

Canal Quarters Program

Experiencing life in a lockhouse



Lockhouse 22 - photos by Chris Hanessian

by Charissa Beeler Stanton

Visit the C&O Canal on any warm, sunny day and you'll see the towpath bustling with a multitudes of outdoor enthusiasts. While most everyone enjoys the beautiful scenery the Canal offers, not everyone pauses to reflect its historical significance. The Canal Quarters program, a creative initiative shared by the National Park Service and the C&O Canal Trust, takes visitors back to a bygone era and provides a glimpse of what life was like living along the Canal.

The Chesapeake & Ohio Canal operated as a transportation route from 1831 to 1924, running parallel to the Potomac River for 184.5 miles from Cumberland, Md., to Washington, D.C. Canal boats transported everything from farm produce, to coal, to lumber. Back in the 19th

century during the heyday of the Canal, nearly 75 locks raised and lowered boats between stretches of water with different levels. The locks were operated by men who lived with their families in lockhouses along the Canal. These houses represent just 26 of the more than 1,300 historic structures along the Canal, which has more historic structures than any other national park.

In 2009 the C&O Canal Trust partnered with the C&O Canal National Historical Park to open three lockhouses as part of an innovative Canal Quarters program. "Not only did we want to provide really cool interpretive opportunities for visitors and create a neat experience for people," says Matt Logan, President of the C&O Canal Trust, "but we had to figure out a way to save all these



Lockhouse 22

buildings that were basically falling down on themselves due to neglect. When we thought about the best use for a lockhouse, we realized...they were homes."

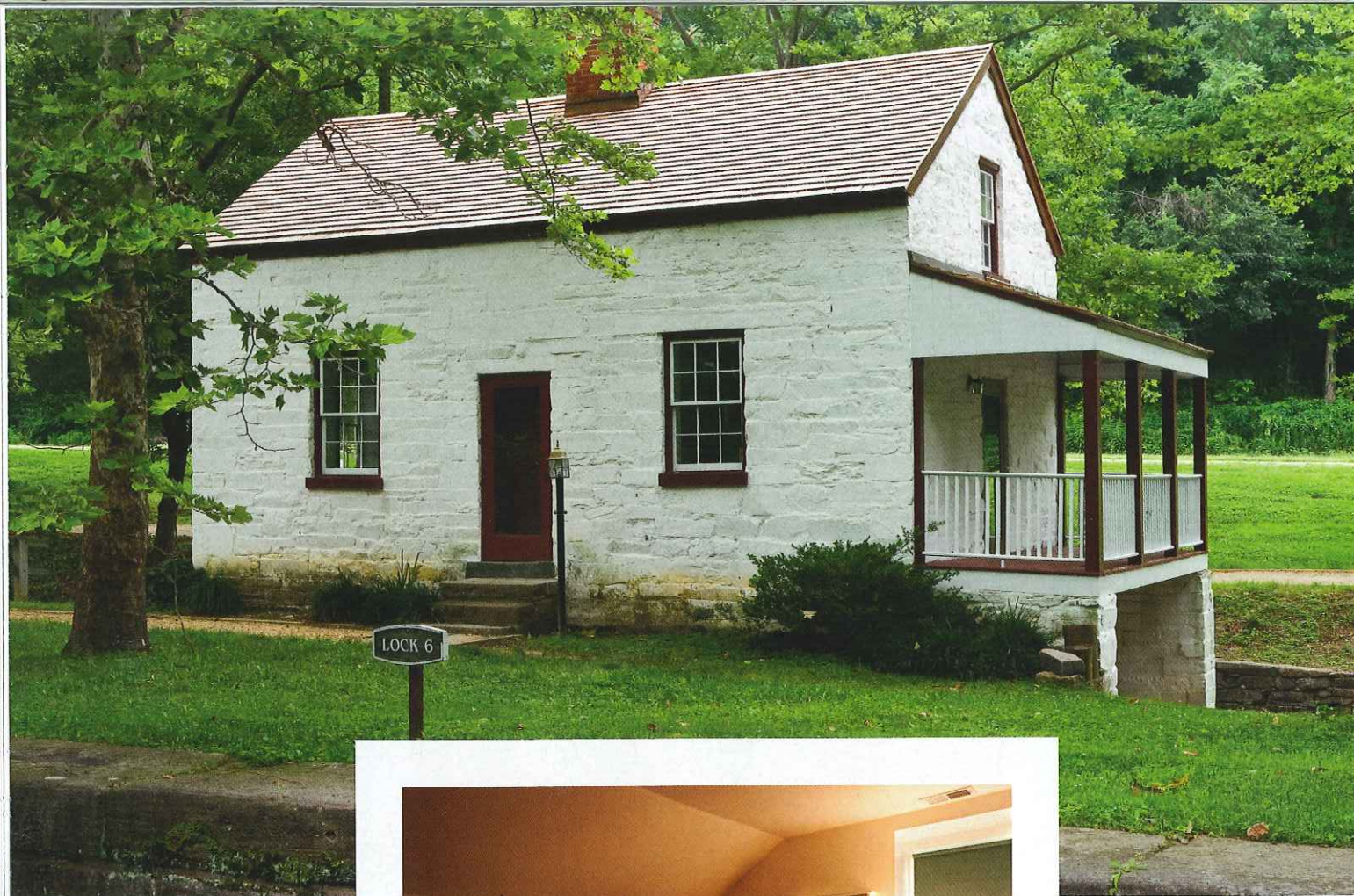
A lot of hard work went into rehabilitating the lockhouses in the Canal Quarters program. Then came the painstaking task of furnishing the lockhouses to represent various eras of Canal life. "We didn't want to just use reproduction pieces," Logan explains. "We wanted it to be authentic."

Robert Mertz, Vice President of the Trust's Board of Directors, eagerly took charge of locating period furnishings. "Robert has been integral to the development of Canal Quarters," Logan says. "He, more than anyone else, has been responsible for those furnishings. He's gone around to auction houses and flea markets around the region." The lockhouses represent a myriad of different time periods in Canal history.

Lockhouse 6 is located at towpath mile 5.4 near Cabin John and Brookmont, off of the Clara Barton Parkway. Formerly used as park employee housing, the stone house has been completely modernized with air conditioning, heat, restrooms and a kitchen. The furnishings at Lockhouse 6 tell the story of the 1950s when Supreme Court Justice William Douglas campaigned to preserve the Canal.

A little more than three miles north on the C&O Canal towpath is Lockhouse 10, which will be ready for its first guests this summer. Located near Cabin John, Glen Echo and Bethesda, the house was built in 1830 and remodeled by the Civilian Conservation Corps and NPS crews in 1939. It has furnishings in the house that reflect the 1930s, including a period kitchen and bathroom.

Lockhouse 22 is at Pennyfield Lock, near Potomac and Tobytown. It portrays what life was like during the establishment and construction of the Canal back in the 1830s. Located at towpath mile 19.64, the lockhouse has no heat or electricity but does have a portable toilet.



Lockhouse 6 - photos by Roy Sewell

Further upstream at mile 48.93 is Lockhouse 28, near Point of Rocks and Lander. Considered a "rustic retreat" that also reflects the early days of the Canal, the lockhouse sits between the Potomac River and railroad tracks that are still used today. It serves as a reminder of the B&O Railroad's race with the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal to reach the Ohio River Valley. Lockhouse 28 will be open this summer and is the most remote of all the lockhouses, with the nearest parking located a half a mile away.

Lockhouse 49 at Four Locks, near Clear Spring, was furnished to reflect the 1920s. It offers amenities like electric heat, a hotplate and like all the other lockhouses in the Canal Quarters program, can sleep up to eight people. When the Canal was operational, Four Locks was a community with stores, warehouses, a school, a post office and a dozen houses.

A group of volunteers makes sure the lockhouses are always ready for the next guest. "The Canal Quartermasters are absolutely amazing people," Logan

says. "These are volunteers who really have taken ownership of these lockhouses and make sure things are kept the way they should be. If there's a problem, they're available to help us. They take care of basic maintenance and when rising waters threaten flooding, they mobilize their friends and neighbors to move furnishings. They're just great people."

Registration to stay in a Canal Quarters Lockhouse is on a first come, first served basis. It can be completed online or by telephone between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m., Monday through Friday, by calling the C&O Canal Trust at 877-571-3627. Though the program is in its infancy and continues to develop and expand, the Canal Quarters program provides yet an even greater draw to Maryland's largest and most visited National Park - The C&O Canal.

For more information about the C&O Canal Quarters program, visit www.canaltrust.org/quarters.



Lockhouse 49 - photo by Roy Sewell

Lockhouse 49 - photo by Jeff Hutman



Great Friends... Good Food... Grand Times at Homewood!

Enjoy special celebrations or a relaxed meal in our newly decorated Friendship Dining Room - there are lots of ways to delight your senses at Homewood at Williamsport!

Call Anne or Kathy to learn more!

A Continuing Care Retirement Community

HOMEWOOD AT WILLIAMSPORT

16505 Virginia Avenue • Williamsport, MD 21795
Phone: 301.582.1750 • Fax: 301.582.1805
www.homewood.com • 877.849.9244



See Hagerstown & Washington County, Maryland!



Come and enjoy what Hagerstown and Washington County has to offer: 5 national parks, 8 state parks, Civil War battlefields and history, over 30 museums, Hagerstown Premium Outlets, hiking, biking, kayaking and canoeing...and so much more!



www.marylandmemories.com • 888-257-2600