



**New Jersey State Archives**  
225 West State Street, PO Box 307  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0307

## **Morris Canal & Banking Company: Microfilm Collection**

### **Brief History of the Canal**

Seeking to improve transportation between the coal mines of Pennsylvania, the iron forges of Morris County, and the great marketplace of New York City, the state legislature chartered the "Morris Canal and Banking Company" in 1824 to build an artificial waterway between the Hudson and Delaware rivers. When completed in 1837, the canal measured 109 miles in length and over 1,000 feet in elevation, and contained 23 inclined planes and 34 locks. Unfortunately, the company went bankrupt soon thereafter due to construction cost overruns and the depression of the late 1830s. Reorganized under new ownership, the canal company prospered briefly. Total tonnage hauled increased from 58,259 in 1845 to a peak of over 900,000 in 1866. However, newly built railroads began to cut deeply into the canal's business. The company felt obligated to lease the entire canal to the Lehigh Valley Railroad Company (LVRR), which used the right-of-way to construct an extension to its rail network in Pennsylvania. By the late 1880s, long-distance traffic on the Morris Canal had ceased altogether.

As evidence mounted of the canal's obsolescence, the LVRR began to press for the right to abandon its money-losing canal operation. In 1923, after years of dickering between a variety of competing interests, the state arranged a settlement transferring all property, stock, bonds, and rights of the canal company to the State of New Jersey, with the exception of valuable real estate in Phillipsburg and Jersey City, which was retained by LVRR. The state then sold most of the canal property and dismantled corresponding canal works. It continues to administer property at several lakes and reservoirs for use as park land and water supply resources.

### **Microfilm Collection Description**

The New Jersey State Archives has inventoried and microfilmed its entire collection of canal company and related records. The microfilm set consists of the following functional record subgroups:

**Minutes and legislation (7 reels), 1828-1973:** contains minutes of the company's board of directors and of the board's committees; also includes copies of relevant state legislation.

**Deeds and other land records (20 reels), 1820s-1950s:** documents all land purchases made by the company in constructing the canal and subsequent sales by the state in dismantling it.

**Stock and loan records, 1837-1954 (42 reels):** records the original sale and transfer of boat loans and company stock, and the payment of interest or dividends thereon.

**Operational records, 1836-1936 (20 reels):** consists of the shipping and financial records of LVRR pertaining to the canal, and documentation relating to canal traffic, boat weights, water levels, and the operation of locks.

**Records relating to canal abandonment, 1903-1974 (32 reels):** contains records pertaining to the investigation and subsequent dismantling of the canal; also includes photographs and news-clippings relating to the canal.

**Maps and drawings, 1840-1969 (8 reels):** consists of boundary maps of the canal and related properties, canal profiles, and engineering drawings of locks, inclined plans, and other machinery.

**Morris Canal & Banking Company: Microfilm Collection ~ Order Form**

The collection can be purchased either in its entirety (129 reels of 35mm film) or by subgroup, as described above. Purchasers of the entire collection will also receive a printed Guide to the Morris Canal and Banking Company Microfilm Collection, which otherwise will be sold for \$10.00. The Guide contains descriptions and file inventories for all record series, including an indexed, item-by-item list of all the maps.

Microfilm Subgroups:	Quantity	# of Reels	Total Reels	
Minutes and legislation	_____ @	7 reels =	_____	
Deeds and other land records	_____ @	20 Reels =	_____	
Stock and loan records	_____ @	42 Reels =	_____	
Operational records	_____ @	20 Reels =	_____	
Records relating to canal abandonment	_____ @	32 Reels =	_____	
Maps and drawings	_____ @	8 Reels =	_____	
Entire collection	_____ @	129 Reels =	_____	
<b>Total # reels ordered:</b>			_____ =	
<b>Guide to the Morris Canal &amp; Banking Company Microfilm Collection</b>		_____ x		_____
				_____

Please inquire as to cost of microfilm and guide - [nj.archives@sos.nj.gov](mailto:nj.archives@sos.nj.gov)

**Make checks payable to:** *New Jersey General Treasury*; libraries and other institutions may submit purchase orders.

**Fill out this form; and email/mail order to:**

[nj.archives@sos.nj.gov](mailto:nj.archives@sos.nj.gov)  
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