Canal Street 1813

The Middlesex Canal Corporation was chartered on June 22, 1793 and opened for business in 1803. The 27-mile canal, designed by Loammi Balwin, connected the Merrimack River with the port of Boston. The canal had 20 locks and featured a uniquely designed floating tow path at various locations along its length; it was one of the first civil engineering projects of its type in the United States and a predecessor to the Erie Canal. The Middlesex Canal had opened during a period of economic expansion as a means to bring goods from the interior of the country to the coast, and to send imported goods back into the interior.

The southern terminus of the canal was at the Charlestown Mill Pond (Sullivan Square T-Station) where barges (skows or flat-bottomed boats) were cabled across the Charles River Bay to Barton’s Point (Leverett Circle) in the West End. Here, goods were offloaded or stored in a warehouse adjacent to the Almshouse. Sometime later, a canal was cut through the center of the Mill Dam and consequently became part of Bulfinch’s plan of 1807, continuing through to the Mill Creek and connecting the Harbor with the Charles River (c.1810)

Canal Street was adjacent to the Boston Mill Pond Canal (c.1810-1815) and was originally a towpath for the canal. In October of 1833 Canal Street was extended across Haymarket Square and Cross Street to Clinton Street; the following year this extension was renamed Blackstone Street (aka Creek Street). With the coming of the railroads the canal was progressively filled in (c.1840-1844) and became the site of the Boston & Maine Railroad, which had an early terminal in Haymarket Square.