

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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A highlight of the World Canals Conference was the departure from Buffalo of the new Seneca Chief (left) on September 26 during the World Canals Conference. Its voyage traced Governor DeWitt Clinton's 1825 journey aboard the original Seneca Chief down the Erie Canal to the Hudson River and ultimately New York Harbor (center). The boat completed the 500-mile journey on October 25. The interior provided sleeping quarters for many of the modern crew (right). Photos left to right: Tony Laing, Bill Holdsworth, Jane Hanna

World Canals Conference in Buffalo Celebrates 200 Years of the Erie Canal

by Rod Mackler

First, the numbers: 400 participants, 10 countries, 22 states, 15 members of the C&O Canal Association. Next to the host New Yorkers, our Association had the largest contingent at the conference, which commemorated the 200th anniversary of the completion of the Erie Canal.

Held September 21–26, the conference started with the welcoming speeches—from local officials, the sponsoring organizations, and New York Governor Kathy Hochul. Richard Millar of Scottish Canals gave the opening keynote, detailing the several canals in Scotland, their revival, the outstanding Falkirk Wheel boat lift, and the Kelpies, giant sculptures of horses' heads from Scottish legend.

A leitmotiv of the conference was inclusion. A second keynote was given at a banquet the first night by Haben Girma, the first deafblind graduate of Harvard Law School. The indigenous nations of New York, particularly the Seneca of the western part of the state, were given a

major role in the conference. Several sessions focused on the use of the Erie Canal as a route for the Underground Railroad, including for Harriet Tubman, who started her life in Maryland.

The C&O Canal played a prominent role in this world conference. On the opening night, Barbara Sheridan was reelected to the board of Inland Waterways International, the organization that sponsors these conferences. Bill Holdsworth gave a presentation on the C&O Canal, focusing on the uninterrupted towpath which forms a major recreational and historical artery. Arden Shaer of the C&O Canal Trust gave a talk on the Canal Quarters program, which he manages. And Tiffany Ahalt combined conferencing with her day job, promoting tourism in Hagerstown and Washington County. She had a healthy supply of Association brochures on her display table.

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President's Milepost

By Arthur Tsien



Arthur at Milepost 76. Photo by Judy McGuire

I started a new personal practice this year: an annual birthday photo taken at my age-specific C&O Canal towpath milepost. (I should have started years ago, but better late than never!) I hope to continue that practice every year going forward. Thanks to Jon Wolz for the idea. If you are interested in following suit, none of the mileposts is more than 5 miles round trip from the nearest access point with parking until you get to Milepost 91.

Our 64-cent question: how is the C&O Canal Association doing? By many measures, it's doing just fine. The Association has a long, proud history as an independent voice and marked its 71st birthday this past year. Thanks to the continuing

generosity of our members and several recent bequests, the Association is in excellent financial shape to carry out our mission—preserving and protecting the historical and natural resources of the C&O Canal National Historical Park. We are 500 dues paying members strong. We have a core of dedicated members who volunteer to lead and participate in activities that further our mission. Our volunteers also undertake the behind-the-scenes tasks needed to keep the Association functioning, such as communicating with members and the public, paying bills, and planning and leading our events. Importantly, we have fun and enjoy comradery in the process. Many of our volunteers have been “on the job” for two or more decades. Hats off to all our volunteers and members for their continuing efforts and support!

Nevertheless, we face challenges. As with many other small nonprofits, we have a declining and aging member base. We have a hard time getting volunteers to fill key leadership roles. Participation in our activities has been declining.

To help ensure that the Association can celebrate many

more birthdays to come, our Board of Directors is in the process of addressing the challenges before us. We are discussing ways to increase membership and foster a new or renewed interest in volunteering. We are looking at increased advertising and promotion aimed at a wider audience to spark interest in our organization. We are examining our current activities and events and will try to make them more appealing to a wider audience of ages and interests. Please stay tuned.

As we head into MMXXVI, I wish you a joyous holiday season. I hope to see you at one of our events or on the towpath. Thanks for reading.

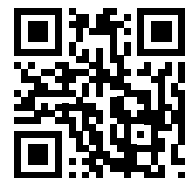
*The Association looks ahead.
Photo by Arthur Tsien*



Submission of Content for *Along the Towpath* –

Please review the submission guidelines posted at candocanal.org/submission. Submit questions, comments and content to editor@candocanal.org or the following address:

Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Association Inc.
Attn: *Along the Towpath* Editor
P.O. Box 366
Glen Echo, MD 20812-0366



*Submission
Guidelines*



Winter scene along the towpath, with frozen water in the canal near Lock 70. Photo by Steve Dean

Donors to Association Funds

Donations August 1 through September 30, 2025

C&O Canal Association donation policy. The Association is grateful for the generous support provided by donors over the years. If a donor specifies one of the special purpose funds listed below, we add the donation to that fund. With the exception of the General Fund, we will use the money in accordance with the goals of the fund and not for administrative costs.

General Fund. If a donor doesn't specify a fund, we add that donation to the general fund, which can be used for any purpose, including the Association's administrative costs.

Help the Association by paying online. The Association website makes it easy to pay online using your credit card. Processing online payments is more secure and easier for our volunteers. You can renew your membership, purchase event meals or bus tickets, or make donations. We use PayPal to process our payments, but you don't need a PayPal membership. You can use your credit or debit card. *Note: You don't need to sign up for PayPal. You can deselect the button "Save info and create your PayPal account."*

Association Funds

A – Nancy C. Long Aqueduct Fund

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.

C – The Cumberland Repair and Maintenance Fund

Donations specifically identified for repair and maintenance of the historic canal boat replica in Cumberland.

D – Davies Legal Fund

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

G – General Fund

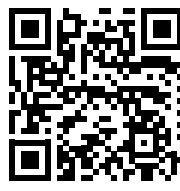
General funds that are used for any purpose.

R – Ken Rollins C&O Canal Fund

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

S – Rachel Stewart Swains Lock Area Fund

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



Donate, or find more information about donations at candocanal.org/contributions

Donations

- Farzad Barkhordari – **G**
- Marney Bruce – **G**
- Ned Ehrlich – **R**

- Judith Glassman – **R**
- Kathleen Hatton – **A**
- Raphael Semmes – **A, C, D, G, R, S**

- Arden Shaer – **G**
- Patricia White – **R**



Crewman guides 1800s-style boat into an original stone lock at Lockport, New York. Photo by Jane Hanna



Association members and friends at Lockport, New York. Photo by Tony Laing

2025 World Canals Conference – Continued from Page 1

The second day of the conference was devoted to field trips. One group went west, to the Welland Canal in Ontario and to Niagara Falls. We were welcomed by folks in several towns along the canal, which connects Lake Erie to Lake Ontario and forms part of the St. Lawrence Seaway, from Duluth at the western end of Lake Superior to the tidewater at Montreal. We had a good vantage point on a platform next to Lock #3, as a ship locked through; it was guided by automated supports in tracks in the lock walls and that attached by suction cups to the ship’s hull. Like the Erie Canal, there were several versions of the Welland Canal, each wider, straighter, and with larger locks than previous iterations. The field trip also included a stop at the Underground Railroad Heritage Center in Niagara Falls, New York, housed in a former Customs House by the site of the first railroad suspension bridge in North America. Many people fleeing enslavement, including Harriet Tubman, took this route to freedom in Canada.

Another group went to Medina, where the mayor led the tour group around the beautifully restored downtown. Nearby was the original road culvert under the canal, still in use by vehicles and pedestrians. Next was Lockport, site of the “flight of five” locks still intact from original canal.

A highlight of the conference was the casting off of the *Seneca Chief*, a replica of the canal boat that carried Governor DeWitt Clinton from Buffalo to New York Harbor in 1825. We all went down to the slip as she began her voyage. The replica was built by volunteers over the past several years. She has no engine and only a vestigial rudder, so she will be accompanied on her 33-day trip by the tug *C. L. Churchill*, to provide the motive power, and by the small “pusher boat” Buffalo Sal to do the steering.

The conference concluded with the handover ceremony, the passing of the torch to the hosts of World Canals Conference 2026, to be held in Guilin, China. Rumor has it that the 2027 conference will be in Europe.



Near Medina, New York, is the original—and only—road tunnel under the canal. Photo by Jane Hanna



Jon Wolz, Pat White, and Rod Mackler at Canalside in Buffalo. Photo by Tony Laing



Notice of 2026 C&O Canal Association Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the membership of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Association will be held on Saturday, March 21, 2026, in Beallsville, Md. The meeting will be for the purpose of electing officers for 2026, electing a nominating committee for 2027, receiving reports of officers and committees, and any other business that may come before it. There are no proposals to amend the bylaws. All members of the Association in good standing are invited to attend. This notice constitutes the call for the meeting, pursuant to articles II.2, III.1, and IX of the bylaws.

2026 C&O Canal Association Annual Meeting

The annual meeting returns to the Upper Montgomery County Volunteer Fire Department (UMCVFD) In Beallsville, Md, on Saturday, March 21, 2026. This venue is centrally located to most meeting attendees and is hospitable with a large meeting room. The events start at 11:30 am and the meeting starts at 1:00 pm, followed by a happy hour and dinner.

11:30 a.m. – Meet the Candidates. This is an informal time to meet the candidates and mingle with other members. This is a great time to reconnect, talk about projects, swap canal stories, see old timers, and meet new people, and ask questions. *See pages 6–7 for candidate biographies.*

A lunch is available and will be served at noon. The lunch must be reserved in advance; details will later appear on the C&OCA website.

1:00 p.m. – Annual Meeting. The meeting will be called to order to conduct Association Business, including any proposed bylaws amendments, committee reports, and the 2026 elections.

3:30 p.m. – Happy Hour. Beer, wine, non-alcoholic drinks, and light snacks will be available for those who have purchased dinner.

4:30 p.m. – Dinner. The details for dinner and how to order will appear on the C&OCA website before the meeting. As always, there will be meat and vegetarian options.



Directions

The UMCVFD is located at 19801 Beallsville Road. Open the camera app on your phone. Hold your device so the QR code to the left appears in view. Tap the notification over the QR code to open Google Maps. Then select Directions to get directions from your location.

2026 Nominations for Officers and Directors

Officers, except directors, are elected at each annual meeting to serve a term of one year. In addition, three directors are elected at each annual meeting to serve a term of three years. The nominating committee, chosen at the preceding annual meeting, will present a slate of candidates. Additional nominations may be made from the floor at the annual meeting. Members attending the 2025 annual meeting elected Barbara Sheridan (Chair), Trent Carbaugh, Jim Heins, Tony Laing, Paul Lubell, and Bob Smart to form the 2026 nominating committee. The committee has nominated the following candidates for election in 2026.

Please note that this will be a balloted election as there are four candidates for the three open director positions.

Arthur Tsien – President

As a lifelong outdoors and parks enthusiast, I learned about the C&O Canal soon after moving to the Washington, DC area in 1980. Over the years, I have walked and biked the entire length of the towpath and explored many of the Canal's wonderful historic and natural features. The Canal is my favorite local outdoor spot. I try to visit somewhere on the Canal at least once every several weeks. (By my count, I had 34 visits in 2024.)

I have been an Association member for over 20 years. I currently serve as the Association's president and the Chair of the Bylaws Committee. I am a Level Walker with two assigned levels. I am a retired lawyer and live in Chevy Chase with my spouse, Judy McGuire.

It is an honor to be nominated for reelection as the Association's president. If reelected, I will continue to try to help the Association advance its mission and improve its operations. Thank you for reading.

Barbara Sheridan – Vice President

I have been a member of the C&O Canal Association for almost 30 years and have served previously on the Board as Director, Vice-President, and President. Additionally, I chaired two Thru-Hikes (2004 and 2009), was Membership Chair for 15 years, have led paddle trips for over 20 years, am a Level Walker, and have served on several other committees.

I was born in Washington, DC, and have lived in the area my entire life. My first awareness of the canal was an aerial view of it from streetcar while on the way to Glen Echo Amusement Park. The streetcars are long gone, as is the amusement park, but the canal lives on for all to enjoy!

If elected Vice President, I will work with the Association to help preserve and protect this valuable resource for future generations.

Jane Hanna – Secretary

I have served on the C&OCA board since 2021, first as a director and then as secretary. This past year, I took over as managing editor for *Along the Towpath*. I'm retired from the National Park Service, where I worked in canal-adjacent Harpers Ferry as a writer-editor in the NPS-wide publications program. Besides volunteering for C&OCA, my retirement "jobs" include monitoring bluebird boxes, researching local African American genealogy, knitting, and road trips to anything historic.

Robert Carpenter – Treasurer

The C&O Canal is a special place to me – a blend of nature, history, and early 19th-century engineering. As an active outdoorsman, I consider the canal my "go to" place for running, walking, and bicycling for over 50 years. I grew up in Hagerstown, MD, where I was first exposed to the canal as a teenager. I currently live in Monrovia, MD, a thirty-minute drive from the beautiful Monocacy Aqueduct. I've completed several bike trips of the entire towpath over the years and visit the canal on average once a week year-round.

I have a B.S. in Accounting and was a licensed CPA until my retirement in 2022. The majority of my 45-year professional accounting and finance career was in the financial services sector, including Controller and CFO roles with banks in the Baltimore metro area. My most significant non-profit experience was as a member of the Board of Governors of the National Aquarium in Baltimore (2001–04), where I also served as a member of the Audit and Finance Committee.

I have been an Association member for seven years and currently serve as a Level Walker for levels 18 and 20 in Frederick County. If elected Treasurer, it would be an honor to have the opportunity to utilize my professional skills while becoming more involved in the Association and the advancement of its mission.

Bill Holdsworth – Director

I am honored to be nominated for the Association board of directors. I have 18 years' experience on the board, including seven years as president and another six as secretary. I serve as the chair of the Finance Committee, manage the Association website, and coordinate the broadcast emails. I am a retired federal employee.

Paul Lubell – Director

Up to now, you are most familiar with my work in the financial arena—tax preparation and Treasurer's duties. My dedication to helping the community is much more diverse and starts at an early age when I was Assistant Scoutmaster for Troop 579 Manhattan from 1961 to 1969. I was President of the Clipper's Ridge Home Owners Assn in Richland, WA, from 1978 to 1980, then a member of the Oakland Mills Village Board from 1986 to 1990. I was a member of the Board of Directors of ISPA, my professional society (Parametric Estimating) from 1994 to 2004, winning accolades from both Industry and Government, meanwhile serving my community by being Vice-Chairman of the Howard County Police Department Citizens Advisory Council from 1996 to 2000. When I moved to Catonsville in November 2000 and even before retiring after 35 years with Westinghouse/Northrop Grumman in 2004, I continued my volunteer work by being President of the Wilkens Police and Community Relations Organization 2003–04 and as a Board member from 2017–21. At my church, St Paul Lutheran Church of Catonsville, besides a variety of financial positions, I have been in charge of our cemetery since 2008, heading up a committee of volunteers. Perhaps, my most responsible position was being President of the Baltimore County Board of Elections from 2015 until 2019. My lifetime of volunteer work resulted in the receipt of the President's Volunteer Service Award in 2017. Regardless of one's political persuasion, it is an honor to have the President of the United States recognize one's service.

And then came COCA. After four years of serving as Treasurer, it is time to help my successor learn the position and continue to help our Association by contributing in a less time consuming manner as a member of the Board of Directors. According to the data published in our Form 990 Tax Return, the Treasurer spends twenty hours per week on Association effort, the President, ten hours, the Vice President and the Secretary, five hours, and the various Board Members two to four hours weekly. (Bet you did not

know that.) I would be honored to have your confidence by electing me to the Board where I will continue to serve to the best of my ability helping the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Association.

Allyson Miller – Director

I have been a member of the Association since 2018. I moved to the Washington, DC area in 1981 and visited the towpath off and on until 1998, when my husband and I moved to the Glen Echo Heights neighborhood of Bethesda. Since our move to Bethesda, we visit the C&O several times a month, enjoying the towpath for hiking, running, cycling and cross-country skiing, and kayaking and ice skating in the canal. I retired from the federal government in 2018 and started as a level walker the same year for Level 3 and later added Level 4. In 2019, I cycled the entire length of the C&O and the adjoining GAP trail with family. I am also in the Weed Warrior program. I usually patrol my levels by bicycle and no matter where I go in the park, I carry a bag for picking up trash. I love being outside and enjoying the natural beauty and history of the park and talking with passers-by who often say 'thank you' and sometimes even stop and ask how they can help. I love living close to this wonderful natural area. I would love to see the locks and lockhouses restored and water returned to the first 22 miles of the canal, as it was 20 years ago.

Tim Snyder – Director

I've been a long-time member of the Association and previously served one term on its board of directors. During my tenure on the board, the Association, in partnership with Visit Hagerstown, hosted the 2021 World Canals Conference. I served on a small committee that recruited speakers and set up the daily program of presentations. I have an M. A. degree in history and am the author of the 2011 book, *Trembling in the Balance: The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal During the Civil War* and a forthcoming book (2026) with a working title of *Stonewall Jackson's Winter Operations: The Raids on the C&O Canal and the Bath-Romney Campaign*. While I support working with the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal NHP when we can, I also think that the Association should broaden its outlook to include local towns, communities, and nonprofit organizations, which, in my view, is more consistent with the organization's mission statement that encompasses the entire Potomac River basin.

C&O Canal Association Membership Renewals

C&O Canal Association memberships renew at the first of the calendar year. Maintaining a current membership is required to participate in the Association board, vote in board elections, participate in the Level Walker program and to receive the *Along the Towpath* newsletter.

If your membership lapses at the end of the year, you will receive the upcoming March 2026 issue of *Along the Towpath* as a courtesy, but you will not receive additional issues.

Please use the enclosed renewal form (*between pages 14 and 15*) to process your membership renewal for 2026 if you haven't already. Alternatively, you can renew online or download a form by visiting candocanal.org/renew2026 or scanning the QR code to the right. Click on the Renew Your Membership for 2026 button to renew online. If you are unsure of your membership status, check the "Membership Expires" date just above your name on the mailing address for this issue of *Along*

the Towpath. If it says "Membership Expires Dec-2025" then your membership renewal is due. Please contact the Membership Chair via email at membership@candocanal.org if you have any questions. Thank you so much for your continued support of our organization!

If Your Membership Expired in 2024 or 2025

If your membership expired in the past two years, you are no longer a member of the Association and you have stopped receiving *Along the Towpath*. You can verify this on the mailing address for this issue by checking for "Membership Expired Dec-2024" or "Membership Expired Dec-2025." We are providing this issue as a courtesy to you. If you missed receiving *Along the Towpath*, please consider renewing by using the above renewal information.



Visit to renew your membership

The Association Welcomes New Members

Don and Chere Athey

Edward Crowe

Leonid and Mariya Nikolayev

Mark Schermerhorn

Thank you for your continued support of our organization! If you have questions, please contact the Membership Chair at membership@candocanal.org. Membership information is available at candocanal.org/membership.

Board Meeting Highlights – October 2025

By Jane Hanna

Fourteen board members and others met in the Williamsport town hall. Continuing discussions about supporting the NPS Canal Classroom program, the board allocated \$5,000 to their transportation fund to be transferred shortly after the federal government reopens.

Another pressing need throughout the C&O Canal NHP is infrastructure maintenance and repair, especially culverts. The Board voted to set aside \$50,000 in next year's budget to help fund repairs. We will ask our park contact for their priorities.

The Association still needs volunteers for key positions including Programs, Membership, and internet and computer-related tasks. Current chairs of these positions are willing to work with new volunteers. Email blasts have been sent out to the membership.

As part of an ongoing discussion about boosting membership, the board is in the early stages of planning a membership picnic to be held somewhere on the canal in 2026. The board also approved \$1,584 for a 2026 ad in the GAP Trail Guide. We will look into placing ads in local publications and creating an Association promotional piece.

The 175th Anniversary of the C&O Canal's Completion

By Jon Wolz



The canal reached Cumberland, Maryland, in 1850, realizing the vision of shipping coal eastward by boat. Soon, coal was brought to the port by rail and loaded into boats—10 tons per car and 12 carloads per boat. Photo courtesy National Park Service

October 10, 2025, marked the 175th anniversary of the completion of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. During its construction period, there were three documented celebrations: the groundbreaking in 1828, the completion of the first lock in 1829, and the completion of canal construction in 1850.

On July 4, 1828, President John Quincy Adams, with some effort, turned over the first shovelful of dirt during the groundbreaking ceremony near Little Falls, Maryland. Thus began an effort to build the C&O Canal, which was intended to stretch from the tidewaters of the Potomac River in Georgetown to the Ohio River at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In attendance that day were president of the C&O Canal Company Charles Fenton Mercer, the board of directors, many representatives of official Washington and foreign delegations,

and other dignitaries. After breakfast at 8:00 a.m. at the Union Hotel in Georgetown, a procession was formed. Led by a musical band, it proceeded to the wharf, where the group embarked on the steamboat *Surprised* and two other boats. They proceeded to the entrance of the Potomac Canal, and up that in canal boats to its head just inside Maryland, the spot selected for the groundbreaking. They disembarked at the foot of Little Falls and went directly to the Powder Magazine at the head of the falls.

After a number of short speeches, President Adams gave his blessing to the undertaking by emphasizing the national character of the work. At the conclusion of his address, he took a spade and began to break ground. His spade struck a root, foiling his effort. After another try, the President took off his coat, again picked up

the shovel and, to the cheers of the audience, finally succeeded in breaking the ground.

About 2,000 people attended the ceremony. The members of the official party returned to Georgetown, where they had a lavish dinner. The affair was a momentous success and overshadowed the groundbreaking ceremony of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad on the same day. Using the Fourth of July for formally inaugurating internal improvement projects was a customary practice in those years. For example, the Erie Canal began construction on July 4, 1817.

On May 29, 1829, the first lock was completed, which would become Lock 6. A cornerstone was placed at the lock by President Andrew Jackson and William Hewitt, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Freemasons of the District of Columbia. Also

Continued on next page



Lock 2 in the early 1900s and today. Constructed in Georgetown in 1829–30, it was one of the earliest on the canal. Photos courtesy National Park Service

in attendance was Charles Fenton Mercer, president of the C&O Canal Company, along with his directors and officers. Engineer-in-chief Benjamin Wright; Nathan Roberts and John Martineau, members of the board of engineers; and Robert Leckie, inspector of masonry, were some of the notable canal company members present that morning. Placed inside a cavity in the stone were a set of gold and silver U.S. coins, a copy of each of the District of Columbia newspapers, and a silver plate with the inscription, “The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, commenced on the 4th of July, 1828, by John Quincy Adams, then President of the United States. This is the first Corner Stone of a Lock of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal laid on the 29th of May A. D. 1829, A. L. 5829 by the R W Wm. Hewitt, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Freemasons of the District of Columbia—Andrew Jackson, President of the United States.”

By 1842 canal construction had ceased, because the company had exhausted its financial resources. By then the canal had been completed as far as Dam No. 6, above Hancock. The work had endured a succession of obstacles that affected construction,

including a dispute over rights of way with the B&O Railroad; a cholera epidemic; continual labor, financial, and engineering problems; political divisions; and occasional floods. The portion of the canal from Dam No. 6 to Cumberland that had not been completed was referred to as “the fifty miles.” All but 18 miles of this section had been completed and were scattered along that entire stretch. It was estimated in 1842 that \$1,545,000 was required to finish those remaining 18 miles.

The canal company’s financial condition in 1842 was in poor shape; the company had debts of \$1,196,400. It would take the leadership of company president James M. Coale, who directed the legislative, financial, and administrative efforts necessary, to turn the situation around. Work stopped entirely by December 1842 and would not resume until October 1845. Additional interruptions would occur before the canal’s completion in October 1850.

When progress stopped in 1842, work that still needed to be completed included the Paw Paw Tunnel and its deep cuts; several culverts, waste weirs, bridges, and roads; locks 58 to 71;

guard lock no. 8; Dam No. 8; Aqueduct No. 9 (Fifteen Mile Creek Aqueduct); Aqueduct No. 10 (Town Creek Aqueduct); and Aqueduct No. 11 (Evitts Creek Aqueduct). In 1847 work was done on lockhouses constructed for the following locks: 56–60, 62, 66–68, 70, 72, 73, 75, and guard lock no. 8. Records indicate that all these lockhouses were completed by October 10, 1850, when the canal opened to navigation, but some may have been finished in 1851. The Paw Paw Tunnel was begun in 1836 and completed in 1850.

The eastern section of the C&O Canal, the only part ever completed, was formally opened to trade at Cumberland on Thursday, October 10, 1850. Following gala ceremonies at the basin, a procession of canal boats proceeded down the waterway toward Georgetown. After 22 years of intermittent enthusiasm and despair, the canal was finally navigable to Cumberland. The canal had an elevation change of 605 feet from Georgetown to Cumberland, which required 74 canal locks. The canal also had 11 aqueducts across rivers, about 200 culverts to cross streams or carry passengers beneath the canal, the

3,118-foot Paw Paw Tunnel, seven dams to supply water to the canal, numerous waste weirs, and an assortment of stop gates, river locks, guard locks, bridges, section houses, and lockhouses.

While the canal reached Cumberland in 1850, the B&O Railroad made it there by 1842 and reached the Ohio River at Wheeling in 1848. The railroad completed a short line to the canal basin at Cumberland. Loads of coal left the mines in Western Maryland via this railroad. At Cumberland, the train cars full of coal were pulled along the tracks one car at a time by a white 2,000-pound draft horse to where the cars were unloaded onto canal boats. According to William Bauman, C&O Canal historian, at the end of each day's work, the horse was led to a nearby barn, where ropes tied to ceiling beams were used to lift off the heavy harness. The next day, the horse would be positioned beneath the harness, which the ropes would lower back into place.

Preparations for the October 1850 celebration had been underway for some time. On the day before the opening, invited guests and curious visitors began arriving from all parts of Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia by train to participate in the opening ceremony. Col. John Pickell, a director, brought the band Independent Blues of Baltimore, which was especially welcomed by the local populace. The band responded to the warm reception and "electrified an immense multitude of our citizens with their unsurpassed instrumental performance." Thursday "dawned upon the mountains in all the richness of the early autumn." Ceremonies got underway at the usual early hour. A large crowd was already assembled in front of the United States Hotel and Barnum's Hotel by 8:00 a.m. Colonel Davidson's company of light artillerists

from the Eckhart mines arrived, and about an hour later a procession, made up of the military, the canal board, guests, corporate authorities, and citizens, formed on Baltimore Street, under the direction of Colonel Pickell and marched to the head of the canal. Upon their arrival, and after the firing of a salute by the artillerists, Cumberland resident William Price ascended onto the deck of one of the canal boats. His lengthy address began with, "I have been requested by the Mayor and Council, on behalf of the people of Cumberland, to welcome you to their city, the President and Directors of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, the Agents of the State, and the distinguished visitors who have honored us on this occasion with their presence. Gentlemen, I bid you all a hearty and a cordial welcome and congratulate you upon the event we are assembled to celebrate."

Price continued: "Many of us were young when this great work was commenced, and we have lived to see its completion only because Providence has prolonged our lives until our heads are gray. During this interval of four and twenty years, we have looked with eager anxiety to the progress of the work up the valley of the Potomac. That progress has been

slow, often interrupted, and full of vicissitudes. At times, the spectacle of thousands of busy workmen has animated the line of the work when to all human calculation no cause was likely to intervene to prevent its early completion. But when we have turned to look at the scene again, it was all changed; contractors and laborers had departed and the stillness of desolation reigned in their place. Thousands have been ruined by their connection with the work, and few in this region have had cause to bless it."

Price continued his lengthy speech and concluded with, "The opening of yonder gates to let through the first boat carrying freight from Cumberland to tidewater, signalizes a happy epoch in the financial condition of the State. It is the turning point in the history of the canal and marks that precious moment of time when this great work ceases forever to be a burden upon the taxpayers of Maryland and begins to reimburse those who have so long and so patiently borne the charge of its construction. Such an event is cause of congratulation to the people of the whole State. Without detaining you longer, gentlemen, I again bid you a hearty welcome to our city."

Continued on next page



Families lived and worked together on the canal boats. Photo courtesy National Park Service

Gen. James M. Coale, president of the canal company, rose and responded at length, embracing the occasion to review the history of the canal's progress:

“We thank you for this cordial expression of your welcome, and for the congratulations which you have offered to us on this auspicious occasion. To the officers of the company who have long toiled for the completion of the canal to Cumberland, and to the Maryland State agents who have so ably and generously cooperated with and sustained them in their arduous efforts, the event we commemorate is indeed full of deep interest and gratification. But it is also a subject of scarcely lean interest, and its consequences will prove of far more substantial and enduring importance, to you and to your town. If, therefore, we have congratulations to receive, we likewise have congratulations to return to you.”

President Coale went on for several minutes and concluded, “allow me to express the hope that the just expectations of all the friends of the canal may be realized, and that this day may be the commencement of a new era, to which in all after years we may all look back with honest pride and unalloyed satisfaction.”

About 11:00 a.m., the several boats fitted up for the occasion, pretty well crowded, proceeded down the canal in the following order: Way's excursion boat *Jenny Lind*, having on board the canal board and their guests from abroad; the *Charles B. Fisk*, with the Baltimore band and a large number of citizens; and Mr. Clarke's boat, with the Eckhart artillerists and the Mechanics Band of Cumberland. These were followed by the *Southampton*, *Delaware*, and

Ohio of the McCraig and Agnew's merchant line and the *Freeman Rawdon* of the Cumberland line, all bound for Alexandria laden with coal; and Mr. Mong's *Elizabeth* with coal for Harpers Ferry. The canal board and their guests landed about 9 miles below Cumberland, where they partook an abundant collation, prepared for the occasion, on board the *Charles B. Fisk*. The company returned to Cumberland in the evening, delighted with the excursion. The proceedings of the day closed with a supper and ball in the evening, given by citizens at Hefefinger's Hotel.

Of the five boats that departed that day at Cumberland, one went only to Williamsport, two reached Alexandria, and two got stuck above Dam No. 6 because of the low water level in the canal. The latter two drew 4 feet with their load instead of 3½, which would have passed. The *Freeman Rawdon* won the race with *Southampton* reaching Washington about 6:00 p.m. on October 17. Horses and mules were requisitioned along the way to maintain speed, and the boats arrived within a short time of each other. On November 27, 1850, the C&O Canal Company board of directors ordered that a marble slab or block be placed “in a conspicuous position in the masonry of, or on the line of the canal” with the names of the president, directors, officers, and state agents and the date of completion. The marble monument, a short obelisk, was built near the Wisconsin Avenue Bridge over the canal in Georgetown. In an article in the Washington, DC, *Sunday Star* on August 26, 1917, the monument was described as “once was white.” When I visited the monument on October 4, 2025, with my wife Patricia, the monument appeared to be in pristine condition, clean and very bright.

On the north face of the monument is inscribed, “Chesapeake and Ohio Canal—Commenced at Georgetown July 4th, 1828. Chief Engineer Benjamin Wright.” The west face is inscribed, “Chesapeake and Ohio Canal—Completed to Cumberland October 10, 1850. Chief Engineer, Charles B. Fisk.” The east face is inscribed: “Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, 1850—President James M. Coale; directors, William A. Bradley, Henry Daingerfield, William Cost Johnson, John Pickell, George Schley, Samuel P. Smith; clerk, Walter S. Ringold; treasurer, Lawrence J. Brengle.” On the south side face is this: “Maryland state agents—Samuel Sprigg, Allen B. Davis, William T. Goldsborough, Tench Tilghman, John Van Lear.”

Of the names on the monument, Charles Bezael Fisk was the only man who began work with the C&O Canal Company in 1828 and was still working for it when the canal was completed. He first began work as volunteer rodman and was soon



The author with the 1850 C&O Canal commemorative obelisk in Georgetown.
Photo by Patricia Wolz

hired as an assistant engineer in 1828, helping with the construction of both the Seneca and Monocacy aqueducts. By 1837 he was the chief engineer. He worked for the company until 1852. His name also appears on the builder's stone monument on top of the berm side wall of the Monocacy Aqueduct and on the upstream portal of the Paw Paw Tunnel.

There were plans and talks of extending the canal to Pittsburgh for a number of years after the opening of the canal to Cumberland in 1850. In an 1874 convention, an 8.4-mile-long tunnel was proposed to be built through the Allegheny Mountains. Of the projected western section, the best indication of its proposed course is the mainline of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad from Cumberland to Pittsburgh. By the mid-1870s, because of the funds needed, there was no longer any discussion about extending the canal to Pittsburgh.

In 1850 the major articles in the descending trade of the canal included flour, wheat, corn, oats, mill offal, apples, stone (rough), lumber bricks, shingles, staves, lath, and hoop poles. From October 10 through December 21, there were 7,171 tons of coal boated down from Cumberland. The principal products of the ascending trade included salted fish, salt, plaster, coal, coke, lumber, iron ore, and bricks. In 1851, 82,690 tons of coal were sent down the canal. The peak year for sending coal down the canal was in 1875, when 904,898 tons shipped.

In the fall of 1923, Boat #5 was the last known boat to unload coal in Washington, DC. In 1924, as a result of two early spring floods, C&O Canal operations were permanently closed because repairs would be too costly.

In 1938 the federal government took control of what was left of the canal. By 1950 there was a movement to turn the canal into a paved parkway. In 1954 Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas began leading efforts to preserve the canal. In 1961 President Dwight Eisenhower made the canal a national monument under the Antiquities Act. In December 1970, a bill was introduced in Congress by Maryland Congressmen Gilbert Gude and J. Glenn Beall to turn the canal into a national historical park. On January 8, 1971, President Richard Nixon signed the Act for the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park. For over 50 years, the National Park Service has maintained and improved the 184.5 miles of towpath and historic structures, and continued to tell stories of the canal during its operating days. Today the park is enjoyed annually by tens of thousands of people of all ages, including walkers, cyclists, birdwatchers, and nature lovers. People visit from all over the United States as well as from many foreign countries.

On October 8, 2025, at the Canal Towns Partnership meeting led by the chair from Brunswick, Abbie Ricketts, town representatives present enjoyed a "Happy Anniversary C&O Canal" cake provided by Cumberland representative Nicole Gray. In addition to Ricketts, other members present included Aiden Barnes (C&O Canal Trust), William Bauman (C&O Canal Association), Nora Slick (Brunswick), Sinclair Hamilton (Hancock), Nicole Gray (Cumberland), David Abruzzi (Paw Paw), and Jon Wolz (Poolesville).

After the meeting, William Bauman led a group on a tour of the reproduction canal boat *Cumberland*.

The C&O Canal Association of Cumberland funded the construction of the boat, and when that group disbanded, the C&O Canal Association began to pay for its continued maintenance.

As of October 10, 2025, the federal government was in a shutdown, and park employees were furloughed. For many years, the park has had its budget cut and its workforce decreased. What will the next 25 years bring for the C&O Canal National Historical Park? In September 2025, the World Canals Conference celebrated the 200th anniversary of the completion of the Erie Canal in Buffalo, New York. Hopefully, there will be a grand celebration to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the completion of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal in 2050!



*Anniversary cake at Canal Towns Partnership meeting in Cumberland in October.
Photo by Jon Wolz*

For further reading

“Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, Completing The ‘Fifty Mile Section,’” by Karen Gray, *Along The Towpath*, December 2000.

Historic Resource Study: Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, by Harlan D. Unrau, 1976.

The Great National Project: A History of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, by Walter S. Sanderlin, 1946.

The Chesapeake & Ohio Canal: Pathway to the Nation's Capital, by Thomas F. Hahn, 1984.

The Hike that Created a Park

By Barbara Sheridan

In 1974, the C&O Canal Association organized the first Thru-Hike of the canal. This event was to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas's historic hike in 1954. The Thru-Hike was so popular and successful that the Association decided to repeat the event every five years.

The information below is the second of 14 handouts created by the NPS for C&O Canal Association thru-hikers in 2004 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the 1954 hike by Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas.

Day 2 – Spring Gap to Town Creek

Before the canal, there was a river—the shaper of mountains and valleys, a source of sustenance, a transportation route, and a barrier. Native Americans were drawn to it and settled along its banks for hundreds of years before Europeans discovered it. The Potomac River has always shaped the communities that grew up along her banks and Oldtown, Md., is no exception.

Located at a natural ford in the Potomac River, the area around Oldtown was long favored by Native Americans for settlement. In the 1740s Thomas Cresap established an outpost to trade with local Native Americans. A community of European settlers grew up around the trading post. Settlers used water from the river to power mills and irrigate crops. The decline of the Native American population and the pushing west of the frontier left the town behind, isolated by the mountain ridges that run north and south.

The arrival of the canal in the 1840s was met with mixed reviews by the citizens of Oldtown. While the canal promised increased opportunities for trade, local residents resented the taking of their land for canal construction. Michael Cresap, the grandson of Oldtown founder Thomas Cresap, sued the canal company when construction destroyed his millrace and severed the water supply for his mill. The community also fought for the right to build a bridge over the canal so they could continue to access the ford across the Potomac.

Not until October 1850, when the first boats loaded with Cumberland coal passed through, did Oldtown begin to feel the benefit of her association with the canal. The need for locktenders at locks 71, 70, 69, and 68 provided jobs for members of the community. Keeping canal boats supplied with bread and fresh provisions brought more economic opportunities. The canal provided a link to the outside world. Gradually, canal boat captains and their crews became part of the extended community of Oldtown, linking the town's fortunes to the canal.

What to See

Mile 167.5–Cresap Mill Ruins: Michael Cresap sued the canal company when canal construction destroyed his mill pond. The settlement required the canal to provide the mill with water and a bridge across the canal.

Mile 167–Lock 71: Locks 71 to 58 are composite locks made of rubble stone and wood. Difficulty in obtaining good stone and financial troubles led the canal company to use inferior materials. Over the years as the wood deteriorated, the canal company replaced it and repaired the locks with concrete.

Mile 166.7–Lock 70: A fire in 1906 destroyed a bridge and the first lockhouse built here. Dan Nuse was the locktender before his death in 1915. Following the death of Nuse, a family by the name of Sherwood lived in Lockhouse 70. They were the last lockhouse residents when the canal closed.

Mile 166.5–Lock 69: Known as Twigg's Lock for Emory Twigg and his wife Cora. Both are buried in the Methodist Cemetery in Oldtown.

Mile 164.8–Lock 68: Boatmen referred to this lock as Crabtree Lock after Joe "Pap" Crabtree who tended here around the 1900s. His son Daniel was the locktender here.

Mile 162.4–Town Creek Aqueduct: Aqueduct number 10 was built between 1837 and 1850. It is 100 feet long.



Town Creek Aqueduct. Photo by Barbara Sheridan

My Trail – The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal

By Ronald V. Morris

What follows is a second article by Ronald V. Morris, current president of the Canal Society of Indiana, about his annual hike on the C&O Canal with a small group of friends. It was first published in the July 2025 edition of The Tumble, the newsletter of the Canal Society of Indiana, and is republished here with permission of the society. —Tim Snyder



It was time for my friends and I to make our annual pilgrimage to Maryland for our fall trek on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal towpath. We started this tradition several years ago at Cumberland, Maryland, and expect to finish in Washington, DC. This camping and hiking trip featured extremely warm weather for a November weekend, but our traditional evening campfires was extinguished by Smokey the Bear. It was so dry that Maryland had a burn ban in effect. The stars put on quite a show the first clear night after the moon set. The quiet campground had only the sounds of the wind blowing down the Potomac River and a distant train to break the stillness.

The first hike was from the Cushwa Basin at Williamsport east along the canal and Potomac River. The National Park Service visitor center was open so we visited. My favorite artifact inside the visitor center was a former barrel of cement that had been soaked and the resulting hardened mass was discarded barrel and all into the canal. By the time it was retrieved, the barrel had dissolved leaving a perfect barrel of cement fossil. About 1917 a video was made of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal at work showing mules pulling boats through a lock, passing the Paw Paw Tunnel, and life along the canal. The shadowy black and white images flickered across the screen as I watched seeing visuals I never imagined existed. Charles Kuralt also did a video about life along the canal in the 1980s.

Then there was a last look at the Conococheague Creek Aqueduct, and we were off. The very first lock we visited still had its iron wicket gate poles shoved into the mud

at the base of the extant lock doors at both ends of the lock. Nearly every lock had its lock tender's home. Many of these families were Civil War veterans, and all of them had to supplement their income by farming, practicing a trade, or retail enterprises. We walked to the midpoint of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal trail halfway from Cumberland to Washington.

This was a part of the Potomac called Big Slackwater which was a still pool created behind Dam Number Four. In a major restoration project the National Park Service recreated the section with a series of concrete bridges because the tow path had been flooded away leaving only sheer cliffs and river. Before Dam Number Four the canal boat entered the canal again. The towering Guard Lock let the canal boat travel the Potomac and the mule followed along the bank of the river. In case of flooding the guard lock and banks would seal the raging Potomac from damaging the canal. The surrounding guard banks were equally as impressive as the guard lock and the effort to build it with hand tools and horses was phenomenal.

The next day on the trail we picked up where we stopped at Dam Number Four and passed Killiansburg Cave in the cliffs behind the canal. The Ferry Hill Visitor Center was an old plantation house that had been used as park headquarters. It was standing empty now waiting for maintenance and a new interpretive use. We walked the last of the 15 miles right into our campground between the Potomac River and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal prism, but we went a few more feet to see the stately Antietam Creek aqueduct. All the

Continued on page 18

Paw Paw Bends Paddling Trip

By Tony Laing

For decades, the C&O Canal Association has been offering a paddling trip on the Potomac River in probably its most scenic area: the serpentine section of the river that winds through narrow and mountainous sections of western Maryland on one side and West Virginia on the other. This trip has always provided association members with much fun, exercise, and friendship.



*Paddlers at the Paw Paw Launch.
All photos by Tony Laing*

For this trip, we met at 9:30 a.m. on Friday, September 22, at a boat ramp at Paw Paw on the West Virginia side of the Potomac. Paw Paw is a small, rural, one-gas-station town named after the indigenous paw paw fruit. This launch point is across the river from the iconic Paw Paw Tunnel. After setting up our boats with our gear, we drove to Bill's Place at Little Orleans, where we paid for a shuttle back to our boats.

We paddled for over 8 miles to the Sorrell Ridge campsite after a brief stop for lunch on the riverbank. We paddled under five railroad bridges, both active and abandoned. We enjoyed floating under one bridge as a train passed overhead.

The irony is that, after paddling for 8 miles, the campsite was only a

mile from the Paw Paw Tunnel because the towpath is a relatively straight line. The Sorrell Ridge campsite is the location of the foundation remains of a lockhouse, where a legend says that a lock keeper was murdered over a prized coin collection, and he now haunts the lockhouse. (I have camped next to the lockhouse several times and haven't seen or heard any ghosts.)

We enjoyed a delightful campfire and a supper over a grill, as the paddlers had brought a variety of food to share, ranging from venison baloney to cheese and crackers. We sat around the campfire while being serenaded by annual cicadas, the quiet sound of the Potomac, and the distant sound of trains on the other side of the river.

Saturday began with a leisurely paddle of 9.75 miles to the Devils Alley campsite, with a stop at the Stickpile Hill campsite for lunch. From Devils Alley, we paddled another 3.7 miles downstream to our final destination of 15 Mile Creek at Little Orleans, where several of us dined at the legendary Bill's Place.

In addition to being blessed with a clear sky and moderate temperatures, we enjoyed spotting several bird species: a bald eagle, several ospreys, a kingfisher, and a flock of what we thought were ruddy ducks.

Seven of us enjoyed the trip—Bob Hibbert and Tony Laing in a canoe and the other five in one-person kayaks.

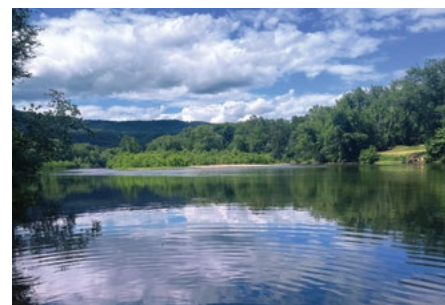
A special thank you and shout out to three of the paddlers. First, to Bob Hibbert, for whom we could not have made the trip—he supplied the canoe, camp stove, and coffee pot. Second, to

Wayne Anderson, who went beyond the call of duty in helping us get up the steep embankment at Sorrell Ridge. And finally, to Paul Sticklely, who carried most of the supplies from the canoe to the campsite, including our heavy cooler, and collected wood for our campfire.

After several decades of offering this Paw Paw Bends paddling trip, we thought this would be our last hurrah, because we need canoes to carry the supplies and most folks paddle kayaks these days. But after some discussion, we decided that next year we will offer a modified trip starting at Little Orleans and paddling to Hancock. We will not offer community food—all the participants will carry their own food and supplies. Stay tuned.



*(Above) Approaching a railroad bridge.
(Below) The Potomac River along the bends.*



Along the Towpath, December 2025

A History of *The Cumberland*

A replica canal boat¹

By William Bauman

This full-scale replica canal boat was designed like the typical cargo-carrying boats on the C&O Canal². About 93 feet long and 14.5 feet wide, the boats just fit inside the lift locks. The replica boat was constructed in 1976 as a Bicentennial project by the C&O Canal of Cumberland, Maryland, Inc. (COCCM), a non-profit organization whose goal was to create a lasting legacy to Cumberland's rich C&O Canal Heritage. Originally located at Lock 75, *The Cumberland* featured period displays and canal artifacts, offering visitors a firsthand look at what life was like on the Canal.

When the COCCM began planning the construction of the replica in 1975, numerous challenges lay ahead. With no original boats left in existence and no blueprints to follow, plans had to be painstakingly recreated from a drawing of the remains of a derelict boat near Hancock, Maryland, as

well as from historic photographs and information gathered from interviews with surviving canal workers. The front or bow of the boat was the location of the mule stable. Two mules pulled the boat for six hours, then were exchanged for two mules that had been resting in the stable. The toolbox is an original from the canal period. The bilge pump, also original, was used to pump out the bilges when the boat was taking on water. The center cabin was the hay house, where hay, feed, or vegetables were stored. A crew member could sleep on the straw tick bed. The tub was used for washing clothes or taking a baths. And the rear or stern cabin served as the captain's cabin. The cabin included a private area for the captain; his bunk was only 5'8" long. The table was made from the remains of an old canal boat. A pantry located

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(Top) The Cumberland, a replica canal boat at Canal Place in Cumberland, Maryland. (Left) Cabin furnished for family use. (Right) The mule stable. On a real canal boat, there would have been a door in the rear wall. Photos by William Bauman

A History of The Cumberland – Continued from Page 17

under the tiller deck was used to store sacks of potatoes, rice, and other bulky foodstuffs that did not require refrigeration. The largest area of the boat was taken up by the front and rear cargo holds. Seven hatch covers were placed over each of the two holds. Boats could haul approximately 120 tons of cargo per boat, with coal being the primary cargo throughout the canal's life. The first boatloads of coal left Cumberland on October 10, 1850.

Financing the project was also a challenge. Cost estimates for the construction materials and labor exceeded \$100,000. Over 10,000 souvenir shares of stock in the replica were sold to help defray some of the cost. The labor involved in the construction of the boat—totaling about 10,000 man-hours—was donated by the U.S. Naval Reserve Seabees Unit (RMNCB-23), the U.S. Army Reserve's 265th Supply Company, students at the Allegany County Center for Career and Technical Education, and many civilian volunteers.

The completed canal boat replica was dedicated on July 11, 1976, with over one thousand people in attendance, including several former canal workers and their families. For the next 23 years, the COCCM maintained and operated the replica, conducting interpretive tours of the boat during the spring and summer months.

In 1999, COCCM agreed to transfer ownership of *The Cumberland* to the Canal Place Preservation & Development Authority for relocation to Canal Place, Maryland's first Certified Heritage Area, at the western terminus of the C&O Canal. Through grant funding from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority, in cooperation with the Maryland

Commission for Celebration 2000, the replica boat was relocated to its current home on January 4, 2000, as one of the State's Millennium celebration projects.

In 2012, during the presidency of Rachel Stewart and the treasurership of William Bauman, the C&O Canal Association assumed responsibility for maintaining the replica boat from the COCCM, which has subsequently been disbanded. During 2019, 1st Sgt. USA (Ret.) Ronald and Mrs. DiAnn Lewis volunteered to lead certain repairs to the replica boat, with a budget of \$3,000. The work started in early October, and on October 26th, 15 members of Carpenters Union Local No. 1541 stepped up to help. The rudder was replaced with a single 200-pound piece of tiki wood; rotted hull boards were replaced; the captain's cabin roof was restored with new tar paper; the breakwater at the bow was replaced; and the City of Cumberland supplied the necessary paint. The project was completed under budget.

Today, restored and repainted, the replica boat is operated jointly by Canal Place, the C&O Canal National Historical Park, and a corps of volunteers. As one of the many unique attractions of the Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area, located at Canal Place in Cumberland, Maryland, *The Cumberland* continues to provide visitors with an entertaining and educational look at life on the C&O Canal.

¹*This history is taken from the brochure "Welcome Aboard The Cumberland, with supplemental information from Retired Ranger Rita Knox's notes, John D. Millar's notes, and a March 2020 article by Rita Bauman in ATP.*

²*See pages Pages 56 & 57 of the Official National Park Handbook 142.*

My Trail – Continued from Page 15



Antietam Creek Aqueduct. Photo courtesy NPS

again. Also, by lunch the Potomac started falling fast and became noisy. Lock 38 was another river lock; it went straight to the Potomac so river boats could be poled across the stream to Shepherdstown, West Virginia. The remains of a dam and several locks bunched around Harper's Ferry, and we left the trail for the old streets and structures of the arsenal town. This left us some time for celebratory ice cream and a visit to Antietam. We were not in Washington yet, but we were already looking forward to more future adventure along the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal next year.

aqueducts looked like they were designed by Roman Architects in stately blocks of classical features with extra pillars and details we would never think of adding in the Midwest.

The third day of the hike was only ten miles, but the Potomac had changed. The first difference was that the rock broke the surface of the water parallel to the flow of the stream, by lunch the rock was perpendicular to the stream



What Is That Building?

By Ed Toussaint

Visitors to the C&O Canal National Historical Park are sometimes curious about the building located on the park's access road about one-third of a mile from the park entrance at Falls Road. National Park Service staff are often asked if this is park property or if the building was associated with the C&O Canal.

In the past, some thought the building was originally built to serve as a station house for the trolley car line that ran from Bethesda to Great Falls from 1913 to 1921. This line was built by land developers looking to attract customers to property west of Wisconsin Avenue. Bradley Boulevard from Wisconsin Avenue to River Road was built on the trolley line's right of way. (You can still see evidence of the trolley line's turning loop along the Gold Mine Spur Trail in the Gold Mine Loop area of Great Falls.) Others have suggested the building may have served as a roadhouse or as a "speakeasy" during Prohibition.

None of this is correct. However, the building and the land on which it sits do have interesting histories, and there is a connection to the C&O Canal. Since 1968, it has been the home of the Cabin John Memorial Post #5633 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. But the VFW is just the most recent owner of the property.

A Pursuit of a Civic Ideal

The building was the brainchild of Truxton Beale, a very wealthy Washingtonian. Beale had an interest in Great Falls and the Potomac area. In 1913, he leased Great Falls Tavern and converted it into a private club for Washington's elite.

Having witnessed town meetings in New England, Beale believed it was important that citizens of the local area assemble at public meetings to discuss things like road improvements, schools, and taxes. The Potomac area lacked a place to hold such meetings. Beale's remedy for this was to construct a community center that

could be used free of charge by the local citizenry for this purpose.

The building could also be used for social gatherings and entertainment. It would have a stage for presentations and shows, and its hardwood floors would be made expressly for dancing. Beale's only requirement was that any gathering be preceded by a discussion of matters of interest to the community.

In 1913, Beale purchased the two-acre plot and commissioned noted Washington, DC, architect Clarke Waggaman to design the building. Waggaman designed many of the buildings at Dupont Circle and in Kalorama. Many of his projects are now protected as national historic places. It's a testimony to Beale's power and influence that he could get an architect of Waggaman's stature to design a rather small building. The VFW Post has acquired copies of Waggaman's original drawings of Beale's Community Center from the Library of Congress and has them on display.

Continued on next page

The Beale Family

Truxton Beale was a scholar and diplomat. He served as the U.S. Ambassador to Persia, Greece, Romania, and Serbia. He was also a member of the University of California Board of Regents. He resided in Decatur House on Lafayette Square.

Truxton Beale's father, Gen. Edward Fitzgerald Beale was a national figure in the 19th century. He was a naval officer, military general, explorer, frontiersman, Indian affairs superintendent, California rancher, diplomat, and friend of Kit Carson, Buffalo Bill Cody, and Ulysses S. Grant.

General Beale fought in the Mexican-American War, emerging as a hero of the Battle of San Pasqual in 1846. He achieved national fame in 1848 by carrying the first gold samples from California to the East, contributing to the gold rush.

He was the greatest of all surveyors of transcontinental roads. While he was surveyor general of California, General Beale personally acquired huge tracts of California land. His property, Rancho Tejon in the San Joaquin Valley, was about the size of Rhode Island (276,000 acres).

General Beale turned the management of his California property over to his men. He moved to Washington, DC, where he played a distinguished part in public affairs, including serving as the U.S. Ambassador to Austria.

In 1912, the California property was sold by General Beale's heirs, including his son, Truxton Beale.

The Land

Both the C&O Canal National Historical Park at Great Falls and the two-acre plot on which Beale's Community Center were built were originally part of a larger parcel of land known as Crawford Lodge. The original owner of the property was a Rockville doctor, James Anderson. It consisted of many acres of farmland



From The Sunday Star, July 2, 1916. "Building in Potomac district, Montgomery County, given by Truxton Beale for use of community." Photo courtesy Library of Congress

along the Great Falls of the Potomac and was worked by enslaved people and tenant farmers. They originally grew tobacco and then later wheat and corn. The farming operations struggled to be successful. The number of enslaved fell from 40 in 1840 to eight by 1860.

In the 1850s and 1860s, Anderson's land became more valuable for canal operations and gold mining. In August 1853, the C&O Canal paid Anderson \$200 to build the canal through part of his property. He also gave the canal company permission for a waste weir, a guard bank, and a stop lock on his property between lockhouses

16 and 17 to control the flow of water. A month later, the *Baltimore Sun* reported that the "jury of condemnation of the property of Dr. John W. Anderson" had awarded him another \$1,875.

In 1866, the Maryland Mining Company leased 125 acres of Anderson's land for gold mining. You can still see vestiges of this mining operation at the top of the Great Falls access road near the intersection of Falls Road and MacArthur Boulevard. Two smaller mines operated on Carroll Creek, a stream close to the Great Falls gatehouse.

Almost Full Circle

In 1926, Truxton Beale sold the building and the land. It's possible there had been more dancing than discussion going on in the Community Center. At least one old map identifies it as a "Dance Hall." The new owner converted it into a private residence, and it was occupied by a series of families with children for the next 42 years.

In 1968, the building was returned to its original purpose as a meeting place for a community when the property was purchased by the Cabin John Memorial Post #5633 of the VFW. A large addition was added to the rear of the building to allow larger meetings and ceremonies. In 2003, a cell tower, disguised as a pine tree, was added. The revenue from this lease allows the VFW Post to contribute to organizations that support veterans and active-duty military and their families.

On the Level

By Allyson Miller

This report covers level walker activity from July through September. Earlier reports are included where applicable. Any reports for activity performed later will be in the next issue of Along the Towpath. Thanks to all who participate in our Level Walker volunteer program! As a team, your efforts make a significant contribution to the park.

The Level Walker program is a long-term Association volunteer activity and the oldest volunteer program in the park. Level walkers periodically visit their levels and assess conditions, pick up trash and perform light trail clean-up. Many level walkers are long-time volunteers. Level walkers must be members in the C&O Canal Association, comply with NPS regulations, and walk at least once a year to remain active level walkers.

Interested in being a level walker? There are several levels without an assigned level walker and we could use your help. Most of the unassigned levels are in the western part of the park. If you are interested or have additional questions, please contact Allyson Miller at lw@candocanal.org.



*Become a
Level Walker*

July to September 2025 Level Walker Activity

*Level 2 – Incline Plane to Lock 5: **Kamile Kay reports in July–August:*** There was more wildlife than usual on my walks, and I noticed very high usage with many people on the trail, especially in August. There were large groups and at least one organized run. I picked up many plastic cups after the run. Otherwise, the trail was pretty clean considering the high usage.

*Level 3 – Lock 5 to Cabin John Creek: **Allyson Miller reported in August:*** I monitored the towpath and canal after heavy rains and flooding. Cabin John Creek had overflowed the blocked culvert, and the water had flowed over the berm, washing debris into the prism and over the towpath. As a result, the towpath surface between Lock 7 and Cabin John Bridge was heavily eroded, and several social side trails had severely eroded the river side of the towpath. As I was completing my bike ride, I noticed the NPS was in the process of repairing some of the erosion and putting up yellow tape on the heavily eroded trails that could not be repaired with a simple fix. The DC Water pipe that runs on the berm side of the towpath was heavily eroded and exposed above Cabin John Creek, and there was a large debris field with full-size trees. Yellow tape was blocking the Union Arch Trail from Cabin John Bridge to MacArthur Boulevard. DC Water estimated the site would be repaired and cleared by August 31.

*Level 4 – Cabin John Creek to Lock 14: **Allyson Miller reported in August:*** After heavy rains in July and August, the towpath between Cabin John Bridge and Lock 8 showed erosion from recent flooding. The surface was very rough, and there were some deep washouts along the

side of the towpath where social trails meet the towpath. All tree debris had been cleared, and the NPS had placed yellow tape at the worst of the eroded spots.

*Level 5 – Lock 14 to Copley Bridge: **Mindy Ginsburg reported in July:*** Because of the heat, I broke my level walk into two days. Each was a typically warm and humid summer day, the sky a beautiful blue. There was evidence of the recent heavy rains in the fast-moving Potomac River below, with high water levels in parts of the canal and some muddy patches on the towpath. I noted that the wooden parts of Locks 13 and 14 continue to erode and decay. There is no risk to pedestrians, but the appearance is not beautiful.

*Level 8 – Lock 21 to Lock 22: **Rinze and Sue Roosma reported in August:*** It was a very nice, relatively cool day with temperatures in the 70s. Even though it was a quiet day on the trail, there wasn't much wildlife to observe this time, just the usual turtles, a lone great blue heron, and one deer. Even the blooming pickerel weed didn't attract any butterflies. Both sides of the trail were pretty much overgrown and in need of mowing. There was very little trash. There were no tents at the campground. The whole prism section was watered, and the water level was high.

*Level 9 – Pennyfield to Seneca Aqueduct: **Lou Robbins reported in August:*** It was a beautiful summer day, with several running and biking groups. The prism was full from Pennyfield to Violettes Lock, and there were isolated wet spots north of Violettes. The access road and parking area need major regrading and filling of potholes.

Continued on next page

Level 10 – Seneca Aqueduct to Milepost 25: Judith Walton reported in August–September: I did numerous walks during this time. The parking lot and picnic area had a lot of trash.

Level 12 – Sycamore Landing to Edwards Ferry: Pat Hopson, with Carol Ivory, Larry Broadwell, and Frank Wodarczyk, reported in August: There were many people out enjoying the towpath on this sunny and not-too-hot day. Frank counted 85 bicyclists and 11 walkers. He noted that about three-fourths of the bicyclists were headed downstream. It seems cyclists now consistently outnumber walkers by a large margin. There was very little trash at Sycamore Landing and at Edwards Ferry and, as always, not much along the towpath itself. But there was lots of trash at the Goose Creek river lock. In all, we collected the equivalent of about three full 30-gallon trash bags, plus a large buoy that got a bag of its own.

Level 15 – Whites Ferry to Lock 26: Jon Wolz reported in August: The towpath is damaged in several places and may take quite some time to repair. There was wet mud in several places and downed trees at Miles 38.1 and 36.4. I reported these downed trees to the NPS. There was water in the prism from Lock 26 to below Whites Ferry. At Whites Ferry, there are potholes that need filling. The field by the pavilion is overgrown. The cabins are still standing, and there has been no new commitment from the NPS to have them removed. They were vacated prior to April 1, 2022.

Level 16 – Lock 26 to Monocacy Aqueduct: Jon Wolz reported in August: The towpath surface is rough in different places and on both ramps at the Monocacy Aqueduct. The sinkhole I reported in June on the towpath near the entrance to the park at the Dickerson Conservation Park parking lot has been filled with cement. The water was at a normal level from the Dickerson Conservation Park parking lot entrance up to Lock 27.

Level 18 – Nolands Ferry to Point of Rocks: Bob Carpenter reported in July: The towpath was alive with bicycle traffic today for what was Day 3 of The Great Bicycle Tour (“TGBT”) from Cumberland to Georgetown. It was a typical summer day, with heat, high humidity, and a mix of clouds and sun. Overall, the towpath was in good condition, and fortunately this level suffered only minor damage from the May Potomac River floods. There was little trash along the towpath, but a much heavier volume of trash at the Nolands Ferry and Point of Rocks boat ramps. There was a downed tree just upstream from the Calico Rocks hiker-biker campsite at

Mile 47.7 (reported to the NPS) that was easy for hikers and bikers to get across.

Level 19 – Point of Rocks to Catoclin Aqueduct: Lou Robbins reported in August: It was a cool summer day and a good walk. A camper had left a fire smoldering at Landers boat ramp, which I extinguished. Possible sinkholes in the prism at Culverts 78 and 79 were reported to the NPS. The previously reported damaged rub rail on the Catoclin Aqueduct is now totally rotten.

Level 19 – Point of Rocks to Catoclin Aqueduct: June Miller and Cathy Guzauskas reported in September: We spotted a deer standing in the canal. There was not a lot of trash. We noticed two small areas where gravel material was added to the towpath. There were a lot of fallen branches on the towpath, and we tried to remove as many as we could. We spotted a lot of wildlife: a small snake, a salamander, cardinals, goldfinches, and turkey vultures.

Level 20 – Catoclin Aqueduct to Lock 30: Bob Carpenter reported in July: It was a hot and humid day. The towpath was in generally good condition, and I noted no apparent damage from the Potomac River flooding in May. Bicycle traffic was light, and I encountered no walkers during this visit. I spotted several duck families in the algae-covered canal prism near Mile 54. While the sinkholes at the edge of the waste weir that I’ve previously reported have been filled, deterioration of the wood at the edge of the towpath on the river side appears to be a recurring issue. There was minimal trash along the towpath and at the Brunswick Lock 30 access area. The beautiful Catoclin Aqueduct is in excellent condition. No tree debris was visible on the upstream side of Catoclin Creek. The footbridge over Little Catoclin Creek, opened in the summer of 2024, provides an all-weather continuation of the towpath. The construction site continues to heal nicely, and the low-water temporary bridge has been removed. The upstream end of the footbridge was slightly damaged by a falling tree that I encountered on a bicycle ride back in May, but this damage is cosmetic only.

Level 20 – Catoclin Aqueduct to Lock 30: Lou Robbins reported in September: It was a nice fall day. I noticed a number of issues, all reported to the NPS. The top of Culvert 84 was breached, and a steady stream of water flowed into the void. Other problems noted include a rotting rub rail, a stagnant pool of water, sinkholes along the towpath (outlet side), and a sinkhole in the prism at Culvert 83. The west side of Culvert 87 has about a 20-foot embankment with about a 20-foot vertical drop less than 10 feet from the roadway.

Level 22 – Lock 31 to Lock 33: **Paul Durham reported in July:** Heavy usage today (Saturday morning, holiday weekend, 57 cyclists, 43 hikers). No problems observed, towpath in good condition. There were volunteers at the Route 340 bridge painting over the graffiti. A large pile of trash was left at the Keep Tryst Road access point; a truck would be needed to collect it.

Level 22 – Lock 31 to Lock 33: **Paul Durham reported in August:** Cooler weather brought out an increased number of visitors to the towpath this morning: 59 cyclists and 57 walkers observed. A large group was gathering along the riverbank at the Keep Tryst Road access point, including four tubers on the river. The towpath repair after the flooding earlier in the summer downstream of the Harpers Ferry railroad bridge has settled, and a large puddle has formed. Users, especially cyclists, are traveling around the uphill edge and are starting to widen the towpath a bit. More gravel fill is needed at this location.

Level 22 – Lock 31 to Lock 33: **Karlen Keto reported in August:** There were 45 cyclists and one high-wheeler, almost all heading east. I was saddened to see the one fast-moving, motorized, fat-tire dirt bike, which left a thick trail of dust. A concerning note: There were about 45 cars parked in the access area, many parked illegally. Only one had a bike rack. This is very unusual. As I started the level walk, I noted the sounds and strong odor of grill cooking coming from the river bank. Upon my return to the access point, I saw a man come from the river path and place a large, heavy-duty, filled plastic bag under the trash-free sign. I asked if he was leaving the bag there; he replied yes. I was wearing my NPS volunteer shirt and hat and my Association name tag. I also had my own picked-up trash bag in hand, so I felt comfortable explaining the park's trash-free policy. He retrieved his trash bag and returned to the parking area. There were still many picnickers at the river, and I wondered whether there would be trash in this area today. The lockhouse remains in good condition. The level has been recently maintained with mowing and trimming and tree removal. It is beautiful and safe! **Karlen Keto and Don Peterson reported in September:** Someone left two filled garbage bags by the trash-free sign at the beginning of the level (perhaps the people in my previous report). We greeted 45 cyclists, four walkers, and one jogger. Two dogs on leash were enjoying their walk. One cyclist was packed for a multiday trip. Most cyclists approaching from the rear did not make their presence known. Towpath remains in great shape. No safety concerns were noted. Turtles were out enjoying the sun. Paw paws filled the air with pleasant scents. We each ate one paw paw. They were so sweet and delicious!

Level 23 – Lock 33 to Dam 3: **Arthur Tsien reported in July:** This was my third walk of this level in 2025. It was a great summer day to spend outdoors as part of celebrating the Fourth. Even at 9 a.m., Lower Town and the towpath between the Goodloe Byron footbridge and the Maryland Heights trailhead were teeming with people. As previously reported, I observed some erosion of the repaved towpath surface topcoat in a few places, particularly near Lock 33. Nevertheless, the level continues to be in good condition. I did not see any significant impediments to foot or cycle travel. I had my usual positive experience walking the towpath. **Paul Durham reported in August:** Fairly heavy trail usage for this early in the morning due to 50-plus runners associated with what looked like a high school cross-country team. There were 58 walkers/runners and 2 bikers. No trash or other problems observed. **Arthur Tsien reported in September:** It was a great late summer/early fall day to spend outdoors. The level continues to be in good condition, with no changes from my last report two months ago. I did not see any significant impediments to foot or cycle travel. The river was very low. I had my usual positive experience walking the towpath.

Level 26 – Lock 37 to Antietam Aqueduct: **Larry Cohen reported in July:** There has been little trash on my walks this year. This level is in good condition. There is an abundance of English ivy. I saw several deer, sanderlings, a kingfisher, and an osprey.

Level 32 – Marsh Run Culvert to Dam 4: **David Plume reported in September:** The towpath was partly covered with leaves and tree bark. The surface was in good condition. From Dam 4 downstream past Mile Marker 84, there are multiple areas of fine gravel and loose sand that showed ruts from bicycle tires.

Level 42 – Four Locks to McCoy Ferry: **Jack Ebersole reported in August:** The towpath was dry and clear, with little trash. A downed tree from the last storm has been cleared. The waysides at Four Locks are in very bad condition, barely readable. There are trees growing out of the top far wall in the stop lock; they should be removed before the roots damage the wall. The construction of the new boat ramp at Four Locks continues.

Level 44 – Fort Frederick to Ernstville: **Jim Biasco reported in July:** The towpath is in excellent condition, with little trash. It was overcast, hot, humid, and buggy; I certainly could have found a better day! But it was quiet, just four cyclists and two fishermen. The Big Pool water level was down below normal. At the upstream end of Big Pool, there seems to be quite a bit of algae in the water and on the shore.

Continued on next page

Level 49 – Round Top Cement Mill to Lock 53: **Paul Petkus reported in September:** The level was well maintained. The campground and areas near the structures had been mowed. It appears that the towpath had been resurfaced. The condition of the structures was stable. It was a nice afternoon, although park visitation was low in the area. Wingstem, goldenrod, and aster attracted a variety of insects. I saw butterflies from nine species.

Level 54 – Lock 59 to Lock 60: **Paul Petkus reported in August:** It was a nice day for an outing in the park. The towpath was well maintained and in good condition overall. One item of note was a small hole in the center of the towpath in Mile 147. Another hole was in the prism near Lock 59. A grill at the campground needs to be replaced due to rust. Graffiti has increased on the railroad bridge abutment. I noted a small degradation on one of the walls on the berm side of Culvert 206. I saw more deer than typical. Butterfly activity was low. I chatted with a solo bicyclist, who was biking from San Diego to Maine. It was the 70th day of his trip. He planned to bike from Cumberland to Hagerstown that day.

Level 55 – Lock 60 to Culvert 208: **Paul Petkus reported in July:** Overall, the towpath was in good condition. There were a few short sections with puddles, mud, and tire tracks. All the muddy sections were small enough to be easily bypassed by park visitors. There were no obstructions on the towpath. The prism held water where it normally does. No sinkholes were evident.

I detected no changes in the condition of the lock. I did not photograph the culvert on this outing, since the vegetation level near it was too high for me. I didn't see any spotted lanternflies on Level 55, but I did see many downstream. It was a good day for nature sightings. I saw 10 species of butterflies overall during the outing. Dragonflies and damselflies were active and plentiful. I saw deer in multiple locations. The most interesting was a fawn that followed one of the bicyclists on the towpath.

Level 67 – Mexico Farms to Evitts Creek Aqueduct: **Sue Rudd reported on multiple outings, July–September:** With the resurfacing done on this end of the park, traffic has increased a lot. People comment on how nice it is to ride on the canal now. Like I've said before, you really get to experience all the beauty the park has to offer when you don't have to worry about where you are riding or walking because of all the old ruts and potholes. On the downside, the nice surface has also increased the speed bikes can travel, so we still need to be careful. On September 29, in a one-hour period, I counted 47 cyclists! Four were locals I see often, but the rest had left Cumberland for DC, loaded down with supplies and happy to be on their way. The prior Sunday, I talked with a group from Oregon and California who had biked from Pittsburgh and were doing the entire GAP and canal in seven days. They were very impressed with the beauty of the area and how nice the ride is, which is always nice to hear! Thanks to everyone who keeps the park in such great condition!

Fall 2025 Activities



(Left) The November 1 Heritage Hike activities included short and long hikes, as well as a bike ride. Photo by Charlotte Loveless; (Center) Over 40 people attended the Heritage Hike dinner and David Gilbert's presentation on the Hall Rifle Works at Harpers Ferry. Photo by Jane Hanna; (Right) The November 9 Continuing Hike was a round-trip between Antietam Creek Aqueduct and Lock 37. Photo by Jon Wolz

2025 C&O Upper Canal Ride – A Time of Reflection

by Deborah Weaver Poole



Riders at Knobly Mountain, Maryland. All photos by Denny Sloppy

There are those who see the turning of leaves, their color, as the beginning of the end. Winter and snow will grace the C&O making our days of riding short—for some of us, our bikes are put to rest until spring. However for our upper C&O 2025 annual bike ride, we were blessed with not only being able to view nature's budding and colorful beauty, but to also experience cool crisp days, forming new and nurturing old friendships, and enjoying the simple and at times the spirituality of the ride. It is not only the peacefulness of the ride, but the realization that this ride is part of each person's individual journey that makes the C&O ride special! Our ride was a time of renewal and reflection.

Our 2025 ride started with five riders which is a small group in comparison to other past rides led and organized by Tom Perry. Many of you fondly remember Tom—not just as a leader of the C&O Canal Association, but as a guiding force in Boy Scout and Cedar Ridge bike rides, a devoted Lutheran pastor, a gifted organist, and a proud member of the Hagerstown Lions Club. He was recognized for his contributions to the C&O Big Slackwater project, and he lived his life with unwavering ethics and quiet

honor. Tom's spirit, leadership and love for the trail, encouraged many and on his home fireplace mantel sits a replica of a large C&O Canal boat. Tom is the reason many of us have connected and ridden this annual C&O Canal ride together for multiple years. The 2025 riders included, Denny Sloppy (leader/organizer), John Betting, Kathy Merchant, Deb Poole and Paul Stickley. On Saturday, we were joined by another biker friend, Pat Pope.

In reflection during our ride, we talked about how the C&O bike trips have evolved over the years. Even the strongest riders may one day find themselves unable to return to the trail—whether for a season or for good. Yet, groups like ours continue to welcome new faces, offering a chance to forge friendships and share the journey. Every group creates memories along the C&O that become part of the journey. These rides honor those who've ridden before, keeping their spirit alive with every mile. Because once you've ridden the C&O, you understand something words can't quite capture. Its beauty isn't just in the scenery—it's in the quiet moments, the laughter, and the rhythm of the trail. It's an experience etched into the heart and soul of every rider, carried long after the ride ends.

The decision to do the 2025 C&O Canal Association ride as the "Upper C&O ride" was made in light of unknown dates for the repairs to the Harpers Ferry pedestrian bridge. This decision established the ride as shorter, going from Cumberland to Williamsport, Md.

Our ride began on October 10th where we left Cumberland Maryland biking to Paw Paw, West Virginia. In Paw Paw a highlight of the evening included a simple camping treat over an outdoor fire—Hershey s'mores. Sharing sticks for cooking the marshmallows, we enjoyed these gooey deserts along with warmth from the fire.



The author at Canal Place.

In the morning we walked through the Paw Paw tunnel where we learned that nearly six million bricks were used to line the tunnel walls. Can you imagine the time and effort it took for workers of the past to lay nearly six million bricks by hand, one by one? We pedaled to Bills Place where we were treated to his annual Customer Appreciation Day, which included multiple bands and a fun atmosphere. In Hancock, a smaller group dined at Buddy Lou's, had breakfast the next morning at

Continued on next page

Potomac River Grill, and continued on to Williamsport, Maryland. On the way we stopped below Fort Frederick to look at a marker in recognition of E. C. Whyte III and E. C. Whyte Jr. (Missy Whyte Pope’s father and grandfather). Missy’s grandfather was the first superintendent at Fort Frederick State Park. He and his family lived at the park and her dad grew up living there. At Williamsport we met at Tony’s Pizza for dinner and were joined by other biking friends, Paul and Bonnie Leatherman, Melody Miles, Pat and Missy Pope and Ken Johnson.

As F. Scott Fitzgerald once wrote, “Life starts all over again when it gets crisp in the fall.” That spirit of renewal is alive on the C&O Canal Association rides, open to anyone who enjoys cycling at a relaxed pace—typically around 9 miles per hour, with plenty of breaks. Our stops give us time to capture photos, share stories, enjoy snacks, hydrate, and shed extra layers as the day warms. It’s not just about the ride—it’s about the camaraderie, the laughter, and the memories made

along the way. We’d love for you to be part of it and consider joining us for the 2026 C&O Canal Association October ride.

John Burroughs once said, “How beautiful the leaves grow old. How full of light and color are their last days.” By riding we honor those who built the canal, those who depended on it for their livelihood, those who maintain the canal, and those who have contributed financially and volunteered to preserve the canal, we honor those leaders who have organized rides in the past and those who continue to make memories by experiencing the C&O’s beauty and peacefulness. For all those who love the C&O, for those who love or loved to bike, may your beautiful memories continue forever. When we get near to our last days on earth, may we leave a legacy for those who will continue to enjoy life, may we have provided light and also led a colorful life that will live on in memories from our individual journeys and experiences. Remember, that one person can make a difference. Your actions can

change lives and touch others in ways you may never fully see. We will always appreciate all those who have led bike rides in the past and all those who have volunteered through the C&O Canal Association to make the C&O Canal National Historical Park a better place. We hope to see you on the trail in 2026. Let’s ride, remember the past, look forward to the future and make new memories together! Enjoy the journey!



Denny Sloppy on the towpath.

C&O Canal Association Calendar of Events – 2026

C&OCA Business
C&OCA Hike and Dinner or Other Event
Non-C&OCA Event
C&OCA Hike
C&OCA Volunteer Event
C&OCA Paddle Trip
C&OCA Bike Trip
Feb. 1, 2026, Sun., Board Meeting , 1:00 p.m. via Zoom. Check calendar at www.candocanal.org for details.

March 21, 2026, Sat., Annual Meeting Beallsville, Maryland See details on page 5.
Apr. 12, 2026, Sun., Board Meeting , 1:00 p.m. Glen Echo, Md. Check calendar at www.candocanal.org for details.
June 7, 2026, Sun., Board Meeting , 1:00 p.m. Williamsport, Md. Check calendar at www.candocanal.org for details.

Visit Facebook and the Association website and check upcoming issues of Along the Towpath for additional event listings and for further details of scheduled events. Contact programs@candocanal.org with questions.

C&O CANAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
C&O Canal National Historical Park Headquarters
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Superintendent's Assistant.....Erin Cowan
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Chief of Business Management Vacant
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Chief of Interpretation, Education, and Volunteers....Christiana Hanson
Chief of Professional Services.....Joseph Reed
Partnerships Coordinator Vacant
Volunteer Program ManagerEmily Tyner-Hewitt
Cultural Resources Manager and HistorianJustin Ebersole
Safety Officer.....John Adams
Supervisory Park Ranger (Law Enforcement)Joshua Cunningham

Palisades District

Mile 0 (Tidelock) to Mile 42.19 (Monocacy River)

Interpretive Supervisor.....Nicolette Talley
Supervisory Recreation Fee Specialist Evan Costanza
Georgetown Partnerships Coordinator..... Shaun Lehmann

Western Maryland District

Mile 42.19 (Monocacy River) to Mile 184.5 (Cumberland)

Interpretive Supervisor.....Joshua Nolen

Visiting the Park

The C&O Canal NHP is open 365 days a year, but may be closed entirely or in sections at times due to weather conditions, towpath issues or repairs. Park visitor centers are located at Georgetown, Great Falls, Brunswick, Williamsport, Hancock, and Cumberland. They may be closed seasonally or due to staffing limitations.

Check park status before visiting.

www.nps.gov/choh/playourvisit/index.htm provides information about park facilities, towpath closures, NPS events, canal boat programs, visitor centers, camping, and other visit-related information. The park information phone number is **301-739-4200**.



NPS
Plan Your Visit

Other Useful Contacts

Canal Quarters Program – www.canaltrust.org/programs/canal-quarters
Canal Towns – www.canaltrust.org/programs/canal-towns

24-HOUR EMERGENCY:

911 or 866-677-6677

REPORT SAFETY HAZARDS OR TOWPATH ISSUES:

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: \$25 for individuals, \$35 for families, and \$50 for patrons, assessed on a calendar-year basis, and include a subscription to the newsletter.

Dues should be mailed to the C&O Canal Association or paid online. 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 contacting the C&OCA at the address above or emailing inquiries@candocanal.org. 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 web page at www.candocanal.org. The webmaster is website@candocanal.org. Inquiries can be directed to the Association at inquiries@candocanal.org.

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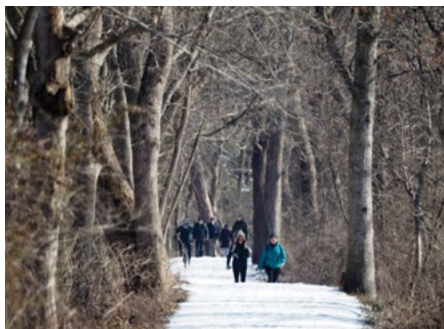
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With leafless trees and occasional snow, winter brings a quiet beauty to the canal corridor. Photographer Kuriacose Joseph has documented some of these scenes.



ALONG THE TOWPATH

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www.candocanal.org

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