

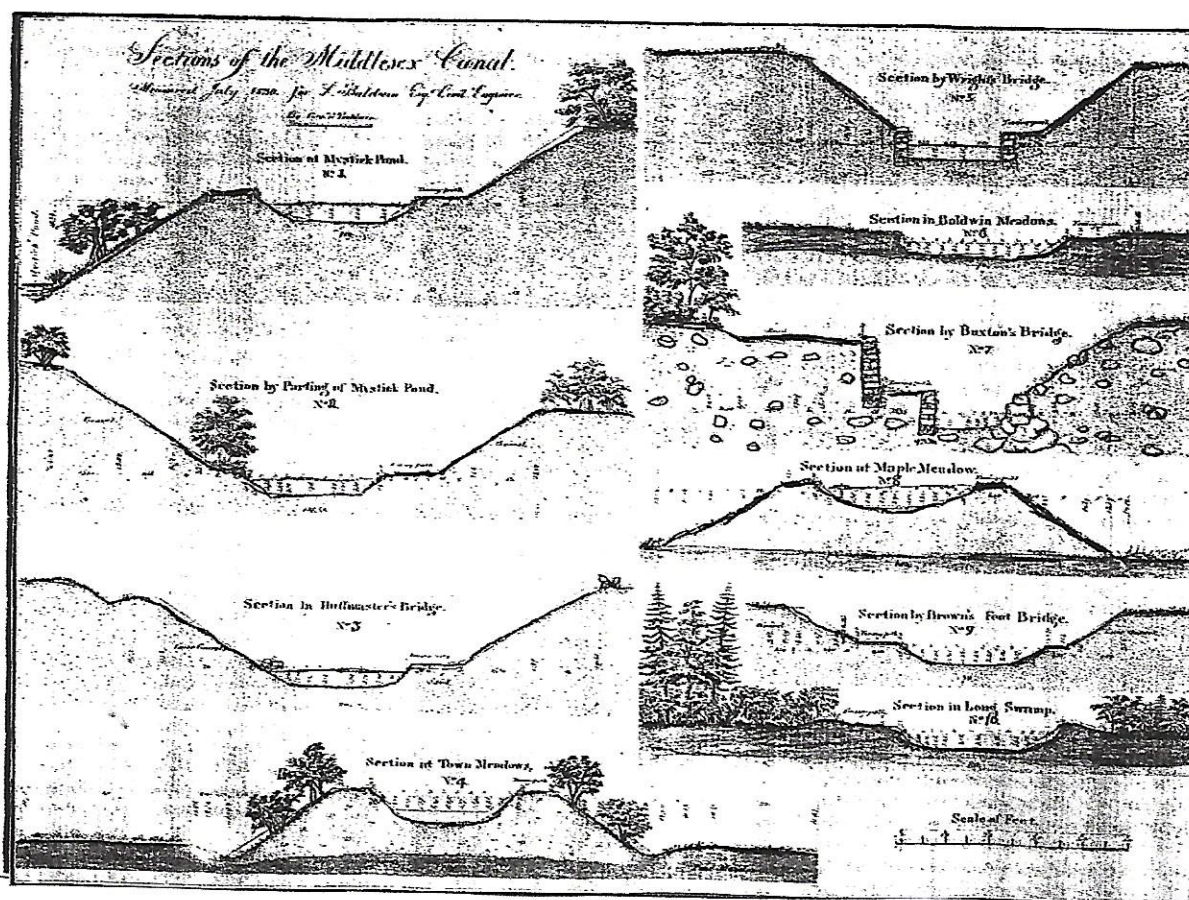


THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
Middlesex Canal Commission



MIDDLESEX CANAL
RESTORATION GUIDELINES

JANUARY 1997



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I. INTRODUCTION

The Middlesex Canal Commission at its reorganizational meeting of March 19, 1996, adopted the 1980 "Middlesex Canal Heritage Park Feasibility Study" as the "Master Plan" for the restoration and preservation of the Canal.

The "Master Plan" identifies by segment within each municipality, the canal condition, the canal structures and significant associated historical buildings. Restoration and preservation was recommended in general terms.

A more detailed set of guidelines are required to define the specific degrees of stabilization, restoration, and preservation to be undertaken. In an attempt to prepare such guidelines, a survey was initiated by the Executive Committee of the Commission seeking the advice of senior canal enthusiasts, experts and historians for each of the three categories.

Basic Canal
Canal Structures
Associated Buildings

This report provides their combined recommended guidelines for the mission of stabilizing, restoring and preservation to be used in any representations for funding, planning, design, construction, maintenance and management of the historic corridor. It represents the advice of David Dettinger, William Gerber, Roger Hagopian, Bruce McHenry, Carl Seaburg, and Warburton Ver Planck and was compiled and edited from the surveys by Thomas Raphael and Arthur O. Vogt.

The letter and the survey check list sent to fifteen "canalers" are appended to this report. The report is organized in the order of the check list.

II. BASIC CANAL

Towpath

The objective should be to restore a lightly crowned ten foot wide dirt or gravel (not paved) path wherever any visible canal exists.

The path should be cleared of grass by mowing and of trees and understory by hand felling to grade but not grubbing.

There should be a ten foot wide marked access along roadways or rights-of-way connecting segments of the restored canal.

Dry Canal Bed

Any dry canal bed and berm should be cleared in the same manner as the tow-path.

The bed should be recontoured, stabilized and graded when possible to the original dimensions.

Studies should be made to determine if it is feasible to restore water to any sections of the canal especially if it can be joined to another watered section.

Watered Canal

Watered sections of the canal should be restored by clearing of vegetation and grading and contouring to original dimensions.

Methods of controlling the water level and flow should be by restoring historic method if possible.

Consideration should be given to allowing and providing access for controlled rowing and canoeing as well as winter ice-skating.

Rest and Picnic Area

Parking and group gathering areas should be planned at all access points.

Rest and picnic areas should be planned at appropriate scenic and interpretive sites. It should be an objective to acquire land to provide access or to connect segments of canal separated only by private owners. Alternately right-of-way or easement should be sought.

Fencing

Appropriate historic fencing will only be planned and added where separation of canal property from private property cannot be screened by landscape plantings or where limiting access is needed.

Landscaping

Beyond the towpath and the berm of any restored canal section, natural growth will be maintained and restored in so far as possible except where especially scenic vistas are to be retained.

Screening and limiting of access will be accomplished by appropriate and historic landscape vegetation.

Landscaping in picnic and interpretive site areas must be planned to require minimum maintenance while ground areas must be arranged for easy mechanical mowing.

III. STRUCTURES

The following aqueducts should be restored and bridged:

Shawsheen
Maple Meadow
Lubbers Brook
Settled Meadow

The aqueducts will serve as connecting bridges to extend the accessibility to restored canal as well as interesting scenic and interpretive sites.

Locks

It would be desirable to reconstruct one or more workable locks.

Other locks should have sidewalls restored where possible or else laid out on the surface to show the full effect of the change in elevation.

Locks will be major interpretive sites

The following locks are of particular interest:

Concord River Guard Lock
Red Lock and Channel
Lincoln Lock
Lowell Locks
Stoddard Locks

Culverts

Culverts and weirs should be restored if they serve a function or where of particular interest.

Bridges

One or more bridges should be built as historic examples and especially if they can serve for access to scenic areas or as interpretive sites.

Baldwin Farms and Browns foot bridges would be good examples.

IV. BUILDINGS

Former tavern buildings should be labeled with plaques or as interpretive sites with permission of owners.

A study should be made to determine if any former taverns could be privately restored and operated as a tavern, restaurant or bed and breakfast.

The Commission should establish an agreement with the owners of the Baldwin Restaurant in particular so that it is either maintained as such or can be preserved.

The Mears Tavern should be studied.

A canal museum could have a tavern motif as a part of its public structure.

Other Buildings

All existing canal related buildings should be considered for restoration, signage or as interpretive sites. The following in particular should be studied:

Cyrus Baldwin House
Brown's House
Gillis Locktender's House
Nichols Locktender's House

Museum

Ideally, a canal museum should be located in a mill building at the Billerica Mill Pond Park or a reconstructed or new building should be planned.

Archives

The archives should remain at Lowell until appropriate storage capabilities can be included at the museum.

Headquarters

A permanent staff and headquarters for the Commission will be needed to maintain the historic corridor, to preserve the archives, to plan continuing public education and to provide funding.

Possible sites could be the museum at the Billerica Mill Pond or the doctor's house at Francis Gate.

Floating Towpath

This is a major interpretive site which will be part of the Concord Mill Pond Park project.

The towpath peninsulas should be reconstructed.

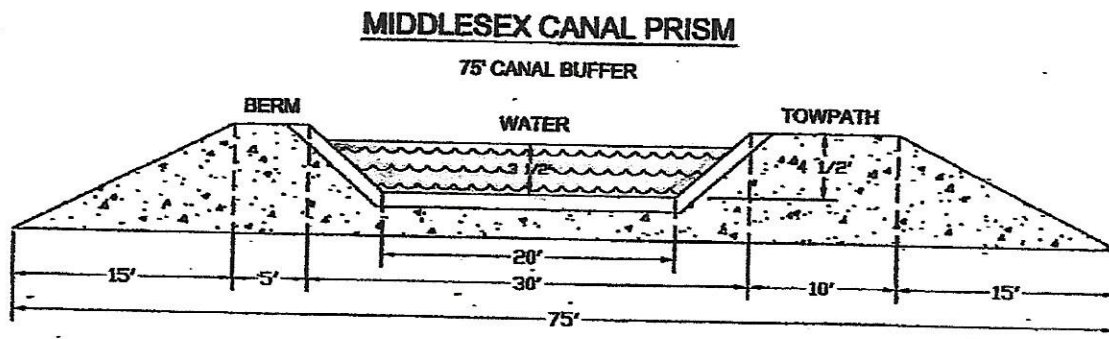
Floating towpath sections should be planned and constructed but maintained in their open position; not connected across the river except on special occasions or celebrations of such is deemed practical and safe.

Signage

Permanent signage will be the result of a final restoration project which will include all aspects of the canal from Lowell to Boston. It should delineate a complete continuous corridor.

Temporary signage should be planned as part of any design and restoration study and implemented by durable, replaceable, low cost but artistic signage. These will serve directional, educational and public interest purposes.

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MIDDLESEX CANAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

PREPARED FOR
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