

NEW YORK STATE BARGE CANAL, WASHINGTON STREET LIFT
BRIDGE
(Erie Canal, Washington Street Lift Bridge)
Washington Street
Spencerport vicinity
Monroe County
New York

HAER NY-473
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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NEW YORK STATE BARGE CANAL, WASHINGTON STREET LIFT BRIDGE (Erie Canal, Washington Street Lift Bridge)

HAER No. NY-473

Location: Carries Washington Street over the Erie Canal, Ogden, Monroe County, New York

Washington Street Lift Bridge is located at latitude: 43.1955751, longitude: -77.8537368. The point represents the control tower and was obtained in 2009. There is no restriction on its release to the public.

Significance: Washington Street Lift Bridge, located on the Erie Canal, is a component of the nationally significant New York State Barge Canal. It is one of sixteen such bridges constructed between Fairport and Lockport.

Description: The sixteen vertical-lift bridges on the Erie Canal are Warren pony trusses raised by an electrically-driven system of cables, counterweights, and sheaves. As described in the New York State Barge Canal National Register nomination, “the moveable truss is supported by vertical lifting frames at either end. When the bridge is ‘down’ the lifting frames retract into the pits” located behind the bridge abutments. “The bridge is raised by cables that run from fixed anchor points at the top of the pits, down around sheaves at the bottom of the lifting frame, back up to sheaves at the top of the pit, and down to cast concrete counterweights. When the counterweights sink into the pits...the cables pull the lifting frames upward by the sheaves at their lower corners.” Each bridge has a control tower, with the motors and gearing generally located in the pit nearest to the tower.¹

The vertical-lift bridge carries Washington Street across the canal.² The steel Warren pony truss measures 145' long and 18.7' between curbs and has an open-grate deck. There are steel access stairways at either end of the east side of the bridge to provide access to a pedestrian walkway on the bridge. Steel lattice lines the walkway. The abutments are concrete with machinery pits covered with cross-hatch plates located behind them. The bridge is in good condition.

The control tower is located on the east side of the south approach. The two-story frame building sits on a concrete foundation and is clad in fiber-cement siding. It has an asphalt-shingled pyramidal roof. The fenestration consists of two-over-two-light and three-over-three-light wood windows. The building is entered by a wood pane-and-panel door and is in good condition. It retains the historic warning bell outside the upper level door.

Near the control tower is the storage shed, a frame building on a concrete slab foundation. The building is clad in vertical-board siding, while the gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

¹ Duncan Hay, “New York State Barge Canal,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2014, Section 7, Pages 21-22.

² Description of current conditions is based on a site visit made by the HAER recording team in summer 2009.

There are one-over-one-light vinyl windows with steel mesh covers and a vertical board paneled door. The shed is in good condition.

History: Contract 105, awarded to Skene & Richmond of Louisa, Kentucky, on April 19, 1912, covered the construction of five lift bridges, including the Washington Street Lift Bridge. The contract had been completed by August 1913.³

Sources:

Annual Report of the State Engineer and Surveyor of the State of New York for the Fiscal Year ended in September 30, 1914, Vol. 1. Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, 1915.

Hay, Duncan. "New York State Barge Canal." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2014.

Series B1762, New York State Archives, Albany, New York. "Western Division, Erie Canal, Section 9, Sta. 3430 to Sta. 3460," approved December 29, 1922, 118.

Historians: Laura S. Black and Jami Babb, summer 2009

Project Information: The Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) is a long-range program that documents and interprets historically significant engineering sites and structures throughout the United States. HAER is part of Heritage Documentation Programs (Richard O'Connor, Manager), a division of the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior. The New York State Barge Canal Survey was undertaken in summer 2009 in cooperation with the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor (ERIE), Beth Sciumeca, Executive Director. Justine Christianson, HAER Historian, and Duncan Hay, ERIE, served as project leaders. The staff of the New York State Canal Corporation provided access to the sites. Craig Williams of the New York State Museum provided research materials and assistance. The HAER field team consisted of Jami Babb and Laura Black.

³ *Annual Report of the State Engineer and Surveyor of the State of New York for the Fiscal Year ended in September 30, 1914, Vol. 1* (Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, 1915), 311.

Appendix: Images of Current Conditions



Image 1: Overview of Washington Street Bridge with control tower at left. Field photograph taken by HAER recording team, summer 2009.



Image 2: Control tower with historic bell and storage shed at rear. Field photograph taken by HAER recording team, summer 2009.