COMPILED OF CANAL TRADE ARTICLES FROM
THE WASHINGTONIAN
A LEESBURG NEWSPAPER
1836 - 1871
LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

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A. PREFACE

This compilation of newspaper articles about the C. & O. Canal is one of a series. In 1836, The Washingtonian was published weekly, on Saturdays, then sometime before 1849 publication was shifted to Friday. The microfilm box indicated that the contents went from Nov. 12, 1836 through Nov. 27, 1875, which is true as regards the first and last edition. However, every edition between those two dates was not found.

This compilation was started with the intent to follow the format of the other compilations for The Alleganian, a Cumberland, Md. newspaper. However, because Leesburg was not a "Canal Town" the human interest stories nor the record of canal boats with their cargoes was not found. Instead what we have is as sketch of the rise and fall of the business interests, as seen through advertising, due to the canal. Once the railroad arrived in Leesburg, first bringing passengers and then passengers and freight, the benefit of the canal, to Leesburg, waned. So, as the reader peruses the following report, liberal inclusion of images of the actual advertisements breaks with the format of the other compilations of newspaper articles. The town citizens, and many others, still benefit from the historic, operating Whites Ferry providing access to Maryland.

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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Before the canal opened to Cumberland on Oct. 10, 1850 it was opened to Harpers Ferry in 1833 and to Dam No. 6 in 1839. The canal being open to Harpers Ferry meant that commerce from Harpers Ferry, Berlin (Brunswick), Point of Rocks, Monocacy Aqueduct, Whites Ferry and Edwards Ferry had begun. Opening the canal to Dam No. 6 meant that commerce from Sharpsburg, Shepherdstown and Antietam Iron Works had begun. Sometime in or before 1836 a packet boat was running between Shepherdstown and the District of Columbia as evidenced by the following ad:

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Leesburg & Canal Line.

A COACH will leave this place every day, at half past 9 o'clock, A.M., (Sundays excepted) to intersect at Edward's Ferry, the Canal Line of Packet Boats now plying daily between Shepherdstown & the District of Columbia, and will return immediately after the arrival of the boats.

Fare 75 cents to Edward's Ferry, and $1 25 cents from thence on the boat to the District, making $2 from this place.

N. WHITE, Agent for Stockton & Stokes.

August 20, 1836.
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At that time there must have been a road suitable for a stage coach to connect now VA 7 to Edwards Ferry, probably following Goose Creek to the Ferry where passengers would be taken across the Potomac River in time to connect with the packet boat. The above ad ran weekly from August 20 through November 12, 1836 at least. The name of the packet boat and the owner's name remain to be found.

We know from the Canal Company Annual Reports that prior to 1850 the canal carried agricultural products and building materials, e.g. flour, lime, cement, lumber, stone and pig iron. In the immediate area of Leesburg were at least two water-powered mills: The Big Spring Mills (opposite Harrison's Island, MP 33.27-35.1x) and The Elizabeth Mills (on Goose Creek, MP 30.64). The Goshen Farm of 442 acres lay just across from Edwards' Ferry (MP 30.84). We deduce from the following advertisements, over the years, that each facility had a warehouse or landing on the Virginia side of the Potomac River to receive and ship goods via canal boat. These boats preceded the ubiquitous coal freighting boats subsequently built in abundance in Cumberland. Two of those boats were mentioned in the following ad:

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TRANSPORTATION
On the Canal.

I HAVE two first rate boats, inferior to none on the Canals of the country; the “Henrietta” & “Mill Boy” — which are now engaged on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. Flour will be transported to Georgetown from the Big Spring Mill at 20 cents per barrel, and at 15 from Edward’s Ferry, and any thing else in proportion. Flour sold and money returned free of expense. These boats afford perfect protection to all produce placed in them, and are commanded by careful and trustworthy captains.

JNO. P. SMART.

August 20, 1842.
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The above advertisement implies that these boats were covered, or at least the freight carrying portion was enclosed, to protect the consignment from the weather. Also implied is the existence of a landing or wharf at both Big Spring and Edwards Ferry, there the two canal boats could enter or exit the canal through the Goose Creek River Lock.
The adjacent advertisement, also placed on August 20, 1842, locates and describes the three properties, with their appurtenances. Because the sale of those three properties was not scheduled until December, we may presume it was John P. Smart who continued to operate them.

As noted from the below advertisement, placed February 24 through May 25, 1844, at least, John B. Smart could store flour or grain safe and secure and then boat it to market as the farmer ordered. If the farmer wanted his wheat ground into flour Mr. Smart could do that and return the mill offal to the farmer. Mr. Smart insured the farmer's produce against loss by fire.

Because John P. Smart was still at Big Spring Mill in 1844, it would suggest that the December 1842 sale of that property had not been successful.

By 1849, the warehousing and/or granary business near Leesburg was bustling as shown below:
Surely this GOSHEN WAREHOUSE was located on the previously mentioned Goshen Farm and John & William Thomas had bought the Goshen Farm at the December 1842 sale, or subsequently. This advertisement ran from September 14 through October 19, 1849, at least.

William K. Ish, Jr. and Jacob Ish bought a warehouse from Robert G. Bowie, Esq., on the Potomac, about 2-1/2 miles from Leesburg, and promoted their business by arranging with in-town merchant Robert W. Gray, Esq. to receive farmer's and miller's produce and pay for it. The advertisement for the sale of The Big Spring Mill said it had "...facilities of transportation to market from its contiguity to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, ..." Thus it may be that Robert G. Bowie, Esq. purchased some or all of The Big Spring Mill from John P. Smart and then sold it to Messrs. Ish. A search of land records would clarify that point. A careful reading of the following advertisement would indicate that after the farmer's and miller's produce was boated and sold, then payment would be made by Mr. Gray.

The above advertisement ran from Aug. 10 through October 19, 1849, at least.

It would appear that the citizens of Leesburg preferred to shop in town vice going to a store or warehouse on the Potomac River as evidenced by the following advertisement wherein Johnson & Wallace brought their groceries from the "Head of Navigation" which was surely Whites Ferry or Edwards Ferry, to save on transportation costs.
The above advertisement ran from October 5 through October 19, 1849, three times.

Fri. 10/26/49 - FLOUR BY THE CANAL.

A few days ago the Canal boat Horatio Allen brought down 900 bbls. of flour. This was one of the largest cargoes of flour ever brought down the Canal in one boat. The weight of the cargo would make about 85 tons; and the boat drew about 4 feet 2 inches of water. From this we may safely infer that boats with 100 tons of coal may come down the Canal as long as there is as much as 5 ft. of water in it. -

Georgetown Advocate.
lath available. There must have been warehouse facilities at Bowie's Landing, 2½ miles from Leesburg. From another advertisement, P. G. Smith, Leesburg, advertised coal, plaster, &c. at the Goshen Warehouse or by delivery. A business arrangement must have been in place for P. G. Smith to sell items at John & William Thomas' Goshen Warehouse. John & William Thomas also advertised to boat flour from their Goshen Warehouse, presumably to Georgetown, at 12-1/2 cents per barrel.

Then in the spring of 1850 John W. Gover advertised:

John W. Gover was bringing merchandize from both Williamsport (lime) and Cumberland (coal), probably by canal. The advertisement ran from May 31 thru Aug. 30, 1850, still before the canal opened.

From the following advertisement we see that Isaac M. Rice had taken the warehouse at Conrad's (Whites) Ferry:

The above advertisement ran from July 5 thru Oct. 4, 1850, at least.

In the spring of 1851, after the canal had opened, Wm. Cline advertised:

Because he was offering the coal for sale "on the River" that would suggest he had a landing or wharf where the coal was stockpiled.

From April 11 thru May 16, 1851 John W. Gover advertised 3,000 bushels of Cumberland coal for Smithing purposes and,
during the same period, William Cline also advertised Cumberland coal at the very lowest prices.

Fri. 5/16/51 - The little steamer Virginia passed up the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, from Georgetown, on Friday last, having three canal boats in tow. The Virginia is owned by a company of northern gentlemen, and is intended as a regular tow boat between the District and Cumberland.

In August of 1851, the packet boat Fashion, Capt. Sherman Petrie, began weekly trips from Cumberland to Georgetown and Alexandria, departing Cumberland every Monday evening.1 By early October, 1852 the second packet boat, Belle, Capt. William Singer, was in service on the same route, departing Cumberland every Thursday evening.2 Apparently the passenger traffic to and from Cumberland was not sufficient to support that packet boat business after the 1851 boating season. However, the proprietors resumed their business only from Harpers Ferry to Georgetown, Washington City and Alexandria in 1852 as shown in the following advertisement:

Notice that the trips were overnight and board was included in the fare. No mention was made of sleeping accommodations. The advertisement first ran on Mar. 26 but then, due to a flood, the advertisement was not found until July 2; it also appeared on Aug. 27 and Oct. 8, 1852.

A flood (freshet) occurred in April, 1852 and interrupted navigation until July, 1852. As indicated above, the packet boat business resumed after navigation was restored.

Fri. 6/11/52 Chesapeake and Ohio Canal.
At a meeting of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, held in Washington, on Monday, ex-Governor Wm Grason, of the Eastern Shore of Maryland, was elected President, in the place of ex-Governor Samuel Sprigg. An entire new board of directors was also chosen, as follows: Dr. James Fitzpatrick, of Allegany county;

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1. The Cumberland Alleganian, Cumberland, Md., weekly newspaper, Saturday, 8/30/1851.
2. The Cumberland Alleganian, Cumberland, Md., weekly newspaper, Saturday, 10/4/1851.
Robert Watson, of Washington county; Michael T. Byrne, of Frederick county; John W. Maury, of Washington city; B. J. Semmes, of Prince George’s county; and Phineas Janney, of Alexandria, Va.

Fri. 8/13/52 The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. - The Cumberland Journal says that the canal is in navigable order throughout its entire length. The steam canal boat President made an experimental trip down the canal on Tuesday. Her performances were highly satisfactory, and the Journal thinks that she will solve the problem of the practicability of navigating canals with steam. She made six miles an hour without any difficulty, and as soon as her machinery becomes smoother is expected to run at the rate of eight.

The Friday, August 20, 1852, newspaper edition included advertisements from William Cline for prime Cumberland coal, from the celebrated Parker vein, lime, lumber, chairs, nails, screw, hinges, &c. on hand and shingles, laths and palings expected in a few days. Business resumed after navigation was restored.

Fri. 6/15/55 - The packet boat business must have been good on the lower portion of the canal as evidenced by the following:

Note that the packet boat Congress had her machinery removed and horsepower substituted. This was a day trip, daily except Sunday, with meals available at moderate prices. Leesburg residents would have used Edwards Ferry or Whites Ferry to board or disembark.

Fri. 12/5/56 included the following:

A VERY large, new Gondola (12 to 15 tons burthen) for sale by WM. CLINE.
A vessel of this type could navigate Goose Creek, cross the Potomac and enter the canal at Goose Creek River Lock for the trip to Georgetown.

From March 31 thru Dec. 1, 1858 a daily packet boat, either the Argo or the M. C. Meigs, having undergone thorough repair, would depart the wharf of W. H. and H. G. Ritter, Georgetown, D.C. at 7 o'clock a.m., Sundays excluded, bound for Edward's Ferry. Boats would arrive at the Great Falls or Washington Aqueduct at 10 a.m.; Seneca at 12 noon; Edwards' Ferry at 3 p.m. with a connecting stage line to Leesburg. Returning, leaves Edwards' Ferry every day at 9 o'clock in the morning and arriving in Georgetown at sunset. Through tickets were $1.75; Great Falls or Washington Aqueduct 50 cents; Seneca 75 cents; Edwards Ferry $1.12; Leesburg Virginia, including coach $1.75. Meals served on the boats: breakfast 37½ cents; dinner 50 cents. Persons wishing to visit the Great Falls would have ample time to do so and return the same day. A coach would always be at the Boat in Georgetown to convey passengers to and from the Boat. Excursion parties to the FALLS, half price.3

By June 8, 1859 William Cline had decided to get out of business by August 1, 1859 and advertised:

3 The Democratic Mirror, Leesburg, Va., newspaper, Wednesday, 3/31/1858, p. 4.

The Civil War began April 12, 1861 and ended April 9, 1865. While this newspaper was published during that time, nothing was found regarding the canal.

Fri. 8/11/65 - After the Civil War the packet boat business resumed on August 7, 1865, at least as far as Point of Rocks. The canal steamer George Washington, Capt. John Moore, took the same route and schedule as the packet boat Congress had in 1855 and the Argo and M. C. Meigs had in 1858. Notice that meals were not mentioned. The immediately following advertisement indicates how passengers could travel to and from Leesburg to board the George Washington. Capt. John Moore continued to advertise through December 8, 1865, at least. However, the advertisement by R. J. Steadman for the connecting stage line was not found in the December 8, 1865 newspaper. Instead, Edgar Jarvis had been advertising his stage line to Point of Rocks, where passengers could connect with the trains bound East or West, since June 23, 1865.
In the same Dec. 8th newspaper, Lewis Peacock offered his stage line connecting Washington to Winchester, touching at PICKETT’S HOTEL, Leesburg, from Oct. 13, 1856 until March 2, 1866, at least. The fare from Leesburg to Washington was $2.50. While the fare by packet boat was less, you had to pay to take the stage to Edwards Ferry to catch the packet boat. The advertisement follows:

Starting on June 1, 1866 Mr. W. H. Ritter advertised his horse propelled canal packet boat Minnesota plying between Whites Ferry and Georgetown at a fare of $2.25. Note the accommodations provided, which must have been easier riding than in a stage coach. Mr. George R. Head, Jr., Agent, of Leesburg was to run a daily line from Leesburg to Whites Ferry, fare not specified in the following advertisement:
Capt. John Moore continued to operate the steamer *George Washington* through mid-September 1866, at least. He picked up and discharged Leesburg passengers at both Edwards Ferry and Whites Ferry with Mr. Steadman in Leesburg providing stage coach transportation.

Following the advertisement for the steamer *George Washington* was an advertisement for the Alexandria, Loudoun and Hampshire RAILROAD. Note that the railroad also provided thrice-weekly service for $3.00 with a connecting stage between Leesburg and Farmwell.
Passenger traffic on the railroad must have been good because after 1868 no more advertisements were found for canal packet boats; instead the railroad made new arrangements:

From Dec. 27, 1867 thru April 3, 1868, Goshen farm, 540 acres, across from Edwards' Ferry was offered for sale.

Earlier we had mentioned the Big Spring Mill as a place where Loudoun County farmers could bring their grain for grinding into flour and/or shipment to Georgetown. Apparently there was a fire and the mill was destroyed. The property was sold as indicated in the following advertisement, which ran on Feb. 21, 1868:

From the advertisement, the railroad came directly to Leesburg and then passengers took a stage coach to Hamilton, Purcellville, Berryville, Winchester or Capon Springs. With the fare being $2.00 from Leesburg to Alexandria, no stage coaches, the canal packet boats were probably out of business from Leesburg participation.
After the above mentioned advertisement, only one other mention of the Canal was found through Nov. 27, 1875:

Sat. 7/22/71 "Georgetown Affairs.

It is stated at the collector's office that there is a break in the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal at Mercersville, about 80 miles above that city. A dispatch states that the break is 30 feet wide and 10 feet below the bed of the canal, and occurred Sunday or Monday. It is hoped the breach will be repaired by the end of the week."