

MORRIS CANAL GREENWAY



WATER AND THE CANAL

When the Morris Canal opened for transportation in 1831, the main source of water flowed from the summit level at Lake Hopatcong. Numerous small streams and rivers entered the canal between Lake Hopatcong and Phillipsburg, helping to maintain the water level in the canal at 4 feet in 1831.

During construction of the canal, Lopatcong Creek was directed into the basin at the bottom of Inclined Plane 9 West where it combined with discharge water from the plane. But because Lopatcong Creek frequently flooded, a small water overflow and a large combined overflow-waste weir were built into the towpath between the bottom of Plane 9 and present day Strykers Road.



A view looking west down the towpath towards Phillipsburg and across the overflow-waste weir. On the right, in the distance, is the humpback canal bridge over what is now Strykers Road. On the left is a masonry structure where heavy planks could be dropped into a slot acting as a temporary water barrier across the canal prism in case of a break, to drain for maintenance, or to stop navigation at the end of the boating season.

This was done to prevent overflowing of the canal from stream flooding, thereby reducing the danger of a breach. Such a disaster could empty a whole section of the canal leaving the boats high and dry. The cost of repairs and lost revenue could be crippling.

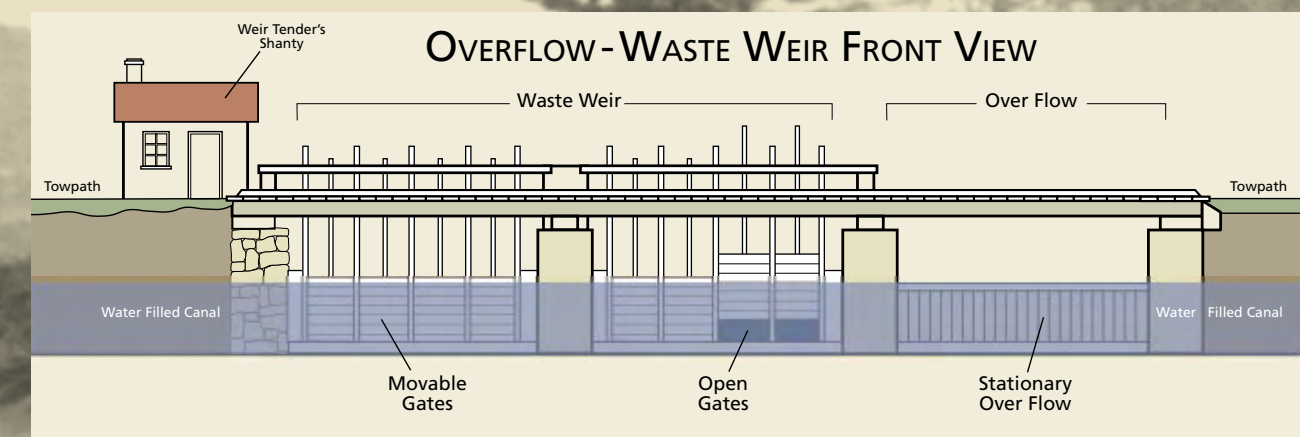
After the abandonment of the canal in the 1920s, the creek was rechanneled out of the canal bed, leaving the canal unwatered.



A long bridge carries the canal towpath across the combination overflow-waste weir. The section on the right acted as an overflow allowing excess water to spill back into Lopatcong Creek. In the left background are part of the control mechanisms that operated the waste gates during flooding. At approximately 76 feet, this waste weir was the largest in Warren County.



The overflow kept the water level in the canal constant under normal operating conditions by letting the excess flow out of the canal. The waste weir had movable gates that could be opened to let massive amounts of water flow out of the canal in time of flood.



This historic view looking east down the canal towards Port Warren shows a wide sweep of Warren County countryside. On the far left is the combination overflow-waste weir. In the center, the building at the bottom of Inclined Plane 9 West can be seen in the background.