bride to his estate of 17,000-18,000 acres which covered Conococheague Manor. General Ringgold called his home "Fountain Rock", from which he represented the district in Congress from 1810-15 and 1817-21. His manor house eventually became the nucleus of St. James College.

It was common practice in the colonial period for property owners and tenants to give their holdings titles. Scharf's History of Western Maryland reproduces a list of some 1300 property resurveys which were made between 1726 and 1800, probably including some within Conococheague Manor. These names still serve as the starting point in tracing land ownership in 18th and 19th century Maryland.

Point of Rocks to Catoctin Creek Aqueduct

Marie M. Grenan
August 26, 1978
September 2, 1978
January 6, 1979

The trail looks good. The lock houses at Lock 28 7 29 have been restored and painted. The bridge is till out at the aqueduct. Saw what appeared to be a freight car derailment on the curve around the catoctin ridge. Railroad ties and parts of track as well as freight cars were strewn in and about the canal in August, and some ties and track are still lying in the canal as of January.

Mountain Lock to Antietam

Theresa B. Haddy
November 25, 1978

The campgrounds and the bridges over the canal, at both of the entrances, were in excellent condition. At Mountain Lock, a group of three young men were camping. At Antietam, there was a group of young boys and several men, as well as another tent of two young women. It was not a very good day for wildlife, chilly and overcast, but we saw a squirrel, three hawks, and a group of robins.

Snyder's Landing to Lock 40
Lock 40 to Marsh Run Culvert

Harold A. Cramer Sr.
Harold A. Cramer Jr.
William H. Cramer
December 9, 1978

In light rain with temperature in the upper 40's, the condition of the towpath was well drained except in tire ruts at isolated spots. Washouts in the vicinity of mile 79 have been repaired.

Mile 81.6 to Dam 4

Edith and Marvin Wilkerson
December 7, 1978

The towpath was in quite good condition. There were indications that the NPS had recently cut a number of blow-downs that had fallen across the towpath. The pump below the Big Woods HBO was operational, and the HBO was in good condition. On this chilly day there were only a local resident walking his dog and two fishermen. Two avian oddities were noted. Edith observed two large flocks of robins feeding in an adjacent field. From the size of the groups she judged they were migrating. We also saw a sizeable group of very large birds who lumbered into the air on the river side of the canal. We decided they must be wild turkeys.

Great Falls to Swain's Lock

John F. Anderson
January 14, 1979

Towpath condition is good, although footway was muddy from recent rains and snows. The canal prism was intact, and there is much water in the canal. Because of the season and the weather, there were only a few joggers, dogs, and people fishing in the canal. The concession areas were closed, although Great Falls Tavern Museum was open for visitors.

Lock 47 to McCoy's Ferry

A.K. McGraw
July, August, September, October
1978

The towpath on this section is in excellent condition. Waste weir above Lock 50 has been repaired, a fine job on it. Four Locks and McCoy's received heavy use over weekends, North Mountain received overflow from McCoy's on weekends. Horse back riding seemed to be heavier; also, large groups of bicyclers, especially Boy Scouts. Flowers noted included Ox-Eye, Day, Jewel Weed, Wild Bergamot, and New York Iron Weed.

Round Top Hill to Lock 53

Ralph E. French
October 24, 1978

The towpath, covered by fallen leaves, appeared sound and with a good surface for hikers and bikers, except for a few spots damaged by the 1976 fall flood, where repairs made a rough stoney surface. That flood damage was caused by water rushing from the canal back into the river. More than 75 trees or large limbs which encroached on the path right-of-way have been felled, cut into 1-1½ foot lengths of fire wood and stacked alongside the path. The view of the river has thereby been enlarged. Round Top Cement Mill has received some mortar to prevent further loss of bricks from the walls. Leopard Mill Hiker Biker is in good condition; no indication of recent use. One white-tailed deer was sighted on the

path in Section 50. One groundhog, 2 ducks or cormorants (light too dim), numerous white throated sparrows, flickers and owls. A fine black walnut tree with a good crop of nuts was at Leopard Mill Hiker Biker.

Fort Frederick Level

Jane & Harold Larsen
October 15, 1978

On a beautiful, crisp autumn Sunday, we found the towpath in very good condition except for a few mudholes. We saw: one fisherman, in boat on Big Pool; three walkers and one dog; five cyclists (one group); and a man strolling on his farm on the berm side of the canal. The path was recently mowed on both sides. Saw few flowers, mostly blue asters, knotweed and sticktight. Not much brush to remove from towpath, and so little debris that on return trip we decided to walk in the dry canal bed and the banks of Big Pool, which yielded a rich harvest (favorite beer in the area appears to be Pabst). At Mile 114.5 three concrete posts had been erected to prevent vehicles from entering the towpath from the lane on the river side of canal. NPS should remove vegetation from spillway at Mile 113 before it undermines the structure.

Woods Lock to Monocacy Aqueduct

Anson & Frances Courter
September 16, 1978
October 29, 1978

Work on culvert 65, a passage for a stream at the bottom of a wooded ravine, is in progress. A dirt fill for vehicle passage is in place of the washed out foot-bridge from Dickerson Regional Park. The prism of Lock 26 is filled with red earth, apparently top fill for the towpath when culvert repair is finished. Access over the canal to the table under the big silver maple is by the dirt fill.

On 10/29 there were 11 bikers, two fishermen, 19 hikers. One of the bikers was a boy scout bound for the Pentagon that afternoon on a 50 miler. The picnic area at Monocacy was clean, although someone had disposed of some old furniture in the trash dump in the parking area.

Monocacy, Little Monocacy and the #65 culvert stream were clean but low. Outflow from the Pepco cooling water backed up to Lock 27. Noted again how the grass in the prism cleans the flow.

This has been a year of heavy fruiting for spice bush and poke berries. A girl at a Pennyfield craft show a few years ago told me "I don't know if poke berries are poisonous or not, but my goat ate some and he died." That is warning enough for me. Wild grapes are abundant, but to F. Courter's disgust, all in the tree tops. From Lock 27 to near the Little Monocacy the towpath is becoming Paw Paw Alley. Few walnuts, no persimmons noted along the path.

The ranger, a woman, told me there are still fish in the watered area near Pepco, where I saw a man and woman fishing, but they probably were near the bottom. There were spotty thin oil films just below Lock 27.

Saw woodpeckers: red bellied, hairy, one flicker, no downies, probably because weed patches are back in woods; cardinal, mockingbird, goldfinches, titmice, juncos, white throated sparrows, crows, vultures, one hawk.

Lock 44 to Pinesburg Station

Melvin I. Kaplan
November 5, 1978

From the east end of the Conococheague Aqueduct to Pinesburg Station, there have been no changes in the towpath or canal prism. However, from the east end of the aqueduct to Lock 44, the towpath is very rough, due to the excavation to restore and rehabilitate this section of the canal to its original state. Work has been going on for about a month and a very good job is being done. The NPS expects the job to be finished in time to pump water into the canal from Conococheague Creek for ice skating this winter.

I began my walk at Pinesburg Station just as daylight was getting good. Mist was rising from the river and dew was dripping from the trees. A rabbit or two running along the towpath and then off into the brush, a couple of squirrels running up and down the trees, a woodpecker beating a tattoo on a tree trunk were my company. Lock house 44 has a new roof and new paint and the exterior has been restored to its original condition. Nothing has been done to the interior.

Horses, bikes and hikers are still using the towpath, but mopeds and motorcycles are also using it. While looking over the work done at the east end of the aqueduct, I had to jump out of the way of two motor bike riders coming through the aqueduct.

Swain's Lock to Pennyfield Lock

Joan Paull
November 8, 1978

Again I rented a bicycle at Swain's to test the towpath. After several days of rain the resurfaced path was in excellent condition. The canal was high but not overflowing. The towpath had only two pieces of trash, the least I've ever seen. There was a pile of trash about 2/10 of a mile down canal from Pennyfield. About 1/10 mile down canal from post 18 there is a 6" tree trunk on the berm side blocking most of the canal. Near the footbridge there are a few trunks in the canal. We will have to watch the growth of the nettle plant on both sides of the towpath in several areas. It could cause a great deal of discomfort, if someone brushed against it. (For the stings, use butter or cucumber. Ed.) There were 11 tents in the Swain's Lock Campground, 24 hikers including joggers, 18 using canoes, 13 bicyclists, 5 fishermen, 3 dogs with their owners. There were still some orchid composite daisy-like flowers. One mallard duck was enjoying the canal near the big bend area. There were 28 cars in the Swain's Lock parking area. Is there some way that additional parking can be put in? Many cars are parking up the road and it is difficult to get by.

Sycamore Landing to Edward's Ferry

Charles & Florence Otstot
November 19, 1978

The towpath is in very good condition. My only suggestion, made last spring, are for a load of fill stone at two points: at mile 28.3 the path is eroded 6-8 inches and at mile 29.2 a less dramatic erosion is occurring at the culvert. The Youth Conservation Corps has developed and labeled with temporary signs an interpretative trail from Edward's Ferry community to the river lock and on to the culvert at mile 30.1. They have built in stairways at the culvert and at the towpath bridge over the river lock channel. Already the wooden stair risers are beginning to rot. The trail is a good idea, and I hope the NPS can make the effort a more permanent one. The Chisel Branch HBO was clean, the pump was working but its drain was clogged. The grill is still just a piece of metal, but recent campers have created a nice cooking nook with logs. Several new trash containers are well maintained. We saw 10 bikers, 4 hikers, one camper, and two horse riders. There were a few turtles sunning themselves on logs. There were a number of lively squirrels, as well as many chipmunks. Finally, someone should be thanked for removing the chemical toilet from Lock 25.

Brookmont to Cabin John

Philip J. Stone
November 12, 1978

The towpath is in good condition throughout my section. The locks (5,6,7) and lock houses (6, 7) and bridges continue to be in reasonable good shape. Access to the towpath is available at Lock 5,6, and 7, and the footbridges at Cabin John and Sycamore Island. Many paw paws provided a display of yellow, while some sumacs were still red and a few red and silver maples were orange or yellow. Box elder and ironwood trees had shed their leaves but retained their seedpods. I noted red berries on the spice bushes and black ones on the honeysuckle. In an hour and 3/4 I observed 211 recreational users of the canal, including 100 bicyclists, 70 hikers and strollers, 35 joggers, 5 fishermen, and one canoeist. Plus seven dogs, and a park policeman patrolling on a motorscooter.

Green Ridge Station to Lock 61

Jeremy F. Parker
October 22, 1978

My son Chris and I approached our section from a new direction, the Paw Paw Tunnel, going by bicycle and celebrating the tunnel's reopening. The fall colors were at their height on the mountains while down on the towpath the leaves seemed mostly green. The tunnel end was alive with people, but as we went downstream the crowds thinned out. The route via the Outdoor Club is where the rubble from the tunnel repair was dumped. The pile was quite impressive. For the first time we can remember the culvert at the bottom of our section had no water running through it. Although the brickwork was generally in good shape inside, there was one spot with a brick out and a slight leak. Several bricks have fallen out of the work around each portal. We continued downstream to mile 150.1 where a dirt road crosses the canal and towpath, and we followed this down to the river. To our surprise we found a well appointed campground 'Bend's Landing' apparently put there by Green Ridge State Forest. It is accessible by car. This is zoned long term remote in the NPS Plan, with access restricted to hikers on foot.

Because of repairs upstream, water in the canal has been low for most of the summer. As of November, dredging of the canal prism was underway preparatory to moving the barge to the lock just below the Tavern. Removal of all growth on the canal walls had been started in the entire Widewater area and would continue upstream. The towpath is in good condition except for several places where heavy rains wash it badly. The wash is accentuated by the denuding of the canal banks. The washed out areas are a hazard to users under icy conditions. Routine mowing at the entrance to the park was delayed last spring until the peak of the wildflower blooming period was past. However, maintenance continues to include unjustifiable mowing on both sides of the towpath; apparently it also includes herbicides at least to some extent.

Trash left along the towpath and the trails continues to be a problem, especially after a weekend of heavy utilization. Thousands of people flock to the area on fair weekends. On weekdays, visitors are fewer but hikers, bikers, bird watchers, joggers, fishermen, dog walkers, and others number in the hundreds on nice days. A check list of plants and birds currently being observed in the area is prepared for each series of four monthly nature walks. The composite list of plants now includes over 300. A similar composite list of birds is being prepared. It is noteworthy that the Caroline wren is again heard frequently. The last two severe winters greatly decreased their numbers, as well as chipmunks, moles, turtles, snakes and other small creatures. The snows of last winter provided a perfect background for animal tracks. Deer use the trail on the berm side of the canal. Raccoons are numerous although seldom seen, and quail were observed several times.

Sights and Sounds of the Seasons walks are conducted four times each month (first and last Wednesday and Saturday) starting at the Tavern at 10:00 am. Betty Bushell is co-leader, and Betty Henson and Philip Stone have furnished back-up. The decision to move the barge to the Tavern appears to be final. It will mean further over-use of an area already stretched beyond its capacity. The immediate threat to Rockwood, the Girl Scout property adjoining the park, seems to be removed. The office building at Falls Road and MacArthur is still pending. Can the NPS obtain scenic easements or otherwise protect the immediate environment of the Park? The park as it exists with its plant and animal life is a precious resource. It could be destroyed by the wrong kind of development along its boundaries.



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Members receive a C & O Canal Association badge, copies of the newsletter ALONG THE TOWPATH, issued four times a year, notices of meetings about matters affecting the park and its environs, information about events on or near the Canal including the Association's hikes which culminate in the Annual JUSTICE DOUGLAS REUNION HIKE each April.

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