

Phase I Reconnaissance Survey: Shelton River Walk Shelton, Connecticut

In connection with a proposed multi-use trail along the Housatonic River, AHS conducted a Phase I Reconnaissance Survey of historic and archaeological resources that potentially could be impacted by trail construction. Although archaeologically the area was found to be too disturbed to merit further investigation, numerous features of historic interest were photographed and described in the report.

This tailrace arch, one of many still in place on the river side, was associated with the Star Pin Company's factory.



The construction of the Derby-Shelton dam and canals, one of the state's largest 19th-century engineering undertakings, was the reason Shelton developed into a small industrial city after completion of the project in 1870. Today significant industrial remains include the dam, headgates and canals on either side of the river, several tailraces on the Shelton side, a retaining wall along the bank on the river's west side, and several historic factory complexes in Shelton. The proposed River Walk lies within the Shelton Canal Industrial District, which has been determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.



The canals provided 22 feet of fall for the factory sites along the river banks and enough water to generate 2,400 horsepower during all but two months of the summer, when the available power dropped to 1,725 horsepower. At one time, more than 1,000 workers were employed making flatware, textiles, corsets, fasteners, and other products in the Shelton-side factories.

The canal was primarily conceived as an industrial-power facility, but two locks on the Shelton side allowed small vessels to bypass the dam and thereby continue navigating the Housatonic River. In addition, a basin was constructed at the southern end of the canal to accommodate waiting vessels.

Wooden gate still in place at one of the locks, folded back into its mortise.