



Our Old Bookcase, May 25, 2017. New Tourism Site of an old West Bank Site

Photo caption: Look closely and you will see five Hydraulic Control Gate Mechanisms, which controlled the flow of water for Grand Lake, south of Celina on the West Bank, at Coldwater Creek. Is this the Oldest Historic man-made site on this West Bank of the Reservoir?

OUR OLD BOOK CASE

By Joyce L. Alig, President, Mercer County Historical Society

There is a new Tourism Site in Town! This site is not exactly new on the West Bank of the Reservoir. It may date to the early years of the Reservoir. Between 1837 and 1845, the lake was created as a Reservoir to provide water for the Miami and Erie Canal, via the Canal Feeder via the East Bank. These gates date later, but how much later?

To find this new Tourism Site, walk south on West Bank Road, to the Western Embankment Spillway Complex, which was constructed in the mid-1990's. Stop and read the Plaque about this structure. This Spillway Complex is a part of the flood control system. The history of the flood control system dates to the early development of the Reservoir, now known as Grand Lake.

Are you old enough to remember the previous Spillway, with its Gatehouse, which had been constructed in 1914? That Spillway was built to maintain water level of the lake. You can see photographs of the 1914 Spillway, in the book, ***“Our Post Card Past, Grand Lake Saint Marys, Ohio,”*** which I wrote in 2001. The reason the 1914 Spillway was constructed at that time was due to the 1913 flood disaster which not only flooded Dayton, but also flooded Celina and Saint Marys regions. When George Nearingdard served as President of Auglaize County Historical Society, and I was serving as Director of the Mercer County Historical Museum, we shared information of local history. I had post card photographs of the 1913 flood at St. Marys, which I gave to George. You can see the images in his book, ***“Post Card Images of Auglaize County.”***

Now, before you go any farther in your walk on West Bank, think about the construction of this Reservoir. The Eastern and Western Embankments could not contain the water when water was first let into the Reservoir, which resulted in the flooding of the area in 1843. [I have written before about the 1843 flood damages and the State's not paying for removal of trees, and the farmers for their crop damages, of which action resulted in the local Mercer County Government Officials cutting through the West Bank and letting the water out of the lake!]

For those seeking this Historic site, walk past the current Waste Weir on West Bank Road. Walk south to West Bank Park, and follow the path. Continue across the circle where the State has cleared the brush, and you will find the five Hydraulic Control Gate Mechanisms. [See the photograph above.]

The Hydraulic Control Gate Mechanisms were installed at some point after the Reservoir was filled with water, about 1843, and prior to the 1914 Waste Weir on West Bank. I talked with Dave Faler, at the Grand Lake St. Marys State Park Office to discuss these gates. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources [ODNR] has no plans to remove these gates in the near future. Dave referred me to Steve Dorsten, a most knowledgeable person about the history of the Reservoir and the Miami & Erie Canal.

The next step is to ask the Ohio Department of Natural Resources what they are planning for these Hydraulic Control Gate Mechanisms, which may be the oldest Historic Site on the West Bank of the Reservoir. The previous 1914 Waste Weir on West Bank Road was nominated for the National Register of Historic Sites. Will the ODNR apply for this Oldest Historic Site on West Bank Road on the Reservoir, Grand Lake, for National Register status?

You can read about the History of Grand Lake in the 1978 "***Mercer County Ohio History***" which I edited for Mercer County following the National Bicentennial (1776-1976) Celebration Committee's conclusion, and the book was published through the Mercer County Historical Society.

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