

ALONG THE TOWPATH

A quarterly publication of the
Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Association

An independent, non-profit, all-volunteer citizens association established in 1954 supporting the conservation of the natural and historical environment of the C&O Canal and the Potomac River Basin.

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2021 World Canals Conference

By Bill Holdsworth

Fans of the C&O Canal can add a dash of post-pandemic merriment to their celebration of the park's 50th anniversary. The 2021 World Canals Conference will proceed as scheduled during August 30 to September 2 at the Maryland Theatre in Hagerstown.

Association volunteers have been planning this conference for three years. In conjunction with Visit Hagerstown, we submitted our bid to Inland Waterways International in the summer of 2018. They accepted our bid at that fall's WCC in Ireland.

Last year's onset of the pandemic suddenly converted the preparations into a series of Zoom calls. Leipzig was forced to cancel the 2020 WCC. We hoped that time was on our side for 2021. The COVID-19 surge in December/January created doubts.

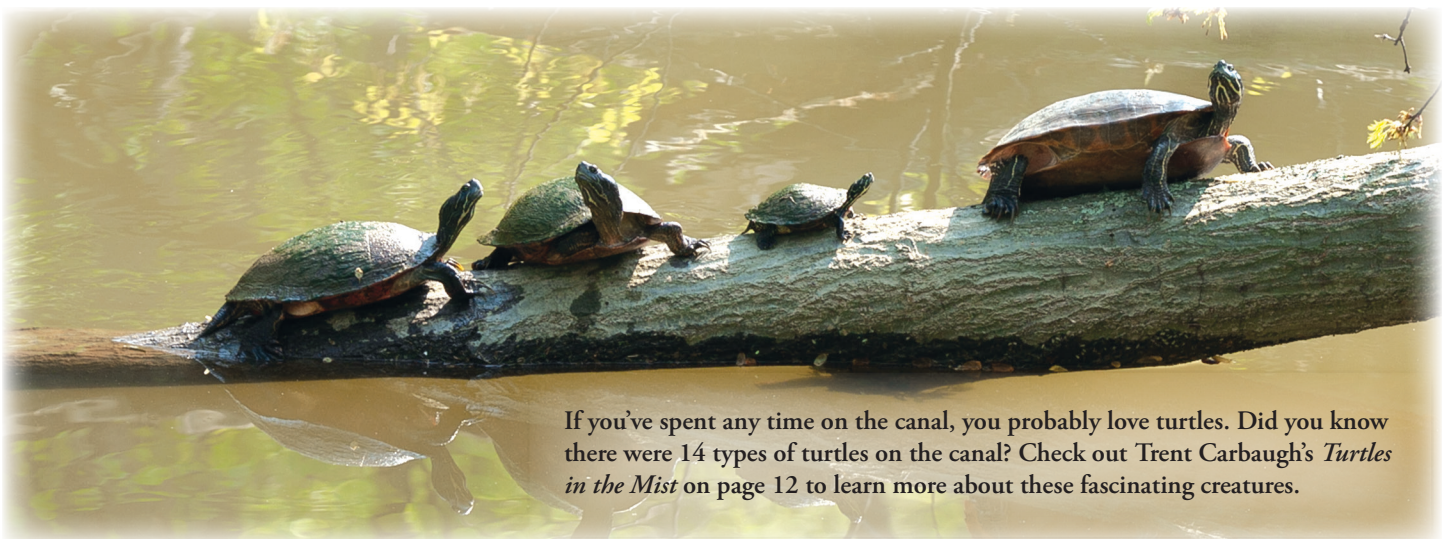
Distribution of the vaccines gave us enough hope to open registration in February. We set May as the final go/no-go decision point. Early registration was slow.

Then events seemed to turn in our favor. Cases and deaths declined. Progress caused the CDC to ease its masking requirements on May 13. By the time the early bird discount expired on May 15 some 78 people had registered for the conference. When we met with our Visit Hagerstown partners on May 20 the decision to proceed was easy.

Not everything is sunshine and roses. International travelers still face COVID-19 related restrictions. We are hopeful those will ease. We are eager for more international participation. We have extended the early bird discount for foreign registrants. We want the world to see our canal.

We have planned an enjoyable conference. Many Association members have registered. If you haven't, you should consider attending. Visit wcc2021.org for details. Prices start at \$540.

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If you've spent any time on the canal, you probably love turtles. Did you know there were 14 types of turtles on the canal? Check out Trent Carbaugh's *Turtles in the Mist* on page 12 to learn more about these fascinating creatures.

Topics of morning presentations include discussions of the canal history, modern uses of historic canal corridors, and the use of inland waterborne transport to reduce vulnerability to climate change.

Afternoon study tours will take attendees to the Paw Paw Tunnel, Fort Frederick, Great Falls, the Monocacy Aqueduct, Antietam Battlefield, and Williamsport.

from Washington, D.C. include the Catoctin Aqueduct, Harpers Ferry, South Mountain Battlefield, and Shepherdstown.

The post-conference tour starts immediately after the closing ceremony and whisks participants to the western end of the canal. They will see Hancock, Sidel-ing Hill, Cumberland, and Frostburg. The tour includes lunch aboard the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad.



The World Canals Conference is made possible by private donors and these sponsors:



*Bergmann –
Architects Engineers
Planners*



*Friends of Historic
Great Falls Tavern*



*Maryland Heritage
Areas Authority*

Evening events feature a Sunday reception at the Hagerstown Ramada Inn, a Monday cookout at the Western Maryland Sportsmen's Club, and a Wednesday banquet at the Springfield Barn in Williamsport.

For those who want to take a deeper look at the canal and the Potomac river basin we are offering both pre- and post- conference tours. These tours will be limited to a small group, one busload, and will include hotel accommodations as well as meals.

The pre-conference tour starts Thursday, August 26 and will use the North Bethesda Marriott as its base to visit highlights along the eastern end of the canal. Planned stops in the D.C. area include touring the monuments, a Canal Quarters lock house, and Georgetown with its new canal boat.

The tour will deliver participants to their Hagerstown hotels Saturday night. Planned stops upstream

The group will spend two nights at Cumberland's Fairfield Inn before returning to Hagerstown and Washington, D.C. on Saturday, September 2.

The C&O Canal community has embraced this conference. Association members have been generous, donating over \$45,000. The partnership with Visit Hagerstown has provided critical logistical support. We have received two grants from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority. The park has been cooperative in the planning study tours, bending over backwards to fit plans within the constraints of social distancing. Williamsport is allowing us to use Springfield Barn rent-free for the conference banquet. The Canal Trust and Can-

al Towns Partnership have been active participants in the planning.

We will stage a conference worthy of our canal.



WCC Committee members (l-r) – Bill Holdsworth, Barbara Sheridan, Anthony Laing and Kerry Gruber – Photo by Tiffany Abalt

President's Report

By Bill Holdsworth

While the World Canals Conference will dominate our attention for the next couple months, the Association's business goes on.

I signed the formal agreement to provide 70 percent of the funding for a full-time park employee at the Cumberland Visitor Center, as discussed in the March *Along the Towpath*. The Association feels that it is important to have a presence at the western end of the canal. The agreement calls for the employee to devote a portion of his or her time to historical research.

Jon Wolz and William Bauman continue working with the park to come up with a written agreement for some repairs to Monocacy Aqueduct. Once started the project would remove the mule kick boards and wooden mounts that have deteriorated over the years and replace them along the 516-foot aqueduct.

Volunteers Needed

Our Association depends on the efforts of its volunteers. Many people have stepped forward to help with

the World Canals Conference. We also need help with the more mundane month-to-month tasks required to keep the Association running.

We need a new chair for the Program Committee. Traditionally this person organizes our event calendar and plans the spring Douglas Hike, the autumn Heritage Hike, and the annual meeting in March. If planning social events is your forte, this may be the job for you. Even if you are willing to commit to just one of these three events, that would be helpful.

Without a Program Committee, these events will disappear from the calendar. Because of the pandemic, we just endured a year without events. Many of us are hoping that we can get back to normal.

Our Nominating Committee faces a challenging task this year, with several key positions to fill. I will step down as president next year. Richard Radhe will step down as treasurer. If the Nominating Committee approaches you, please listen.

C&OCA Welcomes New Members

Lisa Appel, Springfield, W.Va.

Josh Bowers, Chevy Chase, Md.

David Christian, Arlington, Va.

James Crutchfield, Cabin John, Md.

Tom Fisher, Roanoke, Va.

Mike Folliard, Camp Springs, Md.

Walker Freer & Liz Sullivan, Washington D.C.

Meagan Garrison, Gaithersburg, Md.

Shelby & Ron Garrison, Gaithersburg, Md.

Nola & Mel Harnish, Hagerstown, Md.

Joanne Healey, Havre de Grace, Md.

Peter Helt, Mt. Airy, Md.

Susan Jenson, Washington, D.C.

Maria Kummerfeldt, Frederick, Md.

Gerald Laporte, Arlington, Va.

Alice Mayio, Bethesda, Md.

Maribeth Oakes & Robert Bingaman, Takoma Park, Md.

Margaret & Jamie Oberman, Poolesville, Md.

Deb Poole, Big Spring, Md.

Sierra Reckley, Oldtown, Md.

Joseph Regalbuto, Burke, Va.

Barbara Rice, Hagerstown, Md.

Jill Seyfarth & Gregory van der Vink, Bethesda, Md.

Pamela Sislen, Washington, D.C.

Timothy & Kathleen Spillane, Mohegan Lake, N.Y.

Richard Webber, Stephens City, Va.

Kelly Whelan, Ashburn, Va.

Christine Wisniewski, Sharpsburg, Md.

If you ever have any membership questions, please contact Will Stewart, Membership Chair, at membership@candocanal.org.

Recurring C&O Canal Association Funds

By Jon Wolz

The table below is summary of the C&O Canal Association's recurring funds balances. Projects the Association committed to for 2021 include the Cumberland ranger position, replacement of the Monocacy Aqueduct mule kick boards, repair of picnic tables throughout the park and maintenance of *The Cumberland* boat. In 2021, additional donations have been received for *The Cumberland* boat fund, and a prospective

project for 2021 is to add ground-level lights on a timer so the boat is illuminated in the evenings. A decision on having it open for visitors on weekends has not been made.

Projects the Association supported in 2020 included *The Cumberland* canal boat brochures, the Hilda Carpenter memorial bench and the Civilian Conservation Corps way-side exhibits at Carderock.

Recurring C&O Canal Association Funds as of December 31, 2020

	Cumulative Balance	Future Commitments	Uncommitted Balances
Restricted Funds			
Bill Davies Legal	\$46,042.55	\$0.00	\$46,042.55
Publications	\$2,238.93	\$0.00	\$2,238.93
<i>The Cumberland</i> Boat	\$23.03	\$0.00	\$23.03
Nancy Long Aqueduct	\$17,910.00	\$10,000.00	\$7,910.00
Rachael Stewart	\$28,340.42	\$2,000.00	\$26,340.42
Total Restricted Funds	\$94,554.93	\$12,000.00	\$82,554.93
Unrestricted Funds			
Kenneth Rollins C&O Canal	\$111,746.26	\$100,284.89	\$11,461.37
General	\$67,359.85	\$8,000.00	\$59,359.85
Total Unrestricted Funds	\$179,106.11	\$108,284.89	\$70,821.22

C&O Canal Association Board Opportunities

The C&O Canal Association membership will elect new officers and directors in March 2022, and several positions will be vacated by the incumbents. This is an opportunity for Association members to provide more support for the Association's efforts to support the C&O Canal National Historical Park. Officers serve one-year terms in specific offices and directors are elected for three-year terms. Service on a committee is optional. The board meets six times per year.

The efforts of the board are essential to the operation of the Association and support of its mission. Please consider serving. Interested members should contact the nominating committee chair, Steve Dean, at editor@candocanal.org for further information about available offices, specific duties and qualifications.

Donors to Association Funds

February 1 to April 30, 2021

Nancy C. Long Aqueduct Fund – A

– Supports restoration and preservation of the 11 aqueducts on the C&O Canal. The fund was established with a generous donation made by C&O Canal advocate Nancy Long.

Davies Legal Fund – D

– Supports the Association's involvement in activities such as opposition to the transfer of public land to any individual or enterprise for private use.

Ken Rollins C&O Canal Fund – R

– Supports current projects and programs in and for the C&O Canal National Historical Park.

Rachel Stewart Swains Lock Area Fund – S

– Funds improvements to the area around Swains Lock as they are identified in conjunction with the National Park Service.

2021 World Canals Conference Fund – W

– Supports the 2021 World Canals Conference at the C&O Canal. Includes donations from private individuals as well as sponsorship by corporations and organizations.

General Donations

American Painting Fine Art

– A, D, R, S, W

Nicholas J. Barnard – A, D, R, S, W

John Barr – A, D, R, S, W

Franklin Bell – A

Dorothy Boerner – R

John Bowman – A

Rachel Burchard – A, D, R, W

Kathleen Carroll – D, R

Jo Ann Condry – A, D, R, S, W

Norman J. Cook – D

Jay Creswell – W

Lynn DeForge – R, W

Louise F. Delavergne – W

Sharrill Dittmann – A, R

Christina Doucette – R

Bruce & Linda Dwyer – R

Sharon G. Elliott – D, R

William E. Gerber – D, W

Megan Goener – A, D, R, S, W

John C. Harden – A, D, R, S, W

Don & Liz Harrison – R

Anne Hawthorn – S

Billy & Peggy Hendrick

– A, D, R, S, W

Bob & Stephanie Hibbert

– A, D, R, S, W

James Hutzler – R

Michael Johns – A

John & Carol Kimbrough Jr. – R

Frederick Kreiger Jr. – A, S

Ronald W. Lewis – R

Thomas & Linda Lightfoot – W

Laila Linden – R

Marc Lipnick – A

Karen Lubieniecki – W

Linda & Michael Marmer – A

Paul & Rita Marth Jr. – A

Edward Terhune Miller – D, R, W

Kirk & Karen Moberley – D

Mary Ann D. Moen – A, R, W

Ronald & Cappie Morgan – R, S

Emil Moskovich – W

William Nestor – D

Louis & Janice Odom – A, D, R, S, W

Barbara Peterman – S

Dr. John Pierce – A, W

Ed & Linda Rhodes – S

Edward & Patricia Rogers – D

Nasra Sakran – W

Catherine H. Savel – R

David L. Scally – A

Kathryn J. Schmidt – W

Patricia Ann Scully – S

Raphael & Katherine Semmes

– D, R, S, W

Robert & Karen Shoemaker – S

Margaret Skinner – R

Carol C. Smith – R

Richard O. Stoner – W

Russell & Alice Strasser – R

Anne Sumner – A, R, S, W

Cynthia Sumner – R

Authur Tsien – R

Sandra Vanfossen – S

Washington County – R

Glenn E. Watkins – W

Tom & Marie Wetzel – A

George & Julie Wyeth – R

The following donation was incorrectly listed in the March issue:

In Memory of Marion Robertson

Don Robertson – R

Accompanied by the Past

By Karen Gray

History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illumines reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life, and brings us tidings of antiquity. **Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BCE), *Pro Publio Sestio***

1890 Part A: The Court Battles Begin:¹

During the six months after the June 1, 1889 flood, the C&O Canal Company found neither cash nor credit to repair the heavily damaged canal. The lower five miles from Inlet #1 were restored in an arrangement with the millers who relied on the canal's water to power their mills, and Frederick Merton had made the 23 miles from Okonoko to Cumberland navigable for his lumber products. 1889 reports varied from referring to the canal as a total wreck to insisting major sections had not suffered major damage. But as the end of the year approached, little was heard from C&O Canal Company president Stephen Gambrill or the directors and they had not filed for bankruptcy protection with any court.

The Primary Combatants Enter the Fields of Battle

On December 31, 1889, the first legal volley was fired when the trustees for the 1844 bondholders filed a bill of complaint against the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company in the circuit court of Washington County, Maryland, sitting as a court of equity, Judge Richard H. Alvey (1826–1906), presiding. That case is No. 4191. Those 1844 bonds (commonly known as “construction bonds”) had been issued to raise money to complete the canal between Dam 6 and Cumberland. They mortgaged the future tolls and income of the canal.²

The foremost concern of the 1844 bondholders was to see the canal repaired and operated, as there was no chance of their recovering any of their investment if the canal was not earning income. The trustees therefore asked the court

to “appoint receivers to take possession of the said property, its franchises, works, records, books, accounts, papers, and everything belonging or pertaining to the said Company, with authority to manage and operate the said Canal.”

On the same date they filed a duplicate complaint in the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia (also sitting as an equity court), Judge Walter S. Cox (1826–1902), presiding. That case is No. 12,240.

On January 14, the 1878 bondholders' trustees³ filed a bill of complaint in Judge Alvey's Washington County court against the 1844 bondholders and the C&O Canal Company. That case is No. 4198. The 1878 bonds (commonly known as “repair bonds”) had been issued to repair

the canal after the flood at the end of the boating season in 1877. Those bondholders' primary interest was in being allowed to activate the mortgage that is “a lien upon the canal, works, land, water, rights, tolls, revenues, franchises and other property, real, personal and mixed” and thus to have the court recognize them as the primary lien holders of all canal properties and assets which would allow them to sell it to recoup at least some of their investment.

Thus, to summarize: By the middle of January the canal company was a defendant or complainant in three cases. Two, brought by the 1844 bondholders (No. 12,240, District of Columbia,

and No. 4191, Washington Co., Md.) asked for receivers to repair and operate the canal. The third, (No. 4198, Washington Co.), asked for receivers to be given ownership of canal assets.

Ultimately there would be others admitted as parties to the Maryland case, most notably the state of Maryland, which requested admittance as a defendant alongside the canal company on the ground of being the major holder of C&O Canal Company stock. The legislature directed the state Attorney General William Pinkney Whyte to represent the state in the proceedings.



Judge Walter S. Cox – public domain

The state and the canal company denied that the 1844 bondholders had any claim on the canal, admitting that while those bondholders could never recover any of their investment from the inoperable canal, they held no lien on its property. Further, their unfortunate situation was simply the result of “a succession of disasters” that prevented them from receiving any earnings and was not a failure of the canal company to otherwise meet the terms of the mortgage.

On January 28, 1890, Judge Cox issued the first decree in the canal cases appointing as receivers Henry C. Winship, of the District of Columbia, and Victor Cushwa, of Washington County (boat owners and businessmen well familiar with the canal and its operation). In the decree he ordered that all the books, maps and other records and documents of the canal company be turned over to these receivers who were directed to hold and manage the canal property “*subject to the future orders of this Court.*”

This District court case was primarily concerned with the nearly-five-miles of canal within the District boundary, but Judge Cox’s order that his receivers take control of all the canal company records became a complication in the Maryland court proceedings. The records, of course, were essential to determine the extent of the canal property and its financial situation—the initial task Judge Cox assigned to the two receivers.

On January 30, 1890, the C&O Canal Company filed an extensive response to an Alvey court order to give reason why receivers should not be appointed to take control of the canal. In the response it acknowledged fully the canal’s destitute condition and asserted its failure to make the canal profitable was evidence that doing so was impossible, stating: “*No receiver can offer any security other or different, greater or better, than this respondent has repeatedly offered in every shape and form in vain...[and] it is clear that the revenues of the canal even when restored and repaired cannot under the most favorable circumstances be sufficient to meet the current expenses.*”

The canal company and the state of Maryland found themselves in a common bond in these cases. Most importantly there were Maryland constitutional issues around the canal as it was a work that Maryland controlled under

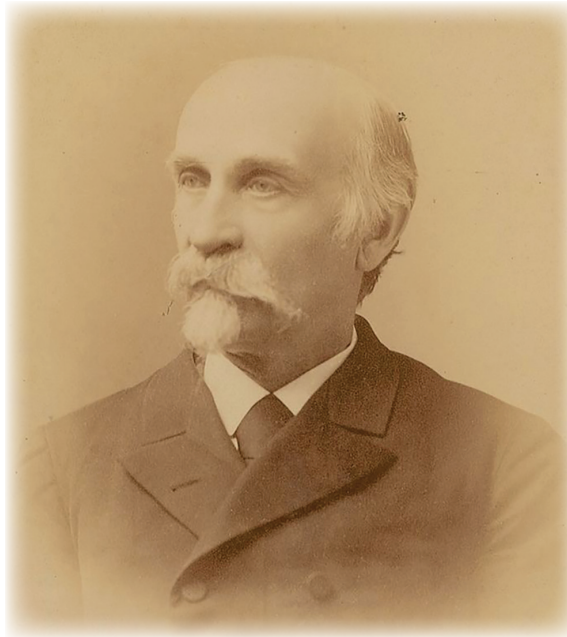
its Board of Public Works as the majority stockholder. Additionally, the state had invested huge sums in it through multiple legislative acts and some of the acts specified state actions should the canal be sold. Thus, Maryland declared that it: “*holding these liens, aggregating, with principle and interest, about twenty millions of dollars so far as it is advised, denies the right of this Court in this proceeding, to take possession of what is left of the corpus of the canal, and rehabilitate it at an enormous expense and then permit its use, to the injury of the State, for the benefit of [the 1844] bondholders, having no lien upon the real property of the Canal Company,*”

The canal company in its answer, stated that “*the canal and its works in their present condition are an ample security for the payment of the bonds and coupons thereon, issued under said Act of 1878, Chapter 58, that the said property if exposed to sale, will undoubtedly bring a price sufficient to extinguish and satisfy the principal and interest of said bonds*” and that “*that there is no danger of any diminution in value of said canal and its works until such time as a sale under decree of this Court can be had.*”

For the State of Maryland and the C&O Canal Company, the argument was simply that the court should order the sale of the canal without the intervention of receivers. Of course, this left hanging multiple legal issues such as the priority and rights of those with liens on the canal and the inevitability of legal challenges to whatever decisions were made concerning the distribution of the income from the sale.

In a lengthy opinion and decree of February 21, 1890, Judge Alvey combined cases No. 4191 and 4198. This was an important legal action, as it signaled that, before the law, the complaints and concerns of the 1844 and 1878 trustees were essentially the same. Basically, it had been established that the canal was defunct and the bondholders needed court intervention to recover any of their investment. That the 1844 bondholders would try to do that by repairing and operating the canal and the 1878 bondholders by selling its real property and assets, were simply matters that would be adjudicated by the court.

In the same decree Judge Alvey appointed receivers, specifying that they did not have the power to create more “liens or charges on the property” as “the rights of the



Judge Richard H. Alvey – public domain

deferred lien holders must not be sacrificed or impaired by experiments of doubtful propriety.” He therefore set aside for the moment the claims and desires of all the parties, but it is hard not to see in the reference to “experiments of doubtful propriety” an initial perspective against the request to be allowed to repair and operate the canal by the 1844 trustees.

However, in the February 21 opinion and decree, Judge Alvey also addressed the position of the 1878 bondholders, Maryland, and the canal company that the 1844 mortgagees had no claim on the canal as the failure to produce the mortgaged revenues was not “*due to default or breach of the condition in the mortgage by the company.*” Importantly Alvey ruled that the 1844 bond issue did not imagine and therefore did not provide for the current situation when, through no fault of the company, the canal was inoperable and beyond the company’s means to repair it. He stated: “*I cannot, therefore, accede to the proposition, urged by both the Canal Company and the State, that the [1844 bond] trustees would have no right to take possession under the mortgage.*”

Nevertheless, by the end of February, it was clear that the 1844 bondholders’ early effort to quickly gain the right to repair and operate the canal had failed and they were caught in both courts in the competing claims on the canal involving the 1878 bondholders, the State of Maryland, and even the C&O Canal Company. Indeed, Maryland’s interests and the mortgage of 1878 did appear to limit any strong legal claim by the holders of the 1844 construction bonds, especially with the canal company’s sworn statements that it was impossible to make the canal profitable.

The Receivers’ Search for Information

At this point in the proceedings, action in both courts slowed as both sets of receivers went about their business of

providing their courts with the details on the canal’s condition, value, and prospective use if repaired. Such information was necessary, of course, for the judges to make their decisions. One of the issues settled during this time was the legal priority of the combined 4191 and 4198 cases in the Washington County Court. That priority did not alter the validity of the District court’s actions and throughout the remaining history of the canal, both jurisdictions would from time to time require the concurrence of the other in an action, and respond to the other’s decrees and opinions when it was appropriate to do so.

I will not deal with the detailed reports of the receivers in this article with one exception to be discussed in Part B. I would note, however, that while some of the findings concerning the canal are parallel or overlap, the information in the District court’s five miles of primary concern and the nearly-180 miles of the Maryland court’s primary concern shed considerable light on the canal, its property, and those sections and structures most—and least—vulnerable to flood damage.

On August 12, 1890, the District court’s receivers, Henry Winship and Victor Cushwa, submitted a fourth report. Acting in response to July 8th instructions from Judge Cox to estimate “*the feasibility of the operation of the canal after the same has been repaired for the business of transportation.*” It was an astonishing report, and it would change everything from what the ordinary observer would most likely have expected—namely the sale of the canal properties and assets due to the nature of the 1878 mortgage, the previous evidence against the canal ever paying on the 1844 mortgage, and Maryland’s enormous claims and legal complexities. I will examine this report in a future column.

Notes

1. This column draws heavily from the court documents for the three cases (DC 12,240; MD 4191 and 4198 consolidated), official government documents, and newspaper reports.
2. This column greatly simplifies the legal proceedings and will mention only the most important actions and will not be concerned with such details as the fact that the mortgage for the bonds authorized by the Maryland act of 1844 was not legally finalized by the Maryland and Virginia legislatures until 1848.
3. Note that George S. Brown was a Baltimore investor with a large holding of both 1844 and 1878 bonds and, as it happens, was one of the trustees for both groups of bondholders. His name appears first in both lists of trustees.

Charles Fenton Mercer

By Rod Mackler

We are familiar with Charles F. Mercer from the name stenciled on the stern of the canal packet at Great Falls Tavern. Most of us know him as the first president of the C&O Canal Company. His name is also engraved in stone on the plaque at the center of the Monocacy Aqueduct and on the spandrel of the bridge over the canal on Wisconsin Avenue in Georgetown.

Let's take a look at some of Mercer's other roles: entrepreneur, promoter, politician, and soldier.

Charles Fenton Mercer was born in Fredericksburg, Virginia, in 1778, during the American Revolution. He graduated Princeton and became a lawyer in Loudoun County, Virginia. In 1810, Mercer established the village of Aldie, Virginia, on the banks of the Little River, and harnessed the stream's power with a grist mill, the basis of his later fortunes. Both the mill and Mercer's home in Aldie are still standing, over 200 years later.

Mercer served in the Virginia House of Delegates from 1810 to 1817. He rose to the rank of brigadier general of the 2nd Virginia Brigade during the War of 1812. He was elected as a Federalist, and later, as a Whig to the United States House of Representatives, where he served from 1817 to 1839. He was the chairman of the Committee on Roads and Canals from 1831 to 1839, that is, concurrently with his presidency of the C&O Canal Company (1828-1833). ("Conflict of interest" was not a term in the political vocabulary as it is today.)

We generally think of a river as larger than a creek, but these terms have no precise definitions and in this case the Little River is a tributary of Goose Creek. (Goose Creek was designated a Virginia State Scenic River in 1976.) Both of these streams were to some extent navigable. Improvements were made by the Goose Creek and Little River Navigation Company, using short canals and stone locks around the largest obstructions in the streams, and removing boulders from the main channel. Canal boats, half the length of those on the C&O, were poled, rather than pulled by mules or horses. Their principle cargo was milled grain, though the navigation never reached Mercer's mill at Aldie. One can still see the ruins of locks and one of the mills on Goose Creek between State Route 7 and the Potomac River.



Mercer's Mill – photo by Rod Mackler



Charles Fenton Mercer home, Aldie, Va., built circa 1810 – photo by Rod Mackler

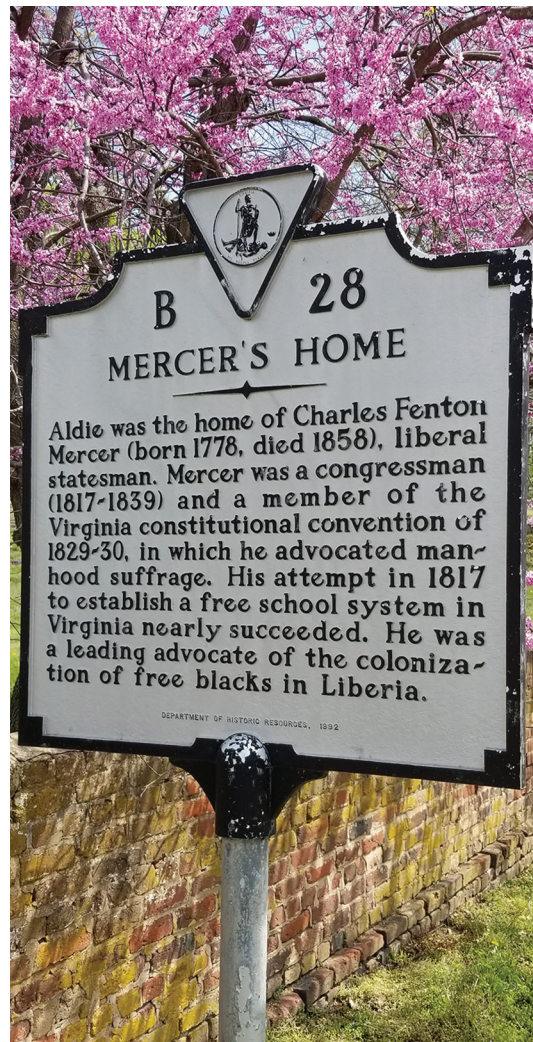
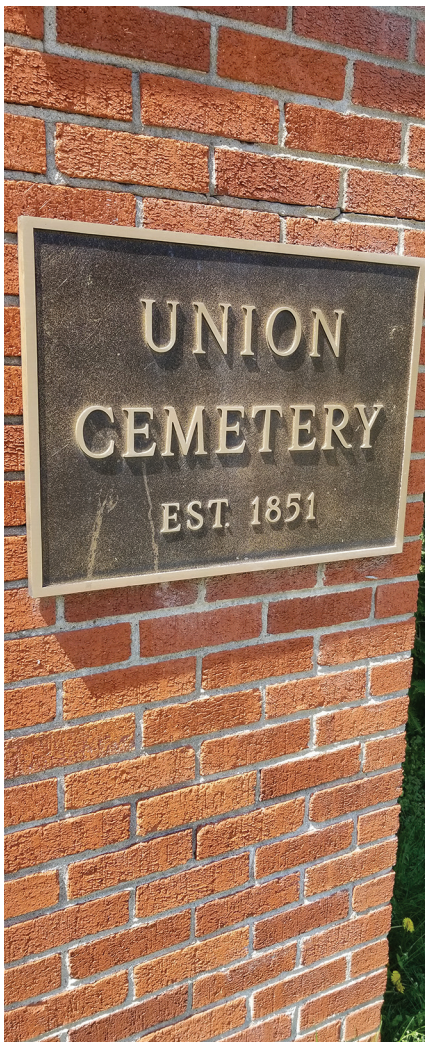
The C&O Canal built a river lock in 1837-38 near Edwards Ferry, at mile 30.64, opposite the mouth of Goose Creek. This was intended to permit cargo from Goose Creek and Little River to enter the canal. The Goose Creek River Lock is a two-lift lock combine with a total lift of about 15 1/2 feet. The upper lock has a lift of eight feet; its lower gate is also the upper gate for the lower lock, which has a lift of about 7 1/2 feet, depending upon the water level in the river. Although common on other canals, this is the only case on the C&O where two locks share a gate. This is one of three river locks that the Virginia Legislature required in 1833 as a condition of its financial support for the canal. The other two are at Shepherdstown and at Harpers Ferry, across from the mouth of the Shenandoah River.

Mercer was, not surprisingly, a strong supporter of “internal improvements,” the term in his day for infrastructure, especially roads and canals.

The marker in front of his Aldie home calls Charles F. Mercer a “liberal statesman.” One must be careful using today’s buzz-words to describe politicians two hundred years

ago. He did advocate expanded suffrage in the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829-30 and he supported state funding for public education, including Jefferson’s University of Virginia.

Mercer was a founding member of the American Colonization Society, which promoted the “return” of free Blacks to Africa. This has been cited as a progressive concept, often referencing Abraham Lincoln’s support for the idea. But Lincoln’s views evolved from there. Take a look at the supporters and opponents of colonization. Most abolitionists and freedmen opposed the movement. Frederick Douglass gave Lincoln a talking-to on this subject in the White House. The strongest support for colonization came from slave states. Mississippi even established its own colony in Liberia. In short, free Blacks were seen as a threat to slavery, as an enticement to uprisings and as supporters of the Underground Railroad. In any case, the colonization movement collapsed because of the reluctance of free Blacks to sign on and because of the cost of shipping people across the sea. Incidentally, the colonization movement, which sent about 15,000 Blacks to Liberia, had a



Mercer is buried at Union Cemetery; Sign at Mercer’s home; despite the naming as a creek, Goose Creek is a river — photos by Rod Mackler

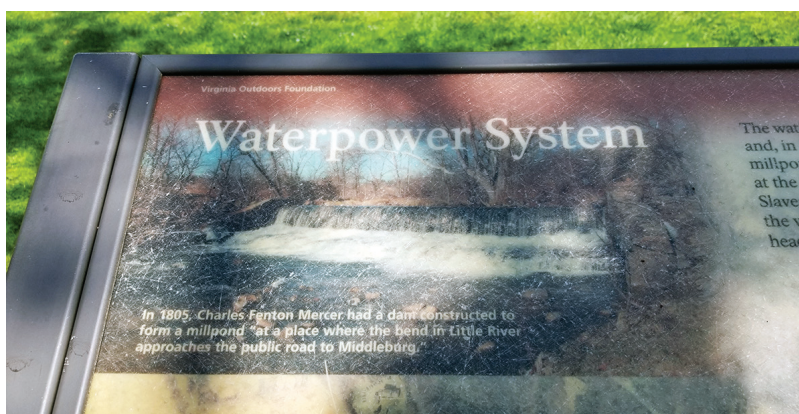
negligible impact on the free Black population in the U.S., but an enduring one in West Africa. The descendants of English-speaking “returnees” from North America dominated Liberian politics, at the expense of the indigenous majority, until 1980.

Charles F. Mercer died near Alexandria and is buried in Leesburg’s Union Cemetery. The marble ledger stone disintegrated over time and had been overlaid with a granite marker installed in 2005 by “the Society of the War of 1812 in Virginia.” The epitaph reads:

SACRED
to the memory of
GEN. CHARLES FENTON MERCER
Born June 16th, 1778
Died May 4th, 1858
Aged 79 years 10 months & 18 days
A Patriot, Statesman, Philanthropist
and Christian
After spending his life in the service of
Mankind, he died at peace with the
world and in the favour of God.



C&O Canal Goose Creek river lock – photo by Steve Dean



Pedal, Paddle and Hike

By Trent Carbaugh

Not all who wander are lost – J.R.R. Tolkien



Turtles in the Mist

Turtle, (order Testudines), any reptile with a body encased in a bony shell, including tortoises. Although numerous animals, from invertebrates to mammals, have evolved shells, none has an architecture like that of turtles. The turtle shell has a top (carapace) and a bottom (plastron). The carapace and plastron are bony structures that usually join one another along each side of the body, creating a rigid skeletal box. This box, composed of bone and cartilage, is retained throughout the turtle's life. Because the shell is an integral part of the body, the turtle cannot exit it, nor is the shell shed like the skin of some other reptiles.

– From Encyclopedia Britannica

Although I enjoy being on the towpath or paddling on the Potomac at any time of the year I particularly enjoy the spring. In cold weather many of the creatures that share the park with us humans are hibernating, tucked away in the mud or in a nice warm hole in the ground. One of the things that I miss during winter trips on the canal is seeing all my reptile and amphibian pals out and about. I get delighted when the calls of frogs wake me up in the night, or I see a salamander crawling along and feel the need to roll around on the wet ground

with it to get the right angle for a photograph. Snakes are great to see and those goofy little rock lizards running around on some locks make me laugh. Toads have a special place in my world view, but that's a story for another time.

I recall a few years ago whilst camping somewhere on the western end of the canal I awoke to a foggy warm spring morning. I walked up to the towpath from the hiker/biker and saw through the mist off the water in the canal prism turtles lined up on a log. I immediately thought of Dian Fossey's book *Gorillas in the Mist* but with a C&O Canal kind of twist. I always think of this memory when there is fog on the canal or on the Potomac; my mind does sometimes work in strange ways. When I start seeing turtles, though, I know that spring has sprung. The blossoms will sprout, soon the trees will be green, and I'll need to invest in some mosquito repellent. So here's a little about these unique armored creatures that grace our local waterways and forests.



A red bellied turtle (*Chrysemys rubriventris*), painted turtle (*Chrysemys picta*) and a couple of cooters (*Chrysemys floridana*) on a log. All photos by Trent Carbaugh

Turtle Species Seen Along the C&O Canal

Terrestrial turtles:

Box turtle – common

Wood turtle – common

Mostly aquatic turtles:

Bog turtles – threatened species

Eastern mud turtle – common

Eastern musk turtle – also known also as a stinkpot turtle – uncommon

Eastern painted turtle – common

Midland painted turtle – common

Red bellied cooter – common

Red eared slider – common

River cooter – introduced, mostly seen in the Potomac River – uncommon

Snapping turtle – common

Spotted turtle – uncommon

Striped mud turtle – only in Frederick County

Yellow bellied slider – common

260 million years ago the first proto-turtle appears in the fossil record. *Eunotosaurus*, the name of this first known turtle, looked like a flat sprawling lizard and had very wide ribs. This fellow was a streamlined burrower and digger with powerful front legs and long claws.

Over time *eunotosaurus*'s descendant's ribs and sternum fused into a carapace (upper shell) and a plastron (lower shell). Unlike all other vertebrates a turtles shoulder blades are under the ribs that have fused to produce the carapace. This is an evolutionary trade-off; a turtles breathing ability (as is overall speed) is compromised by not having flexible ribs to assist in breathing but it allows for extra strong muscle connections to develop in the forelegs. This allows our turtle friends to dig very well, be powerful swimmers, and has the added benefit of protection from predators. Turtles and tortoises have adapted to every environment in which cold blooded reptiles can live.

Just as a point of reference for those that might not know: turtles live in the water primarily and tortoises live on land. Tortoises often have a rougher shell with pyramidal or square-ish protrusions that add to the strength of the carapace. They can also thrive in arid environments. Turtles usually have smooth shells for more streamlined swimming. True tortoises are not naturally native to the C&O Canal and Potomac River watershed. Although, to blur the line a little, terrestrial turtles, notably the box turtle and wood turtle, both spend most of their lives on land.

According to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources there are nineteen native species of turtles in the state, with three other species that have been introduced. This includes everything from box turtles to five varieties of sea turtles. Fourteen of these live along the C&O Canal and Potomac River watershed.



*A red eared pond slider (*Chrysemys scripta*) posing majestically on a log.*



*Eastern box turtle (*Terrapene carolina*) traveling overland. Male box turtles usually have red eyes, females usually yellow/brown eyes.*



*The smartest and most adventurous of the local turtles, the wood turtle (*Clemmys insculpta*) is prone to wandering widely in search of gourmet invertebrates. Wood turtles are also some of the most friendly of turtles and often when I am in out of the way places they wander up to see what I am doing.*



This snapper, about a thirty pounder, posed for a portrait on the edge of the towpath at Big Pool.



*The spotted turtle (*Clemmys guttata*) a relatively rare turtle with a black carapace with bright yellow spots. This specimen has some damage to the front of its shell.*



A fast moving snapper races along.

Any place where the canal prism has water in it on warm days you can see turtles basking in the sun on logs, fallen trees, and sometimes rocks. Often quite wary, they will notice your presence and with a loud plop enter the water to avoid your gaze. But if you approach cautiously it is possible to observe them closely. Some of these fellows are quite large which is a sign of a good healthy population; turtles and tortoises, like most reptiles continue to grow throughout their entire lives. Big turtles are old turtles and this means the environment is being good to them.

Usually the most common aquatic turtles you will see in the waters of the canal will be the eastern painted turtle and the northern red-bellied cooter; red eared sliders, a non-native species, are also extremely common. The handsome spotted turtle, though rare, can be seen at times along the towpath.

Snapping turtles, a predatory critter that looks like a prehistoric creature that should be eating small dinosaurs, can often be seen swimming under the water (under the ice sometimes as well). In the spring snapping turtles sometimes move around on land looking for new hunting grounds and mating opportunities, or possibly just to cause trouble. Weighing up to 45 lbs. they can be quite startling to encounter on land. They will bite with their bolt cutter jaws if they feel threatened, so use caution should you have the good fortune to encounter one of these mighty beasts on land.

Terrestrial turtles are less common on the canal but it is not unusual to see an eastern box turtle or wood turtle on the

towpath at times. The eastern box turtle, and all of the local varieties around the country as well, is somewhat unique in the land of turtledom; their shells have a hinged plastron, the under part of the shell, that allows them to close up tightly into a “box” for protection from predators. Box turtles can live very long lives; known specimens have lived at least 100 years. Wood turtles prefer slightly wet areas and the margins of farmland. These fellows are excellent climbers as well and can get over 6-foot high chain link fences. Once hunted for food, wood turtle numbers declined but are happily on the rise now.



The mighty snapping turtle (Chelydra serpentina) basking on a log. This shows how long the neck of these critters are, useful for snatching prey at high speed or biting unwary herpetologists.

Turtles usually have very small ranges, mostly dependent on food sources. Watered areas of the canal prism are rich breeding areas for invertebrates, insects, crustaceans, and bait fish which are food sources for most turtles. Turtles are opportunistic feeders and most have an omnivorous diet, this is part of the reason they are such a successful species.

All turtles are egg layers and will dig a nest in mud, dirt, or sand. The eggs are typically rounder than bird eggs and have a soft shell. When they hatch a smaller

version of the full size animal digs its way out and heads to its preferred habitat. Attrition is high among young turtles as they are very vulnerable to predators when young and inexperienced.

So when you're out and about on the towpath this spring and summer keep an eye open for turtles and enjoy all of the wildlife around you (except maybe the mosquitoes).



A hatchling snapper that unfortunately got trapped in a low spot on the towpath. He was successfully moved to the canal prism.



Large snappers often attempt to hitchhike along country roads. Don't be tempted to pick them up – it won't go well.



A stinkpot turtle or eastern musk turtle (Sternotherus odoratus). An aggressive turtle, prone to biting, with the ability to secrete a foul smelling yellowish fluid from glands along bottom of its carapace.

C&O Canal Supporter Joan Paull

As we were preparing this issue we learned that long-time C&O Canal supporter Joan Paull died on May 23rd. Joan was a tireless advocate of preservation of the C&O Canal, provided volunteer service through many programs and often shared its unique story with the park's visitors.

Joan started as a C&O Canal Association Level Walker in 1975 on Level 8, Swains Lock to Pennyfield. She served as the Association's Volunteers in Parks (VIP) coordinator for many years. Joan assisted in interpretative operations at visitor centers and on canal boats, and participated in many other projects. Joan is especially well known for creating and managing the Rileys Lockhouse Girl Scout docent program.

The National Park Service honored Joan Paull's 40 years of volunteer service to the C&O Canal in 2015 with an outdoor celebration at the Pennyfield Lockhouse.

The September *Along the Towpath* will feature a full appreciation of Joan and her numerous contributions.



Joan Paull at Pennyfield for the celebration of her 40 years of service to the C&O Canal – Photo by Chad Crumrine

Turtles in the Mist (Continued from previous page)

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The Audubon Society Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians – John L. Behler and F. Wayne King, 1989

Maryland's Turtles & Tortoises (Order Testudines) – Maryland Department of Natural Resources This web publication is an excellent resource to begin studying local turtles. Visit dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/plants_wildlife/herps/Testudines.aspx



A young cooter found in a mud puddle on the towpath. He was successfully relocated to the canal prism.



A lady eastern box turtle out for a water adventure.



There are those who say reptiles have no personality. I think that this young lady shows otherwise.

Nature Notes

By Marjorie Richman

Brood Parasites

A bird's life is not easy. Besides predation they have to worry about injustice. Birds? Injustice? Of course, there are no law courts in the bird world, but there are outlaws. The story of how these criminals operate could be the subject of any TV true crime series. There are tales of outrageous acts and innocent victims.

The birds I'm referring to don't raise their own chicks. It is not exactly known why certain species have adopted this survival practice, but it does give them more time for foraging and, of course, for producing eggs. Instead of wasting energy building nests and feeding their own hungry chicks, they put their eggs in the nests of other birds and let the involuntary hosts raise the chicks.

Such nefarious birds are called "brood parasites." They are everywhere: North and South America, Europe and Asia. Rather isolated Australia seems to lead the world in the number of brood parasite species. We have our own local brood parasite here in the Mid-Atlantic, the brown-headed cowbird. The cowbird's behavior is a good example of how brood parasites infiltrate a nest and ensure the success of their own species.

A female cowbird will target the nests of many of our favorite songbirds. Some cowbirds are picky; they will spend hours sizing up the health and energy of prospective foster parents. Timing is important. She must observe when a potential victim lays her eggs and determine when they will hatch. Cowbird eggs have a shorter incubation period than those of most species and their chicks develop faster. If her chicks hatch a few days earlier than those of the host, the cowbird chicks will be bigger, hungrier and more aggressively demanding when food is being distributed, giving the cowbird's chicks an obvious advantage in the race for survival. If the timing is not quite right and she really wants to use the nest, she has another option: she can

simply destroy the host's eggs so that the birds will have to start over and she can try again.

Once she selects a victim, the cowbird will wait for the host birds to leave the nest. If she gets impatient, she might encourage them to leave by mimicking the sound of a predator, such as a hawk. She has to work fast during the breeding season. A cowbird lays about 40 eggs, far more than her victims. In a single year she must parasitize several nests to accommodate all of them.

Why don't the birds destroy foreign eggs before they hatch? Researchers wondered about this. Many birds, it was found, lack the ability to recognize foreign eggs. Those who do see the difference may take action either by puncturing the eggs or throwing them out of the nest. This strategy may not work out well for the host birds. It seems the female cowbird

does not abandon her eggs, she is watching. If her eggs are purposely destroyed, she has been known to take vengeance either by puncturing the hosts' eggs or destroying their nest entirely. Birds who have suffered cowbird retaliation often choose to raise the foreign chicks and hope for the best.

Miraculously, cowbird chicks become mature cowbirds, not members of the species that raised them. They learn cowbird calls, mate with other cowbirds, and become good brood parasites. One might think they would imprint on their foster parents and learn the behaviors and songs of the host species. They do not because the female cowbird visits all her parasitized nests and contacts her offspring via special calls while they are still in the host nest. Researchers call these calls, "passwords". Somehow the chicks relate to her calls rather than to those of

their foster parents, an amazing adaptation in the auditory regions of their brains. Otherwise, there would be few brood parasites alive today, and that's not the case.

I've painted a pretty bleak picture of the female cowbird. I have characterized her as lazy, sneaky and cruel. While her victims work hard to feed her voracious chicks, she sits in



Cowbird (f) – photo by Kurt Schwarz

a tree nearby calling to them. If her intentions are thwarted, she is vengeful. All true, but there is another view.

As we know, life in nature is an evolutionary arms race. Let's give the female cowbird a bit of credit for her intelligence and her ability to deal with the difficulties she faces. She is not a welcome guest in any neighborhood. If spotted, an alert is sounded and she will be mobbed. If caught, she will not survive. If a nest is parasitized, the host birds may build a new nest with narrow openings that she can't enter or, if she enters, she is trapped. A helpless brood parasite is not treated gently.

The female cowbird must be a skillful cheat and a patient watcher. She has to spend hours observing promising nests while keeping out of sight. If she mistakes the timing, her eggs may hatch too late and the chicks will



Cowbirds (m) at feeder – photo by Kurt Schwarz

not be able to compete with the host's chicks for food. Placing eggs in a nest exposes her to predation and she must visit many nests during the breeding season. She has to remember the location of all the nests that contain her eggs and make sure she is not putting eggs in a previously parasitized nest. Otherwise her earlier eggs will hatch before eggs deposited later, and her offspring will be competing with each other for food. Once the chicks hatch, she has to monitor the all her nests to ensure that her chicks know they are cowbirds.

In short, the female cowbird has to have a great deal of intelligence, a good memory, and stealth. Parasitism requires an exotic set of skills, although perhaps the kind one associates with the mafia rather than birds. Perhaps we shouldn't judge raw nature, but it is tempting.

Nature Walks Will Return Soon

By Paul Petkus



The pandemic disrupted many aspects of life over the past year. Organized activities like the nature walks were put on hold. Even though the organized walks were suspended, the park was open. One could continue to view nature, but not as a group activity. It was a rewarding endeavor since nature continued to put on a show as it always has.

Last year, butterfly activity was lower in the early summer, but picked up by late July. Their activity this spring has been increasing as the weather warms. A section upstream of the Devil's Alley campground was an excellent area to view their activity this May. The juniper hairstreak butterflies with their vibrant green coloring were a highlight. They were active in large numbers. Like some butterflies, their brood was active for a short period of time before they are gone. Another brood is expected in mid-summer. Other colorful butterflies to anticipate in the summer include great spangled fritillary, monarchs and tawny emperors.

Dragonflies and damselflies activity is increasing as the weather warms. They can be observed patrolling over the canal, obelisking to cool off on very hot days, or basking to maximize sun exposure on days that aren't quite warm enough for

them. Halloween pennants, blue dashers, eastern pondhawks and ebony jewelwing are perennial favorites.

Different types of wildflowers bloom throughout the year. In the spring bluebell carpet some areas of the park. Others such as golden ragwort take over when they subside. Cardinal flower add splashes of vibrant red color during the summer. Asters and goldenrods predominate in the autumn.

Bird watching can be done year-round. The park is an excellent location to watch them. Migrants can be observed passing through the region. Indigo buntings are a colorful favorite. Belted kingfishers can be observed streaking from one place to another. The "kwirr" from red-bellied woodpeckers can be heard throughout the year. Baby wood ducks, geese and turkeys are always a pleasure to see in the spring.

Due to the vaccination effort restrictions are being relaxed. Relaxed restrictions will allow group activities such as the nature walks to resume. As dates are set, the C&O Canal Association calendar will be updated. Anyone with a passion for nature is invited to lead a walk. Coordinate with the C&O Canal Association's nature committee to arrange an outing.

On the Level

By Steve Dean

This report covers level walker activity for February through April 2021. The report features reports from new level walkers Rick and Wendy Duke, Tom Mears, Joel Miller, Jone and Joseph Parr, and Dave Shumaker. Their support is greatly appreciated and we welcome them all to the team!

If you're not familiar with our program – level walkers are C&O Canal Association members who agree to cover one of 69 levels on the canal park. They can volunteer on their own schedule and participate as an individual, family or group. For more information, visit the Association web site at candocanal.org/level/. Information for level walkers is also available at levelwalker.blog/. Contact Steve Dean at levelwalker@candocanal.org for further information.

Level 1 Tidlock to Incline Plane: Joel Miller reports March 14:

Because of ongoing project work, the canal was under repair. There was no water from 29th Street until the Key Bridge. Lots of trash was in the canal. The interpretive signs around the visitor center were starting to peel and show signs of age. I saw five or six electric rental scooters that were abandoned along the towpath: mostly between Wisconsin Ave and Key bridge. They looked like they had been there a while. I observed the finish line of the St. Patrick's Day half marathon near the Key Bridge. There were about 30 people milling around after finishing the race. They had a giant timer set up as well as a finish line and a table full of water cups. I encountered about three dozen runners on the towpath heading east towards the finish line.

Level 4 Cabin John Creek to Lock 14: Alyson Miller reports

March 11, 26 and 30: The towpath was generally in good shape. There was no noticeable water at Lock 10. There was little to no water between Locks 8 and 10 but I did hear peepers so there must be some moisture here. There was shallow water between Locks 7-8. This level has a huge population of turtles. **Larry Heflin reports February through April:** The towpath was monitored over numerous walks, through all conditions. No significant issues were reported during this period.

Level 11 Milepost 25 to Sycamore Landing: Pat Hopson reports

March 6: The river water level at Sycamore Landing was too high to get down to the shore; that area was submerged by water. There were a fair number of recently downed trees along the level; the NPS has done a great job of removing them promptly. The towpath on this level and the adjacent ones was resurfaced during the previous six months or so. At the time of this walk, Level 11 was in great shape. Maybe because most trees were still bare, I noticed more than usual trees that have been invaded by English ivy growing up them.

Level 12 Sycamore Landing to Edwards Ferry: Pat Hopson, with Ray Abercrombie, Larry Broadwell, Elizabeth Dame, Carol Ivory, Margaret Neuse, Ron Wise, and Frank Wodarczyk, reports

March 13: It was a delightful late-winter day – beautifully sunny, a tad cool, and a bit of wind at times. We all loved being out on this beautiful day. The crossover bridge at Edwards Ferry was blocked off, though it looked like it was finished, or close to it. People parked along the entrance road and even beyond

the three-way junction on River Road; there were at least 10 vehicles besides ours when I arrived. It was a little strange to see the Edwards Ferry parking lot totally empty. The lockhouse and the Jarboe store at Edwards Ferry were in good condition, but there were more bricks falling out of the downstream inside of the store. The towpath was repaved and in good condition. We recovered eight large bags of trash.

Level 13 Edwards Ferry to Harrison Island: Liz Wagner reports

April 6: The level was clean. The resurfaced towpath was in good condition. There were signs of wear between Mileposts 32 and 33 near Broad Run Trunk. No areas with erosion, rutting or puddling were seen. The bridge at Broad Run Trunk shows more wear. The warping of the top rail plank on the right side facing Milepost 32 has increased. Also, wood is rotting along the edge of one of bridge deck planks near this end of the bridge. Several wild flowering plants seen along the level, including Virginia blue bells, Virginia spring beauty, cut-leaved toothwort, toad shade, mayapple, Dutchman breeches, yellow trout-lily, small-flowered buttercup, ground-ivy, and common cinquefoil

Level 14 Harrison Island to Whites Ferry: Dave Shumaker reports

March 29: The towpath was in excellent condition throughout. Lots of small branches were littering the towpath due to the winds of the previous day, but there were no new tree falls or even large branches down. I pushed or threw all the branches I encountered off to the side. All culverts appeared to be functioning. I observed no vandalism, degradation, obstruction, or other problems. It was a perfect time for early spring wildflowers.

Level 15 Whites Ferry to Lock 26: Jon Wolz reports Feb. 25, Feb.

26, March 23, and April 7: There was snow on the level in February. One biker commented on the difficulty of pedaling in the snow. The grill at the Marble Quarry Hiker-Biker remains broken. The culverts on the level were observed and were generally in normal condition. A large-scale clean-up was conducted on this level in April as part of the Potomac watershed clean-up. A kingfisher, barred owl and snapping turtles were noted in April.

Level 16 Lock 26 to Monocacy Aqueduct: Jon Wolz reports Feb.

12, Feb. 16, March 19, and April 26: In February it was noted that the potholes in the Monocacy entrance road were filled. Snow was on the ground in February. Tree debris was noted against the Monocacy Aqueduct in February. The ongoing prism

leak at Mile 41.25 was observed in March and April. The silver maple tree at Lock 26 was showing signs of life in April but has many dead limbs. A rotten windowsill was noted at the back of the Lock 27 house. Culvert 68, which has noticeable leaks in the barrel. Culvert 69 has barrel leaks when water is present. A large-scale clean-up was conducted on this level in April as part of the Potomac watershed clean-up.

Level 17 Monocacy Aqueduct to Nolands Ferry: **Earl Porter reports March 16, April 6 (with Lynne Layug), and April 22:** The towpath was generally in good condition. Mud from recent floods was cleared in March. Trash was at a consistent moderate to high level during the monthly visits. Arch blockages of the aqueduct varied, but it was not completely blocked. The condition of Culvert 71 is an ongoing concern. In March, four NPS interns were cleaning graffiti on the level. A two-person electric vehicle (non-bicycle) was reported in April.

Level 19 Point of Rocks to Catoctin Aqueduct: **June Miller and Anastasia Miller report March 10:** There was lots of activity on the canal, and it was very clean! Fish crow, turkey vulture, woodpecker, red tail hawk and turtles were all noted. The high-light was spring peepers out in record numbers – what a glorious sound! **Don Peterson reports March 12 and 23:** The towpath had a moderate level of activity. Dutchman's breeches and Virginia bluebells were starting to flower. **James Spangenberg reports April 27 and 28:** The level was in very good shape, evidence of recent work on the towpath perhaps to smooth it out. No mowing was noted on the towpath except at Lock 29. There was a little water around Lock 29; increasing substantial water at Mile 50.2; and water again from Mile 50 to Point of Rocks.

Levels 21 through 24 Lock 30 to Dargan Bend: **Tom Crouch reports Feb. 17 (22), March 3 (22), March 11 (21-24), March 22 (22-24), April 5 (21-23), April 13 (21-23), April 20 (21-23), and April 27 (21-23):** Despite the damp cold weather in February, there was extensive trash found at an illegal camp site near the U.S. 340 bridge. Conditions improved in March. The towpath was in good condition, and regular trash clean-up was needed on the levels. It was great to see the turtles taking up their usual spring/summer residence on logs in the watered section of the canal. Clean-ups continued in April. I met my first two through-hikers of the year. They were flip-floppers; starting at Harpers Ferry and walking north to Maine, then driving back to their starting point and walking south to Georgia.

Level 23 Lock 33 to Dam 3: **Arthur Tsien reports Feb. 26:** The resurfaced towpath generally looked good. The towpath was damp, as expected from recent snow, but not very sloppy. There was no remaining snow or ice on towpath at all. The Maryland Heights parking area was still blocked off by concrete barriers; apparently this is permanent. Locks 33 and 34 were in good condition.

Level 27 Antietam Aqueduct to Lock 38: **Jonnie and Joycie Lefebure report March 9:** The towpath was in great shape. Five trees or limbs that had fallen across the towpath since our last walk had been cut and moved aside. Hazardous tree were marked

for removal. As noted in previous walks, at about Mile 70.2, between the river and towpath, there's a depression formed by upwelling water during heavy rains with a channel running the river. There now seems to be a small channel forming from the towpath to the depression. Overall, this feature seems to be growing larger since the beginning of my level walks. We talked with a birdwatcher who had been earlier in the day at Ferry Hill and had seen three bald eagles – two adults and a juvenile.

Level 30 Snyders Landing to Lock 40: **Charles Connolly reports March 11:** The condition of towpath was generally excellent except for a few developing potholes. There were several damp, soft places because of all the recent rain. The canal prism was watered about a foot deep from Miles 77.5 to 78.5 due to recent heavy rain. I had the delightful experience of enjoying the sounds of two or three species of frogs including spring peepers.

Level 31 Lock 40 to Marsh Run Culvert: **Jennifer Bean reports March 2:** The river was very high, and the Horseshoe Bend Hiker-Biker Camp and Taylors Landing boat ramp were under water. A very few towpath users were out.

Level 34 McMabons Mill to Opequon Junction HBO: **Trent Carbaugh reports March 9:** Between the mill and Lock 41 lots of trees were down; the first and third causeway heading west were scoured of their towpath surfacing; and a large mud hole was present just before Lock 41. At Little Howell's cave someone has cut down trees, with an axe at about 5 feet from the ground, evidently to clear space for climbing as there are new bolted climbing routes on the rock face. The trees were just dropped onto the towpath. The same thing has been done on the last outcropping just before Lock 41 without the bolts yet installed. The NPS was contacted about maintenance issues and law enforcement concerns related to this matter. Locks 41 and 42 were in good condition with standing water in the locks.

Level 36 Lock 43 to Falling Waters: **Dick Ebersole reports April 28:** I have not been on my level for more than a year and I was surprised to see what good condition the towpath was in. There were no real potholes and only a few small branches here and there. Lock 43 and lockhouse seem to be stable. Some spring flowers are in bloom; more Virginia bluebells than anything else.

Level 37 Falling Waters to Lock 44: **Jim Tomlin reports Feb. 25:** The towpath ranged from moist to icy and slush covered. The stretch from Lock 44 to the I-81 overpass was the worst. Downstream from there, the towpath had slush and ice only in a few colder spots. The going was slow and tiring because of the slippery footing, and there were approximately one "gazillion" small sticks to flick, so I turned around at Milepost 97. The area around the I-81 bridge construction is still very trashy, but being outside the fence, I could not get to it. Hopefully this will be cleaned up when the work is completed. It was another great day to be out on the canal.

Level 38 Lock 44 to High Rock Quarry: **Tom Mears reports March 10:** The towpath was in excellent condition. There were no puddles, no sign of storm damage or erosion, and no obstructions. Just downstream from the lift bridge, on the side opposite

the towpath, erosion has significantly undercut the bank. Two medium trees looked as if they would topple over soon. **Jone and Joseph Parr report March 20:** It was the first day of spring, with warmer weather and of folks out. Trash was light and most was found at the Jordan Junction Hiker-Biker camp. The towpath was in excellent condition. Water appeared to be flowing through the culverts without issues.

Level 40 Nettle Railroad Bridge Piers to Dam 5: **James Spanenberg reports Feb. 9 and April 28:** In February an extensive amount of trash picked up from edge of Little Conococheague Creek and Potomac River; it appears that this is a popular fishing area. There was frozen snow and ice on the towpath with narrow walkway on the surface. Only three walkers were encountered, and they were all local residents. In April there were two groups of people fishing with their children. The towpath was in good condition with no recent mowing. There was quite a bit of trash in the Dam 5 parking lot.

Level 41 Dam 5 to Four Locks: **Mike Anderson reports April 11:** The towpath was in excellent condition. Most trash was found in the Dam 5 area. There were numerous downed branched and trees from recent winds. This level is a gem and I thoroughly enjoy every level walk.

Level 42 Four Locks to McCoy's Ferry: **Jack Ebersole, with Dick Ebersole, reports March 23:** After a long COVID-19 hiatus, it was nice to get back on the canal. The towpath was in good condition, completely dry with no ruts or limbs. There is a hole in front of Lock 49 about in the middle, unknown origin, but someone could step in it and sprain an ankle or worse.

Level 44 Fort Frederick to Ernstville: **Jim Biasco reports April 20:** The towpath was clean and dry. Some geese, ducks and turtles were on Big Pool. At the downstream end of the level there is evidence of beaver activity around the pond on Fort Fredrick State Park that borders on the towpath. Several big trees along the towpath were marked for cutting.

Level 45 Ernstville to Licking Creek Aqueduct: **Dennis Kubicki reports March 3:** The towpath itself was in generally great condition! There were no potholes or ruts observed, and the surface was dry overall. I was surprised that there was not more deadfall on the path after recent high wind conditions. I noticed cut-down tree trunks at several places and concluded that NPS personnel or contractors had "groomed" the towpath within the recent past. Except for a few isolated locations (e.g., at culverts), there was standing water of varying depth up to about 6 inches throughout the canal.

Level 46 Licking Creek Aqueduct to Little Pool: **Rick and Wendy Duke report March 14:** The surface of the towpath within the level is in excellent condition. Hanging and downed tree issues were reported to the NPS. The structures on the level appeared to be in good condition. We noted beaver activity at Mile 118.

Levels 47 and 48 Little Pool to Round Top Cement Mill: **Phillip M. Clemans reports April 19:** A more pristine day could not be found. Towpath conditions were good, with a little erosion observed at the iron bridge in Hancock. Structures were in good

condition. The canal water level was low in town. Bagged dog waste was found near Lock 51, unfortunately. Bricks were observed in the prism by Devil's Eyebrow that appeared to be from the cement mill. Several pileated woodpeckers were observed.

Level 49 Round Top Cement Mill to Lock 53: **Paul Petkus reports Feb. 12 and April 17:** The level was completely snow covered in February. It was just me and the birds on the towpath that day, and birds were plentiful. They were in flocks along the canal and around 10 species were noted. Turkeys were not seen but tracks were noted. In April wildflowers were out, especially Virginia bluebells, and varied wildlife was much more evident. At the Leopards Mill Hiker-Biker camp it appears that campers attempted to improvise a handle by tying a long branch to the pump with cord.

Level 54 Lock 59 to Lock 60: **Dennis Kubicki reports March 9:** I met three cyclists. One said that he was in the midst of a cross-country bike ride. He was from Seattle, Wash. and was heading for Washington, DC. I also encountered a crew of three individuals who were NPS contractors with their NPS supervisor. They were operating a "Bobcat" excavator with a chopper attachment and were cutting down to ground level all the vegetation along both sides of the towpath.

Level 55 Lock 60 to Culvert 208: **Paul Petkus reports March 13, March 27, April 10, and April 25:** In March, as is usual at this time of the year, reptiles and amphibians took center stage. Many turtles enjoyed the nice weather and basked on exposed items in the prism. Most were quick to drop into the water upon detecting my presence. By April human activity had increased significantly; the Bonds Landing area was especially busy. Wildflowers peaked in April. Conditions of Lock 60 and Culvert 208 remained consistent. *Congratulations to Paul for completing his 100th level walk during this quarter!*

Level 56 Culvert 208 to Lock 61: **John Wiggins and Kathleen Moriarty report March 21:** There was not much different on the level since our last walk. One large pothole puddle around Mile 153 was getting worse. There were no particularly exciting wildlife moments. We did see mating pairs of both common and hooded mergansers on the Potomac. Lovely wildflowers were already coming in. There were tons of bluebells coming up.

Levels 59 through 61 Paw Paw Tunnel Parking Area to Lock 68: **Trent Carbaugh reports April 18:** Conditions were good on these levels. The prism was the same as usual, slightly more water with hordes of turtles. Things were getting green with lots of wildflowers and may apples. There was quite a bit of beaver activity was in evidence along the canal prism on Level 59.

Level 68 Evitts Creek Aqueduct to Wiley Ford Bridges: **Travis Medcalf reports March 27:** An old locust tree was down around Mile 182.6. The root ball was riverside and the tree was blocking the entire towpath. I notified the NPS of the obstruction of the towpath. The prism at the Candoc area was moist with occasional neighborhood garbage; there was less than last two reports. Many park users were out enjoying the first mild weekend day of year.

Volunteers in Parks

By Jim Heins

Like Spring and Cicadas – Energy Abounds in Our Park

For the past year things have been slow or slower, but not now. Needs, projects and a desire to get out and do something have created lots of opportunities within our beautiful park.

We had a very satisfactory effort in April with the Potomac River Watershed Cleanup, involving in excess of 100 volunteers. Another good cleanup was conducted in the Swains Lock area where our association is the steward, and we are currently preparing for another work day at Swains.

There was also a limited effort to control garlic mustard this year. A dedicated group met at Swains to remove a large amount of the nasty weed, and on another occasion a few hardy volunteers worked at Carderock in poor weather. Among the (unfortunately) very few individuals who spent time at their assigned sites this year were Pat Hopson and her team

at Edwards Ferry, Rita and Paul Marth at Violettes Lock, and Jim Tomlin and Cindy Walczak near Williamsport.

A small group of volunteers is preparing to refurbish all 60 bulletin boards in the park, one of the activities planned to help the C&O Canal NHP celebrate its 50th anniversary as a national park this year. Along with this effort to spiff up our park, we are repairing many of the picnic tables throughout the park that need board replacement and painting. That tremendous effort will require the need for additional boards that will be purchased by our association and then primed and painted by some of our members.

The addition of 16 more benches to be installed later this summer adds to the already bustling schedule of our volunteers. Shortly, eight new wayside panels will be swapped out for those in need on the Paw Paw Tunnel Hill Trail.

The ability to work on all of these projects reflects the willingness of some of our members to dedicate many hours of helping to keep our park accessible and beautiful. Our thanks and appreciation go to these folks.



Above – Pat White cleans a picnic table at Swains

Below – Doug Zveare clears a grill at Swains – Photos by Jim Heins



Above – Rod Mackler pulling garlic mustard

Below – Doug Zveare and Jon Wolz anchoring a picnic table



Calendar of Events - 2021

Non-C&OCA event
C&OCA business
C&OCA hike and dinner or other key event
C&OCA Bike Ride
C&OCA hike
Aug. 1, Sun. Board Meeting , 1 p.m., at Glen Echo Town Hall, 6106 Harvard Ave.
Aug. 30 - Sept. 2, Mon.-Thu. World Canals Conference , At the Maryland Theatre in Hagerstown, Md. Visit https://wcc2021.org/ for detailed information.
Oct. 3, Sun. Board Meeting , 1 p.m., at Williamsport Town Hall, 2 North Conococheague St.
Oct. 8 to 13, Fri. to Tues. Through Bike Ride, Cumberland to Georgetown , No sag wagon provided. Reservations required; Reserve no later than August 15. Limited to 20 riders. To register or for more information, contact Denny Sloppy at dennysloppy@yahoo.com or 814-577-5877.
Dec. 4, Sat. Frostbite Hike : 10:30 a.m. Great Falls. Contact Bill Holdsworth at 301-762-9376 or website@candocanal.org .
Dec. 5, Sun. Board Meeting , 1 p.m., at Glen Echo Town Hall, 6106 Harvard Ave.

About the 2021 Calendar –

We will add events as conditions allow. Please check with candocanal.org/calendar/ or social media for updates or for upcoming event status.

Important Information –

- » *Liability waivers are required for many Association activities. You will be asked to sign a waiver before participating in certain events.*
- » *Hikes require proper footwear.*
- » *Paddling, hiking and biking participants are responsible for their own equipment and food.*
- » *Reservations are required for many events.*
- » *All events are subject to cancellation. Before attending, visit www.candocanal.org, Facebook @candocanal.org or contact the event coordinator.*

Support is Needed for the Program Committee

After a year of limited event activities, the Association is ready to resume a full calendar of events as the restrictions on activities are lifted. The program committee chair position was recently vacated and a new program chair is needed. The program committee chair works with the nature committee chair, hike leaders, paddle trip leaders and other committee members to schedule and coordinate nature walks, hikes, paddle trips and other events. Additionally, the program chair coordinates annual events, including the Douglas Hike, Presidents Day Breakfast, Heritage Hike and annual membership meeting. The program committee meets once a year, in the fall, to plan the event calendar for the next year. No special qualifications are needed. This is a rewarding position and provides great assistance to the Association.

Interested members should contact Bill Holdsworth at president@candocanal.org.

**C&O CANAL
NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
Telephone Numbers and Personnel**



C&O Canal National Historical Park Headquarters

1850 Dual Highway, Suite 100, Hagerstown, MD 21740

Superintendent	301-714-2202	Tina Cappetta
Deputy Superintendent	301-714-2200	John Noel
Superintendent's Assistant	301-714-2201	Mackensie Henn
Chief Ranger	301-714-2222	Ed Wenschhof
Chief of Business Mgmt.	301-714-2204	Ben Helwig
Chief of Resource Mgmt.	301-714-2225	Jeri DeYoung
Chief of Maintenance (Acting)	301-714-2211	Jim Yelton
Chief of Interpretation, Education and Volunteers	301-714-2238	Christiana Hanson
Partnerships Coordinator	301-714-2218	Anthony Bates
Volunteer Coordinator	301-491-7309	Emily Durán Hewitt
Cultural Resources Manager/Historian	301-491-2236	Justin Ebersole
Volunteer Historian		Karen Gray
Safety Office	301-745-5804	John Adams
IT Specialist	301-745-5817	John Lampard

Palisades District – Mile 0 (Tidelock) to Mile 42.19 (Monocacy River)
11710 MacArthur Blvd, Potomac, Md.

Interpretive Supervisor	301-767-3702	Pete Peterson
District Ranger Law Enforcement	301-491-6279	Joshua Cunningham
Supervisory Visitor Use Assistant	301-767-3703	Stephanie Lyons
Georgetown Partnerships Coordinator	240-291-8466	Millie Jimenez

Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center 301-767-3714
11710 MacArthur Blvd, Potomac, Md.

Western Maryland District – Mile 42.19 (Monocacy River) to Mile 184.5
(Canal Terminus, Cumberland, Md.)

District Ranger Law Enforcement	301-722-0543	Todd Stanton
Cumberland Subdistrict	301-722-0543	
Hancock Subdistrict	301-678-5463	
Ferry Hill Subdistrict	301-714-2206	

Williamsport Visitor Center 301-582-0813
205 West Potomac St., Williamsport, Md.

Supervisory Park Ranger	240-625-2931	Joshua Nolen
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Hancock Visitor Center 301-745-5877
439 East Main St., Hancock Md.

Supervisory Park Ranger		Stephanie Siemek
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Cumberland Visitor Center 301-722-8226
Western Maryland Station, Cumberland, Md.

Supervisory Park Ranger		Stephanie Siemek
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OTHER USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

Great Falls Boat Operation	301-767-3714
Boathouse at Fletcher's Cove (concessionaire)	202-244-0461
Carderock and Marsden Reservations	301-767-3731
Canal Quarters Program	301-714-2233
Williamsport Boat Operations	301-582-0813

24-HOUR EMERGENCY:
911 or 866-677-6677

REPORT SAFETY HAZARDS OR TOWPATH ISSUES:
866-677-6677 or HAZARDS CHOH_Hazards@nps.gov

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C&O CANAL ASSOCIATION

Membership in C&OCA is open to all persons with an interest in the C&O Canal, the C&O Canal National Historical Park, and the Potomac River Basin. Annual membership dues are: \$15 individual, \$20 family, and \$25 patron, assessed on a calendar-year basis, and include subscription to the newsletter. Dues should be mailed in to the C&O Canal Association. C&OCA is a non-profit organization as defined by section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, and all contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. A copy of our current financial statement is available upon request by writing to C&OCA at the address above or calling 301-983-0825. Documents and information submitted to the State of Maryland under the Maryland Charitable Solicitations Act are available from the Office of the Secretary of State for the cost of copying and postage.

C&OCA maintains a home page at www.candocanal.org. The webmaster is website@candocanal.org. C&OCA also maintains a telephone number for recorded information and inquiries: 301-983-0825.

Association Officers

President: Bill Holdsworth, president@candocanal.org

First Vice President: Barbara Sheridan

Second Vice President: Anthony Laing

Secretary: Kerry Gruber, secretary@candocanal.org

Treasurer: Richard Radhe, treasurer@candocanal.org

Information Officer: Doug Zveare, inquiries@candocanal.org

Board of Directors: (terms expire in 2024): Trent Carbaugh, Philip deVos, Dick Ebersole, Christine Holdsworth, Paul Petkus. (terms expire in 2023): Jill Craig, Karen Gray, Jane Hannah, Jim Hutzler, Jonnie LeFebure. (terms expire in 2022): Tom Aitken, Tom Crouch, Tim Snyder, William R. Stewart, Pat White.

Committees (contact at C&OCA address/tel. no. above): Archives, Christine Holdsworth; Auditing, Jon Wolz; By-laws, Dave Johnson; Editorial Review, Steve Dean; Environmental, Rod Mackler; Festivals, Rita Bauman; Finance, Richard Radhe; Legal Advisory, Vacant; Level Walkers, Steve Dean; Membership, William R. Stewart; Nature, Paul Petkus; Nominating, Steve Dean; Programs, Vacant; Sales, Jill Craig; Special Projects, Susan VanHaften; Volunteers-in-Parks (VIP), Jim Heins; World Canals Conference 2021, Bill Holdsworth.

CHESAPEAKE & OHIO CANAL ASSOCIATION INC.

P.O. Box 366

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Along The Towpath

Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Association

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Culvert 223, at Mile 170.84, is better known as the Kellys Road Culvert. It provided access to farmland located between the canal and the Potomac River. Like many Western Maryland canal culverts it is brick-lined, since suitable construction quality stone was harder to obtain on the upper parts of the canal. Photos by Steve Dean.



Check us out on social media!

C&O Canal Association



Founded in 1954



@candocanal.org



@CandOCanalAssoc



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