

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

NAME: Morris Canal  
New Jersey, Code: 24  
(Continuation Sheet)

10.

STATE New Jersey	
COUNTY Multiple	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE OCT 1 1974

(Number all entries)

8. Significance (cont.)

navigable. However, preliminary surveys conducted during 1823 indicated a somewhat different and better route for the canal. Moreover, pressures exerted by various capitalists, whose support for the canal depended upon its servicing of their particular industries, further modified the shape, direction, and location of the waterway. Consequently, as it was finally mapped, the canal was to connect Easton, Pennsylvania with Newark, passing through Warren, parts of Sussex, Morris, Passaic, Essex, and Hudson Counties. Thus, coal could be brought directly from the anthracite fields to the Sussex, Warren, and Morris County iron mines and forges for smelting. Then, coal, plus the pig or bar iron, would be floated to Dover, Rockaway, Boonton, and Paterson for manufacturing. The finished products, plus coal, would then be shipped to tidewater and the waiting markets at Newark and beyond.

After considerable advertising and lobbying, McCulloch and his supporters were successful in obtaining a charter for a private corporation, and the Morris Canal and Banking Company came into existence on December 31, 1824. By July, 1825, enough stock had been sold to finance construction, and in October, official ground-breaking ceremonies were held at Lake Hopatcong, the summit level and principal reservoir.

That summit level was found to be 914 feet above sea-level, and some 760 feet above the mouth of the Lahigh River, the source of coal shipments. Making a canal to ascend and descend this height in less than 100 miles was beyond the economical capacity of ordinary lockage. As a result, the use of water-powered inclined planes was adopted, based upon principles laid down by Robert Fulton and others, then in use on various canals in England and Europe. The incline plane was a short stretch of railroad, built to connect an upper and a lower level of canal that was interrupted by the intervening elevation of the terrain. Unique to this country, the Morris Canal's planes are the basis for its lasting fame in engineering annals and canal histories.

The Morris Canal's inclined planes provided an ideal training ground for a number of engineers who later used the experience gained on them to go on to help build many of the nation's early railroads which would subsequently replace canals. In 1831, Ephraim Beach, the first of the Morris Canal's chief engineers, surveyed the route of the Susquehanna and Delaware Railroad, which was later incorporated into the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western system. In 1832 he surveyed the route of the New Jersey Railroad and Transportation Company's road, and served briefly as its chief engineer. By 1835 he was employed by the Morris and Essex Railroad to map out its path, and still later, laid out the extension of that road to Dover. He died, just short of the age of 74, while surveying for the Catskill and Canajoharie road.

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