

SCHUYLKILL NAVIGATION COMPANY

The linking of the Delaware, Schuylkill and the Susquehanna Rivers began as a dream shortly after William Penn established Philadelphia. The Schuylkill River was treacherous and low in places. After many attempts, the dream was realized. The Schuylkill Navigation was a slack-water navigation system consisting of a series of dams, slack-water pools and canals that linked Port Carbon with the Port of Philadelphia. The main purpose of the System was to move coal from the coal regions to Philadelphia, and ports in between, to provide a more economical means of running the mills.

For over 75 years, the Schuylkill Navigation System served as a major transportation artery. The System enjoyed its greatest prosperity between 1835 and 1841. It originally contained 109 locks.

Although the railroad took a lot of the canal's business, the real reason for the demise of the System was the washing of the coal with water before it was loaded, causing large deposits of silt to form in the river. By 1872 the dredges that maintained the canal could hardly keep the channel free of silt deposits.

