

Canal terminology

Aqueduct- Structure built to carry the watered canal over an intersecting watercourse or valley.

Basin- Area in the canal prism that has been widened to allow the docking of boats for loading, unloading and off duty time for boat crew, while still allowing free traffic through the canal.

Berm- A horizontal space about one to two feet wide and located about one foot above the water surface on the side slope of the canal. This space protects the upper part of the interior side slope of the canal. Or - Opposite wall to the towpath that protects the interior (prism) of the canal.

Bypass flume- Water course constructed parallel to the lock chamber. The flume was used to control the water levels on either side of the lock by allowing water from the upstream side to flow to the downstream side.

Freshet- Flooding caused by heavy rain or snowmelt

Inlet lock- An Inlet or River Lock was built in order for the canal to accept boats from the river into the canal.

Landing- A place for loading and unloading cargo along the canal, often a small agricultural operation.

Lock - A lock is a chamber used to lift or drop water levels in order for a boat to move across elevation levels. There are 74 lift locks that rise 605 ft from Georgetown to Cumberland.

Prism- The watered section of the canal, not including the berm and towpath

Scow- A long flat bottomed square boat that carried cargo in an open hold. The canal used scows for transporting repair supplies and maintenance crew along the canal.

Script- Currency used by the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Company to pay employees and boatmen. Canal script could be accepted by businesses in towns along the canal. It was created in 1837 because of a shortage in specie and the script would eventually make its way beyond the Maryland/Virginia border to Pennsylvania and Ohio.

Water weir- a cut constructed through the side of a canal for channeling off any surplus water. A waste weir used wooden planks to control the level of water in the canal.

Wharf- A place for loading and unloading cargo along the canal, often larger operation with multiple docks.