

COMPILATION OF  
CANAL TRADE ARTICLES FROM  
***THE NEWS***  
A Frederick, Maryland newspaper  
AND  
***THE MORNING HERALD***  
A Hagerstown, Maryland newspaper  
1923

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A. PREFACE

In this compilation, all the **Canal Trade** articles were transcribed from *The News*, a Frederick, Maryland newspaper and *The Morning Herald*, a Hagerstown, Maryland newspapers of the era. The articles were compiled, chronologically in a two-column format, much as they appeared in the newspaper. Articles from *The News* are preceded by *News*, those from *The Morning Herald* are preceded by MH.

The newspapers were found on-line. There may be some duplication or overlapping of stories due to the varied sources, date of publication, and local interest. I did not include the newspaper editorials because those were opinion pieces. The research continues because the reader may yet find a missing date.

The reader will notice the absence of articles from either Cumberland or Washington newspapers. They were searched, to no avail.

Readers are encouraged to search the enclosed report for information on their ancestor, as their time and interest permits. Feel free to send additional observations for the benefit of others.

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**Canal Trade 1923.**

*News*, Mon. 3/26/23, p. 3. CANAL TO OPEN MAY 1 – **Will be Operated This Season on Extensive Scale.** – The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal will resume operations May 1 on an extensive scale, according to an announcement from Vice-President G. L. Nicholson, of the Towage Company. Coal will be hauled from Cumberland to Georgetown, and on the return trip sand and gravel, to be used in the million-and-a-half-dollar hydro-electric plant of the Potomac Public Service Company, at Williamsport, will be hauled. Boatmen have been instructed to put their boats, many of which are badly in need of repair, in condition for service.

With the announcement of the plan of the Towage Company to reopen the waterway this season came rumors that this may be the last season that the waterway is operated for freight service. It is said that a

big railroad company may purchase the right of way and run a double-track system from Cumberland to Washington. It is said that the Rockefeller interests have their eyes upon this waterway.

According to an estimate made today by boatmen, only 70 odd serviceable canal boats can be mustered into service this summer out of a fleet of some 600 during the canal's palmiest days. With the railroads unable to handle the volume of freight because of the car shortage, there is every indication that there will be plenty of work for all canal boats that are in running order.

Water will be turned into the canal about April 1. A large force of men has been working on the waterway during the winter, strengthening weakened places in the banks and repairing locks, and no trouble through breaks, such as was experienced last year, is anticipated this summer.

*News*, Thu. 3/29/23, p. 7. ORIGIN OF CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO CANAL AND EARLY SURVEY MADE BY WASHINGTON ARE DESCRIBED IN INTERESTING ARTICLE.

An interesting article entitled "Washington's Canal Idea That Went To Seed," and written by Geo. H. Dacy, appeared in a recent issue of the *Dearborn Independent*. It describes the work of George Washington in making the survey, tells of the origin of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal which passes through this county, and gives an interesting history of the inland waterway.

Mr. Dacy's article follows:

The greatest single work of development of the eighteenth century in this country, our first medium of easy transportation between the Atlantic Coast colonies and the Western Territory, a scheme which occupied much of the time and attention of George Washington many years before and again after he had served as President, never came up to early

expectations other than being a historical stepping stone in American progress. At a time when public roads were as scarce as millionaires, when saddle horses furnished the most dependable transportation and when the settlement was impeded by impenetrable forests, unexplored districts and Indians, anything but friendly and hospitable, a trader, Thomas Cresap, who had worked his way West as far the beautiful bluffs overlooking the picturesque Potomac River, settled near a deserted Shawnee village and built a fortified home. Thereafter, Cresap made many trading trips among the friendly tribes farther West and became well acquainted with the land and flow of streams which linked the Virginia seaboard with the Ohio River Valley.

It was about 1740 that Cresap first conceived that easy communication between

the English settlements on the Atlantic Coast and the country west of the Allegheny River could be effected. After much investigation, he finally journeyed to Yorktown where he interested man of money in his hobby and ultimately consummated the organization of the Ohio Company which thereafter developed into the most powerful of all pre-Revolutionary trading projects and which was the initial incorporated attempt to reach the great West. The company was chartered in 1748 and was granted a half million acres of land whereon it was to establish a fortified garrison of at least 100 families. About this time, George Washington was amusing himself surveying lots and fields in the neighborhood of Mount Vernon. His keen interest in surveying finally resulted in his accepting a position with the Ohio Company. Finally, he was appointed surveyor-in-chief and remained with the trading company until 1750 when he received a commission in the army.

It was during those years that Washington became intimate with all the crooks and turns in the Upper Potomac in addition to making detailed excursions into the interior. He staunchly supported the plan to develop the inland waterways to promote migration to the country near and beyond the Ohio. The project to clear the channels of the Potomac River was first agitated about nine years after Washington entered the military service. This agitation culminated in the Pawtommack Company which operated from 1785 to 1828. Its purpose was to develop the transportation possibilities of the Potomac and other rivers which could be recruited by the use of connecting highways to form a satisfactory channel of communication and transportation between Ohio and Virginia. It is notable that George Washington subscribed \$2,500 of the original \$40,000 raised to promote this project.

Matters were at a standstill during the Revolutionary War and the scheme was dormant until several years after the Constitution was signed, when the influence of General Washington caused the incorporation of the Pawtommack Company. During the war, Virginia had ceded to Maryland all jurisdiction over the Potomac River, reserving only the right of free navigation. Legislative action by these states was necessary to endorse the organization of the Pawtommack Company. Previous to this important event, George Washington spent six weeks in making a horseback trip of 680 miles inspecting the western country and investigating the prospects of water transportation and railroad development.

Washington and his associates conceived a plan to render the Potomac River navigable by constructing locks and canals as detours around its impassable falls and rapids. They proposed to use the Potomac as a waterway to a point above Cumberland, Md., then known as Will's Creek, to build a national highway as a land link between this station and the mouth of the Cheat River and to join this river in a similar way with the Youghiogheny and Monongahela rivers. At that time there was not an engineer in the United States who had ever seen a canal lock or understood anything about the mechanical principles involved in such construction. But the same courage and daring which had lifted the yoke of England were evidenced in the solution. No public undertaking up to that time had aroused such enthusiasm and interest in the United States. Although the people were almost impoverished after the war and money was hard to get, some way or another the advocates of the waterways plan stinted and skimmed and raised enough funds to start the Pawtommack Company on its colossal task. The best mechanic in

Maryland accepted the position as chief engineer of the project.

For the next score of years, the work of the Pawtommack Company occupied the same attention in the mechanical world as did the Panama Canal in later years during its era of construction. The remarkable series of locks which were built around Great Falls was the engineering feat of the eighteenth century and was described in detail in scientific publications.

The development of the Potomac River was the nucleus of Washington's hope for national expansion, prosperity and unity. His activities in this particular work reveal him as a man of great imagination and enthusiasm. In a letter to Edmund Randolph dated August 13, 1785, Washington wrote: "The great object for the accomplishment of which I wish to see the inland navigation of the rivers James and Potomac improved and extended is to connect the Western Territory with the Atlantic States; all others with me are secondary."

In a letter to Richard Henry Lee the same year, Washington wrote: "However singular the opinion may be, I cannot divest myself of it that the navigation of the Mississippi River at this time ought to be no object with us. On the contrary, until we have a little time open and make easy the ways between the Atlantic States and Western Territory, the obstruction had better remain. There is nothing which binds one country or one state to another but interest. Without this cement, the western inhabitants who more than probably will be composed in a great degree of foreigners, can have no predilection for us and a commercial connection is the only link we can have."

Labor troubles and unfavorable weather handicapped construction activities on the canal and locks. The white laborers who were originally hired were unsatisfactory despite a bonus of a daily ration consisting of one pound of dried or

salted meat or one and one-half pound of fresh meat, one and one-half pounds of bread and three gills of rum. Finally, slaves were purchased to perform the work. The rainfall was unusually heavy and often the 40-foot rock which towers above the Potomac at Great Falls, 16 miles from the capital, was submerged. More money was needed for the work than was originally anticipated. Both Virginia and Maryland had to raise special appropriations on several occasions. Finally, Maryland adopted a lottery scheme to raise \$300,000.

The principal canals were built at Great Falls and Little Falls. They were six feet deep and 25 feet wide, the river boats then in use being about seven to eight feet wide and 70 to 80 feet long. The locks were 14 by 100 feet in dimensions with a lift of 10 feet. They held from 18,200 to 25,200 cubic feet of water apiece. A suspension bridge was also built at Great falls over the Potomac River, the little settlement then being called Matildaville. The cost of transporting a barrel of flour from Matildaville to Cumberland, 170 miles, was 15 cents, while a charge of six cents a bushel was made for carrying corn on the river boats. In the year 1800, 296 boats of 1,630 tons were regularly using the new waterway but the toll charges for that year amounted to only \$2,134. Eleven years later as many as 1,300 vessels plied the Potomac, their combined tonnage amounting to 16,350 tons, but even then the toll revenue was but \$22,542.

The decline of the Pawtommack Company began when the waterway was initially opened to navigation. The shipping and freightage were never sufficient to pay the maintenance expenses of the great work. However, the project was fruitful of progressive results in that it led to the building of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, which in turn was the agency which was responsible for the construction of the

Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, the first common carrier which penetrated what then were western wilds. The original canal locks around Great Falls, the first mechanical marvels made in America, which next to Mount Vernon were dearest of all to George Washington, today are marked only by ruins. Great crumbling walls of massive machinery and a huge opening 200 feet deep blasted out of the solid rock are monuments of a big idea that went to seed. Altogether they consist of five locks and a canal which was one mile in length. A descent of 76 feet was made by the boats which passed through the locks. Another canal two and one-half miles long featured three other locks with a descent of 37 feet.

With the failure of the Pawtommack Company, all attempts to utilize the natural bed of the Potomac as a channel of traffic was abandoned. The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company took over the charter of its predecessor, being capitalized at \$6,000,000, represented by 60,000 shares of stock. Originally, the project to build a barge canal from Georgetown to Cumberland had the support of Congress and the legislatures of Virginia and Maryland. The canal was laid out on the Maryland side of the Potomac River because natural conditions and the topography of the country were more favorable. It was the first big national undertaking to improve internal and domestic commerce. Baltimore, which at that time was one of the largest trade centers in the East, had made arrangements to tap the canal and extend it to that city which would have greatly augmented its commercial operations. The early surveys indicated that the canal would cost about \$8,000,000, an enormous sum in those days. Later, more detailed investigations were made and it was ascertained that to build the canal properly and to extend it to Ohio would cost more than \$20,000,000. The public immediately sensed that such a

project was impossible. The citizens of Baltimore withdrew and centered their attention on the development of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, which they determined to groom as a rival of the canal. Thus the canal was responsible for the promotion and development of a common carrier which penetrated to the rich and fertile valleys of Ohio.

On July 4, 1828, the two most remarkable demonstrations held in the country up to that time took place in Baltimore and at Great Falls on the Maryland side of the Potomac River. The celebration at Baltimore was in honor of the commencement of work on the first long railroad in the United States. Charles Carroll, of Carrollton, Maryland, the only surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence, delivered an inspiring address, and the entire day was devoted to merrymaking and joyous festivities. Washington was practically deserted that memorable day as, headed by President John Quincy Adams, everybody had gone to Great Falls to celebrate the beginning of work on the canal. President Adams, spade in hand, stood ready to shovel the first earth from the proposed canal. He prodded the spade into the soil and struck a root. Again he stuck the spade into the ground and hit another root. Then, throwing aside his coat, he went to work, cut away the roots and finally penetrated to the soil.

The difficulties that President Adams met in digging the first shovel of dirt from the canal reflected the obstacles that the canal company was to encounter before the completion of the waterway. On 10 separate occasions, the company had to petition the Virginia and Maryland legislatures for more funds while Uncle Sam also aided the project financially. Finally the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal was completed at a cost of \$11,071,176, or \$59,618.61 a mile. Unfortunately, due to the Baltimore and

Ohio Railroad with which it had to compete, the canal was also representative of a big idea that went to seed. In 1843, its total revenues amounted to but \$47,635, while its expenses for the year were \$83,792. These figures were authentic barometers of what has happened since that period. The greatest single achievement of the C. & O. Canal, as it is commonly called, was to be the instrumentality that led to the construction of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, which by 1842 was using 13 locomotives and a decade later had extended its tracks to Wheeling, West Virginia.

Several unusual occurrences took place in the development of the railroad. When it was started, locomotives were still in the experimental stages. One was operated by horsepower, horses walking on endless belts inside of the locomotive to make its wheels move. Then Peter Cooper perfected the steam locomotive called "Tom Thumb." A curious race was held between the horse-driven locomotive and Cooper's steam locomotive and when the latter won, it was accepted as the official railroad engine of the new project. Previous to that time a locomotive which operated by means of huge sails was used. The Canal Company fought many long and bitter legal battles with the railroad authorities before it conceded any of its right of way along the Potomac which was the natural outlet through the mountainous sections.

From 1850 to 1889, this history of the C. & O. Canal was a history of the Democratic party in Maryland. The canal designed as a waterway, which ultimately was to connect the Great Lakes with tidewater Virginia, developed into a channel of corruption and political push ball to be buffeted this way and that with the swing of political sentiment. In every way, the canal was a financial failure and paid practically nothing to the holders of its debentures. It cost the state of Maryland millions of dollars

and never yielded much of any income. If it had been conducted on an economical and businesslike basis, it might have developed profit, but in the hands of the politicians it was abused and misused. Since 1848 the canal has been operated by a board of trustees or bondholders.

The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal has the most valuable charter rights of any waterway in the United States. All the potential development of water rights and power in the Potomac River is dependent on the will of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, for complete control of this water is vested in the project. It is one of the last of the old trading companies which were granted liberal charters. In 1870, this canal was handling more coal than any other waterway in the country and was making money, but political destiny ruled that its management should be changed so that the outgo again would be greater than the income. It has repeatedly been responsible for the ascendancy and political power of different regimes that have dictated Maryland politics.

The canal is 186 mile in length and bridges a descent of 578 feet from Cumberland, Maryland to Georgetown, D. C. It contains 75 lift locks, each of which is 14 by 106 feet in dimension and two guard locks. It can easily accommodate 350 canal boats – the capacity of the ordinary canal boat is 116 gross tons – sufficient to transport 1,000,000 tons of soft coal to market from the mines around Cumberland. This canal is an open carrier, a water highway for the use of any boat that will pay the toll charges. During the recent World War, a considerable portion of the soft coal supply of the city of Washington came in over the canal. The indications are that this waterway will never be an important factor in the transportation of coal from the Maryland mines to seagoing ships, as the lower Potomac River is not easily navigable

for large vessels engaged in the coal trade. It is probable that for years to come the C. & O. Canal will continue to be the punching bag for Maryland politics.

*News*, Sat. 5/19/23, p. 1. **Another Break in Canal** – Traffic on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal between Washington and Cumberland was halted Wednesday when the towpath broke for a distance of 51 feet at William's Culvert, on the lower level of the Williamsport division. The break extends 10 feet below the bottom of the canal. It is at the same point where a serious leak started 10 days ago, which blocked navigation. The break does not interfere with the traffic on the canal between Cumberland and Williamsport, but between the later point and Washington.

*News*, Mon. 5/21/23, p. 8. More than 350 children are living on canal boats in the United States. This interferes with the children's schooling as the boating season on the canals ranges from seven to nine months in length.

*News*, Fri. 6/22/23, p. 5. **LOCK KEEPER DEAD** – Charles H. W. Pennifield, for the last twenty-five years in charge of Pennifield's lock, on the Chesapeake and Ohio canal, near Travilah, Montgomery county, and well known to many Maryland, District of Columbia and Virginia people who visit that point in quest of black bass, died at half past 10 o'clock Sunday night at his home, near the lock, aged sixty-six years. He had been ill several months. He is survived by his wife, formerly a Miss McCrossin of Montgomery county, and a son, George W. Pennifield.

Funeral at 11 o'clock Wednesday from the Presbyterian church at Darnestown. Burial in the cemetery near the church.

Mr. Pennifield was the only child of the late George W. Pennifield, who was

"keeper" of the lock bearing his name for twenty-five years before his son took charge and who was probably more widely known than any other man along the canal and Potomac river from Cumberland to Washington.

*News*, Fri. 9/28/23, p. 3. **WATER PLANT SITE BOUGHT** – Hagerstown has just closed a deal for the purchase of between 20 and 30 acres of land along the Potomac river, where the new plant to supply the city with water will be located.

The site is about a mile and a half above Williamsport. The water, after passing through the new pumping and filtration plant, will be piped here.

One more tract, about five acres, will be purchased shortly. This land is necessary, as a tunnel must be constructed between the Chesapeake and Ohio canal and the river.

The building of a new water plant was authorized by the Legislature in 1918. The need for the plant became so glaringly apparent during recent years that the matter was taken to the Mayor and Council, who authorized the Board of Water Commissioners to acquire the necessary land and obtain plans for the structure.

*News*, Thu. 11/22/23, p. 9. **MAN STRANGLES MAD DEER** – Hagerstown, Md., Nov. 21 – Attacked by a stag which he encountered near Cumberland while on his canal boat from Washington to Cumberland, C. M. Boyer was forced to battle for his life before strangling the animal to death.

Boyer was walking beside his mules near Gross lock when he observed the outlines of some large animal swimming across the canal towards him. The mules became frightened and started to run. It was while he was attempting to quiet the animals the deer reached the towpath.



The deer's antlers struck Boyer in the ribs and knocked the breath out of him. Boyer, after struggling with the animal several minutes, managed to grip the deer's hear and strangled the animal.

Boyer was injured about the body and face, but is not seriously hurt. The deer weighed 123 pounds.

MH, Wed. 12/19/23, p. 4. **New Concrete Weirs Built on the Canal** – Two new concrete waste weirs have been constructed on the Williamsport division of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal since the canal was closed last month, and a third one will be built at once. One of the new weirs is at Dam No. 5, and the other one on the Four-Mile Level. They replace wooden weirs. The third weir will be built about a quarter mile below the lock at Williamsport. The work is being done by the regular canal force under the direction of Supervisor J. T. Richards.

*News*, Wed. 12/26/23, p. 1. **Mountaineer Slain by Canal Lock Tender at Sandy Hook.** – Chester Smith, 26, a mountaineer, whose word was law in the Sandy Hook district, is dead. The man held as his slayer, Millard Goodhart, tender of No. 2 [*sic* 32] lock on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, near Sandy Hook, probably owes his life to the timely arrival of Sheriff Duffey and his deputies from Hagerstown, for a crowd of Smith's friends was about to storm Goodhart's house and lynch him when the officers checked the mob. The lock-tender then was rushed to the jail in Hagerstown.

#### **What Led to the Shooting**

According to the story told at the coroner's inquest Tuesday by Gordon Goodhart, 20, son of the accused man, his father and mother had quarreled earlier in the day. A remark the wife made to the lock-tender angered him and he attacked her with a wrench, the son said. Goodhart

inflicted an ugly wound on her head. Remonstrating with his father, the son testified, he was threatened and warned "to stay out of it."

When the fight between Goodhart and his wife was in progress, the son slipped from the house, ran to Sandy Hook and pleaded with Smith to return with him and intervene in behalf of his mother. Smith accompanied by a friend and the Goodhart boy, went to the Goodhart home and warned the lock-tender that "his gang would take care of him" if Mrs. Goodhart was attacked again. Goodhart apparently heeded the warning. But not long after Smith had gone, the son told, his father again struck his mother. Again the son brought Smith back. The father, learning that Smith was returning, barricaded the door. Smith is said to have forced the door, but the coroner could find no evidence of this.

#### **Smith Shot and Killed**

Words passed between Goodhart and Smith. Then a full charge from a shotgun entered Smith's abdomen. He died several hours later.

Sandy Hook is a village in the southernmost neck of Washington county, just across the Frederick county line.

When Smith's alleged gang of young mountaineers learned that their leader had been killed, they swarmed out of the hills, taking several ropes.

#### **Plan to Get Goodhart**

They were planning a ruse to capture Goodhart without shooting when Sheriff Duffey and his deputies arrived. The Sheriff warned the gang he would not see Goodhart harmed.

Goodhart said he shot in self-defense and not until Smith had broken in the door of his home.

The inquest jury, of which Magistrate S. A. Keller, of Sandy Hook acted as coroner, found that Smith met his death at the hands of Goodhart.

*News*, Fri. 12/28/23, p. 1. **Mountain Leader Killed** – Christmas Eve  
Chester Smith, recognized leader of the Sandy Hook Mountain “Bullies,” sought to regulate the home of Millard Goodhart, when this man and his wife had quarreled. Smith was shot dead by Goodhart on the porch of Goodhart’s home. It is said Smith’s word was law in the Sandy Hook district.