

THE RONDOUT AND ITS CANAL*

LEON SCIACKY

AT THE beginning of the nineteenth century the Rondout Creek flowed through a silent and, for the most part, uninhabited country. Its wooded shores echoed the call of the bittern and the kingfisher, and its surface mirrored the deer and the long-legged heron. At long intervals a thin column of smoke rising from the bower of greenness along its banks would mark the isolated farm. At other places, in its meandering toward the Hudson River, the clatter of a water wheel would break the silence and frighten away the winged and furry denizens of its woods. In such places a few dwellings would nestle about the mill, and settlers from many miles around would come to satisfy their simple economic and social needs.

One such settlement had been situated for many years on both sides of the creek, where in a last jump it tumbles down in a flurry of foam to its tidewater level. Here the Freers, the Van Akens, the Hasbroucks cultivated the rich earth, yielding an abundance of golden grain. About a mile farther downstream where the Twaalfskill empties into the creek, a few more houses had been built about a

* Mr. Sciacky teaches history at Hessian Hills School in Croton, New York. His article is the result of "a summer of foraging of old records, graveyards, letters, and local oldsters." Joseph Feldman, of Eddyville, the son of Johnny, the Barber; Charles De Graff, boat builder; Bill Deyo, stagecoach driver who now lives at Tillson; Billy Stewart, of Wilbur, a canaler now aged ninety; and Mike Solon, another canaler, who has died since last summer contributed anecdotes and ditties.

Newspaper files in the office of the Kingston *Freeman* and in the Kingston Public Library were of help. Deeds in the Ulster County Clerk's office at Kingston were also used. (See the Historical Records Survey's inventory reviewed in *NEW YORK HISTORY* for April, 1941, p. 228). Secondary sources consulted included A. T. Clearwater, ed., *History of Ulster County* (Kingston, 1907); Delaware and Hudson Company, *A Century of Progress; History of the Delaware and Hudson Company, 1823-1923* (Albany, 1925); A. F. Harlow, *Old Tow Paths* (New York, 1930); *Olde Ulster*; Marius Schoonmaker, *History of Kingston* (New York, 1888); N. B. Sylvester, *History of Ulster County* (Philadelphia, 1880).

gristmill, and still farther, where the waters of the Rondout enter the Hudson at the Strand, stood a few sheds and dwellings.

Up on the hills a few miles inland from the Strand, the village of Kingston had already emerged from its ruins after its destruction by the British in 1777. It now had about 120 dwellings and 800 inhabitants. Two or three sloops a week put up at the Strand or at Columbus Point, provided an outlet for the agricultural products of the countryside, and brought supplies to replenish its score or so of stores.

Kingston's inhabitants had resumed the slow and contented life of their ancestors, the sturdy Dutch burghers and husbandmen who for a century and a half had peopled the 'Sopus country. Theirs was a plain, homespun kind of life, reflecting the simplicity of their calling as tillers of the soil. They had remained aloof from the cosmopolitanism of New York, and the fertility of their fields, for long the granary of the province, had saved them from the unbending austerity of stony New England.

But the spirit of growth and industry which was taking hold of the country in the years following the Revolutionary War, the urge to make full use of the riches to which the inhabitants of the newborn republic had fallen heir, was slowly pervading the people of the region. The means of communication with the hinterland were gradually being improved. Turnpikes started stretching their tentacles, reaching out like arteries through which the life-blood of the country was to circulate. Mail stages ran oftener, and for the first time rolled on the west side of the Hudson. Newspapers secured a stronger foothold and acquired more viability. Greater effort was expended in reaching the outlying settlements and isolated homesteads.

In the village new enterprises were started, and for the first time advertising, crude, naïve, and already making incredibly wild claims, supplemented the homely notices of

arrival of merchandise at this store or that. The tempo of life was to remain slow and deliberate for yet many years, but the stream that was destined to grow and acquire the rush of the mountain torrent had commenced to flow. In the newspapers of the day, which devoted most of their space to the oddities and intelligence of far away places and to nascent political rivalries, scant record is found of the life of the people.

Among the names of old Dutch or Huguenot families traceable to the earliest settlers of Esopus, new and unfamiliar names appear in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Thus we find that of George Eddy in the land records of 1806 and later years. In 1820 he with his family was established on the west bank of the Rondout, operating a large cotton mill and a sawmill, availing himself of part of the ample water power of the falls. Who the man was and whence he had come no one knows, and no records tell the story. Local tradition is silent, and few indeed of the oldest inhabitants of the little village which took his name have so much as heard of him. Only the abandoned and forlorn graveyard on Church Hill, overgrown with vines and weeds, bears mute testimony to his sojourn in Eddyville, and the fading epitaph on his moss-covered tombstone, promising him remembrance as a "benefactor of the State," seems ironic in the face of his total oblivion.

Not that the importance of the man extends beyond his having enlarged the nucleus of a village around ambitious enterprises which were destined to be of brief duration. For the power of the falls had already been utilized at an earlier date. As far back as 1739 permission had been granted by the trustees of Kingston to a Cornelius Delamater to build a gristmill on the site. That mill ran until 1760 when it was completely wrecked by a particularly severe freshet.

One cannot help but be moved, however, when attempt-

ing to pierce the shroud of mystery which surrounds George Eddy, by the malignity of the fate which seems to have dogged the family and to have made the life of its members difficult and melancholy. For, in a span of about thirty years, one by one, young and old were carried to the little graveyard on the hill. Traces of the two remaining members of the family, Mary and Nancy, an infant, are lost soon after the complete collapse of the enterprise following the death of the founder in 1828.

While tragedy was stalking Eddyville, the general urge for expansion was becoming more articulate in the region and finding expression in the Kingston *Plebeian*, a Democratic Republican newspaper. In the fall of 1817 John Tappen, its editor, was inviting the attention of his readers to the importance of cultivating commercial intercourse with the "thickly populated settlements that border on the Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers." Kingston, he said, "must eventually become at some future day the great emporium of that country."

Events, then unrecorded and unheralded, were shaping themselves in far away Pennsylvania to bring into reality Mr. Tappen's dream with a swiftness that not even the boldest would have dared envision. "Stone coal," or anthracite, which few of the inhabitants of Kingston had ever seen, and the importance of which Mr. Tappen would have hardly recognized—stone coal was to be the builder of the region.

Legend has it that William Wurts, of Philadelphia, having purchased a basketful of the shiny stones, was so pleased with the results that he set about looking for deposits. He and Maurice, his brother, were successful and enterprising merchants. They bought promising land for about 50 cents to \$3.00 an acre. It is said that while Maurice was inspecting some wild tracts in the upper Lehigh and Lackawanna regions, he met a man who was in hiding. Though the owner of extensive lands which

examination showed were underlain with rich deposits of anthracite, this man could not make his assets available and meet his obligations. He had fled rather than face the prospect of indefinite incarceration in debtor's prison. Maurice, after becoming the owner of these lands, awakened to the importance of finding easy access to markets.

About 1822 the Wurts brothers reached what is today Carbondale, named it, and put up a log tavern-office. At first Philadelphia seemed the only outlet for the mines. For years the two brothers fought against obstacles which would have discouraged many. The small quantities of coal that were mined by hand were carted over the mountains and rafted over turbulent streams in which they would often founder. When they did reach Philadelphia they found an unresponsive trade whose small demand for the new fuel was being amply supplied by the more accessible Schuylkill and lower Lehigh fields.

It soon became obvious to the Wurts that unless they could reach the New York market their enterprise had little chance of success. At that time the Erie Canal was nearing completion. The whole nation was seized by a mania for internal improvements, and the linking of New York with the West by a water route providing effortless and, at that time, rapid transportation seemed a ready solution to the problem. It was natural that the two brothers should think of a canal as a logical means of reaching the rich market of New York City. A preliminary survey showed the project feasible, but the direct outlet to the Hudson at Newburgh or Cornwall was blocked by the Shawangunks. The people of Newburgh were so enthusiastic about the projected canal that they offered to tunnel through the mountains to bring the terminal to their shores.

It was while this problem was being pondered that Maurice Wurts met Abraham Cuddeback, a man living about where Port Jervis was to be, who advised him to

make use of the "Old Mine Road." This old road, shown on maps of two centuries ago, followed more or less the course of the Rondout, and led to the "Minisink country," a vague, ill-defined region replete with legends of silver or copper mines, which bold adventurers had sought as far back as 1641. Cuddeback's advice was followed. The Delaware and Hudson Canal Company was incorporated in New York in 1823. With unprecedented celerity legal difficulties were smoothed, monies raised, and on one sunshiny day in July, 1825, with prayers, singing, and outbursts of enthusiasm, the actual digging of the canal was inaugurated at the summit of the watershed at Mamakating.

Having chosen the Rondout as the channel of debouch into the Hudson, the company purchased property at the Strand. To this hitherto quiet and somnolent place, enlivened into desultory activity once or twice a week when the sloops "Controllor" and "Martin Wynkoop" landed at Abraham Hasbrouck's dock—to the Strand descended overnight an army of Irish and Scottish workers come to dig and shovel. Bolton, as the company attempted to rename the Strand, became a maze of crooked, narrow streets, winding among wooden shanties thrown together hastily to house the new population.

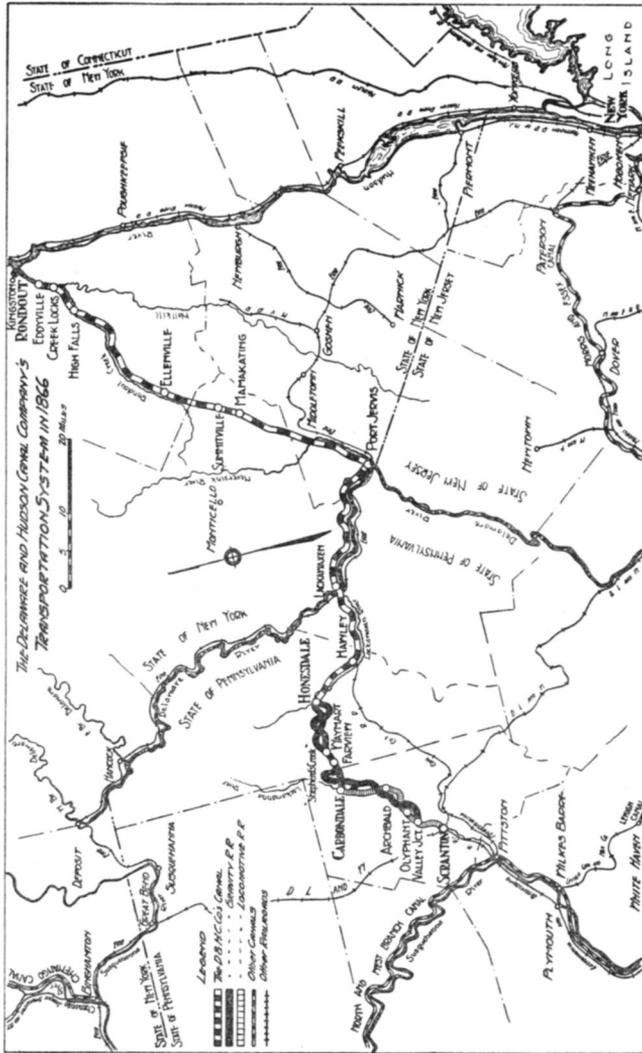
Eddyville, at the head of navigation, resounded with the creaking of wagon wheels and the boom of blasting powder. The blows of the axe vied with the din of hammers as trees were felled and homes erected. The brogue of the newly arrived workers, shouting, singing, and quarreling as the vigorous toil went on, fell with startling strangeness on the ears of the Van Akens and Freers, the Le Fevers and De Witts. Under the direction of James McEntee, the engineer in charge of the first twenty miles of canal, the work proceeded with haste and precision.

A few miles upstream, stone was discovered which bore a close similarity to the Chittenango rock from which the

cement for the Erie Canal was made. A new industry sprang up, and Rosendale cement, which was later to build the Brooklyn Bridge and the Croton Dam, was burnt in hastily contrived kilns and ground in the gristmills of the neighborhood.

Although the canal was not ready for operation for another two years, the day of the formal opening arrived seventeen months after the first spadeful of sod was removed. The weather had been cold and uncomfortable for a few days, but on this November morning in 1826 the sun shone brightly upon the multitude of workers and sightseers lining both banks of the creek. On wagons and carts, on horseback and afoot, they had come from great distances to view the wonder "which the Yankees had conjured." At Twaalfskill a select company of officials and guests boarded the "Morning Star" under the command of Captain Griffin, and with music, cheers, and the booming of cannon proceeded upstream to the tidewater lock at Eddyville. Here masonic rituals consecrated the cornerstone of the lock, and the official barge followed by other gaily decorated canal boats continued, on the high level for a few miles. The crowds cheered and sang. Enthusiastic onlookers grasped the towlines to relieve the "gorgeously caparisoned horses." Speeches were read, the engineers and the officials were cheered. Toasts were offered to the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company, to the workers, to Governor Clinton, and to "American Enterprise: may it never cease till it eclipses the vanity of the mother country." Thus reported Kingston's *Ulster Sentinel* of that week, devoting more than three columns to the fateful events which had awakened the creek from its centuries of slumber and peopled its shores with a population so alien to its old settlers.

The canal when opened for business in October, 1828, was little more than a ditch. Its width of 28 feet at the surface and 20 feet at the bottom, and its maximum



THE DELAWARE AND HUDSON CANAL, 1866

By courtesy of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad Corporation from their *A Century of Progress; History of the Delaware and Hudson Company, 1823-1923* (Albany, 1923), p. 195.

depth of 4 feet allowed the navigation of barges of not more than 30 tons capacity. It ran a distance of 108 miles from Eddyville to Honesdale, Pennsylvania, where the coal from the mines at Carbondale, 16 miles farther, was brought by gravity on cars traveling on flat rails spiked to hemlock stringers. On October 16, 1828, the "Orange Packet," the first barge to navigate the entire length of the canal, left Eddyville for Honesdale, and on December 5 the first shipment of coal—eleven barges carrying ten tons apiece—arrived at tidewater.

The growth of Eddyville, of Twaalfskill, and of the Strand was rapid. By 1832 an average of 4,000 tons a month was being carried to Rondout, and about 200 barges were engaged in making the trip to and from Honesdale. Prospects were good, contracts were let for a fleet of 100 additional boats, and the creek reverberated with the sound of the adze and caulking hammer.

While new dwellings were being erected on the hill, Eddyville along the towpath at the tidewater lock was acquiring the lusty water front atmosphere it was to maintain for three-quarters of a century. A row of stores carrying a variety of goods had sprung up, and there were inns and saloons where the canaler could quench his thirst and loaf between trips. Two churches had been built on the hill, but the heart of the village was along the towpath where the farmers who had abandoned the plow handles and the workmen who had discarded their shovels to grasp the tillers of canal boats drank and sang.

The traffic on the creek increased, and for the first time steamboats made their appearance. The "New London" and the "Hudson" began regular trips to and from New York. In 1836 Philip Lockwood started quarrying bluestone, and the flagstone industry which in twoscore years was to mount to millions of dollars annually, established itself at Twaalfskill. Ulster County bluestone was to be shipped to every state in the Union.

The canal company now made an experiment which was eventually to be the undoing of the great enterprise. As early as 1827 it was decided to try that new fangled contraption, the steam locomotive, for the sixteen miles of rail between the mines and Honesdale. Horatio Allen, an engineer of the company, was sent to England to purchase four locomotives and to study their operation. The engines arrived at New York in 1829, and at least one of them, the "Stourbridge Lion," was put on a canal boat and taken to Honesdale. Here Mr. Allen, then the only one having any practical knowledge of a locomotive, acted as machinist, fireman, and engineer. The road was in very bad condition, and it was thought prudent to risk as little human life as possible. When steam was up, Mr. Allen rode the locomotive for three miles, then reversed it and returned to the starting point. While the experiment could not be in any way considered a failure, the famous "Stourbridge Lion," after another trial run, was put in a shed to rot and rust. The other three locomotives were not even fired. They were one day to avenge the affront by bringing to an end the usefulness of the canal itself.

It would be irksome to recount the development brought about by the canal in all its detail. Suffice it to say that its history is one of increasing prosperity and usefulness, hampered now and then by the reverses and disappointments to which all human undertakings are subject. There were years of great prosperity and upbuilding, and years of depression when the growth was checked. The years leading to the Panic of 1837, cholera epidemics, the increasing industrial use of coal as a fuel, as well as the rise of labor unions had their repercussions upon the canal and upon the communities built on its path. Twice the canal was enlarged and its capacity increased by making the navigation of boats carrying a maximum of 136 tons possible. In 1872, 1,000,000 tons of coal came down to tidewater.

In the middle of the nineteenth century Eddyville and

the Strand had already assumed the appearance and importance of real inland harbors. A large fleet of schooners, tugs, steamboats, and barges was entering and leaving the creek. At any time one could see vessels whose home ports down-east brought to the creek the tang of salt water.

The Strand, now boasting of a population of 7,000, almost double that of Kingston, incorporated under the name of Rondout. Twaalfskill, busily engaged in the shipment of bluestone, had grown into a village of more than 100 dwellings, to be known as Wilbur. Eddyville was teeming with activity. The wide street along the towpath was lined with large buildings in which a brisk trade was carried on day and night. At either Connolly and Schaffer's, at Black Brothers, or at Ben Turner's Emporia, standing near the entrance to the tidewater lock, the canaler could find work clothes and Sunday apparel for every member of his household. The ladies could delight their hearts with figured jaconet, mull and Sarcenet muslins, Barcelona and Canton handkerchiefs, and white cashmere shawls with merino borders. On the long shelves behind the heavy mahogany counters could be seen row upon row of tins where spices, cassia, coffee, pearlash, candles; plug, paper, and ladies' twist tobacco; and Macoboy and Rappee snuff were kept. Hard by were the half opened barrels of salt fall mackerel, salt beef, and herring, and large casks of pungent cheshire cheese. Toward the back of the store huge coils of rope stood in front of nests of shovels, pickaxes, and cast iron pots and pans.

Loaded boats glided into the basin above the lock. The tired teams driven by young lads were unhitched and taken to one of the large stables behind the stores. The barges entered the weighlock and after their load was ascertained were locked to lower level. Here they would make fast to the long dock where fifty or sixty others awaited the tugs that were to take them to Rondout or New York.

Other boats docked on the east side of the lock waited their turn to start on their trip to Honesdale. The traffic was practically continuous, for as many as 150 boats locked through in a day. Fights and altercations started often as "the Irish tried to beat the Dutch" to the lock. The season was short, and the more round trips to the mine the more dollars could the canaler put in his pocket to feed his usually large family. His payments on his barge, the cost of repairs, and the feed bill for his team cut large swaths in his earnings. The youngsters of the tradespeople, standing barefooted along the towpath, watching with envy in their hearts his "Mary Jane" pass silently by, taunted him with the saw,

Canaler, Canaler, you'll never get rich
 You'll spend all your money and die'n the ditch;
 You — — — —.

Often his boy, who drove the team on the towpath, came in for a thrust. "A horse an' a mule and a jackass as a driver," they would shout.

These canalers were a hard-working, hard-drinking, and hard-swearing lot, and yet not devoid of a certain sense of poetry. Many boats had painted verses of their own on their rounded bows. They voiced their resentments in rhymes for all the world to read. When Mr. Hill, the superintendent of the canal, became too much for Old Mike, he let the public know that

Between Hill and Hell there's but one letter
 If Hill was in Hell times would be better.

Another old-timer, who had grown up on the towpath and now owned a boat of his own, declaimed on his cabin bulkhead,

May God above send down a dove
 With wings as sharp as razors
 To cut the throats of those damn rogues
 Cuts down canalers' wages.

More sober was the admonition of that red-headed giant whom the boating fraternity had ironically dubbed "Morn-

ing Glory." In large letters of black he had painted on the white sides of his boat, "Don't be Mean." Morning Glory was known in all the fourteen saloons of Eddyville's water front as a good, likeable fellow, when sober. When fortified by repeated drafts of Jamaica or St. Croix spirits, he would take on all comers just for the sheer animal joy of using his iron biceps.

Above the Diamond store, Johnny, the left-handed barber, plied his trade, carrying on the tradition of his confrere of the Kingston of 1830 who advertised in the *Sentinel*:

My art can lend new beauties to the face,
And spirits to every native grace;
The magic of the main 'tis I impart;
But for my skill in the cosmetic art,
What were the proudest dame?

But Johnny Feldman's clientele consisted mainly of canalers. He was known from Rondout to Honesdale, and such was his art that he could shave and trim the hair of a boatman while his barge was locking through. He was also a good shoemaker, and when barbering was dull he would retire to a back room, don his apron, and wield the awl and the needle in the best of form. One day a stranger in the section, who did not know of Johnny's dual trade, ascended the creaking stairs and asked for the barber. Johnny, who at that moment was busy resoling a pair of boots, offered to attend the newcomer's beard. "Oh no," replied our stranger, "No — — — shoemaker is going to shave me."

Of the three shipyards busily engaged in repairing and building boats, John Snyder's, across the way from Black's store, was the most important one, and some of the finest craft on the Hudson were built here. Large tug boats like the "Resolute" and the "Ives," passenger steamers like the "Charles C. Coutant" and the "A. E. Anderson"—named after the owner of the "Mary Powell"—and many others slipped from his ways into the Rondout.

On the same side of the creek, not far from the Snyder yards, stood the large warehouses and barrel factory of the Lawrence Cement Company. Here three-masted schooners brought their loads of staves from Maine and took on cargoes of cement or coal for return trip.

On the high cliff overlooking Eddyville from the east shore an amusement park had been opened, and to the dock at its foot the "James T. Brett" brought crowds of pleasure seekers from down the creek. The laughter and songs of the revelers lasted until the wee hours of the morning. A lustier merriment prevailed in the inns and saloons of the water front across the creek, where hogsheads of Ulster County applejack were being drained.

The booming voices accompanied by the clink of glasses would drift out of the open doors as the crowd of roisterers took up the refrain to an unprintable song:

Round and round the Wurtsboro turn,
The big boat chased the squeezer,¹
Pat Flaxey's boat had passed them both.
Pop goes the weazel!

Pat Flaxey was said to be the laziest man on the canal. He never steered his boat if he could help it. Yet he had a record of a round trip to Honesdale in eight days. His wife Bridget, a "good woman," lived on the barge with him, and sometimes trod the towpath while her man took his ease aboard. "Pat, O Pat," she would call to him, "What'll ye have fur dinner?" "Cook the kittle and bile th' pot an' make a cup o' tay, — ye!" he would answer. He had a beautiful baritone voice, and long before his boat could be recognized by the lock tenders his approach was heralded by his rendition of the canalers' song:

I'm happy, I'm happy
On my journey home
If you get there before I do
Tell 'em I'm a'coming through.

While the prosperity of the canal was at its height, and

¹ A squeezer was a double barge.

the people along its life-giving course spent their busy days working, hoping, and planning, the years of its existence were already numbered. The very coal that was the life of the waterway was also to be its death. As the use of coal had increased, so had the means of transporting it been accelerated and improved. The faster tempo of living had multiplied the length of shiny rails over which rolled trains carrying a more impatient generation. The era of blunt-bowed canal boats gliding lazily between green banks was fast waning. The events of December, 1878, were to hasten the ebb and deal the canal and its industries a blow from which there would be no permanent recovery.

The canal season had closed late, since unusually mild weather had kept the waterways open. Canalers were congratulating themselves on being able to make tidewater without fighting their way through ice on the last trip. The season had been good, and jobs seemed plentiful as winter labor began for the canalers in the cement mills and cooerage works.

The first week in December was warm, and overcast skies blanketed the Atlantic seaboard while southerly winds brought the mildness of spring days. A warm rain started falling on the eighth and continued steady and monotonous throughout the night. It increased in intensity the next day, when it stopped for a few hours, only to return with renewed vigor. On the morning of December 10, gray and forlorn, the rain had become torrential, and the wind had acquired gale force. Old-timers watching the creek, muddy and dark, rolling and swirling ominously into fast-moving eddies, shook their heads silently.

Men in oilskins, with shoulders hunched and heads bent to the wind were warping extra hawsers around partly submerged bollards. Great clouds of black smoke torn from every funnel in the harbor by the howling wind hurried northward like frightened birds. The southerly

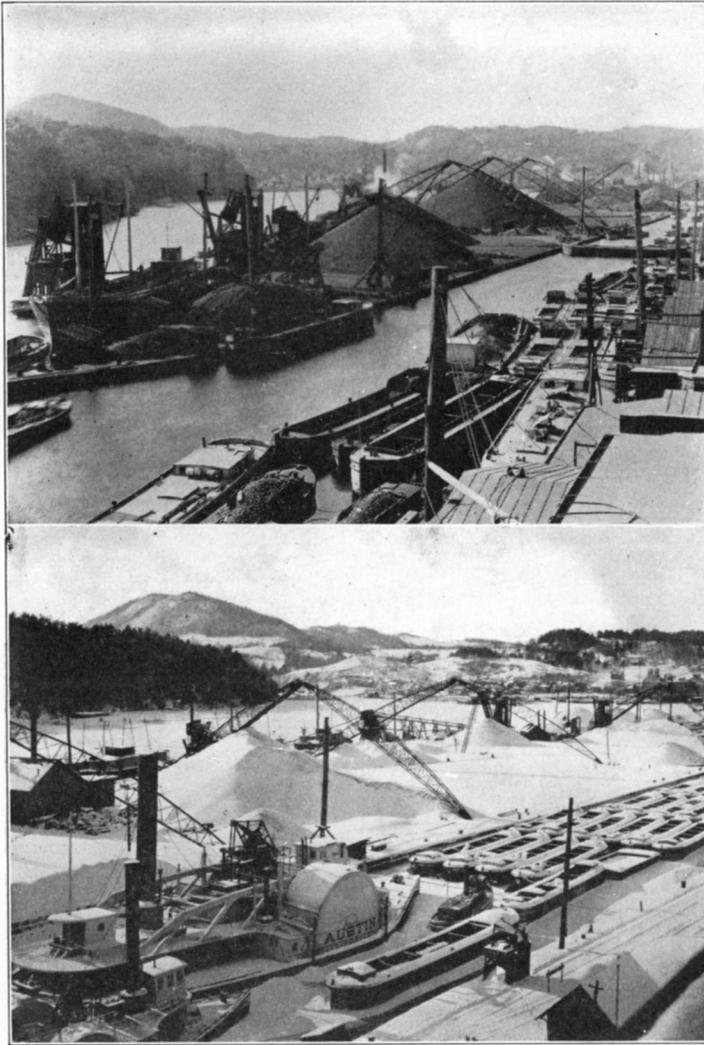


SCENE ON CANAL NEAR ELLENVILLE



TIDEWATER LOCK ON CANAL, EDDYVILLE

By courtesy of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad Corporation from their *A Century of Progress; History of the Delaware and Hudson Company, 1823-1923* (Albany, 1925), pp. 109, 183.



CANAL OPERATION AT RONDOUT
Summer and Winter

By courtesy of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad Corporation from their
A Century of Progress; History of the Delaware and Hudson Company,
1823-1923 (Albany, 1925), p. 279.

whistled and screamed through the riggings and buildings, and like a malevolent spirit lashed pitilessly at the straining men. Higher and higher rose the creek, faster and faster moved the current, carrying uprooted trees and crashing barns over the dam.

As the day wore on, the water front was abandoned for the safety of the hills flanking the canal. Huddled together on overcrowded porches and at windows the people, yesterday so joyous and carefree, watched their creek with awe-stricken eyes. As dusk approached, disheveled men, were feverishly working on the embankment near the guard lock. Bales of hay, bags of cement were rushed to the spot, and the wind brought shreds of shouts and warnings as they labored on. Slowly darkness enveloped the scene. Only the neighing of struggling horses and the threatening roar of unseen waters reached the listeners. Weird sounds, amplified and distorted by the gale, came to straining ears. Was that someone crying for help or the shriek of the gale around the chimneys?

At about midnight the rain ceased, and as if to make the terrified crowd witness the final scene of destruction, the fast-moving clouds uncovered the moon to light up the stage. Anxious eyes on Cutler Hill turned toward the embankment. A torrent was rushing through the breach and cascading down to the lowland behind the Fly, the road to Rondout. A canal boat loaded with cement was carried by the rush of water against the embankment and for a while closed the breach. As drift and wreckage pushed against the wedged boat, the embankment crumbled, and with a deafening roar, echoed and reëchoed by the cliffs, the mass of water and wood tumbled down and raced across the Fly. The whole stream was deflected toward the road. Houses, barns, outbuildings were carried away, careening madly in the turbulent rush of water.

In its "Local Intelligence" column, the *Kingston Free-*

man of April 16, 1879, carried the following item: "Canalers must be on board their boat tomorrow with a full crew; a man, a boy and a team ready for instant action." The extensive damage caused by the flood had already been repaired. A new guard lock had been built to replace the one carried away, the twenty-eight foot breach in the embankment had been filled. Help, in the form of clothing, food, furniture, and money, had come from many sides to allay the suffering of homeless families during the severe winter that followed the flood. In the mildness of April days new barns were being built and shaken foundations consolidated. Under the apparent general hope and happiness brought about by the industry of reconstruction, however, lay fear and insecurity. Rumors that the canal was to be abandoned persisted despite denials.

For yet many more years was shiny coal to come down in barges towed by horses; for yet many seasons was the canaler to sit contentedly at his tiller as the warm summer sun shone on the familiar waters of his canal. The hour was approaching, nevertheless, as more and more tons rolled on cars behind panting locomotives. The manufacture of quick-setting Portland cement had diminished the demand for the stronger but slower Rosendale product. Kilns and mills were shutting down. Canalers and cement workers were moving away to other parts, and stores in Eddyville were closing their heavy doors, never to be reopened. General discouragement was setting in, and those who carried on had no song on their lips and no swagger in their gait.

On the eve of St. Patrick's Day in 1892 a mysterious fire started in one of the buildings on the water front. It quickly spread to barns and stores while the population helplessly looked on. There are some who imply that the fire was not accidental, and others that its spread could have been prevented. The death knell had sounded for Eddyville.

On November 5, 1898, Boat No. 1107 cleared Hones-

dale with the last load of anthracite to traverse the canal. Soon after, the water was drawn off, and one of the busiest and most profitable canals came to the end of its career.

The Rondout Creek at Eddyville runs lazily between wooded shores with the languid somnolence with which the life of the village now flows by, unhurried and uneventful. On the shore stands a small frame house. Its walls, a bit askew and out of plumb, show the damage of successive freshets in unpainted, weathered patches. Farther on is an old brick building with large, arched doorway and windows, the only remaining structure of bygone days, the Diamond store, where Johnny, the barber, plied his trade. From the anchorage the red roofs of two other buildings can be seen through the foliage above the walls of an old lock, one of the gates of which has been long missing.

Nature has benevolently covered the signs of decadence and decay. The gaping wounds of fallen buildings and crumbling foundations are hidden under a lush growth of loosestrife and goldenrod which in late summer becomes a riot of purple and gold. Poplars and cottonwood trees, mulberries and maples have sprung up to cast a merciful shade on the nudity of rotting wood and disintegrating stone. Ivies and vines have festooned the lone walls which have grimly withstood the searing of fire and the onslaught of weather, and softened their sharpness with a mantle of venerability.