

Towpath Topics

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

Volume 61 No. 3

April 2023



Pictured are the remnants of the Middlesex Canal in East Chelmsford, MA. The gravel road, maintained by the East Chelmsford Water District, covers the towpath. Picture courtesy of J. Jeremiah Breen.

MCA Sponsored Events – 2023 Schedule

Annual Meeting, 1:00pm, Sunday, April 30, 2023

Douglas Chandler

“Towpath to Bike Trail”

21st Fall Bike Tour, 9:00am, Saturday, September 30, 2023

Meet at the Middlesex Canal Plaque right of the entrance to the Sullivan Square T Station, 1 Cambridge Street, Charlestown, MA 02129.

Leaders: Dick Bauer and Bill Kuttner

Fall Walk, 1:30pm, Sunday, October 15, 2023

Meet at the southeast corner of the parking lot at the Woburn Cinemas, 25 Middlesex Canal Drive, Woburn, MA 01801

Fall Meeting, 1:00pm, Sunday, October 29, 2023

Speaker and Location: TBA

When available details will be posted on www.middlesexcanal.org

The Visitors Center/Museum is open Saturday and Sunday, Noon – 4:00pm, except on a holiday. 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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Topic | Page |
|--|-------------|
| Editors’ Letter | 2 |
| MCA Sponsored Events and Directions to the MCA Museum and Visitors’ Center | 2 |
| President’s Message from J. Jerimiah Breen | 3 |
| MCA Winter Meeting Report by Debra Fox | 6 |
| MCA Spring Walk Report by Robert Winters | 7 |
| “When are We Going to Move” by Betty Bigwood | 9 |
| “Towpath to Bike Trail” by Douglas Chandler | 10 |
| “Farmer, Middlesex Canal, 1810” a poem by Joanne Diaz | 16 |
| Miscellany | 16 |

Editors’ Letter

Dear Readers,

It is such a cliché to talk about lovely flowers and weather, but it is still always a wonderful time of the year. To see “green” again after months of “brown.” Yeah spring!

The spring issue of Towpath Topics should be enjoyable as the blooming trees and flowers. There are recaps of the winter meeting and the spring walk, an update by Betty Bigwood on the status of the new canal museum, and for the first time in recent history, a poem.

Roger Hagopian had planned to submit an article relating his experiences encountered during the filming of the Middlesex Canal documentary. Unfortunately, he was unable to complete the article in time for this issue. It should be an interesting piece and we hope to include it in the fall issue. Technology has changed a great deal since he began the project and his results have been sold and enjoyed for many years by many people.

Lastly, in time for our spring meeting, we have an article by Douglas Chandler. He discusses the path and progress of walking/bike paths along railroad rights of way and the canal towpath. Read the article, then come meet Mr. Chandler at the Museum and Visitors’ Center on April 30th.

See you there,

The Editors

MCA Sponsored Events

Annual Meeting – 1:00pm, Sunday, April 30, 2023: The Annual Meeting of the Middlesex Canal Association will take place at 1:00pm in the Reardon Room at the Middlesex Canal Museum and Visitors’ Center at 71 Faulkner Street, North Billerica,

MA 01862. Douglas Chandler will talk about using the towpath of the historic Middlesex Canal as the connecting link for bike paths between Lowell, Boston, and Framingham. Mr. Chandler is a proprietor of the Middlesex Canal Association and a member of the State’s Middlesex Canal Commission.

The Visitors’ Center will open at noon. The meeting will be ZOOMED starting at 12:30pm with call to order at 1:00pm, <https://rb.gy/82f4j> Meeting ID: 87524716938, Passcode: 685592, Tel. 646-876-9923.

More information is available at www.middlesexcanal.org.

Note: Walks and Bicycle Tours: For more detailed information please access the MCA website at www.middlesexcanal.org about a week prior to the scheduled event.

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

By Car: From Rte. 128/95

Take Route 3 (Northwest Expressway) toward Nashua, to Exit 78 (formerly Exit 28) “Treble Cove Road, North Billerica, Carlisle”. At the end of the ramp, turn left onto Treble Cove Road toward North Billerica. At about ¾ mile, bear left at the fork. After another ¼ 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 bridge over the Concord River, 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 bridge. Watch out crossing the street!

From I-495

Take Exit 91 (formerly Exit 37) North Billerica, then 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). To get to the Visitor Center/Museum enter through the center door of the Faulkner Mill and proceed to the end of the hall.

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, “Farmer Takes a Wife”

by J. Breen

The Lehigh and Delaware Canals were the location in 1935 for filming *Farmer Takes a Wife*. Recently the National Canal Museum has published an article on the significance of the movie in recreating the story of canals in the United States, in particular the emergence of the railroad as a competitor.¹ Given that its a romantic comedy, the debate between Janet Gaynor and Henry Fonda on where to live, canal boat or farmhouse, is well argued on the facts by the characters Molly and Dan. The author of the article, Martha Capwell Fox, DLNHC Historian, repeats that according to IMDb, *Farmer* is the only movie ever made about a canal that isn’t a documentary. Well, the Middlesex Canal Association has produced a preview of coming attractions which is nine minutes of a second movie that is not a documentary.

The stills of the packet boat *Governor Sullivan* are from the year 2022 movie after-



Canal boat photo in the *Farmer Takes a Wife* article



Packet *Governor Sullivan* headed to Boston

word to the tragic novel *This Enchanted Land: Middlesex Village* by Wayne Peters, published in 1984.² The nine minute movie is better described as an afterword than a coming attraction preview as it is a distillation of the tragedy in the enchanted land rather than exciting or entertaining scenes.

Much of the setting of *This Enchanted Land* has as a factual basis the historical Middlesex Canal. For example, Jim's wife Lu is sitting at the base of her favorite oak tree where she can view the boats passing on the canal when she commits suicide by slashing her wrist. In the movie, the canal boat is passing in the canal which has become a water hazard in Mt. Pleasant Golf Club. Behind Jim on the crest is the green of the 5th hole.

The Wayne Peters' novel is an homage to Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome* (1911). In both novels, the three protagonists of the love triangle suffer, both Jim and Ethan



Jim at crest of Cutbank Hill. Lu knitting at tree in center. *Gov. Sullivan* headed to Lowell.



The line between the 2nd and 3rd fairways is the location of the towpath plotted from an 1829 survey. The oaks in the movie are late winter leaf less.

are crippled but Lu and Mindy die in Peters' tragedy, Lu a suicide, Mindy tumbled over Pawtucket Falls then swept out into the Atlantic. An homage based on the plot, a tragic love triangle, and the strong sense of place, Middlesex Village and Starkfield.

Lucretia as a name for the wife in *Enchanted Land* is a namesake for Edith Wharton's mother perhaps. The movie afterword is a dramatic summation for one who has read the novel; however, Liam Neeson's portrayal of Ethan Frome's suffering in the 1993 movie of the 1911 novel is a better evocation of pain than Peters' novel.

Notes:

1. *Farmer Takes a Wife* (1935), article at National Canal Museum, <https://canals.org/2023/02/07/rom-com-on-the-canals/>
2. *This Enchanted Land: Middlesex Village* movie afterword is part of the April 3, 2022 talk at the MCA museum, <https://archive.org/details/3997-1-mcalowell-bicentennial-040322>. The afterword begins at 9.1 minutes of the 57 minute talk. The afterword is a separate nine minute movie at <https://rb.gy/daz7dc>.

Winter Meeting Report 2023

by Debra Fox

The Reardon Room at the Middlesex Canal Museum and Visitors' Center was host on Sunday, February 19, 2023 to the winter meeting of the Middlesex Canal Association. The meeting was called to order at precisely 1:00pm and introduced by Association President J. Breen.

Zoë Lawson, guest speaker, is the daughter of original MCA member and founder Fred Lawson. A technical writer by profession, she styles herself as a person of the 18th century through her love of all things "fiber" and its importance to the story of the Industrial Revolution and our lives today. Fiber creates fabric but the process of creating it by hand is slow and laborious, as she very carefully showed the audience. The need to speed up the process led to the machines, power sources, factories, and the modern world.

Lawson's lecture was received very enthusiastically by the fifteen plus member audience who bombarded her with questions and swarmed her tables to examine her tools and fibers. Pizza and coffee was served and the day was deemed a success by all who attended.



Zoë Lawson with display table 2/19/2023



Kelly Diffin (left) and Zoë Lawson, MCA speaker

MCA Spring Walk Report - March 19, 2023

by Robert Winters

Our cycle of Spring and Fall Walks has consisted of 5 stretches of the Middlesex Canal for some time. This section in Wilmington had been one of the more labor-intensive sections for many years in that we had to construct the "Bigwood Bridge" over the Maple Meadow Brook at the aqueduct remnants in the Wilmington Town Forest. This was necessary when participants parked their vehicles at the lot for the Town Field, walked by the "grooved boulders" adjacent to the old towpath at the Ox Bow section of the canal, and then proceeded over the constructed bridge to the spectacular raised section of the canal en route to Patch's Pond.

Without the bridge, this Spring we repeated the route from 2½ years ago with the approximately 25 participants parking on Towpath Drive and gathering at the kiosk at the entry to the easement leading to Patch's Pond.



MCA President J. Breen at the start of the Spring Walk

Early in the walk we encountered a new bridge over the canal:



It would have been nice if we had a bridge like this at the aqueduct!

The walk continued along the canal to Butter's Row where one of our many canal markers is located. From there we continued on to the spectacular raised canal section that was donated to the Association by Stanley Webber and his daughter, Julia Fielding in 1983.



Ideally we would have crossed over Maple Meadow Brook and onto to the grooved boulders near the Town Park but, alas, the tree section that had fallen across the brook was not suitable as a bridge, and we had to turn back.



A smaller contingent returned afterwards to survey the section on the other side of the bridge, including the "grooved boulders" that show the mark of towlines rubbing against them during the five decades of regular operation of the Middlesex Canal over 200 years ago.

Upon returning to Patch's Pond, we continued to the short segment that is used today by commuters accessing the Wilmington Commuter Rail station near Route 62.



Grooved Boulders in the Wilmington Town Forest

(Burlington Ave.) near the home of our esteemed Membership Secretary Neil Devins. On the way back we gathered for a picture:



When Are We Going to Move?
by Betty Bigwood

It is April 2023 as I write this and construction season is well underway. We are able to proceed because of a Grant from the Massachusetts Art Council for \$200,000 and generous contributions from our members and friends. The grant application process is a serious undertaking requiring a ton of work filling out forms. Our President J. Breen was successful after his third try. His persistence is much admired. Kudos to

John Jeremiah Breen. (By the way he loves licorice!)

National Grid has kept us on hold now for 4 months. Repeated requests from our electrician Kenny McDonald (Juszczak Electric) have brought responses “they will be at 2 Old Elm shortly”. We have speeded up our efforts as this delay is only an added expense to us.

Dick Hawes met last week with sewer line installer Mark Farmer, environmentalist Brian Dunn and members of the Billerica DPW to make final decisions when the Town of Billerica gives us a “go”. At that time there was a suggestion that the current sewer line plan should change direction slightly to veer to the left after the bridge and go directly to the existing sewer access through the parking lot. This shortens the length by ~50 feet. The new superintendent of the DPW was on vacation so we will know his opinion shortly. Meanwhile, Treasurer Russ Silva has written checks to the Town of Billerica for \$35,000 to cover the bond costs for breaking into the street, \$232.50 for the road opening permit and \$150 for the sewer permit. The total cost of this is unknown depending upon the type of fill they find when digging. The final cost of asphaltting Old Elm Street – whether a patch over the disturbance we make versus the entire street – is still in discussion. Billerica Selectman Mike Rosa has been helpful to us. That section of Old Elm Street has serious needs for federal funding which will be addressed.

We had planned to heat the building with gas, but a lot has changed recently. In the last few months everyone is required to consider heat pumps. The federal government has offered generous rebates up to one-third for us. Vendors for this new technology are overwhelmed, inexperienced and understaffed. Dick Hawes has finally found a local company who is interested in adding a museum to their repertoire. The Mitsubishi units are available – so no long waits for parts. Our current electrical plans should handle the three phase 400 amp required. Neither our contractor nor our architect have experience in this area. We should have plans in the next few days.

Bill Cogley, our contractor, is currently planning to pour a concrete floor when we are ready and the weather is warm.

Moving: We plan to store our contents in the attic. This area will need to be open until the heat pump unit is installed. After National Grid is connected, we can have the required electrical fire alarm system completed. (It’s paid for and almost done.) We want the concrete floor poured. So, what is the move in date? As soon as possible.

Towpath to Bike Trail — Preserving and Repurposing

by Doug Chandler

Summary

For decades abandoned railroad (RR) track and right-of-way (ROW) have often been converted to bicycle trails. Abandoned canal towpaths are now being converted as well. As this readership knows, the Middlesex Canal has many useful hiking remnants that could be incorporated into regional trails. Woburn has a Rail-to-Trail project now underway that includes a section of our canal towpath. This repurposing not only benefits local recreation, but preserves the canal ROW and prism and helps publicize the canal’s history for future generations. Many states, especially in the northeast

where canals were prevalent, have extensive towpath bike trails, even hundreds of miles of contiguous off-road recreation. Our state and county maintain a 5-Year priority plan for all transportation projects from highways to bike trails. Some of your officers are working to get the section from the Museum to Canal Street in Chelmsford prioritized in the current plan revision as a connection between other multi-use trails already in place or in planning and to extract a short but critical easement from a developer in Chelmsford.

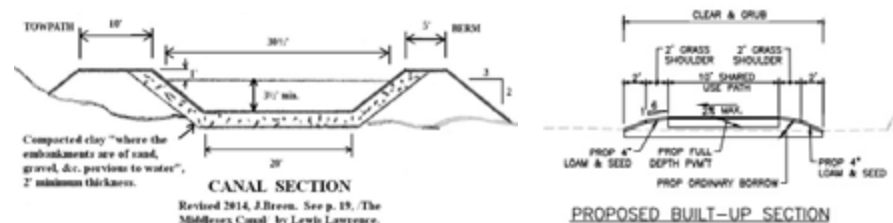
Natural Evolution

What are the characteristics of RR ROWs that support conversion to Bike and multi-use trails, aka Shared Use Paths (SUP)? The RRs had put a lot effort and expense into assembling their ROWs to be:

- Smooth – RRs can only tolerate very gradual changes in elevation or direction when hauling hundreds of tons at high speed. Hills and valleys of natural terrain had to be flattened.
- Level - Not only are local bumps not allowed, but long-term climbs and drops are spread out and kept to a few % grade.
- Wide – Rails are a standard width (4 ft 8½ in), and above that the railcars are also a standard width. Many railroads were 2-track in their heyday to allow 2-way traffic; even when scaled back to single track, the second track ROW is usually maintained for maintenance trucks.
- Continuous – It goes without saying that no gaps were allowed. Assembling such an aggregation of parcels nowadays would be impossible in any populated area like Eastern Mass. Losing such an asset by selling it off in pieces would be a permanent loss, as we know from the Middlesex Canal in the inner suburbs.

Canals and their towpaths had all the same constraints! The ideal canal would be perfectly smooth, level, straight and constant width. Baldwin and his surveyors took great effort to choose the best route to accomplish the above with minimum earth moving. Long term drops in elevation from the summit pond to the Merrimack and Charles Rivers were accomplished as discrete changes at a few locks; otherwise, the canal water level was almost flat. Except at the locks, so was the adjacent towpath.

Both the towpath and the modern bike trail have a ten-foot-wide travel lane. A typical cross section of canal compared to a typical multi-use bike trail:



Middlesex Canal Towpath (on left)
← towpath 10 feet wide →

Billerica’s Yankee Doodle Trail
← 10 foot paved + 2x2 shoulder →

Factoids re RR abandonment:

- “Railroad mileage within the U.S. reached its peak in the mid-1910s, with over 254,000 miles of railways in use.” (Wikipedia) “The U.S. rail network is comprised of nearly

140,000 miles of track.” (www.infrastructurereportcard.org) So almost half the track has been abandoned.

- A huge fraction of the remaining track is cross-country long-haul, not the local competing tracks a couple miles apart that we once had here in Eastern Mass. (author’s opinion). The Boston and Maine RR absorbed over 150 local RRs in MA, NH, ME, and VT (book: “*Boston & Maine in the 19th Century*”, Appendix B). So our area has above average abandoned ROW per town.
- Modern Rail Trails, now known as multi-use trails or SUPs, also support strolling, hiking, jogging, running and occasionally horse riding – any non-motorized person-powered recreation, even commuting.

Other Towpath Bike Trails

The best local example of towpath bike trail is the current Woburn project. They are converting almost three miles of abandoned RR and canal into an SUP. The whole path follows the old Middlesex Canal, though 80% of the length had been previously converted to RR in the late 1800s and since abandoned. Over a half mile will actually be on canal towpath.



New York State is a leader in towpath trails. They have finished most of the Erie Canal and much of the Champlain Canal, plus more in the works. Examples:



Walk! Cycle! Jog!
The Erie Canalway Trail is waiting for you.

Ohio also has converted a high percentage of their extensive old canal system to SUP:



Virginia and WDC have the second-best canal (after Middlesex of course), the Chesapeake & Ohio. Their towpath trail system is extensive:



A Google search shows towpath trails in many other states; NY, OH, and VA dominate the topic.

Bridging Gaps in Local Trails

As much as we would like to restore our canal towpath to all-season walkability, such as the sections between North Billerica and East Chelmsford pestered by high water from the beavers, it is the big picture that holds promise of state and federal funding to actually make it happen. Our North Billerica towpath sections and the adjacent Billerica Branch RR (on the Smallpox Cemetery walk) are short segments that would help close short gaps remaining in hundreds of miles of continuous regional Rail Trails. Clockwise from North, these are:

The Bay Circuit Trail (BCT) “The Bay Circuit Trail and Greenway” is a Massachusetts rail trail and greenway connecting the outlying suburbs of Boston from Plum Island in Newburyport to Kingston Bay in Duxbury, a distance of 200 miles.” (*Wikipedia*) In over 200 miles of trails assembled from trails in 37 towns linked together, there are some gaps left to complete the circuit. Greater Lowell and Bridgewater are the notable gaps. There is about a mile left to finish between around the Lowell Connector and Lowell’s Concord River Greenway. Unfortunately, the RR ROW has been lost and there is an active railroad yard in the way.

The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) is the Acton/Carlisle/Chelmsford portion of the BCT. BFRT runs on the old Framingham and Lowell RR ROW from about the Concord Prison Rotary to past the interchange of I-495 and US-3, east of the highly visible Cross Point (Wang) Towers. It is really perfect all the way, with good surface, guard rails wherever needed, crossing signs on small roads, automatic flashing signs on major roads, a bridge over 2A in Acton and tunnels under 495 and 3 at the Lowell end. The 495 tunnel is the starting point for the next paragraph.

Riverneck Road, with Rte. 3 overpass and Lowell Connector underpass, is one of the few ways to bike or hike across the impenetrable barriers of routes 3 and 495. Jay and the author have researched routes from the BFRT/495 tunnel to the Riverneck Road bridge, all on state or town land except for a 150-foot easement needed across the old Mercury Computer property, 201 Riverneck Road.

A developer wants to demolish Mercury and build a huge distribution warehouse. The neighborhood outcry gives us the opportunity to piggy-back a trail easement requirement onto the huge “Order of Conditions” the developer will probably have to accept to gain approval. The Chelmsford Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) generally likes the idea, and may take it to the planning board at the right time.



Just east of Route 3 on Riverneck Road lies Canal Street, the most visible evidence of the Middlesex Canal before it was buried by acres of the 495/3/Connector interchange. (Note. North of the interchange, the canal exists from Rte 3 to Mt. Pleasant Golf Club with the canal a water hazard between the second and third fairways - as shown on pgs. 4-5.) Canal Street is an access road built on the former towpath and serves two of Chelmsford’s water districts. The remnant watered canal is aside it.

From the brick pump house to Brick Kiln Road is a stretch of canal under water much of the year (due to highway and/or beavers?).

Between Brick Kiln and Route 3A in North Billerica is a good canal remnant that is unfortunately also under water a lot. That connects to the well-preserved canal almost to the dam and museum.

The road around the dam is a tough stretch to imagine a good bike trail, but luckily it is short.

Once on Rogers Street, north-east of the summit pond, we can pick up the canal again, as in the smallpox hikes. Jay and Marlies are working on easement(s) to allow improving the towpath in this stretch. When we reach the old 1-track unused RR, the canal’s part is over.

From here Andrew Jennings is working on getting an easement from the track owner, MBTA, for a Rail-with-Trail path down to Boston Road (Rte. 3A) at Heritage Road. The Yankee Doodle between Heritage Road and Billerica High School is under construction as part of repaving Boston Road.

Billerica High is the northern end of the current phase of the Yankee Doodle Bike Trail project, which will connect to Bedford’s Narrow Gauge Rail Trail. Bedford Depot

is a wye: South is the beautiful paved Minuteman Bikeway to Lexington, Arlington, Alewife, and connecting to Cambridge, Somerville, and the whole Boston trails network. West, completing the northern loop of the BCT, the Reformatory Branch Trail will someday reach the BCT and BFRT near the Concord Prison Rotary, where this circle started.



Funding

In the modern era, almost any significant public work relies on funding from higher government. This requires years and decades of prior planning, attending meetings, and advocating one’s project.

The Mass Department of Transportation (MassDOT) has a Priority Trails Network Plan that shows the canal sections, Yankee Doodle and Narrow-Gauge segments and a slightly different on-road route for the Billerica Branch segment we propose. They also show the old idea of connecting BFRT and Concord River Greenway via bike paths on Lowell city streets, instead of our Riverneck Road plan.

The Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) is currently working on their 5-year update of “Envision 2050” Plan and were kind enough to hear from Marlies Henderson, Bill Gerber, Andrew Jennings, Jay Breen and me at their March meeting. Also, Billerica is currently updating their Open Space and Recreation Plan. Andrew is actively advocating our ideas at both of these.

The “low-hanging fruit” in all this is the opportunity later this year to get the easement from the Riverneck developer that would allow all the off-road BFRT-Middlesex Canal link to be accomplished on public land.

Conclusion

Once again, the Middlesex Canal has a significant role to play in regional transportation, one of the three projects that will complete the BCT - BFRT - Yankee Doodle - Narrow Gauge - Minuteman - Reformatory trail system.

From The Lessons – Silverfish Review Press, 2011
“Farmer, Middlesex Canal, 1810”

by Joanne Diaz

N.B. This poem was published with permission from the poet.

The canal is a hollow reed
a jointed fissure
each knot a wooden lock
to be fastened then released
to the lurch and sigh
of its most ancient sound
qanah qanah

The canal is a bank where asters
blossom and break
and in their breaking a memory
of what came before:
my father’s flute
resting in its pouch by the fire

my mother’s cane
and the echo of its tapping

my fishing rod from childhood
the hook a rusted curl
from hours of dipping

and in the watery wind
my wife’s distant breath
yes, she: a narrow flute
a slender road
a small beauty
that required close watching

She is there in each new hook
in the ice that fractures stone
I know the canal’s flow is the remnant
of a certain kind of brilliance
a ruthless optimism ringing in the night

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.

Web Site – The URL for the Middlesex Canal Association’s website 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.