

MORRIS CANAL GREENWAY



PORT DELAWARE ARCH

In 1830 the Morris Canal was opened for transporting coal from mines in Pennsylvania to developing markets in New Jersey. By 1832 a cable ferry system was being used to bring coal boats across the Delaware River from the terminus of the Leigh Canal to the entrance of the Morris Canal. Boats could move in either direction across the river by being lashed to a rowboat. In turn the rowboat was attached by two ropes, a short one at the bow and a longer one at the stern, to a cable stretched across the river. The current helped move both boats from one side of the river to the other. The mules that pulled the boats and their drivers crossed the river just upstream on the free bridge.

Originally the canal boats entered the Morris Canal via a guard lock to Inclined Plane 11 West. By 1835 a "port" was beginning to develop for loading and unloading cargo to be transported on the canal. This was later called Port Delaware.

To accommodate larger boats the canal was enlarged in the 1850s and the inclined plane was rebuilt. At that time the large cut limestone arch replaced the lock at the entrance and allowed boats to pass through directly onto the cradle car which ran on the inclined plane raising them 35 feet to the canal prism. As part of the enlargement, the water wheel that originally powered the inclined plan was replaced with a more powerful reaction turbine and the chain that was used to pull the boats was replaced with wire rope. After removing the lock, flood damage control was needed to protect the rails of the inclined plane. The arch was built with a slot down which large planks could be lowered vertically to close off the entrance, acting as a stop gate, and keep out silt and floating debris during floods.

On the far right of this 1830 engraving can be seen the basin at the terminus of the Leigh Canal on the Pennsylvania side of the river. In the center of the basin, locks allowed boat to head south on the Delaware Division Canal. Farther to the left other locks allowed boat access to the river and the cable ferry that crossed to the Morris Canal. In the distance can be seen the original entrance lock and large earthen embankments.



To the left a canal boat is shown leaving the cradle car at the bottom of Inclined Plane 11 West. In the distance another boat just inside the stone arched entrance waits to cross the river by the cable ferry.



The massive walls of the stone arch at the entrance to the Morris Canal were built higher than the highest flood waters. Inside the arched entrance can be seen the slot down which wooden planks could be lowered to keep out debris and silt from the river.



Morris Canal Entrance Arch

In the center of this resent view looking south from Easton on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware River, the stone wall and arch protecting the entrance to the Morris Canal can be seen, dwarfed, beneath more modern railroad Bridges.