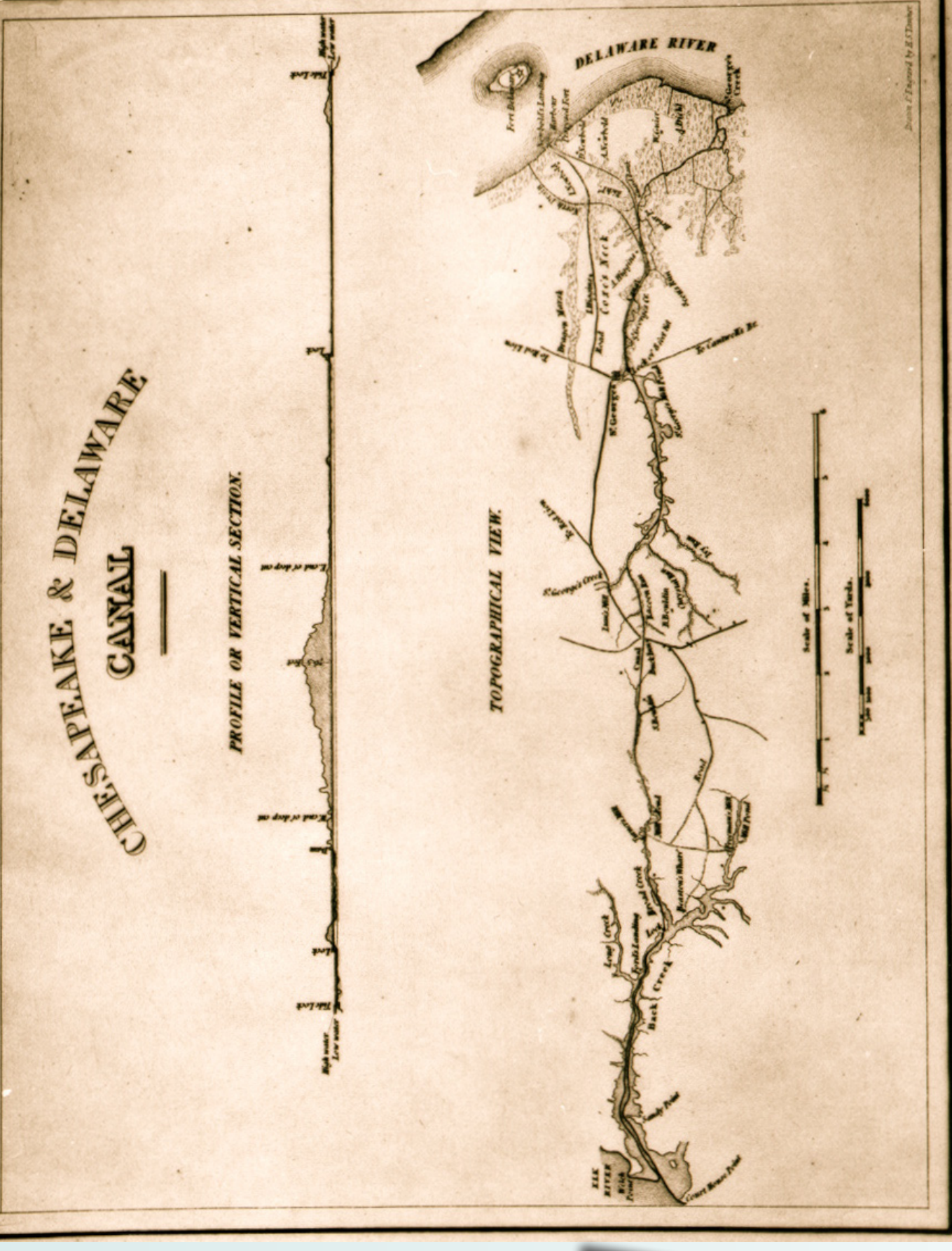
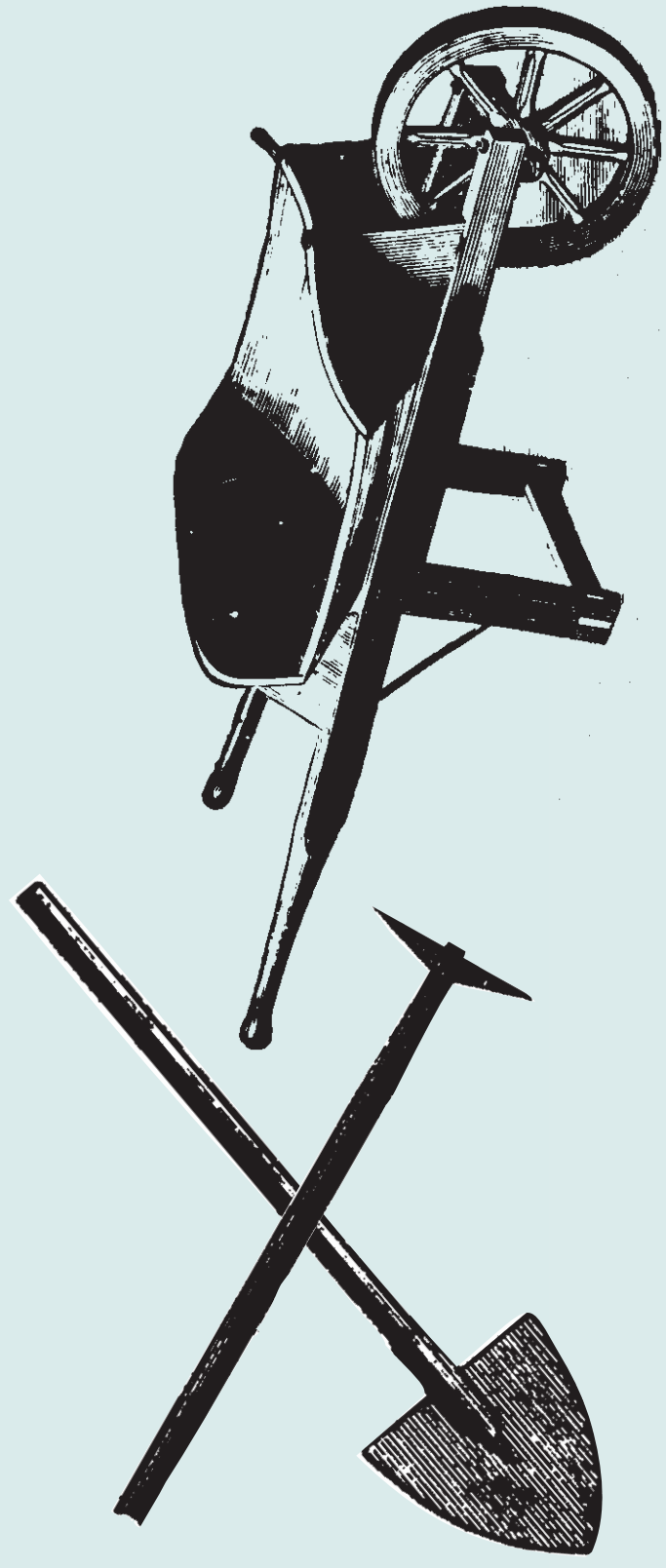


Although the idea of a waterway crossing the upper Delmarva peninsula was suggested in the 1600s, the canal did not become a reality until 1829. Over 2,600 workers, including many Irish immigrant and African-American laborers, dug the canal with picks and shovels for wages of 75¢ a day. When they were done, they had created a 14-mile long ditch that was ten feet deep and sixty feet wide, with four locks to carry ships over high and low waters, shortening the water route between Philadelphia and Baltimore by more than 300 miles.

The canal opened on October 17, 1829, with great celebrations. All manner of craft used it. Initially horse- and mule-drawn barges predominated, but eventually steam powered vessels made up the majority of canal traffic.



The early drawing above shows the changes in elevation between Delaware City and Chesapeake City and the four locks required to raise and lower boats through the passage. There were single locks at Delaware City and St. Georges and two locks at Chesapeake City. At Summit, the highest point on the route, workers cut a huge notch they called Deep Cut.



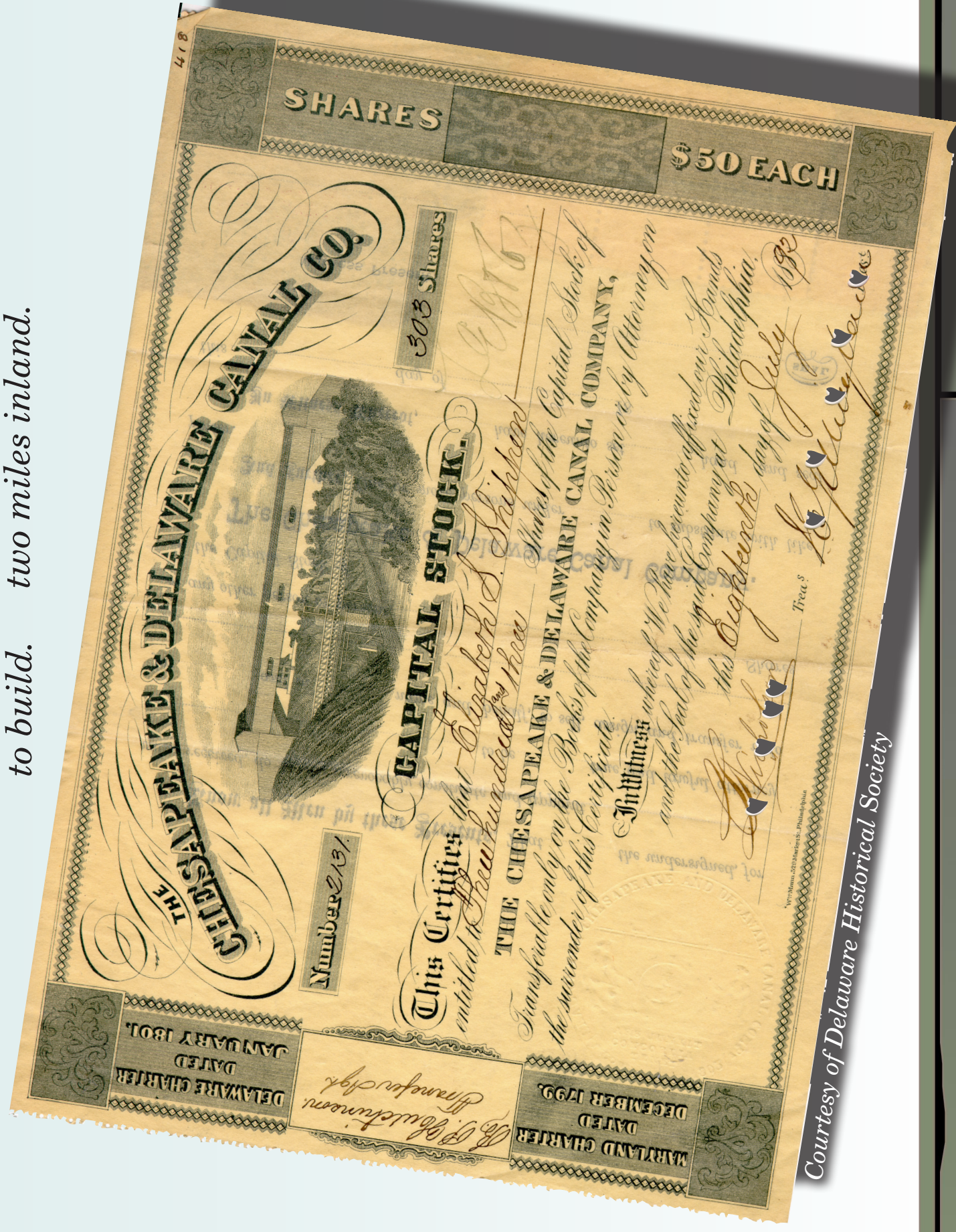
At right, a token minted in 1825 as scrip for payment to laborers working on the C&D Canal.



Collection of Edward Kalinowski

Private investors, operating as the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal Company, raised the money to build the canal by selling stock. The canal cost \$2,250,000 and took five years to build.

The United States government purchased the canal from the private corporation in 1919. By 1927, the Army Corps of Engineers had relocated the Delaware River entrance of the canal to Reedy Point, two miles south of Delaware City. The Corps also eliminated the need for locks by dredging the waterway into a sea-level passage. The branch of the original canal that passes through Delaware City that passes through Delaware City connects with the main C&D Canal two miles inland.



Courtesy of Delaware Historical Society



Courtesy of Delaware Historical Society

Courtesy of Delaware Historical Society

BUILDING THE C&D CANAL



Sources: Delaware Historical Society; Federal Writers' Project—Delaware; Ralph D. Gray, *The National Waterway, A History of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, 1769-1965*; Carol E. Hoffecker, *Delaware—A Bicentennial History*; Edward Kalinowski; John A. Mumroe, *A History of Delaware*; J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Philadelphia*; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.