



Towpath Topics

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

Volume 57 No. 1

September 2018

Please mark your calendars

MCA Sponsored Events
2018-2019 Schedule

16th Annual Bike Tour, 9 A.M., Sunday, September 30, 2018

Fall Walk, 1:30 P.M., Sunday, October 14, 2018
Woburn Cinemas

Fall Meeting, 1 P.M., Sunday, October 28, 2018
Speaker: Frank J. Barrett

**Topic: The planning and effort to build canals across New Hampshire
and Vermont**

Winter Meeting, 1 P.M., Sunday, February 10, 2019
Speaker: TBA

**The Visitor/Center Museum is open Saturday and Sunday, noon – 4pm,
except on holidays. The Board of Directors meets the 1st Wednesday of
each month, 3:30-5:30pm, except July and August.**

**Visit www.middlesexcanal.org for up-to-date listings of MCA events
and other events of interest to canallers!**

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Editors' Letter

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the Fall 2018 issue of Towpath Topics. After record-setting summer days over 90-degree weather, cooler days are coming and will be enjoyed until that day when boots will be needed just to get the mail! So for now, settle somewhere comfortable and read Towpath Topics.

This issue starts, sadly, with tributes to Dr. Rev. Alan Seaburg and Rep. Micelli, both remembered by Betty Bigwood, and both long-time members and friends of the Middlesex Canal Association. The MCC: Billerica Section has contributed a salute and short biography of retiring member, Andrew Bowen, who has worked tirelessly for both groups for many years.

MCA President J Breen has made a contribution to this issue, and housekeeping information includes an update on the progress of the new museum, and a recap of the Annual Meeting. The calendar section, as always, describes activities and details of upcoming events.

Articles this month include one on the rebuilding of the Shawsheen Aqueduct; hops production in Wilmington and the Canal connection to it; and Part III of Alan Seaburg's book, *A Social History of the Middlesex Canal*. A full and interesting issue that we hope will be enjoyable as well.

The editors would like to recognize the efforts of Neil Devins, Andrew Bowen, and Marlies Henderson for their work in Wilmington and Billerica. Neil spearheaded the effort to place a Middlesex Canal wayside marker in the Wilmington Town Park. On Lowell Street (parallels the remnants of the Middlesex Canal from the North Billerica Fire Station to Boston Road) in North Billerica Marlies saw to the installation of the Thoreau Path sign and Andy, in cooperation with Billerica's Town Manager, arranged for the placement of two memorial benches along the recently completed sidewalk. One bench is dedicated to the memory of Thomas Raphael, MCC Chair and the second to the memory of John "Kenny" Reardon, MCC: Billerica Section Chair. Collectively, these efforts benefit the areas in which they are placed and kindle an interest in preserving the history of the Middlesex Canal.

Bill Gerber has recently stepped-down from the MCA Board after many years of service including a term as president and several years as editor of Towpath Topics. Although he remains an active member of the MCA, his service on the Board will be honored in the next issue!

Lastly, check out the Miscellany at the end of the newsletter, and please contact us with any complaints, comments, or suggestions.

As always,
Deb, Alec, and Robert

MCA Sponsored Events and Directions to Museum

16th Annual Bicycle Tour North: On Sunday, September 30, 2018 riders are encouraged to meet at 9:00am at the Middlesex Canal plaque, Sullivan Square MBTA Station (1 Cambridge Street, Charlestown, MA 02019). The ride will head north following the canal route for 38 miles to Lowell. There will be a stop for snacks at Kiwanis Park across from the Baldwin Mansion (2 Alfred Street, Woburn, MA 01801 ~12:30pm), stop for a visit at the Canal Museum (71 Falkner Street, North Billerica, MA 01862 ~ 3:00pm) and arrive in Lowell in time for the 5:00pm train back to Boston. Riders



can choose their own time to leave or join the tour by using the Lowell line which parallels the canal. The ride is easy for most cyclists. The route is pretty flat and the tour group will average 5 mph. Steady rain cancels; helmets are required. For changes and updates see www.middlesexcanal.org. The leaders of the tour are Bill Kuttner and Dick Bauer.

Fall Walk: The Fall Walk will take place on Sunday, October 14, 2018. Participants are encouraged to meet at 1:30pm at the southeast corner of the parking lot behind the Woburn Cinemas. The Appalachian Mountain Club and the MCA will host the three-mile walk along two level sections of the historic Middlesex Canal. MCA member, Robert Winters will lead the walk accompanied by co-leader Marlies Henderson.

Directions: From Rte. 128, take Exit 35, Rte. 38S. Proceed 1/10 of a mile and take a left turn off Rte. 38 onto Middlesex Canal Drive past the Crowne Plaza to the meeting place. Additional information is available at www.middlesexcanal.org.

Fall Meeting: The Fall Meeting of the MCA is scheduled for Sunday, October 28, 2018 at 1:00pm in the Reardon Room of the Middlesex Canal Museum and Visitors' Center located at 71 Faulkner Street, North Billerica, MA 01862. The featured speaker will be Frank J. Barrett, an architect and historian from White River Junction, Vermont. In 1829, Charles Francis Adams, son of a founding stock holder in the Middlesex Canal, and himself a director from c. 1829 to 1852 wrote in a management consultant-like report the disadvantage to the canal "should railways yet succeed." Though railroads were the "rage" in 1829 canals were still planned. Why? In an attempt to answer this question, Frank's presentation will address the planning and the effort to build canals across both New Hampshire and Vermont, that in many cases would connect with the Merrimack River.

Directions to Middlesex Canal Museum and Visitors' Center

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, "Three Recent Events"

by J. Breen

Fred Lawson was speaker at the winter meeting. He spoke on his remembrance of the "Start of the Association", beginning with Harry Lasher's talk at the 1961 annual meeting of the Billerica Historical Society. Fred commented to his wife Cathy that Lasher was in error. Dick Manning asked how Fred knew this, starting a conversation that led to the Association. More information on the origin of the Association is in Betty Bigwood's Sept 2002 *Towpath Topics* article, <http://tinyurl.com/yczdd667>. Fred's talk was recorded by Roger Hagopian and is in the Internet Archive, <http://tinyurl.com/y88ub6hr>.

The bike tour south on April 14 began with the 8 AM train from Boston's North Station arriving at Lowell at 8:44 with tourists cycling to the Owl Diner for breakfast. We were ten for breakfast. One person was there just for breakfast. After breakfast, we cycled to the location of the former landing on the Pawtucket Canal for boats from Boston and Concord. Next stop was the location of the warehouse built over the Merrimack Canal for ease in moving bales of cotton from the boat. The third canal stop was the Hall St. Dam with prominent remnants of the two-step lock staircase for boats travelling between the upper and lower levels of the power canal system. While the Lowell National Historical Park's exhibits at the canal landing, cotton warehouse, and Hall St do not mention the boat transportation which supplied the people and factories of Lowell, at Hall St the historian designing the exhibit also had to ignore the gate pockets and the remnant of the 160' long wall of the locks. The breakfast group returned to the train station to welcome the cyclists for the 10:44am start of the bike tour south. The next tour is September 30. As the photo shows, the flat route and slow speed make the tour easy for a wide range of cyclists.

The April 22 walk in Wilmington was obstructed by several trees blown down by a storm. Ed Dolliver loaned a 2 horsepower Husqvarna chainsaw to clear the path. Roger Hagopian placed new boards at the Patch's Pond Brook crossing. Most notable in building the ladder bridge crossing Maple Meadow Brook was 93-years-old Gerry Bigwood's participation for most of the two hours of work. Betty Bigwood, on the Tuesday after the spring walk emailed a summary to the Google group, "MCA Directors" as follows:

It was a beautiful day in Wilmington - perfect for a walk! There was a good crowd - ~35 people. I have never seen the Wilmington Town Park so busy! My car was near the Dog Park and at times there were 30 dogs - it is well liked by the Town folks - still wish it were some where else! Neil's new sign was up and in good form - many thanks to Neil for all his efforts - J commented how much effort it took - but we did it the correct way and got some good publicity for it too!

Building the bridge across the Maple Meadow Aqueduct was especially tedious this year. The Town, delayed by a late Spring, and many ball fields to get in order where too inundated to help us clear the brush blocking the aqueduct. Mother Nature had even felled a large tree across the canal which blocked access - J cut the tree into several pieces to allow passage but more work needs

to be done - perhaps when it is dry and removal of tree debris is easier.

Removal of the brush and building the bridge took longer this year and taxed the brute force of four workers (J. Roger, Neil and Gerry). Robert held forth and led the walk impressing all with his knowledge and considerable charm.

J put the 17 ft ladder on his car, Gerry and I put the boards and rope into our car and off we went - thinking that we had plenty of time - 2 hours to build the bridge - but considering the age of the workers and the amount to be done they finished just as the first walkers came - in the nick of time - two hours later. The McInnis son, Steven, provided cookies and lemonade - most appreciated!

J's nephew, Ted and his wife and James Baldwin (GreatGrandson of Loammi) and his family came for the walk. It was a nice mixed crowd plus a couple of walkers who we were concerned about and admired their effort.

We have been having trouble with motorized bikes on the pathway - ATV's. One came and was upset to be told that he could not do what he wanted - there was a lot of yelling. I called the police for the third time in the last few weeks but I need to get signs out there - will work on it this week.

Gerry complained all day yesterday that his right shoulder was hurting and he was exhausted. Roger said he had to go home and take care of his aching back and Neil said he realized how out of shape he was! But the Leader of the group - J - was truly exhausted! That day did him in. He was covered in scratches from the branches and wet from standing in the water - thigh high! I have never seen him so worn out - he really over did it.

We must build a bridge there. All five volunteers (J, Roger, Neil, Robert, Gerry) deserve a GOLD STAR!!!!

At the May 6 annual meeting, Robert Thorson's book, *The Boatman*, was the topic for a colloquy.[1] Thorson's publisher describes the book as the most complete account of the "flowage controversy",[2] better known to *Towpath Topics* readers as the Great Billerica Dam Controversy.[3] The invited speakers to the colloquy were James Baldwin, Marlies Henderson, and Alec Ingraham. James was invited as he was thought to be a professor of geology like Thorson but James is a geographer. He agreed to participate in the colloquy if he had time to read the book after final exams. James has a familial interest as a descendant of the dam builder, Loammi Baldwin. Marlies has a knowledge of Thoreau, the Concord River, and Billerica. [4] Alec is the Town of Billerica historian, chairman of the Billerica Section of the Middlesex Canal Commission, and author of *A Short History of the Milldam at North Billerica 1653-1995*. [5]

A video of the colloquy is in the Internet Archive at <http://tinyurl.com/yc83xfra>.

Tom Dahill was the cameraman, and Roger Hagopian the editor. J. Breen was the producer, director, moderator, and participant which list is why he is responsible for the faults in this first attempt at a colloquy.

Notes.

Alan Seaburg, a stalwart of the Association from the time of publication of the

Incredible Ditch in 1997, died July 22. Along with the remembrance in this issue of *Towpath Topics*, the guest book at the Bedford Funeral Home, <https://tinyurl.com/ya8ukb6m>, is another valediction.

1. *The Boatman: Henry David Thoreau's River Years* by Robert M. Thorson. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017. The book was published in the bicentennial year of Thoreau's birth.

2. The "flowage controversy", <http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674545090>

3. Great Billerica Dam Controversy, *Towpath Topics*, Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 8-10, <https://tinyurl.com/y8qxbggq>.

4. Marlies Henderson, "Thoreau in Billerica", *Towpath Topics*, Vol. 56, No.3 (Apr 2018), pp. 11-15, <https://tinyurl.com/y6vja4pc>.

5. Alec Ingraham, *A Short History of the Milldam at North Billerica 1653-1995*, published by the Billerica Historical Society, 1995. In the Internet Archive, <https://tinyurl.com/IngrahamHistory>.

Building in Massachusetts is a long, protracted, tedious Process

by Betty M. Bigwood (9/12/18)

The Middlesex Canal Association became the owners of 2 Old Elm Street in February of 2014. Thomas Raphael lead the effort to acquire the building with Bill Donovan of the Cambridge Division of Pace Industries in Billerica. Plans were made almost immediately which were not successful. In May of 2017 Tom Raphael, J Breen, Tom Dahill and Betty Bigwood met at the current museum to start anew. We well knew the obstacles we were facing. We did not expect the length of the procedure or the passing of our energizer bunny, Tom Raphael.

We had hoped to begin the demolition process this fall (2018) but at the current rate of process we may be delayed until next spring. Bill Cogley, our projected Contractor, agreed with us that we would not begin his hiring until we have a Building Permit.

As *Towpath Topics* goes to press: John Caveney of Caveney Architects is due this week to complete the final Structural Plans. Scott Smyers and Jonathan Schuster of Oxbow Associates (wetlands specialist) has sent the NOI (Notice of Intent) to Conservation today, Matt Hamor of Landplex (our Civil Engineer) has completed the Site Plan. Paul Phelan of Phelan Engineering (our structural Engineer) has drawn plans for the internal beams for floor design, Johnson Engineering has almost completed the utility design (water, gas, sewer, electricity, sinks, toilets, heating and air conditioning etc) and Pace Industry has sent a letter of support. We have not yet applied to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a variance for parking or Appeal to Board of Health for a variance for the pilings needed for the observation deck in the Flood Plain. A permit from the NGrid has been delayed because of their strike which is delaying the location of the electrical entrance into the building.

We are almost at the point to apply to the Billerica Building Commissioner (Mark LaLumiere) for a Building Permit. He has 30 days to respond.

At the present time we expect this preparation to build process (Pres. J calls it pushing paper around) to cost between \$125,000. and \$150,000. This is Massachusetts!

The Building Committee has been working full time to push this project along. Just yesterday we received a letter from Pace allowing us to go full speed ahead. I am attaching this correspondence. We cannot underestimate the support that Pace Industries has given us. They are truly our benefactors. Their recent letter is below:

Pace Industries, LLC
67 Faulkner Street
N. Billerica, MA 01862

September 11, 2018

Billerica Conservation Commission
Town of Billerica
365 Boston Road
Billerica, MA 01821

Re: Middlesex Canal Association/2 Elm Street, Billerica, Massachusetts Project

Ladies and Gentlemen:

This letter will confirm that Pace Industries, LLC, as the owner of "Parcel B" shown on the attached Notice of Intent Plan (the "Plan"), which parcel is also commonly known and numbered 6 Old Elm Street, fully supports the project proposed by the Middlesex Canal Association with respect to its redevelopment of 2 Old Elm Street and has agreed that the footbridge shown in the Plan may terminate upon Pace Industries' property. Pace Industries is also in discussions with the Middlesex Canal Association to finalize an anticipated easement agreement to create certain parking spaces to support the Middlesex Canal Association's use of the completed project.

Sincerely,



William P. Donovan, President, Cambridge Division
Pace Industries, 67 Faulkner Street, N. Billerica, MA 01862

The Reverend Dr. Alan Leslie Seaburg – (1932-2018)

by Thomas H. Dahill and Betty M. Bigwood

Rev. Dr. Alan Leslie Seaburg, 86, of Billerica, formerly of Cambridge, died on July 22, 2018 at the Beth Israel Hospital in Boston a few days after coronary artery stent surgery. He is survived by daughters Carolyn and Ann and two granddaughters Lizzie and Sarah. His wife, Jean, passed away when their daughters were in their twenties.

Rev. Seaburg was Librarian of Crane Theological School, Tufts University; Co-



Rev. Dr. Alan Leslie Seaburg

Alan was a poet. He was for many years Poetry Editor of the Snowy Egret and has written several books of poetry.

Alan was a twin. His sister, Nancy, was very dear to him. One of Nancy's sons gave a wonderful eulogy wearing Alan's only tie while telling the audience that Alan was not a "dresser" and how proud he was to stand there and wear it.

Alan and his brother Carl bought a 200-acre farm in Vermont – the farm house was later enlarged by his son-in-law and painted a bright yellow. There were so many guests that Carl later had a small cabin built on a ridge so he could write in peace. They dammed up a stream for swimming and rigged up a swing - flying across with a rope so they could land with a splash. Many happy summers were spent there.

Alan knitted. Not sweaters, scarves etc. but squares which were sewn into afghans for the homeless.

Alan was exceptionally kind and thoughtful. He had a knack for remembering your name and always made you feel wanted, welcome and at ease. He was a gentleman. At a reception in his honor on Saturday, July 28, 2018 at the Burlington Marriott a number of people told me that he had invited them to lunch at Harvard or to the Hasty Pudding event – he shared his world with those who normally would not have been included in it.

He liked to tease. Shayne remembers countless notes – signed only THE MOUSE was here. They brought a smile to your face.

Alan was an anglophile. He had many friends in England and visited there frequently staying with friends or renting a "do it yourself flat". My husband once received a birthday card from England with the Queen singing "Happy" He was

minister with Kenneth Patton of the Charles Street Meeting House in Boston; and Curator of Manuscripts for 25 years at the Andover-Harvard Theological Library, Harvard Divinity School. When he retired in 1995 the school made him Curator of Manuscripts, Emeritus. In 1999 the Meadville/ Lombard Theological School in Chicago gave him an honorary D.D.

Alan became interested in the Middlesex Canal when his brother Carl asked him and Tom Dahill to join him in writing "The Incredible Ditch". He later became a Director of the MCA and pushed forward our Endowment Fund to insure future operating expenses could be met. He later wrote "Life on the Middlesex Canal" a collection of short stories.

very fond of Winston Churchill and his memorable quote – “ I like pigs. Dogs look up to you. Cats look down on you. But a pig looks you square in the eye”. Alan then assumed the nick name “Pig” which his close friends and relatives called him to his delight! It even went so far as to call his bed room a “pig pen”. Alan was fun! He came to several MCA parties in “costume” and one Christmas wearing antlers to set the tone.

Alan has a web site: Anne Miniver Press which will give you more details about his publications. He was an excellent writer.

We will miss him.

He formed a group of his friends when they retired from working at Harvard College. They were called the Bogies, Dan McCarron, Ken Carpenter, and Harley Holden, who met regularly at lunch. At the last meeting scheduled was held by the Bogies without Alan several days after his passing at his favorite restaurant, The Riverview in Billerica.

History and Biography were two favorite subjects which occupied a lot of his writing. Tom Dahill was the subject of two biographies. Many others were featured in the online biographies of the UUA, called DUUB. His research and accuracy were superb, and will secure for many a place in history.

The Honorable James R. Miceli – Who will replace him?

by Betty M. Bigwood

Representative James R. Miceli passed away on Saturday morning, April 21, 2018, from an apparent heart attack as he waited to give a speech to a Little League ceremony. He was 83 years old. In the House he was the penultimate Representative, serving as State Rep for 41 years, and was much loved by the two towns he represented, Wilmington and Tewksbury.

He leaves his wife Jean, three children and their families. He was easily accessible, worked tirelessly to help a large variety of people and served on numerous committees. We have all been welcomed over the years to his office in the State House as we tried to resolve myriad problems. He will be very missed.

Jim was a huge benefactor to the Middlesex Canal Commission delivering support, mentoring and five hundred thousand dollars through the State Legislature. MCC Chairman Tom Raphael and Waterfield Design used this money to complete the Middlesex Canal National Historic Registry recognition and with Ryther Design to work on the Middlesex Canal Heritage Park.

Running for State Rep is a continuous job – every two years you must apply again. Jim Miceli never took his re-election for granted. This is a wonderful opportunity to support the candidate by holding signs, writing letters, volunteering to man phone banks etc. In time you get to know each other very well - a deep friendship develops.

We need to develop new friendships in the State House because we need to have access to legislative avenues, funding and a variety of programs to improve our organization. Fortunately, Rep. Miceli’s aid, David Robertson, was just elected in the Democratic Primary to fulfill his place. David knows our organization well. There is a new possibility in Lowell, Lori Trahan, who recently prevailed in the recount in the

MA 3rd Congressional District Democratic Primary. Can you get your Rep interested in helping us?

Filling the shoes of Representative James R. Miceli will not be easy to do! But, let’s try!

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Middlesex Canal Association was held on May 6, 2018 at the Middlesex Canal Museum and Visitors’ Center at 71 Faulkner Street in North Billerica, MA. After President J. Breen called the meeting to order, a short business meeting ensued, followed by a colloquy based on the theme of Thorson’s new book, The Boatman. Listed in the table below is the slate of Officers and Board Members who were nominated and elected to serve for the upcoming year.

Name	Office
J. Jeremiah Breen	President
Traci B. Jansen	Vice President
Russell B. Silva	Treasurer
Neil Devins	Membership Secretary
Howard Winkler	Corresponding Secretary
Roger K. Hagopian	Videographer
Debra Diffin Fox	TT Copy Co-Editor
Alec Ingraham	TT Copy Co-Editor
Robert Winters	Webmaster & TT Publisher
Thomas H. Dahill, Jr.	Artist in Residence
Betty M. Bigwood	Museum Building Committee Chair
Alan Lefebvre	Member

Recognized as Honorary Directors were Jean Potter; Fred Lawson, Jr.; Howard Winkler, Treasurer Emeritus; and Leonard Harmon. In accordance with the recent by-law changes (see *Towpath Topics* #55-3) Barbara George, Aron Levy, and Sandra Doherty of Billerica; Usha Sree Kolipakkam of North Billerica; Bill Poole of Chelmsford; Charles Spence, James “Jay” McCarthy and Ginny Burnham of Lowell; Charles Lojek of Wilmington; Dennis Misserville of Lawrence, Diane Quimby Shayne of Hingham; and Leonard W. Delaney of Woburn were unanimously voted in as new Proprietors for 2017/2018 and welcomed to the MCA.

A Salute to Andrew Bowen

by Deb Fox

On June 30, 2018, after serving two consecutive three year terms, Andrew Bowen retired from the Billerica Section of the Middlesex Canal Commission. To commemorate his years of work, his fellow commissioners would like to share his life story and

accomplishments with the readers of Towpath Topics.

“Andy,” as he is known to us, was born in November of 1933 in Boston, one of six children and the only male. He started his professional career in the Army, where for three years he was a Specialist 4, and worked as a Radar and Computer Technician at Nike Ajax Missile Systems in Needham. From there he moved to Lincoln Labs, when it was located within MIT in Cambridge in 1951. During this time, he was also attending Northeastern University, acquiring an Associate Degree in 1964 and a Bachelor’s in Mechanical Engineering in 1971.

His personal life was not ignored while he was studying. In April of 1961, he married Patricia Barlow at the Bethany Methodist Church in Roslindale. They moved to Billerica that year, since they decided their commutes would be reasonable, a short train ride to Pat’s job at Jordan Marsh and Andy’s car ride to Lexington to the new Lincoln Lab facility next to Hanscom Field. Once settled, Pat and Andy added their son Scott to their family. Now grown, Scott and his wife Debra have two daughters Jessica and Kaitlyn and they too live in Billerica.

By 1972, Andy was ready to get involved in Town politics and stepped into the fray as a Town Meeting Member from 1972 -1981 and 1995 – the present, with over thirty years of service. Concurrently, he served from (1974-1980) as a member of the Cemetery Commission, which at the time was an elected position.

While on the Cemetery Commission, Andy would ride around town checking out the cemeteries with long-time Commission member, Frank Dignon. During these trips the pair would stop at local historic sites. This is how Andy claims he was introduced to Billerica’s history and why he became interested in preserving it. (Ingraham)



Cemetery Commission (Billerica Town Report 1977)

In the 1980’s and 1990’s Andy took a break from town affairs, but after retiring from his full-time job at Lincoln Labs in 1994, and his part-time job there in 1996, he jumped back in with both feet. Here is a partial list of his activities: Town History Museum, 2 years; Beautification Committee, 4 years; Precinct Worker, 1 year; Billerica Historical Commission, 3 years; and a Town Meeting Member at least until 2018.

He is a life member of the Billerica Historical Society and served as the organization’s president from 2000 – 2002; is an active parishioner of the First Parish Church in Billerica Center; and a long-time member of the Middlesex Canal Association.

Andy has worked an unknown number of hours for the Town and for the Billerica Section of the MCC. His specialty is acquiring grant money for historic markers. Most of the signs designating historic places in Billerica are due to his efforts. Filling out and filing paperwork for grants, hiring contractors, getting signatures and approvals from town boards, placing and installing them, and maintaining them through all kinds of weather are all the jobs he undertakes for the historic markers.

Always cheerful, full of great ideas and how to implement them, he is a joy to work with and will be sorely missed by his fellow Commissioners of the Billerica Section: Deb, Chuck, Alec and Marlies.

41 Years and Counting

by Alec Ingraham|



It is hard to believe that the restoration work on the Shawsheen Aqueduct began on October 5, 1977, almost exactly 41 years ago. The successful bid for the HUD funded project, which was supervised by the Billerica Historical Commission in conjunction with the MCA, was submitted by E. C. Blanchard Company, Inc. of Lynn, MA. It took three weeks to complete the venture, which involved rebuilding the central pier and a portion of the retaining wall on the west side. Stones, which had fallen from the aqueduct’s central pier, were hoisted from the river bed below and fitted into place. One long, flat ashlar, however, was missing and a 24” x 10” x 12” replacement was purchased from Guilmette Bros. It was the only stone brought to the site. The total cost to rebuild the central pier and repair the west side retaining wall was \$17,542.85.

An additional \$7,852.93 was expended for final site improvements which included

access steps and railing, site marker, protective fencing, and minimal plantings. (A more detailed version of the venture can be found in Towpath Topics #16-1 of January, 1978. See *The Shawsheen Aqueduct Restored* by Robert E. Valyou.)



History: Wilmington led nation in hop production

by Larz F. Neilson

Hop vines climb aggressively, going up 20 feet. The cones then hang down on the vines. These hops were on a trellis. When grown commercially, they are allowed to climb a rope, which is then lowered for harvest. (Courtesy photo)



What brought about the building of stone walls in Wilmington? While there are a few reasons, one primary reason was to allow the cultivation of hops. Yes, hops, like in beer. About 200 years ago, Wilmington was the leading producer of hops in the country.

There were a few factors involved in this. Hop culture was centered in Massachusetts in colonial times. After the Revolutionary War, Middlesex County was a prime hop-growing area, and Wilmington led the county in hop cultivation.

The hop industry was so valuable in Massachusetts that careful records were kept as to the number of bags shipped, and the quality of the hops in those bags. Keeping the records, once it had been decided to do that, was easy, as all (with one exception) were shipped via the canal, and all that was needed was to consult the manifests of the Middlesex Canal barges to find the total number of bags shipped.

The Middlesex Canal, completed in 1803, is best-known for shipping cotton to the textile mills of Lowell. For the farmers of Wilmington, it provided excellent transportation for shipping hops to market. Canal records indicate that between 1806 and 1837, there were 78,806 bags of hops sent from Wilmington to Albany, New York.

The total value of the hops grown in that era was \$2,169,430, in the dollar value of that era. A dollar was considered a good day's pay back then. Consider the price of the Louisiana Purchase, in which the U.S. bought more than 800,000 square miles for \$15 million.

In 1817, the price was 34 cents a pound. Two years later, it had dropped to five cents.

The hops were shipped in very large bags. The canal boat would take them to Charlestown where they would be loaded on a coastal packet, a small ship. The shipping route would take them down the New England coast to New York City, and then up the Hudson River to Albany.

Water transportation was far superior to the roads of that era. The Middlesex Canal, the first of its kind in the United States, proved to be an economic engine for Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

But the War of 1812 threw a monkey wrench in the shipment of hops to Albany. The British blockaded the port of New York, which included the Hudson River. The farmers briefly turned to overland transportation.

Asa Sheldon, in his autobiography, *Wilmington Farmer*, tells of that time. Asa, then a young man, transported hops overland to Albany. He did this with a large cart, drawn by oxen. Quite probably other Wilmington men did the same thing, but there is no other record.

Sheldon relates of his fear of highwaymen on the return trip. He tells how he hid the money he had received in the ear of one of the oxen. Fortunately, he seems to have met no bandits.

William Blanchard, Jr., better known as Squire Blanchard, was the state inspector of hops, an important job. His duty was to insure that all hops exported from Wilmington were up to the standards set by the state.

For this he was paid \$2,000 a year. That was the same salary as that given to the governor of Massachusetts, and those two gentlemen were the only ones in the state to receive such a munificent salary.

Behind the William Butters II house on Chestnut Street, adjacent to the Baldwin Apple, was a hop kiln. In the uplands near that house were many stone walls. Those stone walls mean that the fields were cleared to grow hops.

Up in North Wilmington more stone walls could be found in the uplands, though development has destroyed many of them. There were many walls between Andover and Ballardvale streets, and between High Street and the new Route 62, over Route 93. There are also stone walls in the land that was once a part of the Gowing Farm.

The Harnden family and the Gowing family both undoubtedly were hop farmers. On High Street, Henry Carter grew hops. He lived in the house now owned by the Espinola family.

In 1817, the price was 34 cents a pound. Two years later, it had dropped to five cents.

Probably the best story, relative to hops, relates to the Benjamin Buck house, between Wildwood and Woburn streets, now the oldest house in town. The Buck family had a lot of upland, where the Wildwood School is now located. They owned right down to the brook.

Benjamin Buck made considerable money by growing hops in Wilmington. Benjamin lived in the old Buck house, which now bears his name, although it was built by his forebears. It seems that he built a secret hiding place, which was only discovered in the 1960s. One of the chestnut beams on the first floor had a little addition to it, that

could not be detected by a casual glance. In there, for possibly a half century, Benjamin Buck hid his money.

If the town needed \$1,000, it would borrow it from Benjamin. This happened more than once, according to the town records.

When the church (Congregational) steeple blew down in 1876, it was Benjamin Buck who paid \$5,000 for a new steeple. He just went to his hiding place, after being certain no one was watching, and got the money.

That was hop money.

The Buck house has a third floor, where the hops were dried, before they were sent to market. It seems to have been the only place where this was done indoors. Everywhere else, they were dried in outdoor kilns. Drying at cooler temperatures produces higher quality hops.

After the hops were dried, they were packed in large bags and dropped down a chute, beside one of the chimneys to ground level. Then the bags were taken to the canal for shipment to Charlestown, thence to Albany.

Hop cultivation stopped in 1837. That was the second year, it seems, of a hop blight, from which Wilmington hops never recovered. As areas in the west were being developed, new areas opened for hop cultivation.

The craft beer industry has brought about a resurgence in the cultivation of hops in some areas of the East, but Washington state has for a long time been the leading hop producer.

Wilmington Town Crier, week of August 5, 2018;
Reprinted with permission

Editors' Note: Interlude Three is the third part in a series from the e-book *A Social History of the Middlesex Canal* by Rev. Alan Seaburg.

INTERLUDE THREE: THE CANAL ABOUT 1820

Occasional parties of pleasure were made up on the canal, and a boat of elegant proportions, and brilliantly decorated for the purpose, was owned by the corporation. Often Mr. Sullivan and his brothers, who held a preponderating interest in the property, made up such parties for the entertainment of their families and invited guests. If the speed of four or five miles an hour seemed slow compared with modern rates of locomotion, the canal passed through some of the most beautiful country seats in the neighborhood of Boston. Its placid course extended midst flowers and shrubs and clumps of majestic forest trees through a scenery of romantic beauty, -- through lakes and streams and in sight of picturesque dwellings. A band of music was generally in attendance. The way was enlivened by vocal music, and songs of Burns and Moore and Haynes Bailey were sung in solo or chorus; and often in the summer days and pleasant weather, the younger people, for whom such recreations were a special delight, might have been dancing on the mowed lawns which bordered the canal. Horn Pond at Woburn offered an ample area for rowing. When, towards sunset, after these

various recreations, the company assembled on the lawn, various round tables covered with spotless damask, loaded with flowers and fruit, with strawberries and ices, refreshed those who were weary with so many enjoyments. Such as were permitted to participate in these gatherings must recall the festal scenes where those to whom we were most fondly attached constitutes the company. When at sunset we embarked on our homeward, the changing landscape afforded a variety of beauty of soft lights and refreshing breezes ever to be remembered. To the splash of the graceful boat drawn through the waters rose on the evening air cadenced voices of the many who then in every family were so gifted and carefully trained. The houses of moonlight flitted away in merry glee, in strains of sentiment and pathos, which then exerted a great influence in developing affection and sensibility. With music and cheery conversation, the way back thus formed a fit ending for so much happiness. It will never be forgotten how large a part of this gratification was due to the genial sympathies and considerate thoughtfulness of the subject of this memoir [Richard Sullivan].

Thomas C. Amory

DICTIONARY OF MIDDLESEX CANAL BIOGRAPHY: A SAMPLER

THE IDEA

The idea for an online *Dictionary of Middlesex Canal Biography*, established and run by the Middlesex Canal Association, first came to me at a canal gathering where Howard Winkler, the Association's long serving treasurer, said that he would like to know more about the life of Christopher Roberts, the author of *The Middlesex Canal 1793-1860*. His request proved easy to answer for while writing with my brother Carl and our friend Tom Dahill *The Incredible Ditch* I had researched in the archives of Harvard University, and elsewhere, the available facts about Roberts. Carl then wrote them up for our volume, and after Howard's query his account was reprinted in the March 2004 issue of *Towpath Topics*.

Following that meeting I thought, you know what, there are a lot of folks connected with the canal, both major and minor figures, as well as those who in the Association who have kept its heritage bright, that I would like to know more about. Some examples selected at random would be Samuel Hadley, Benjamin and Ebenezer Hall, Marion Potter, Samuel Swan, Captain Tyler, Micajah Cowing and Sarah Ames Cowing, Shubael Bell, Cathy Lawson, Jonathan Page, and Judith Tuck.

In reality, however, it is really impossible to name just a handful of people for the list is endless, and includes, besides those named above, individuals like Anna M. Seaver who owned 5 shares of stock and Elizabeth Guild who owned 14 shares right down to manual laborers like blacksmith Jonathan Burnham, stone layer Timo Clough, carpenter Zachariah Spaulding of Chelmsford, and as Baldwin noted in his "Pocket Memorandum," Joseph Kinney who worked on the "Canal or Farm at 10 doll. for season."

For some time I let this idea drift in my thinking until it finally dawned in my brain that a reliable way to learn more about those who were connected in so many different

ways was for the Association, when it could afford to utilize the abundant and wonderful possibilities made so easily available by the computer, to start an online *Dictionary of Middlesex Canal Biography*, which over time could make all the our Canal folks no longer living, for that is the practice of such publications, come alive once again. So briefly, that is how the idea behind this Sampler came to be.

STRUCTURE AND SOME GUIDING RULES

It is very important that the *Dictionary of Middlesex Canal Biography* have "structure" and "some guiding rules," that both its editors and the various researchers who prepare the individual entries, strictly and honestly follow. I know this fact to be true for over several decades I have written biographical entries of well over one hundred individuals for such encyclopedias and reference dictionaries. Some of these include *Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary*, the *American National Biography*, *The Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of the American Enlightenment*, and the *Dictionary of Unitarian Universalist Biography*.

The beginning of the "structure" will be the editor(s) appointed by the Association. Since the project will be an ongoing one, with every entry only put online when approved by the editor and writer, there will never be an actually end to the process. If for no other reason than of the fact that as the years roll along more good people will become involved in preserving the "life" of the canal, and in the activities of both the Association and the Middlesex Canal Commission. So there will always be more biographies to write.

The second focus of the project is about those who agree to write a biography, or perhaps several biographies. All who do so, plus the individuals they write about, will need to be approved by the editorial staff. Next everyone involved must clearly understand that writing an entry is a cooperative task between writer and editor. That approach insures that there is a consistency to every entry the Dictionary has as to style, length, and content. And most important the research and interpretation of the subject must always match the high standard associated with biographical publications like the *American National Biography*, and its British counterpart, the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

Now I am not so naïve to believe, or even hope, that there will be a rush of folks to sign up to write these biographies. Nor is it necessary that this should happen for this project will extend over years, and there will always be researchers and writers who will delight in being part of its work. The result will be, if slowly, a growing number of entries. This process will be similar to the Association's Endowment Fund. No one thought when that was started that it would overnight and magically reach the total needed to fund all of the Association's programs – and dreams. But it was hoped that year-by-year it would continue to received new donations, and that through careful investment, it would, despite the stock market's ups and downs, become a useful financial resource. And, fortunately, that is what is happening.

Now once the idea and the need for the Dictionary are embraced, additional rules will be developed. For example, the length of the entries will not be the same simply because available resource material will depend on how well known a person was

during their lifetime. In other words researches will locate more data for James Sullivan and the Baldwins then, say, for a farmer and his son who dug up the canal bed that ran by their homestead. Nor will it be necessary for entries to have “bibliographies” which is the case for most such dictionaries.

That will be because people will use this resource as a place to learn not only essential details about the person’s life but also how they were connected to the Canal. Put another way, the Dictionary is a tool to enhance our knowledge about the men and women who made the Canal the marvel that it was – and still is – for those of us who did not know it first-hand.

Finally, we close our introduction with this important last rule, which is - See a mistake, Report it - so that the Editors can check it out. If it is truly an error than a correction will be made. In a printed version that may not be possible at first but for the online edition it takes but only a wave of Cinderella’s wand. Also keep in mind that if you know facts that would make the entry better please share them with the Editors.

THE SAMPLER

Editors’ Note: Due to space constraints this issue contains only “A” through “C” of the sampler. Subsequent issues will continue down the alphabet.



WILLIAM APPLETON

William Appleton (1786-1862) was twice a Director of the Middlesex Canal Company, the first time from 1830 to 1837, and the second from 1850 to 1854. He also served on its Standing Committee from 1830-35, and owned 21 shares of its stock.

Appleton was born November 16, 1786 in Brookfield, Massachusetts, went to school in New Ipswich and Frances-town, both in New Hampshire, and then in Tynsborough, Massachusetts. When he was but 15 he started working in a country store in Temple, New Hampshire and within three years its owner had made him a partner.

However, a year later, he moved to Boston to work in a store selling West Indies goods. So began his career as a Boston merchant.

By 1807 he had his own establishment, and two years after that had purchased his own ship, and started trading for good profit with European merchants. In 1808 he was one of the subscribers to the newly chartered Suffolk Bank, Boston’s seventh bank. In time he became one of the city’s wealthiest citizens. As such, he donated \$300,00 to the newly created Massachusetts General Hospital and served for a period as its president. He also supported the work of the Massachusetts Charitable Eye and Ear

Infirmery.

With his son James and Samuel, he founded in 1841 for the purpose of trading in California and China the William Appleton and Company. Banking was another interest and he was a trustee/director for several local banks, and from 1848- 61 president of the Provident Institution for Savings. Earlier, from 1832-36, he had been president of the Boston Branch of the United States Bank. While chiefly a merchant he was also involved in politics, and three times was elected to the United States House of Representatives

William Appleton died on February 15, 1862. During the period he was most active he belonged to an influential business group Historians term “The Boston Associates.” For information about them see Robert F. Dalzell, Jr., *Enterprising Elite: the Boston Associates and the World They Made*.

Perhaps Appleton’s most valued work for the Canal came during the 1830s when he served on the Corporation’s Standing Committee. In the business world that Committee is used on a continual basis to carry out the “bulk” of the Directors assigned tasks, which included for the Canal auditing its books and accounts plus setting, if any for a given period, what dividends should be paid to stockholders. It is difficult to see how they could have selected for their Standing Committee a more seasoned and successful member. In addition, one of the added values he brought to the committee’s decisions was his understanding and connections with the factories and mills now springing up in Lowell whose business the Canal needed.

EBENEZER CHADWICK

Ebenezer Chadwick (1789-1854) was a Director of the Middlesex Canal Company from 1830 through 1850, and its sixth president from 1850 through 1853. He was in addition a member of its Standing Committee from 1839 until the committee was abolished in 1846, and owned 29 shares of its stock.

Chadwick was born in 1789 in Exeter, New Hampshire to Ebenezer and Hannah Chadwick. As a young man Eben, as he sometimes was called, was poor. However after his marriage to Elizabeth Jones (1793-1856), the daughter of the well-to-do John Coffin Jones, his financial status greatly improved. With that change, and through hard work and effort, he soon became a wealthy businessman, and at his death his estate was worth, in that day’s money, at least \$300,000 dollars.

His chief business interest was textiles, and he was associated with several such companies, the most significant of which was the Merrimack Manufacturing Company in Lowell, which was the first big textile company in that city. From 1839 until his death in 1854 he was its treasurer. Beside that position he served as a Director for the Suffolk Bank, the Merchants Insurance Company, the Massachusetts Mutual fire Insurance Company, the United States Bank, the Massachusetts Hospital Life Insurance Company, and the Boston Water Power Company. In addition he also served on the Board of Managers of the Boston Medical Dispensary, the Massachusetts Charitable Eye and Ear Infirmery, and was a trustee of the Provident Institution for Savings. These responsibilities made him one of the city’s most important financial leaders as well as a part of the inner circle of businessmen termed “the Boston Associates.”

A good example of his local status was his helping, along with such other successful merchants and politicians as Peter C. Brooks, Josiah Quincy, Benjamin B. Mussey, Frederick Tudor, and Thomas Handasyd Perkins, to fund the building in 1829 of America's pioneer first-class hotel, the famous and popular Tremont House.

Elizabeth and Ebenezer had one child Martha who was born in 1833. They lived in Boston and their social activities included being Proprietors of the Boston Athenaeum and members of the First Church in Boston. Here Ebenezer served for over a decade on its Standing Committee. He was also a Life Member of the Prison Discipline Society and an annual subscriber to the Massachusetts Bible Society. His death occurred at age 65 on April 3, 1854, and he was buried in Cambridge's fashionable Mt. Auburn Cemetery.

His involvement with the Middlesex Canal, his father-in-law was for a period one of its Directors, came several years before the close of its most successful years as a business operation. Once connected to the enterprise, however, he was fully committed to its mission, and from time to time the Board of Directors would hold their meetings in his Counting Room at 70 State Street, Boston. But in the end even his successful business experience and knowledge was not able to avert the eventual collapse of the company.

ARTHUR HARRISON COLE

Arthur Harrison Cole (1889-1974), a prominent economic historian in the twentieth-century, was Professor of Business Economics at the Harvard Business School, and Librarian of its world renowned Baker Library. Christopher Roberts, in his authoritative study of the Middlesex Canal, thanked him for his "generosity" in placing "his notes on the canal at my disposal."

Arthur Cole was born in Haverhill, Massachusetts on November 21, 1889. He and his sister were raised by his father, a lawyer, and after his mother's early death, by a maiden aunt. He was education at Governor Dummer Academy (1904-07), an independent boarding school, today simply called The Governor's Academy, where he was his class's valedictorian, and then at Bowdoin College where he earned his BA (1911) *cum laude*. Cole now entered Harvard University to do graduate study in the field of economics, earning in 1913 his MA and in 1916 his Ph.D. His dissertation was the history of wool manufacturing in America, which when expanded and published in 1926 was entitled *The American Wool Manufacture*. In 1941 he and Harold F. Williamson published a related study, *The American Carpet Manufacture: A History and An Analysis*.

At his graduation Harvard immediately appointed him as a tutor in its economics department. His academic rank was as an Instructor. During the period of the First World War he also worked in the U. S. War Department, and after peace for the U.S. Tariff Commission. In 1923 Harvard promoted him to Assistant Professor, then in 1928 to Associate Professor, and finally in 1933 to Professor of Business Economics at its professional Business School. His duties at the School included in addition to teaching and research, responsibility for the library. That involvement had started as early as 1929 when he had been made Administrative Curator of Baker, Library a title soon changed to Librarian of the Business School, a position he held until his retire-

ment in 1956.

During his long tenure at the library he oversaw the building up of the library's collections of books, serials, manuscripts, and business records, which made its holdings one of world's finest such repositories. Just one example of his work as librarian would be the addition to Baker Library of the extensive and invaluable family and business papers of Boston's "Ice King," Frederic Tudor.

Beside his important work at Harvard, Cole was connected at various periods with editorial duties at the *Review of Economic Statistics* and the *Journal of Economic History*. Early in his career in 1929 he served as the financial supervisor of the International Scientific Committee on Price History, which was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation to study social and economic problems in Europe and America up to 1861. For this organization he wrote *Wholesale Commodity Prices in the United States, 1700-1860*. Then, near the conclusion of his academic life, he was the Executive Director for the Research Center in Entrepreneurial History (1948-58), which was located at Harvard but not, as Cole wrote "circumscribed by the university in its research connection or plans." He died November 10, 1974.

The papers of Arthur H. Cole are at the Harvard Business School Archives, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School and cover the period 1926-1960. A finding aid has been prepared; unfortunately it does not indicate that he ever wrote on the Middlesex Canal or kept separately the notes that he had let Christopher Roberts use while he was researching his book on the Canal. Nor are there any footnotes in Roberts' text, which credit Cole as a source for a quote or a historical fact. However, a careful examination of the finding aid reveals many topics/subjects that are relevant to an understanding of the Canal's history. Here are some of them: "Canal Boats, Annual, 1830-1845," "Canals, Tolls and Tonnage, Monthly and Weekly, 1830-1860," "Cordage, 1797-1860," "Wood & Wooden Products, 1797-1861," and "Cotton, 1800- 1861."

As significant for our understanding of the history of the Middlesex Canal as may be these notes, and of his sharing of them with Christopher Roberts, is the fact that while he was in charge of the Baker Library Collection he accepted from James R. Baldwin in 1930 the papers of Loammi Baldwin, his family, and their business ventures. Without these our knowledge about the Canal would be at best rather meager.

ISRAEL COLSON

Israel A. Colson (1803-1889) was for about fifteen years, starting about 1830, employed by the Middlesex Canal Company as one of its carpenters and general laborers in the North Billerica area.

Colson was born in Uxbridge, Massachusetts on August 4, 1803; his parents were George, who was from Bellingham, Massachusetts, and Nancy Aldrich. They had been married in Uxbridge on January 18, 1802. Nothing is known about Israel's early years until 1830, when he was 26, and moved from Rhode Island to settle in Billerica, which became his home for the rest of his life.

Two years later, on March 29, 1832, he married Rachael Farmer. Her father, Oliver Farmer, was a well-to-do farmer who in 1803 had built his house on land that his

wife's father owned where today Elm Street and Colson Street meet. In 1853 this area was named "Fordway Road" but is now named Colson Street in honor of Israel. The house is an attractive Federal Style "brick end" Colonial structure, which still exists. After their marriage this became the young couple's home, and here they raised their two children, Caroline and George.

Colson was a successful farmer and milk from his cows and vegetables from his garden were consumed by Billerica families for years. His town tax return for 1850 showed that he owned 85 acres, a horse, two oxen, six cows, and two pigs.

In addition to being a productive farmer, Colson was an able carpenter, and often worked on various projects undertaken by the Middlesex Canal Company. Usually his work was done in association with his neighbor, Daniel Wilson, a carpenter and foreman for the Company's operations at the North Billerica Mill Pond and Dam. Wilson also served as a Billerica selectman from 1834-38, and for one term, in 1835, as one of its representatives to the Massachusetts House of Representatives. As with Colson the town also named a road in his honor in North Billerica.

Colson, as one of his apprentices, helped to build, as needed the woodwork for Canal gates and locks, especially the new lock beyond the raft lock near Richardson Mills, which the Company constructed in the summer 1837, often called the Red Locks. These allowed boats to enter the Concord River below the Mill Pond Dam to sail directly to Lowell.

During his lifetime Israel was a well-known and highly respected member of the town of Billerica. He served his fellow citizens as one of their Selectman in 1860, and again from 1869-73. Colson lived to the good age of 85, passing away on January 4, 1889. His beloved wife Rachel had died from consumption at 79 in 1883. They are buried side by side in the town's North Cemetery.

Fortunately a lovely story has survived about Colson, his friend Daniel Wilson, and Caleb Eddy, the Canal's Agent and Superintendent (1825-45), which reveals the comradeship that existed among those who worked together to make the Canal meet successfully the needs of those who depended on it to ship their goods, and to travel between Boston and the various towns it served.

It goes this way. One day in 1835 Caleb Eddy decided to make an inspection of the Canal to see for himself that it was operating smoothly, and also to make sure that any repairs that needed to be done were being properly taken care of by its workers. So he left his office in Charlestown, stepped onto one of the "laboring boats," and set off. After passing Col. Baldwin's homestead his boat arrived at the embankment just beyond the Ox-Bend. There he found Daniel Wilson and Israel Colson busy making repairs to the washed out sections of the embankment.

When they saw the laboring boat approaching with their "boss," they laid down their tools, and engaged him in conversation about this repair and earlier ones they had made that day to leaks cause by pesky muskrats. Then the three exchanged family information, local news, and probably a bit of Canal gossip. That done Eddy, with a friendly goodbye, proceeded onward with his tour, and Wilson and Colson picked up their tools and returned to the task at hand.

JOSEPH COOLIDGE

Joseph Coolidge (1747-1820) was an active Director of the Middlesex Canal Company from its very beginning until his death, and owner of 15 shares of its stock.

Coolidge was born at Boston on July 27, 1747 to Marquerite (Olivier), a French Huguenot who came from Nova Scotia, and Joseph Coolidge, a great-grandson of John Coolidge of Watertown who took the Freeman's Oath in 1636, and served his town as a Selectman and Representative to the General Court. The family lived in Boston where his father worked as a merchant importing goods desired by the public from Britain.

Young Joseph when he grew up followed in his father's footsteps and also had an import office at Cornhill in Boston. Through hard work and diligent management of his business activities – for example, it was his "habit of appearing at his place of business at an early hour in the morning, whilst others were still immersed in sleep" - he became during the last decade of the eighteenth century and the opening decades of the new century one of Boston's most important merchants and bankers. As such he was also one of the early Boston entrepreneurs to trade with other merchants in the Far East. The *Columbian Centinel* wrote at his death that he was one of his generation most "distinguished" Boston citizens.

In addition to his various merchant ventures, plus his extensive involvement with the Middlesex Canal, Coolidge was for years one of the Directors of the United States Branch Bank, the Massachusetts Bank, as well as a Trustee of the Humane Society, and a "resident member" of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

He and his family were active members of King's Chapel. His first wife was Elizabeth Boyer who he married on October 24, 1771. They had two children: Joseph (1773-1840) and Charles (1780-1820). After her early death at 32, he married a few years later on March 13, 1788 her younger sister Katharine Boyer.

In 1813 Coolidge commissioned his good friend Gilbert Stuart to paint his portrait (oil on wood) as gift for his son Joseph. When his son died in 1840 it was then passed on within the family for several generations until given to the Harvard Art Museum in 1981. In 1820 Stuart did a second portrait of Coolidge for his wife Katherine, which now is in the collections of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. It was regarded by the artist as one of his more successful efforts at portraiture. Both show him as an older gentleman, with a confident façade, and still extremely handsome.

Joseph Coolidge died in Newton on October 6, 1820, just a few days after his second son Charles had passed away. His funeral was held at King's Chapel; its pastor James Freeman, the first American minister to call himself a Unitarian, delivered the eulogy, which he entitled "The Memory of the Just is Blessed." The *Columbian Centinel* declared in its obituary for Coolidge: "he was a pious Christian and a humane man." His remains are buried at the Chapel's Burying Ground alongside of other members of his family.

From the Canal's very conception Joseph Coolidge was one of the most active and enthusiastic leaders of those who worked to make its vision of a transportation and freight canal, from Boston through northern Middlesex County and into New Hamp-

shire, a reality. His commitment to the idea, and the project, remained constant until the day he died in 1820. James Sullivan, Col. Baldwin, and the Canal, had no better friend than him.

As one of the initial shareholders, he was elected to the first Board of Directors. Together with his colleagues, all friends from the contemporary Boston business and social world like Aaron Dexter, John and Benjamin Joy, they met regularly at Union Hall in Medford, at the Baldwin home in Woburn, at Sullivan's Boston office, the Branch Bank of Boston, and at many other localities to formalize and implement the plans that after ten long years resulted in the Canal being open for business.

Coolidge took a vigorous part in all Directors' discussions and decisions, both those on major matters and questions, and those on the ever-present detailed problems, such as the laying of the "stones for the locks" on the Merrimack River. He did this throughout his twenty-five years as a director. An example from the late period would be his working in 1817 with Josiah Quincy and Joseph Hall on a committee concerned with finding the necessary funding required for keeping the Canal functioning properly, and safely, both for those traveling on it, and for the rafts, packet boats, and freight barges that daily sailed its waterway. In addition, to his Middlesex Canal duties, he was one of the Proprietors of the Amoskeag Canal in New Hampshire, and owner of 400 shares of its stock.

His oldest son Joseph Coolidge (1773-1840) also served as a Director of the Middlesex. He had been educated at the Royal Military College of Soreze in southern France in 1792, and then had traveled throughout Europe, before returning to Boston to work with his father in the import business. When his father died he took over the concern and made it more prosperous than ever.

As early as 1806 he owned 6 shares of Canal stock. Like his father he became a Canal Director, holding that position from 1829-37. When the Directors were reduced in 1838 to but seven members he was not one of those appointed. In 1829 when some in Boston were pressing the Massachusetts General Court to issue them a charter to establish a railroad between Boston and Lowell, young Coolidge was with William Sullivan and George Hallett the committee that drew up the Canal's vigorous "remonstrance" to the General Court objecting to such a charter. In the end, however, their effort failed for the General Court in 1830 approved the petition for the railroad charter.

Additional biographies will appear in future issues of *Towpath Topics*.

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.

Back Page - Excerpt from an August, 1818, drawing (artist unknown) of the Steam Towboat *Merrimack* crossing the original (pre-1829) Medford Aqueduct, probably on its way to service on the Merrimack River.

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.

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.

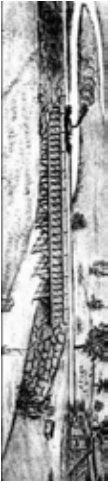
Museum Shop - Looking for that perfect gift for a Middlesex Canal aficionado? Don't forget to check out the inventory of canal related books, maps, and other items of general interest available at the museum shop. The store is open weekends from noon to 4:00pm except during holidays.

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.



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