



WEST PENN TRAIL at CANAL TUNNEL - EAST PORTAL



You are looking toward the mouth of the third tunnel ever dug in America. This tunnel, built in 1828 by State engineer Alonzo Livermore, was 817 feet long, 14 feet high and 22 feet wide – wide enough for a canal prism 15 feet wide at bottom, 15½ feet wide at top, and five feet deep, bordered by a towing path 6½ feet wide. In this 1970 photo, the canal tunnel can be seen between the 1907 railroad tunnel (left) and the 1864 railroad tunnel (right).

In 1828, few people in America knew what a tunnel was, so the canal commissioners had to explain that " a tunnel is like a well, but dug on the horizontal. This east end of the tunnel passed through weak shale and was not lined with arched stonework, so this portal

began to crumble not long after the tunnel was completed. Finally (1989) the tunnel opening was buried when this road was cut to provide access to the hydro-electric power station tunnel intake located nearby.

The first tunnel in America, dug in 1821 for the Schuylkill Canal near Reading, PA was 450 feet long and was soon converted to an open cut.

The second tunnel in America was dug in 1827 for the Union Canal near Lebanon, PA. Now the oldest tunnel in America, and a national civil engineering landmark, the Union Canal Tunnel, 729 feet long, is still in use, today passing tourists on a short boat ride.

The fourth tunnel in America was dug in Pittsburgh, in 1830, to carry canal boats through Grants Hill, from the terminal basin (between Penn and Liberty streets , at the foot of Grant Street) to an outlet lock on the Mon River, where a canal to Cumberland, MD was to have begun.

The fifth tunnel was the first railroad tunnel in America, built in 1833 for the Allegheny Portage Railroad, to cut across the Staple Bend of the Little Conemaugh River, near Johnstown, where the tunnel can still be seen (and entered).