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## **LOCAL HISTORY & GENEALOGY**

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# **Erie Canal**

## Research Guide

### **SCOPE**

This guide is intended to assist in identifying the types of materials and information available in the Rochester Public Library's Local History Division regarding the Erie Canal. In addition to these examples the department houses similar Erie Canal materials not listed here.

The Local History Division's materials are not available for circulation. They may be viewed at their 2nd floor location at the above address. Note: Restrictions may apply to some forms of use of some of these materials. Many may be copied. For more information or assistance ask at the Division's reference desk.

Other divisions of the Rochester Public Library may have additional materials on the Erie Canal for viewing or checkout.

### **INTRODUCTION**

New Yorkers wanted a less expensive way to transport raw materials and finished goods to and from the interior of the continent, and they wanted an easier travel pathway to the western parts of our new nation. The Erie Canal provided a key to our nation's economic and geographic development. This canal was the most successful 19<sup>th</sup> century undertaking of its kind in the United States.

Construction of the Erie Canal began on July 4, 1817 with the first shovelful of dirt thrown at Rome, New York. After more than 8 years of labor and a cost of more than 7 million dollars it officially opened on October 26, 1825. Upon completion, a westward surge ensued. Small outposts along the path of the new canal soon became booming cities facilitating transport of the great volume of products between the Great Lakes and New York City. The Erie Canal was the reason New York State became the Empire State. The heyday of the Erie has long since past, but this 524 mile long step back into history has remained a wonderful recreational attraction.

## BOOKS

- L/H  
Rr386.4809  
B531w Bernstein, Peter L. *Wedding of the Waters, the Erie Canal and the Making of a Great Nation*. New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005
- L/H  
Rr386.4097  
B775f Bourne, Russell *Floating West, The Erie and Other American Canals*. New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992
- L/H  
Rqr386  
D759c Drago, Harry Sinclair, *Canal Days in America, The History and Romance of Old Towpaths and Waterways*. New York: Clarkson N. Potter-Crown, 1972
- L/H  
Rr386  
G242C Garrity, Richard G. *Canal Boatman: My Life on Upstate Waterways*. Syracuse N.Y.: SU Press, 1977.
- L/H  
Rr386  
G654c Goodrich, Carter, *Canals and American Economic Development*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961
- L/H  
Rr386.4809  
K78b Koppel, Gerard, *Bond of Union, Building the Erie Canal and the American Empire*. Philadelphia, Pa. Capo Press, 2009
- L/H  
Rr386.4809  
L324n Larkin, F. Daniel, *New York State Canals: a Short History*. Fleischmanns, New York: Purple Mountain Press, 1998
- L/H  
Rqr386  
L477g Lee, Florence, *Canal Sites within Monroe County*. Prepared for the Meeting of the Canal Society of NYS at the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences. January 25 & 26, 1958
- L/H  
Rrq386.4809  
M143L McFee, Michele A., *A Long Haul: The Story of the New York State Barge Canal*. Fleischmanns, New York: Purple Mountain Press 1998
- L/H  
Rr  
386.4809  
E683e Morganstein, Martin and Cregg, Joan H., *Erie Canal, Images of America*. Charleston South Carolina, Arcadia Publishing, 2001
- L/H  
Rr386.4809  
M978e Murphy, Dan, *The Erie Canal: The Ditch That Opened a Nation.*, Buffalo, Western New York Wares, 2001

- L/H  
Rrq386.4809  
R582o Rinker, Harry L., *The Old Raging Erie...There Have Been Several Changes, A Postcard History of the Erie and Other New York State Canals (1895-1915)*. Berkley Heights, New Jersey: Canal Captain's Press, 1984
- L/H  
Rr386  
S535e Shaw, Ronald E. *Erie Water West, A History of the Erie Canal 1792-1854*. Lexington Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press
- L/H  
Rrq386.4809  
S775e Stack, Debbie Diana and Marquisee, Ronald S, *The Erie Canal, Cruising America's Waterways*. Manlius, New York: Media Artists Inc. 2001
- L/H  
Rr623.82  
E25e *The Edward Backus Method for Propelling Canal Boats by Steam*. Rochester N.Y.: Curtis and Morey & Co, 1868
- L/H  
Rr386  
W177e Walker, Barbara K. and Warren S., Parsons College. *The Erie Canal, Gateway to Empire*. Boston, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1963

### ***Agency and Government Publications on the Erie Canal***

- L/H  
Rrq386.4809  
C2122c Canal Society of New York State, *The Canals of Western Onondaga County, Field Trip Guide*, October 1-3, 1999
- L/H  
Rrq386.409  
E682e Canal Society of New York State, *The Erie Canal, Monroe and Orleans Counties, Bushnell's Basin to Medina, Field Trip Guide*, May 20, 1995
- L/H  
Rrq386.4809  
E684e Canal Society Of New York State, *Erie Canal Buffalo to Lockport, Field Trip, October 3, 1987*
- L/H  
Rrq386.4809  
E68e National Park Service, *The Erie Canalway, A Special Resource Study of the New York Canal System*, Northeast Region, Boston Support Office, 1998
- L/H  
Rrq368.486  
N532n New York State Canal Recreationway Commission, *New York State Canal Recreationway Plan, 1995*
- L/H  
Rr386.1  
N532e State of New York Erie Canal Centennial Commission. *The Erie Canal Centennial Celebration 1926*. Albany N.Y.: J.B. Lyon Company 1928
- L/H  
Rrq386.4809  
N5325m State Education Dept., *The Mighty Chain: a Guide to Canal Records in the New York State Archives*, Albany,: University of the State of New York
- L/H  
Rqr386  
N532Le  
Vol. 1 & 2 State of New York. *New York Canals: Laws of the State of New York in Relation to the Erie and Champlain Canals together with Annual Reports and Other Documents*. Albany: E. and E. Hosford, 1825

## MAPS

The Erie Canal is shown on many maps in the Local History Division's map collection. Check the map case index, under your subject heading, in the Local History Division to see all available maps.

Some original maps have become brittle and fragile and require librarian assistance - ask at the Division's reference desk.

Several of the Division's maps have been digitized and are available online.

<https://roccitylibrary.org/>

1. Select 'Local History' tab
2. Select 'Rochester Images'
3. Select 'Search for Images'
4. Type "Erie Canal Map" in the search box

## MEMORABILIA

L/H Consignment of Merchandise Record Book 1825-1826  
Document Case  
Case 10 shelf 6

L/H Report of Canal Board; Petition of Paul Knight, building sawmill would be  
Document Case injurious to aqueduct.  
Case 13 shelf 1

Please ask at the reference desk for access to these materials.

## MICROFILM

L/H Erie Canal from a Survey by Holmes Hutchinson. 1834  
Rr386.4809  
H976e  
Microfilm

L/H New York State Canal Construction. 23 reels of microfilm  
Rr627.1309  
N532n

## NEWSPAPER ARTICLES AND CLIPPINGS

Local Newspaper Index: 1818-1850 (C) Canal

<http://www.libraryweb.org/~digitized/newsindex/1818-1850/CAD-COU.pdf>

Local Newspaper Index: 1818-1850 (E) Erie Canal

<http://www.libraryweb.org/~digitized/newsindex/1818-1850/ELE-GEN.pdf>

Local Newspaper Index: 1851-1897 (E) Erie Canal

<http://www.libraryweb.org/~digitized/newsindex/1851-1897/Index24ENT-FIL.pdf>

## ONLINE RESOURCES

The online resources for the Monroe County Library System are available through this website. <https://roccitylibrary.org/> Select the blue tab “Local History” and then select what you wish to view.

Hint...’Digital Collections’ then “browse all collections” is a great place to start.

*Rochester History* is a long-running journal that covers the history of Rochester and western New York. This link will take you to the index starting with the letter E. Scroll down to find Erie Canal

<http://www.libraryweb.org/~rochhist/indexe.htm>

Local History Link -- History of the Erie Canal -- includes links to the official New York State Canal System site and to other canal sites

<http://www.history.rochester.edu/canal/index.htm>

## PAMPHLETS

Pamphlets are located in these three boxes. Ask a librarian for assistance.

RVF2 Canals - Erie and Barge (2 folders)

RVF2 Canals – Genesee Valley

RVF2 Canals – New York State System

## PERIODICALS

*Rochester History* is a newsletter published by the Rochester City Historian. Many articles containing information about the Erie Canal are from as early as 1939. These newsletters are available for viewing in the Local History Division.

These newsletters are also available online at <http://www.libraryweb.org/~rochhist/indexe.htm>

This index can be used to locate other subjects alphabetically, such as: A-Aqueduct, C-Canal, B-Barge Canal System.

Also see the Newspapers section in this guide.

## **PHOTOGRAPHS**

Early original photographs and copies of photographs showing scenes of the Erie Canal are available in the folders listed below. Ask a librarian for assistance.

- RPF1 Canal – Erie - General
- RPF1 Canals – Erie – Aqueduct
- RPF2 Canals – Erie – General
- RPF2 Canals – Erie – Aqueduct (Folders 1 and 2)
- RPF2 Canals – Erie – Locks
- RPF2 Canal – Genesee Valley
- RFP1 Floods - Folder (Folders 1, 2 and 3)

## **POSTCARDS**

Postcards are available in the Postcard File. Ask a librarian for assistance.

- Canals, Barge
- Canals, Erie-Aqueduct
- Canals, Erie General

## **SUBJECT HEADINGS**

The library has sorted materials into the following specific subject headings. You may want to use these phrases when reviewing indexes (or conducting searches).

- Erie Canal
- Barge Canal
- Erie Aqueduct
- Aqueduct
- Genesee Valley
- Floods
- Boats, Ships, Canal Boats