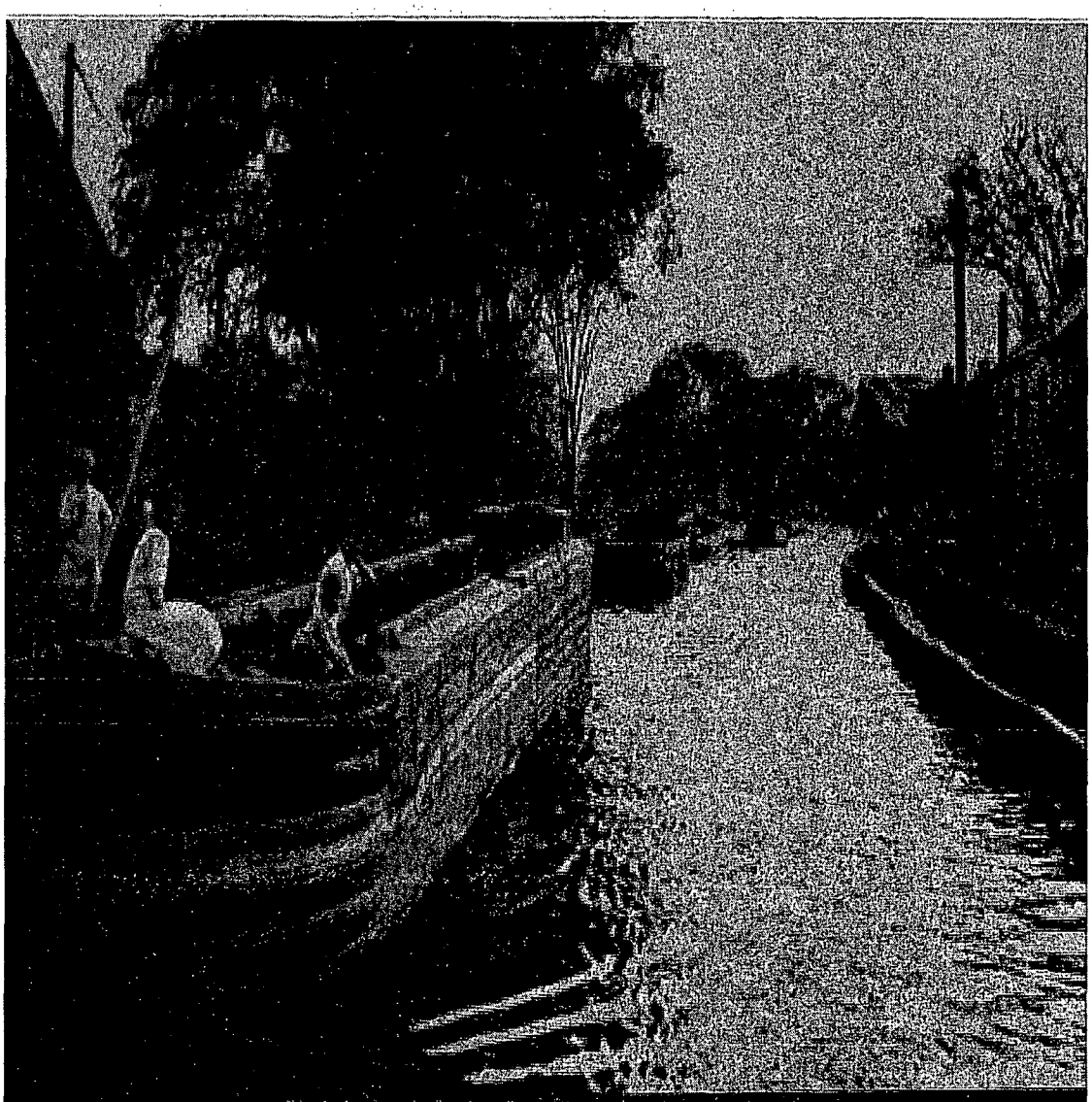
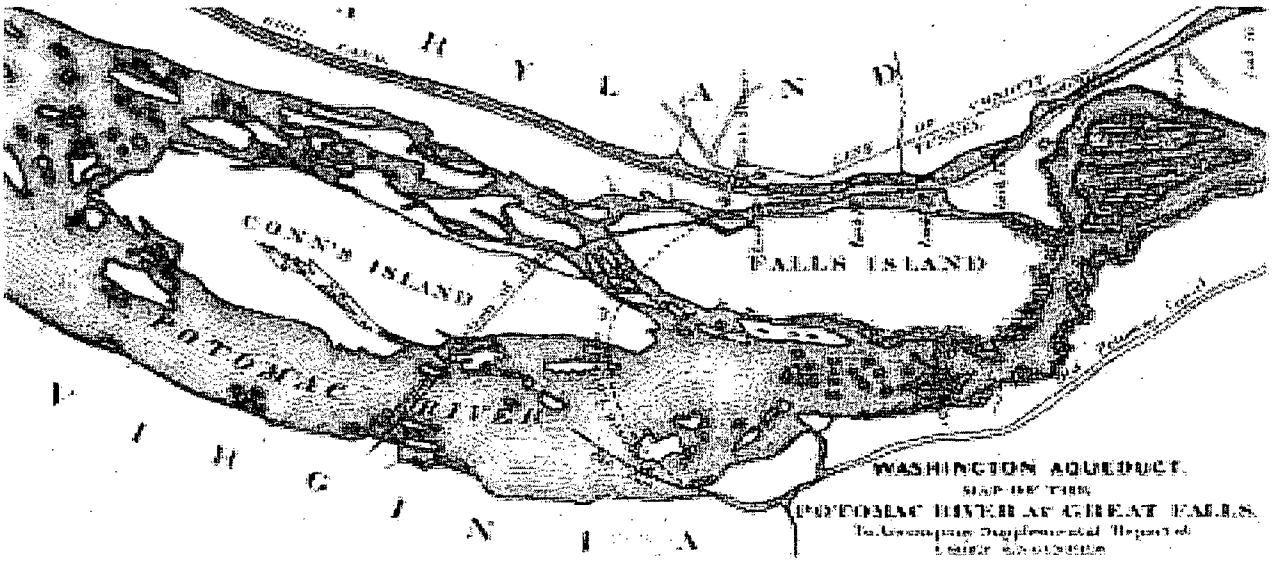
Kapsch 2004



Robert J. Kapsch

CANALS

Copyrighted material



IN-DOB. Potomac Canal on the Virginia side of the river, and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal on the Maryland side of the river, around Great Falls, Maryland/Virginia. February 1864. G & M, GJ842.W3 svar .M3.

Other attempts to improve navigation included a bypass canal around Conewago Falls, northeast of York, Pennsylvania, on the Susquehanna River, where work under the leadership of Philadelphia financier Robert Morris began in 1795 and was completed in 1797. Chief engineer of the canal was James Brindley, nephew of the James Brindley who built the Duke of Bridgewater's canals. The younger Brindley had come from the Manchester region with other "mechanics" almost twenty years earlier to work with John Ballendine on the Potomac and James River navigations. The Conewago Canal was less than a mile long and had three locks: two lift locks to raise or lower boats at the 19-foot drop in the Susquehanna, and a guard lock, which prevented unwanted water from entering the canal, particularly in times of flood. One of the first canals in America, the Conewago could be navigated by a canal boat going upriver in thirty-seven minutes, compared with a day's work for thirty to forty men on shore pulling the boat.[6]

Overall, however, river improvement efforts of the late eighteenth century like the Potomac and Conewago canals proved less than satisfactory. Despite the bypass canals, seasonal variations in river flow, both flood and drought, and winter ice still limited the use of rivers to a few months of the year. Improvements made in the riverbed tended to increase the velocity of river flow, hazardous for boats headed downstream. Hauling or poling boats back upriver against the current remained a problem without towing

Copyrighted material