

# ON THE LEVEL

STORY  
EDITION



THE CANAL SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY

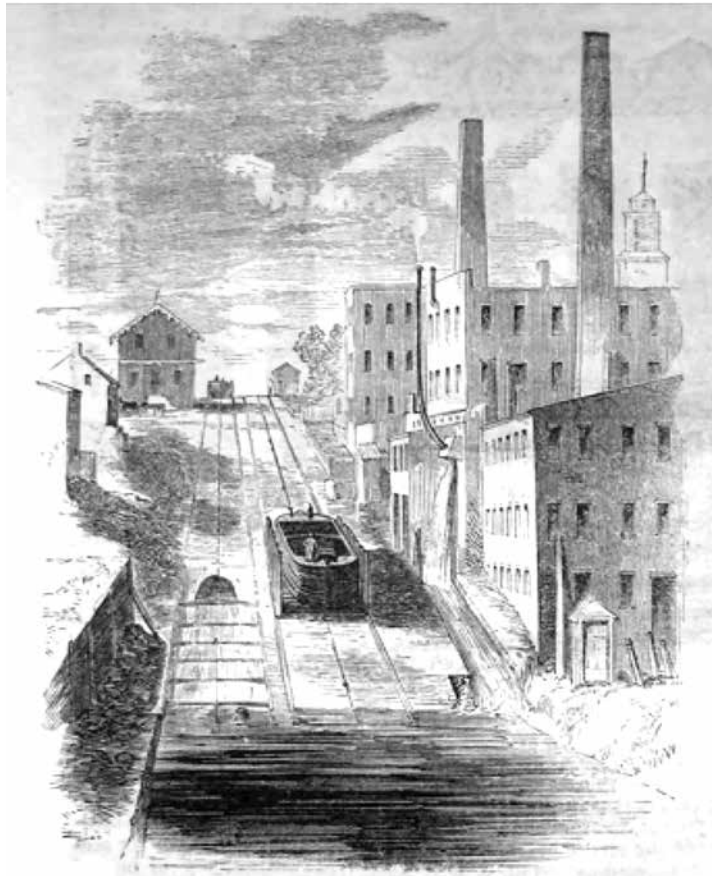
## Old Times on the Canal

THE SUNDAY CALL.

WHAT THE VETERAN CANALER TOLD A NEWARK CALL REPORTER

September 11, 1881

“Did you ever take a ride on one of ‘em?” said the old canaler, as he observed the *Call* reporter critically examining his craft at the foot of the inclined plane, and on being answered in the negative he extended a cordial invitation to the scribe to take a seat on the roof of the low cabin, and make a short trip up the canal, promising to give him plenty of chance to debark should he deem the situation at any time perilous. The craft was a coal boat, or “Chunker”, going home light, and as she glided into the immense cradle or car, preparatory to ascending the plane, the reporter jumped aboard. The captain was a veteran rustic canaler, having seen over thirty years of service and become burned to the color of hemlock sole leather by the fierce rays of the sun, against which the boatman had no protection. His crew consisted of his wife, who filled the arduous position of cook, stewardess, and first mate; and a small boy, whose nautical duty consisted in walking ahead and cutting sticks to encourage the mules by a vigorous and continuous application to their backs.



Morris Canal Inclined Plane 12 East, Newark

As soon as the boat was fairly in the car the captain took a turn of a short “snubbin’ line” loosely about a cleat on the [aft] framework, and then stepped up to the hinges which connect the two compartments together. Kneeling down he shifted an iron lever at each side of the boat and thus drew the pins from the joints, allowing the two immense floating boxes

to separate slightly. Then standing up he took his battered straw hat from his head and waved it aloft as a signal that all was ready for the passage over the hill. Almost instantly a man in the upper floor of the plane house was seen to leave his window, engage in a struggle with some machinery in the middle of the room, and a slight forward motion was perceptible on the boat.

As the car reared its arms out of the water, the boat settled down and the captain eased off on the line to accommodate the motion, making all fast when the full length of the car was out of the water, and proceeding to pump the bilge water from the forward boat with a crude but admirably adaptable tin pump, which rapidly ridded [sic] the compartment of several barrels of water the old man called coal juice.

(Continued on page 2)

### MEMBERS

We hope that you enjoy this story. It is taken word for word as printed in the *Newark Sunday Call* in 1881. The writer has attempted to capture the wit and slang of the boatman he met working on the canal. If we could meet this captain in person, we are sure he would have many more yarns to spin.

# Old Times on the Canal



*(Continued from page 1)*

When this task was completed the grizzled veteran folded his arms and meditated while we swiftly bumped along over High Street, past the hub factory and the huge cylindrical conduit which conveys the water to the turbine wheel furnishing power for transporting the boats over the plane. As we reached the summit of the hill the reason for making the boat and cars in two sections was manifest, for a single boat of the length used would certainly break its back in getting over the crown of the ascent and commencing to descend the short decline to the water. Passing under the Summit Street bridge the line was cast off, and the boat quietly glided out, while the car came to an abrupt halt at the end of its rope. At this point the tow line was thrown ashore to a red headed boy in waiting with pair of ill matched mules, and the voyage began in earnest. The captain now came aft

and braced his huge bare feet against the cabin, while he manipulated the tiller with the small of his back, his hands being occupied in filling a clay pipe with coarse tobacco taken from the toe of an old cotton sock. "One more jump and we'll be on the five mile level an' then we won't have nothin' to worry us for a quite a spell", he remarked, after taking one or two whiffs.

The jump he referred to was the lock near Warren Street bridge, and the process of lifting the boat to the upper level was very quickly performed, affording the reporter a new and far from unpleasant sensation when the water surged in under the craft and lifted it bodily in many successive [word missing]. When the water in the lock was level with that in the upper canal the boy cursed the mules and they started briskly along the towpath eagerly sniffing the air of the green fields ahead. Speedily passing the unpleasant-looking and odoriferous tanneries, and the gloomy walls of the jail, the aspects of the surroundings improved rapidly, and soon the boat was gliding between green-clad banks, with cultivated fields or cool-looking woods in the background.

Looking back the captain said, "I don't see nothin' of the feller that was blowin' about given' me a lively chase this trip; guess he ain't far behind though. But you can't get no races now-a-days like we used to have in old times when canaling paid big money and good critters were used on the end of the towline. Them was the times when there was life on the old ditch — good boats, good horses, good grub, and a pile of money at the end of the season. I have made \$90 in one trip and not thought much of it. We used to jerk a boat-load of coal from Mauch Chunk to Jersey City and unload her between two Sundays.

"It was all racing for locks and planes, and 'bout the only stops we made on the levels was when the

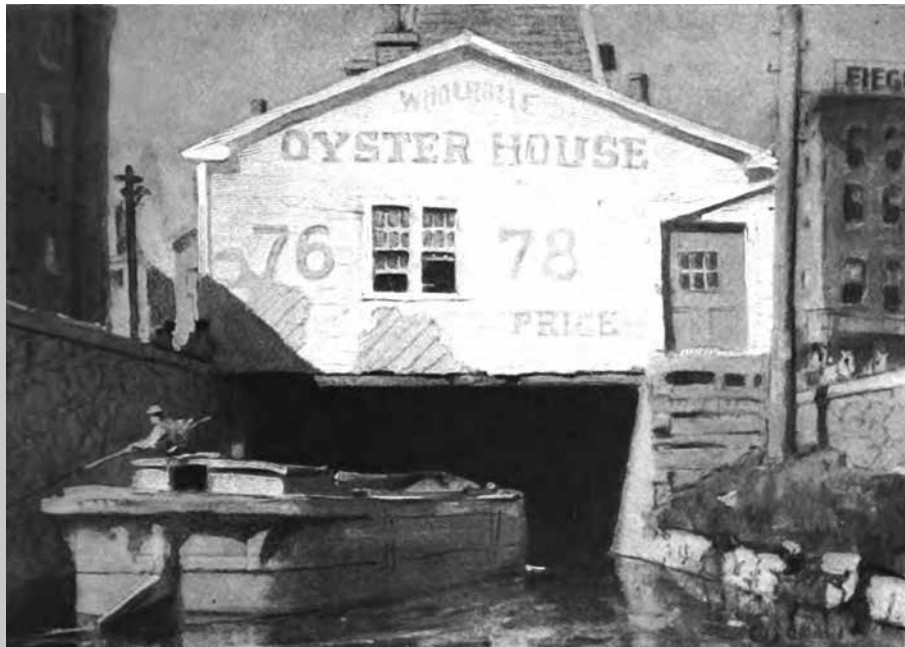
old woman wanted a chicken or a few apples or a basket of taters, and a farmhouse was handy. Buy 'em? Well yes, sometimes; when the farmer kept a dog fer instance, but as a general thing chickens were running loose on the towpath and it was easy to knock 'em over with a chuck of coal. Taters, corn, cabbages, and such truck growing along the canal, and the patches are spotted in the day for a visit at night.

But, I was talkin 'bout racin'. I remember one race that ended up serious. I'll tell you about it: Steve Bailey an me started "light" from Jersey City, an' it was nip and tuck all the way up to 'bout Stone House Plains. I was behind with a team of powerful mules, and Steve was 'bout two hundred yards ahead harupping a team of purty decent horses. His ole woman was steerin', and the boy was lyin' sick in the cabin. Everything was goin' along bootain, until Steve's boat come to a low bridge; then there was trouble. Yer see, the ole gal was interested in the race, an' was lookin' our way, so she didn't see bridge, an' no amount of hollerin' could



make her understand till the bridge ketched her a whack under the ear and flopped her inter the canal. Steve didn't miss her, but went right on along, an' I stopped and fished her out, but warn't no more use. She was deader then Eph's pig. I managed to hail Steve an' he come back. He stood looked at her a minute, an' then began to storm.

"Darn your picter," he said, addressin' the corpse, "you always was the contrariest critter livin', an' here you goes an' kills yourself just to put me behind on my trip." Then he picked her up and toted her on his boat. I 'spect he planted her along the bank that night 'cause he borrowed a pick from me an' I went along and left him. I never got the pick back neither, 'cause Steve never made another trip. He went into a new business — started a coal yard 'long the canal. He was a mighty smart fellow, an' was always workin' some new game that he got out of his head. You see that big frog over there under the grass on the berm bank? That's what we call the bank we don't use. It was jest such a big green-headed frog that give Steve the idea of goin' into the coal biz. You see 'bout the only amusement the boys has on the boat is throwin' coal at the frogs, an' one big frog will have 'bout a ton of coal fired at him in a month if he is a good stayer. Well, Steve has observed this fact and an' as soon as he got rid of the ole woman an' his boat, he just squatted on a piece of land near the road an' alongside the canal, and a-ketched a whoppin' big frog. He took that frog alive and made a plaster cast of him, an' from that he manufactured 'bout twenty or thirty mighty natural-looking plaster frogs. He painted then green an' set them along the banks of the canal for the boys to fire at, an' then all he had to do was take a basket an' gather up the coal. In less then three months he had more black diamonds than a boat could haul an' he bid fair to get rich if it hadn't been for a Frenchman coming along one day and tryin' to



Although the Morrissey & Price Wholesale Oyster House was considered to be part of the Centre Market complex, it was located across Broad Street from the main, block-long, brick market building described in the story below.

## The New Market

### *The Sentinel of Freedom, Newark*

November 16, 1852

The Market Committee of the Common Council has been for some time considering plans for this structure, the general appearance and character of which has been agreed on. Specifications have been received from various architects, and the award will soon be made. The work will be immediately commenced. The contract between the city and the Morris Canal Co., by which the former assumed the care of the city bridges, in consideration on the right to occupy the space over the canal, the deeds to the city of wharf lots on the north side of the canal will also be signed. The market will extend from Broad to Mulberry streets over the canal, to be

built of brick with doors at intervals of 24 feet and have entrances also from the bridges. On the end towards Broad Street a room for the Common Council and the city offices will be prepared, and a watch tower with an alarm bell for fires will be erected. On the end towards Mulberry Street, a room for the watch Department will be constructed. On the north side of the market the wagons of the hucksters and farmers will be placed along a foot path and the present arrangement for these in Broad Street will be abolished. When the projected improvement is accomplished, it will become an ornament and a highly useful building to the city. ■

catch one of the frogs with a piece of red flannel on a hook. Steve was watchin' him dancin' 'round the frog, an' he bust a blood vessel tryin' to keep from laffin'. That wound up both Steve and the coal-yard.

"Well you aint' goin' to leave me now, be you? Better you go on

farther with me. I like to have a little decent feller to talk to, an' it ain't often I get anybody except some tramp to ride with me. Tramps. Well bless my soul, the towpath is paradise for tramps; there is more of them travelin' along the canal than on any road  
(Continued on page 10)

# Lincoln Park and the Pompton Aqueduct

By Tim Roth

Lincoln Park continues to make great strides in its development of the Morris Canal Greenway! Two years ago, a new Greenway trail was opened on the west side of town, from Beaver Brook Road to the foot of Plane 10 East, which ascends to Montville Township. This year, the east side of Lincoln Park's Greenway is getting attention: A new sign kiosk has recently been installed at Aqueduct Park, where an aqueduct once

crossed the Pompton River into Mountain View in Passaic County.

When the Morris Canal was being designed, one of the numerous issues the planners had to consider was the number of places the 102-mile canal would cross a river. In some cases, the canal boats navigated across the river. While that may seem simple, it required a dam to create slack water, a bridge for the mules and tenders to cross the river, and guard locks to control the flow of water in the canal and overcome any elevation change.

However, if the canal ran significantly higher than the river, it was more practical to build an aqueduct for the boats to cross. An aqueduct was a water-filled trough that the boats used to get

from one side to the other. However, the design varied greatly based on the topography. The Pompton Aqueduct was one of the longest of these structures, with eight spans set on abutments and seven stone piers, and totaling 275 feet in length. It was built in 1850, replacing an earlier aqueduct built in 1830 that was 236 feet long.

The recently installed kiosk at Aqueduct Park tells the story of the Pompton Aqueduct. While the aqueduct itself was removed during the canal abandonment, there are still remnants that can be found on the river's edge. An exploration of the west shore will reveal a few flat stones that were used in the aqueduct's abutment and, across the river on the east shore, an intact abutment is visible. Binoculars are recommended for better viewing, or if you happen to be a paddler, bring your canoe or kayak along. A boat launch at the park will allow you to paddle across the river for an up-close look at the east abutment. To access Aqueduct Park, follow Route 202 north from Lincoln Park; it will be on the left shortly before the Pompton River bridge. (Use caution in high water.)

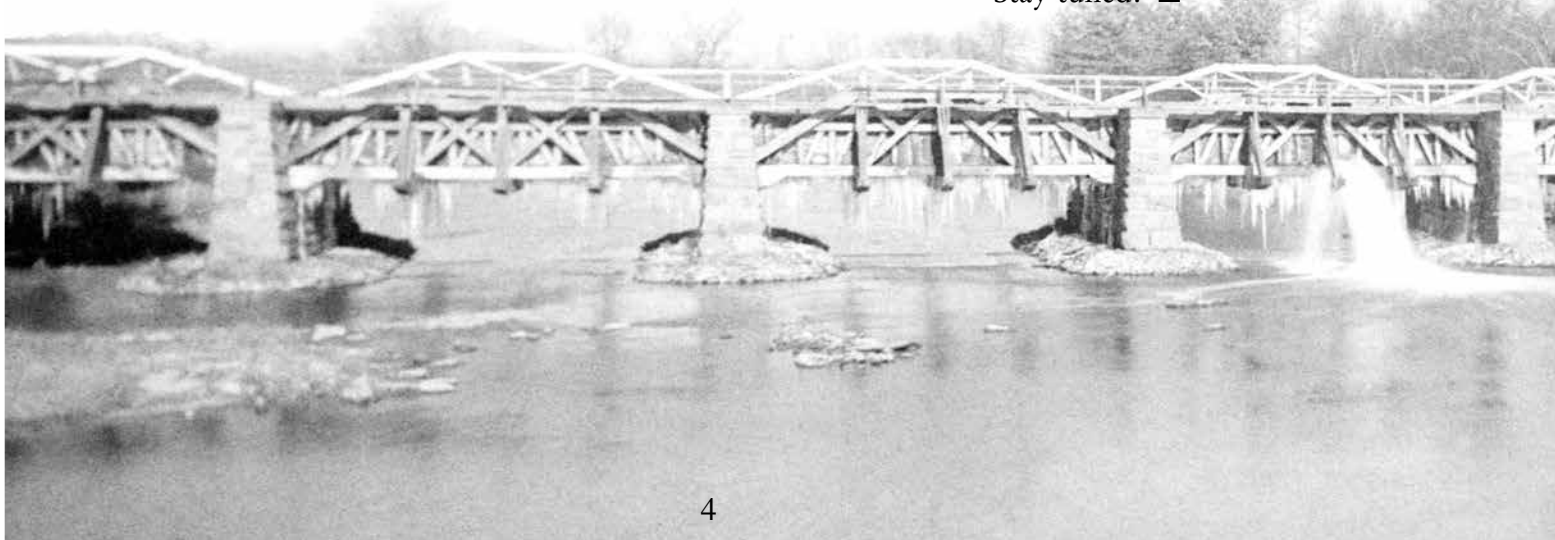
Further plans for Lincoln Park include interpretive signage at Lock 14 East, which was the last elevation change before the 17-mile level between Lincoln Park and Bloomfield. Stay tuned! ■



ABOVE: New trail head kiosk installed in Aqueduct Park in 2019.



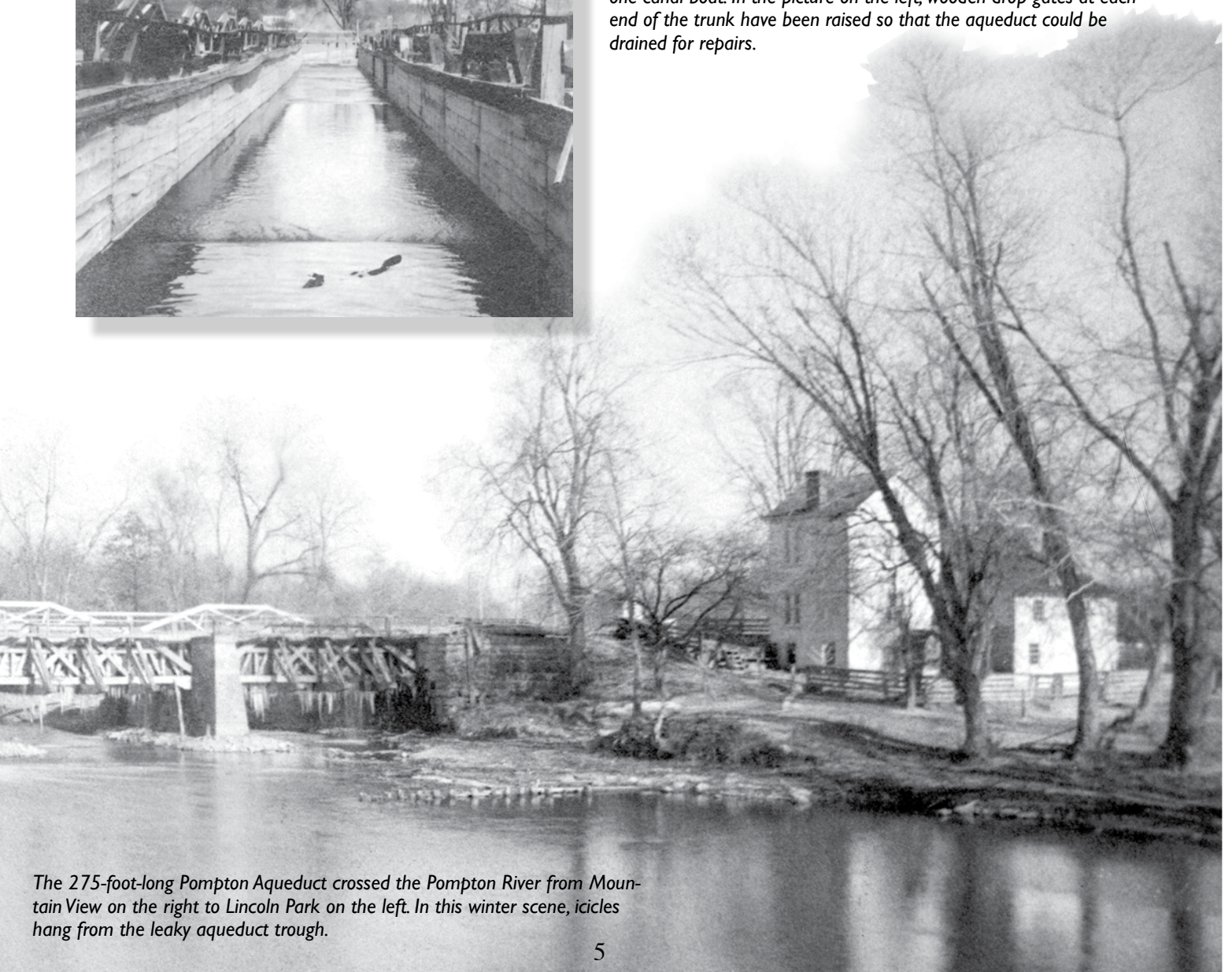
RIGHT: On the east bank of the Pompton River, a few stones remain to mark the location of abutment that once supported that end of the aqueduct.



An overflow at the western end of the aqueduct, seen in the picture on the right, allowed excess water to spill into the river below. At Mountain View, the Pompton Feeder added an additional water supply to help fill the canal.



The massive wooden aqueduct trunk was built just wide enough for one canal boat. In the picture on the left, wooden drop gates at each end of the trunk have been raised so that the aqueduct could be drained for repairs.



The 275-foot-long Pompton Aqueduct crossed the Pompton River from Mountain View on the right to Lincoln Park on the left. In this winter scene, icicles hang from the leaky aqueduct trough.

# A Break in the Canal

Some time ago while searching the Canal Society archives I came across a photo that caught my eye. Unfortunately it was a poor quality copy and no amount of manipulation could make it better. Recently, however, while working on another project, I located an original photo print of the same image. It was scratched, but clean, and obviously had a story to tell.

Although I was not able to find a newspaper account of the event, I was able to use highly detailed Sanborn insurance maps of Newark to identify many of the buildings seen below. In addition, I found that Jim Lee Sr. had published several images of the same event in *The Morris Canal: A Photographic History*, all possibly taken on the same day. His picture caption helped set the scene.

Sometime before 1908, there was a break in the stone wall that support-

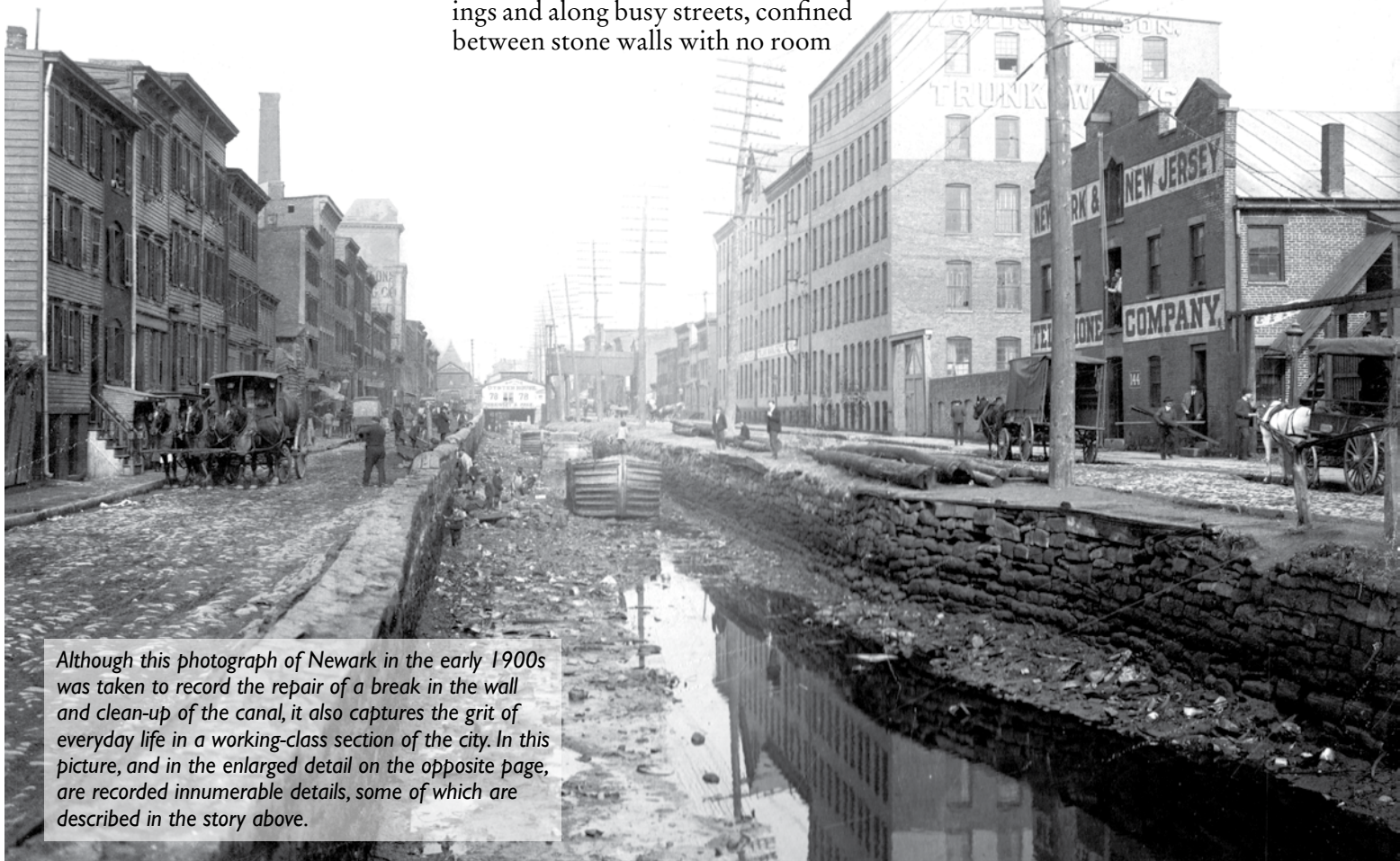
ed the canal banks between River and Mulberry Streets in Newark. To facilitate repairs, the canal was drained, revealing that it was being used as a convenient disposal place for tons of trash. It was a disgraceful situation. Although the canal was not what it once was, people came to see the curious goings on. Among them was an unknown photographer who set up his camera at the upper end of Lock 15 East. From there he could take in a view looking all the way up the canal to Newark's Centre Market. Although there is no way of knowing why he was there, the photo that he took captures a gritty, but somehow fascinating, picture of everyday life in one of Newark's busy commercial neighborhoods.

By the 1900s, Newark had grown to become sprawling city. The canal now passed between factory buildings and along busy streets, confined between stone walls with no room

for a towpath. In the 1880s the canal company bought a small steam-powered tug to pull tows of boats from the bottom of the inclined plane to the Passaic River. This saved the boatmen the job of poling their boats through this part of the city.

In the left center of the photograph below, workmen inspect the stone wall that collapsed into the canal. Spectators have gathered to see what is going on and a group of boys in dark jackets has climbed down to explore the drained canal bed. To help with the cleanup, canal boats have been towed to the site, disconnected at the hinge and spaced out along the canal to collect the trash.

Along the cobblestone streets on either side of the canal, the day's business goes on despite the work in progress. South Canal Street, on the left, is lined with three-story tenement houses, some with first-floor or basement-level storefronts. The street is crowded with wagons and pedestrians. Of par-



Although this photograph of Newark in the early 1900s was taken to record the repair of a break in the wall and clean-up of the canal, it also captures the grit of everyday life in a working-class section of the city. In this picture, and in the enlarged detail on the opposite page, are recorded innumerable details, some of which are described in the story above.



This enlarged view shows workers in the canal bed and activity along both sides of Canal Street in great detail. On the far right a bystander with a hand-held camera takes his turn at capturing the on-going repairs and cleanup.

particular interest is the water tanker in the left foreground drawn by a three-horse team. In the distance, the building with the tower and tall chimney is the Lyon & Sons Brewing Company, established in 1897. Part of the company name can be made out on the end of the building.

In the distance, the canal continues under the Oyster House at the east end of block-long tunnel beneath the Newark Centre Market. The tunnel was a unpopular for the boatmen: Despite a sign on the end of the building that read "Notice: No Dumping Garbage on Canal Property," they were often pelted with trash from the market stalls above.

*(Continued on page 8)*

## ON THE LEVEL



### THE CANAL SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY

PO Box 737, Morristown, New Jersey 07963-0737

*On the Level* is published three times a year by the Canal Society of New Jersey.

#### OFFICERS

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**Treasurer:** Ken Roser  
**Recording Secretary:** Bierce Riley  
**Corresponding Secretary:** Vacant  
**Past President:** Vacant

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## SAVE THE DATE

# Fall Tour

## Easton to Lake Hopatcong

**October, 18, 19, & 20**

This Fall the Canal Society of New Jersey will join with the Pennsylvania Canal Society in presenting a tour of the Morris Canal from Easton to Lake Hopatcong.



- Friday** Tour will visit Planes 1&2 West and Lock 1 West, Stanhope and Lake Musconetcong.
- Saturday** All-day bus tour: Easton to Lake Hopatcong, dinner and evening presentation.
- Sunday** CSNJ-guided tour of Waterloo Village including Canal Museum and newly expanded Canal Boat Exhibit.

All CSNJ members will receive an e-mail message with complete tour information and a registration form.

**Sign up early, seats on the Saturday tour bus will be limited. For additional information contact us at:**

[macgraphics2@gmail.com](mailto:macgraphics2@gmail.com)

## MEETINGS

Morris County Cultural Center, 300 Mendham Road, Morris Township

**Friday, September 20, 7:30 p.m.** Refreshments at 7:00

### THE DELAWARE CANAL

#### COMMERCE, CALAMITIES & CONSERVATION

BY SUSAN TAYLOR

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FRIENDS OF THE DELAWARE CANAL

In this presentation Susan Taylor will give us a visual tour of the 59-mile-long Delaware Canal that runs from Easton to Bristol, PA. The evolution of the Canal from a 19th century commercial corridor to a Pennsylvania State Park will be related. Historic photographs will illustrate stories of the era when teams of mules pulled canal boats laden with tons of coal bound for Philadelphia and New York. Calamities caused by structural failures and Mother Nature will be described, and the challenges of maintaining and restoring the Canal will be shared.

The Friends of the Delaware Canal is an independent, not-for-profit organization working to restore, preserve, and improve the Delaware Canal and its surroundings. The organization's primary goals are to ensure that the Canal is fully watered from Easton to Bristol and that the towpath trail is usable over its entire length. ■



Lehigh Canal boat heading south on the Delaware Canal

**Friday, November 15, 7:30 p.m.** Refreshments at 7:00

### A NIGHT AT THE MOVIES

A REAL-FILM SHOW PRESENTED BY MITCH DAKELMAN

This program will include a selection of films from Mitch's vast collection. The evening's movies will include: *Paradise Ditch*, a 12-minute black-and-white film about the The Delaware & Lehigh Canals made in 1955, showing an active lock on the upper Lehigh Navigation in 1936; *New Jersey Journey*, a 1946 33-minute color and narrated time capsule looking back at New Jersey and the U.S.A. 73 years ago; and *Steel in America*, a 1965 30-minute Technicolor film, that gives a history of iron and steel manufacturing. The film is a Walt Disney production with Donald Duck starring as the ironmaster.

**Mitch Dakelman** is a professional film librarian who has authored or co-authored six railroad- and highway-related books. His latest book, *The Glory Years of The Pennsylvania Turnpike*, was co-authored by Dr. Neal A. Schorr and published by Arcadia in 2016.

## A Break in the Canal

(Continued on page 7)



Above, the same event is captured in a view looking east. The photographer is standing on one of the canal boats positioned to help with the cleanup. In this photo workers take a break from mucking out the canal to pose for the camera while spectators on South Canal Street peer over the wall to see what's going on. Above, on the left, is the overhead tramway of the J.J. Schmidt Coal & Wood Company and to the right is Lyon & Sons Brewing Company.

Photo courtesy of the Lee family.

In the right foreground, on the opposite side of the canal, workers at the New York & New Jersey Telephone Company Repair Shop go about the day's work. Just down the street is the massive six story Louis Goldsmith & Son Trunk Works. The company was a wholesale manufacturer of trunks and luggage for the world market. In the distance is the covered overhead tramway of the J.J. Schmidt Coal & Wood Company. Supplies of coal and wood were taken from the canal boats up and over the street to bins in the company's yard tucked away behind the building along North Canal Street. In the yard, wagons were loaded, weighed and sent off to deliver fuel to customers in surrounding neighborhoods.

On October 20, 1908, flames broke out at the trunk factory. The fire destroyed the building, jumped the canal, and damaged the Lyon & Sons Brewery as well as a half-dozen tenement houses. While fighting the blaze, Fire Chief Astley and one of his battalion chiefs were obliged to jump into the canal to avoid the flames. The damage was estimated at \$500,000. ■



# D&R CANAL 2019 WALKS AND EVENTS

*These walks and events are sponsored by the D&R Canal Watch. All Saturday Canal Walks begin at 10 AM, unless noted. Meeting Places are designated with "(MP)" in the walk description. Contact information for Program Leaders is below. If emailing, use "D&R Canal" in subject header.*

D&R Canal Watch, [www.canalwatch.org](http://www.canalwatch.org) – D&R Canal State Park, [www.dandrcanal.com](http://www.dandrcanal.com)

Bob Barth, 201-401-3121; [bbarth321@aol.com](mailto:bbarth321@aol.com)

Jessica Hunsdon, 732-993-4505

Pamela V'Combe, 609-635-2783; [pjvcombe@gmail.com](mailto:pjvcombe@gmail.com)

## **Saturday, September 14 - 10:00 a.m.**

5.7 m Walk Bulls Island to Holcombe Jimison Farm (MP). Starting at the D&R Feeder Canal origins, we will pass an early 18th century milling village on the confluence of the Delaware River and Wickecheoke Creek, pass through Stockton, and conclude at a historical farm site. Short walk is 3m to Prallsville Mills. Leader: Pamela V'Combe.

## **Saturday, October 12 - 10:00 a.m.**

5.4 m Walk on the D&R Canal towpath from Fireman's Eddy to Prallsville Mill (MP) The tour will include the historic remnants of the feeder canal outlet lock to the river, other historic canal structures, and expansive views across river. Short walk is 2.6-mile walk to the Holcombe-Jimison Farm. Leader: Pamela V'Combe.

## **Saturday, November 9 - 10:00 a.m.**

5.3 m Walk Fireman's Eddy to Washington Crossing (MP @ Nelson House). See the emerging grassland/meadows restoration project, riparian and edge habitats supporting a large variety wildlife. Along the way, stroll through the picturesque and historic Titusville, ending at the site of the famous Christmas Night Crossing by Washington and the Continental Army. Short walk option is the 4.1-mile walk to Church Road in Titusville. Leader: Pamela V'Combe.



*While canal boats passed below, the block-long Newark Centre Market, right, bristled with activity. On market days the entire cobbled area between the market and Commerce Street, far left, would be filled with the wagons of those who came to buy and sell.*

Inventory Reduction

# SALE

T-SHIRTS



Size S–XL ~~\$17~~ \$12

Size XXL & XXXL ~~\$20~~ \$15

Three shades of green  
Not all colors in all sizes

Visit the sales table at the  
**September 20<sup>th</sup>**  
**Program Meeting**

## WATERLOO CANAL DAYS

### VISIT WATERLOO

Every Saturday in September  
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Canal Boat Rides, Lenape Indian Village,  
Canal Museum, Canal Boat Exhibit, village  
walking tours, historic trades and more.

## INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE WALKS

September through November

September 21<sup>nd</sup>  
**Chester Furnace**  
Iron Mining & Iron Making

October 12<sup>th</sup>  
**Morris Canal Walk**  
Stanhope to Waterloo

*Industrial Heritage Walks are sponsored by  
the Morris County Park Commission.*

For information and reservations, please email  
[macgraphics2@gmail.com](mailto:macgraphics2@gmail.com) or call 973-292-2755.

# Old Times on the Canal

(Continued on page 3)

in the country. They steal the farmer's chickens, melons, corn, and sich and the poor canalers get the blame for it. Well if you must go, you'd better jump on this boat comin' down and git off when you come to the horse car bridge, but before you go I want

you to promise to take three or four days off some time next month an' make a good long trip with me. I'll show you the purtiest country you ever traveled through, and don't forget it. Look out for that topline! Now jump. So long." ■

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Friday, September 20**

**Program Meeting**

Delaware Canal, Susan Taylor  
Morris County Cultural Center, 7:30 p.m.

**Sunday, September 29**

**Boonton Day**

Boonton, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**Friday – Sunday  
October 18, 19, 20**

**Fall Tour**

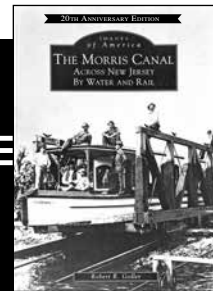
Easton to Lake Hopatcong  
See notice on page 7 for details.

**Friday, November 15**

**Program Meeting**

Movie Night, Mitch Dakelman  
Morris County Cultural Center, 7:30 p.m.

[www.CanalSocietyNJ.org](http://www.CanalSocietyNJ.org)



A 20th Anniversary Edition of Bob Goller's "Images of America" book, **The Morris Canal: Across New Jersey by Water and Rail**, is being published by Arcadia and will be available by the end of September. This is an expanded and updated version of the original book, incorporating some necessary text corrections and a new 32-page section at the end.

## PASSAIC COUNTY CANAL WALK

October 27  
**Woodland Park to  
Little Falls**

For information and reservations, please email [macgraphics2@gmail.com](mailto:macgraphics2@gmail.com) or call 973-292-2755.

*Thanks for helping us  
celebrate our anniversary.*

1969-2019

**Canal Society  
of  
New Jersey**  
50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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CANAL SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY

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