

CANAL AND RAILROAD DAYS

D&R Canal Feeder at Cadwalader Park, c. 1905. This view shows the canal swing bridge and bridge tender's house. At the far right, behind the gentlemen standing on the steps, is the gardener's cottage. Both buildings are now gone.



D&R CANAL

The Delaware & Raritan Canal opened in 1834, forming a direct passage for boats traveling between the Delaware and Raritan rivers. It was critical to the industrial and commercial development of the region. Boats carried coal, iron and agricultural produce to businesses that in turn shipped their finished products to the expanding cities of Philadelphia and New York.

The D&R Canal is what is known as a contour canal. In other words, it follows the ground avoiding dips and rises to the greatest extent possible. As a result, the canal winds and curves across the landscape.

The 43-mile main line of the D&R Canal is located between Bordentown on the Delaware River and New Brunswick on the Raritan River. A 22-mile spur north of Trenton passing through Cadwalader Park is known as the Feeder. Most of the water in the canal is drawn from the Delaware River at Bulls Island, about 20 miles north of Cadwalader Park, and flows slowly downhill by way of the Feeder all the way to Trenton.

The D&R Canal prospered in its early years, carrying as much as 2.8 million tons of freight in 1866. Eventually, the canal could not compete and traffic declined. The last year of operation was 1933. The State of New Jersey acquired the canal in 1934 and turned it into a source of water for towns in central New Jersey – a purpose it still serves.

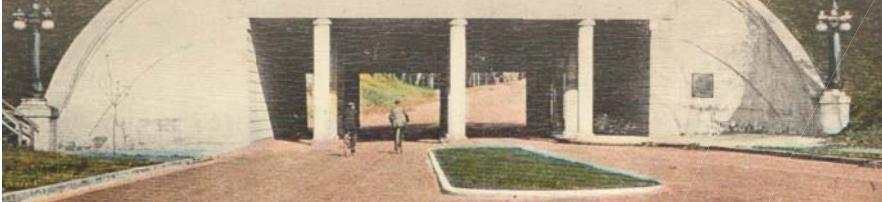


For many years, the canal embankment at Cadwalader Park featured flowerbeds. Mules would have traveled the canal towpath pulling boats.



Cadwalader Park's wood dock made it convenient to take a cool dip in the waters of the Canal Feeder, c. 1920.

The Parkside Avenue Tunnel was completed in 1910. It made for a new formal entrance into Cadwalader Park and the suburb of Cadwalader Heights. Stairs, visible to the left, provided access to the railroad's Cadwalader Station platform.



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A southbound Bel-Del freight train steams past the Lovers Lane crossing, c. 1870. This photograph predates the establishment of Cadwalader Park by 20 years. Lovers Lane served as the main entrance to Henry McCall's country estate, Ellarslie.



A Bel-Del passenger train approaches the Cadwalader Park platform from the south, c. 1905. This view is looking southeast from the Lovers Lane swing bridge. The canal towpath is to the left.



This view is looking northwest from the swing bridge over the D&R Canal Feeder at Cadwalader Park, c. 1905.

BEL-DEL RAILROAD

The Belvidere Delaware Railroad, known as the Bel-Del, was built from 1850 to 1854 to supplement the service of the D&R Canal Feeder. The railroad and canal were not direct competitors since they were owned by the same corporation. The railroad provided extra freight capacity, particularly for coal from Pennsylvania, and it provided needed passenger service to the small towns on the Delaware River from Trenton north to Phillipsburg.

Trains did not stop at Cadwalader Park until 1903. The railroad built a passenger platform and a small shelter on the west side of the tracks near Parkside Avenue. The station was a "whistle stop" meaning that engineers did not stop unless signaled.

The Bel-Del operated as part of the Pennsylvania Railroad system until the late 1960s. When the railroad went bankrupt, the Bel-Del was abandoned. Subsequent work by the D&R State Park converted the old railroad into a recreational trail.

... in Trenton's Cadwalader Park

Just beyond this sign and down the hill is the Delaware & Raritan Canal State Park, one of central New Jersey's most popular recreational corridors for hiking, bicycling, canoeing and fishing. It is possible to leave Cadwalader Park from this point and travel a nearly level path 29 miles north to Frenchtown or two miles south to downtown Trenton and another 34 miles northeast to New Brunswick. Most of the canal system remains intact and is a reminder of the days when mule-drawn boats delivered coal and freight to the towns along its route.

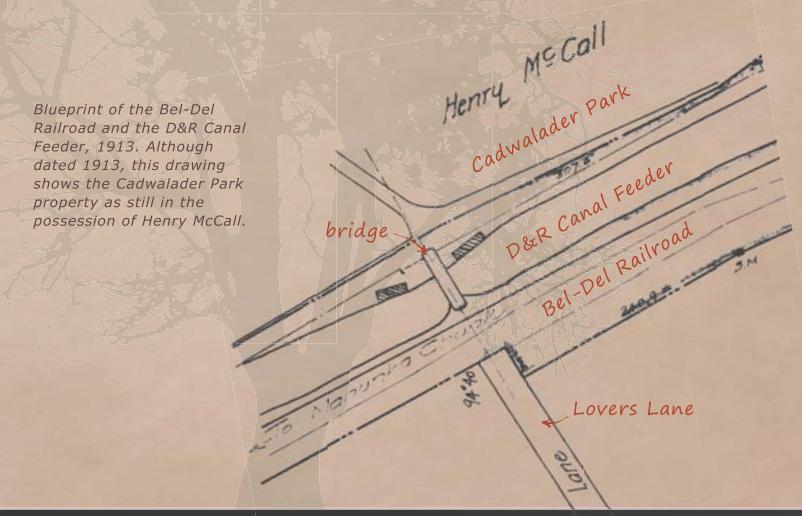
LOVERS LANE CROSSING

A bridge first crossed the Delaware & Raritan Canal Feeder near this location in Cadwalader Park in the mid-1830s. The crossing was a requirement of Thomas M. Cadwalader when he sold a strip of land to the canal company. He wanted to be sure that the new canal would not interfere with access to his farm. This bridge could be temporarily swung out of the way of passing boats.

In 1841, Henry McCall bought the 148-acre property from Cadwalader and not long thereafter built Ellarslie mansion. A beautiful tree-lined entry lane, which led from River Road, across the canal and up a drive to Ellarslie, eventually became known as Lovers Lane.

After the McCall property was sold to the City of Trenton for Cadwalader Park in 1888, the city planted hundreds of trees to shield the park from the transportation corridor and a "tunnel" was opened under the canal and railroad at Parkside Avenue in 1910. The bridge at Lovers Lane was removed shortly thereafter. During these years, the canal and railroad were thought of as unwelcome reminders of industrial Trenton. The park, after all, was meant for visitors to escape the noises, sounds, smells and scenes of the city.

Despite efforts to separate the park from the transportation corridor, the two were forever linked. After the railroad was torn up in the late 1970s, a pedestrian footbridge was restored to the location of the original bridge. Today, the canal is considered one of the city's most important historical and recreational assets.



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