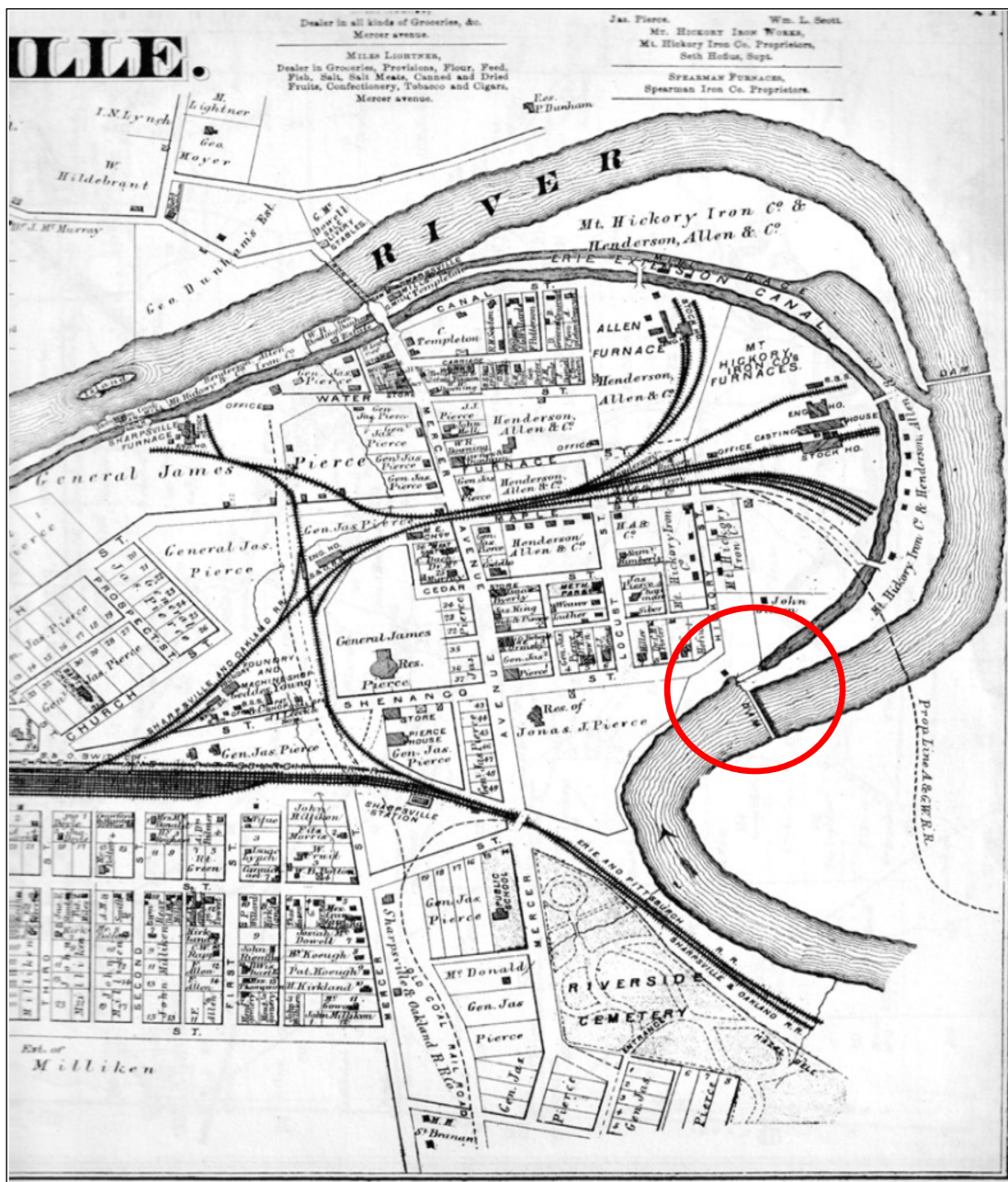


ISSUE 206

Winter 2024

Spring Tour Will Visit Lock 10



Iron furnaces in Sharpsville are shown located next to the canal. The Spring Tour, article on page 6, will visit the preserved guard lock next to the dam shown here. The Erie and Pittsburgh Railroad was relocated when Shenango Reservoir Dam was constructed upstream. It is now the Trout Island Trail. The Sharpsville Mill of Templeton, shown at the bridge crossing the river, still operates.

To see what's inside this issue of *Canal Currents*, turn to page 2.

Canal Currents is published quarterly by the
Pennsylvania Canal Society for its members.

Newsletter submissions may be sent to:

PaCanals.info@gmail.com

Submission deadline for our next edition: April 15, 2024

Pennsylvania Canal Society

National Canal Museum

2750 Hugh Moore Park Road

Easton, PA 18042

www.pacanalsociety.org

The Pennsylvania Canal Society is a non-profit, educational organization. The purpose of the Society is to preserve and transmit the rich heritage of canal transport in Pennsylvania. To attain these objectives, the Society:

- supports the National Canal Museum and library at Easton, Pa.;
- conducts tours of canal sites in Pennsylvania and other states;
- encourages canal research, conducted in libraries and/or by means of explorations in the field;
- makes available to the public the Society's collection of books, pictures and documents pertaining to the construction and operation of canals;
- publishes *CANAL CURRENTS*, a journal of articles detailing the research and field activities of persons interested in canals;
- provides members to present illustrated lectures and conduct tours for non-profit groups and schools.

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MEMBERSHIP FORM

Members: If you don't keep your *Canal Currents*, please pass it along to someone who's not a member. Not a member? Here's how to join:

Name _____

(Title: Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr., etc.) First MI Last

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Student \$18, Individual \$20, Dual (using same address) \$25

This form and other dues classifications available online at:

<http://pacanalsociety.org/membership.htm>

Checks payable to the Pennsylvania Canal Society and mailed to:

PA Canal Society

2750 Hugh Moore Park Road

Easton, PA 18042

A letter from the President



Most members have sent in their renewals for 2024. Thanks to all of you! If you didn't get around to it, a reminder will be included with the Spring Tour invitation and registration form that will be mailed later in February. If you are planning on attending the tour, you can include your renewal when you mail your registration form.

Our Spring Tour on the Erie Extension Canal, April 12-14, should be a good one, and I'm hoping to see a lot of you there. I've already heard from a few people who are excited about it. We're planning on having a 27-passenger coach for the Saturday portion of the tour, rather than using vans. It'll be a better all-around match for our tour.

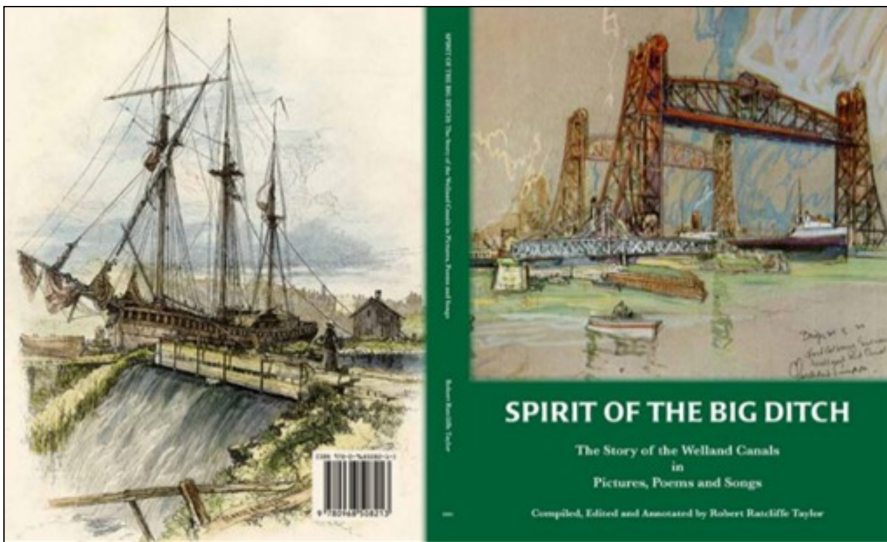
The 2023 Treasurer's Report and 2024 Budget were finalized in January and are now available. Call, write, or email me if you'd like a copy.

As always, I hope to get a chance to see you soon!

Doug Logan

610-955-6436 (text me or leave a voice message) | PaCanals.info@gmail.com

New Book About the Welland Canals



SPIRIT OF THE BIG DITCH: The Story of the Welland Canals in Pictures, Poems and Songs.

By Robert Ratcliffe Taylor, \$25 Canadian, shipping not included, soft cover, 116 pages, 73 illustrations. QR codes link the creative writings to special audio recordings by guest performers. Published by The Historical Society of St. Catharines.

To order, contact the Historical Society of St. Catharines at:
HSSC.contact@gmail.com

Schuykill Navigation Company Map Detail

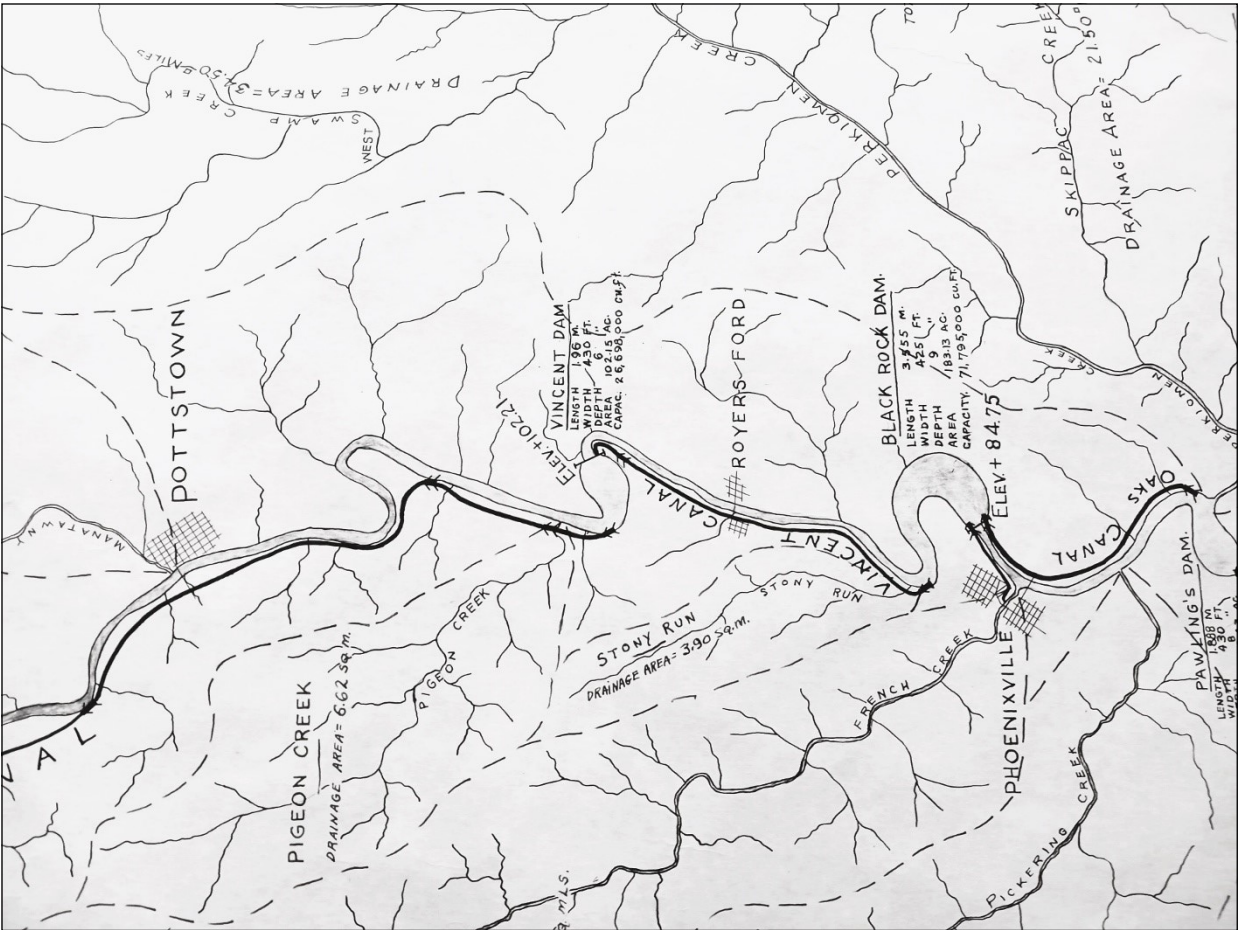
Part II – Locks 51 - 72, Dams 25 - 32

By Doug Logan

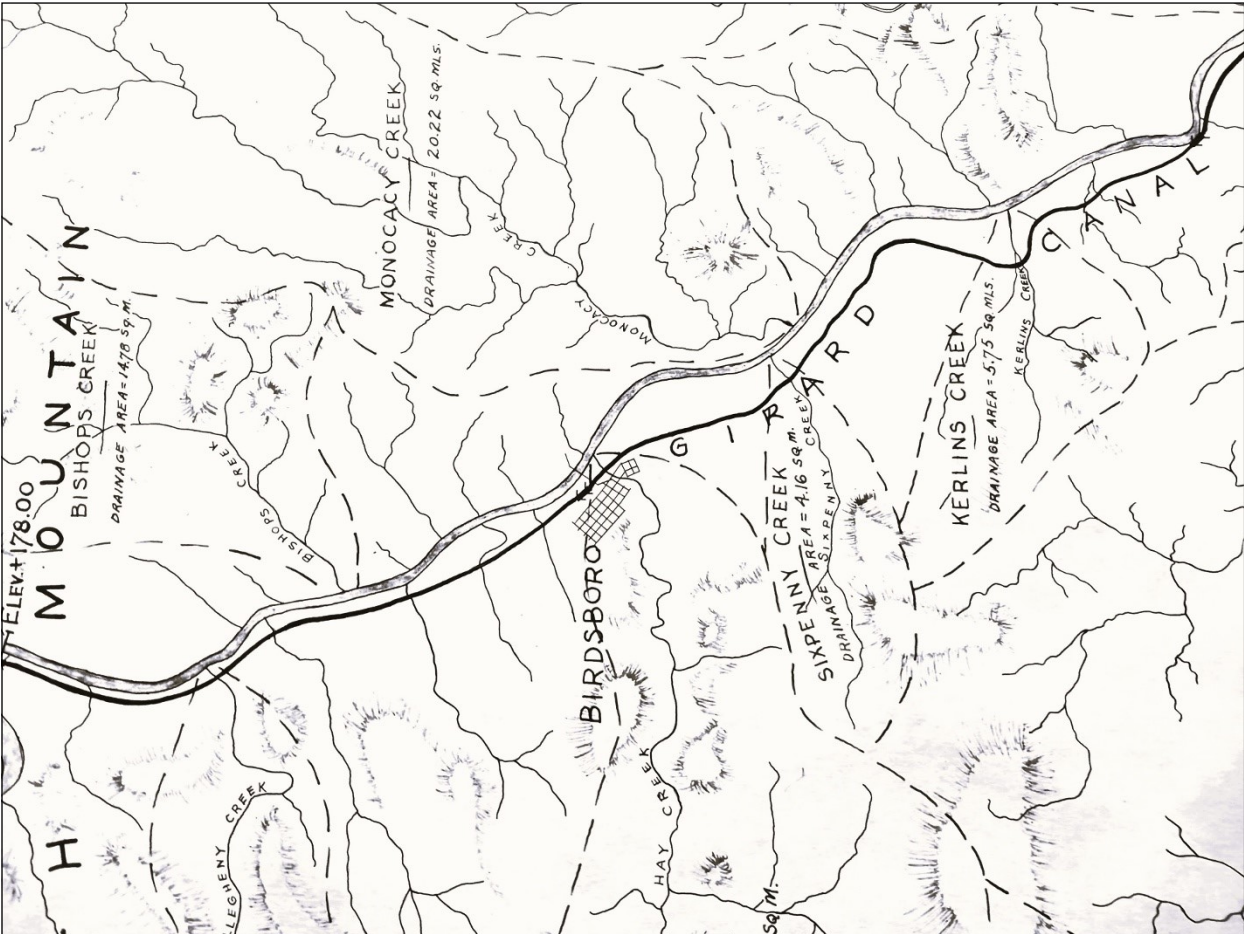
As promised in our last issue, the last four of our eight close-ups of the map are included on the following pages.

As noted two Issues ago, the large size presented a problem sharing it in a much smaller format, without a lot of details being lost. Lock location by number is included with the close-ups, and not all locks are shown on the map. The numbers listed are based on canal maps by Morgan Pfaelzer on the endsheets of "Inland – The Abandoned Canals of the Schuykill Navigation" by Sandy Sorlien, published by George F. Thompson Publishing in association with the Center for the Study of Place, **and** in Harry L. Rinker's "The Schuykill Navigation: A Photographic History" published by the Canal Captains Press, ©1991.

The numbers represent the final numbering, probably after the 1846 enlargement, according to Sorlien.



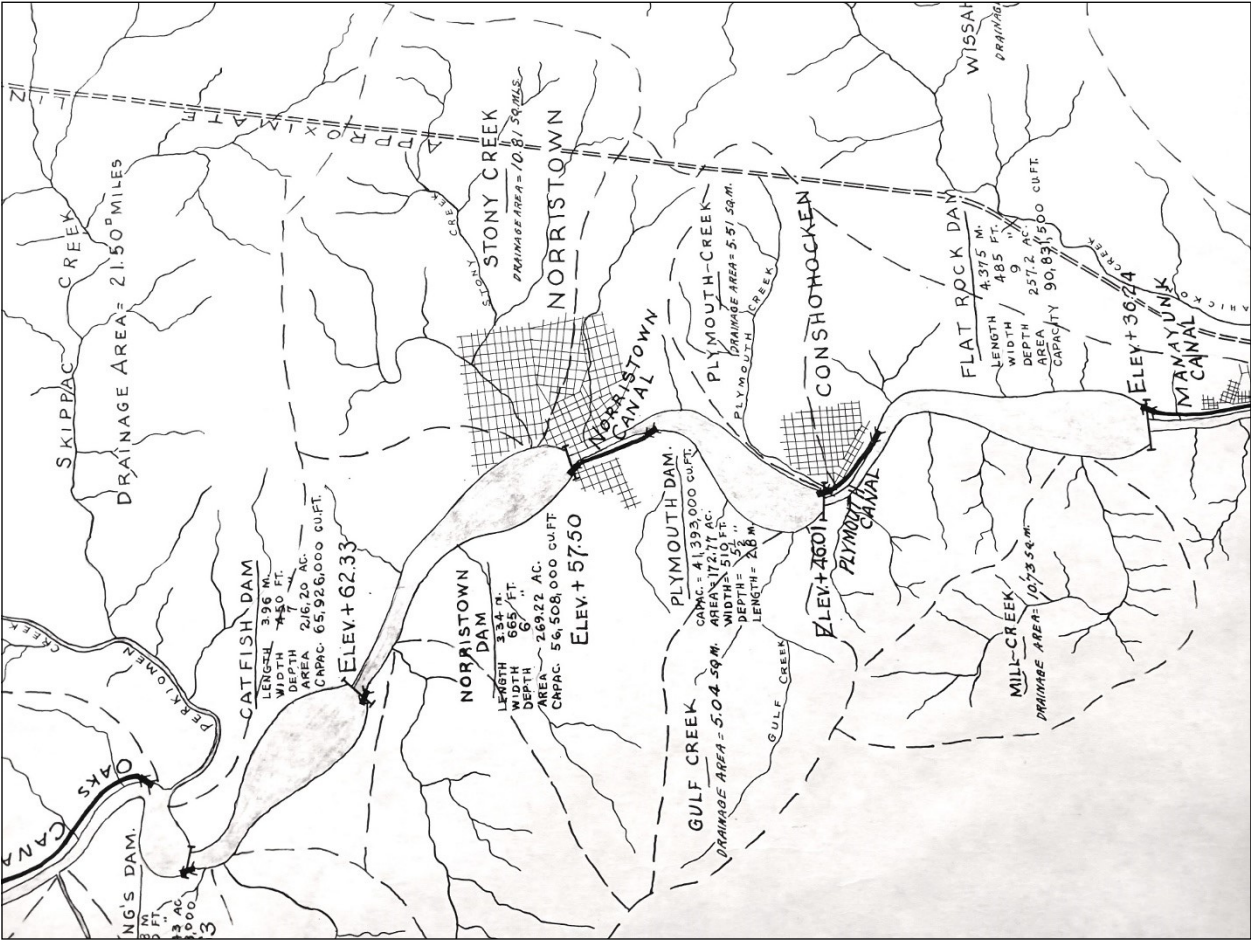
Locks 52-53, called Laurel Locks, 54-55, called Frick's Locks, 56, & 57 were on the Girard Canal, the longest. The Vincent Canal began at Lock 58 & Vincent Dam # 25, ending at Lock 59. There was a guard lock on the west side of Black Rock Dam # 26 for the Phoenix Iron Canal in Phoenixville. The Oaks Canal, a.k.a. Oaks Canal, began at Black Rock Dam # 26 & Lock 60, ending with Lock 61.



Lock 50 at The Big Reading or Lewis Dam # 24 began the Girard Canal, the longest in the Schuylkill Navigation. Lock 51 was at Birdsboro.



Flat Rock Dam # 31 and Lock 68 begins the Manayunk Canal, ending at Locks 69-70; and a short canal called Fairmount began with Guard Lock 71 and ended at Tide Lock 72 below Fairmount Dam # 32.



Lock 62 is at Pawling's Dam # 27; Lock 63 is at Catfish Dam # 28; the Norristown Canal begins at Norristown Dam # 29 & Lock 64, ending with Lock 65; and the Plymouth Canal begins at the Plymouth Dam # 30 & Lock 66, ending with Lock 67.

Erie Extension Canal Spring Tour Scheduled

By Dave Wright

The PCS Spring 2024 Tour is scheduled for the weekend of April 12-14 on the middle portion of the Erie Extension Canal. The Quality Inn, 3200 S. Hermitage Road, Hermitage, PA will serve as our tour headquarters. This hotel is located on SR 18 north of the I-80 interchange with I-376. We stayed there on our Spring 2015 Tour of the Beaver Division of the Pennsylvania Canal.

The Commonwealth almost completed constructing the canal before a new governor stopped work. The Erie Canal Company completed and opened the canal in 1844 to connect the Beaver Division, north of New Castle, with Erie, PA. The Reed family, a major stockholder, operated a fleet of freight and passenger boats on Lake Erie. The canal transported local coal and Michigan iron ore to the iron furnaces along the Shenango River valley until the canal closed and was replaced by railroads in 1871.

Our tour will also view part of the French Creek Feeder. This navigable canal supplied water from French Creek, above Meadville, to raise the level of Conneaut Lake. Raising the lake level 11 feet made the natural lake into a usable reservoir to supply the canal summit level. The canal dropped 512 feet from its summit level to Lake Erie.

Although much of the canal bed is now covered by railroads, the railroads bypassed many curve sections, leaving them for us to visit. The first stop on our bus tour will be the only Erie Extension Canal preserved lock. Guard Lock No. 10 is located in Sharpsville below the Shenango Reservoir dam. Visiting the dam is worth a side trip before or after the bus tour.

Next, we will walk along the canal towpath at New Hamburg and at Kidds Mill Covered Bridge. Portions of the towpath are used for the Shenango Trail.

We will then spend about an hour at the canal museum in Greenville. It is located next to where the canal crossed the Little Shenango River by a slackwater dam and guard lock, now removed for the railroad.

After that, our bus will take us to Hartstown for a walk in State Gameland 214 on the towpath along lakes in Pymatuning Swamp. Bring a brush to brush off the ticks.

We will provide a variety of box lunches to enjoy in the Conneaut Cellars Winery Pavilion in the Borough of Conneaut Lake. After lunch, you may walk on the nearby Ernst Nature Trail. This trail runs on the former Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad branch built on the French Creek Feeder towpath along the south shore of Conneaut Lake.

After leaving Conneaut Lake, our bus will stop briefly on the Harmonsburg Road bridge over the B&LE Railroad to view the summit cut. We will continue northward to stop for a visit at Market Village Canal Park, just north of Conneautville. The railroad bypassed this canal bend. The grass towpath trail remains in the park.

We expect a smooth, restful, hour-long ride back to the Quality Inn. In the evening we'll have our banquet, followed by our speaker, Julia Catalano from the Conneaut Lake Historical Society. She will tell us about the French Creek Feeder and its role as a navigable part of the Erie Extension.

In addition to an option to visit Shenango Reservoir dam on your own, our Friday Earlybird Tour will be a driving tour of the French Creek Feeder, and our Sunday Tour will be the Greenville RR Park & Museum. If there's interest, we'll request that the Greenville Canal Museum be open Sunday for a more leisurely tour.

Tentatively, Saturday's Tour will cost \$110 and includes lunch. The evening banquet will be \$35. The Quality Inn group rate for PCS is \$70 per night. Invitations and registration forms will be mailed to members sometime in February. We are also planning a Fall Tour but there are no details to share at this time.



Lock 10, taken during the Spring 2015 Tour.

Photo by Doug Logan

Upcoming Events

Field Trips:

Friday—Sunday, April 12—14, 2024

See above article on the PCS Spring Tour.

Friday—Sunday, April 19—21, 2024

The Canal Society of Ohio is having a Spring Tour on the Miami & Erie Canal in the Defiance area with Chuck Collins as the host. Saturday features a bus tour and banquet, \$85

and \$30 per person respectively. Sunday features a canal boat ride for \$10 per person. The complete tour is \$120 for all 3 events, which applies a \$5 discount. Make your own hotel reservation: the special group rate at the Hampton Inn in Defiance is \$125 per night and includes breakfast. For more information, registration, or questions, call Ron Petrie at 216-789-2301.

Canalling Coal To Erie

By Terry K. Woods

FROM ERIE STORY MAGAZINE. Reprinted by permission.

[This article first appeared in Canal Currents Issue No. 54, Spring 1981]

From December 2, 1844 to November 20, 1871, Erie literally sat on top of one of the earlier interstate transportation systems. The western division of Pennsylvania's extensive canal system, first authorized in 1826, was to be the final link that connected Philadelphia on the eastern seaboard to Lake Erie and a way to compete with New York and her Erie Canal.

But by 1844, the scope had been changed, though not necessarily limited. By time the freighter *R. S. Reed* and the Packet, *Queen Of The West* had smashed their way through the 2" ice covering the canal and tied up at the Erie terminus that crisp December day 136 years ago [180 now], Philadelphia had been effectively isolated, at least temporarily, behind the Allegheny Mountains; and the newly opened canal that joined the lower reaches of the Beaver River with Lake Erie was to give Pittsburgh access to the Lake.

The lake was now more of a funnel into and out of the New York markets via the Erie Canal. Not only would much of Pittsburgh's goods and products to pass through what became known as the Beaver Division and Erie Extension Canals, but (it was hoped) all of southern Ohio as well. For in 1840 the Pennsylvania & Ohio Canal – the "Crosscut" linking Ohio's Canal System at Akron to that of Pennsylvania's at Mahoningtown (a few miles below New Castle) – was built.

Promoters of the privately financed P. & O. and Erie Extension Canals were sure that traffic would race (at a maximum speed of four miles an hour) through their waterways. That this didn't happen wasn't really their fault, nor was the fact that these two canals were forced out of business by railroad competition in only three short decades.

So short was the life of the Erie Extension Canal that relatively little is known about operations on it or about the men who made it their livelihood. Now, thanks to a series of Jorgen Peterson diaries in the Archival Department of University of Akron, we're able to get just a glimpse of life on the Erie Extension Canal.

When Jorgen Peterson was mustered out of the U.S. Army in late 1863 or early 1864 he found that things had changed while he was away. Though Jorgen had begun making his way in life as a young boy from Norway on the high seas, he had been settled down for many years now in northeastern Ohio. He and his wife Marie were busily

engaged in raising eight children. Jorgen, himself, had been steadily employed as a boat builder in the Waterman Yards at Peninsula (some 24 miles south of Cleveland).

Now he found that railroads in northeastern Ohio had taken nearly all the passenger traffic and much of the fast freight traffic away from the canals. There was still a lot of heavy materials – coal, iron ore, stone, etc. – that the canal could carry, but the number of boats then available on Ohio's eastern canals was more than sufficient for the tonnage being moved.

But Jorgen was a man who could find the good side to nearly every situation. If the depressed canal traffic had reduced the demand for canal boats, then that meant canal boats should be relatively cheap to buy. "Sailing" on artificial waterways shouldn't be difficult, particularly for someone who had sailed the North Atlantic.

All you needed to be a successful Canaller was to be stubborn and a hard worker and the Good Lord knew that Jorgen Peterson, age 42, was both! So, in February, 1864, Jorgen made a \$950.00 down payment on a 3-cabin freighter, rechristened it the *Scandinavia* and became a "sailor" again-this time on the "Raging Canawl"!

The Erie & Pittsburg R.R., in direct competition with the Erie Extension Canal, was just completed in that year of 1864 and hadn't had the chance to ruin canal traffic here. Business didn't peak on the Erie Extension for two more years. An iron industry was really beginning to open up around Youngstown and Sharon and New Castle. Thus, north bound boats, heavily laden with coal from Mercer and Lawrence counties for the grates of the lake steamers at Erie, could pick up iron ore from those same steamers in Erie and deliver it to the furnaces down south – virtually an assured southbound cargo.

Captain Peterson, his helper, Henry, and the tow animals, Old Tuck and New Horse, left the Peterson home on Monday, July 10th and headed for Pennsylvania.

The *Scandinavia* was loaded with coal near the mouth of Connoquenessing Creek on the Beaver Division – some 9 miles below the junction – then headed north for the first look at Erie.

That first night on the Erie Extension Canal was spent back at Junction (Mahoningtown), the second, some 20 miles to the north, at Pulaski in Lawrence County and the third at Sharpsville in Mercer County. Captain Peterson made a slightly longer run the next day and was able to spend the fourth night on the Extension in Greenville, though still in Mercer County.

The *Scandinavia* was able to maintain her steady gait of 18 to 20 miles per day by reaching Hartstown, Crawford County, by the evening of Tuesday, July 19. This was a

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

new canal to the Captain and he was taking it easy, running only by daylight and noting each peculiarity of the channel for future reference.

If Captain Peterson had the impression by now that the Erie Extension was a relatively easy canal to navigate, he was in for a rude awakening the next day.

When the engineer began laying out that portion of the canal through Crawford and Erie Counties, they found their greatest difficulty was to guarantee a sufficient water supply throughout that 38 miles stretch into the basin at Erie. It was decided to erect two reservoirs in that section. The first was built by erecting a dam across the outlet of the Pymatuning Swamp near Hartstown. The second was produced by enlarging Conneaut Lake and running a feeder canal to the main ditch.

The enlargement of the Conneaut Reservoir and the construction of the canal through that area was hampered by the discovery of large expanses of quicksand. As quickly as the canal ditch was scooped out of that gelatinous earth, the sides and bottom would flow together to obscure, or at least lessen the depth, of the channel.

The quicksand was a problem that was never completely solved. To compound the problem, enlarged Conneaut Lake often couldn't supply sufficient water in dry seasons, even when the dam across its outlet was raised from 9 to 11 feet. This combination of quicksand and low water plagued Erie Extension Canallers throughout the canal's life.

They certainly became a part of Captain Peterson's life when, early on the morning of July 20th, the *Scandinavia*, heavily laden with #3 coal for the Erie trade, approached the mouth of Conneaut Feeder and found low water, high quicksand and dozens of other boats in the same predicament. Jorgen laid over waiting for a swell of water to be built up in the Reservoir that could carry his boat over the quicksand into the clear channel.

He waited through the 21st, 22nd and into the morning of the 23rd. Finally the water came and at noon, 3 ½ days after arriving at this place, Old Tuck and New Horse leaned into their harnesses and pointed their ears, once more, toward Erie. Conneaut Township, Erie County was finally reached the evening of July 26th – eleven days after leaving Connoquenessing Creek!

With the Conneaut Reservoir, low water and quicksand behind him, Old Jorgen made quick passage through Erie County. He crossed the impressive 96 foot high 500 foot long wooden trough aqueduct over Elk Creek at Girard and the even more impressive Walnut Creek aqueduct that was constructed 104 feet above the level of the gorge with a span of nearly 800 feet.

From there it was an easy glide – all down hill – into Erie itself. The lock at Eighth Street took just a bit of time to negotiate, then the Weigh Lock at Seventh. Here a gigantic frame building protected the delicate scale that was actually part of the lock and weighed cargo and boat at the same time. Once the *Scandinavia's* cargo was weighed and sold, Captain Peterson's first trip was history – in the morning of July 29th.

For the rest of August and into September, Captain Peterson made his hasty dashes between Erie and Sharon, Sharon and Connoquenessing and back to Erie, with occasional southbound stops at New Castle, Greenville and Big Bend.

Freight traffic peaked on Erie's canal in 1866 and fell rapidly after that. In 1870 competing rail tonnage for only four months was 207,404 while that for the entire boating season (April 1 through December 1) was only 182,017. By that same year the canal company's floating debt had increased to \$1,595,070, and the Erie Canal Company was declared bankrupt and its holdings put up for sale.

The canal was sold to the Erie & Pittsburg R.R. which promptly turned it over to the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. The canal was operated by the railroad during 1871, but collapse of the Elk Creek Aqueduct effectively isolated the southern divisions from the Lake Erie terminus.

The canal property was eventually sold, including most of the lock stone, and the channel was filled in. The lock stones in and around Erie became part of Erie's Catholic Cathedral; and the canal boats remaining were sold to be operated on Ohio canals.

The map below was discovered by Earl Heydinger in The Pennsylvania Archives (RG 17 - French Creek Div. W2 L2)

