

A Journey on the C & O Canal



You are about to read a fictional journal written by 9 year-old Michael O'Leary in the year 1876.

Michael's journal tells about what life was like for families that made their living by transporting cargo up and down the C & O Canal in the mid-1800's.

But first, a little background...



The C & O Canal

Geography and History in our own backyard!
Williamsport, Maryland – the early 1900's



Where is the C & O Canal?

The **Potomac River** forms the boundary between Maryland and West Virginia, and then Maryland and Virginia.

Can you locate those state boundaries?

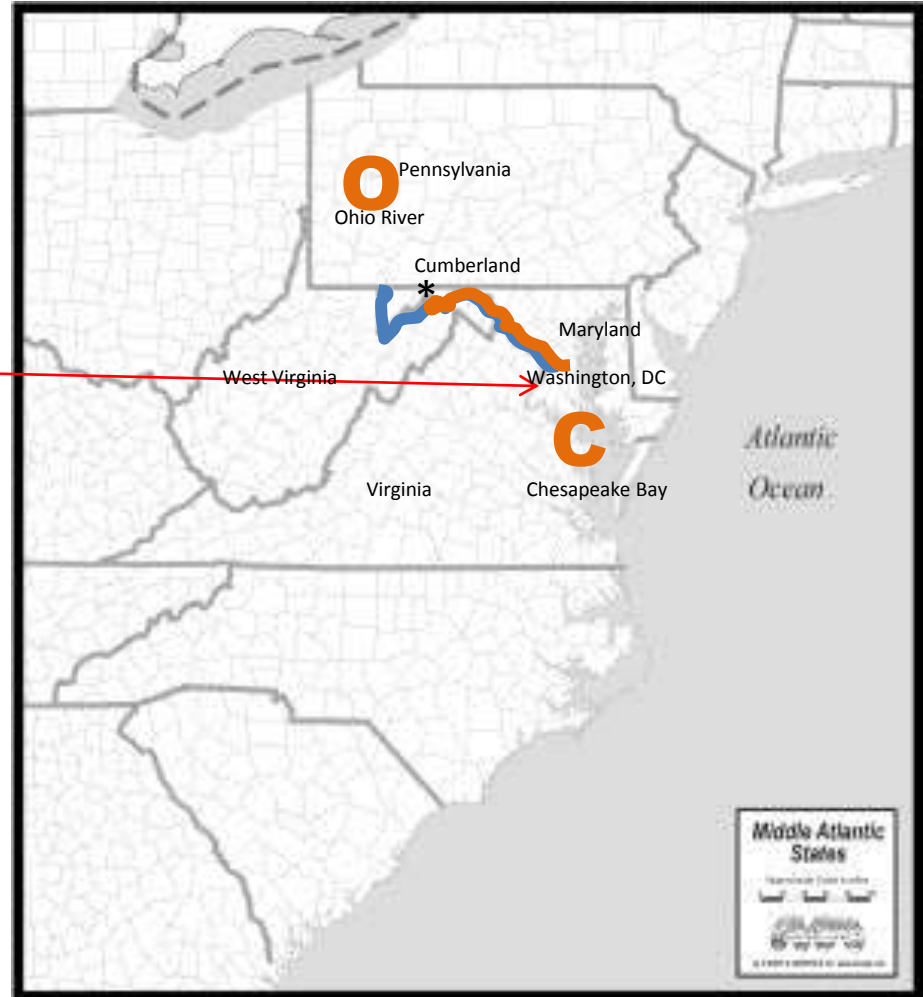
The **C and O Canal** was built *alongside* the **Potomac River**.

The canal began at the mouth of the **Chesapeake Bay** near **Georgetown**, which is part of **Washington, DC**.

The canal ended in **Cumberland**, Maryland (*.)

The original plan was to build the canal all the way to the **Ohio River** in Pennsylvania so that boats could travel to the West, but that never happened.

Now you know why the canal was named **C** for the Chesapeake Bay and **O** for the Ohio River!



That was so much fun, let's try it again!

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Lucky Us!

Now that you know where the C and O Canal is located, notice the smiley face.

It shows **Washington County, Maryland**, our home!

We live right in the middle of what some people call 184 ½ miles of adventure!

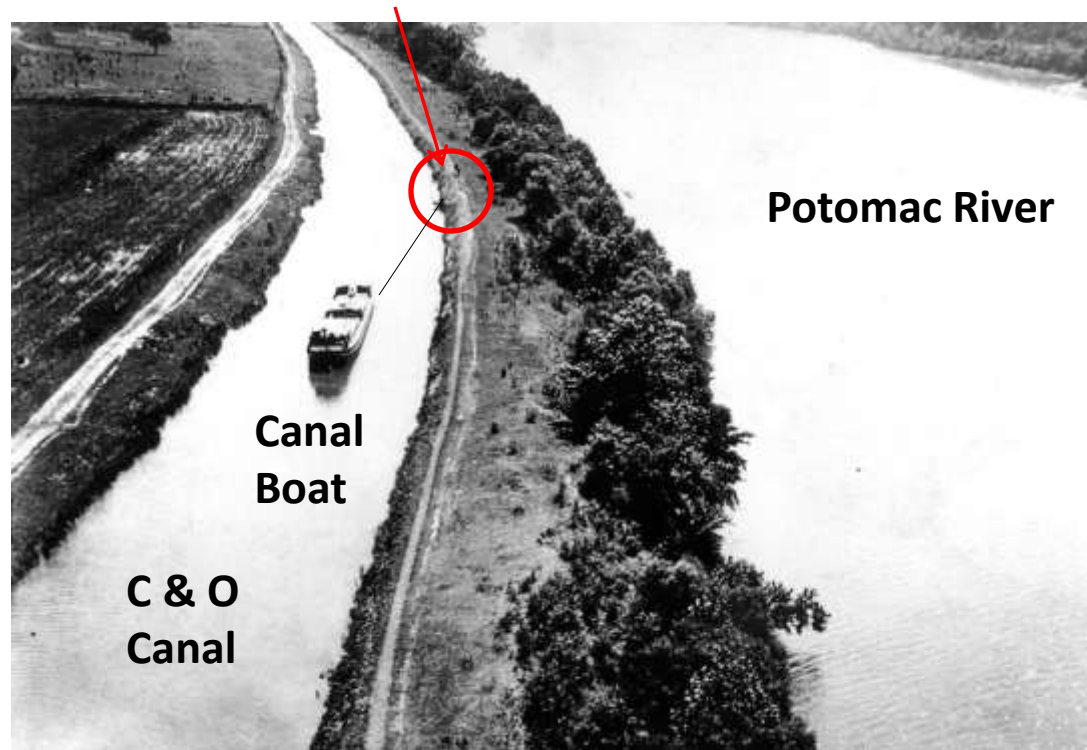
That's because the C and O Canal stretches for 184 ½ miles from Georgetown to Cumberland.

We can easily visit many areas along the canal, and learn about what life was like when the boats traveled back and forth in the late 1800's and early 1900's.



So what exactly *is* a canal?

Mule walking on the towpath towing the boat

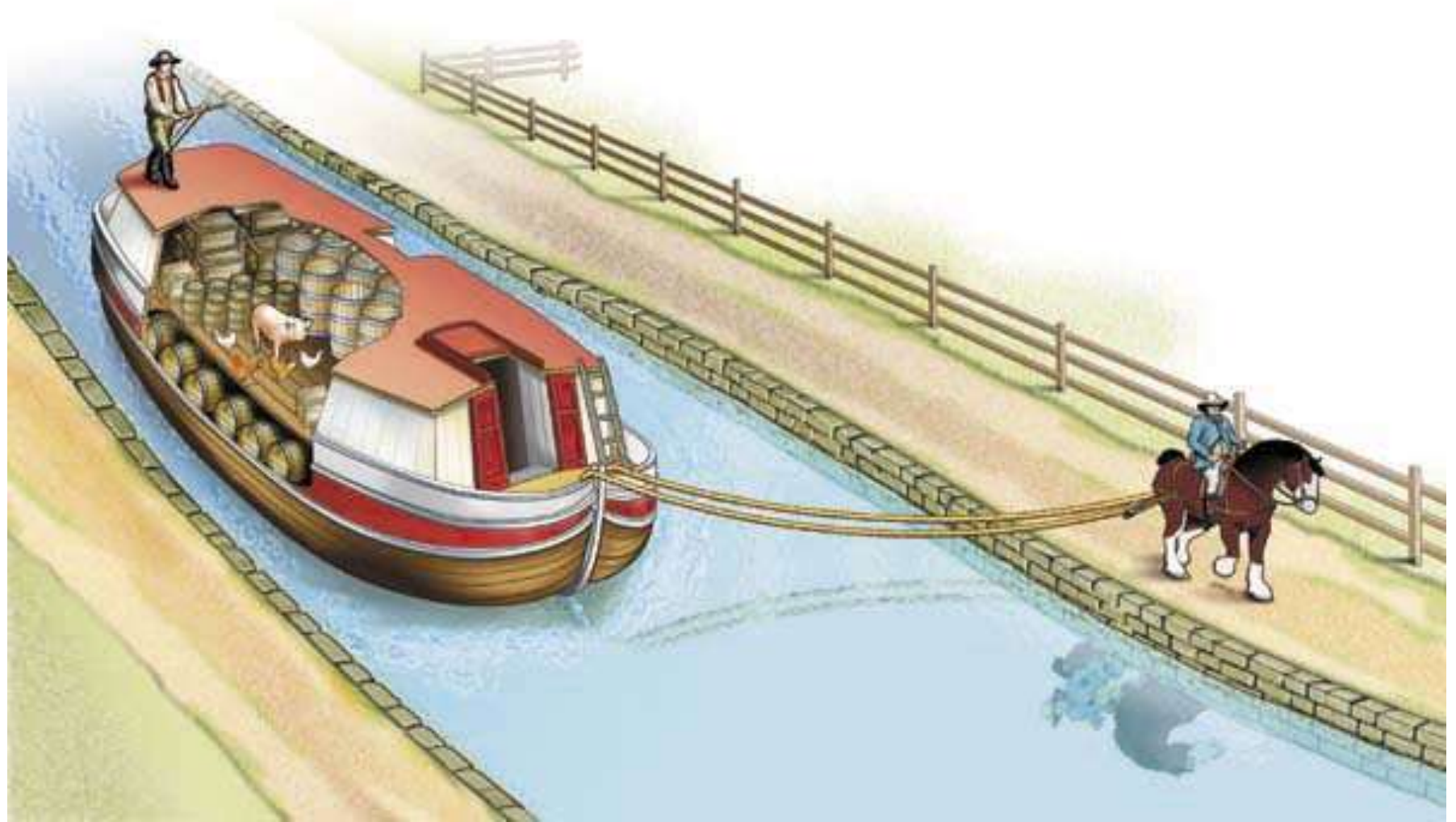


A canal is an **artificial (manmade)** waterway for shipping, for irrigation, or for recreational use.

In a canal, a boat can travel in either direction, something they certainly can't do in many rivers...

especially at some places where the
Potomac River is rather rocky!





The Race Between the C & O Canal and the B & O Railroad



President John Quincy Adams broke ground for the C and O Canal in **1828**.

It took **22** years to build the canal as far as Cumberland!

By then, the cost and hard work made it too hard to continue.

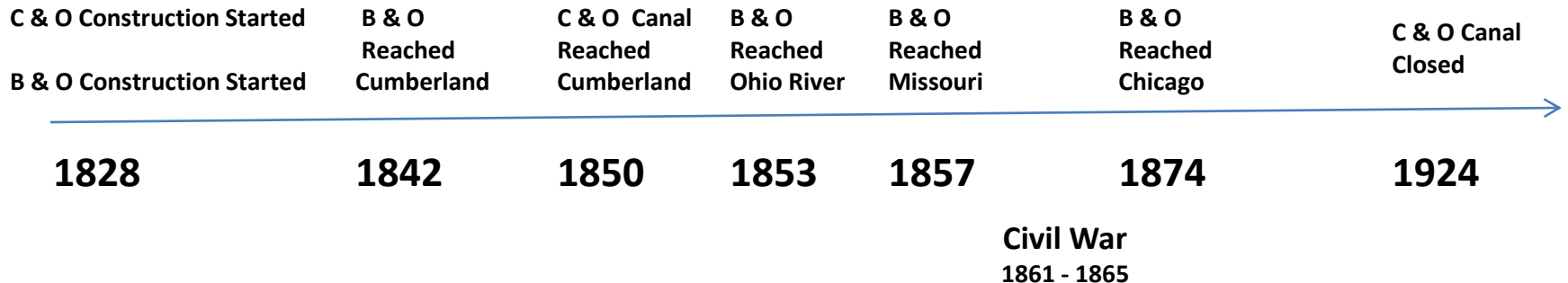
More important, a better form of transportation made it possible to move goods to the West:



Construction of the **B** and **O** Railroad was also started in 1828.

B stands for Baltimore. Can you guess what **O** stands for?

Use the timeline below to notice which form of transportation reached Cumberland first, and how the B & O won the race.



Back to Michael and His Journey...



In this piece of historical fiction, we'll travel with Michael and his family.

Their trip from Cumberland to Georgetown begins on Monday, June 7, 1876.

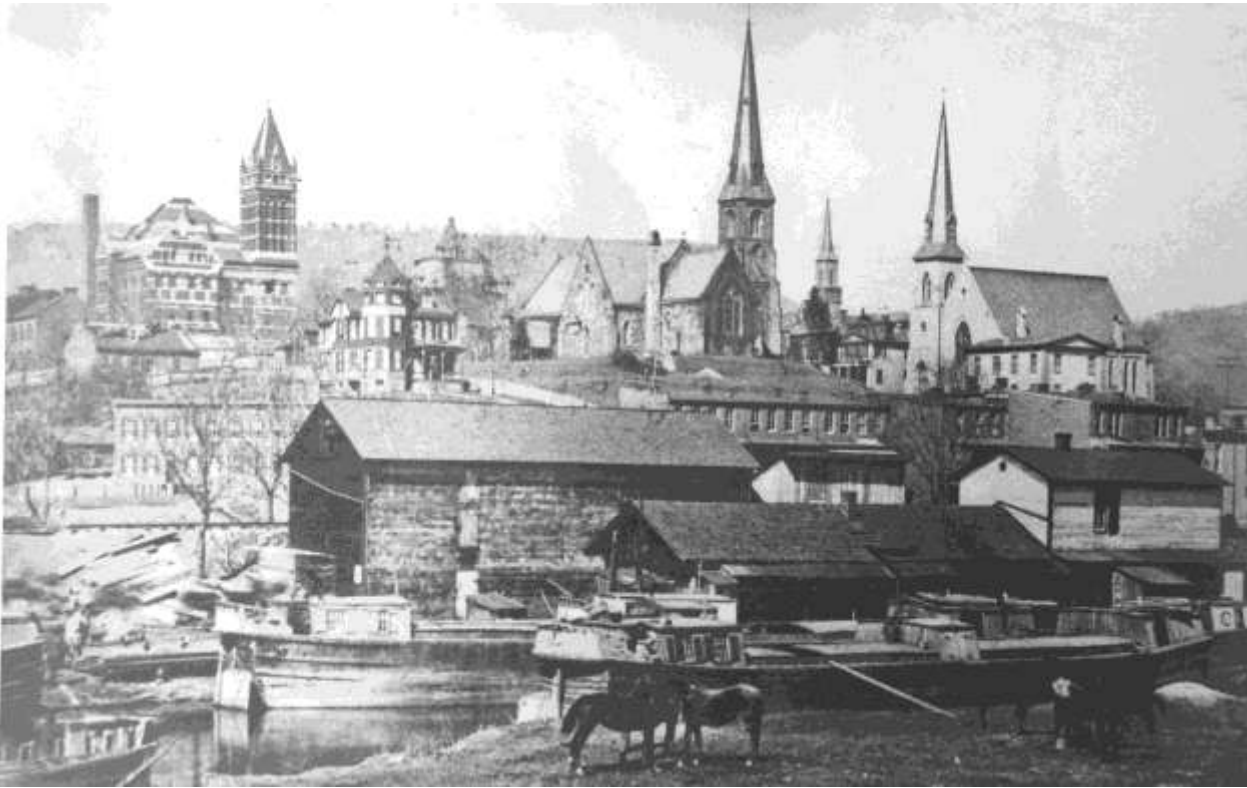
How long ago was that?

You've got it – 135 years ago!

Read the *Introduction* on page 1 to learn about the other members of Michael's family and about the interesting name they have for their boat!

Monday, June 7, 1876

Leaving Cumberland



Use your map to chart the O'Leary's trip by writing in the stops along the way.

Mark the first spot near the 180 mile marker as **Cumberland**.

The family's trip will take them 8 days.

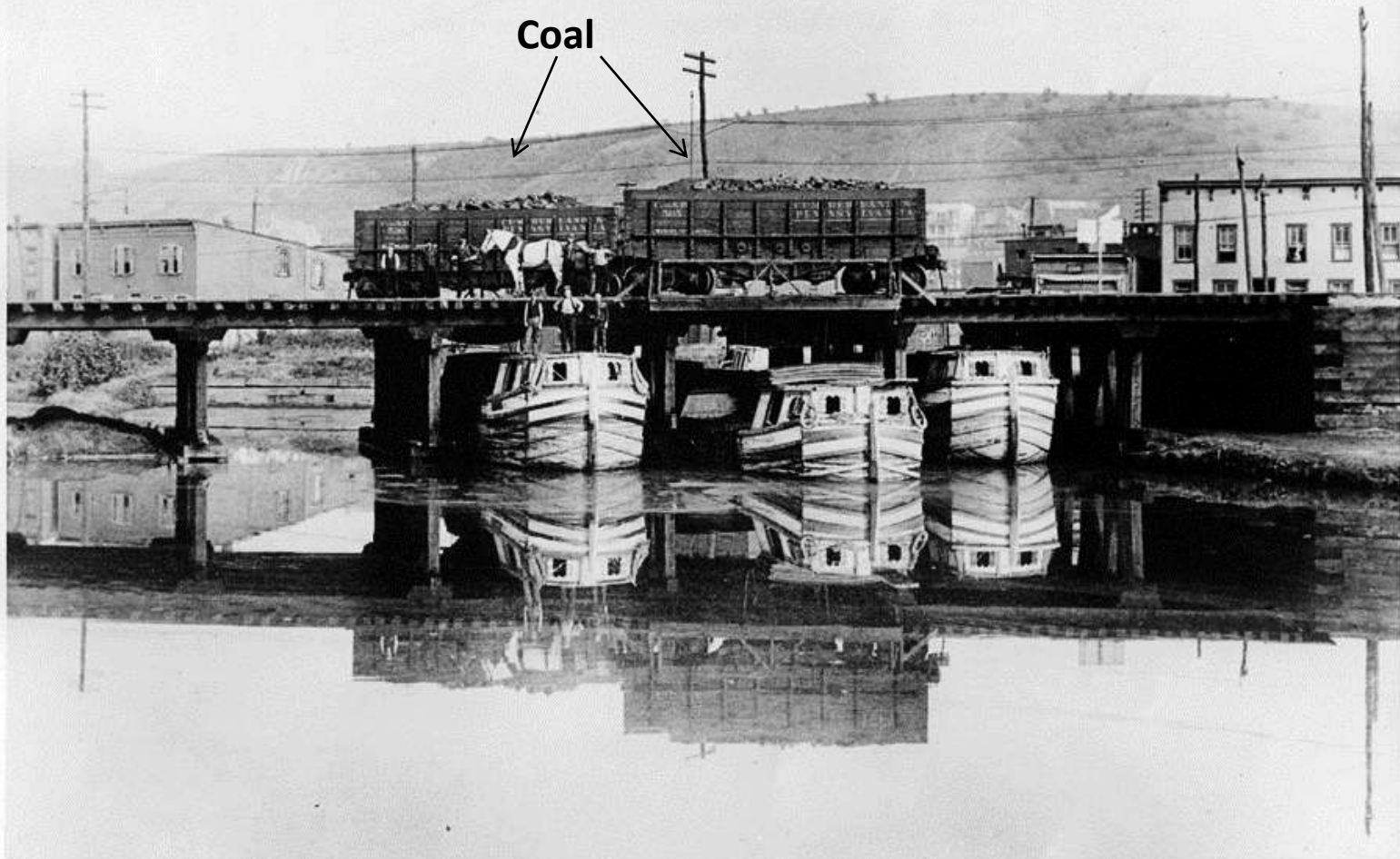
Since the trip is $184 \frac{1}{2}$ miles, about how many miles will they travel in one day?

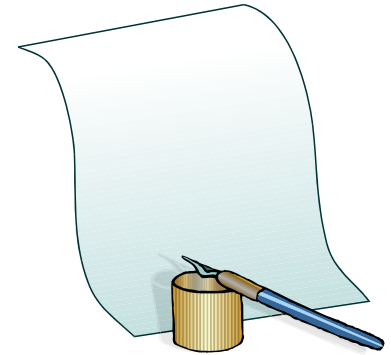
Are you tired yet?

C. & O. Coral Boatyard - Cumberland.

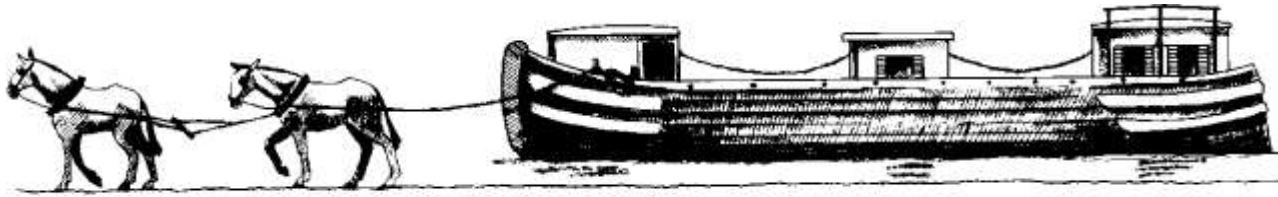


Coal





- Read Michael's first entry on page 2 to learn about the huge load they'll be transporting.
- You'll also learn about Frances and Ida, some other "family" members.



What do you learn about Michael and the life he has led growing up on the C and O Canal?

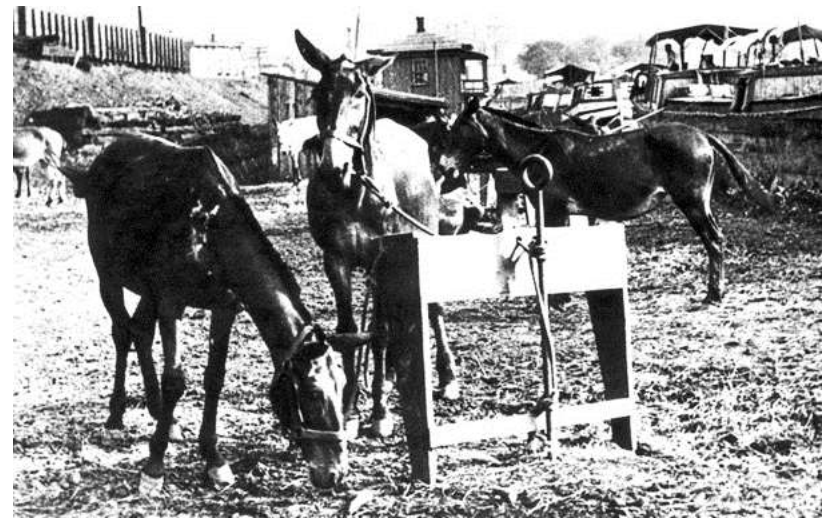
How does Michael seem to feel about his responsibilities?

How do you think you would like life on the canal based on Michael's journal so far?

A mule is a hybrid animal, a mix of a female horse and a male donkey. Remember, "M" for mom, "M" for mare and "D" for dad, "D" for donkey. Switching the parents will produce a **hinny**.



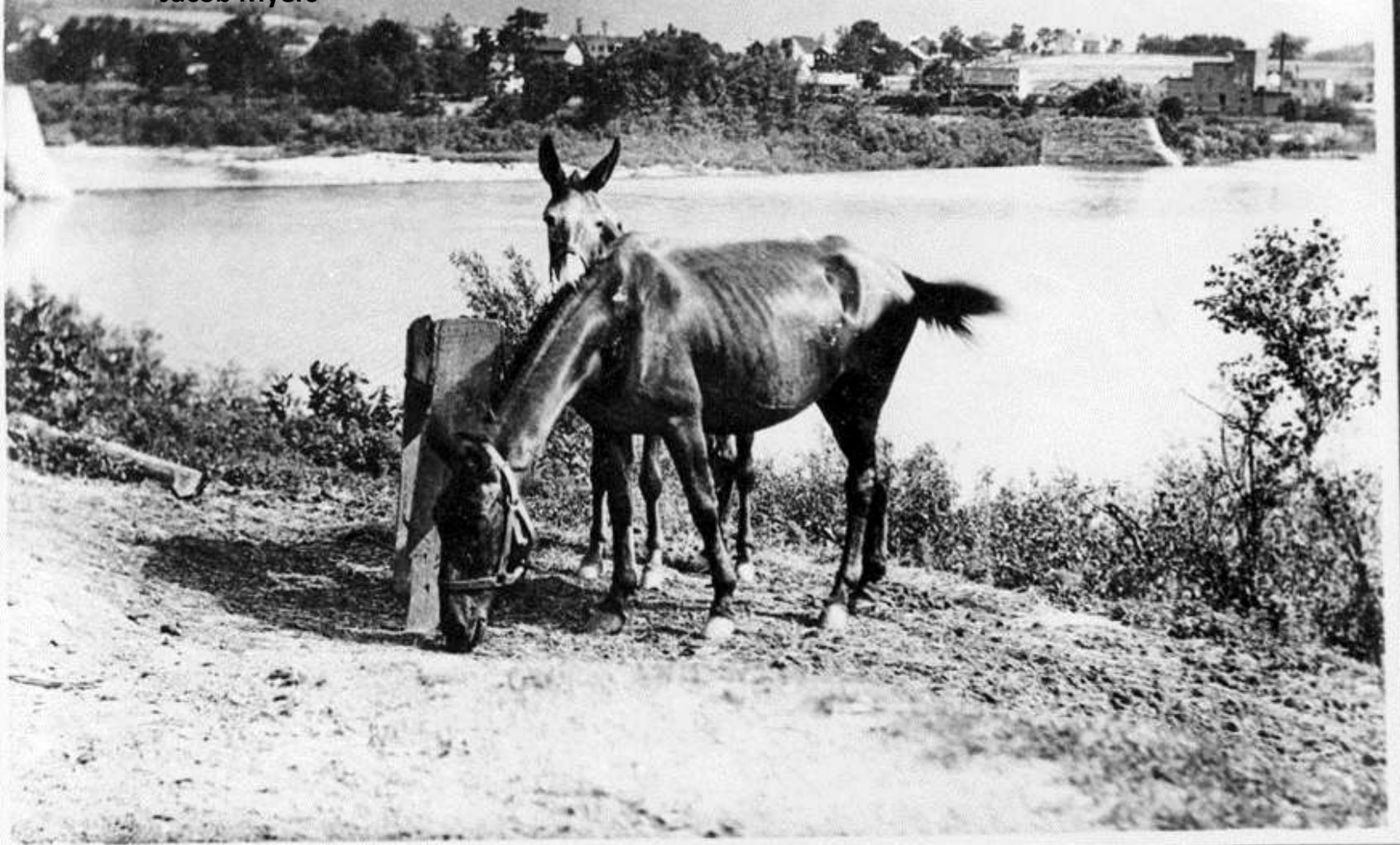
Most mules on the C&O Canal weighed about 1000 pounds, stood about 15 "hands" tall (one "hand" equals four inches) at the point where the neck meets its body and cost about \$125 each.



Mules had both a longer life span and a longer work life than horses and could pull a canal boat for up to twenty years if they were taken care of.

I enjoyed being with the mules. I had a lot of fun with the mules. A mule is intelligent. He has more intelligence than a horse. And good. Gentle. If you treat a mule right, he'll treat you right."

-Jacob Myers



In storm, in sunshine or in rain?

June 20 1904
R.S.



The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal maintains a stable of six to eight mules for its interpretive canal boat operations. The mules are a great favorite of park visitors.

To learn more...

<http://www.nps.gov/choh/planyourvisit/meetthemules.htm>



Nell



Lil

Tuesday, June 8, 1876



The
Paw
Paw
Tunnel

Mark the
second
stop on
your
map.

The Paw Paw Tunnel has been referred to as one of the "Wonders of the World".

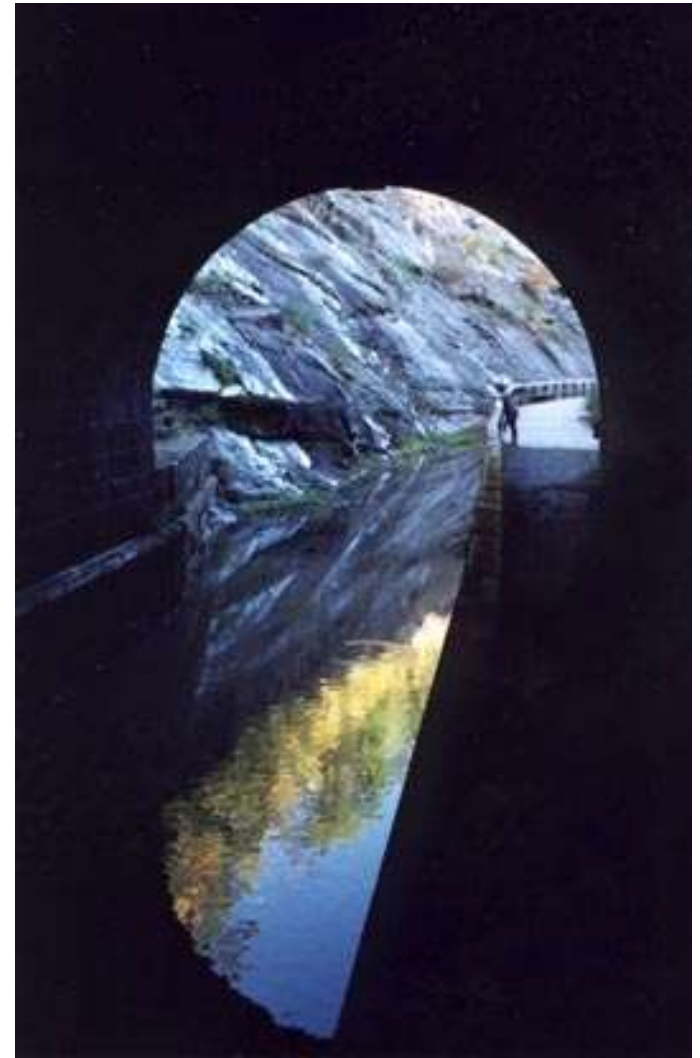
It was built to bypass some very difficult terrain along the Potomac River.

It eliminated having to build the canal along several miles of the Potomac River (see next slide).

It was estimated that construction of the nearly one kilometer-long tunnel (3118') would take two years.

Instead, it ended up being fourteen years between the onset of construction and the opening of the tunnel to traffic!

They just didn't realize how hard it was going to be to build it!



**C & O Towpath
Mile 150 - 168**

Towpath

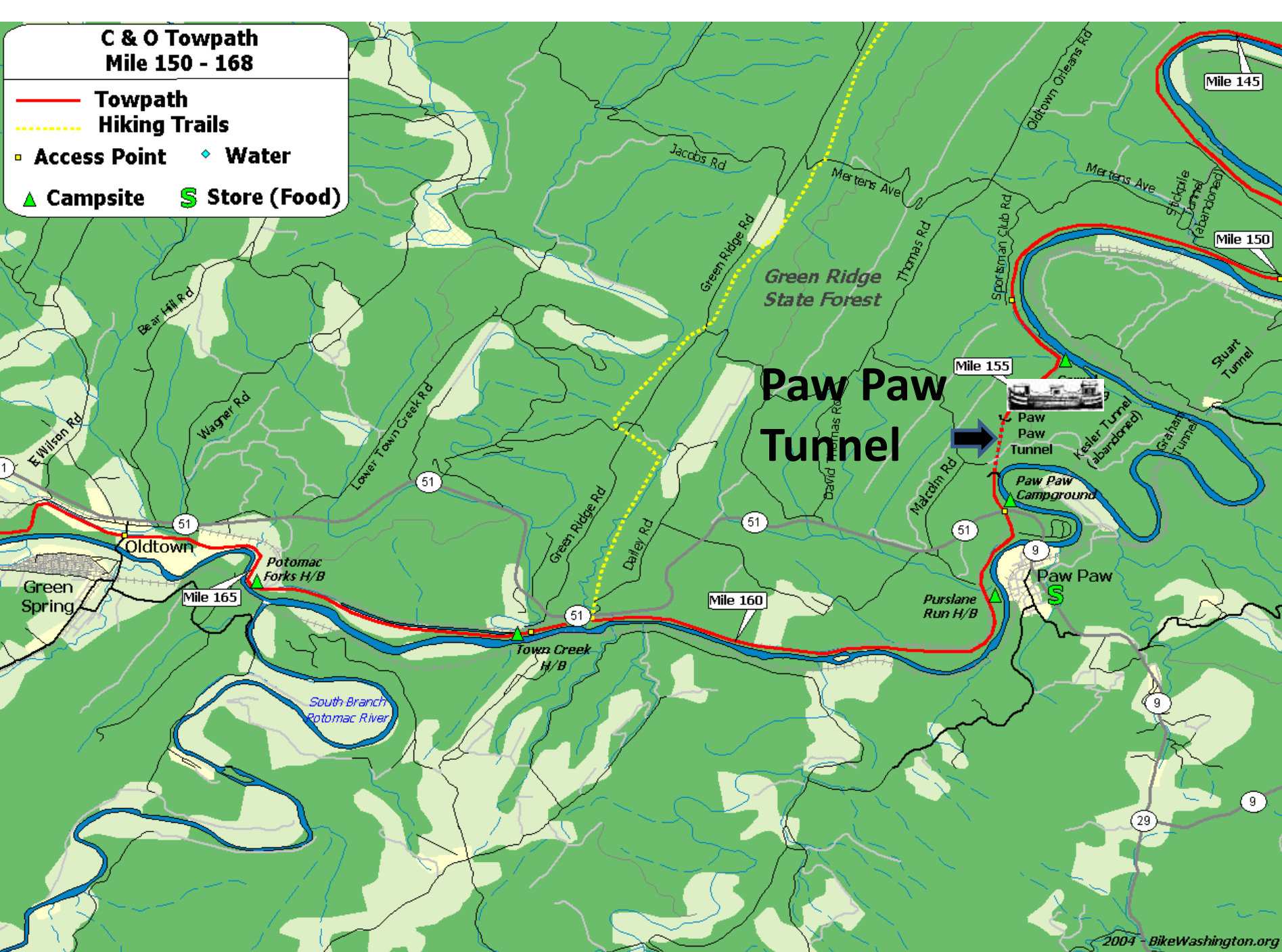
Hiking Trails

■ **Access Point**

◆ **Water**

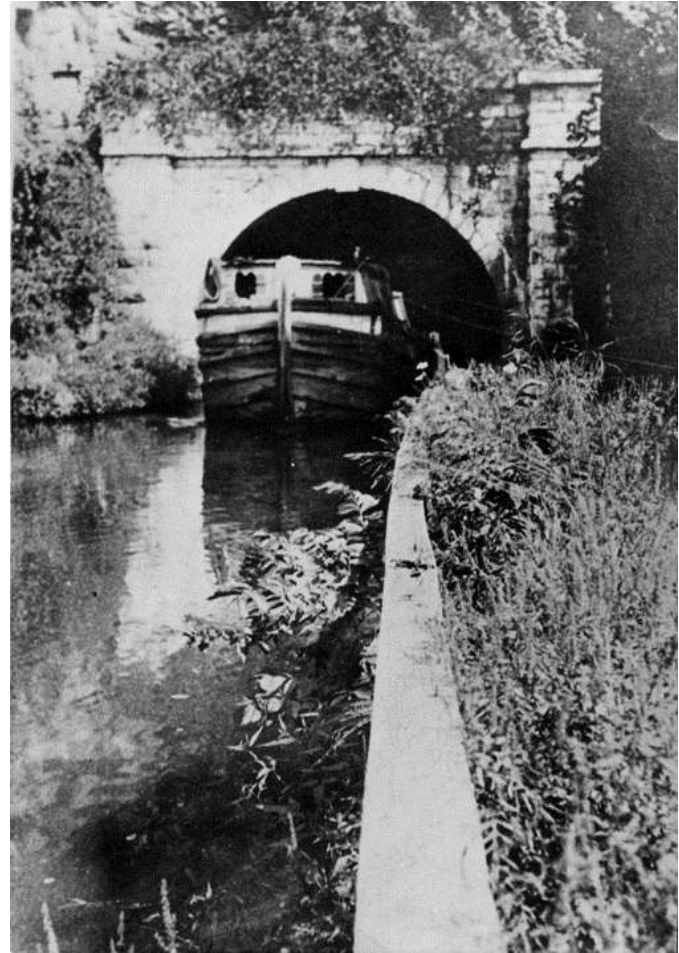
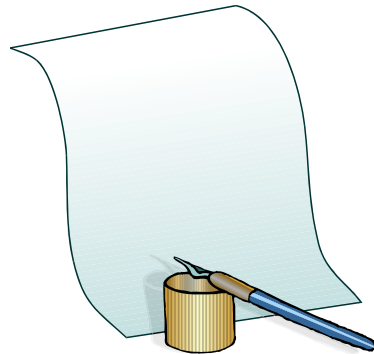
▲ **Campsite**

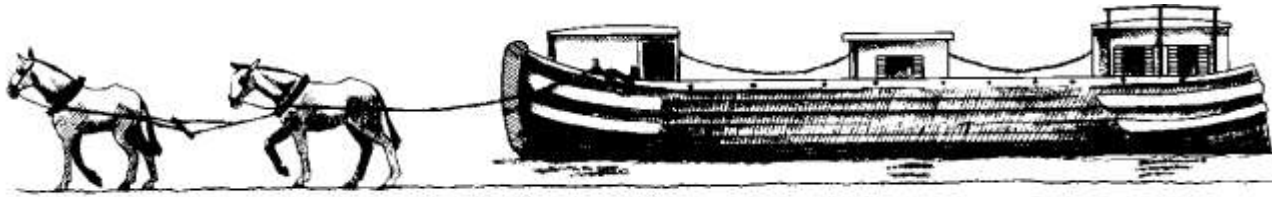
§ **Store (Food)**



Some canalers
found the tunnel
rather spooky.

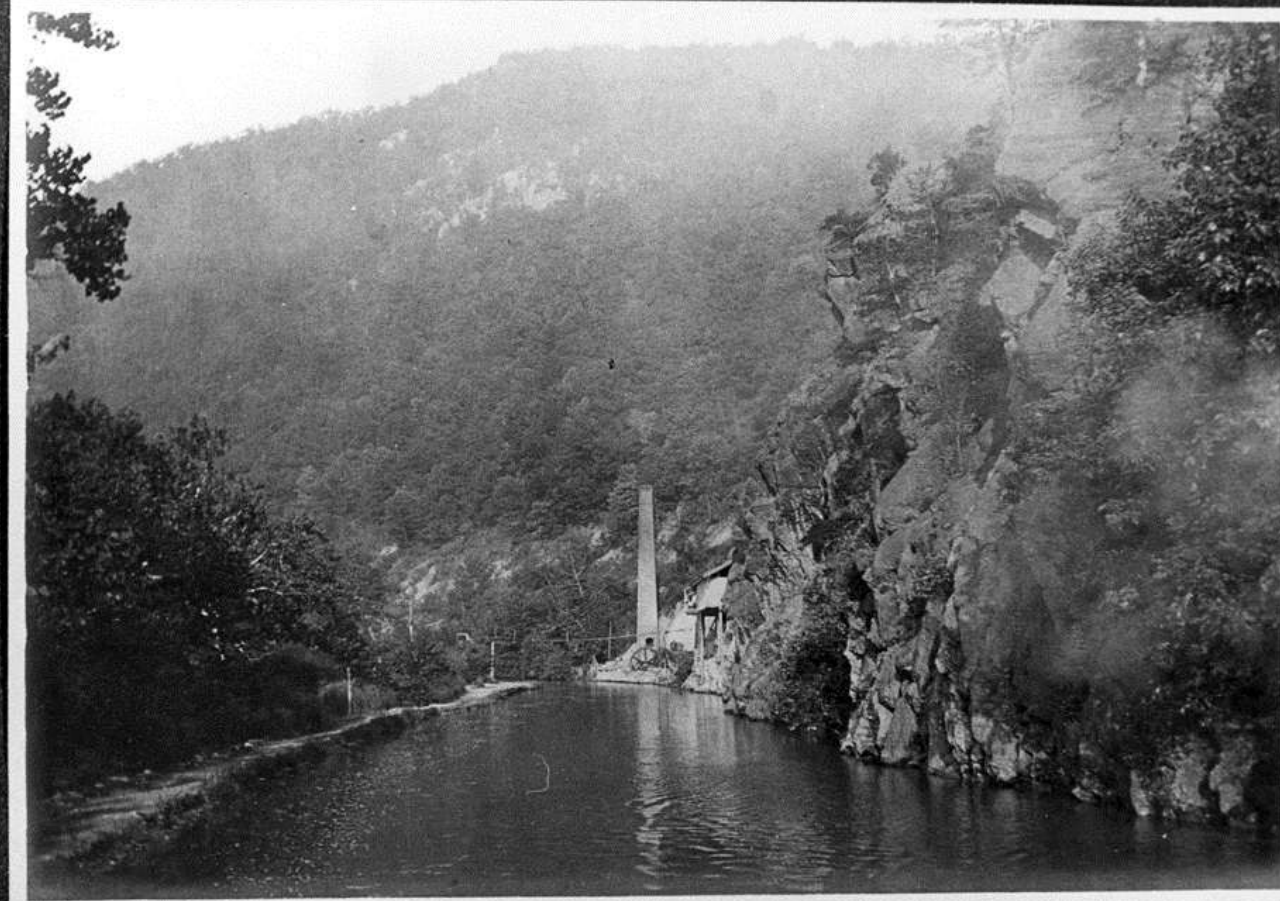
Read about
Michael's first
night as they tied
up their boat for
the night near the
tunnel (page 3).





- What do you think of Michael's story?
- Do you think you would have been a little spooked too?

Wednesday, June 9, 1876
Hancock, Maryland



*Remains of "Round Top" Cement Mill
near Hancock, Md*

*Sept. 19, 1904
J.L.G.*

Mark the
third spot
on your
map.

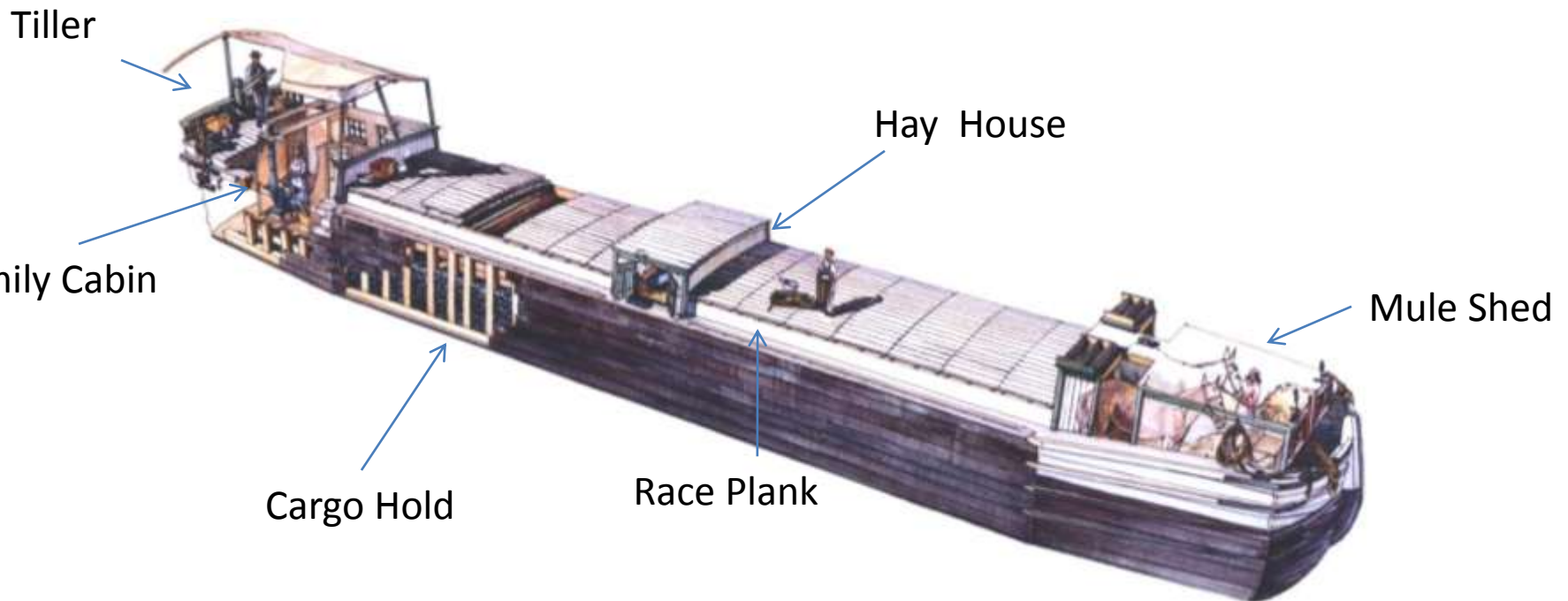
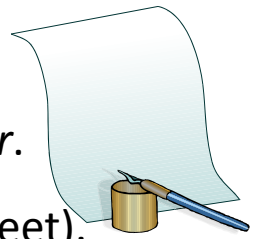
Now you'll read a little about Michael's first experience steering the *Turn Over*.

Like all canal boats, it has a cabin for boaters at one end (about 12 feet x 12 feet).

It has a stable (shed) for mules and a hay house for the mules' feed.

A tiller and a rudder are located at the back (stern) of the boat. They help to steer it. There is also a hold where the cargo of coal is loaded.

The outside of the boat has a race plank around it. The crew and family walked on it.

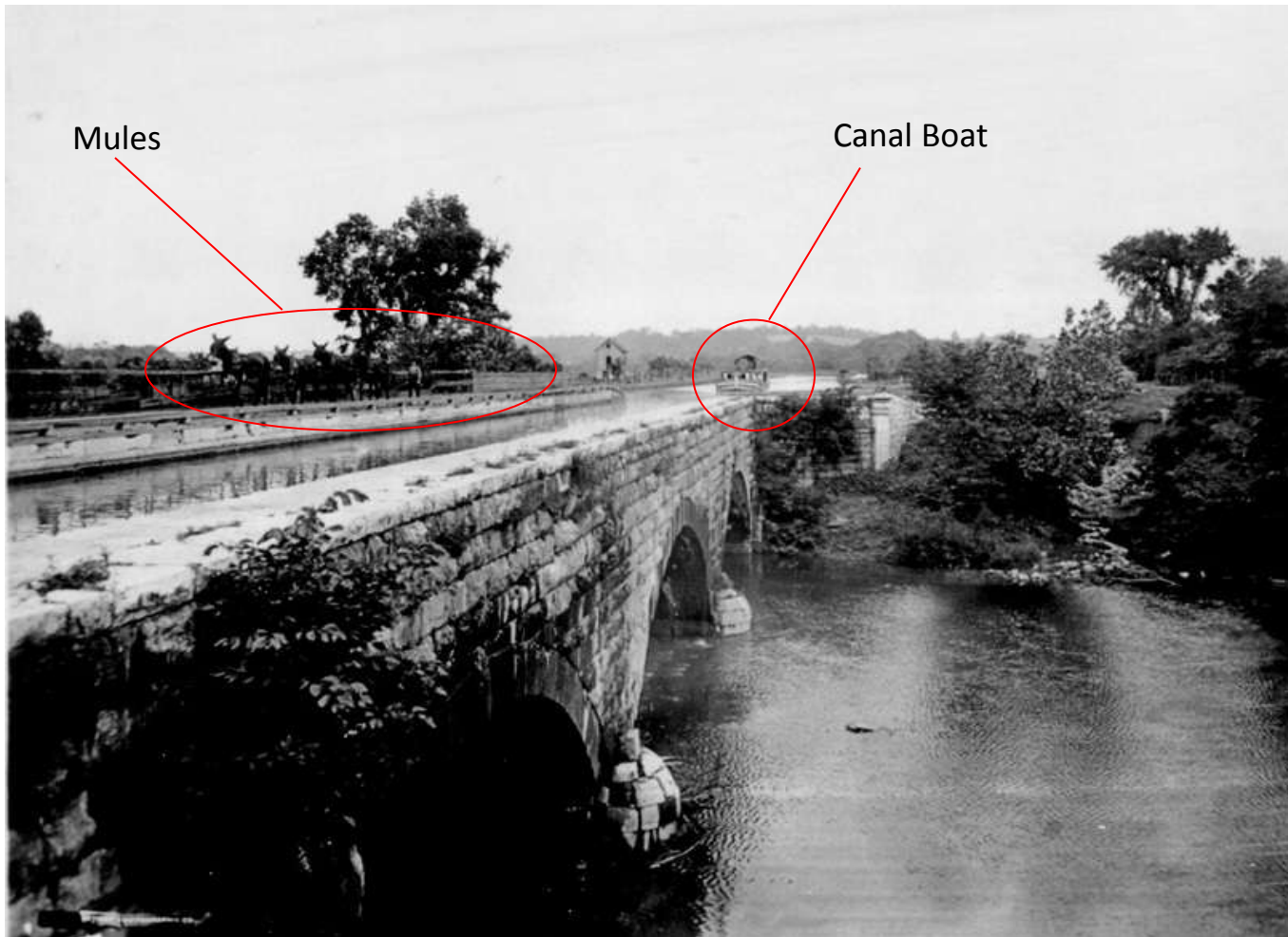


Michael also describes the tricky aqueduct at Licking Creek, one of many aqueducts on the C & O Canal.

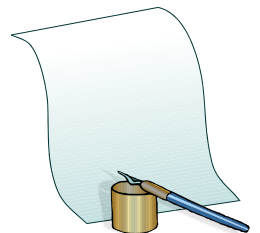


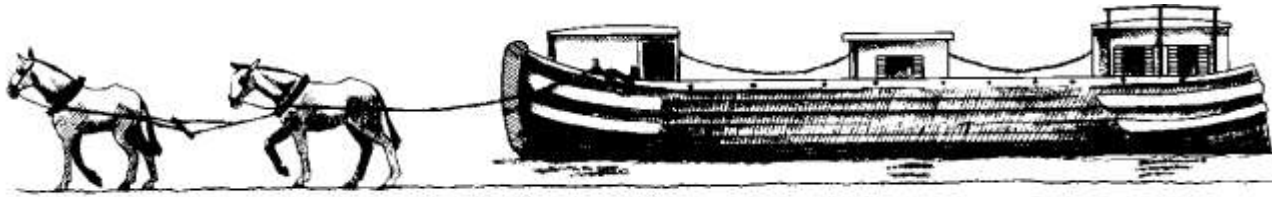
An aqueduct is a water-filled stone trough built to take the canal and towpath over a river or creek.

You will see this aqueduct on the C & O Canal Field Trip!
It's the Conococheague Aqueduct.



Now read page 4.
Notice how
confident Michael
sounds as they
travel over the
aqueduct.





- Did it surprise you when Michael said that most boys start learning to steer a boat when they're ten?

Thursday, June 10, 1876

Passing through Williamsport, Maryland

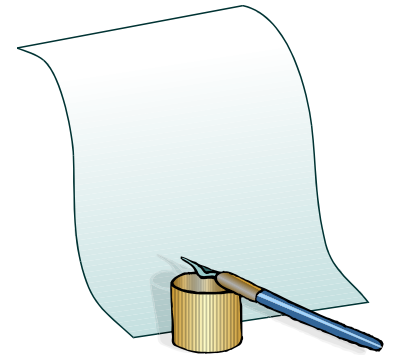


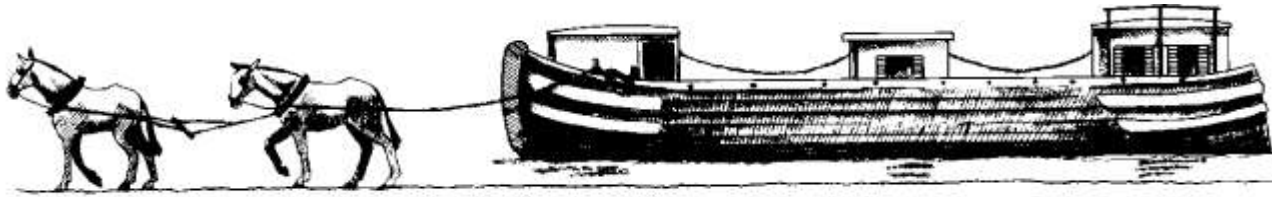
The first C and O Canal boats reached Williamsport in 1835, and the town became one of the most typical canal towns along “the ditch”.

Did you know that George Washington considered Williamsport as a possibility for our nation’s capital?

Mark Williamsport on your map.

Read page 5 and 6 to find out the many jobs canal boaters needed to do to take care of the boat, the mules, and themselves!





What did you learn about the work and responsibilities of living and working on a canal boat?

Did you enjoy learning why Jeffrey was tied to the roof?

How long do you think it would take to walk thirty miles?

Compare Michael's life to yours.
How are they similar and different?



Friday, June 11, 1876

Passing Near Antietam Battlefield



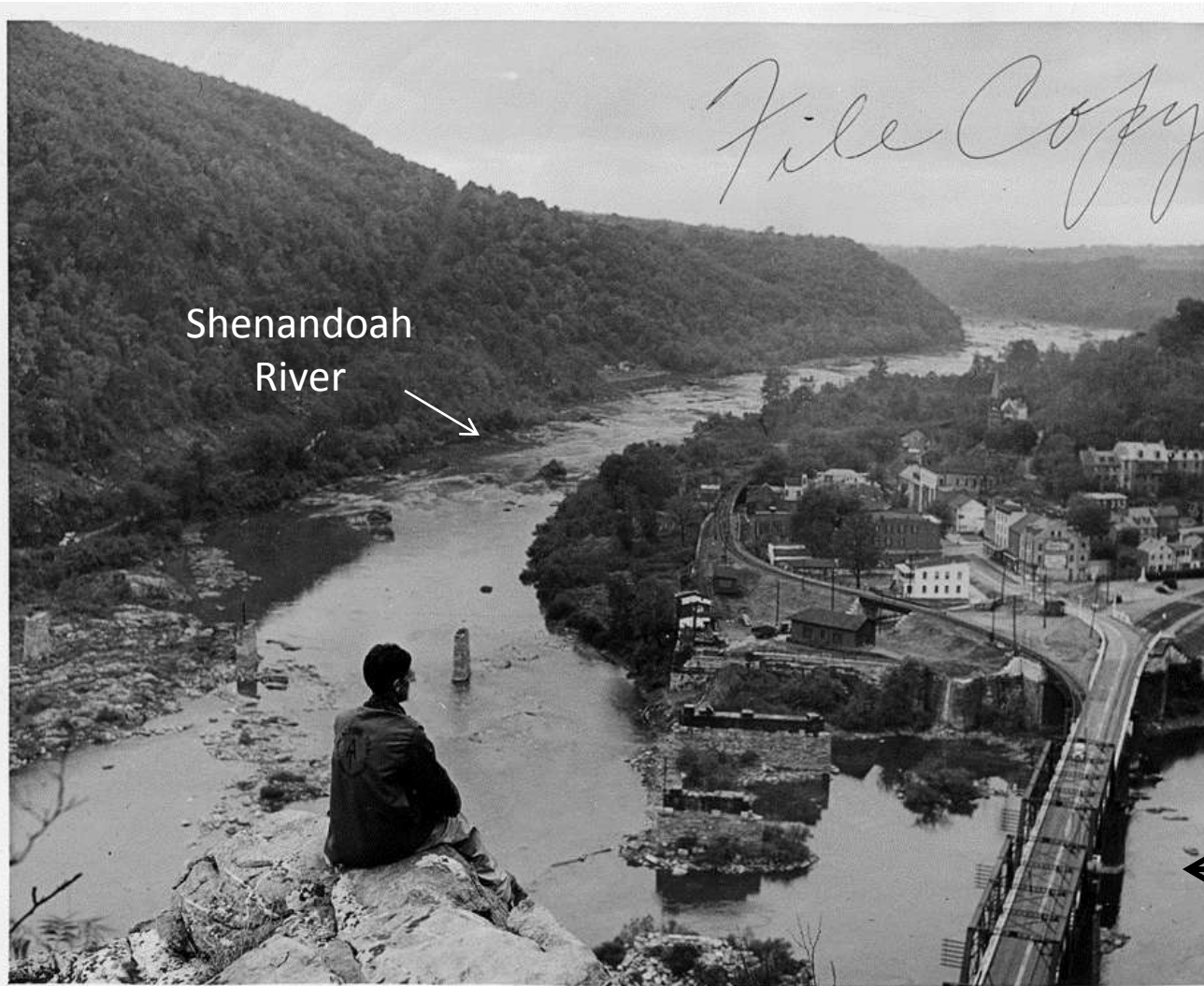
The Battle of Antietam was fought during the Civil War on September 17, 1862.

It was the first major battle to take place on Northern soil.

It was the bloodiest single-day battle in American history with about 23,000 casualties (people who were killed, wounded or captured).

Mark the Antietam Battlefield on your map.

Entering Harper's Ferry, West Virginia



Shenandoah
River

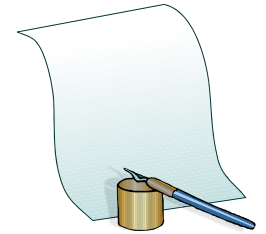
In 1859, a man named John Brown led a raid of a government arsenal at Harper's Ferry. John wanted slavery to be abolished. He tried to steal the weapons to help some slaves start a rebellion, but the plan failed.

Potomac
River

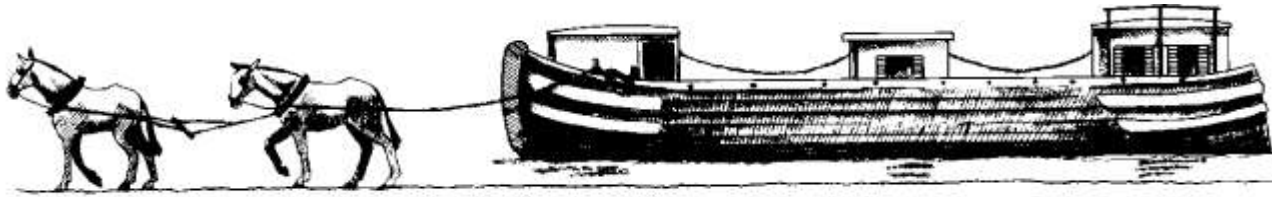
Mark Harper's Ferry on your map.

Read page 7 to find out Michael's thoughts as he passes the Antietam Battlefield and Harper's Ferry.

Remember that this story is set in 1876, and the Civil War has been over for only 11 years.



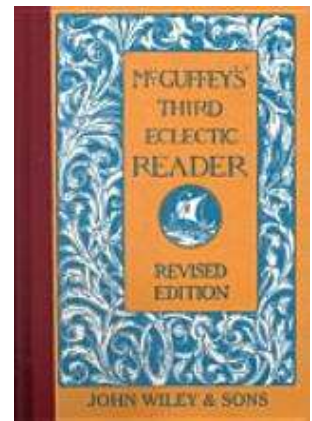
You'll learn something surprising about how much time Michael spends in school!



How has Michael learned about important events in history such as the Civil War?

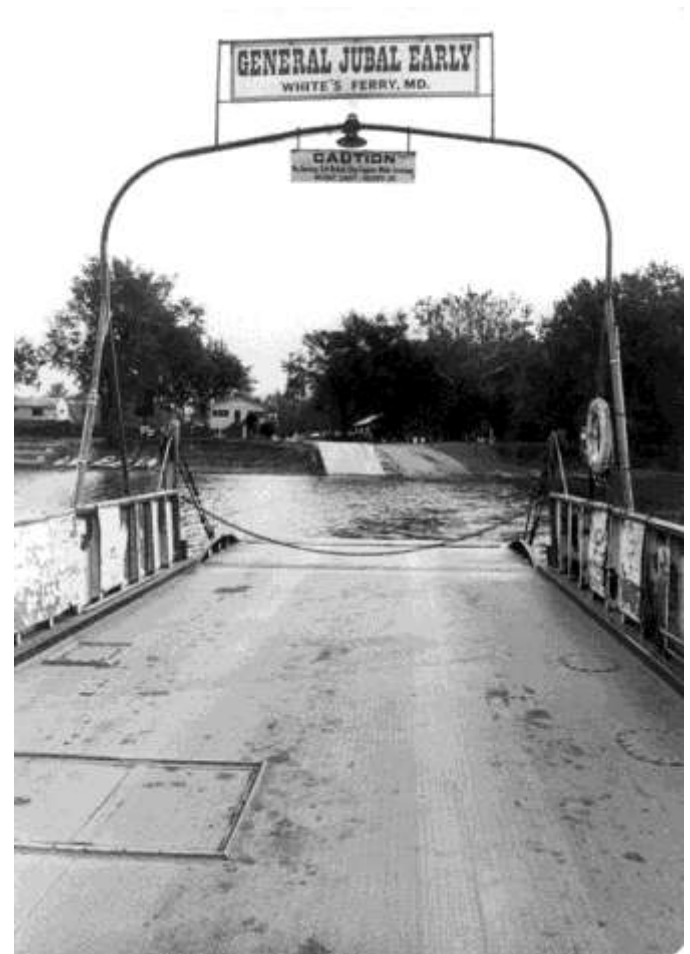
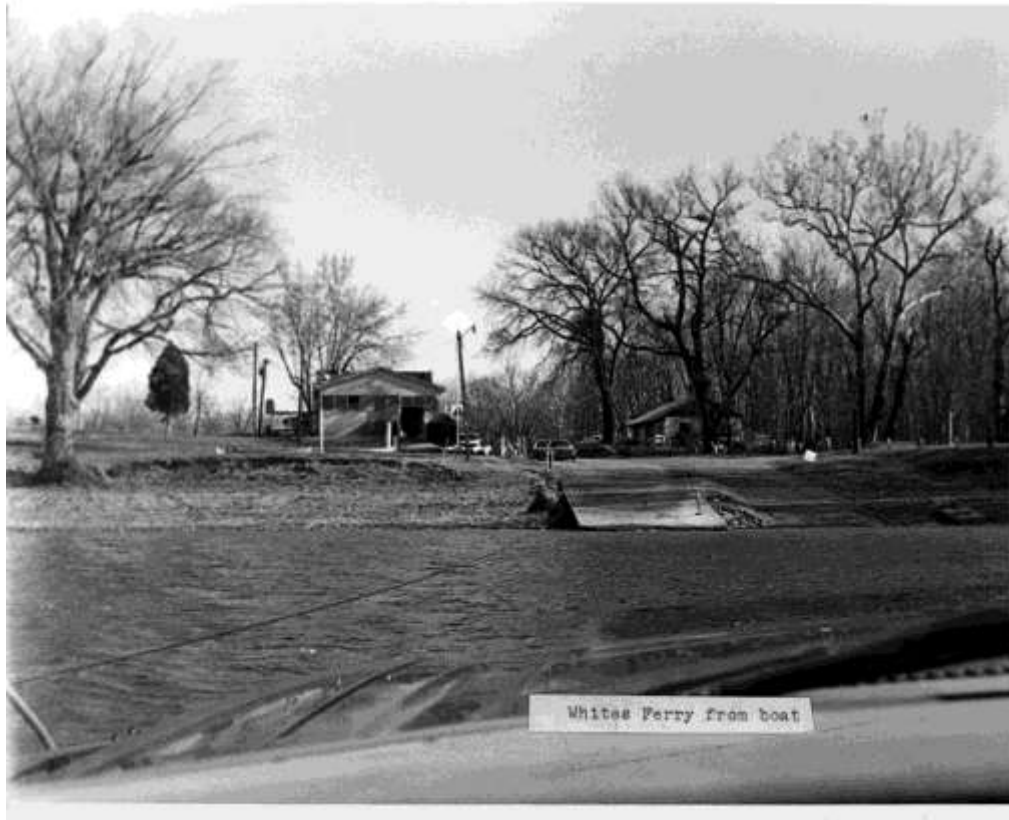
Do you think Michael's parents think education is important? Why/why not?

Would you like to attend school only during the winter months and work during the remaining eight or nine months?



Saturday, June 12, 1876

White's Ferry



Mark the next stop on your map.



White's Ferry Today

White Ferry is the only ferry still operating on the Potomac River.

The ferryboat, the *General Jubal A. Early*, carries cars, bicycles, and pedestrians between Maryland and Virginia.

The waters at this spot are relatively still and provide an ideal location for a ferry.

In the early days, the ferry provided a place of commerce between the C & O Canal and the surrounding community.

Farmers from Virginia used the ferry to get their crops to markets in Maryland and Washington, DC via the canal.

Together, the ferry and the canal shortened the time it took farmers to get their goods to market.

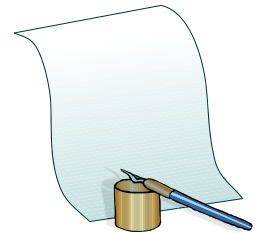


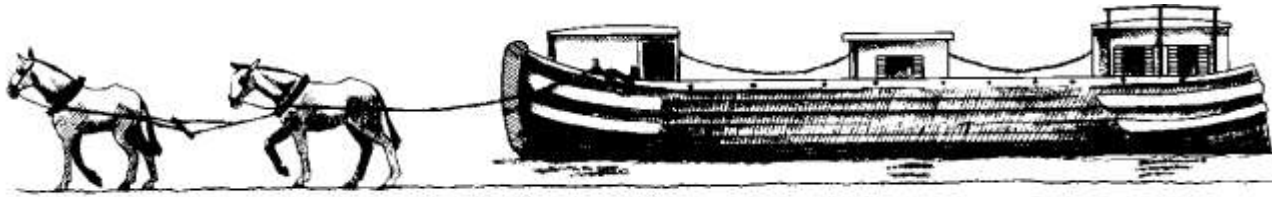
- You may recognize this building as The Castle, the first Smithsonian building in Washington, DC.
 - It was built in the 1850's.
- Its exterior is Seneca Sandstone which came from a quarry 12 ½ miles from White's Ferry!



It's summertime,
and you know
what kids like to
do in the
summertime!

Read page 8 to
learn about a
great day on the
canal!

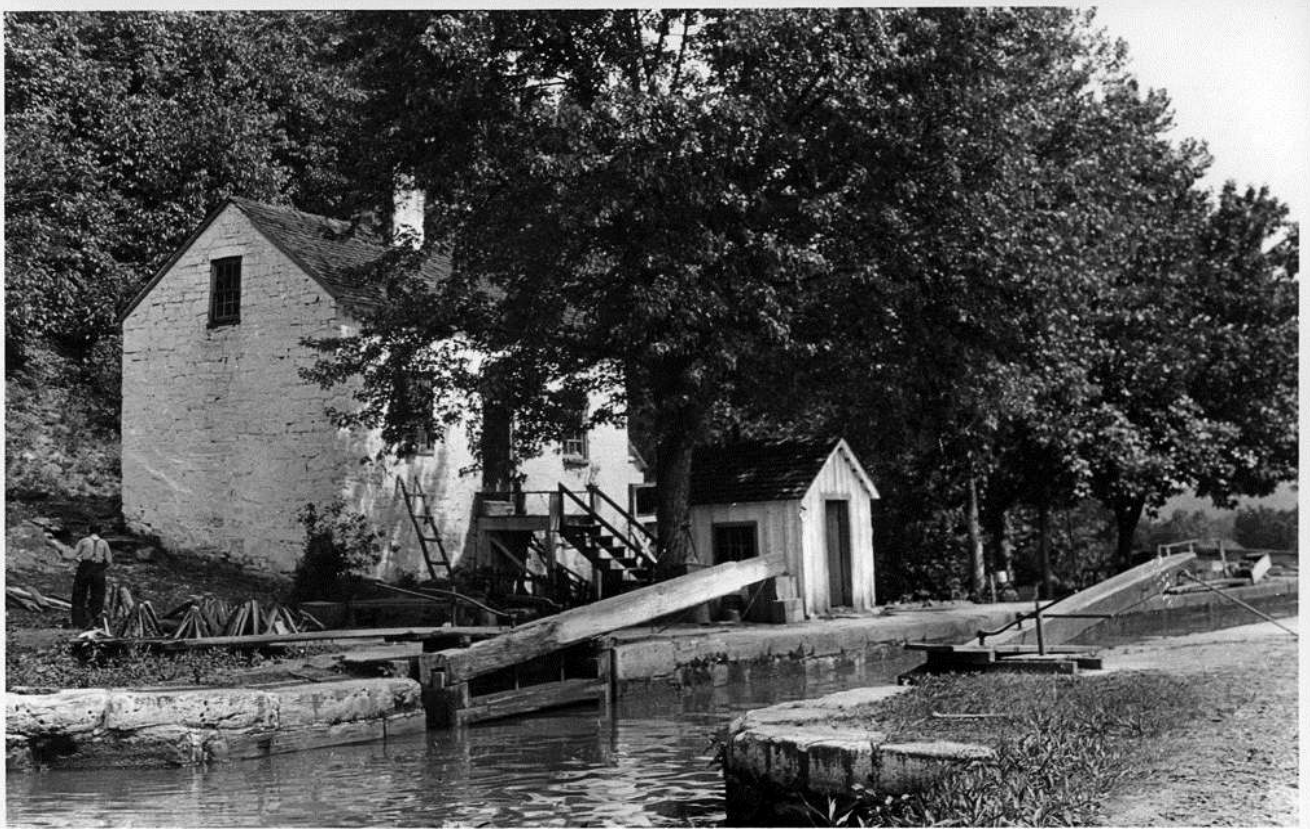




- How does this entry help you understand what it must have been like to be a member of the O'Leary family?
- What can you tell about the relationship between the canal boaters and the people who lived and worked along the canal?
- Instead of next door neighbors, a canal family had "next door boaters". What did you learn about the O'Learys and their next door boaters?

Sunday, June 13, 1876

Riley's Lock

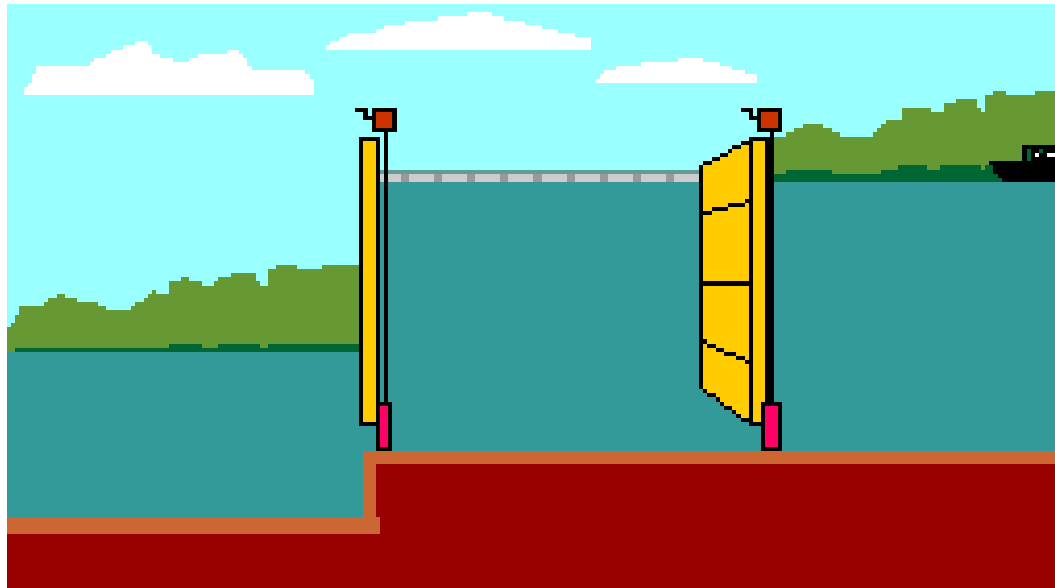


(This photo shows a C & O lock and lock house; it is not Riley's Lock.)

Mark the next spot on you map.

What is a lock?

- A lock is like a big step built into a canal.
- A lock allows a boat in a canal to travel alongside a river without facing rocks.
- In a lock, the boat is lowered or raised so that it can keep going:

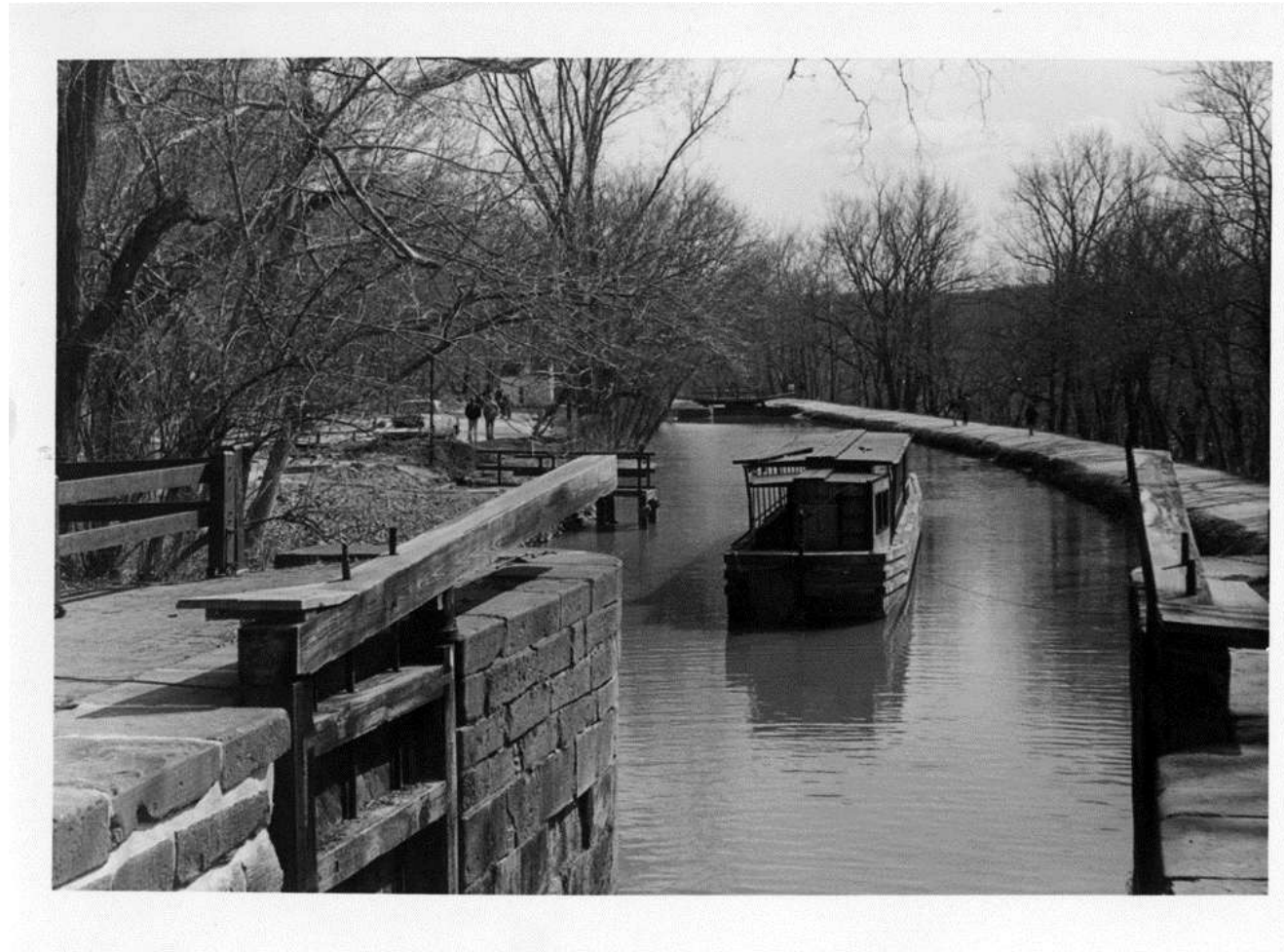
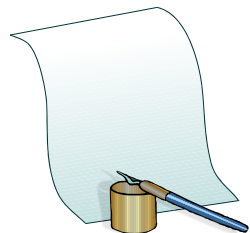


<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2Q-no03zdw&feature=related>

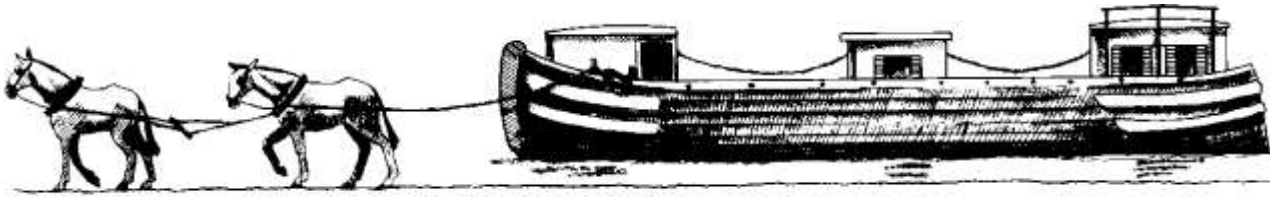
<http://www.haworth-village.org.uk/nature/how/canal-lock.asp>

Read the short entry on page 9 to learn about Michael's "day off" as a lock helper.

Michael's entry doesn't mention the name of the lock, but the location helps us to understand that Riley's Lock fits the location!



A boat leaving one of the 74 locks on the canal.



- Why do you think they called them locks?
- How do you think Michael is feeling now that they are almost to Georgetown?

Monday June 14, 1876

Great Falls



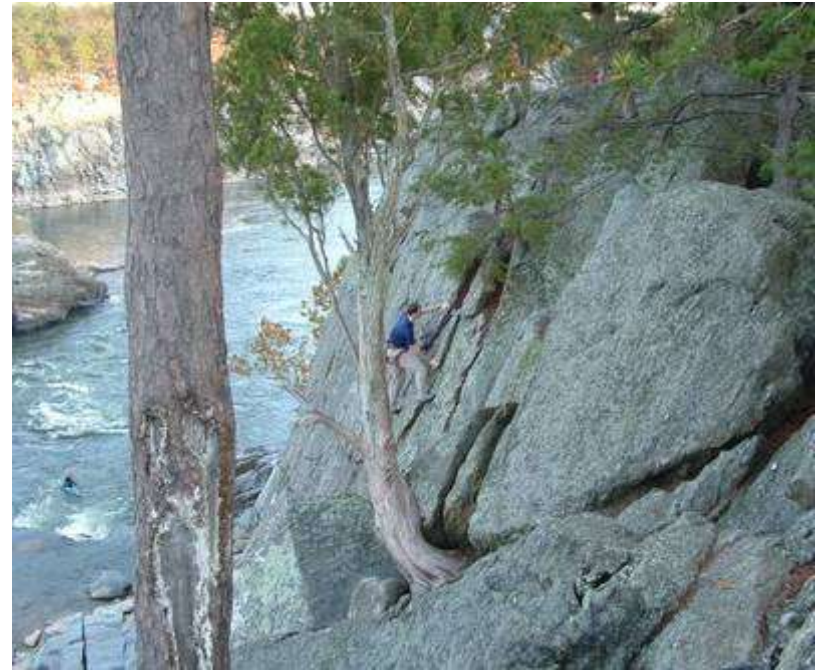
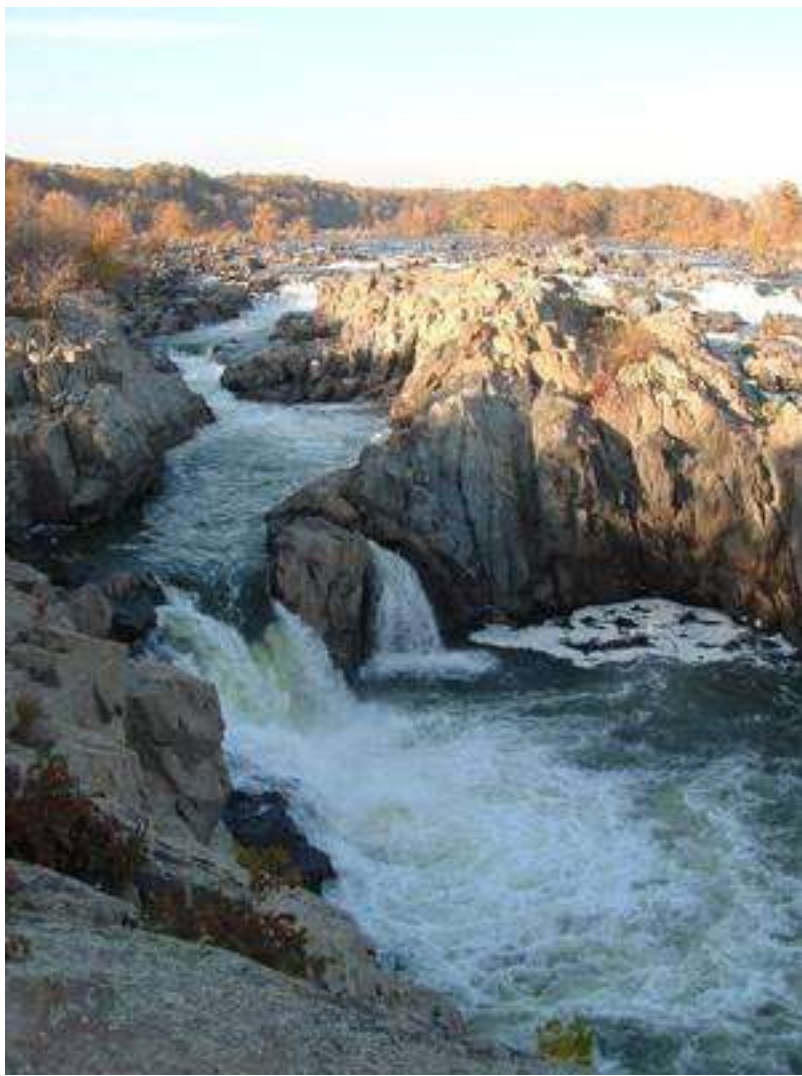
Have you ever been to this beautiful spot on the Potomac River just above Washington, D.C.?

To help adjust for the 41 foot drop in elevation, the canal required 6 locks in less than one mile!

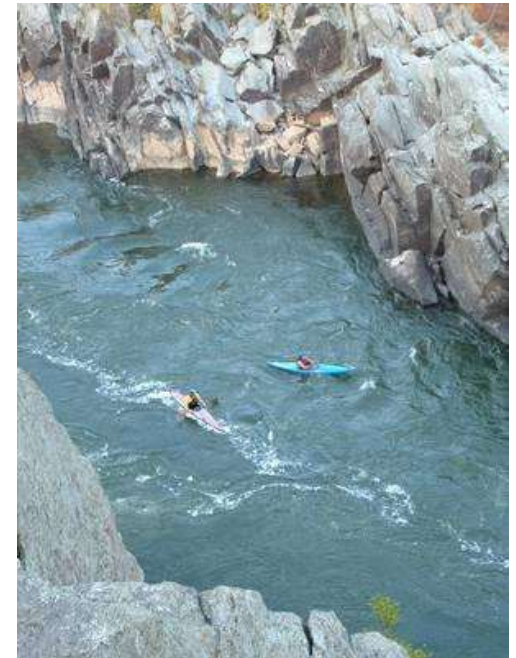
Great Falls of the Potomac

June 25 1904

R.A.



Great Falls
really is
great!



The Historic Great Falls Tavern was originally a lock house.
It has stood at Lock 20 on the C&O Canal since 1831.



1384 The Locks and Hotel at Great Falls, showing the Bridge across the Canal
Published by T. F. Ellis, Mt. Vernon Railroad Station.

signed on April 17/07 J. Essie.



<http://www.crommelin.org/history/Biographies/1707Daniel/CrommelinHouse.htm>

Mark Great Falls on your map.

End of the Road –Georgetown

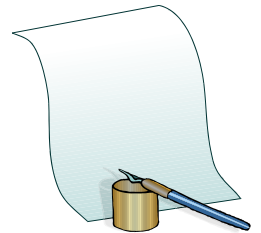
The Place Where the C & O Began

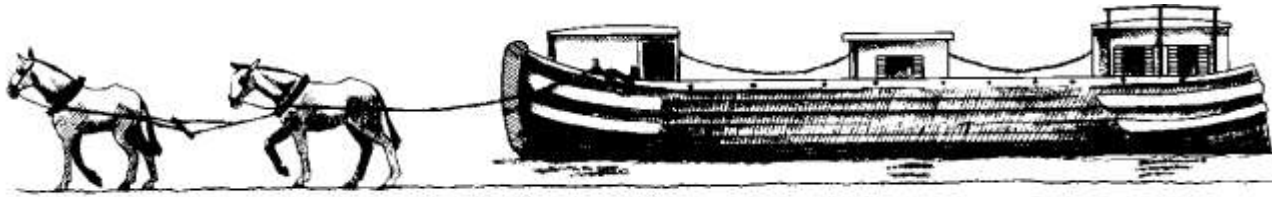


Mark the last spot on your map!

Read to “see” the sights and feel Michael’s excitement as they reach their delivery spot.

Think about your favorite candy, and how much it costs.





What is different about the Georgetown area compared to most of the spots the O'Learys have passed on their trip?

How does Michael's description of their shopping help you to understand how different things were in 1868?

Do you think the coal company left a little coal on the boat on purpose? Why or why not?

This is the end
of the journal,
but only half
way for the
O'Learys!



Think about
what you've
learned about
life on the
C & O Canal!

- What do you think was the best part of living and working on a canal boat?
- What part would you like the least?
- What part of the C & O Canal would you most like to visit?

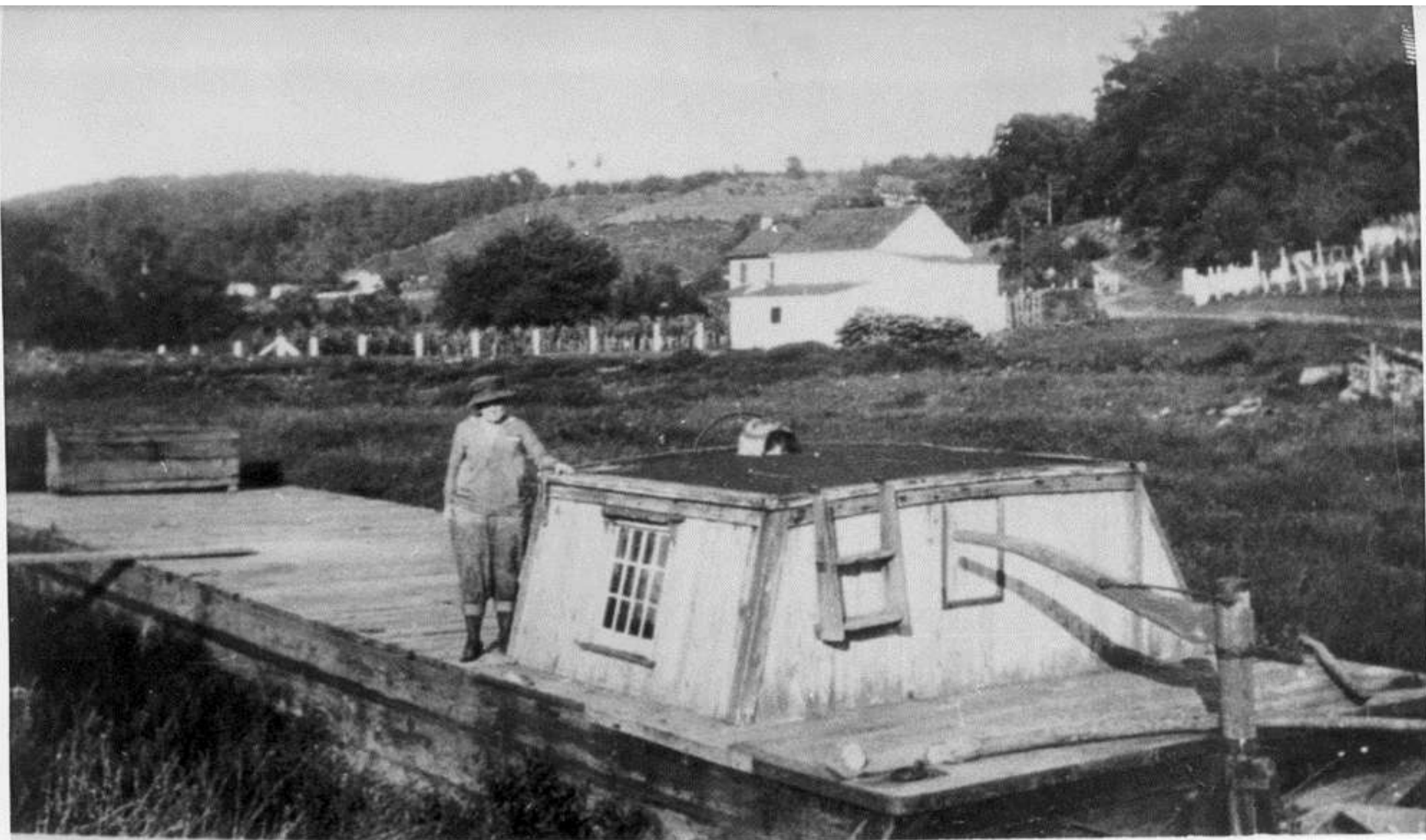
Thank you to the National Park Service for sharing these historical photos!

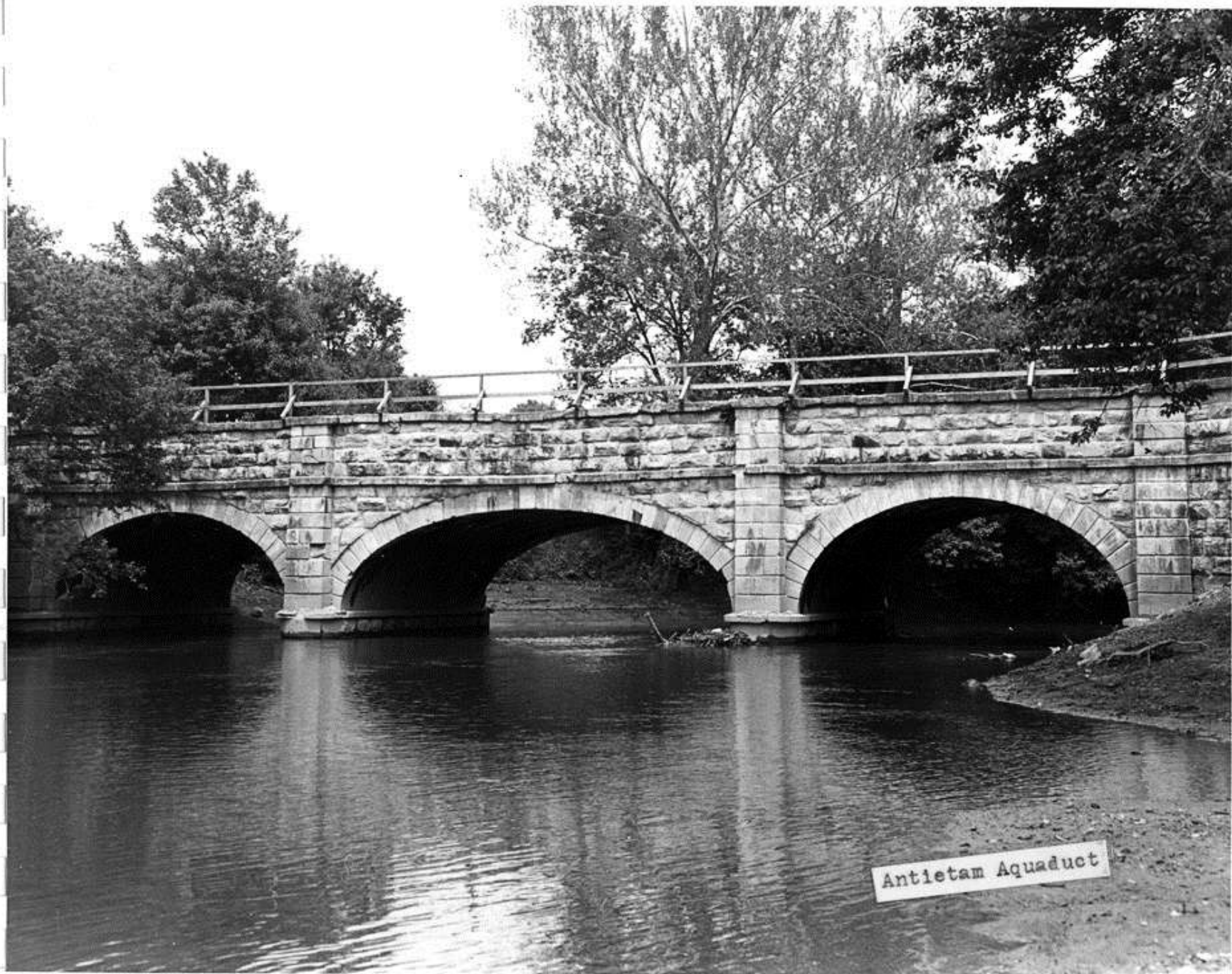
Keep going for a few more photos that allow us to enter the life of the C & O Canalers.

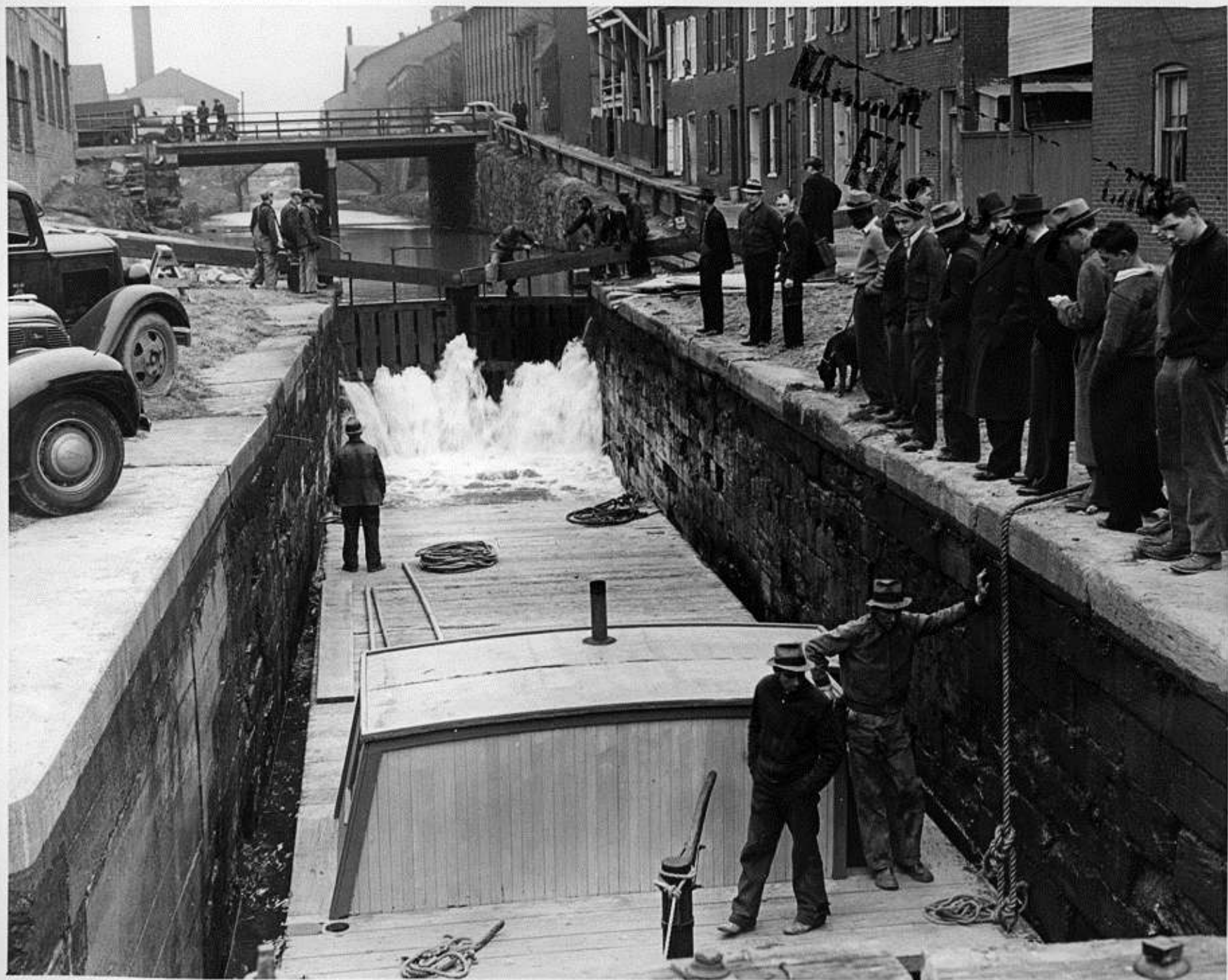




Another view of Cushwa Basin









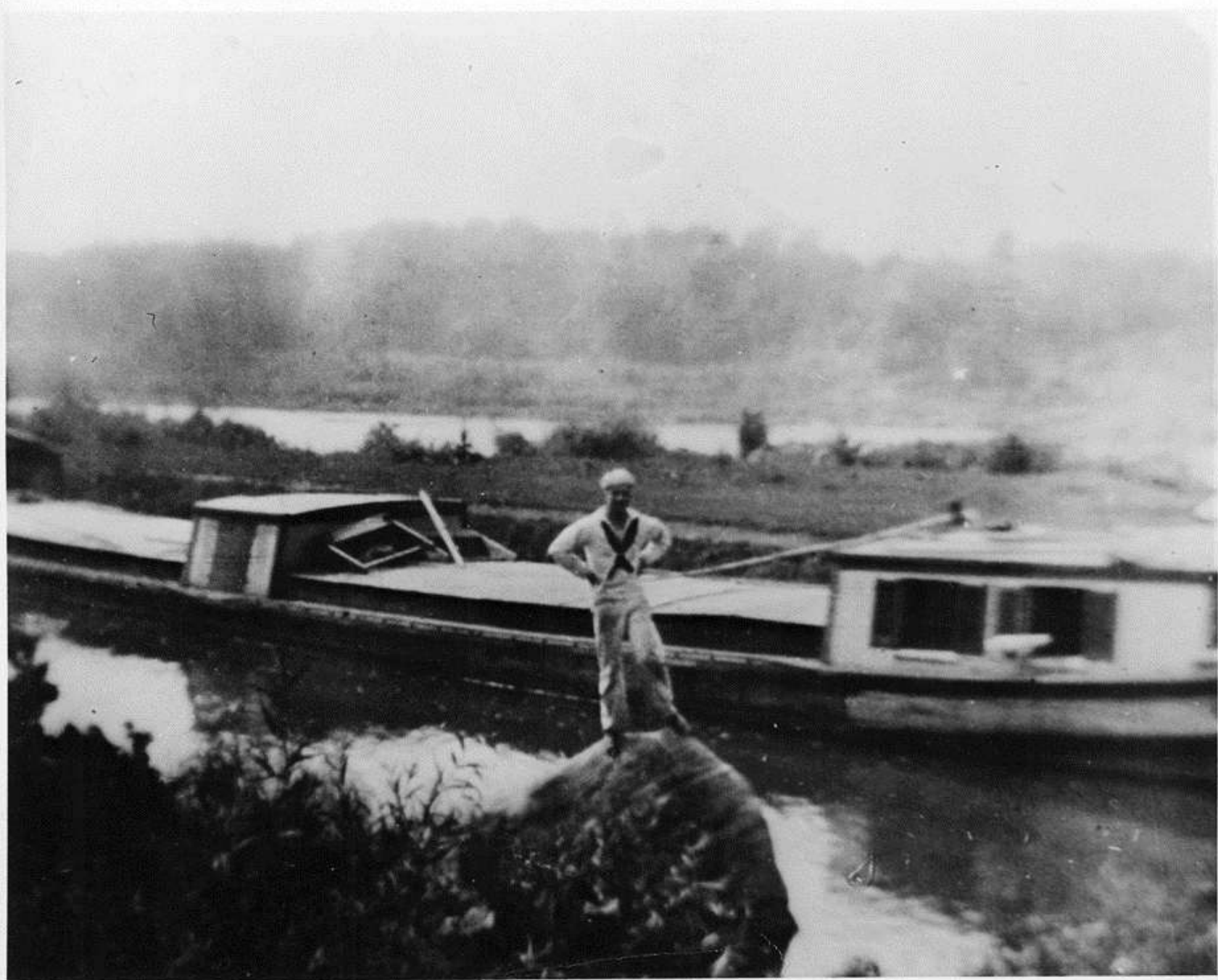
On the Cando Canal, Hancock, Md.



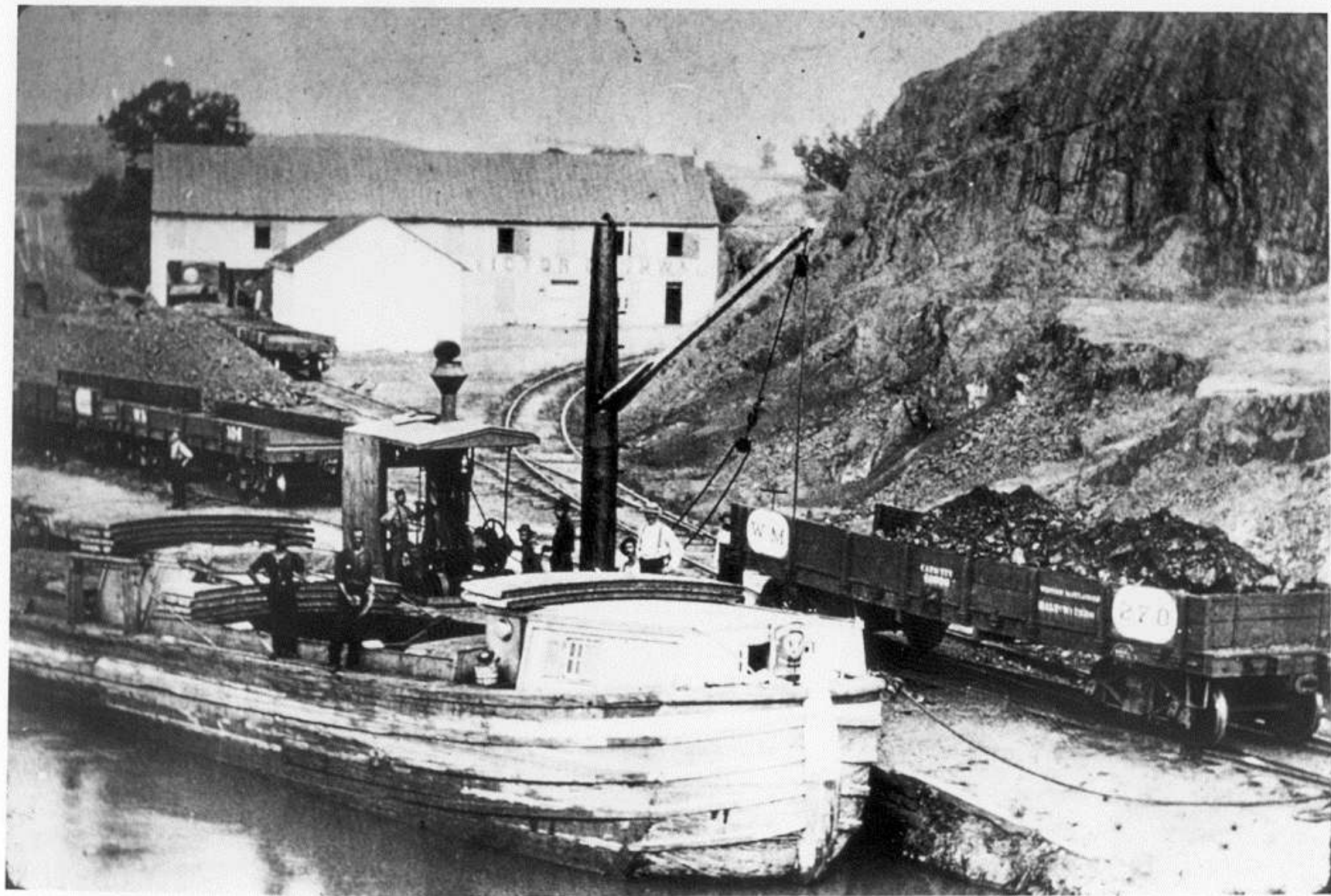


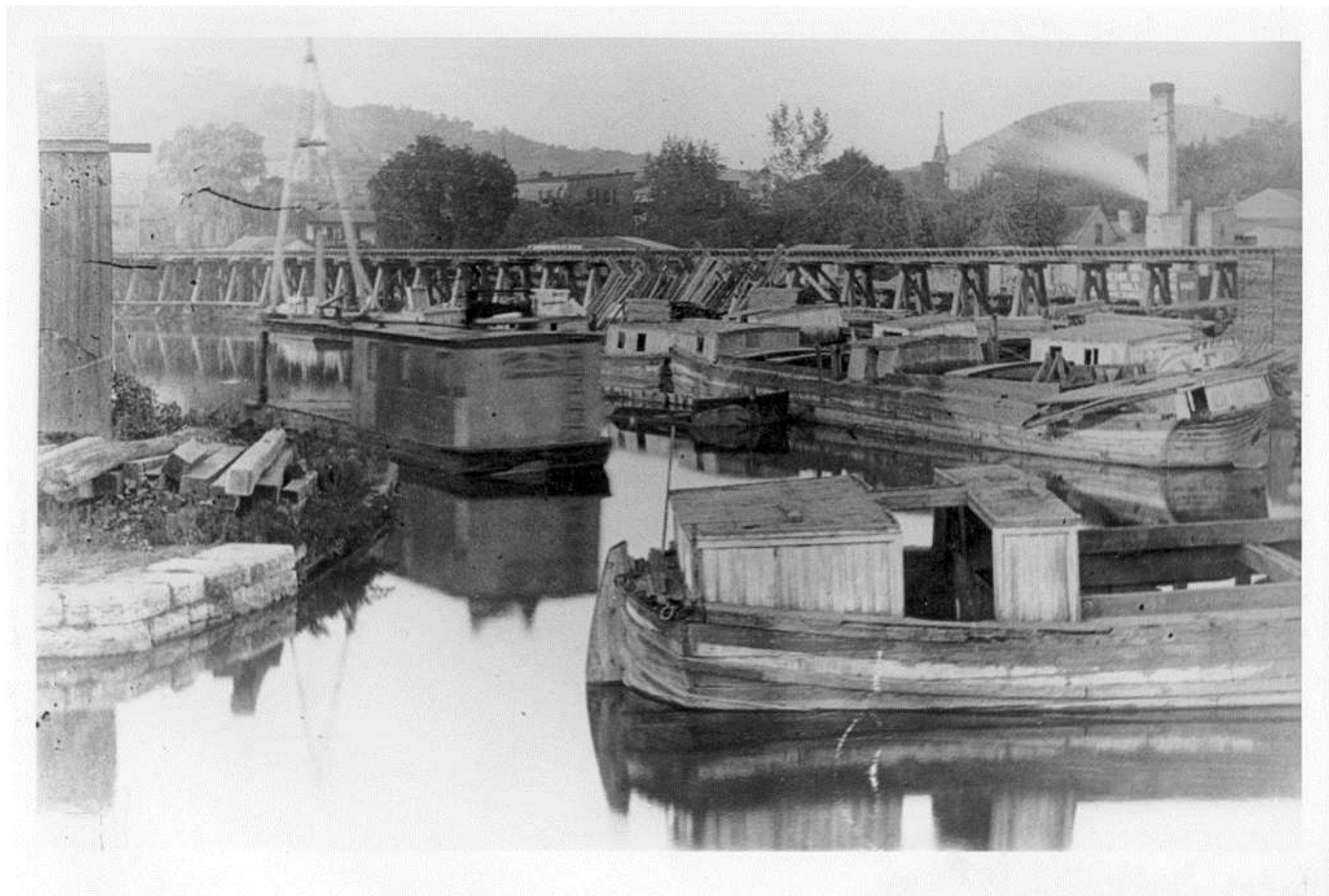


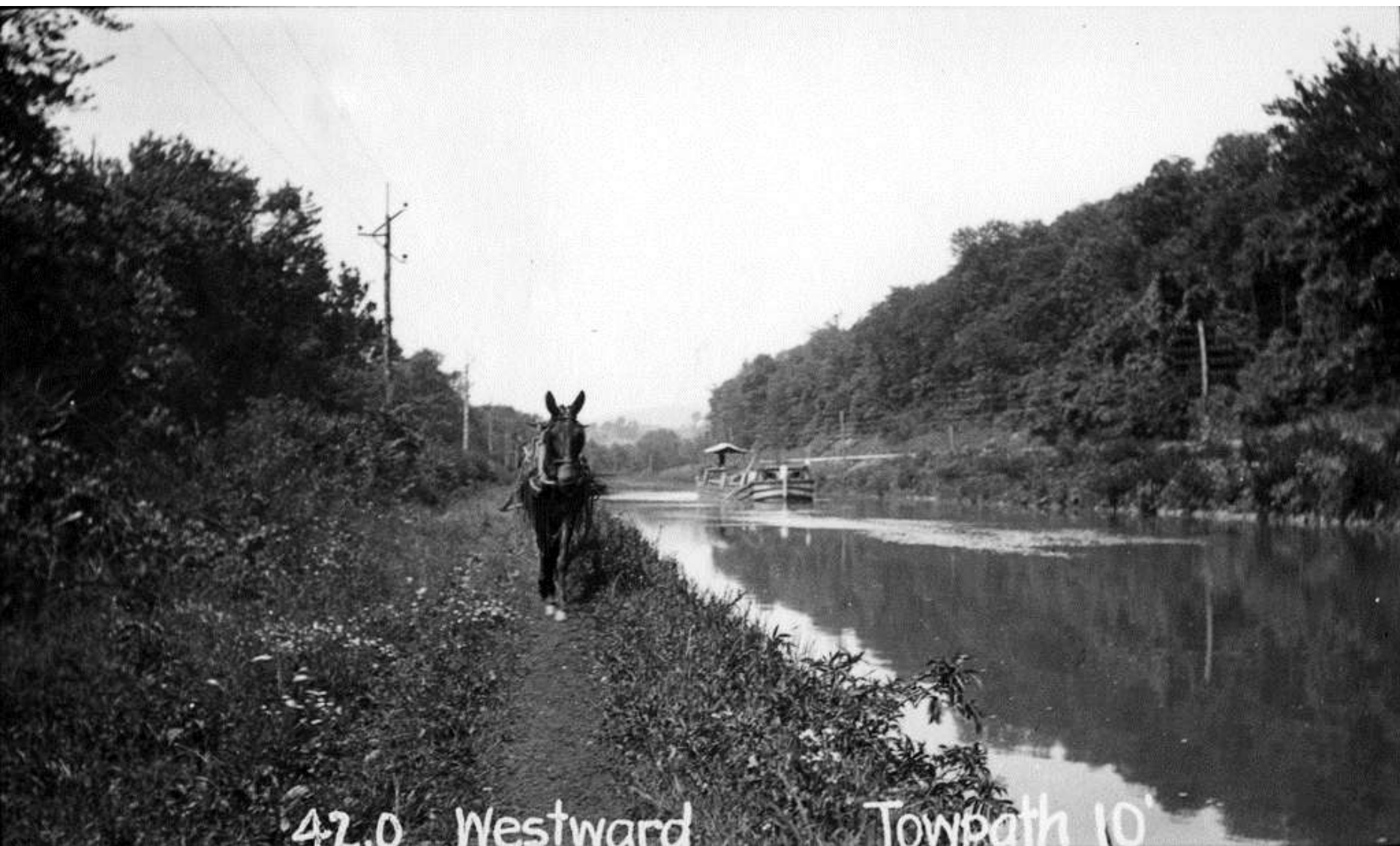












42.0 Westward

Towpath 10'

