Causes and Effects of the Erie Canal

In this inquiry-based lesson, students will use primary sources to show wide-ranging effects of the Erie Canal in Rochester and the surrounding area. Students will have a chance to interact with a variety of primary source documents both historical and current, and sort them to determine what may have been reasons for building the Erie Canal, and what may have been effects, or influences, that the canal has had on the people of New York and surrounding areas.

**Lesson Duration:** 70 minutes

**Enduring Understanding:** The Erie Canal affected people long ago and today.

**Concepts:** cause and effect, connection, change

**New York State Social Studies Standards Addressed:**

4.6a After the Revolution, New Yorkers began to move and settle farther west using roads, many of which had begun as Native American trails.

4.6b In order to connect the Great Lakes with the Atlantic Ocean, the Erie Canal was built. Existing towns expanded and new towns grew along the canal. New York City became the busiest port in the country.

4.6c Improved technology, such as the steam engine and the telegraph, made transportation and communication faster and easier. Later developments in transportation and communication technology had an effect on communities, the state, and the world.

4.6d Farming, mining, lumbering, and finance are important economic activities associated with New York State.

4.6f Between 1865 and 1915, rapid industrialization occurred in New York State. Over time, industries and manufacturing continued to grow.

**New York State Social Studies Practices Addressed:**

**A. Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence**

2. Recognize, use, and analyze different forms of evidence used to make meaning in social studies (including sources such as art and photographs, artifacts, oral histories, maps, and graphs).

4. Identify arguments of others.

6. Create an understanding of the past by using primary and secondary sources.

**B. Chronological Reasoning and Causation**

1. Explain how events are related chronologically to one another.
Causes and Effects of the Erie Canal

3. Identify the relationship between multiple causes and multiple effects, using examples from his/her life or from a current event or history.

4. Distinguish between long-term and immediate causes and effects of a current event or an event in history.

7. Recognize and identify patterns of continuity and change in New York State.

D. Geographic Reasoning

2. Distinguish human activities and human-made features from “environments” (natural events or physical features—land, air, and water—that are not directly made by humans).

3. Identify how environments affect human activities and how human activities affect physical environments.

5. Describe how human activities alter places and regions.

Teacher Questions:

1. Why did New York need a canal?
2. What were some immediate effects of building the canal for the people of New York State?
3. What were some immediate effects of building the canal for areas outside of New York State?
4. What are some long-term effects of the Erie Canal in Rochester, in New York State, and across the country?
5. What are some current uses of the Erie Canal?
6. Was building the Erie Canal a good idea?

Materials List:

1. Primary Source Image Cards (provided)
2. Poster paper and markers, notecards, or digital setup for students to sort the Primary Source Image Cards into two categories: “Cause” and “Effect”
3. Half sheets of paper and pencils, electronic assignment turn-in, or notecards (choose one way to document student work if you use this reflection as a formative assessment)
Causes and Effects of the Erie Canal

**Procedure:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Questions</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>10 minutes:</strong> Review the concept of “cause and effect” with your students by having them participate in a “Think, Pair, Share” thinking routine with simple, familiar examples of cause and effect. Students may use verbal descriptions, drawings, or act out their situation.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Primary Source Image Cards (provided)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Why did New York need a canal?
2. What were some immediate effects of building the canal for the people of New York State?
3. What were some immediate effects of building the canal for areas outside of New York State?
4. What are some long-term effects of the Erie Canal in Rochester, in New York State, and across the Country?
5. What are some current uses of the Erie Canal?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>5 minutes:</strong> Explain to students how sorting with picture cards will work.</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Students will work in small groups to review images of primary source documents. The descriptions of the images will also be presented on the sorting cards.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Their task is to review each image and decide if it reflects a cause for creating a canal or an effect of the Erie Canal.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>20 minutes:</strong> Students will have time to work in their groups to sort their cards.</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Why did New York need a canal?</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Primary Source Image Cards (provided)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. What were some immediate effects of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## Causes and Effects of the Erie Canal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why did New York need a canal?</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 minutes: Final reflection: Students will determine answers to teacher questions,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were some immediate effects of building the canal for the people of New York State?</td>
<td>10 minutes: Once all groups sort all the cards, students will participate in a gallery walk to see what they notice and wonder about how other groups sorted the cards.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were some immediate effects of building the canal for areas outside of New York State?</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 minutes: Students will return to their own work and decide if they want to move any cards to a different category. After students are satisfied with their sorting decisions, talk as a class about what they noticed and what they wondered about how the different groups sorted the cards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were some long-term effects of the Erie Canal in Rochester, in New York State, and across the country?</td>
<td></td>
<td>What were the discrepancies? Why? Where should the card go?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are some current uses of the Erie Canal?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Notes:

- Students will return to their own work and decide if they want to move any cards to a different category.
- After students are satisfied with their sorting decisions, talk as a class about what they noticed and what they wondered about how the different groups sorted the cards.
- What were the discrepancies? Why? Where should the card go?
## Causes and Effects of the Erie Canal

2. What were some immediate effects of building the canal for the people of New York State?

3. What were some immediate effects of building the canal for areas outside of New York State?

4. What are some long-term effects of the Erie Canal in Rochester, in New York State, and across the country?

5. What are some current uses of the Erie Canal?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. Was building the Erie Canal a good idea?</th>
<th>5 minutes: Teacher may choose to have this final reflection for the whole group, as a formative assessment, or as a “Ticket Out the Door.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pose the final teacher question: “Was building the Erie Canal a good idea?” Have students answer this question using at least one primary source from the work they participated in today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Half sheets of paper and pencils, electronic assignment turn-in, or notecards (choose one way to document student work if you use this reflection as a formative assessment)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOR SALE,

TO FARMERS AND EMIGRANTS,

15,000 Acres of Land,

IN THE TOWN OF WOLCOTT,

COUNTY OF SENeca, AND STATE OF NEW-YORK,

BEING THE UNSOLD PART OF A TRACT OF 55,000 ACRES.

The tract is bounded on the north by Lake Ontario, on the west by Sodus Bay, and the Great Canal runs within a few miles south of it. The large Vessels navigating the Lake regularly visit the Bay, which is an excellent harbour. The tract is intersected by leading Roads, one of which is a continuation of the great Ridge Road from Lewiston to Oswago falls, and a Bridge is now erecting across the Bay. The land therefore possesses the greatest facilities for the transportation of its productions both to the Canada and New-York markets. It is calculated that the Canal will reduce the price of transporting a bushel of wheat, from Seneca County to New-York, from Sixty five to fifteen cents. It is reasonable therefore to conclude that the cheapness of transportation, the fertility of the Soil, and the mildness of the climate, will raise the intrinsic value of the land, to the value of that bordering on the Hudson River.

The land is of excellent quality—is well watered—abounds with inexhaustible beds of good Iron Ore, and is well supplied with mills, and with sites for hydraulic works.—A forge and furnace for manufacturing the Ore into wrought Iron, and Castings, are now erecting on the tract, and will soon be in operation. It is already settled by about 350 families, and the adjacent Country is both populous, and prosperous.

It is confidently asserted that there is not now for sale in the Genesee County a more inviting tract of land, both for quality of soil, and advantages for trade.

It will be sold in farms of about 100 acres to actual settlers only, at moderate prices, and on a credit of ten yearly payments. The title is indisputable, and good warrantee deeds will be given to purchasers.

ALSO FOR SALE,

AT LOW PRICES, AND ON A LIBERAL CREDIT,

SEVERAL VALUABLE IMPROVED FARMS,

IN THE COUNTY OF ONTARIO.

Persons desirous of becoming purchasers may apply to the subscribers.

Land Office—Geneva—Ontario
County, State of New-York
December, 1821.

JOSEPH FELLOWS.

ANDREW MC Nab.
Canal Celebration, March 15, 1825.

The papers are filled with accounts of celebrations in different places, of that great and interesting event, the completion of the Erie Canal. The citizens of most places benefited by this great work, seem to have truly felt that no event was so worthy of a joyous celebration as this one, which they have gladly united to commemorate. Nay, they have derived no pecuniary benefit from this undertaking, disinterestedly come forward and offered their congratulations; all have seemed anxious to give vent, by some public testimonial, to the glad feelings which this event has elicited.
Woodcut, Rochester-Canandaigua stagecoach. The first stagecoach from Rochester to Canandaigua began running in 1815. https://catalogplus.libraryweb.org/?section=resource&resourceid=1115959304&currentIndex=0&view=fullDetailsDetailsTab. Courtesy of the City of Rochester.
Barge Canal construction near Rochester, NY, ca. 1918–1923.

https://catalogplus.libraryweb.org/?section=resource&resourceid=N11167119529&currentIndex=5&view=full&detailsDetailsTab.

Courtesy of the Rochester Public Library Local History & Genealogy Division.
VALUABLE PROPERTY

IN ROCHESTER.

For sale at the general Land Office of
Elisha Johnson and William Atkinson,

SEVERAL hundred Lots situated in different sections
of the village, consisting of Mill Lots, Warehouse
Lots, situations for Dry Docks, Lumber Yards, Boat
Yards, &c. situated on the Erie Canal and Feeder.—
Dwelling Lots, Out Lots, and several Farms near the
village.

March, 1827.

“Advertisement, Valuable Property in Rochester,” A Directory for the Village of Rochester
Courtesy of the Rochester Public Library Local History & Genealogy Division.
Early Opening of Navigation.

The present state of the markets and the quantity of produce awaiting transportation, render an early opening of navigation imperatively necessary. The demand for breadstuffs in Europe, and the small stock on hand in the sea board markets, will probably call out all the stocks remaining in store. It is by no means certain that the present high prices will continue for many months; and if our farmers and produce dealers, and through them the country in general, are to be benefitted by the present favorable state of things, they must be provided with the means of transportation early in the spring. It is well known that the railroads can, with their present means, do but little in the way of transporting flour. This renders an early opening of navigation the more necessary. The season has been unusually mild, and we have good reason to anticipate an unusually early opening of the Lake, which will throw into Buffalo an enormous quantity of western produce. Rochester has now 80,000 barrels of flour ready to send east, and she can with ease turn out that amount each week after the opening of navigation. The Canal Board should be urged to make an extra effort to place the Canals in a navigable condition at as early a day as possible. Produce dealers, boat owners, and boatmen, should unite in a movement to that effect. We understand that some of our business men have already written the Canal Board on the subject, but a further demonstration should be made immediately.
FOR SALE.

INDIAN LANDS

IN THE STATE OF NEW-YORK.

For Sale by Public Auction, in the City of Buffalo, on the 15th day of June next, about 16,000 acres of Land, in the County of Erie, being part of the Tract called the Buffalo Creek Reservation, the north line of which is bounded on the Corporation line of the City of Buffalo.

And on Monday, the 19th of June, at Batavia, in Genesee County, about 8000 acres of Land, in that County, being part of the Tract called the Tonnewanda Reservation, lying on the Tonnewanda Creek, near the Town of Batavia.

The possessory right in these Tracts, hitherto reserved by the Seneca Indians for their own occupation, has been lately sold by them to the preemptive owners. They are now surveyed and subdivided into convenient farms, amounting in number to about 320, containing generally from 50 to 140 acres each.

These Tracts have never before been in the Market. They are well known to be the most inviting bodies of Land in the State of New-York, both as to soil and situation, being all near the Grand Canal and the Great Western Rail-Road; part of them in the vicinity of the City of Buffalo, and part near the town of Batavia and other flourishing villages and settlements, and all possessing extensive and durable water power. For the culture of wheat the Tonnewanda Tract is not excelled by any land in the State.

By the convention between Massachusetts and New-York, these Lands will be exempt from state taxes for fifteen years from the date of the purchase of the Indians in 1842.

The title which is indisputable, is now vested in the undersigned Trustees, by whom the farms will be conveyed to the purchasers at the sale.

TERMS OF SALE.—One fourth of the purchase money to be paid in hand—the residue in five annual instalments, with annual interest, and to be secured by Bond and Mortgage.

To enable applicants conveniently to examine the farms, Maps will be furnished, on application to the Subscribers at their respective offices in the City of New-York and in the village of Geneva; to Rogers & Smith, Buffalo; and N. U. Soper, at the Clerk's office Batavia; Maps will also be placed in several of the County Clerks' offices.

New-York, 1 May, 1843.

T. L. OGDEN,
JOSEPH FELLOWS.

STATISTICS.

I.—TRADE AND COMMERCE.

The superfluous productions of the extensive and fertile valley of the Genesee river, together with that of the surrounding country east and west, naturally concentrate at Rochester, and are exported from thence. While these exports passed through the port of Genesee to the Canada market, the amount was more accurately known, than since the opening of the canal; the amount of tonnage being now more the object of reckoning at the several places of entry, than a specifick account of the particular kinds.

From the best data at hand, we have collected the following account of the exports by the canal, in the years 1823 and 1826. A few of the leading articles only are here presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>1823</th>
<th>1826</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flour, barrels,</td>
<td>64,114</td>
<td>202,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat, bushels,</td>
<td>20,590</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork, barrels,</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef, do.</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pot and pearl ashes, do.</td>
<td></td>
<td>9,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiskey, gallons,</td>
<td>52,903</td>
<td>135,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V.—TRAVELLING.

The facilities for travelling to and from Rochester, in almost every direction, have so much increased within a few years, and are a matter of so much importance, as to deserve a distinct enumeration.

The chief routes are, to the ports on lake Ontario, and the rivers Niagara and St. Lawrence, by steam-boats and schooners that ply upon the lake, and come into the port of Genesee;—directly east and west to Albany and Buffalo, with all the intermediate places, by the Erie canal;—to Albany by the great western state road;—and to Lewiston by the famous ridge road.

In addition to the travelling occasioned by the extensive export and import trade of this particular region, Rochester proves a thoroughfare for the trade of a large portion of Ohio, Indiana, the Michigan territory, and Upper Canada; and for the crowds of travellers from almost every country, who annually visit the falls of Niagara.

2. By the Canal.—The packet boats daily arrive at and depart from Rochester, both east and west, during the season of navigation, and afford excellent and comfortable accommodations. During the whole of the summer months, or from the first of May to November, the traveller is sure to meet, in these boats, a large company of the most respectable of both sexes; while the easy motion, and rapid progress of the boat, with the opportunity of alternate reading and conversation, beguile the tediousness of a long journey. These boats run night and day, and accomplish about 80 miles in twenty-four hours. The fare, including all expenses, is generally about four cents a mile. The packet boat company have at present 12 boats, and 130 horses.

The following list of distances on the canal, is believed to be correct, and may not be unappropriate in this place, viz:—
The following view shows the increase of population from 1815 when the first census was taken, to 1834.

**POPULATION.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1815</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>1825 (Feb.)</td>
<td>4274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1819</td>
<td>1049</td>
<td>1825 (Aug.)</td>
<td>5273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>1502</td>
<td>1826</td>
<td>7669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1822</td>
<td>2700</td>
<td>1830</td>
<td>10863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1834</td>
<td>12252</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Population," *Charter and Directory of the City of Rochester*  
(Rochester, NY: C. & M. Morse, 1834), 5.  
Courtesy of the Rochester Public Library Local History & Genealogy Division.
Captain Patterson returns to have charge of the Exchange Street lift bridge over the Erie Canal after an absence of four years, due to the exigencies of politics. The captain was welcomed back on the old job yesterday morning. One of his first duties will be the self-imposed task of making “Patterson Park” to bloom with flowers, for which he has a great liking.

Ice skating on the Erie Canal Aqueduct, Rochester, NY, ca. 1900.
https://catalogplus.libraryweb.org/?section=resource&resourceid=1115927367&currentIndex=1&view=fullDetailsDetailsTab.
Courtesy of the Rochester Public Library Local History & Genealogy Division.
https://catalogplus.libraryweb.org/?section=resource&resourceid=1428016293&currentIndex=0&view=fullDetailsDetailsTab.
 Courtesy of the Rochester Public Library Local History & Genealogy Division.
City Mills, Rochester, NY, owned by Josiah Strong, 1838.
https://catalogplus.libraryweb.org/?section=resource&resourceid=1116791972&currentIndex=5&view=fullDetailsDetailsTab.
Courtesy of the Rochester Public Library Local History & Genealogy Division.
https://catalogplus.libraryweb.org/?section=resource&resourceid=1115918340&currentIndex=3&view=fullDetailsDetailsTab.
Courtesy of the Rochester Public Library Local History & Genealogy Division.
Detail of “Rochester from the west,” 1853.
https://catalogplus.libraryweb.org/?section=resource&resourceid=1115971734&currentIndex=0&view=fullDetailsDetailsTab. Courtesy of the City of Rochester.

https://catalogplus.libraryweb.org/?section=resource&resourceid=1116708529&currentIndex=0&view=fullDetailsDetailsTab.

From the Albert R. Stone Negative Collection, Rochester Museum & Science Center, Rochester, NY.
Erie Canal Aqueduct, Rochester, NY, 1855.

https://catalogplus.libraryweb.org/?section=resource&resourceid=1116790146&currentIndex=2&view=fullDetailsDetailsTab.

Courtesy of the Rochester Public Library Local History & Genealogy Division.
STORAGE,
Forwarding and Commission Business.

CANAL TRANSPORTATION.

UNION LINE.
FOR FREIGHT AND PASSENGERS.

The subscriber, as agent for the above extensive Line of

Canal Boats,
is prepared to receive property and forward the same to Albany or New-York. He will also contract to receive merchandise in Albany or New-York, and forward the same to any part of the western country, or the Canadas.

Office at the stone Warehouse, near the Episcopal Church.

RUFUS MEECH.

Rochester, March, 1827.