

History of the Union Canal Tunnel

The Union Canal Tunnel, the oldest existing transportation tunnel in the United States, was a connecting link between the eastern and western branches of the Union Canal. The Canal connected the Schuylkill River with the Susquehanna River thus providing a passage by water from Philadelphia to Harrisburg.

Dug through the ridge dividing the waters of the Quittapahilla Creek and Clark's Run, the Tunnel was originally 729 feet long.

Drilling was done by hand using a star drill and blasting with gunpowder through Argillaceous Rock with veins of flinty limestone 80 feet below the summit of the ridge. Progress of the work was 5 lineal yards per week.

Work began May 1825 and was completed in June 1827, at a total cost of \$30,404.29.

The Tunnel's length was reduced to 621 feet during the Canal's enlargement of 1858 when three feet of rock was removed from the ceiling, increasing the height from 15 to 18 feet. The width remained 18 feet.

The first boat to pass through the Tunnel was the Alpha of Tulpehocken on June 12, 1827. Boats were poled through the Tunnel by pushing against the ceiling or the walls, while the mules were walked up over the top of the ridge.

Designated a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark in 1970, the Tunnel received its recognition as a National Historic Landmark by the US Department of the Interior on April 9, 1994.

***Union Canal Days held the 3rd weekend in May**
***Halloween Scare Affair held 3rd or 4th weekend in October**

***Boat Rides given June-Oct. on every Sunday**

To reserve a group canal tour, call (717) 272-1473



North Property Trails

North Tow Path: Provides a pleasant walk around the North Section of the Canal. 0.3 Miles

Mule Path: Passes over the tunnel to historic stone stairs. 0.1 Miles

South Property Trails

Pansy Hill Trail: Crosses Pansy Hill and through a meadow which was once part of a farm. 0.4 Miles
Hawks Flight: Rabbits along with various birds of prey make their habitat here. 0.3 Miles

Gravel Hill Trail: The longest wooded trail, features steady incline hiking on the gravel hill. 0.35 Miles
Sunny Side Trail: Follows the north side of the Canal and is adorned with flowers in spring. 0.35 Miles

Tow Path: Former Union Canal Tow Path. 0.35 Miles
Farm Lane: Passes by many ruins of an old farm. 0.3 Miles

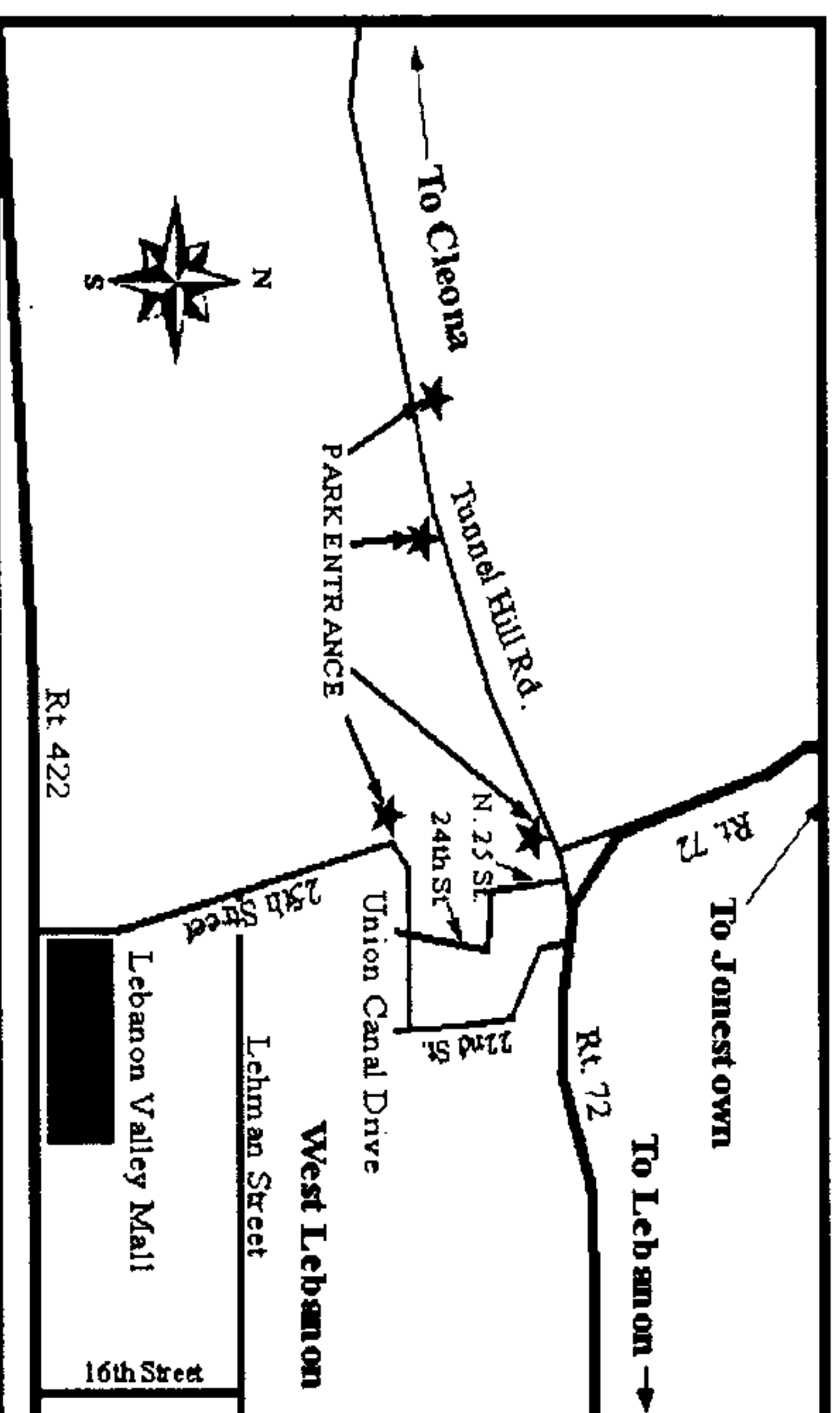
Eagle Scout Trail: Passes through Scout Meadow. 0.4 Miles
Dynamite Trail: Site of a large explosion in the early 1900's. 0.1 Miles

West Lawn Trail: Pleasant walk under the blue sky. 0.25 Miles

Blue Bird Trail: Blue birds can be heard and seen from trail. 0.4 Miles

Red Fox Trail: Pleasantly shaded walk along the south park boundary. 0.5 Miles

Old L and T Railroad: Former Lebanon-Tremont Railroad, now makes pleasant hiking bed. 0.5 Miles



Pamphlet Created as Graduation Project by:

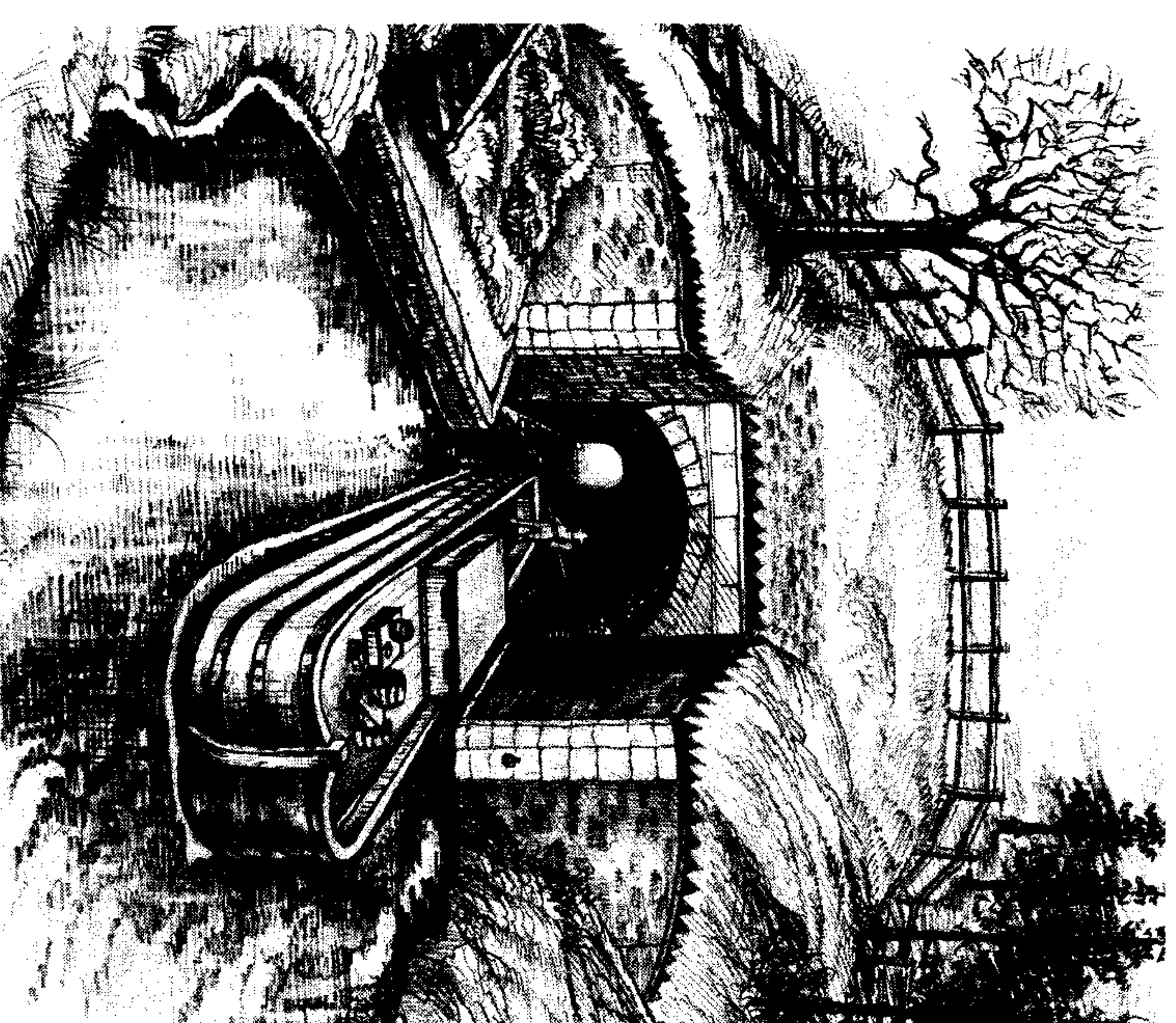
Daniel Michael Shay

Cedar Crest High School Class of 2003

In Memory of Earl P. Leiby

THE UNION CANAL TUNNEL PARK

Recreational Map



The Friends of the Union Canal Tunnel Park
Lebanon County Historical Society

Lebanon, PA
(717) 272-1473