

Group III. The Map Books

The surviving ones of the many maps and map books which, in building and operating years, belonged to the Board of Canal Commissioners manifest a marked limitation: they include few maps or sets of maps representing divisions or lines as completely built and in operation. Far more commonly they consist of maps and profiles drawn by or for the exploratory engineers who surveyed the routes being studied by the commissioners or adopted for this or that divisional canal or line.

Two distinct archival values, however, inhere in those map books which have been preserved:

First, they represent at its best map-making in Pennsylvania during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. They record, in meticulously exact and often beautifully rendered cartography, the expeditions among the mountains and along the great rivers of the Commonwealth of famous engineers: Charles S. Treziyulny, James Geddes, David Bates Douglass, Nathan S. Roberts, Moncure Robinson, Charles T. Whippo, Edward F. Gay, Charles L. Schlatter, and John August Roebling. They carry on with fine dignity the traditions of such earlier map-makers as Lewis Evans, Reading Howell, and John Melish. Particularly eloquent are they of the state's determination to conquer the obstacles set to the canal and railroad building by Allegheny Mountain and of the state's gradually won victory in the establishment of a flourishing and prosperous east - west route of trade and travel.

Second, the map books provide numerous drawings for dams and for raft chutes in them, for feeders, reservoirs, locks, lock-gates, lock houses, aqueducts, towing-path bridges, waste weirs, etc., thus affording