

The Old Canal Loop, Medina

Recently, while giving a brief talk on the Erie Canal, several people found it hard to believe that a bridge once crossed over the canal on Church Street in Medina. Knowing how wide the Medina canal basin is today, it is hard to imagine. Nevertheless, here is a picture showing the Church Street Bridge looking about due east. I think the picture was taken from the top of the tower on the Bancroft Hotel, which was all of six stories high.

It was a simple steel arch bridge with plank flooring. At the north end of the bridge, Church Street ended into the canal towpath, which led to several businesses. At the south approach of the bridge on the west side of Church Street was a coal yard. It appears to me that the three canal boats docked under the bridge have unloaded coal there. The building in the lower right hand corner was the Medina Iron Works. Also in this same area was the Medina Gas Works. Both of these businesses would have relied on shipments of coal for manufacturing purposes. Hence, they were located on the canal. Directly east of the bridge at the curve was the William Hedly Planing Mill. The factory building in the distance, to the far right, was that of S.A. Cook on East Avenue.

Around 90 years ago, the Church Street Bridge was removed and several properties were appropriated along the south side of this loop. It was at that time that the canal basin was expanded as we know it today. Consequently, on the north side of the basin, a huge poured concrete retaining wall was built to reinforce the canal bank. This in itself is an engineering feat. The towpath, or walkway, is located on the top of that retaining wall.

It is also just east of where this bridge was located that the Oak Orchard River flows under the canal.

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