

"Old Lock 9" - Monongahela River

Homeport of UMRA's Flagship, the *Cindy*

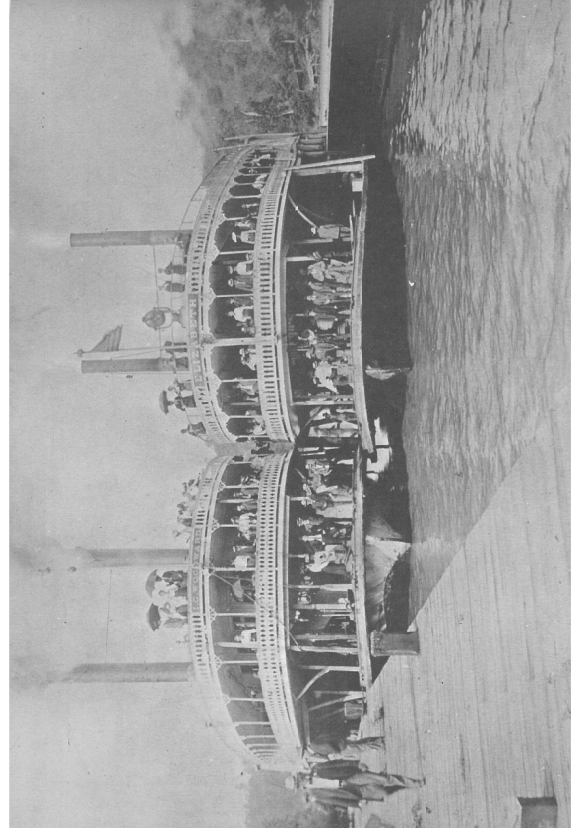
After the Civil War, steamboat commerce on the lower Monongahela burgeoned, thanks in large part to the construction of locks and dams by the Monongahela Navigation Company of Pennsylvania.

In 1872, Colonel William E. Merrill of the US Army Corps of Engineers reported "Since 1850, steamboats have reached Fairmont only ten times." Morgantown received most of its supplies by wagon over bad roads from rail heads at Uniontown and Fairmont, or by flatboats towed by horses sixteen miles upriver from the head of slackwater at New Geneva. He thought extension of slackwater up to Morgantown was badly needed, and he recommended federal construction of locks and dams 8 and 9 along with construction of No. 7 by the Monongahela Navigation Company.

Colonel Merrill located Lock 9 at Hoards Rocks, and designed a lock that was 200 feet long in the chamber, ten feet longer than the Navigation Company locks. At the recommendation of "Old Slackwater" Moorhead, he designed a stonemasonry arch dam instead of a timbercrib structure. Stonemasonry construction was selected because the 15.5-foot lift at Dam No. 9 would be nearly double that of the downstream timbercrib dams and because a masonry dam would be tighter and hold more water during droughts. The chief engineering innovations at No. 9 were the use of culverts through the lockwalls for emptying and filling the chamber, instead of valves in wooden lockgates; and first use in the United States of Stoney valves, a combined slide and roller valve invented by English engineer F. G. M. Stoney that allowed one man to open and close the valves in the emptying and filling culverts.

Construction of No. 9 began in 1873 and was finished in late 1879, but No. 9 was of little value to navigation until locks and dams 7 and 8 below it were finished. In 1881, Merrill began construction of Lock 8 and General Moorhead began construction of No. 7 which was completed in 1883, but Merrill had to stop building No. 8 for lack of funds. After more funds were provided, construction of No. 8 resumed in 1887. On November 8, 1889, Colonel Merrill rode the packet *Adam Jacobs* up to Morgantown to celebrate completion of No. 8.

Lock 9 served river traffic until a new and higher No. 8 was opened in October 1925.



Sunday morning, July 20, 1902. Pilot Frank Ganoë backed the *Elizabeth* from Morgantown wharf and left for Pittsburgh. Frank Williams moved the *I. C. Woodward* away from the wharf at the same time. The *Elizabeth* belonged to the Monongahela River Packet Company, the *Woodward* to the rival Pittsburgh, Brownsville and Morgantown Packet Company, and the pilots of the competing boats were determined to be the first to Lock 9 because the first boat through the lock would win most of the freight and passengers waiting between there and Pittsburgh. Neatly side by side, they raced down the ten-mile pool of Dam 9 and put on full steam as they hove in sight of the lock.

Lockmaster Benjamin Hoard heard their whistles and strode out on the lockwall to welcome them. He watched with amazement as the two boats, smoke boiling from the stacks and paddlewheels churning the water, bore down on the lock. Frantically, he tried to wave them off. Neither pilot slowed, neither gave an inch, and the two sidewheelers simultaneously crunched into the lock entrance.

When swearing subsided, the lockmaster asked both pilots to back the boats off. Neither would budge. He threatened them with every regulation in the book, and the answer was still no. Both were first at the lock. Finally he returned to the lockhouse and called the company superintendents and at last arranged orders for Williams to back the *Woodward* out of the lock entrance and let Ganoë take the *Elizabeth* through first.

Our thanks to Corps Pittsburgh District webmaster Dave Schwab for the scans of the Old Lock Nine photos, and to Leland Johnson for the *Headwaters District* history book.

