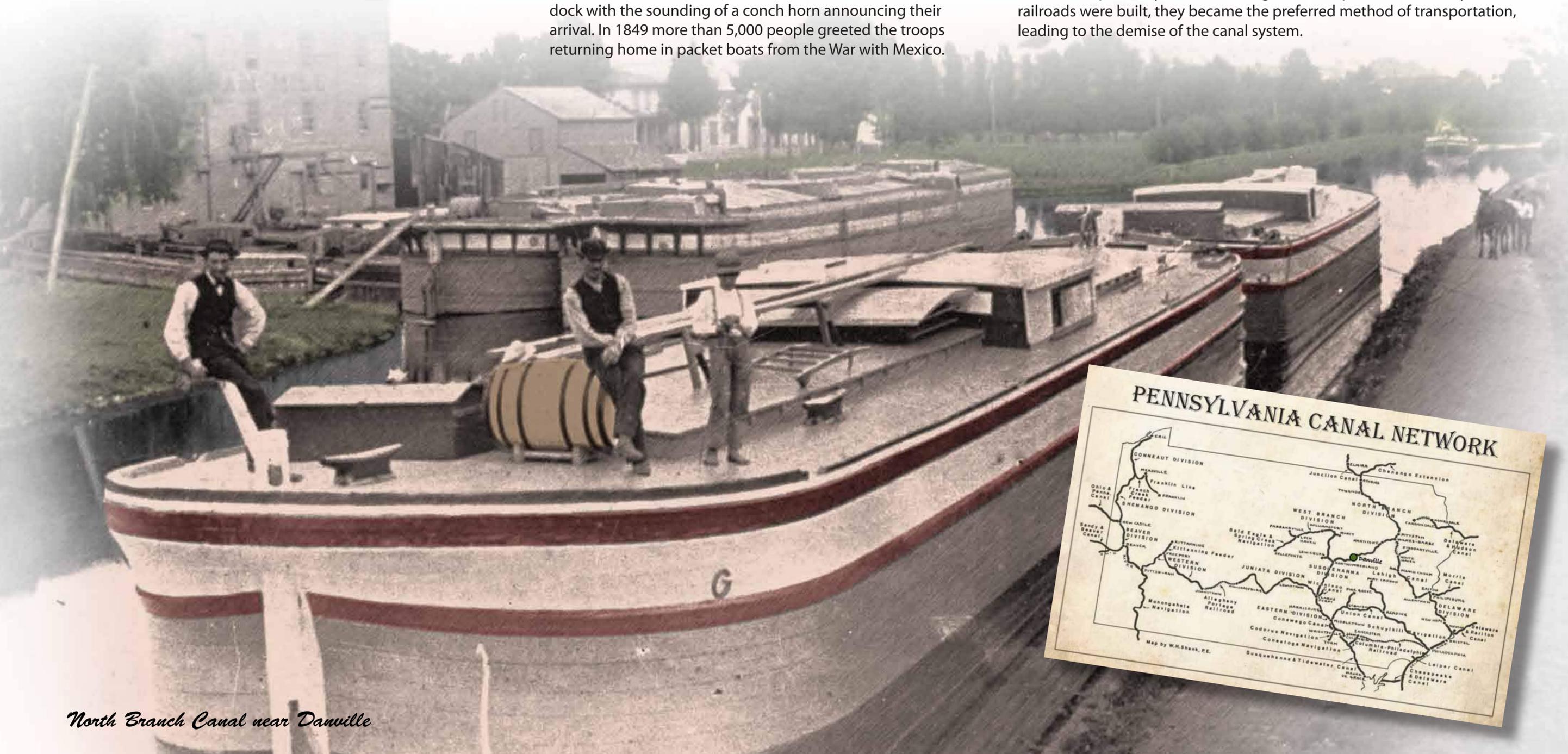


The North Branch Canal

In 1826 Daniel Montgomery, for whom the town of Danville was named, was elected president of the Board of Canal Commissioners. The North Branch Canal was surveyed in 1826-27, with construction of the canal between Northumberland and Nanticoke beginning in 1828. The first water was turned in during 1832 opening up a new transportation corridor.

At Danville the canal veered away from its normal place along the river to the center of town close to where the Montgomery family had mills. At one time Mill Street merchants advertised their business as north or south of the canal. Both cargo and packet boats, which had sleeping and dining accommodations, traveled the canal attracting local residents and visitors to the dock with the sounding of a conch horn announcing their arrival. In 1849 more than 5,000 people greeted the troops returning home in packet boats from the War with Mexico.

The use of anthracite coal in the iron furnaces in Montour County and the rolling of the first T Rail for building railroads at The Montour Iron Works on October 8, 1845, contributed significantly to the success of the North Branch Canal. Thousands of tons of coal were shipped from the Wyoming coalfields to produce the rails, which in turn were shipped to markets by canal boats pulled by mules traveling at 4 miles per hour. Ironically, as railroads were built, they became the preferred method of transportation, leading to the demise of the canal system.



North Branch Canal near Danville