

II. Superintendents' Papers

More exactly named, the SUPERINTENDENTS' PAPERS might be called the papers of the early acting commissioners (1826 - 1831), of the superintendents, and of the supervisors of the Pennsylvania Public Works Canal System, including all those canals of the state which, together with the (Old) Allegheny Portage Railroad, the New Allegheny Portage Railroad, the Columbia and Philadelphia Railroad, and the never-completed Gettysburg Extension Railroad, were built in 1826 - 1856 at public cost under the Board of Canal Commissioners. In essence, these papers are archival records of the superintendency of the exploration for, of the construction of, and of the operation of the several canals and the railroads which comprised the Pennsylvania Canal (1826 - 1857).

During the first two years of its official existence, the Board of Canal Commissioners assigned men out of its own membership to direct the creation and the development of divisions. Acting Commissioner Charles Mowry, for example, was authorized to oversee the early construction of the Eastern Division; Acting Commissioner Abner Lacock that of the Western Division. This practice, however, was abandoned within a few years and, from 1831 onwards, the Board appointed divisional superintendents and divisional supervisors, the former of whom corresponded in function to the superintendents of railroad divisions in the twentieth century, the latter of whom supervised maintenance and repairs on the several divisions or lines of the Pennsylvania Canal System.

The papers of the acting commissioners, of the superintendents, and of the supervisors preserved in the BUREAU of LAND RECORDS present, then, an official day by day, month by month, year by year archival account of the exploring for, of the constructing of, and of the operating of each of the several divisions and the lines. Although, unhappily, the files of a number of superintendents, men whose names began with the letters T to Z, have disappeared, the records are as a rule detailed and accurate.

The earliest files of any particular division may be expected to contain, and commonly do contain, packets of papers presenting the accounts of the exploring engineer and of his staff, with voucher lists