

NEW YORK STATE BARGE CANAL, WATERLOO DAM AND
TAINTER GATES
(Cayuga-Seneca Canal, Waterloo Dam and Tainter Gates)
Intersection of Locust and Washington streets
Waterloo
Seneca County
New York

HAER NY-525
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
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HAER No. NY-525

Location: Intersection of Locust and Washington streets, Waterloo, Seneca County, New York

Waterloo Dam is located at latitude 42.9018857, longitude -76.8647591. The point represents the dam and was obtained in summer 2009. There is no restriction on its release to the public.

Significance: Waterloo Dam and Tainter Gates, located on the Cayuga-Seneca Canal, are components of the nationally significant New York State Barge Canal.

Description: Located about 170' north of Lock CS4, the dam consists of six Tainter gate openings between concrete piers.¹ New York State Electric and Gas Corporation (NYSEG) operates the three gates on the south end, while the two former gate openings to the north now serve as a retention dam. The last Tainter gate at the north end of the structure is still extant. The entire structure is in fair condition.

The NYSEG Tainter gates are constructed of riveted steel and sit between concrete piers. The steel gates appear to be rusted, and the concrete counterweights also exhibit signs of spalling and vegetation growth. These three gates regulate the water flowing into a bypass channel that was the former Seneca River alignment. At the end of the channel is a NYSEG hydroelectric plant.

The next two Tainter gate openings are now a dam. The concrete pier exhibits signs of spalling and breaking. A riveted steel I-beam catwalk with a wood plank deck and cable railings spans the dam.

The final gate opening has a riveted-steel Tainter gate between concrete piers operating with a concrete counterweight. A small plaque on the concrete abutment gives the construction date as 1915. Water flowing through this Tainter gate empties into a bypass channel that runs to the north of the NYSEG power facility and empties into the Seneca River further downstream.

Rusted steel I-beam catwalks with wood plank decks provide access to both the NYSEG and Waterloo Tainter gates.

History: Construction of the Waterloo Dam was included with Lock CS4 in Contract E, awarded in 1913 to Cleveland & Sons Company of Brockport and overseen by State Assistant Engineer Thomas R. Tetley, Jr. Noble Whitford noted in his history of the New York State

¹ Description based on a site visit made by the HAER recording team in summer 2009.

Barge Canal that the Waterloo Tainter Gate served as one of the “most conspicuous examples” of the type on the waterway. The gates were overhauled in 1937.²

Sources:

Annual Report of the State Engineer and Surveyor of the State of New York for the Fiscal Year ended in September 30, 1914. Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, 1915.

Hay, Duncan. “New York State Barge Canal.” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2014.

State of New York, Department of Public Works. *Annual Report of the Superintendent for the Year 1937.* Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, Printers, 1938.

Whitford, Noble E. *History of the Barge Canal of New York State.* Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, Printers, 1922.

Historians: Laura S. Black and Jami Babb, summer 2009

Project Information: The Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) is a long-range program that documents and interprets historically significant engineering sites and structures throughout the United States. HAER is part of Heritage Documentation Programs (Richard O’Connor, Manager), a division of the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior. The New York State Barge Canal Survey was undertaken in summer 2009 in cooperation with the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor (ERIE), Beth Sciumeca, Executive Director. Justine Christianson, HAER Historian, and Duncan Hay, ERIE, served as project leaders. The staff of the New York State Canal Corporation provided access to the sites. Craig Williams of the New York State Museum provided research materials and assistance. The HAER field team consisted of Jami Babb and Laura Black.

² *Annual Report of the State Engineer and Surveyor of the State of New York for the Fiscal Year ended in September 30, 1914* (Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, 1915), 236; Noble Whitford, *History of the Barge Canal of New York State* (Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, Printers, 1922), 474; State of New York, Department of Public Works, *Annual Report of the Superintendent for the Year 1937* (Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, Printers, 1938), 18.

Appendix: Image of Current Conditions



Image 1: Overview of Waterloo Dam and Tainter Gates. Field photograph taken by HAER recording team, summer 2009.