



Around 1829, Alexander Weatherhead built a sawmill at what would later be the location of Lock 3, and made plans to throw a dam across the river, raising water levels and bringing power to his mill. Weatherhead was an agent for the Arnold Family, who owned most of the land around what Weatherhead named 'Barbadoes' after the British colony where his father had been born (and which would later be called Port Elmsley); his sister was married to Richard Arnold, son of Benedict Arnold. Weatherhead's mill was, in fact, the first development in the area, and the village began to grow around this site over the next several years. (*H.R. Morgan "The First Tay Canal"; pg 3*) (*Larry Turner "The First Tay Canal in the Rideau Corridor, 1830-1850"; pg. 11*)

Not everybody was content with Weatherhead's plan to dam the Tay, though. William Morris (who had previously tried to set the wheels into motion for development of a canal along the Tay) and his supporters at first sent a formal letter to Weatherhead, stating that they believed that his dam would interfere with navigation on the Tay, and with their plans to develop the river. Morris then wrote to Colonel By, who was supervising the construction of the Rideau Canal. Morris suggested that the dam would interfere with communication down the Tay with the Rideau. By agreed, calling Weatherhead's dam 'illegal', and suggested that the petitioners contact the Lieutenant-Governor. Subsequently, Weatherhead was warned by the Attorney-General that if he were to dam the Tay, he would be liable to prosecution. (*H.R. Morgan "The First Tay Canal"; pg. 3*) (*Larry Turner "The First Tay Canal in the Rideau Corridor, 1830-1850"; pg. 12*)



Weatherhead, however, claimed that his dam would actually facilitate travel on the Tay, as for most of the year it was not navigable without a considerable portage to begin with; Weatherhead claimed that his dam would raise the water levels, decrease the rapids along the river, and require only one short portage around the dam, rather than many longer ones around the rapids. (*H.R. Morgan, "The First Tay Canal"; pg. 3-4*)

In the end, though, it seems as though William Morris won out after another petition countered Weatherhead's claims; ultimately, the canal was built, and no further records seem to remain regarding Weatherhead's dam.

This entire episode may have, in fact, helped to galvanize support for the idea of a privately-funded canal along the Tay, as William Morris and other influential residents of Perth worried about keeping navigation of the river free and abundant. By the end of 1830, Morris had begun to actively raise money and support from the residents of Perth for the Canal's construction; and in March of 1831, the "Tay Navigation Company" was incorporated and granted the land and privilege to proceed. They hired Perth local John Jackson to survey and engineer its construction, and continued to try to raise money and support. While Wm. Morris himself was not one of the original board members of the Company, he still held considerable influence over it, as most of the board members were also part of the conservative elite of Perth with whom Morris had close political associations. (*Larry Turner "The First Tay Canal in the Rideau Corridor, 1830-1850"; pg. 21, 37*) (*"The Statutes of the Province of Upper Canada [1792-1831]"; pg. 557-565*)