

UNION CANAL AND THE “SWATTIES”

This scenic ride provides opportunities to learn about the Union Canal and cycle beside and over the Swatara and Little Swatara Creeks that provided their waters for the Canal. By starting at Union Canal Tunnel Park, you can visit the park and, perhaps, enjoy a canal boat ride (specific Sundays). The annual Union Canal Days are held the third weekend in May. For more information: <http://www.lebanonhistory.org/>.

Celebrating Union Canal Days in May



South Portal of Union Canal Tunnel

In 1792, construction of a canal using the Tulpehocken and Swatara Creeks to connect the Schuylkill River at Reading and the Susquehanna River at Middletown was undertaken. Five locks were constructed between Myerstown and Lebanon, but financial difficulties ended this first endeavor. In 1811, the Union Canal Company of Pennsylvania was organized; ultimately a canal with 102 locks over 80 miles was completed in 1828. A north branch was completed in 1832 from Water Works to Pine Grove to reach the coal fields. Construction of the Tunnel, by hand drilling and blasting with gunpowder, lasted two years, 1825-1827. This achievement connected the eastern and western branches. The Union Canal Tunnel is the oldest existing transportation tunnel in the country. The Canal ceased operation in 1885 due to several factors - a flood that caused considerable damage, insufficient water supply, costly widening of the locks, and ultimately, railroad competition.

The ride goes through an area called Union Water Works. A community was created to support the Canal; residents included engineers, boatmen, lock keepers, the weigh master, steam house tenders, boat makers and owners of business enterprises. A dam was constructed as well as a pump station to lift water from Swatara Creek to feed the summit

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at Lebanon. Water traveled for four miles in a wooden barrel type pipeline that was sometimes at a height of 30 feet or buried underground.

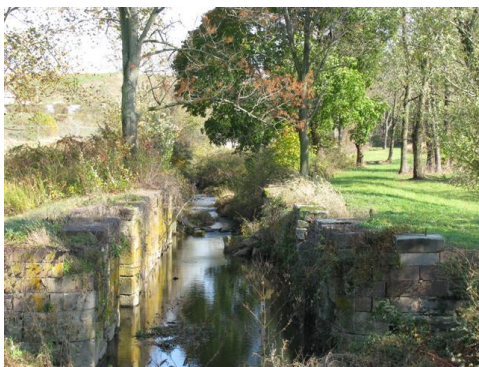
After the demise of the Canal, the Water Works' lake served residents as a recreational area for swimming, picnicking, and fishing until Hurricane Agnes' fury broke the dam breast in 1972.

In less than two miles from your start, the route passes by Hill United Church of Christ which was constructed with stone taken from canal locks, and in less than 3 miles the route passes by a canal lock on a farm that participates in the county's agricultural preservation program. Preserving the past and the future is valued in Lebanon County.



Canal Lock on Emma Road

To view 2 additional locks, instead of turning initially on Emma Road, continue a short distance on Russell Road to view two Canal locks. The Greater Lebanon Refuse Authority maintains a trail to enable visitors to walk to the locks for better viewing.



Canal lock at the landfill

While the Union Canal was of economic importance to Jonestown in the 19th century, this community was established by William Jones in 1761 because it was on the route taken by traders traveling between the Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers. Eventually, this was also a major land transportation route from New York to Pittsburgh. Much trade also took place by rafts using Swatara Creek until the Canal was opened. Wolf

Tavern (1796), Buck Hotel (1804), and the Heilman Hotel (rebuilt in 1862 after a fire) are three remaining structures that reflect the significance of past centuries' traffic and trade.



Wolf Tavern which is a private home today

Jonestown's citizens developed many enterprises including hand decorated dower chests, coverlets, handmade shoes, tinware, a tannery, carriages, cigar factories, brick and pottery yards.

As you cycle on Market Street and pass through "downtown" Jonestown, imagine a different era when this was a vibrant commercial area and where parades were frequently held to display pride and spirit. Today, the community is developing a new streetscape for its future, and parades are still a tradition.

A "modern day" feature of this route is the Greater Lebanon Refuse Authority's landfill. The many wells that protrude are capped to capture and direct methane gas to the *gas to energy* facility. Methane gas produced by the landfill is being burned to produce an average of 3200 kilowatts of electricity per hour. This is enough to supply 3000 homes daily. For more information about this operation, the Union Canal locks trail, water reclamation projects, visit <http://www.goglra.org/>.

Rural churches, cemeteries, productive farms and orchards as well as frequent encounters with "the Swatties" - Swatara Creek and Little Swatara Creek - will round out your experiences on this ride.



Cemetery on Light's Church Road



Zoar Evangelical Lutheran Church

Dead End Road –Bear Right!



Bridge over Little Swatara Creek

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Nor should you miss out on the opportunity to enjoy Sycamore Spring Orchard & Market's fruits and scrumptious desserts. Strap on a pannier for *take away* if you aren't ready to "refuel" at 5.7 miles into the ride! <http://www.sycamorespringorchard.com/>



Union Canal and "the Swatties"

Descriptive Cue Sheet

Ride Start Location: Union Canal Tunnel Park, North Portal Parking Area on Tunnel Hill Road. Traveling east on SR422, in Cleona, turn left at the traffic signal on Center Street which becomes Tunnel Hill Road. The North Portal Parking Area for the Tunnel is on your left. Total distance from SR422 and Center St. is 1 ½ miles. This parking area can be reached from other directions as well including SR72. A totally different start location could be Jonestown's public park on Mill Street.

Dist.	Cum.	Dir.	Road
0.0	0.0		North Portal Parking Area
0.1	0.1	R	Tunnel Hill Road (<i>caution: commuter traffic</i>)
0.9	1.0	R	Hill Church Road <i>Hill Church is aptly named as you will experience the most challenging hill on this ride!</i>
0.8	1.8	R	Russell Road <i>As you enjoy your deserved downhill through farmland, look for Indiantown Gap. On right, .5 mile early 19th century farmstead with summer kitchen.</i>

(If you want to view 2 well preserved canal locks, continue on Russell Road .3 mile to take a trail along the locks. Return to join the route by turning left on Emma Road.)

0.9 2.7 R Emma Road *As you descend towards a dairy farm which is in the agricultural preservation program, note the canal locks on your right.*

1.0 3.7 L Elias Road

0.2 3.9 L Heilmandale Road

0.2 4.1 R Continue on Heilmandale Road

1.6 5.7 L Thompson Avenue *Sycamore Spring Orchard and Farm Market is at this intersection. Another nearby orchard is Honey Bear.*

1.2 6.9 R Water Works Way *You are cycling through "engineering history" as you imagine the 4 mile long wooden feeder that carried water to where you started the ride. Note the former summer cottages on the hillside and ponder the fury of Hurricane Agnes as it destroyed the dam and flooded Swatara Creek.*

0.8 7.7 R Ono Road Be prepared for an immediate left.

0.2 7.9 L Swatara Drive *On a hot summer day this section of roadway offers coolness and shade as you cycle alongside Swatara Creek.*

1.4 9.3 L Ono Road *Cycle by a farm that grows acres of mums and the Landisdale Farm that grows organic vegetables and grass fed beef cattle..*

1.0 10.3 R Valley Drive

0.9 11.2 L Racehorse Drive

0.3 11.5 R Campmeeting Road *Signage denotes that the Lebanon Valley Conservancy with the support of the landowner has been able to conserve lands along Swatara Creek for agricultural and streamside habitat.*

1.0 12.5 L SR72 *Exercise caution for traffic.*

0.3 12.8 R Jonestown Road (becomes Market Street) *Exercise caution for traffic. Cross Swatara Creek before climbing to the center of Jonestown. Buck Hotel is on your right (32 W. Market) and the Rank house, which is log, is directly across the street.*

1.4 14.2 BR Greble Road

1.3 15.5 R Dead End Road

0.2 15.7 R Swatara Road *Enjoy a great ride down to the bridge to cross Little Swatara Creek.*

0.9 16.6 L Quarry Road

1.8 18.4 L Troy Road (Pass by Kenbrook; continue to Troy Road)

0.8 19.2 L Kenbrook Road in order to continue on Troy

0.1 19.3 R Troy Road

0.7 20.0 BL Hain Ave. Caution in crossing SR343.

0.3 20.3 L SR 343

0.8 21.1 R Golf Road *Cross Little Swatara Creek. Cycle through productive farmland.*

0.3 21.4 R Light's Church Road *This is a country "lane". The small 18th and 19th century cemetery will be on your right.*

0.9 22.3 R Greble Road

1.1 23.4 R Union Road *Another centuries' old cemetery to view at the intersection. Union Road traverses countryside with extensive fertile fields and one more opportunity to cross Little Swatara Creek! Miniature horses are often in the pasture by the Creek.*

2.2 25.6 R Freeport Road *Zoar Evangelical Lutheran Church and cemetery on right.*

0.5 26.1 L Morrissey Road

1.0 27.1 R Heffelfinger Road

1.0 28.1 L SR343 (N. 7th Street) *You are entering a suburban area of Lebanon.*

0.3 28.4 R West Kercher Avenue

1.6 30.0 L Sandhill Road (caution: traffic)

0.2 30.2 R Horizon Blvd.

0.4 30.6 R Jay Street

1.4 32.0 L SR72 (Ebenezer Road)

0.2 32.2 BR Old Ebenezer Road

0.1 32.4 R Tunnel Hill Road

0.6 32.9 R North Portal Parking Area Entrance

0.1 33.0 Fin.