

ON THE LEVEL



THE CANAL SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY

Paterson's Barclay Street Canal Bridge

A story from the Canal Society's archival collection of newspaper articles, photos, and drawings

At Paterson, the route of the Morris Canal wrapped around the side of Garret Mountain, high above most of the city. In the 1860s the canal company allowed the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad to share its right of way by cutting into the mountainside along the uphill side of the canal. The railroad built its station off Barclay Street, but to get there, the citizens of Paterson needed a new bridge across the canal.

PATERSON DAILY GUARDIAN

Thursday, April 2, 1877

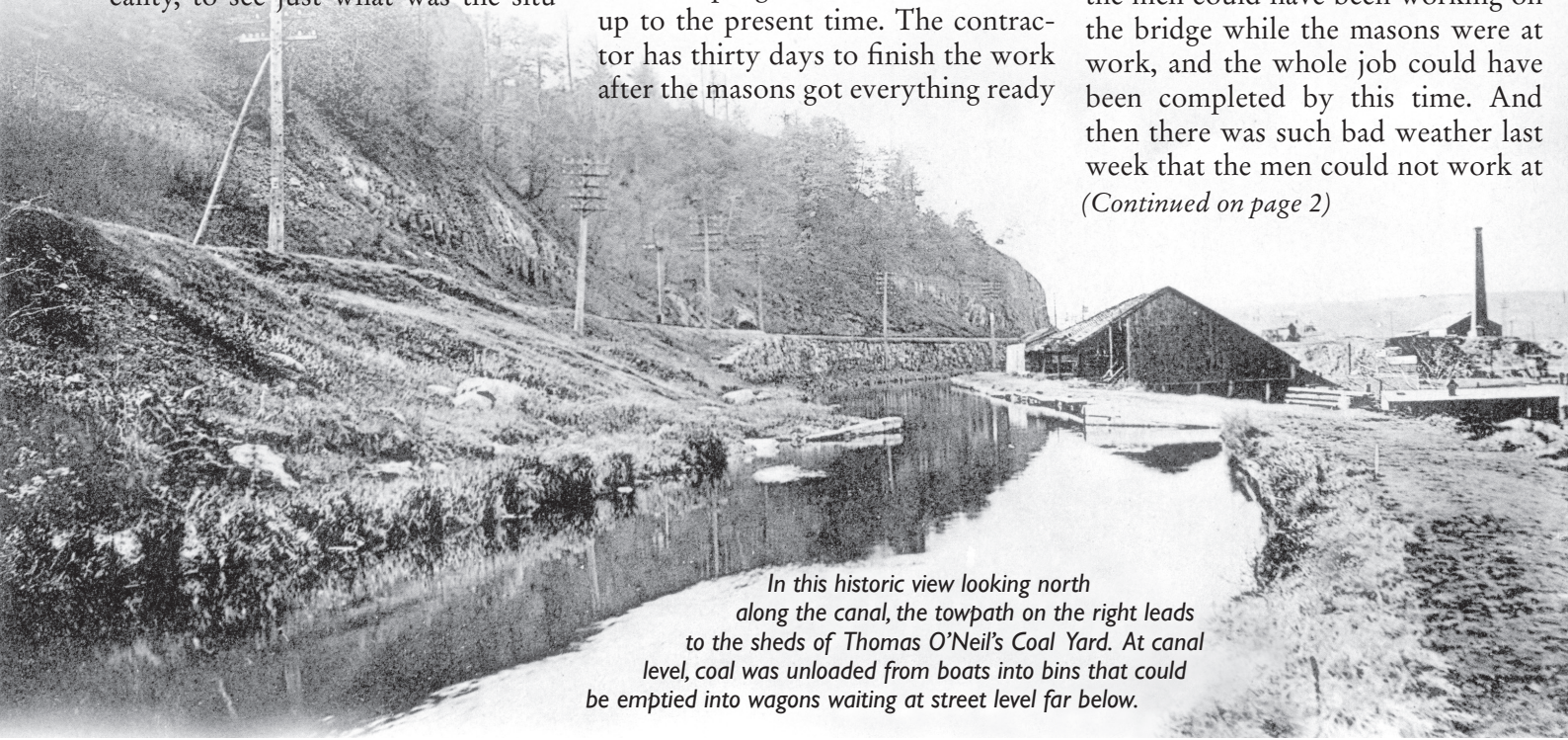
There are so many conflicting reports about the condition and progress of the new Barclay Street bridge, that our reporter yesterday afternoon visited the locality, to see just what was the situ-

ation of affairs up there. In the first place, there is no probability that the bridge will be finished by the latter end of this week, even if it is then, all reports to the contrary notwithstanding. Indeed, if it is finished in time for the wagons to pass over it by Monday of next week, it will be doing a good deal better than we can expect from the progress that has been made up to the present time. The contractor has thirty days to finish the work after the masons got everything ready

for him. He has now been at work only ten days so that if he likes he can take twenty more days. But Mr. Peter VanHouten, who is personally superintending the matter, thinks that he will have the bridge ready for travel by Saturday night sure. The bridge is of such character that a great deal of it has to be put together for the first time on the ground, being rivet work. It looks as if good work were being made of it, and when done, we guess it will be a creditable job.

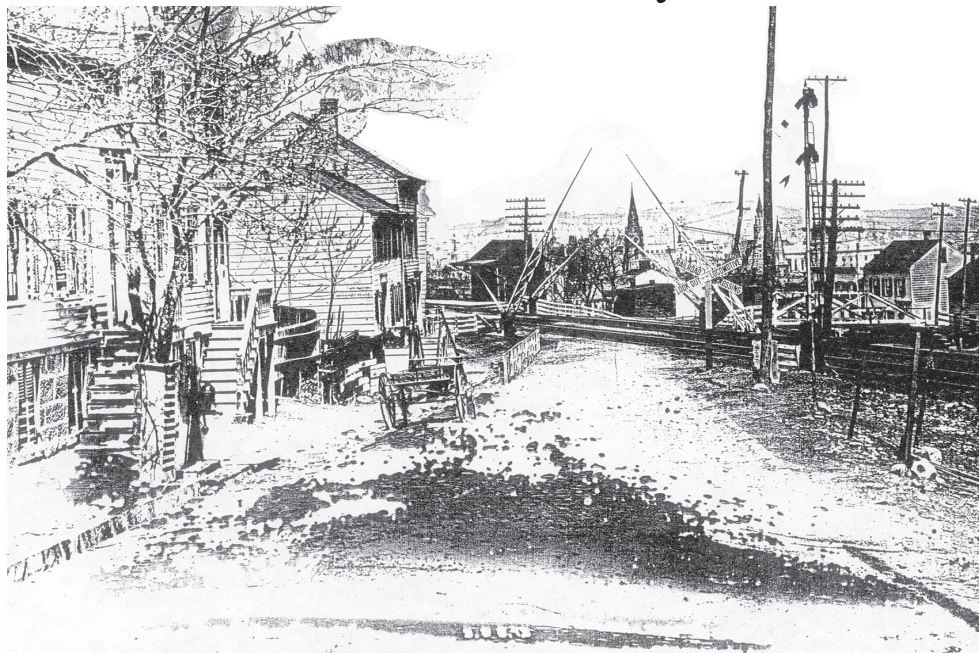
The cause of the delay seems to have been that the contractor for the stone work did the wrong side first. If this part of the work had been reversed, the men could have been working on the bridge while the masons were at work, and the whole job could have been completed by this time. And then there was such bad weather last week that the men could not work at

(Continued on page 2)



In this historic view looking north along the canal, the towpath on the right leads to the sheds of Thomas O'Neil's Coal Yard. At canal level, coal was unloaded from boats into bins that could be emptied into wagons waiting at street level far below.

Paterson's Barclay Street Canal Bridge



In the 1800s, Mill Street was just a dirt track with a few houses, one of the few streets on the far side of the canal and railroad. However, with the Barclay Street Bridge crossing closed, traffic could cross the canal bridge, seen in the distance on the right, then turn onto Canal Street on the far side of the tracks. Apparently this route was not for the faint of heart. Today Mill Street is bisected by the Route 19 exit from I-80, but remains a through street both north and south of the tangle of highways

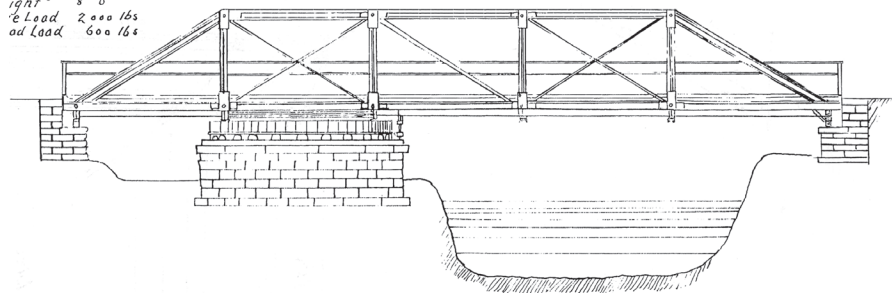
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all, and all that time was lost.

The bridge is of wrought iron structure and is set upon a circular contrivance similar to that under a turntable, such as is used on the railroad to turn around locomotives. The bridge when open, is all over ground on the west side of the canal, so that it is out of the way of passing boats. At

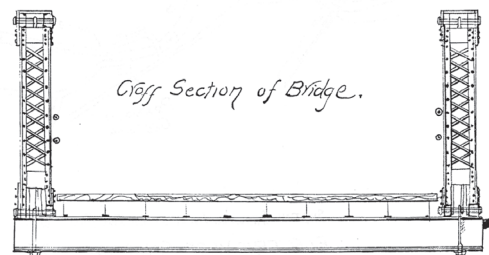
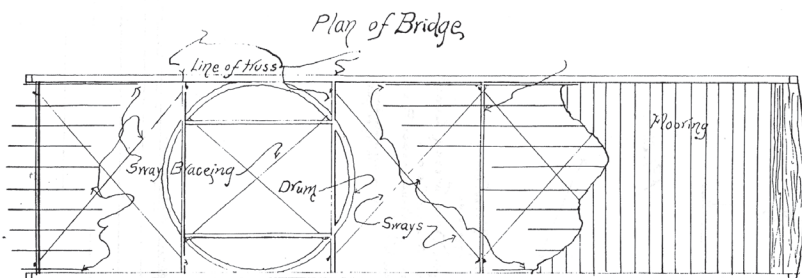
the same time it is made so that it can be swung in the opposite direction if occasion requires. It is to be operated by one man, who turns the bridge with a bar which operates a cog wheel under the bridge. The bridge can be opened or shut in half a minute, and the labor of operating it is expected to be easy, as it is to be perfectly balanced so that it will swing readily.

61' 8 3/4" o"
 roadway 20' 0" clear
 19 ft 8' 0"
 'e Load 2000 lbs
 ad Load 600 lbs



Proposed Swing Bridge
 for
 Passaic Co. New Jersey

Designed
 by the
 Grotor Bridge and Mfg. Co.



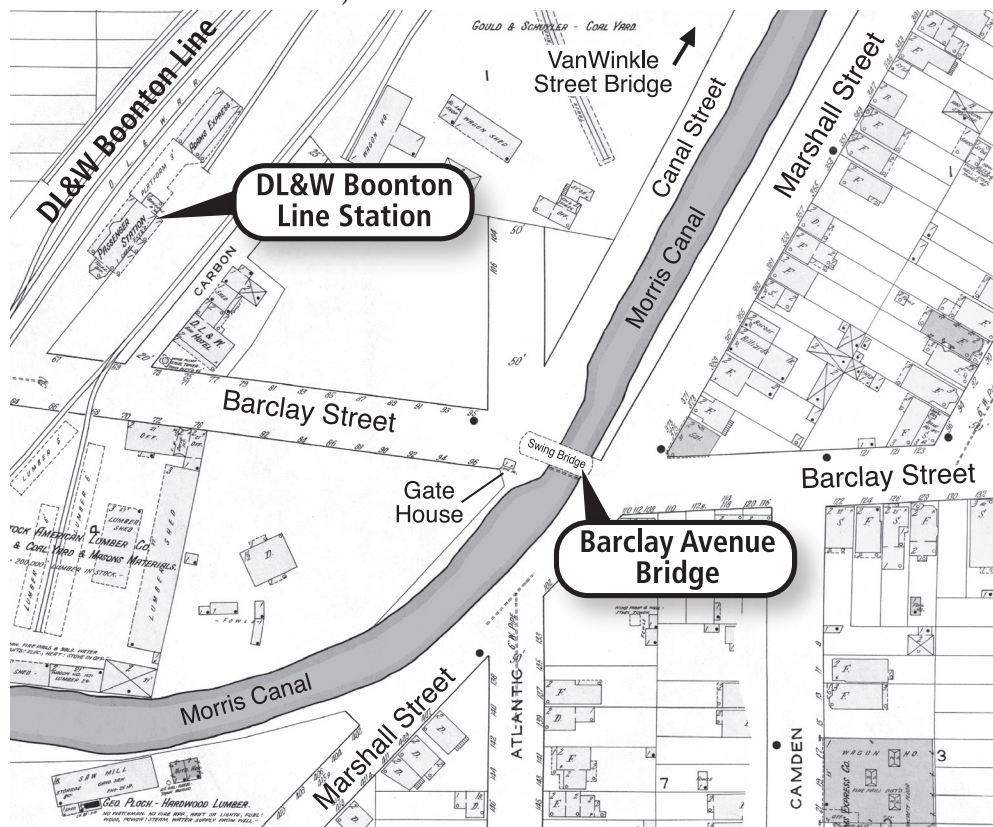
can pass under it without touching and to reach it from the lower side, the road runs up a steep incline of about forty five degrees, where the mud is, without exaggeration, three feet deep. When you get on the other side, the road turns off at a right angle to the left, down a steep declivity, and then runs along the canal for a quarter of a mile to Barclay Street, and thence up to the DL&W railroad. This strip of road along the canal, which we believe is down on the city map as Canal Street, is the worst piece within the city limits. We have seen bad roads in Virginia, in war times, but we think that this city road "takes the rag off the bush" in the point of muddiness. All the coal wagons have to come along here and the Paterson Iron company are busy hauling large quantities of pig iron from the cars. The mud is actually above the hubs of the wheels, and every ten or twenty yards the horses have to be stopped to get a breath. Some of the coal dealers have extra men and teams there all the time to give their wagons a lift over the hard places, like the extra horses on the street cars in some places like Jersey City and Brooklyn to help pull up a steep hill. The Passaic Rolling Mill Company have been waiting some time for the new bridge to be finished, so that they can ship fifty tons of iron beams that they have ready to send be Scranton. The agent for the DL&W RR says that it has almost entirely ruined the local travel on the road, and that as far as freight is concerned, there can none be shipped at all to speak of. In short

the blockade is causing incalculable damage to many different persons and corporations, and the people up there are in a chronic state of anger over the matter.

Who is responsible for this does not seem to be exactly clear. Some lay the blame on one party and some on another. But when you go to them, they one and all have such a plausible explanation of the matter that it is an impossibility to decide who is to blame. Our opinion of the affair is that there are a good many people to blame and there is no one in particular that can altogether be held responsible. It is an unfortunate condition of affairs to say the least and we hope that the new bridge will soon be finished and thus put an end to the general complaints now being made and for which we think there is just cause. ■

Some Thing's Haven't Changed

This newspaper article has been presented here in full text, preserving many interesting details about the canal and about everyday conditions in Paterson in the 1870s. We thought is also of interest to preserve how the reporter treated this local-interest story: The writer goes to great length to churn up as much angst as possible, desperately seeking someone to blame for the perceived delays. The next time you see some outrageous story online you might remember that somethings haven't change. ■



Paterson Daily Guardian

April 24 1877

The cost of the Barclay Street Bridge Canal Bridge has been footed up, and is found to amount to just about \$7,000. The masonry including cement cost about \$4,500 and the superstructure, etc., the rest. Good judges say it is a first class piece of work and well worth the

money. The working members of the committee are entitled to great credit for the job and Charley Lovell, the chairman, is wonderfully proud of it. If we mistake not, The Ajax said some months ago that the bridge was going to cost \$10,000. ■

This 1899 Sanborn Insurance Map clearly shows the Barclay Avenue swing bridge crossing the canal. However, it takes a visit to the site to understand how steep a climb it was from Main Street up to the bridge. Although there are no traces of the canal today you can still drive up Canal Street. Now a dead end, the street is still as narrow and ill paved as described in the story. If you go expect some strange looks from the residents of this tiny neighborhood. The tracks and station of the DL&W Boonton Line, seen on the left, have been replaced by the right of way of Route 19 easily crossed by a modern highway bridge.

The Morris Canal's Man in Newark

By John Prieto

Peter M. Melick was a long-time employee of the Morris Canal Company whose career spanned over 40 years. Born in Pennsylvania, he lived in Newark most of his life and was an accomplished businessman whose endeavors were many.

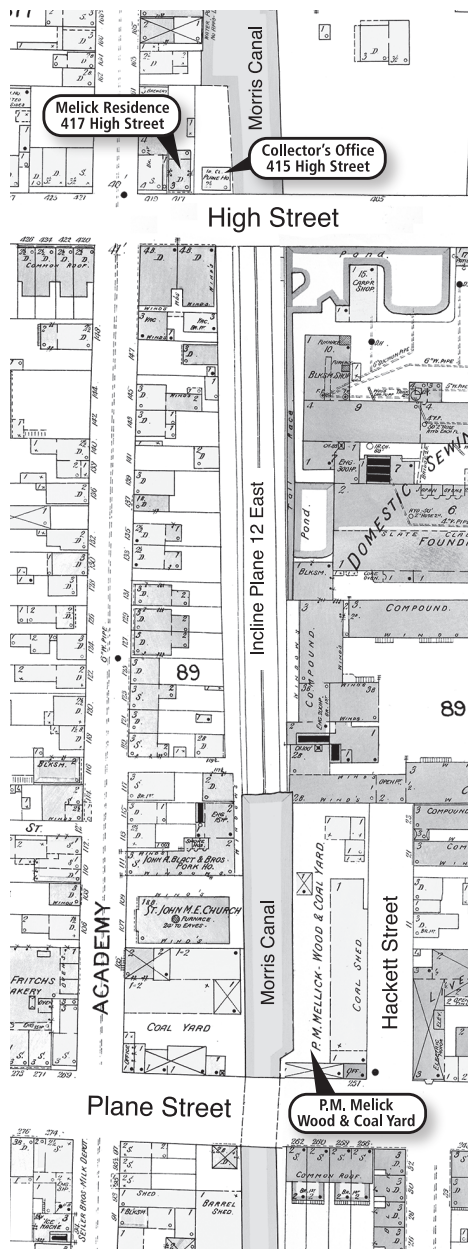
During his tenure with the Morris Canal, Melick held a number of positions. According to the 1858-59 Newark City Directory, Melick was first listed as a toll collector at Plane 12 East; at the time he lived on Summit Street near the canal. By 1864 Melick was still listed as a collector, but had moved to Washington Street.

By 1877 Melick had rented land at 199 Plane Street to be used as a coal yard. A subsequent court appeal allowed for Melick to receive damages for being charged rent based on inaccurate recordkeeping. By 1878 Melick was the owner of a coal and lumber yard located at 251 Plane Street. This property was adjacent to the canal and was quite convenient for his business. The coal yard was still in operation into the 1890s.

In 1879 (and also in the 1880 Federal census) he was still a collector, but was residing at 417 High Street, next door to the collector's office at #415. Arrangements for this residence were evidently made through the Morris Canal Company and would later become a legal issue for the company.

By the early 1880s, Melick had been promoted to supervisor of the canal division; among his duties was overseeing "all repairs from the Bloomfield level to the Passaic River." It was also reported that anyone wanting to take a canoe trip on the canal would find that a permit was necessary and could "procure it at Newark from Peter M. Melick."

Likely due to his standing in the community, Melick was named co-executor of an estate for a local resident. In 1879, he was cited in a court



This 1892 Sanborn Insurance Map of Newark shows, in great detail, Inclined Plane 12 East and the area where Peter Melick lived and worked.

case involving recovery of payments for the estate, but since he had proved the will, he ultimately was not an interested party in the matter.

Melick also was a member of the International Order of Odd Fellows; he was secretary of the Columbia Lodge No. 117 of Newark. The Laws of New Jersey, Session of 1866 show that the Odd Fellows Hall Association of Newark was incorporated in 1866, listing Melick as one of many

who were thus declared to be a "body politic and corporate." Melick became treasurer of the lodge in the 1870s.

Along the way, Melick found time for other ventures. In 1866, he was listed in the New Jersey State Business Directory as being a clothier at 358 High Street. He also applied for and received patents for a railroad sleeping car (1881; also 1882 in Canada) and for a necktie fastener (1883). In addition, it was reported that Melick was nominated for the New Jersey House of Assembly and came within seven votes of being elected.

One event in Melick's life really seems to stand out. In 1882, he evidently embezzled some \$3,000 from the Odd Fellows Lodge Life Insurance Company and left the city. The money due the lodge was paid by others and apparently Melick was not arrested. While he was away, payday arrived for canal employees under Melick's control and an officer from the canal company arrived from Easton to pay the employees. A newspaper account at the time stated that Melick was in good standing with the company. The court case for the embezzlement was not decided until some 15 years later, which found in favor of the lodge.

In another court case from 1884, property taxes for the lot at 417 High Street (Melick's residence) were not paid by the canal company by reason of tax exemption. It is not certain if part of Melick's compensation reflected rent for his living at 417. The court decided that the building's location was not critical to the operation of the canal and ruled that the tax was lawful.

At the turn of the century, Melick was listed as a foreman at 415 High Street in the 1901 Newark City Directory and was still living at 417. Melick died in August of 1901 at his residence due to the effects of a sunstroke. He was about 70 years old. An obituary in *The Jersey City News* stated that he was an assistant superintendent with the Morris Canal and that "he was prominent as an authority on canal navigation." ■

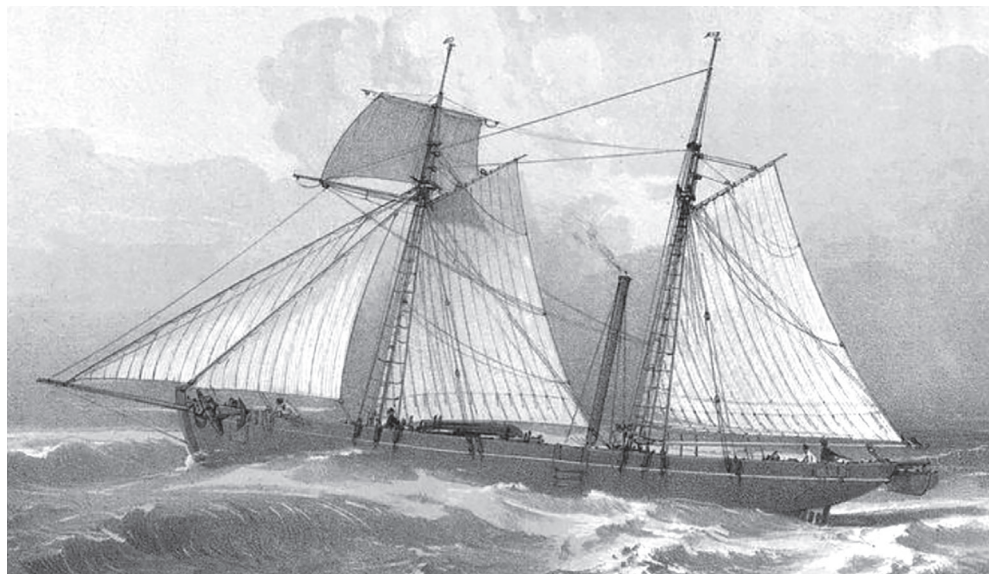
The Robert F. Stockton

The Stockton was designed by John Ericsson and built by Laird of Birkenhead, England, for D&R Canal promoter and US Navy Captain Robert F. Stockton. In 1840, she was renamed the 'New Jersey' and worked towing canal boats between Bordentown and Philadelphia.

THE CAMDEN MAIL

Wednesday, July 10, 1839

The Miniature Steam Boat, "Robert F. Stockton," [commanded by] Captain Crane, which has been lying at the railroad pier for several days past, may be justly determined the eighth wonder, at least in the way of marine architecture and successful navigation. She is a beautiful model, with remarkably sharp bow, but ten feet wide and seventy feet long, and bears a strong resemblance to the eloquent descriptions of that "long, low black schoo-



The tiny Robert F. Stockton, seen here braving the open sea, was an early attempt to apply steam power to deep water navigation. Her owner, Captain Stockton, and designer, John Ericsson, went on to build additional steam-powered vessels for the US coastal trade that would take advantage of Stockton's business interests in the D&R Canal.

ner" which didn't pirate the good ship *Susquehanna*. She is built of iron, bolted and curved after the manner of steam boilers, carries her engine, which is of fifty horse power and of splendid machinery, amidships below, her boiler rather forward. The power is supplied by a shaft extending along

her keel to the stern, where two iron arms project out below the surface of the water, between which her *sculls* or *fans* are turned something like an auger, which propels her through the water eel-like, at good speed, causing scarcely any swell. She measures but twenty-seven tons, was built in Liverpool and is the smallest craft to ever cross the Atlantic. She is designed as a towboat on the Delaware & Raritan Canal but we regret to learn that her draft of water is found to be too great. She was brought over by Capt. Crane, who by this achievement, stands without a parallel in navigation and has reached an enviable distinction for nautical skill and success. As an experiment in this go-ahead age, this little steamer must be an object of interest and enquiry for the curious – and those who may have a taste for the study of *character*, will find in the seemingly ingenuousness of her commander much to interest and delight a landsman.

Since writing the above, through the courtesy of Capt. Mickle, we have had the pleasure of a trip in her around the bar to the foot of Walnut Street, which she performed in less than sixteen minutes under less
(Continued on page 6)

NEW ICE BREAKER BURLINGTON GAZETTE Decembers 11, 1840

Yesterday an old boat, laden with iron and stones, was attached to a locomotive and drawn through the ice, which was about four inches thick, in the Delaware and Raritan Canal from its mouth to some distance above Trenton where three barges freighted with merchandise had been locked up by the ice—passage being cleared, the barges were taken in tow by the locomotive, and delivered in safety at Bordentown, where they were taken in charge this morning by the Iron Steamer 'Robert F. Stockton', and passed here in fine style on their way to Philadelphia.

The 'Robert F. Stockton' was the

first iron screw steamship to cross the Atlantic, mostly under sail, in 1839. She was the second ship designed by John Ericsson to be given screw propulsion and was built by Laird of Birkenhead, England, for Captain Robert F. Stockton of the United States Navy. Measuring 70 feet in length by 10 in the beam and a tonnage of 33 gross, it had two screws revolving in opposite directions on concentric shafts. After crossing the Atlantic, she became a tug on the Delaware River under the name 'New Jersey'. Captain Robert F. Stockton had a very successful career in the US Navy. He was one of the first naval officers to act against the slave trade and was primarily responsible for the introduction of their first screw-propelled warship, the 'USS Princeton' in 1843. ■

BLOOMFIELD – Collins House Restoration

By Rich Rockwell

Exterior preservation of the Collins House in Bloomfield is nearing completion: The only remaining work is to install shutters and paint the doors. We've installed new reproduction windows, a new roof, and a coat of paint chosen from a paint analysis to represent the look of the house when the Morris Canal was in operation.

The original Collins House was a small East Jersey Cottage built around 1790. A similar, but larger, addition was built around 1820 by Isaac Collins. The Morris Canal and Banking Company bought land in the rear of the house from the Collins family to build Plane 11 East. Isaac Collins and his son, John, were carpenters who built the bridges, aqueducts and inclined planes on the Morris Canal. The house is a common landmark in photos of Inclined Plane 11 East.

To date, funding for the project has been generously provided by the Township of Bloomfield. We are continuing to seek funding to compete the interior of the house where we will have a caretaker's apartment, a museum, and public meeting space. And we will also seek funding to landscape the area surrounding the house into a park-like setting with interpretive panels about the Morris Canal, Inclined Plane 11 East, and a new section of Morris Canal Greenway to make the house the centerpiece of the Morris Canal Greenway in Bloomfield. ■



ABOVE: The original 1870 section of the house (center) while stabilization work was being performed in 2018. BELOW: Front of the 1820 addition as it appears today.



MEETINGS

Friday – January 15, 2021 at 7:30 p.m.

TROUBLED WATERS: The Morris Canal in Paterson

By John Prieto

The City of Paterson and the Morris Canal & Banking Company had an oftentimes-contentious relationship. Paterson's Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures (SUM) was jealous of any threat to the waterpower of the Great Falls of the Passaic River. The Morris Canal needed large quantities of water to fill its channel. Each side had issues; neither was willing to compromise. In this presentation we will hear about the major difficulties the canal encountered in Paterson including its chosen location, friction with the SUM, and a series of damaging events.

John Prieto is a long-time Canal Society of New Jersey member. He is an informal local historian with a deep interest in the industrial cities along the eastern end of the Morris Canal. John has already given us stories about the canal in Newark and Jersey City and is now turning his attention toward Paterson. He is also a member of the Newark History Society and the NJ Bike & Walk Coalition.

The Robert F. Stocktom

(Continued from page 5)

than half her power of steam, clearly demonstrating the full success of this description of boat, and its adoption to still-water navigation.

We should have before remarked that Capt. Crane brought her over under canvas rigged schooner-wise, with all her machinery as she now is except the big pipe, manned with eight hands, five of whom were boys. Sailor-like he idolizes this boat, pronounces her a crack sea craft, and declares that she has not leaked a pint since she left the shores of England. ■

Getting Back to Normal

Fellow Canal Society members: At his time last year the pages of the January newsletter were filled with lists of events, meetings, and walking tours. Little did we know what the year had in store! We had a great January program meeting, but then came masks, social distancing and lockdowns. Thanks to online communications, we have tried to keep in touch. Although many of you joined us for our last two Zoom program meetings, it hasn't been the same. We thank you all for sticking with us, renewing your memberships, your generous donations, and your support as we've entered new territory.

Despite the pandemic, we have kept busy. Several Morris Canal Greenway projects were completed and, even more importantly, we took the first steps toward promoting the Greenway to the general public with brochures and maps on a new page on our website. The website also now has an all-new historic photo gallery. We expanded our archives with a large collection of D&R Canal materials donated by Bill McKelvey. Some of these items were featured in the September issue of *OTL*.

This year, as conditions improve, we hope to do better. Although it is still too early to schedule events, we hope that we will have a Symposium, Waterloo Canal Day, and walking tours when it's safe to do so. For now, please join us on January 15th for a great online presentation on Paterson given by John Prieto. The links to the meeting have been sent via e-mail and we hope to see you then. ■

ON THE LEVEL

THE CANAL SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY

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973-292-2755 – www.CanalSocietyNJ.org

People to Remember

Both John Drennan and Myra Snook were long-time Canal Society members. Although most recent members may not have met them, they were for many years part of the core group that helped define who we were and what we did. John was a director from June 1996 to June 1999 and chaired the Map and Guide Committee for many years. Myra was recording secretary from June 1995 to June 1997. She was on the advisory committee from December 1997 to December 2005, served on the membership outreach committee from April 2000 to August 2003 and took on the job of archiving the huge Barbara Kalata collection that the society acquired in 2006. She also co-directed our museum in the late 1980s and 1990s.

John M. Drennan

John Drennan, 84, of Pompton Plains, NJ died on December 11, 2020 after a brief illness. He was preceded in death by his wife Gisela, his brother Paul, and his daughters Susan Raquel Drennan and Caridad Clare Featherstone. He leaves behind children John A., Matthew J., and M. Juliet Drennan and stepchildren Don and Susan, as well as many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

John led a joyous and active life. He was born in Newark, NJ, and spent most of his life in Bloomfield,

where he was a longtime parishioner of Sacred Heart Church. His final residence was in Pompton Plains. He was a chemical engineer who later transitioned to Wall Street finance. He brought that keen analytic eye to his pastimes. He was a devoted fan of rail and canal transportation history, holding leadership positions at the Shore Line Trolley Museum and the Canal Society of New Jersey, as well as the Steamtown National Historic Site. He especially relished international travel. He and Gisela visited all 7 continents, some repeatedly.

Myra J. Snook

Myra Snook, 81, of Fredon Township, passed away Friday, December 4, 2020, at Morristown Medical Center. She was born in Newton to the late Russell and Ruth D. Snook. She was the granddaughter of the late George and Jennie Snook who owned and operated Maple Crest Farm in Fredon Township as did her late great-grandfather, Elias Snook. Myra was a lifelong resident of Fredon, most of that time spent on part of the family farm. She graduated from Newton High School in 1957 and attended Rutgers University graduating in 1961. Myra worked at the Librarian for Byram Township Schools for two years and was a Library Media Specialist for Sparta School District for more than 30 years.

Myra was active in local history with numerous historical and canal societies. She helped start the Paulinskill Valley Trail, the Walpack Historical Society, and Friends of High Point State Park. Myra was on the board and past-president of the Sussex County Historical Society, the municipal historian for Fredon Township, and helped save the Coursen House and reopen it to the public. Myra was a member of the Warren County Morris Canal Committee and researched/designed numerous signs on the Morris Canal. She was active in many Canal Societies in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio and gave many slide shows on local history. Myra loved outdoor activities such as operating canal boats and hiking on local trails.

New Bridge Closes the Gap on the Waterloo Valley Greenway Trail

One of the longest uninterrupted towpath trails on the Morris Canal Greenway stretches approximately a mile and a half from Bilby Road in Hackettstown to Saxton Falls. It is maintained by a group of volunteers from the Warren County Parks Foundation led by CSNJ Board Member Judy Keith. (See the Sept. 2018 issue of OTL for a map of this trail).

Until recently hikers had to navigate a breach in the towpath that involved descending its steep bank, crossing a small creek on a makeshift log bridge, and climbing back to the towpath. As a remedy, Warren County has recently installed a new aluminum alloy bridge that will make this hike much easier. The bridge sections were pre-fabricated off-site, transported to

the site to be connected, and on December 11th, hoisted over the gap using winches and cables. The last step will be to install a wooden decking and paint it.

This trail is part of the longer Waterloo Valley Trail that stretches from Hackettstown to Waterloo Village and soon may continue as far as Stanhope. For now, the trail leads east from the Bilby Road trailhead to Saxton Falls, where the Musconetcong River is dammed to make Saxton Lake a slackwater section of the canal. The trail leads eastward to Lock 4 West at Guinea Hollow, where boats re-entered the canal and then, with a few deviations, to the former hamlet of Starport, under Route 80, and on to Waterloo. ■



ABOVE: A view looking across the troublesome gap and down the cleared towpath trail.

BELOW: The bridge framework is now in place awaiting the installation of its wooden floor boards.



For information visit:
canalsocietynj.org



Explore the
Morris Canal
 Greenway

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CANAL SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY

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