HISTORIC RECONSTRUCTION REPORT

LOCK 75

ARCHITECTURAL DATA

CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO CANAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Written by
William Bauman
Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Association Volunteer

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I. BACKGROUND

As part of the Historic American Buildings Survey, on February 9, 1960, Photographer Jack E. Boucher took the following photograph to document the as-is condition of the downstream lock gates. This view was from the East, looking upstream. The upstream gates were missing entirely and the downstream gates were deteriorated. The hardware for opening and closing the paddles at the bottom of the gates appear to be present. The hardware for holding the gates in the rounded quoins appears to be present. What was not clear from this one surviving photograph was the material condition of the metal parts; they could have been more rust than metal. In any event that was the condition of the gates in 1960.

If we go to the upstream end of the lock and look downstream, on April 16, 1973, the view was as shown above. Note that the abutment stones had fallen out of place and a social trail from the towpath to the prism bottom was evident. Standing a little further back, in the prism, and still looking downstream the view was as shown in the photograph to the right. There were not even remnants of the upper lock gates. The mortar had fallen out of the lock joints and debris had collected on the floor of the lock.

Some time ago the Young Americans Conservation Corps (YACC) built a bridge upstream of the lock from the towpath to the berm side as shown in the next photograph, dated April 25, 1978. A cable was strung between the supports as a hand railing; the towpath was at the left end of the bridge. Park Service maintenance workers and contractors drove up the towpath and parked
their vehicles in front of the lock house, as shown in the previous photograph. Most visitors would have parked their vehicle in the open field to the right of the bridge.

Early in 1970 the Park Service decided that many structures needed preservation and/or stabilization. The Denver Service Center sent a team of historians, architects, archeologists and necessary support personnel to be known as the C & O Canal Restoration Team, which was based at Seneca, MD, although their mailing address was: P. O. Box 77, Germantown, MD 20767. Mr. Edward D. Smith was assigned the task of documenting the history of the last four lift locks, which he completed in 1978. At the end of his report he said: "The house at Lock 75 stood in poor condition until 1976 when it was removed in order to be reconstructed. Its reconstruction is proceeding well and should be completed by the end of 1978." That reconstruction was the basis of a separate report.

The maintenance crews had refurbished the foot bridge across the canal by replacing the cable with a top handrail and adding a second, intermediate railing as shown in the adjacent photograph.

Once the lockhouse had been reconstructed, it was decided to refurbish the lock, put in new downstream gates and replace that YACC footbridge. A draft of this report was shared with Mr. Dale B. Sipes and Mr. Ray Fishel, who were both employees of the C & O Canal NHP at the time. Besides reading the report for accuracy, they were asked to identify the men in the several photographs. None of the men could be identified. Mr. Fishel observed that all Park Service personnel, including maintenance personnel, wore uniforms. Thus we conclude that the new lock gates were installed under the auspices of the C & O Canal Restoration Team with contract personnel. The men doing the pointing of the lock and the downstream abutment walls appear to be in uniform, but identification was not possible. Perhaps a reader will send in the information. All photographs are from the NPS files, unless otherwise footnoted.

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II. RECONSTRUCTION

During the time period Feb. 17, 1977 through Nov. 14, 1978 Lockhouse #75 was reconstructed, with the results as shown in the following photograph.

New lock gates had been constructed in the Old Trolley Barn at Cushwa Basin, Williamsport, MD. The berm side gate was installed first but not fitted tightly until the towpath side gate was installed. The following series of photographs shows the fitting in place of that towpath side gate:
The following view was from the downstream side of the lock; an irrigation type water pump was necessary to de-water the lock and clean out the lower pivot hole for each gate side.
This was a similar view from further downstream.

Now that the towpath side gate had been installed, it was time for the fit-up of the berm side gate. The crane lift was used to jostle that gate into position.
This small back-hoe was used to clean out the silt and debris in the bottom of the lock.

Now the towpath side gate final fitting was to start; note that the band at the top of the gate is not in place. The crane lift pulley would be moved to the missing board area.
The upper metal strap holding the towpath side gate in the hollow quoin was secured next.

The men, with the assistance of the crane, have fitted the balance beam to the top of the towpath side gate. The missing board has been installed in the gate.

The gates were then fitted with the steel bars to turn the paddles at the bottom of each gate.
Here was the berm side gate finished; the towpath side gate looked similarly.
The lock joints were repointed with fresh mortar as shown below.

The following photograph, dated October 17, 1980, shows the repointing of the downstream, berm side abutment wall.

To the left on the same date, the repointing of the downstream towpath side abutment wall had been completed.
Also on October 17, 1980, the adjacent photograph shows that the upstream abutment walls have both been repointed, the quoins are clean, the bottom of the lock is clean, but the lower lock gates had not yet been wired in the open position.

On October 22, 1980, the repointing of the downstream berm side abutment wall was nearly finished. Note the scaffolding in place for the upper wall portions near the bypass flume. The coping stones have been restored to their proper positions.

By March 1992, a decision had been made to replace the footbridge over the canal prism with two foot bridges, one over the bypass flume and the other over the upstream end of the lock. The adjacent photograph shows that the repointing was still in good repair and there was a trickle of water flowing through the lock. At other locks, the replacement of footbridges was usually accomplished with a crane truck. Surely one was available for this task, although no photographs have been found to confirm that.