



Towpath Topics

Middlesex Canal Association P.O. Box 333 Billerica, MA 01821

www.middlesexcanal.org

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**At long last there are signs of progress.
Will the roof be installed before this issue goes to print?**

Please mark your calendars!

MCA Sponsored Events – 2020 Schedule

18th Bike Tour, North, 9:00am, Saturday, October 3, 2020

Fall Walk, 1:30pm, Sunday, October 18, 2020

Wilmington Town Park to Patch's Pond

Participants meet at the kiosk near 35 Towpath Drive, Wilmington

Fall Meeting, 1:00pm, Sunday, October 25, 2020

TBA

Winter Meeting, 1:00pm, Sunday, February 14, 2021

TBA

Special Event: World Canal Conference

August 30 – September 3, 2021

Hosted by the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Association

Hagerstown, Maryland

The Visitors Center/ Museum is open Saturday and Sunday, Noon – 4:00pm, except on a holiday (April 12, 2020 Easter). The Board of Directors meets the 1st Wednesday of each month, 3:30-5:30pm, except July and August. Check the MCA website for updated information during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Editors' Letter

Ever have a moment when you are doing one thing and an idea totally unrelated pops into your head? One day this last summer I was driving past Alec's house on my way to visit family in Dracut when I was hit with a rare occurrence, AN IDEA! The next issue of Towpath Topics should document the PEOPLE working on the new museum, EUREKA! I have researched many old buildings and never located information with names, biographies, and especially photos of the people who did the actual work to create the building. Towpath Topics would create this document. Fortunately, Betty Bigwood liked the idea and has recorded the companies, owner, photos, etc. More will follow in future issues. Hopefully, researchers in 100 years will be grateful.

Before we get to that, however, the MCA must say good-bye to two old and dear friends; Harley Holden is remembered by Tom Dahill and Jean Potter by Howard Winkler and MCA members.

Lastly, the President's letter, the "virtual" schedule and miscellaneous items round out this issue. FYI: The Smallpox Cemetery, Part II will continue in the next issue.

Please Enjoy! Deb Fox, Alec Ingraham, Robert Winters

MCA Sponsored Events and Directions to Museum

Before attending any of these events please check the MCA website for details.

18th Annual Bike Tour North: On Saturday, October 3, 2020, riders are to meet at 9:00am at the Middlesex Canal plaque, Sullivan Square MBTA Station (1 Cambridge Street, Charlestown, MA 02019). As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic the ride has been abbreviated this year. Please visit the MCA website, www.middlesexcanal.org, for details.

Fall Walk: The MCA will sponsor a canal walk on October 18, 2020 at 1:30pm. Participants are to meet at the kiosk near 35 Towpath Drive, Wilmington to the Maple Meadow Aqueduct. Points of interest, along the 8/10 of a mile Middlesex Canal route, will include the Ox Bow Turn where striations from the tow ropes are imbedded in the ledge along the canal, the signs of Fall as the trek continues through the 14-acre tract gifted to the MCA by Stanley Webber and his daughter, Julia Ann Fielding, and finally Patches Pond. Please visit the MCA website, www.middlesexcanal.org, for details.

Fall Meeting: The fall meeting of the Middlesex Canal Association will be held on October 25, 2020 at 1:00pm at the Middlesex Canal Museum and Visitors' Center at 71 Faulkner Street in North Billerica. Please consult the MCA website, www.middlesexcanal.org, for current information concerning this meeting.

Special Event Invitation

Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Association is getting ready to welcome enthusiasts from around the world to next year's World Canal Conference, August 30 – September, 2021 in Hagerstown, MD. The COVID-19 pandemic has cast a cloud over the preparations. Leipzig, Germany was scheduled to host the 2020 conference in September, but the impact of the pandemic forced them to reschedule for May, 2022.

We will monitor developments over the coming months. We are hopeful that conditions will improve and that canal lovers will be ready to gather again. We will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the creation of the C&O Canal National Historic Park. Construction of the C&O Canal began in 1828 in Washington, D.C. The canal reached Cumberland in 1850. It operated until 1924. The federal government acquired the disused waterway in 1938. Legislation transformed it into a national park in 1971.

The Conference theme will be: Historic Canals Today

Education, Recreation, and Tourism

Many 19th-century waterways have found a new role in the 21st Century. The conference will provide an opportunity to hear the secrets their successes.

Mornings of the four-day event will feature presentations related to the conference theme. In the afternoon, attendees will hit the road for study tours that visit canal locations and other local history sites, such as Great Falls, Paw Paw Tunnel, and Antietam battlefield.

Hagerstown is just eight miles from the C&O Canal, making the city an ideal base for canal enthusiasts to explore the area. Conveniently located near the junction of two interstate highways, I-81 and I-70, Hagerstown is a 7½ hour drive from North Billerica. You can learn more by visiting the conference website, <https://wcc2021.org/> or the Visit Hagerstown website, <http://www.visithagerstown.com/>.

Save the date. We would love to welcome you in 2021.

From: Bill Holdsworth

C&O Canal Association



Directions to Museum: 71 Faulkner Street in North Billerica, MA

By Car: From Rte. 128/95

Take Route 3 toward Nashua, to Exit 28 “Treble Cove Road, North Billerica, Carlisle”. At the end of the ramp, turn left onto Treble Cove Road in the direction of North Billerica. At about ¾ mile, bear left at the fork. After another ¾ mile, at the traffic light, cross straight over Route 3A (Boston Road). Go about ¼ mile to a 3 way-fork; take the middle road (Talbot Avenue) which will put St. Andrew’s Church on your left. Go ¼ mile to a stop sign and bear right onto Old Elm Street. Go about ¼ mile to the falls, where Old Elm Street becomes Faulkner Street; the Museum is on your left and you can park across the street on your right, just beyond the falls. Watch out crossing the street!

From I-495

Take Exit 37, North Billerica, south roughly 2 plus miles to the stop sign at Mt. Pleasant Street, turn right, then bear right at the Y, go 700’ and turn left into the parking lot. The Museum is across the street (Faulkner Street).

By Train:

The Lowell Commuter line runs between Lowell and Boston’s North Station. From the station side of the tracks at North Billerica, the Museum is a 3-minute walk down Station Street and Faulkner Street on the right side.

President’s Message

by J. Breen

The good benefit from COVID-19 has been the exercise of coping skills. After the MA governor on March 23 prohibited meetings of ten or more, Treasurer Emeritus Howard Winkler offered to host directors’ meetings in his Zoom room. Howard was able to get the older directors to try a Zoom meeting as he was 87. (The honor of emeritus was voted after 29 years as treasurer, retiring in 2017.) Howard first offered a practice Zoom with director Tom Dahill, 94, then onward to host younger directors.

The first directors’ meeting in Howard’s Zoom meeting room had problems. A director, a professor who had been Zooming classes of 90 students, had solutions like writing advice on paper and holding it up on video to another director who didn’t have audio. Shared video also allowed photos to be seen by all as part of the discussion. Best of all, the director, Robert Winters, attended when usually a physical meeting at 3:30pm on Wednesday at the canal visitor center/museum, had the barrier of 20 miles through traffic clogged metro Boston.

COVID-19 did increase regulations. Robert, leader of the joint Appalachian Mountain Club -Middlesex Canal Association walks on the towpath, has said he would no longer volunteer to lead the AMC walk because of the now onerous AMC requirements. The Maple Meadow walk on October 18 is still likely

as fall is a great time for a walk in the 14 acre gift of the Webber family and the governor's COVID-19 orders permit the walk with restriction. Meetup is a possible replacement for the publicity of a listing on the AMC web site.



The walkers are standing at the Maple Meadow Aqueduct, the beginning of 14 acres with 0.8 miles of canal, a gift in 1983 of Stanley Webber and his daughter, Julia Ann Fielding, to the Middlesex Canal Association

After the governor's COVID-19 order, the Wild and Scenic Concord River Stewardship Council cancelled its planned annual Riverfest for a virtual one. For some time the Middlesex Canal Association had wanted to make a video tour of the museum, now a member of the Council, Marlies Henderson, worked with Billerica public access TV using a 3600 camera to tour the museum, walk the Thoreau Towpath, and paddle the Concord: <https://tinyurl.com/virtualmiddlesex>

The Council has granted the Association \$11,500 from the National Park Service for an observation deck and interpretive panel at the future canal visitor center. The River Stewardship Council grant supports public access to the river. The visitor/center museum is being built on the river bank where the ceremonial groundbreaking for the canal took place in 1794. The shovel used for the groundbreaking is a museum exhibit and can be handled by visitors to experience how shorter Americans were two centuries ago. And strong, working a shovel with a heavy iron blade from can see to can't see.

Obituary: September 7, 2020 Harley Holden (1937-2020) by Tom Dahill

I met Harley Holden when he joined a luncheon group, made up of his friends Alan Seaburg and Ken Carpenter, who had worked for Harvard College and had recently retired from their duties at the extensive library system of that institution, and Dan McCarron, who was responsible for all printing on the Harvard campus. My inclusion in the group was because Alan Seaburg and I had been involved for several years in publication of books he wrote and I illustrated, and because I enjoyed the occasional lunch with people of intense involvement in academic and research activities.

Harley was, as his colleagues, intricately involved with the college libraries, as University Archivist, of Harvard, and became a late addition to the luncheon group. At first the meetings were at the Harvard Faculty Club, and later at the Riverside Café in Billerica, near Alan's home. Harley proved to be most affable and a source of interest to all of us from a perspective only he could provide through his experiences in travel throughout the United States and abroad, and familiarity with historical documents seldom handled by his colleagues. An invitation to his home in Shirley exposed his family's origin in the remote beginning of our country, and the formation of the town of Shirley.



Holdenwood and Maplewood Manor

His "garden" Holdenwood, with a formal section, occupies many acres and is an extraordinary reserve, inhabited by growths he gathered from all corners of the world. It includes a house called Holdenwood Storybook Cottage, a

library for children. The building he lived in, begun in the early 18th century, had additions none later than the 19th century, that is, if you do not observe the collection of at least 18,000 volumes of publications meticulously organized on the second floor. The house and barn next to it, and their contents, are testimonies to his devotion to history and the printed word.

He now resides in the burial ground of his family across the street from the front door of his home, Maplewood Manor.

Harley was a dedicated director of the Middlesex Canal Association and was instrumental in securing the articles of organization that established the legality of the institution. He was a scholar, a gentle soul, and long-term friend of the Middlesex Canal.

In Memoriam, Tom Dahill

Jean Potter: Obituary by Howard Winkler

It is with great sadness I am writing to tell you that my friend and fellow MCA Proprietor, Jean Potter, passed away on July 3. Jean was the mother of four children and grandmother of six.

She was our long serving Recording Secretary. Jean's other MCA activities included being a founder of our school program and helping to produce the teachers brochure of lessons. She was an excellent cook and provided treats for numerous meetings.

I knew Jean from Arlington where we both lived for over 50 years, and our lives crossed many times in our community activities. In addition, my younger son, James, and Jean's younger son, James are lifelong friends. Jean and I rode together to Board Meetings, and on one trip I learned that her grandfather, as well as other family members who lived in Scotland, were coal miners. After I heard this I would on occasion hum Loretta Lynn's song *I was a coal miner's (grand)daughter*. She smiled; she was tolerant. Jean's father migrated to the U.S., and was a minister in California where Jean was born.

She was a lovely person, and I and the MCA Board miss her.

The following was taken from Jean's obituary prepared by her children that was printed in the Sunday, July 12, 2020, Boston Globe.

Jean was known for her extraordinary kindness, patience, warmth, generosity and love of children. After earning a Master's degree in Education from Harvard University, she was a respected teacher of Early Childhood Education at Middlesex Community College for many years. As founder and Director of the Arlington Heights Nursery School from 1971-2005, Jean contributed to the growth and well-being of thousands of children

and mentored generations of teachers and parents. She brought a deep understanding of child development to the creation of a warm, welcoming environment where children thrived.

In the 1970's, she and other directors created the Arlington Early Childhood Association, a professional group that still meets monthly. She was a founding member and longtime stalwart of the original Arlington Food Coop and devoted member of Arlington Civil Rights and Fair Housing groups.

She loved older homes and as the owner of one learned basic carpentry, wallpapering and painting and how-to re-finish furniture. After being told several times by professionals that a replacement washing machine was needed, she disassembled and fixed the old one herself!

Thoughts from Other MCA Members

I remember when I was working on the **Journey...** video, Jean was particularly encouraging. Yes, she was kind, and she'd bring her little doggie on our walks.
— Roger Hagopian

So sorry to hear of Jean's passing. The last few years have been difficult.. She lived with her daughter and had a companion to care for her. Jean was very imaginative and helped us get the school program together. She came in the group to meet the Principal in Wilmington with us. (Dahill, a Lowell teacher whose father was a mason who helped Ron work on the Mill). I had tried for several years without any success to have a program about the MC for the Wilmington students without success. We came to Wilmington - met a new teacher there called Traci Benvenga - and that started our whole program. Jean's Father was a minister and she loved the services in the Harvard church court yard. She was very kind and thoughtful and helped our group in so many ways. — Betty Bigwood

Published in the Boston Globe on July 12, 2020

JEAN M. (MACCORMICK) POTTER



POTTER, Jean M. (MacCormick) Of Arlington, age 89. Passed away peacefully at home with her family on Friday, July 3. Survived by her four children: Anna Potter of Vermont, and Anna's daughter, Marguerite Dooley of Chicago; Andrew Potter, his wife Anne Donovan and their son Owen Potter, of Brooklyn,

New York; James Potter of San Francisco, California and Margaret Potter and her husband Wilbur Kim, and their children Alexander, Daniel, William, and Isabella of Arlington, Massachusetts. Also survived by her brother, James MacCormick and his wife Sue MacCormick, and their children Kimberly, Kevin,

and Michael MacCormick, of California. Also survived by Birnie family in-laws in California, and many MacCormick family members in Scotland.

Jean was known for her extraordinary kindness, patience, warmth, generosity and love of children. She cared deeply about social justice issues, progressive politics, historic preservation and the welfare of those around her. She was a valued contributor and cherished member of a diverse set of communities and associations, but her greatest joy was being with and delighting in her family. After growing up as the daughter of a prominent Presbyterian Minister in Southern California, Jean attended Occidental College where she studied philosophy and education and met her former husband, Ralph Potter.

Before moving to the Boston area in 1958, she spent three formative years as a missionary in Appalachia. Jean lived in Arlington from 1965 to the end of her life, except for one year split between Bethesda, Maryland and Paris, France. As Director of the Arlington Heights Nursery School from 1971-2005, Jean contributed to the growth and well-being of thousands of children and mentored generations of teachers and parents. She brought a deep understanding of child development to the creation of a warm, welcoming environment where children thrived. She was a pioneer of inclusion of children with special needs long before this was common practice or mandated by law.

After earning a Master's degree in Education from Harvard University in her fifties, she was a respected teacher of Early Childhood Education at Middlesex Community College for many years. Jean attended the Memorial Church in Cambridge for over five decades, where she had many cherished friends. Her church community was an important and meaningful part of her life.

Over the years she served on the board of directors of the Arlington Historical Society, the Middlesex Canal Association, the League of Woman Voters, Arlington Heights Nursery School, and the Boston Association for the Education of Young Children Directors' Conference Committee. In the 1970's, she and other directors created the Arlington Early Childhood Association, a professional group that still meets monthly. She was a founding member and longtime stalwart of the original Arlington Food Coop and devoted member of Arlington Civil Rights and Fair Housing groups. She volunteered in her children's schools, hosted METCO and exchange students and was a Girl Scout leader and a Cub Scout Den Mother.

Through it all, Jean found time for voracious reading on a wide range of topics. She organized camping trips and was an accomplished seamstress, knitter, quilter, baker and gardener. She enjoyed taking her children and later grandchildren to concerts, cultural events and historical sites. She loved older homes and as the owner of one learned basic carpentry, wallpapering and painting and how to re-finish furniture. After being told several times by professionals that

a replacement washing machine was needed, she disassembled and fixed the old one herself!

Jean was the daughter of immigrants, her mother Azalia (Rothery) from Wallaceburg, Ontario and her father Andrew MacCormick from Kirkconnel, Dumfries Scotland. She treasured her Scottish heritage in particular and remained in touch with Kirkconnel relatives throughout her life. There was always room for "one more" at her table, as friends, neighbors, early childhood colleagues, fellow activists, members of her church community, and of course her children and their friends learned.

Always compassionate, Jean will live on in the hearts of many and will be deeply missed. There will be a celebration of Jean's life planned in the future. Private interment by DeVito Funeral Service. In lieu of flowers, please consider contributing to The Jean Potter Early Childhood Inclusion Fund at Arlington Heights Nursery School, 10 Acton St., Arlington, MA 02476.

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/bostonglobe/obituary.aspx?n=jean-m-potter-maccormick&pid=196480100>

Awaiting a Decision by Conservation

by Betty Bigwood

The 2 Old Elm Site is less than a quarter of an acre and is surrounded by water on three sides. While it may be small in area it is huge to us; it sits by the summit pond - the primary source of water for the entire canal, across from where Loammi Baldwin ceremonially dug the first shovel full in 1793 and where the famous floating towpath carried horses pulling boats across the pond. The 1870's woolen warehouse - our future museum - cried out for a deck to view the site which could handle a few tables and chairs. While we originally asked for one 12ft wide we were only allowed 9ft. This letter is our final effort to Isabel Tourkantonis/ Director of Environmental Affairs/Billerica Conservation to allow an modification to the Original Order of Conditions.

Dear Isabel, MassDEP File No.109-1362

On Wednesday, August 26, 2020, our contractors met in the parking lot of 2 Old Elm to review our plans prior to ordering the roof trusses. The question of the observation deck was raised again – should we apply for a minor modification to increase the 9 ft width to 12 ft. Even a single foot increase to 10ft would make the area more usable for handicapped visitors.

While the desire to increase the width is overwhelming in the Middlesex Canal Association, concerns were raised about our general approach. Are we being too greedy? You have already allowed

us a deck. Will we annoy the Commission? There will be additional requests as the building process continues – will we hinder future decisions? Things are going well – don't rock the boat.

The Middlesex Canal Commission owns about a mile of river frontage from the Pollard Street bridge to the falls - 50 ft wide - around the mill pond - a donation by Leggett and Platt. We take our custodial responsibility seriously. This request concerns a 33ft length.

We are aware that this deck is in a 25ft No Alteration river front zone – yet we do feel our request comes within the spirit of the law which calls for the enjoyment, preservation, appreciation and accessibility by the public to this awesome wetland view. A recent \$11,500 grant from the Sudbury, Assabet and Concord Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council to help us affirms this. This rational assures its perpetuity – people tend to protect what they enjoy.

We have looked at mitigation measures such as polyethylene Flowthru grids which allow 40% of sunlight that would allow a natural vegetative buffer. We have agreed to a comprehensive planting scheme under the deck.

We are a totally volunteer organization. As such all decisions belong to the Middlesex Canal Association – not to any specific individual. This site is at the Summit Pond – the primary source of water for the entire canal, the Floating Towpath, and where the first shovel full of earth dug was dug by founders Loammi Baldwin and James Sullivan to construct a canal which was considered the greatest engineering feat of the time. This all began in Billerica – a source of pride.

In conclusion we ask for your judgment. Should we apply for a Minor Modification or take what was given and let it rest. On our part we will feel we gave it our best last shot and opportunity to turn our current balcony into a more usable deck.

Thanks,

Betty M. Bigwood, Lead Director for the Museum Building project.
978-657-7870

Let's Not Forget the Workers

by Betty Bigwood

The process of refurbishing 2 Old Elm Street into a Museum - an adaptive reuse – is an awesome project. There have been numerous ups and downs and just when we thought nothing else would delay us – Covid 19 rears its ugly head. We have assembled a group who work well together and without them

absolutely nothing would have been accomplished. Below is a list of those men and women who will give us a weather-tight building this Fall 2020.

Caveney Architectural Collaborative – John Caveney and Christina McMahon

Phelan Engineering, LLC – Paul A. Phelan Jr. P.E. – structural and civil engineer

D and D Masonry Inc – Ed Dolliver

Cogley Construction Co. – Bill Cogley – Lead Contractor/Demolition

Shaw Welding Co. Inc. ---Rick Shaw – steel construction

Landplex – Matt Hamor – Civil Engineer

Goliath – Jeff O'Rourke – screw piles

We will have several articles highlighting the people who help us – in the last issue Bill Cogley and in the current issue Ed Dolliver and Rick Shaw. More will follow.

Pictured below are some of the people who have been involved in the construction effort at the site of the proposed new MCA Museum at 2 Old Elm Street in North Billerica.



Architects: John Caveney and Christina McMahon



Structural Steel Provider: Rick Shaw and Mason: Ed Dolliver (right)



Mason: Ed Dolliver and Lead Contractor: Bill Cogley

ED DOLLIVER – HISTORIC RESTORATION

by Betty Bigwood

Before our 2 Old Elm project could begin, we knew we would need a competent brick mason trained in historic restoration. Martignetti's in Woburn recommended two men, one of whom lived a few blocks around the corner from our site. We hired him. Neither Ed, nor did we, realize that the process would take the next 2-3 years raising money and undergoing a very long permitting process. Every once in a while, Ed would stop by the Museum to see if we were O.K.

We later learned that Ed had worked on the Baldwin Mansion stabilizing the chimneys after Len Harmon moved it across the road in 1971.

When we finally got permission from the Conservation Commission in June 2019, we scheduled a meeting of all the contractors at the Museum. After a brief introduction they all went over to see the building. I have never seen such a group of gloomy faces when they returned. Years of neglect, water running through the building and inside wall deterioration had taken its toll. Should we continue or abandon the project? Only Ed was optimistic. He felt the walls were strong and could be restored. The Building Committee voted to proceed. It was more than bricks and mortar to us; it was at the summit pond, across from the first ceremonial dig by Sullivan and Baldwin and at the mooring of the Floating Towpath. Ed ruled the day.

Ed was born in Woburn, moved to several other towns after his parents divorced and finally settled in Billerica starting High School and has lived there ever since. His stepfather was a mason and the boys followed him. He has two children –a daughter and grandchild - his son is a mason but recent medical issues have kept him from this job. He said on several occasions he married his wife twice. I said to J that he probably reaffirmed his vows at an anniversary but J thought he was divorced and remarried his wife. When I asked Ed, who was correct Ed answered J.

Ed is “Old School” as Cogley likes to say –no nonsense. One helper was told he had to keep his cell phone in the car and could only use it at break time – can you imagine it? Talking on the phone with one hand and laying brick with the other! He has been heard to yell – “if you don't like it here take your tools and go!” In fact, in the beginning it was difficult keeping a crew. They say he yells like a sailor but he has always been a perfect gentleman around me – Ed says his Mother would not allow bad talk around women. He remembers well.

Ed has recently turned 70 years old and has started to cut down his work load. He supervises the men nowadays. Thursday afternoon is golf day. Friday afternoon he stops early and heads for his summer home in Maine. Life is

good. In fact, life is so good that when his D and D Masonry Inc. trailer was spotted by too many admiring his work and wanting to hire him – Ed taped over his business phone number!

Rick Shaw – Shaw Welding

by Betty Bigwood

We first became acquainted with Shaw Welding in Billerica when the tines on our front end loader became bent and we needed someone who could straighten them – a special technique called tempering was needed. On one occasion I noticed I/wide flange beams around their yard. We asked the shop foreman Bill Wightman if they did small construction projects and the rest is history. I called the owner Rick Shaw and he told me that he tried to help people – one story was when a local small orchard owner needed some welding on his apple press. After it was repaired and the man wanted to pay Rick he said no- just bring them some fresh apple cider the next time they were using it – so the workers have been treated to cider as payment each fall.

This part of the construction process has been the most changed. Unbeknown to us, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts had seen fit to strengthen the seismic regulations coincidentally the same year we took possession - 2014. Instead of resting the end beams in pockets made in the brick interior walls, upright steel framing through bolted to 16-inch plates - both inside and out – were needed to meet code. These steel plates needed to stay in place until after the roof was on – then they could be replaced with decorative stars if we wanted. When I saw the price of doing this replacing – approaching \$40,000. – I first asked Rick if this were a typo but he assured me that the price was correct – they need two men on a crane working across the canal from the parking lot removing seventy pounds per plate all, 42 of them. Tom Dahill and I took a brick down to Ace Hardware in Arlington and had the color matched in rust protective paint – Shaw’s men painted them. I’ve grown attached to the squares.

At the very beginning I asked Rick if he knew anyone who did demolition work that he could recommend. He said he liked a Bill Cogley (See Towpath Topics #58-2, February, 2020) and we arranged to meet at the site –we liked him - no one realized at the time it would be years before we got started.

Rick is a hard worker – working 12-hour days since he was 16. At 66 years old he is considering how much longer he can keep up the pace. He treats his men like family – pays them well, attends their family gatherings. We have been fortunate to have him help us.

Lowell Street Canal Walk - North Billerica

There are some wonderful places in Billerica to take a leisurely stroll along what remains of the historic Middlesex Canal (1793-1861). Many of Billerica’s trails along the canal, though, are wooded and the paths are not well manicured. They meander through the woods. That is not the case with the walk along Lowell Street from the North Billerica fire station to Route 3A. The Town recently installed a new cement sidewalk which parallels the canal along the entire 3/8 of a mile route, which is level with no challenging hills. Remnants of the canal and the berm are visible through the trees and brush which skirt the sidewalk, but there is more. About halfway along the route there is an interpretative wayside marker, which provides information about the canal’s rich history. For anyone who may wish to sit for a while there are two benches strategically located along the route. Each pay tribute to two individuals, Thomas Raphael and John “Kenny” Reardon, who worked tirelessly to preserve the canal.

For those who do not live in the area there is ample parking along Lowell Street, which was widened at the turn of the last century to accommodate the trolley car route from Lowell to North Billerica. The Town of Billerica mows the grass along the sidewalk to keep the vegetation from intruding onto the cement and the Middlesex Canal Commission: Billerica Section member, Dick Hawes maintains three planters along the route. During the summer months geraniums and marigolds adorn the flower boxes and, in the fall, they are replaced with mums. If you plan a walk in the spring there are three flowering trees with white blossoms. The entire walk, roundtrip, is ¾’s of a mile. Think of the benefits to your health and wasteline and the enjoyment of learning some of the area’s history along the way! Sit on one of the benches and you may hear Henry David Thoreau and his brother plying the waters of the nearby canal.

Brooks Trull Batcheller

by Alec Ingraham

Brooks Trull Batcheller was born on January 7, 1813. The route of the Middlesex Canal passed near the Batcheller homestead in North Billerica, which if you recall was located on present-day High Street close by the access road into Iron Horse Park. He began his working life as a towboy on the Middlesex Canal and would work his way up to become the captain of a packet boat. When service on the Canal was discontinued, he became a stage driver and later a stable keeper in Boston. An entry in the 1860/1861 Boston Directory listed under stables (livery) reads: *Batcheller, B. T. 48 Devonshire*. In 1867 he purchased a fine house in Lexington, MA. Seven years later he would be elected to a term in the State Senate. Brooks was additionally a member of the first Board of Trustees of the Lexington Savings Bank. He would marry, on

August 13, 1838, Rachel Campbell Dodge, who was born in Edgecomb, Maine on March 17, 1818, the daughter of John and Rachel (House) Dodge. The couple had four children, all born in Boston, however, the 1855 State Census lists the family as living in Billerica. Brooks Trull died on August 21, 1902 at the age of 89, and Rachel on August 21, 1907. **Warren W. Batcheller**, a younger brother, was born July 26, 1815. He died of consumption on October 9, 1841 at the age of 26. He was a boatman and undoubtedly worked with his Brooks on the Middlesex Canal. (Batcheller Family History see Family Search website) Brooks' brother Samuel T. Batcheller died during the 1811 smallpox epidemic in North Billerica. He is buried, with five other victims, in a lonely gravesite situated near the route of the Middlesex Canal between High and Pond Streets in North Billerica. This site is often visited during MCA sponsored canal walks.

Officers of the Middlesex Canal Association

J. Jeremiah Breen, President
 Traci B. Jansen, Vice-President
 Russell B. Silva, Treasurer
 Neil P. Devins, Membership Secretary
 Howard B. Winkler - Corresponding Secretary

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 Debra Diffin Fox (TT copy co-editor)
 Roger K. Hagopian - Videographer
 Alec Ingraham (TT copy co-editor)
 Alan D. Lefebvre
 Robert Winters (webmaster, TT publisher)

Honorary Directors

William E. (Bill) Gerber
 Leonard H. Harmon
 Fred Lawson, Jr.
 Howard B. Winkler - Treasurer Emeritus

MEMBERSHIP

Proprietor (voting)	\$25 per year
Member (non-voting)	\$15 per year

Additional contributions are always welcome and gratefully accepted. Please make check out to the: Middlesex Canal Association and mail it to:

Neil P. Devins, Membership Secretary
 28 Burlington Ave., Wilmington MA 01887

MISCELLANY

Back Issues - More than 50 years of back issues of Towpath Topics, together with an index to the content of all issues, are also available from our website <http://middlesexcanal.org/towpath>. These are an excellent resource for anyone who wishes to learn more about the canal and should be particularly useful for historic researchers.

Estate Planning - To those of you who are making your final arrangements, please remember the Middlesex Canal Association. Your help is vital to our future. Thank you for considering us.

Membership and Dues – There are two categories of membership: **Proprietor** (voting) and **Member** (non-voting). Annual dues for “Proprietor” are \$25 and for “Member” just \$15. Additional contributions are always welcome and gratefully accepted. If interested in becoming a “Proprietor” or a “Member” of the MCA, please mail membership checks to Neil Devins, 28 Burlington Avenue, Wilmington, MA 01887.

Museum & Reardon Room Rental - The facility is available at very reasonable rates for private affairs, and for non-profit organizations to hold meetings. The conference room holds up to 60 people and includes access to a kitchen and restrooms. For details and additional information please contact the museum at 978-670-2740.

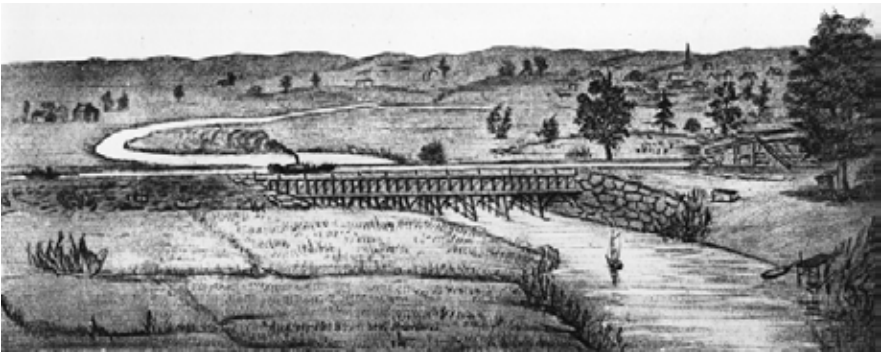
Museum Shop - Looking for that perfect gift for a Middlesex Canal aficionado? Don't forget to check out the inventory of canal related books, maps, and other items of general interest available at the museum shop. The store is open weekends from noon to 4:00pm except during holidays.

Nameplate - Excerpt from an acrylic reproduction of a watercolor painted by Jabez Ward Barton, ca. 1825, entitled “View from William Rogers House”. Shown, looking west, may be the packet boat *George Washington* being towed across the Concord River from the Floating Towpath at North Billerica.

Web Site – The URL for the Middlesex Canal Association's web site is www.middlesexcanal.org. Our webmaster, Robert Winters, keeps the site up to date. Events, articles and other information will sometimes appear there before it can get to you through Towpath Topics. Please check the site from time to time for new entries.

The **first issue** of the Middlesex Canal Association newsletter was published in October, 1963. Originally named “Canal News”, the first issue featured a contest to name the newsletter. A year later, the newsletter was renamed “Towpath Topics.”

Towpath Topics is edited and published by **Debra Fox**, **Alec Ingraham**, and **Robert Winters**. Corrections, contributions and ideas for future issues are always welcome.



August 1818 drawing of the steam towboat *Merrimack* crossing the original (pre-1829) Medford Aqueduct, probably on its way to service of the Merrimack River.

