



*Early excavation operations on the old Lachine Canal connecting the Port of Montreal and Lake St. Louis*

Great Lakes. This activity was spurred by the desire to make use of the economical water route which the waters of the Great Lakes Basin offered for the transportation of goods in and out of this important area of the continent. The first recorded improvement in the long history of navigation on the St. Lawrence waterway dates back to 1700, when a one-and-a-half foot canal was constructed at the Little River St. Pierre near Lachine. In 1780 and 1804, shortside canals of two and three feet in depth were constructed at the edge of the Lachine Rapids. Using them were, among other craft, the huge freight-carrying "canots

de maître" of the fur-trading companies as they plied between their bases at Montreal and the remote posts of the West. It was only in 1821 that the first Lachine Canal proper was undertaken. From a five-foot depth this canal was deepened to nine feet between 1843 and 1848. A second and last enlargement, between 1870 and 1883, provided a fourteen-foot depth throughout. This Lachine Canal, eight and three-quarter miles long, had a total lift of fifty feet and gave access from the Port of Montreal to Lake St. Louis.

The Soulanges Section extended from deep water at the head of Lake St. Louis