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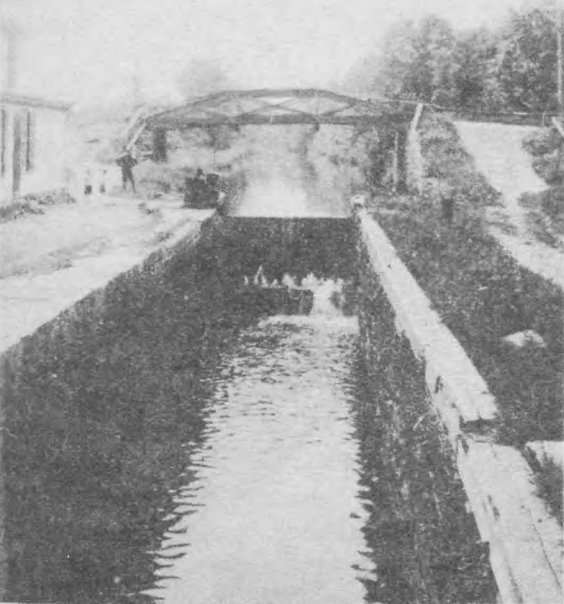
# STORIES of New Jersey

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FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT of the WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
1060 Broad Street, Newark, New Jersey

## THE MORRIS CANAL

In the 1820's, when the new country was expanding and beginning to develop its natural resources, there was great enthusiasm for artificial waterways to transport heavy goods, such as coal and iron, from the isolated interior to the growing manufacturing centers along the Atlantic seaboard. Railroads were still a vision. There were vast stretches of country rich in iron and coal that were forced to depend for transportation on the slow-moving horse or mule-drawn wagons travelling the often impassable roads.

One day in 1822 a Morristown man named George P. McCulloch was fishing at Great Pond, or Lake Hopatcong as it is now called. It occurred to him that the amount of water spilling out of that lake would be enough to maintain a canal running from Hopatcong east to Newark and west to the Delaware. At that time coal from the mines in the vicinity of Easton, Pa., had to be transported to eastern cities by the long water route down the Delaware and up the New Jersey coast, or by wagons which could haul only a ton. Fox Hill, between Denville and Parsippany, was a grade of almost 30 percent. It took powerful horses and oxen to haul even a small load over the hill.



The Morris Canal locks at Denville as they looked when the canal was in operation.

Following the discovery of iron ore all over Morris County, forges had sprung up even before the Revolution. In a single stretch of the proposed canal between Rockaway and Andover, a distance of 15 miles, there were 56 forges, most of which had been forced to shut down because they had practically exhausted the local supply of wood fuel. Large shipments of coal through the canal would mean the rebirth of this industry.

McCulloch's idea gained in popularity and a bill was introduced in the 1824 session of the new Jersey Legislature in an attempt to obtain State funds for building the canal. The legislature did nothing about it. The canal backers, however, got a charter authorizing