

1. Name: Riley's Lock House

2. Planning Area/Site Number: 24/26

3. M-NCPPC Atlas Reference: Map 13  
D-15

4. Address: Seneca Creek at C&O Canal, at Seneca, Md.

## 5. Classification Summary

Category	building	Previous Survey Recording	M-NCPPC
Ownership	public	Title and Date:	1976 Inventory of
Public Acquisition	N/A	Historical Sites	
Status	unoccupied	Federal	State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> County <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/>
Accessible	no	Present use <u>educational, government, museum</u>	

6. Date: 1829

7. Original Owner: C&O Canal Company

## 8. Apparent Condition

a. excellent      b. unaltered      c. original site

9. Description: This three bay, two-and-a-half story house is built into the side of a hill facing south towards the C&O Canal a short distance away. Constructed of Seneca sandstone, the stone takes on a grey color above the windows and below grade on the north elevation. There are six-over-six double-hung windows with sandstone sills and lintels. The gable roof has black asbestos shingles.

10. Significance: This stone lockkeeper's house at Lock 24 of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal was an integral part of the era of canal transportation, sheltering the lockkeeper and his family.

The lockkeeper's job was to work the locks in the summer and to keep them in good repair during the winter. During the winter season, from November 17 to March 1, the lock keeper's salary was \$35 a month, plus firewood, the house use and about an acre of land. He earned \$10 a month the rest of the year.

The John Riley family lived in the house from 1890 to 1924. Riley used his acre of land to feed his family, having a stable, hen house, spring, vegetable garden, hog pens, and cattle grazing in an open meadow. (The yard could not be fenced as the wall area had to be kept free for loading the barges.) About 25 feet north of the house was a shanty where the keeper stayed to tend the locks at night, or in bad weather. It was furnished simply with a bunk, a wood stove, oil lamp and cracker box for storing records.

The property was owned by public transportation companies even after the Canal closed in 1926. It was sold to the Seneca Hotel Corporation in 1973 and to the U.S. Dept. of the Interior in 1974. It is currently used by the Girl Scouts.

11. Researcher and date researched: Kathryn Scott - 10/79      Candy Reed  
Margaret M. Coleman      Arch. Description

12. Compiler: Gail Rothrock      13. Date Compiled: 10/79      14. Designation  
Approval

15. Acreage: 1.94 acres

## MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

M: 24/26  
Magi #

## INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Riley's Lock House

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Seneca Creek at C &amp; O Canal

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

8

VICINITY OF Seneca

STATE

COUNTY

Maryland

Montgomery

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

U.S. Dept. of Interior

Telephone #: 343-1100

STREET &amp; NUMBER

C St. Between 18th &amp; 19th Sts. NW

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE, zip code

DC 20240

VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

Liber #: 4523

Folio #: 701

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Montgomery County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Rockville

STATE

Maryland

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

MNCPPC Inventory of Historical Sites

DATE

1976

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Park Historian's Office

CITY, TOWN

Derwood

STATE

Maryland 20855

**7 DESCRIPTION**

M:24-26

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

**DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

This three bay, two and a half story house is built into the side of a hill facing south towards the C & O Canal a short distance away.

The building is constructed of Seneca sandstone with corner quoins, the reddish color of the stone changes to a gray above the windows on the south elevation and below grade on the north elevation. There is one stone step on the south elevation in front of the vertical paneled wooden door with a brass door knob and surmounted by a three light transom. On the north elevation there are two doors: on the west side the door is vertical paneled and on the east side the door is a modern hollow core door which is padlocked shut.

There are six over six double hung windows with sandstone sills and lintels. The east and west gable ends have two small square louvered windows.

The gable roof has black asbestos shingles. There are east and west interior end chimneys.

**CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY**

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW							
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)				
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION						

SPECIFIC DATES 1829 BUILDER/ARCHITECT

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This stone house was built at Lock 24 of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal for the lock keeper, and was an integral part of this era of canal transportation. Although it is very small by today's standards, the house sheltered 7 children and their parents from 1890-1924, the John Rileys.

The house was built in 1829 of red Seneca sandstone, and white washed to be more easily seen by boat captains. The yard could not be fenced as the wall area had to be kept free for loading and unloading the barges. This proved to be fatally hazardous to a member of the Riley family, and three-year-old Caroline drowned.

About 25 feet north of the house was a shanty where the keeper stayed to tend the locks at night or in bad weather. It was furnished simply with a bunk, a stove, and cracker box for storing records.

The lock keeper used his acre of land. Behind the house (on the west) was a large yard which included part of the present parking lot. On the south side were a stable, hen house and outhouse. Water for the house came from a spring west of the house, and was carried into the house by hand. Across the canal from the house was a large vegetable garden, hog pens and cattle grazing in the open meadow. Thus Mr. Riley was able to feed his family from the land.

Necessary shopping was done at Frederick Allnutt's General Store, located across from the lock house until it was destroyed by the flood of 1889.

Wood stoves were used for heating and coal oil lamps for lighting.

The winter working season was from November 17 to March 1. The lock keeper worked day and night, seven days a week during this time, for a salary of \$35 a month, plus firewood, the house use and about an acre of land. He did not work the locks, but kept them in good repair. During the remainder of the year he received \$10 a month salary, and worked hard to keep the locks from being damaged.

The property was owned by public transportation companies even after the closure of the Canal in 1926. It was sold to the Seneca Hotel Corporation in 1973,<sup>2</sup> and to the present owner in 1974. The Girl Scouts currently operate the lockhouse, presenting programs each weekend. They dress in authentic costumes which were researched by the leaders, and attempt to recreate a day at the lockhouse, c. 1890.

### FOOTNOTES:

1 Kathryn Finch, "Riley's Lockhouse, Seneca, Md., 1890-1924", 1976.

2 Land Records of Montgomery County, Md. 4360/543 (April 11, 1973).

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Land Records of Montgomery County, Maryland  
 Research of Kathryn Scott, Bethesda leader of Cadette Girl Scouts.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.94 acres

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION****LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES**

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Kathryn Scott/Margaret M. ColemanCandy Reed - Arch. Description

DATE

ORGANIZATION

Sugarloaf Regional Trails

1979

STREET &amp; NUMBER

TELEPHONE

Box 87

926-4510

CITY OR TOWN

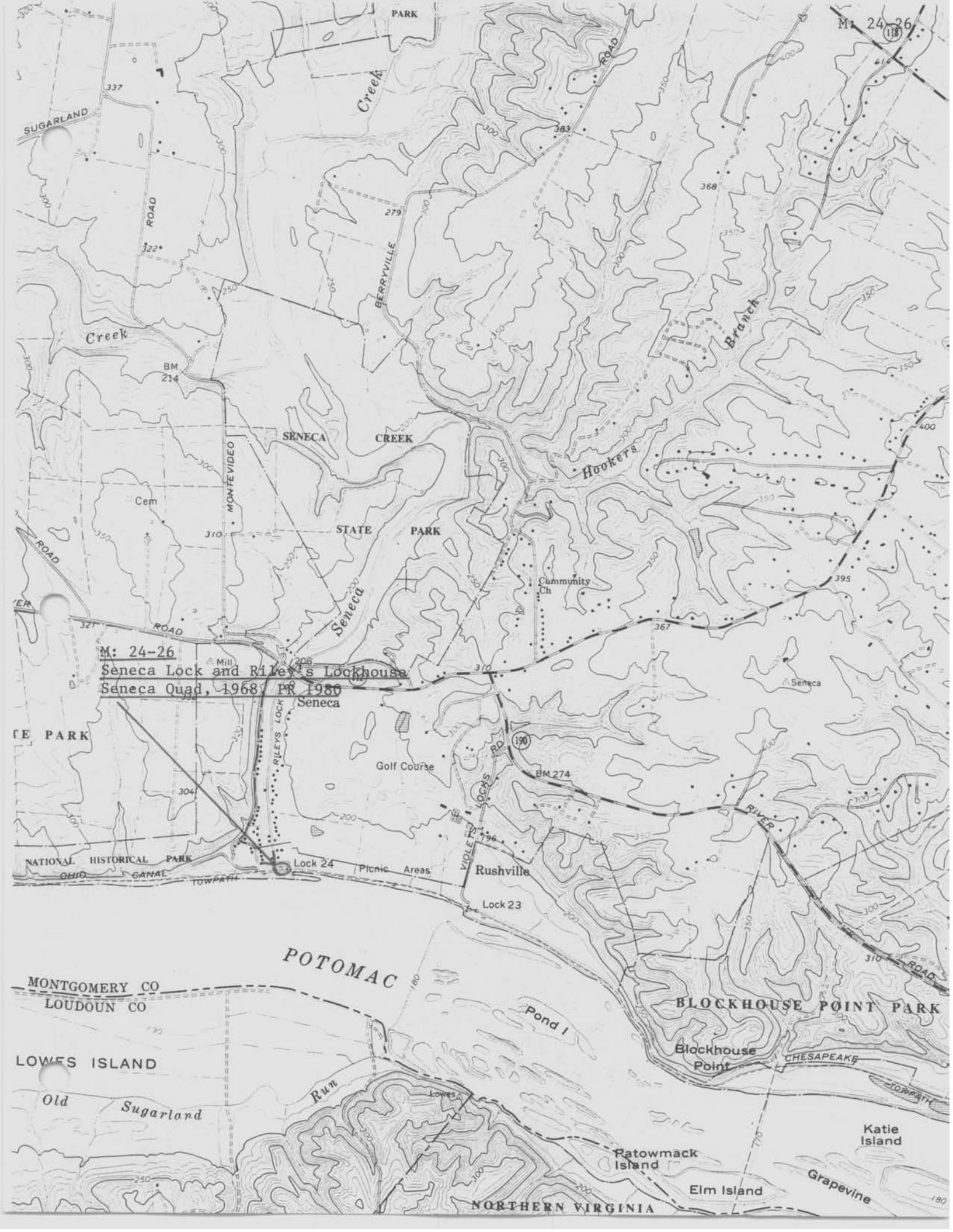
STATE

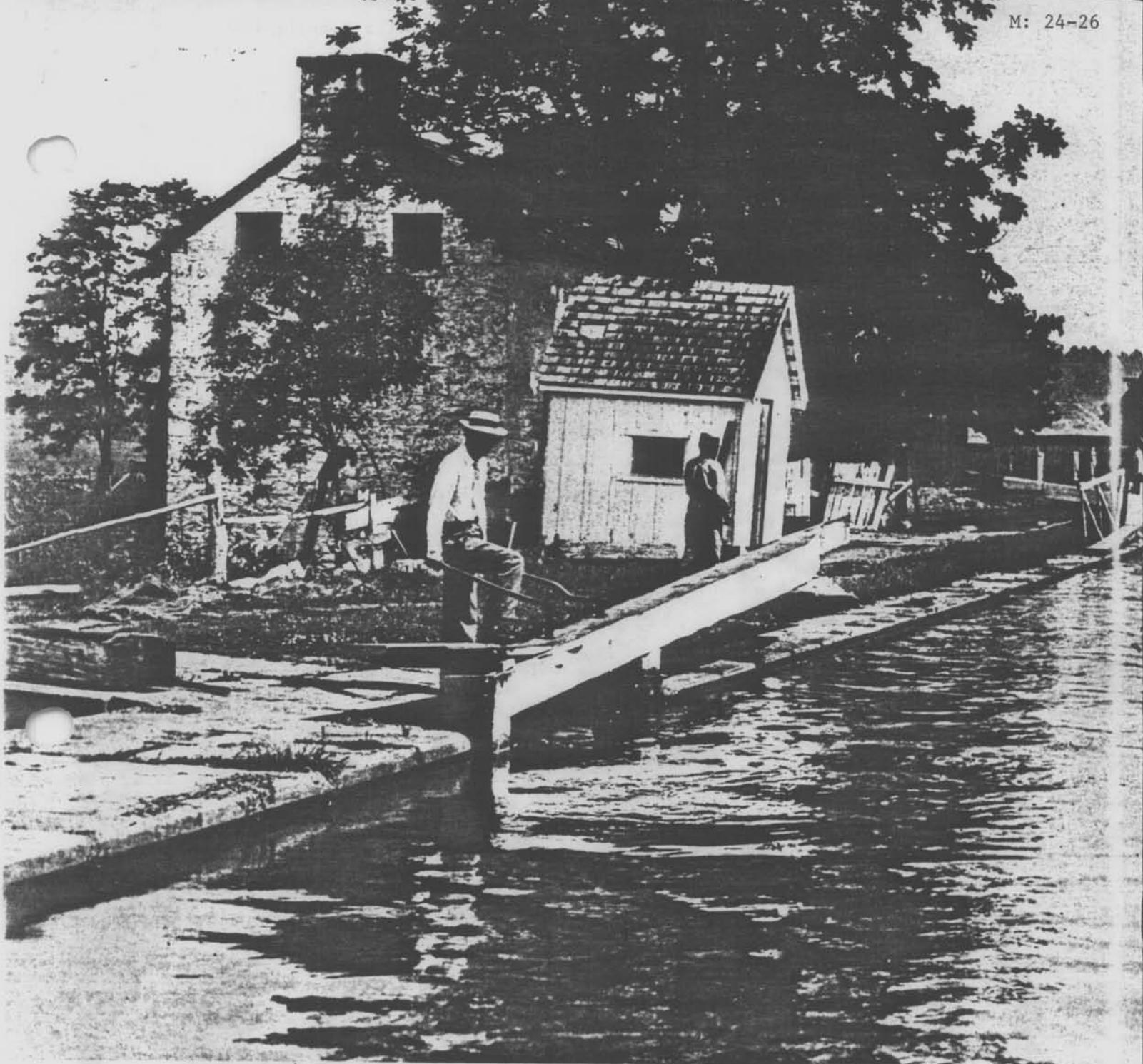
DickersonMaryland 20753

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
 The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
 (301) 267-1438





From 1890 until the canal closed in 1924, John Riley kept the Seneca lock. From the canal company management, he received a house; adjoining land for raising vegetables, pigs, cattle, chickens, and horses; and a salary of thirty-five dollars a month from April through October, and ten dollars a month when the boats did not run but the lock needed repair.

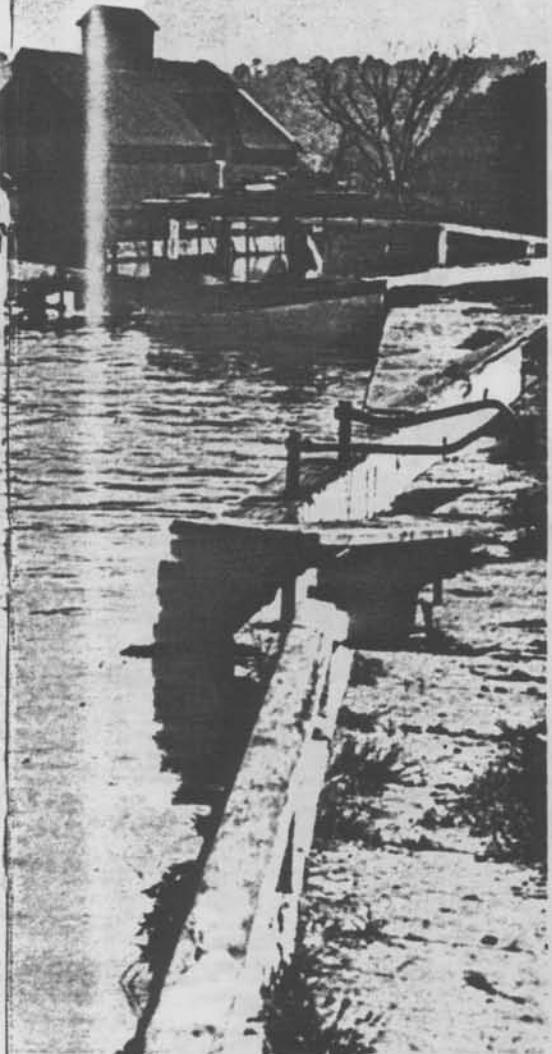
He married Roberta Jane Ricketts on October 22, 1890, and their seven babies were born in the two-bedroom

house built of native sandstone. They named the children Cleveland, Upton, Raymond, Ernest, Katherine, Mervin, and Helen.

When the children were little, Bertie Riley was always very fussy about keeping the gate to the tiny yard in front of the house closed. She realized that the canal was a hazard for toddlers, but the canal could not be fenced in because the space was needed for people and produce. The day this photograph was taken, the

gate was left open. This would happen again, with tragic consequences. On September 23, 1905, three-year-old Katherine Riley fell into the six-foot-deep canal and drowned.

Bertie was uncomfortable living on the canal after this accident, and she persuaded her husband to buy a house on River Road. She collected her other daughter and five sons and walked up the road, but John remained behind and tended his lock.



Courtesy of E. B. Thompson, historic negative collection; original negative in Thomas Hahn collection, from *Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, Old Picture Album*, by Thomas F. Hahn; National Park Service photograph



John Riley continued to work his lock until the canal closed in 1924. From a tintype belonging to Riley's daughter, Helen Riley Bodmer



John Riley's wife, Roberta Ricketts Riley, bundled up her remaining children and left the stone lockhouse after her baby fell into the canal and drowned. She found a little house for her family on River Road, and there today, hanging on the wall, is a picture of the little girl, Katherine. Courtesy of Helen Riley Bodmer