

## *Interesting Middlesex Canal Facts*

1. *Before 1793, 30 canal companies formed to build various canals. Most were abandon before work started or for decades stopped and started and were never finished, not even creating a brief stretch of waterway.*

2. *Coastal cities began to die because merchants could not economically transport goods to the interior of the state without a waterway.*

3. *In Boston, wealthy businessmen wanted to stay wealthy. There were two issues: getting around the Cape Cod and lack of navigable waterways into the interior of the state.*

4. *The canal project created the birth of the American Society of Civil Engineers under Col. Baldwin. The country had never built a canal and did not have the knowledge for the creation of a canal. The Society took on the challenge of building locks, making earth watertight, building the canal over a river, how to make iron fittings for canal locks, pumps, wagons or boats, and the invention and use hydraulic cement. The project was two decades ahead of the American cement industry.*

5. *Economics; canal boats carried passengers, sightseers and cargo. Passengers/sightseers: The best passenger boats were fitted as private train cars.*

*Cargo: Canal boats carried produce to manufactured goods, coal to lumber.*

6. *Local farmers, carpenters, blacksmiths, teamsters and stonemasons were employed during the spring, summer and autumn months, when they could get away from the work. That caused a time issue, slowing the project down. Farmers dug by hand the 27 mile ditch.*

7. *The canal made the development of Lowell possible in 1826 and the Lowell canal system connects with the Middlesex Canal.*

8. *A horse and wagon can haul up to 1 ton. A horse and a barge can pull 25 tons.*

9. *The trip was 12 hours upstream and 8 hours downstream.*

10. *Horse and ox teams had to travel 4 hours apart, the time it took to pass through 4 locks.*

11. *Numerous taverns were built around the locks. Some locks took 4 hours to pass and boats could not travel after dark.*

12. *Taverns provided food, rest stops, overnight accommodations and on Horn Pond on the Winchester-Woburn line, a resort was built featuring row boats and a restaurant on an island in the middle of the pond. The island still exists although much smaller. The area is still used for recreation, a paved walkway circumvents the pond. The locks are now a sluiceway that continues to give the area flooding problems.*

13. *A canal built by the Merrimack Boat Company extended up into Concord then onto Plymouth, NH., providing service to the White Mountains and the White River Vermont area.*

14. *The sole water supply for the canal was the Concord River. The water source of the canal water was 107 feet above the mean tide level in Boston and 25 feet above the mean water level of the Merrimack River. Remnants of the water source lock can still be seen in Billerica. Originally water was to come from the Merrimack but when surveyed, the report indicated the water source had to be the Concord River.*

15. *New York sent representatives to inspect/study the Middlesex Canal and to obtain cost figures before building the Erie Canal.*

16. *In 1819, John Sullivan, secured the first patent for a steamboat over the conflicting claim from Robert Fulton. The first boat was a rear paddle and could not be used on the Middlesex Canal because the back wash was too destructive to the embankments. The boat starting in 1819 was used with great success by the Merrimack Boat Company for service into New Hampshire. John Sullivan was the agent for the Merrimack Boating Co. (Jan. 12, 1812) because he had become the agent for the Middlesex Canal Company after the death of Col. Baldwin.*

17. *Ironically, the canal boats carried the granite for the ties and the engine to be assembled in Lowell signaling the demise of the canal.*

18. *Railroad went into service in 1835.*

19. *On September 5, 1850, the Toll House, the portion of the canal on the surrounding 6 acres of land to Samuel Hadley, the current Toll Collector with the understanding Hadley would be responsible for the maintenance and collections of the canal.*

18. *In 1951, the canal proprietors trying to protect their investment, proposed the canal be used to transport water to Boston. The offer was not accepted.*

19. *On March 27, 1871, Chelmsford accepted that portion of the canal as a town road.*

20. *1962, Middlesex Canal Association was formed.*

21. *On May 18, 1971, the American Society of Engineers designated the Canal as a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.*

22. *On a beautiful Sunday October 14, 1989, the Community Preservation Fund Committee sponsored a family walk on the towpath on Canal Street. The following Town Meeting, the Community Preservation Fund Committee requested money for the survey of portion of the Canal in located in Chelmsford as part of the Middlesex Canal Association's project to place the Canal on the National Register of Historic Places.*

23. *In July 2008, the total length the Canal was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.*