



HENNEPIN CANAL ★ 100 YEARS ★ 1907 - 2007

CENTENNIAL PLANS CONTINUE

By Gay Wagle



As you would expect, the Friends of the Hennepin Canal was the first to make public notice that 2007 marks the one hundredth birthday of our canal. And we are pleased to see a growing interest in this significant event.

The community of Hennepin Canal enthusiasts is lightly sprinkled along the canal's 96 mile length and is made up of a wide variety of interests, ranging from equestrians to snowmobilers. In considering "what to do" for a centennial celebration, it soon became obvious to the half dozen or so active members of the Friends that we do not have the resources required to produce a single celebration suitable for the diversity of interests along the entire length of the canal.

On January 16 several of us, including Supt. Moser, met with Joe Taylor of the Quad Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau (QCCVB) for the purpose of discussing our options. We decided that the Friends of the Hennepin Canal and the QCCVB would co-sponsor an explorative meeting for potentially interested parties. The purpose of the meeting is to measure interest. If people show up, we'll proceed; if not, well, it was a good idea.

Invitations have been sent to various interest groups, cities and villages located along the canal. If interested people attend, the Friends will volunteer to serve as a clearing house, using our website, for the commemorative activities that will occur throughout the centennial year along the canal. In addition, the Friends will work on its own activities to add to the list. For example, Friends Board member, Dr. Bruce Perry, is planning a "centennial" bicycle ride of 100 miles. Details

will be announced. Also, September 8, 2007 has been designated "canal day" by the Friends. This date was chosen to coincide with commemorative activities being planned in Rock Falls, the location of the canal's headwaters and Guard Lock.

The exploratory invitational meeting will be on February 28. Below is an excerpt from the invitational letter. *As a member of the Friends of the Hennepin Canal, you are invited.*

"A free soup/salad buffet lunch will be served beginning at 12 noon on Wednesday, February 28 at Trappers' Creek Grill, just off Interstate 80, in Geneseo, Illinois (1325 S. Oakwood #6). For directions, phone (309) 944-3111. As the meeting room can accommodate 30 people, the first 30 people to RSVP to jtaylor@visitquadcities.com will have attendance confirmed.

Canal site superintendent Steve Moser, Friends of the Hennepin Canal and Quad Cities CVB met and decided to hold the lunch meeting to gauge interest in a centennial celebration. The challenges include funding; staffing (professional and volunteer); the length of the canal and the number of counties, communities and organizations which could be involved; and the short time to implement a celebration." ❖



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Friends of the Hennepin Canal

c/o Pat Stier, Treasurer

410 W. Railroad, Sheffield, IL 61361

NEWS FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

With each Friends of the Hennepin newsletter, we ask Superintendent Steve Moser to comment on the state of the canal. Because there is no formal connection between the State Park and the Friends group, his comments do not necessarily represent the views of the FHC.

Greetings Friends,

Other than the early December snowstorm, Mother Nature has been fairly lenient in her winter script as of this writing. That makes some folks happy, but there are those winter enthusiasts that ice fish, snowmobile and cross country ski, that want low numbers on the thermometer and white stuff on the ground. In looking at what goes on in winter, I thought that maybe you readers might like to know some of the things that keep the Canal staff busy when the grass does not grow and there are no campers or picnickers to take care of.

Actually, we have two tractors that are still out mowing and will continue to do so until the snow gets too deep to go. The articulating arm units, those mowers with long extensions that can reach down the Canal slope and mow the shoulders, are down in the Geneseo area. Since we are playing catch up, we plan on keeping these things out until they break down or spring arrives, whichever comes first; and once spring does get here they will start out all over again.

The rest of the staff? Well with the expanse of the Canal, 96 linear miles and 4 satellite facilities, there is always something to do whether it is 20 below zero, three feet of snow, or something in between. Winter is always the time to repair equipment and get it ready for the next season. We also paint picnic tables, signs, barrels and buoys. During extremely cold spans we must chip forming ice away from lock spillways; otherwise the current slows, pools build up, and Canal banks become compromised. We inventory and clean 100+ bluebird houses and 120+ wood duck nesting structures. Of course we plow snow from roadways and parking lots when the situation dictates, clean toilet buildings, patrol the trail for dead falls and keep watch on drainage culverts for beaver activity. Actually we spend the biggest share of our time during the winter months maintaining and trimming property fence lines of woody and encroaching vegetation. With us having so many agricultural neighbors, this is a never ending job mandated by the covenants inherited from the Corps. Some of the right of ways now have 50 years of growth which makes the going slow and we have never, in my 25 years here, been able to get the request list completed. All too soon it seems though, the grass will turn green and start growing again. Then it is



Lock #26 in winter

pedal to the metal, hand to the throttle, "gitter done" time.

If you are one of those folks who are waiting for a weather change, you probably will not have to wait for long. As a resident of the Midwest, you know "that if you don't like today's weather, wait until tomorrow". ❖



Steve Moser, Site Superintendent
Hennepin Canal Parkway

NEXT EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

The Executive Board conducts nearly all the business for the Friends of the Hennepin Canal.

What do you want us to do?

Please come and tell us.

All members are urged
to attend Board meetings.

We would love your input.

Our next meeting will be in April.

See the next Wanderings for details or visit
www.fhcanal.home.mchsi.com/

MONTHLY WALKS



Beginning about 1999, the Friends have been sponsoring monthly walks that take in the entire 104 miles of the Canal. The hikes are between 4 and 5 miles and usually take place on the third Sunday of each month (except December), beginning at 1:30. (visit our website at www.fhcanal.home.mchsi.com/ for details) Ed Herrmann is our chief hiker/reporter. He rarely misses a hike and has gotten the annual mileage award for the last four years. In addition to being the official Friends greeter at these hikes, he provides us a pleasant review of his observations during each walk. Here is one:

Red Squirrel - November 19, 2007 - 4.4 MILES

By Ed Herrmann

Final hike for the year brings us out on the feeder on a sunny but cold and breezy afternoon. We are all bundled up with hats and gloves but find it did not seem as cold as we went along as the thick growth of trees to the west blocked most of the wind. Keep that in mind when choosing a site to walk or bike on a cold day. Just four of us today, Wayne Leader from Moline, Kim Jalley from Normal, and Ann Pomatto and Ed Herrmann from Spring Valley. The months from now till spring offer a good opportunity for everyone to help in cleanup efforts along the canal. We did our share today. With no leaves or snow the cans and bottles are easy to spot.

Not another person on the trail today, but we did meet one in the water. We mentioned in the first issue of Wanderings of 2006 that trappers help in maintaining the levies. Muskrat and beaver burrow into the banks and some of these have ended up in leaks and breaks. There have been very few trappers in recent years because low prices of furs. This fellow wearing hip waders and towing his boat and



Trapper on the canal

equipment was busy setting traps in the areas where the animals were digging along the banks. Be aware of ribbons along the banks marking areas where slides have occurred near the path and avoid getting too close as the ground may not be stable. ❖

GREAT GRANDDAUGHTER OF CANAL'S ENGINEER IS A FRIEND

We recently received a nice email from Grace Hertz who lives in northwest Iowa. She said, "I am a g-granddaughter of James C. Long, one of the engineers involved with the construction of the Hennepin Canal."

We did a little reading in Mary Yeater's The Hennepin Canal, perhaps the most precise history of the origin of the canal. Yeater states that Grace's great grandfather, James C. Long, was assistant engineer to Major W.L. Marshall, chief engineer, and with another assistant, L.L. Wheeler, began work on the final location of the canal in 1890. Mr. Long was in charge of building the eastern section, and that, "from an engineering standpoint, it was the most challenging section of the canal in that in its first eighteen miles it ascends 196 ft. from the Illinois River and requires 21 locks with lifts varying from 6 to 12 ft."

We're pleased that Grace and her family intend to be an active part in the our celebration of the birth of the Canal. She writes, "There are a number of descendants of James C. Long who would like to attend the centennial." We hope all of you join Grace and her family in helping us celebrate this important birthday. ❖