

Josiah White's final achievement, to tie his entire navigation and transportation system together from east to west, was the "Lehigh and Susquehanna Railroad" completed in 1841, which carried freight over the mountains 25 miles from White Haven on the Lehigh to Wilkes-Barre on the Susquehanna. To lift the loaded cars out of Wyoming Valley on the north end of the route he used a series of three inclined planes, known as the "Ashley planes," run by powerful stationary engines similar in design to those on the Allegheny Portage Railroad. These planes were said to have the highest lift of any in the world. The rail line also included an 1800-foot tunnel north of White Haven.

Disaster struck Josiah White's enterprises in 1841 when a tremendous flood rolled down the Lehigh Valley, with great loss of life, destroying most of the Lehigh Navigation System, portions of his coal and iron works and virtually all of the beautifully constructed locks of the Lehigh Valley Canal. Such a catastrophe would have ruined a lesser man, but Josiah White, with fierce determination, within four months rebuilt enough of his navigation system to get back into operation, at least to Philadelphia, and shortly thereafter restored most of his canal system to its original condition. The White Haven section was ultimately abandoned.

But the transportation medium for which White became most famous was the so-called "Switch Back Railroad." This amazing system replaced the "Gravity Road" between Summit Hill and Mauch Chunk in 1846 and operated solely by gravity over 17 of its 18 miles of track.

The Delaware Division of the Pennsylvania Canal System was sold by the State to the Erie and Sunbury Railroad in 1858. The Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company acquired control of this canal line on a 99 year lease basis, several years later. The old Delaware Division then continued to operate as part of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company system until 1931, when it was reacquired in part by the State of Pennsylvania. In 1940 the balance of the Delaware Division was conveyed to the State as part of an historic park system, administered by the Department of Forests and Waters, known as Roosevelt State Park. Thus, the Delaware Division Canal went "full cycle" from state ownership, to private operation, and finally back to the State again.