

NEW YORK STATE BARGE CANAL, LOCK O6
(Oswego Canal, Lock O6)
East River Road across from Ludlow Street
Oswego
Oswego County
New York

HAER NY-535
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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
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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Location: East River Road across from Ludlow Street, Oswego, Oswego County, New York

Lock O6 is located at latitude 43.44437132, longitude -76.494437844. The point represents the upstream lock gates and was obtained in summer 2009. There is no restriction on its release to the public.

Significance: Lock O6, located on the Oswego Canal, is a component of the nationally significant New York State Barge Canal. The lock retains the original DC electro-mechanical gate and valve operating machinery.

Description: Lock O6 is located on the east side of the Oswego River, 4 miles north of Lock O5, and is accessed from an asphalt-covered driveway extending from East River Road (Route 481).¹ The driveway leads to an asphalt-covered parking area with a steel guard rail. The site consists of the lock and associated structures, lockhouse, and storage building. The High Dam stretches across the Oswego River to the southwest of the lock.

The lockhouse, located on the north side of the chamber, is a single-story concrete block building with a concrete chimney and sits on a concrete foundation. The gable-front roof is covered with asphalt shingles with the gable ends having horizontal board infill. One-over-one-light wooden windows with a mixture of aluminum and wood storm windows comprise the building's fenestration. The entrance is a wood pane-and-panel door. The building is in good condition.

A storage building, a single-story concrete structure on a concrete foundation, is also located on the north side of the chamber. The hipped roof is covered with asphalt shingles and has exposed rafter tails; there is a concrete chimney. The building has wooden paneled double doors and one-over-one-light wood windows. A modern shed roof addition with a door for access is located on the east side of the structure and is clad with vertical board siding. The storage building is in good condition.

A powerhouse was located on the west side of the chamber but is no longer standing.

Lock O6 has a 20' lift to the south with normal pool elevations of 270' below and 290' above. The chamber walls are scored concrete with cast-iron quarter-round coping. There are double-leaf, steel miter lock gates at each end of the chamber, operated by spars and gear trains powered by the original DC electro-mechanical gate machinery. The valve operating machinery controlling the flow of water through the culverts in the chamber walls is also original. The public access side of the lock is surrounded by modern steel guard rails, post-and-rail fencing,

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

and pipe railing. Modern light fixtures illuminate the lock. A truss utility bridge spans the downstream end of the chamber. The lock is in good condition. A concrete stairway that is also in good condition is located at the northeast end of the lock.

Control stand shelters are located on the upstream and downstream ends of the lock on the north side. The shelters consist of single-story frame structures clad in horizontal wood siding that sit on concrete foundations. They have pyramidal roofs with vinyl sliding windows and wooden pane-and-panel doors. The shelters are in good condition.

The guide walls are all in good condition and have been recently modernized. The northeast and southeast guide walls have been modernized with poured concrete and the installation of modern ladders, utility hook-ups, bollards, and street light fixtures. The northwest guide wall also has been recently rehabilitated with new concrete. A steel ladder extends to a platform below. Finally, the southwest guide wall features new concrete, with concrete cribs located at the end of the wall. The cribs are equipped with wooden bumpers.

High Dam is a concrete fixed crest dam (designated Dam 6) that spans the Oswego River. The spillway is about 510' long and is equipped with wood flashboards. It appears to be in good condition.

History: The construction of Lock O6 was part of Contract 37, originally awarded on December 9, 1910, to Henry P. Burgard. D'Olier Engineering Company of Philadelphia seems to have actually done the work, with Edward M. Ellis, State Assistant Engineer, acting as supervisor. The original contract called for "improving Oswego canal between Fulton and Oswego" and encompassed construction of Lock O5 and Lock O6, along with their adjoining dams and other incidental work. Alterations to the original contract included excavating a dike below Lock O6 and removing rock from the approach to the bulkhead to improve hydraulic conditions. The concrete work for Lock O6 and Dam 6 (as it was designated) had been nearly finished by 1914.²

The power plant was part of Contract 93, awarded in 1913 to MacArthur Bros. Co. & Lord Electric Co.³

Repairs and alterations were made to the lock and dam after their initial completion. In 1946, a leak developed at the upper thrust wall, so the entire side wall had to be removed and rebuilt. The 1949 *Annual Report* indicates the Department of Public Works was planning on embarking upon a long-term project to lower approximately thirty-two lock sills so as to provide a minimum 13' depth and altering the lock gates to fit. Sill and gate work was done at Lock O6 in 1956 as

² *Annual Report of the State Engineer and Surveyor of the State of New York for the Fiscal Year ended in September 30, 1913, Vol. 1* (Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, 1914), 232; *Annual Report of the State Engineer and Surveyor of the State of New York for the Fiscal Year ended in September 30, 1914, Vol. 1* (Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, 1915), 220.

³ *Annual Report, 1914*, 241.

part of Contract No. US100 and might have been the result of that initiative. Both the lock and dam were rehabilitated in 1992 as part of Contract D253869.⁴

Sources:

Annual Report of the State Engineer and Surveyor of the State of New York for the Fiscal Year ended in September 30, 1913, Vol. 1. Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, 1914.

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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.

⁴ State of New York, Department of Public Works, *Annual Report of the Superintendent for the Year 1941* (New York: Publishers Printing Co., 1942), 25; State of New York, Department of Public Works, *Annual Report of the Superintendent for the Year 1949* (Albany: s.n., 1950), 93; State of New York, Department of Public Works, *1956 Annual Report* (Albany: s.n., 1957), 83; Maintenance Contracts, 1992.

Appendix: Images of Current Conditions



Image 1: Lock chamber with the lockhouse at right and the storage building behind. Field photograph taken by HAER recording team, summer 2009.



Image 2: View of High Dam. Field photograph taken by HAER recording team, summer 2009.