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The Culvert Underpass on Culvert Road in the Town of Ridgeway was first constructed in 1823. This road going under the Erie Canal is the only underpass in the entire canal system built for a roadway.

The culvert is about 150 feet long and 7 feet, 6 inches high in the center of the arch. The sides and top supporting the "canal" above are of quarry stone.

A cornerstone with the date 1823 was built into the foundation but removed when the waterway was widened. It is now part of the basement wall of a house near the canal.

John Ryan Jr. (1801-96), mason and contractor, "built all the bridge abutments on the enlarged canal between Lockport and Albion, and had many other large jobs" according to Issac Signor. It seems evident that he constructed or supervised

Bethinking of Olde Orleans

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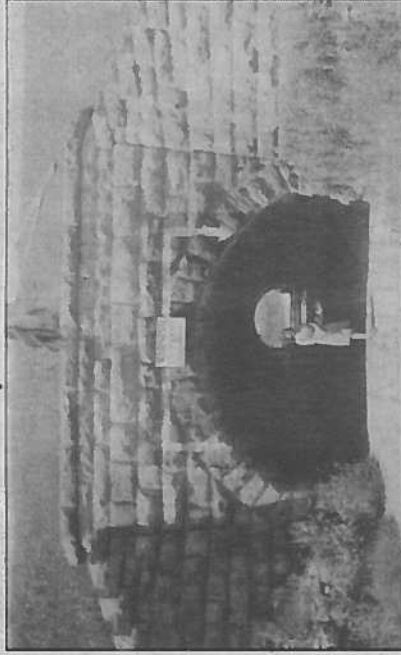
the building of these culvert walls and the stone archway in the 1840s or 1850s.

Born in Philadelphia, John was the son of John Ryan (1750-1836), a Revolutionary soldier.

Young John learned the trade of mason as a boy in Lycoming County, Pa. Until 1825, he worked in that area, coming to Batavia that year, and shortly afterward to Medina. His wife, Hannah Oberdorf, was born in 1811 and married him in Barre in May 1826.

John worked on the canal during the period of its enlargement — from the late 1830s to the early 1860s. For five years, he was superintendent of repairs on the western section.

He became an influential



businessman, with investments and operations in the quarrying industry.

One source credits him with having been "the original discoverer of the sandstone deposits at Medina." Signor states that "the first regular quarry in Orleans County ... was opened by John Ryan in 1837."

In the census of 1855, John Ryan is shown as head of a family that included his wife, Hannah, and 10 children.

John's occupation is given as "canal superintendent." Three sons were old enough

to be working: M.W. Ryan as a contractor, Charles C. as a clerk and John W. as farmer.

Both John and Hannah Ryan are buried in Boxwood Cemetery.

The above information is taken from *Historic Sites In Orleans County, N.Y.* by Irene M. Gibson.