

where, in mid-stream, the current was insurmountable. Consequently, the first improvement was to obtain a sufficient channel near the river bank. Some projecting points could only be passed with extreme difficulty; at these the early canals were constructed.

The first of the number was the canal at Coteau du Lac. The earlier canal, the location of which to-day is traceable, followed the shore line round the point which projects into the Coteau rapids. Originally it was formed with three locks, having a width of six feet at the gates. The canal remained in use until about 1801, when it was enlarged to a width of nine feet six inches at the gates. In 1817 a second Coteau canal was carried across the point, which entirely avoided the worst features of the rapid. The remains are still extant; the works, however, are in a ruinous condition. The length of the canal was 400 feet, excavated in rock, with a depth of four feet on the sills at lowest water. There was one lock, with a lift of seven feet, with guard gates at the entrance. The lock chamber, as it is now seen, is 104 feet in length, with twelve feet six inches width, at the gates. In connection with the first canal a fortified block-house was built for the defence of the works, and for the safe keeping of the prisoners of war confined on the neighbouring island to the south, still known as "Prisoners' island." The original canal, constructed west of the point, was commenced 1779, and finished in 1780, for the engineer in charge, captain Twiss, of the Royal Engineers, reported it complete for traffic early in 1781.*

Haldimand's design in the construction of the canals was, no doubt, primarily to make practicable the passage of food and military stores to the western ports, then constantly threatened and constantly needing supplies; but he also saw that the works would offer great facilities to parties in Montreal engaged in the western trade. With this conviction he instructed Twiss to call a meeting of those interested, and point out the advantages which these improvements would

* 15th February. Can. Arch., B. 154, p. 316.

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