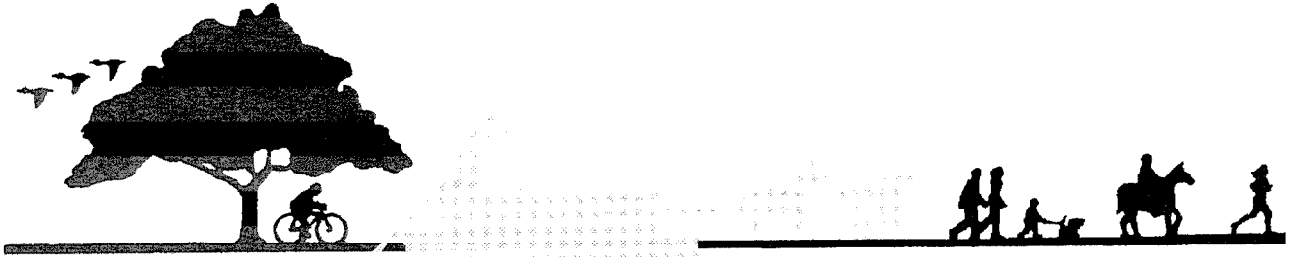


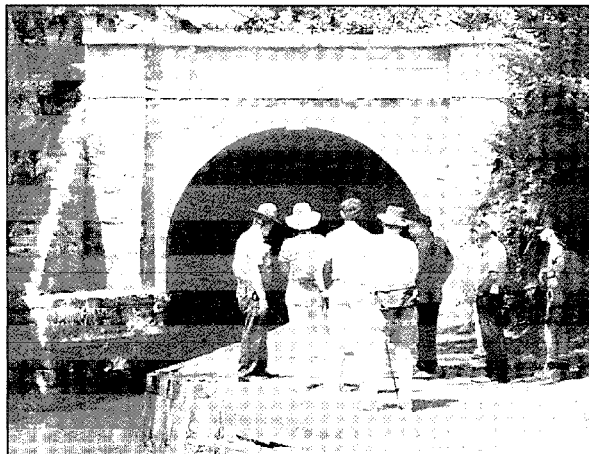
TOWPATHS-TO-TRAILS FACT SHEET



Historic Canal Preservation Through Canal Trail Development

Historic preservation advocates often are concerned that the conversion of canals into trails will result in damage to historic resources. In fact, trail use of canal corridors can both preserve and enhance these significant resources through the identification, stabilization and restoration of historic structures. Access and education lead to users becoming an important part of the management and maintenance of the trail.

When developing a trail along a canal there are many factors that should be considered to ensure preservation of historic resources. These include inventory, resource-sensitive trail design and development and preserving and enhancing historic structures.



A park ranger talks to visitors about the Paw Paw Tunnel along the C&O Canal.

INVENTORY

A thorough inventory of the historic resources that remain along a canal corridor is important for two reasons. First, it is imperative to know what remains of the historic canal so that trail design and development will be sensitive to these remnants. Second, complete knowledge of associated features can identify opportunities to combine the development of trail

support facilities with preservation of historic structures. A good inventory will also allow you to cast your trail project in the light of the overall heritage of a community or region. Canal trails provide recreational facilities for communities, but also afford an exciting opportunity for community residents to return to their historic roots along the banks of the canal.

Historic Resources Inventory

An inventory of historic structures must encompass more than just the canal right-of-way. Individual buildings, mill races built off the canal to power industrial development, neighborhoods and entire towns or cities are often where they are, and what they are, because of the canal. The National Register of Historic Places, State Historic Resources Inventories and local historic landmarks listings are good places to begin your search for significant resources. This information can be found at the State Historic Preservation Office and at local historical societies. Other sources include historic maps, insurance maps, tax records, canal operation records, first-hand accounts and historic photographs that are often available through state and local historical societies, county archives and local libraries.

Archeological Resources Inventory

Some of the most important resources related to canal corridors are archeological features or sites. Canals often followed transportation routes of the past, so it is not uncommon to find archeological resources that predate a canal by tens, hundreds or even thousands of years. These sites must be a part of your inventory. Their identification will ensure protection of these resources and prevent inadvertent destruction of an unknown mill site or prehistoric feature.

A good place to begin an inventory of archeological resources is at the State Historic Preservation Office. The Ohio Historic Preservation Office, for ex-

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ample, maintains the Ohio Archeological Inventory, which is a listing of prehistoric and historic archeological sites statewide. Local historical societies and colleges and universities are also good places to look for information. A search of existing information should be followed by a field inventory of the canal corridor by a trained archeologist, as in the case of the Delaware & Raritan Canal where archeological investigation preceded all trail projects.

INTEGRATING HISTORIC VALUES INTO CANAL TRAIL DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

The development of a canal trail should not compromise the integrity of historic resources and should serve to enhance these resources whenever possible. Trails along canals are compatible with resource preservation and will often lead to rehabilitation of canal structures. The simple removal of the overgrowth of trees and vegetation along a canal goes a long way in restoring a historic appearance. The removal of hundreds of trees along the route of the 20-mile Towpath Trail in the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area (Cuyahoga Valley NRA) along the towpath and between the towpath and canal itself, greatly enhanced the historic appearance of this section of the Ohio & Erie Canal. Factors that should be carefully considered when designing and developing a canal trail are trail surface, signage and the location and type of trail support facilities.

Surface

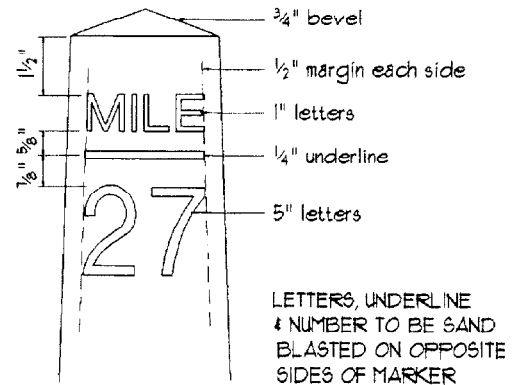
Normally the selection of surface materials for a trail is dependent upon the proposed use and costs. The Towpaths-to-Trails fact sheet entitled, *Canal Trails: Management and Maintenance Issues*, provides a comparison of trail surfaces based on the above considerations. However, in selecting surface materials for a trail along a canal, developers must consider the preservation and enhancement of the canal as a historic resource. A well-drained, hard-packed dirt surface for hiking only or a crushed stone surface for hiking and bicycling are both recommended for a historically accurate appearance.

If proposed use requires consideration of asphalt or concrete, the trail developer should consider coloring or texturing the surface to make it less intrusive on the historic scene. A good example of this is found along the Towpath Trail in Cuyahoga Valley NRA. The National Park Service made the decision to use crushed stone on this trail primarily to preserve the historic setting. But, in high traffic and steep slope

areas where crushed stone is prone to erosion, the Park Service used asphalt covered by a crushed stone chip and seal to maintain the same appearance as other sections of trail.

Signage

Signage along trails is important for users, but signage along canal trails should be developed to complement the historic resource. Directional, mileage, safety and informational signs should not detract from and can enhance the scene. Trail managers have been very creative in finding ways to provide warnings at approaching road crossings without using the standard highway stop sign at no loss of safety to trail users. Below is a drawing of one of the mileage markers installed along the Towpath Trail. These signs were designed to recreate the mile markers originally used along the Ohio & Erie Canal.



TOP DETAIL

Support Facilities

Location and design of trail support facilities should also be undertaken with the goal of preserving the historic setting. Parking areas should be removed and/or screened from the canal trail itself. The use of native materials such as wood and stone for development of restrooms, trash receptacles, water fountains, bulletin boards and other support elements will mirror the use of these same materials in the original construction of the canal. Benches along the canal trail can complement the historic scene through creative design and use of native materials, as exemplified by the benches installed along the Towpath Trail in Cuyahoga Valley NRA.

Complete knowledge of the resource combined with creative and resource-sensitive design and development will lead to a finished canal trail that preserves and enhances the historic resources and setting.

PRESERVING AND ENHANCING HISTORIC STRUCTURES

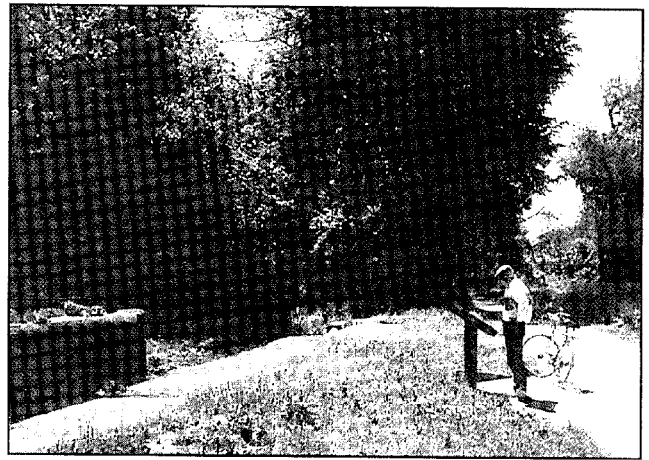
Often a decision to develop a trail along a historic canal results in the restoration of many of the original canal structures. Stabilization and restoration of the canal towpath is a part of all canal trail development. Where the canal and towpath originally crossed a stream or river there was the need for a culvert or aqueduct. Reuse of these structures not only results in the continuation of the trail, but also ensures the stabilization and rehabilitation of structures that otherwise would be left to deteriorate. Trail development has resulted in the preservation of numerous canal structures including:

- Three aqueducts and the original elevated towpath in the development of the 155-mile towpath trail along the Hennepin Canal State Parkway in Illinois.
- Historic stone culverts and Lock 38 along the Towpath Trail in the Cuyahoga Valley NRA.
- The Paw Paw Tunnel and numerous aqueducts, culverts, locks and other canal structures along the 184-mile canal trail in the C & O Canal National Historical Park in Maryland.
- Lock 12, complete with wooden gates, along the Farmington Canal Trail in Connecticut.

The preservation and rehabilitation of many structures associated with the canal, but not directly related to trail development, is another positive impact of canal trails. Examples include:

- The rehabilitation and use of the River Bend Farm as a visitor center along the Blackstone Canal in Massachusetts.
- The development of the Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum including the restoration of a three bay drydock, blacksmith/sawmill complex and general store at the Old Erie Canal State Park in New York.
- The restoration of the historic pumphouse along the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal in Delaware.
- A current effort to restore the "backs" of historic structures in Canal Fulton, Ohio, to recreate the historic scene along the Ohio & Erie Canal.

The recreational opportunities provided through trail development of these historic canals have been the driving force behind all of the historic preservation and restoration described above. Recreational use of canals is a powerful preservation tool.



A cyclist learns the history of the Ohio & Erie Canal.

ACCESS + EDUCATION = ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT

Increased access to canals through the development of trails (when combined with education of trail users) leads to advocacy and support for preservation and maintenance of these facilities. The simple clearing of a canal corridor for hiking reawakens the past by providing the opportunity for people to rediscover their roots. Comments upon finding the old canal range from, "I didn't know there was anything left", to "a canal ran through our town?." Access to these historic canals through trail development creates a heightened sense of place and pride within a community. Access alone will result in increased advocacy for canal preservation, resulting in support for the protection and enhancement of the resource. Examples of this are numerous including:

- Along the Wabash & Erie Canal in Delphi, Indiana, development of a canal trail has brought about a community spirit of historic preservation and friendliness.
- Recreational opportunities along the Old Champlain Canal in New York have led to increased interest in restoring main street storefronts and recognition by the community of diverse cultural resources.
- Efforts to develop a canal trail along the Ohio & Erie Canal in Akron, Ohio, have led to the rediscovery of the watered canal through the central business district. The revitalization of downtown Akron is now focused on its past, the canal.

Education provides a great opportunity to build additional support and advocacy for a canal trail and

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for the preservation of its historic resources. Once the public has access to this resource, they will want to know what it is, how it worked, when was it built, by who, and a thousand other details. The more trail users learn about the canal, the more it becomes not only a trail for recreation, but a special place. Informed trail users will treat the canal with respect and take pride in volunteering their time to maintain and manage the facility.

Interpretation of these historic canals can be accomplished in a variety of ways. Historical interpretive signs and wayside exhibits are used along the Delaware & Raritan, Illinois and Michigan, C & O, Ohio & Erie and many other canal trails to identify and interpret the resources. Other ways to educate trail users about the importance of the canal include trail guides and brochures, audio-tapes, guided hikes, school programs and trailhead exhibits. Imagination

and creativity are the only requirements in deciding how to interpret the resource. Just remember that trail users are visiting the trail for recreation so make sure that your interpretation and educational materials are designed to be informative and fun.

F. A. Ketterson, Cultural Resource Manager with the National Park Service, wrote in an 1990 article entitled, *Interpretation in the National Park System*; "Interpretation is not, of course, the reason for a park's being. But for the vast majority of people, a visit to a park without interpretation would be a less complete thing. Good interpretation contributes mightily to visitor enjoyment and understanding and, through that understanding, to the preservation of park resources, be they cultural or natural." The access provided through canal trail development combined with education results in strong advocacy and support for the preservation of historic resources.



RAILS
- to -
TRAILS
CONSERVANCY

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This fact sheet is a product of the Towpaths-to-Trails Initiative, a cooperative venture between Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service.



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