

1,087,500 Tons Of LeRoy Limestone

by Lynne Belluscio

There's a lot of LeRoy in Mt. Morris - literally. In 1948, when construction began on the Mt. Morris dam, it was General Crushed Stone in LeRoy who had the contract for supplying the crushed limestone. This aggregate, as it is called, was mixed with sand and cement to create the dam. By the time it was finished, the dam was 246 feet high, 221 feet thick at the base, and 1,026 feet long. It required 330,000 tons of sand, 2,443,000 bags of cement and 1,087,500 of crushed limestone from LeRoy.

For three years, the cement was poured non-stop day and night except during the winter. The cement was mixed on site and poured into 8-cubic-yard buckets that weighed 22 tons each. The buckets were swung across the canyon at intervals of about one every five minutes, to fill the huge forms. In order to meet the demand, General Crushed Stone installed a larger crusher. George Schaefer, who was the general manager at General Crushed Stone, reported to the Rochester Rotary Club, that to keep up with production, 3,500 tons of limestone was being trucked to Mt. Morris each day - a distance of 52 miles round trip.

When the dam was finished in 1952, it was the fourth highest dam east of the Mississippi River. It cost \$19,800,000 and came in \$400,000 under budget. At its peak construction, 470 men were working at the dam construction site. The last bucket of concrete was poured on October 31, 1952.

Mt. Morris Dam is under the Buffalo District of the United States Army Corps of Engineers. In 1775, when the Continental Congress organized the Continental Army, it included a chief engineer to provide engineering services to General Washington. In 1779, a separate Corps of

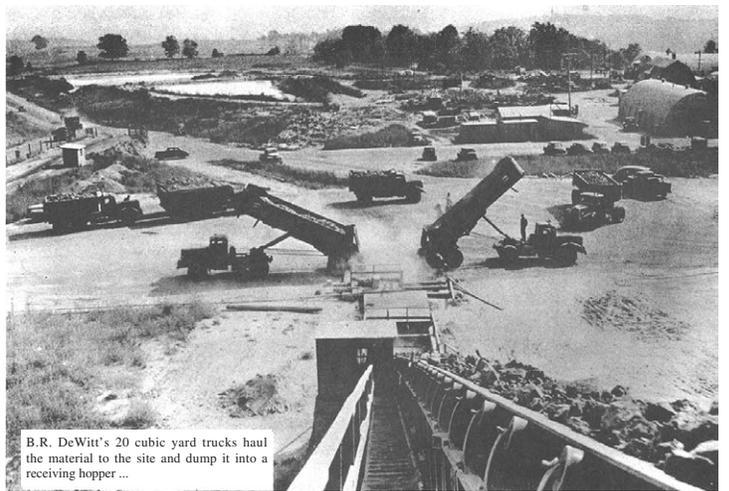
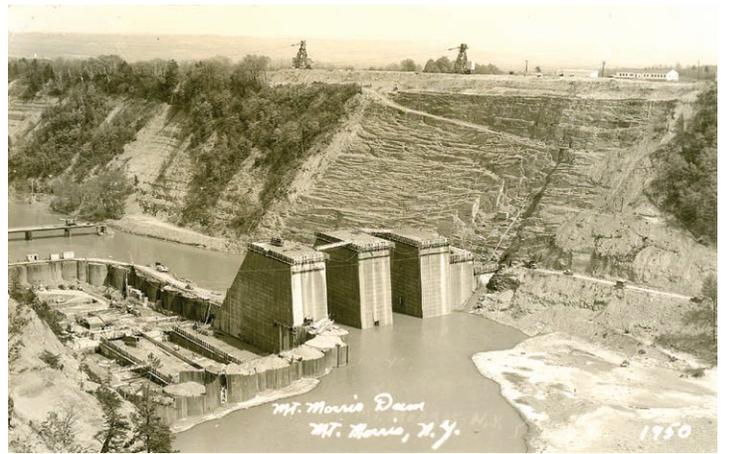
Engineers was created for the Continental Army and one of its first assignments was to build fortifications near Boston.

After the war, and the dissolution of the Continental Army, it wasn't until 1802 that President Thomas Jefferson created the Corps of Engineers, which was stationed at West Point. The superintendent of West Point was always an engineer officer until 1866. In fact, during the first half of the 19th century, West Point was the only engineering school in the country.

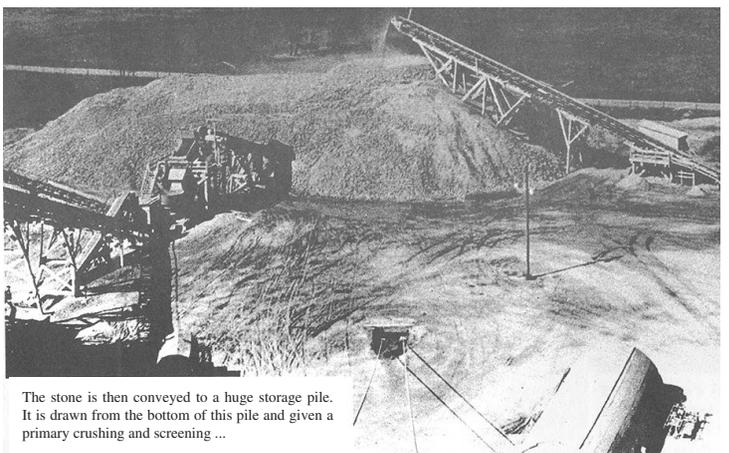
In 1824, the General Survey Act authorized the Army Corps of Engineers to survey roads and canal routes, and Congress approved a bill giving the Corps the responsibility to improve the navigation of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. It was also in 1824, when Capt. Theodore Maurice was assigned to the Buffalo District to supervise operations on Lake Erie, but supervision of the Buffalo District was based at West Point, where it remained until 1857, when a permanent office was established in Buffalo. Today the Buffalo District covers 38,000 square miles from Messena, New York to Toledo, Ohio, and includes six field offices.

In 1952, Bassett's Art Shop in Perry published a photo book of the dam construction. Although the reprints of the photos are not particularly clear, as you can see, it is a great documentation of the work. I don't know if any men from LeRoy worked at the dam site, but certainly the men who worked for General Crushed Stone between 1948 and 1952 and the men who worked for Dewitt, who drove the trucks, contributed to the project.

If you haven't been to the Mt. Morris Dam, you need to take the 30 minute trip. Go down Route 36, through York and into Mt. Morris, past the entrance to Letchworth Park and up the hill. Turn right on 408 and a few miles on the right is the entrance to the dam. It's a beautiful drive to the overlook and the visitor center. There are some great exhibits in the visitor center, about the dam and the Army



B.R. DeWitt's 20 cubic yard trucks haul the material to the site and dump it into a receiving hopper ...



The stone is then conveyed to a huge storage pile. It is drawn from the bottom of this pile and given a primary crushing and screening ...



Corps of Engineers. There is a great exhibit about animals and animal tracks that is great for kids. You might also catch a glimpse of one of the nesting bald eagles that flies over the gorge.