

## National Canal Museum

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Easton, PA 18042

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### Canal History

In the early days of our country, the Indians traveled on rivers and lakes by canoe. If they came to rapids or waterfalls, they carried goods and canoes around the obstacle and later entered the water at a safe spot. But many of the people settling in the new world were farmers and merchants. The small canoes were not strong enough to carry the heavy cargoes and animals brought by these people. Strong wooden boats were constructed for this purpose.

The new boats were forced to stop at the first spot in the water where there were rapids or waterfalls. The boats were too heavy to carry to a safer spot, so the goods were unloaded and carried farther inland on mules or in wagons. Soon more settlers came and more goods had to be transported. Wagon travel became more and more expensive. In 1812, it took a six-horse team 18-35 days to transport 3,000 pounds of cargo by wagon from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia! Boat transportation was faster, but river travel was limited to the route of the water. In addition, rapids and waterfalls created problems. Canals were the answer. They had been used in Europe for many years. Now more cargo could be shipped, and the journey from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh was reduced to 3 1/2 days. No wonder that from 1815 -1835 more than 3,000 miles of canals were built in this country! As train travel became more important, the time was reduced even more - by the early 1850s it was 20 hours! Today, tractor trailer rigs cross the state daily in about 6 - 8 hours.

As early as 1727, Easton, PA was a very important part of moving goods by boat. It was centrally located at the junction of the Delaware and Lehigh Rivers, which is how Two Rivers Landing gets its name. As the canal era began, Easton became important as a canal port. It was one of the few places where three major canals came together: the Lehigh, completed in 1829 (some sections continued to operate until 1942); the Delaware, completed in 1833 (closed in 1932); and the Morris, completed in 1832 (closed in 1924). Today, Easton is the site of The National Canal Museum.