

ROCHESTER HISTORY

Edited by Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck
City Historian

Vol. LVI

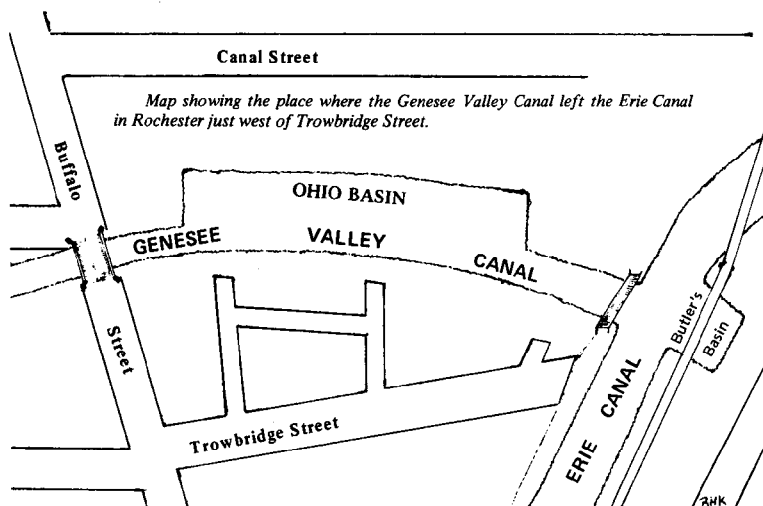
Fall 1994

No. 4

The Genesee Valley Canal

An Extension of our Grand Canal
by James Warlick





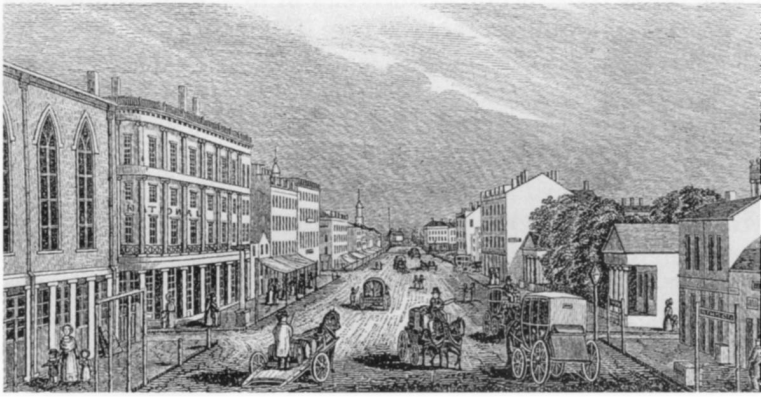
Cover: A Stereopticon view of the Amblico Quarry along the Genesee Valley Canal about 1870. Note that among the men on board the Harvey Tucker are two women at lower right and a young boy at the upper left. Families often lived on board the canal boats. Given by G. W. Woodward to Rochester Public Library.

Above: The Genesee Valley Canal met the Erie Canal at Trowbridge north of Buffalo Street (now West Main Street).

ROCHESTER HISTORY, published quarterly by the Rochester Public Library.
Address correspondence to City Historian, Rochester Public Library, 115 South
Avenue, Rochester, NY 14604.

Subscriptions to the quarterly *Rochester History* are \$6.00 per year by mail. \$4.00 per year to people over 55 years of age and to non-profit institutions and libraries outside of Monroe County. \$3.60 per year for orders of 50 or more copies. Foreign subscriptions \$10.00.

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The Four Corners at the intersection of State and Buffalo (West Main) Streets about 1840 when construction of the Genesee Valley Canal began. Courtesy of the Rochester Public Library.

The Genesee Valley Canal

Viewing [the Genesee Valley Canal] only as a link in a grand communication with the Ohio, by a ready, cheap, and direct route...sufficient reason is presented for its construction. But, when we consider it in a more national and enlarged sense, and recognize in it an EXTENSION OF OUR GRAND CANAL...IT SWELLS FROM THE MINOR IMPORTANCE OF A BRANCH CANAL to a RIVALRY WITH THE GREATEST RIVER ON THE FACE OF THE HABITABLE GLOBE.¹

The Genesee Valley Canal was conceived during the halcyon days of Rochester the Flour City and the unexpected success of the Erie Canal. By its time of completion, however, the Valley Canal bisected a "Flower City" whose youthful brilliance had given way to the modesty of qualified mediocrity. Financial crisis and the opening the old Northwest changed the character of "America's first boom-town."² In the euphoria of the Erie and the boost it provided for the small county seat of Monroe, a water way capable of accessing the forests of the Genesee Valley, the coal fields of Pennsylvania, and major river routes to the south and west seemed both reasonable and possible. But as the nineteenth century unfolded, the water passage fervently lobbied for in the press and in Albany became, by the 1880s, an obsolete malarial ditch. While the Valley Canal had served its region by facilitating transportation between the southern tier and Rochester, the lofty purposes originally ascribed to its construction remained the criteria by which its success was judged throughout the nineteenth century.

Running 107 miles from Rochester to Olean, the Genesee Valley Canal began construction in Rochester in 1837, with the first section to Mount Morris opening in 1840. The main route, including a branch canal to Dansville jutting midway along the mainline's longitudinal course, was completed in 1857. An extension from Olean to Millgrove was added on in 1861.³ One hundred six locks accommodated a 911-foot rise in elevation from the Erie in Rochester to the summit level at man-made Cuba Lake, from which nine more locks then lowered the canal 134 feet to Olean and Millgrove Pond.⁴ Locks were made of wood and stone variously, their average 15 by 90-foot capacity allowing passage for boat and scow alike. The canal's profile was trapezoidal, 42 feet at surface and 26 feet at the bottom, easily accommodating two-way traffic. The Genesee Canal reached its peak annual capacity of 158,942 tons in 1854, three years before completion.⁵ From 1854 to its abandonment by the State in 1878, that apex was never surpassed.

Petitions calling for a lateral connection from Rochester to the Southern Tier first circulated among the public and press in 1825, all within the "canal-mania" spawned by the Erie's success.⁶ These early entreaties accomplished little, as would be the case for appeals which followed over the next several years. While the New York Legislature saw nearly a hundred separate petitions between 1826 and 1829, they found no consensus as to the best route, with some proposals suggesting a variety of alternatives to a river valley passage.⁷ In 1828, a direct appeal to Congress by citizens of Rochester for a survey of the Valley route achieved few results.⁸

By 1829, however, canal advocates exhibited a greater degree of organization and strength, demonstrated in a memorial circulated by residents of Monroe, Livingston, Allegheny, Genesee, and Cattaragus counties. They asked for passage of laws and dispersal of sufficient funds for the construction of a canal "from Rochester to Olean Point, through the Valley of the Genesee. . . ."⁹ The proposal stated the obvious: lands along the Genesee east and west held vast resources as yet not properly exploited. In the shadow of prosperity brought to western New York by the Erie, counties south of the canal's latitudinal stretch remained a "sequestered region."¹⁰ But the memorial of 1829 articulated a position which elevated the Valley connection from a purely regional concern to one having importance far beyond internal navigation in New York State. Canal advocates envisioned direct access to the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers all the way to the Gulf

of Mexico, creating a network of “unbroken inland water communication between...three quarters of the entire territory of the United States.”¹¹ Taken in total, the memorial had something to spark the interest of everyone; but it also raised the stakes by pushing a national design to the forefront, one which in hindsight may have sown the seeds of discontent as expectations confronted harsh realities. The majority of memorialists overlooked topographical and political considerations, optimistic from the feats of engineering and financial skill demonstrated in the making of Clinton’s Ditch.¹²

While advocates envisioned a plan for the benefit of the nation, they never lost sight of the regional economic gain, especially to the city of Rochester. The *Republican* informed its readership that “Rochester more than any other place would reap the benefits resulting from the execution of [the Valley Canal]. Her citizens should therefore render an energetic support to the appeal now before the Legislature.”¹³

While the 1829 petition displayed a certain refinement by procanal forces, it was several years before the Genesee Valley route gained true momentum. The State Senate authorized a survey in May of 1830; however, even with the urging of a “canal congress” made up of delegates from various counties, the allotted sum of \$750 proved insufficient for its execution.¹⁴

In 1834, the State Legislature received twenty-eight new petitions. By this time, the national scope of the project offered up in the 1829 memorial garnered the interest of advocates outside of the Genesee region, with support coming from as far away as New York City.¹⁵ Interest in coal from Pennsylvania as well as lumber and agricultural products from the Southern Tier made the new lateral appear both lucrative and beneficial. An act allowing for a survey was passed in April of 1834, with results submitted by engineer Frederick Mills in March of 1835. Mills supplied figures for a 122-mile route on the west side of the river, estimated at \$1,890,600, and an east route, one mile longer estimated at \$2,002,000. He pointed out that the canal south of Mount Morris, an area of rising elevations and deep river gorges, would be the most tasking and expensive portion of the project. In hindsight, Mills’ cautionary comment would prove something of an understatement.¹⁶ While the Legislature was out of session, the Genesee Valley Canal advocates pooled their resources, so that by the beginning of the 1835–36 legislative session, Albany was inundated with petitions.¹⁷ In Rochester, advocates predicted that

the route would make Rochester "a haymarket for Olean and the intermediate country," and cautioned that failure to connect the Allegheny Region with the Erie would increase the danger of "association of the Southern Tier with Pennsylvania instead of New York."¹⁸

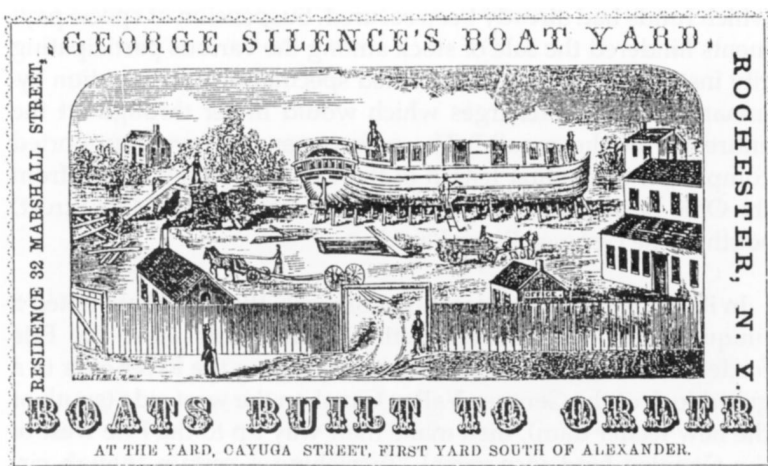
Although seeming most beneficial to rural areas in the south, the idea of a lateral canal had wide support among the Rochester business community.¹⁹ On March 4, 1836, "a very large and respectable meeting of citizens of Rochester friendly to construction of the Genesee Valley Canal" met to discuss and lend formal support to the project. Their memorial reiterated sentiments put forth seven years prior, emphasizing not merely the access to products of the Genesee Valley, but more importantly a water network connecting the Erie to the "Atlantic...the valley of the Ohio...[and] the Mississippi" as well.²⁰ Persistence and organization succeeded; on May 6, 1836 an act for construction was finally passed, to which the legislature allocated \$2 million. They left the specific route south of Mount Morris undefined, calling for one that would be "the most eligible route to the Allegheny River at or near Olean."²¹

In June of 1836, writer Henry O'Reilly published his optimistic observations of Rochester, focusing on improvements in transportation recently sanctioned by the Legislature: railroads, enlargement of the Erie, and the Genesee Valley Canal. O'Reilly applauded State government for having "enlightened regard [for] the "public welfare" in authorizing the "GENESEE CANAL thus," in O'Reilly's opinion, "opening a DIRECT COMMUNICATION thro' the most fertile region of the STATE BETWEEN ROCHESTER and the vast VALLEY OF THE MISSISSIPPI."²² Seeing possibilities of a Valley connection with the proposed enlargements and improvements of the Erie, tolls, which O'Reilly stated were greater than "any other place west of Albany," would be "increased in a far greater ratio than any other place by the ENLARGEMENT of the ERIE CANAL and the CONSTRUCTION of the GENESEE CANAL."²³ At the end of the year, O'Reilly reiterated his enthusiasm for the Valley Canal as a linchpin in the network to the Mississippi, as well as a means of "enabling [Rochesterians] to exchange...manufactures for the mineral treasures of Pennsylvania."²⁴ Much of the public's optimism hinged on rumored improvements to the Allegheny River by the state of Pennsylvania. To proponents still basking in the after-glow of internal improvement mania, it seemed that hopes would become reality.

When work finally began in 1837, the *Rochester Republican* cautioned the "vigorous prosecution of work" past the point for which funds had already been secured. Suspension of specie payments hindered the sale of stock among the various participating city institutions, all of which fueled speculation of corruption by unnamed officials (charges which would linger throughout the entire life of the canal).²⁵ The newspaper, however, supported completion of the first length of the Genesee Valley Canal, from the Ohio Basin connection just above Buffalo Street (Main Street) south to the Genesee River Rapids.²⁶

In its call for timely prosecution of work, the *Republican* noted a unique utility for the first section. Boats could enter the Erie feeder on the east side, make their way across the River over to a guard lock of the Genesee Valley Canal on the west side (south of the new feeder dam), then make their way up to the Erie west of the Genesee (and vice-versa) "furnishing a certain though circuitous navigation for the Erie Canal Boats in case of accident to the Aqueduct..."²⁷ Use of the feeder in this fashion was not new; it had in fact served as a much used lateral passage for river transportation years before the Valley Canal was completed. It was likely that the river boat trade which preceded the Genesee Valley Canal used the feeder in a similar fashion, down-loading cargo onto scows which could make their way up the shallow and narrow feeder, circumventing rocks, rapids, and any man-made obstacles which prevented direct river access to Rochester. This fledgling trade network no doubt provided a tangible example of the usefulness for a lateral to the Genesee Valley.²⁸ Later in 1836, when a short canal from Scottsville to the Genesee River was completed (and soon after made a part of the Genesee Valley Canal), captains, after making their way to the Genesee and north to Rochester, ended their runs by slipping up the Erie's feeder onto points East and West.²⁹

Even after work began, canal enthusiasts felt the need to push for its completion, as well as continue to justify and defend the Genesee Valley Canal from critics. Implications of political corruption and conspiracy were interspersed among reports of construction delays. In 1842, although the first section appeared to have had positive effects upon interstate trade and property values, one writer charged Albany with holding completion funds hostage. Although the State Senate apparently intended to freeze expenditures on all public works until they could stabilize state finances, critics saw the "Stop Law" as a corrupt co-optation of finances by, as they put it, "our present Locofoco legislature."³⁰



From the Canal Society of New York State.

Five years later, while a new State Constitution allowed for small appropriations to complete projects such as the Genesee and Black River Canals, this combination of praise for the canal and admonitions of politicians continued.³¹ The editor of the *Rochester Daily Democrat*, came straight to the point in placing blame over work delays on the southerly stretch:

[The Valley Canal] has been the object of plunder. Dishonest offices have swindled the State out of sufficient money to complete the project.³²

He then bitterly complained of State Legislators who “belittled the Genesee Valley Canal,” as an unimportant expense. Citing a report to the contrary by their own Canal Commissioners: “It has been shown that the Genesee Valley Canal, although in operation only 52 miles, already pays the interest upon the cost of construction, and furnishes a handsome sinking fund to apply to the principal.”³³

But as work managed to creep along, even the usually optimistic Rochester newspapers began to question the utility of the Genesee Valley Canal. Reporting on the anticipated completion of a new passage above the Mount Morris dam, a writer resigned himself to the delays saying that “the Valley Canal has almost become obsolete.”³⁴ Updates from the field only deepened the pessimism. Blasting through sedimentary rock to create a tunnel

proved fruitless, necessitating an open passage ("the Deep Cut") and paralleling of the Genesee gorge dangerously close to its edge.³⁵ Engineers and work crews found quicksand along much of the route.³⁶ The number of locks required for the ascent, combined with a paucity of native materials, required a switch from stone construction to wood (with combinations of both when possible).³⁷

There is no better expression of the relative value placed upon the Genesee Valley Canal by its contemporaries than in a decision of the New York State Canal Appraisers' Board. The Appraisers' Board functioned as mediator in a civil dispute brought about by mill owners seeking damages for lost "hydraulic privileges due to the Erie and Genesee canals. Concerns regarding the effect of a lateral upon mill races found their way into public debate over the Genesee Valley Canal early on. Manufacturing interests in the city of Rochester were some of the canal's strongest advocates, but some mill owners were "apprehensive that the proposed canal" might decrease the velocity and volume of water necessary for continued operation.³⁸ The issue came to a head in mid-century when a group of Rochester mill owners brought suit against New York State.³⁹ At the end of the hearings, however, all claims brought against the Erie were summarily dismissed, even though the board verified substantial losses caused by the Grand Canal. In the opinion of the Canal Board:

Rochester is said to be the greatest flouring city in the world. Would it have been so without the Erie Canal transporting wheat to its mills and flour to its markets? If there has been, for a fraction of the year, a curtailment of water power, an ample equivalent (sic) and compensation has been paid therefore.⁴⁰

But the Genesee Valley Canal claims turned out quite differently. After complicated and conflicting measurements from engineers on both sides, the board compromised between the State's figures of 1,757 cubic feet and the mill owners' 9,444 cubic feet: 3,600 cubic feet per day. But the State finessed out of paying the majority of claims, based on the status of water rights, amounts of water actually used by claimants, and restricting claims to those affected only in 1840 when the canal began diverting water. In the end, only sixteen of the fifty-one plaintiffs were awarded any compensation.⁴¹ The board provided no justification or written opinion; their conspicuous silence belied a certain apathy toward the valley lateral vis-à-vis the Erie.⁴²

Much of the overt criticism levied against the Genesee Valley

Canal and other laterals centered around notions of internal commerce between businesses along the canal itself, which would have added little to the Erie route, and therefore, New York in general. Shipping bills for the Valley Canal, however, reveal that a parochial conception of trade on the Valley Canal was unjustified. Collections of shipping bills for canal boats *Ann of Wheatland*, *Poverty of Scottsville*, and *W.W. Wooster of Cuylerville* suggest a much broader scope of trade. These vessels transported goods for a number of businesses, but many of their runs were from the gypsum-and-lime works of Philip and J.W. Garbutt. Reflecting the years between 1841 and 1875, these records show that while the Garbutts dealt in local trade, they were also integrated into a network that went far beyond locations adjacent to the Genesee Valley Canal.⁴³

Philip Garbutt was no stranger to shipping goods north by water. Settling in Wheatland during the 1820s, Philip Garbutt established himself as a grain merchant/retail businessman, and in 1832 bought and operated a river boat to transport wheat to and from Rochester.⁴⁴ It would seem unlikely, then, that one of the Wheatland's leading citizens would make his mark not by the grain trade, but by gypsum, another of the area's natural resources.

During the 1820s, the practice of using crushed gypsum (which contains sulphate of lime) on crops to aid in their growth was a common practice.⁴⁵ Although advertisements of the period made it apparent that the "secret" of gypsum was unknown, small independent farmers and large farm associations alike promoted the use of "land plaster," observing that whatever the cause, it did seem to help the soil retain moisture and make crops grow.⁴⁶

While digging the foundation for a grist mill on Oatka creek, Garbutt discovered a huge deposit of gypsum. With easy conversion of mill apparatus to facilitate grinding of the soft rock, Garbutt began his lucrative career in the "land plaster" business. After the Valley Canal opened in 1840, Garbutt's product gained widespread distribution throughout the northeast.⁴⁷ As receipts show, Garbutt's gypsum was in great demand as far away as Boston, Massachusetts, where his "Wheatland plaster" was "recommended by the Massachusetts Farmer's Association" over other available soil supplements.⁴⁸

Later, it was discovered that when boiled and left to harden, gypsum made a durable building material known as water-lime



Above: Hornby Lodge built by Elisha Johnson as his residence while he was engineer building the tunnel at what is now Letchworth Park. The lodge stood between 1840 and 1849. Courtesy of Rochester Public Library.

Right: Elisha Johnson, engineer for part of the Genesee Valley Canal, also served three times as Rochester's village president and as its fifth mayor. Courtesy Rochester Public Library.

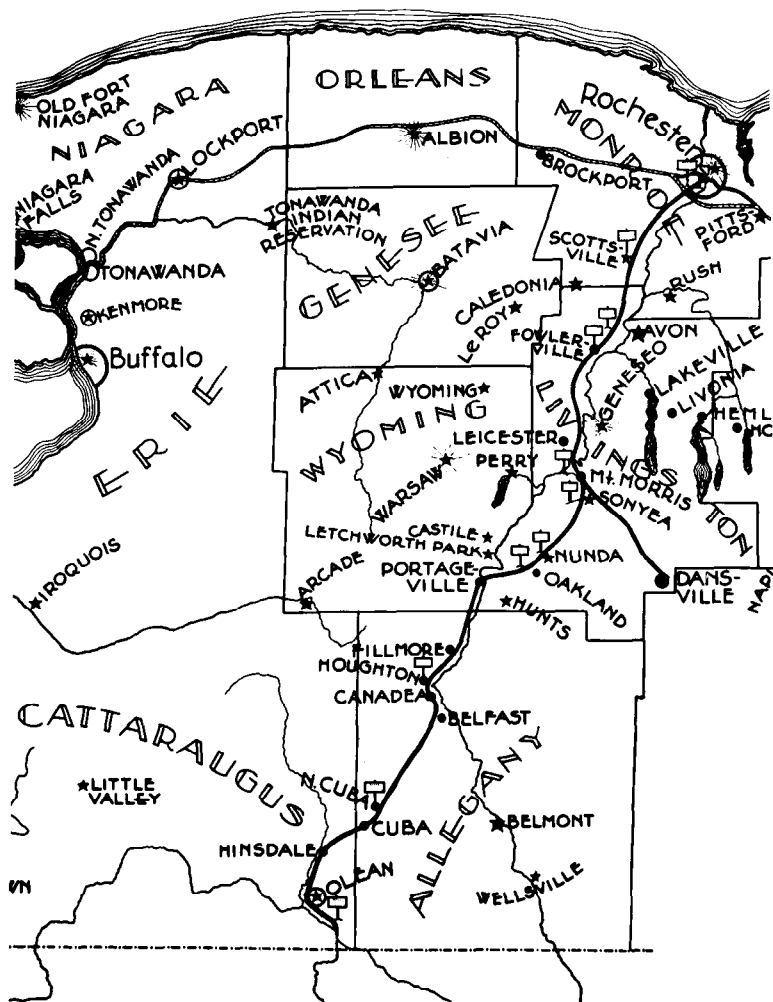


cement. Again the Garbutts modified their manufacturing facilities, producing water lime cement well into the nineteenth century.⁴⁹ Although Philip Garbutt left western New York a financially beaten man in 1859 (the victim of a disastrous wheat crop and a local recession), his business continued under the control of son John W. Garbutt. The younger Garbutt operated mills in Mumford, Garbuttsville, and Scottsville aiding farmers in the area not only in the growth of their crops, but providing employment in the winter months as well.⁵⁰

By all accounts, the opening of the Genesee Valley Canal was a tremendous boost for Garbutt's gypsum operation. Both Philip and son John owned and operated canal boats and warehouses all along the Genesee Valley Canal, even employing agents along the Erie as far away as Brockport. But the Garbutts dealt not only in plaster, but flour, lumber, and dry goods as well, using their centrally located warehouses as shipping stations and wholesale facilities.⁵¹

The 221 shipping bills in the Wheatland/Mumford collection reveal first that, while a healthy internal trade existed on the Genesee Valley Canal, it was also a part of a much wider commercial network, and one that must have benefitted the Flour City. Thirty and one-half percent of the receipts related to Rochester trade which terminated in or departed from forwarding or shipping merchants such as E. N. Buell, Thomas Pease and Company, and John L. Fish. It is likely that these goods would arrive from, or be shipped out to, other points along the Erie. Forty-three percent of these receipts represented external trade to destinations or points of departure either along the Erie or as far away as Boston. A number of shipments in both categories were to or from John Connor, Garbutt's agent in Rochester. The ultimate destination of plaster and cement shipped to Connor's warehouse near Court and Exchange is unknown, but like goods to and from Pease, Fish and Buell, probably had wide distribution from temporary housing in Rochester.⁵² The warehouse district which lined the Erie near the feeder and on the canal west of the river obscured the nature of direct shipping. If anything, one can surmise that the shipping bills of Scottsville and Garbutt underestimate the spatial dispersement of business related to the Genesee Valley Canal. In terms of the debate over parochial versus regional trade on the Genesee Valley Canal, the Garbutt and Scottsville shipping bills suggest that the litany of breaks, leaks and technical problems which plagued the canal south of Mount Morris somewhat confined internal trade that did exist. This is

TERRITORY INFLUENCED
—BY THE—
GENESEE VALLEY CANAL
—1840~1878—



Map showing route of Genesee Valley Canal

From The Genesee Valley Canal by Gladys Reid Holton, 1970.

evident in the 26% of receipts which represent intra-canal business along and between points on the Genesee Valley Canal. Destinations south of Mount Morris are in the minority (taking into consideration years in which the entire canal was opened). It is easy to correlate the paucity of regular trips to points south of Mount Morris with the number of reports in Rochester newspapers describing breaks and stoppages along the canal. Although the northern section was afflicted with its share of problems, they failed to compare with the majority along the southern arm. Noble Whitford points out that from an engineering and topographical standpoint, the Erie had an average of one lock for every five miles. Laterals such as the Genesee, however, averaged two or three per mile, indicating "unfavorable topography" as well as expensive construction costs and complicated technical considerations.⁵³ The Nunda ascent and the "Deep-Cut" contained some ten locks over two miles, lifting the water level over 100 feet (that is to say nothing of the thirty-three locks which brought the canal from the Dansville Junction to Nunda up a 350-foot elevation).⁵⁴

In Rochester, wood merchants, lumber yards and boat makers were hardest hit by trouble on the Genesee Valley Canal. From the outset, advocates touted the possibility of transporting the vast forest resources of the southern tier to markets north, east and west. A majority of Rochester's lumber dealers were located on the west side of the Genesee, with firms such as W.B. Morse and J.W. Phillips adjacent to the Ohio Basin.⁵⁵ One newspaper in 1847 wrote that lumber remained "one of the principal articles of trade, which could never reach Rochester for shipment east had not the Genesee Valley Canal been constructed..."⁵⁶

Before the opening of the Genesee Valley Canal, transporting the southern tier's abundant forest stocks was precarious and haphazard.⁵⁷ Loggers tried to float timbers down the river, but the procedure was dependent upon flooding, drought, and the topography through which the river intersected. Attempts at "rafting" lumber down river were subject to the same restrictions.⁵⁸ Wood was a vital commodity of the southern tier, especially in demand by the construction, milling, and boat-building industries in Rochester, Buffalo, and New York City. By using the long square-ended scows upon the canal, logging merchants and boatmen easily and safely transported raw timber and rough sawn lumber up the valley to Rochester. Upon arrival, stocks were milled, used in manufacturing, and/or shipped on to points east and west along the Erie. As the largest craft which the Genesee Valley Canal was designed to carry, the 12 by 75-foot

scow craft could carry a maximum of seventy-five tons without "rough sledding" along the canal's bottom. But H.P. Marsh, a canal boater on the Erie and Genesee Canals, remembered that Genesee Valley boats were "some fourteen feet wide and eighty feet long...[and] would carry ninety tons, if loaded with lumber, 50 to 80 thousand feet." A shipping bill to William B. Morse on the boat *E.H. Whitney* in 1862 records a cargo of "4048' cherry lumber, 3290' Cucumber lumber, and 57,943' pine lumber," totaling roughly 65,000 feet. Other bills show footage of lumber at an average of 40,000 feet. It was said, quite facetiously, that scows were made in standard widths, but manufactured in mile-long sections which could be cut to any length.⁵⁹

From 1855 to 1863 there was a noticeable rise in the number of lumber facilities and wood-dependent industries along the Genesee Valley Canal within Rochester's city limits. While a direct correlation to the Genesee Valley Canal is unknown, newspaper articles suggested such a dependency. In a report of damage on the Genesee Valley Canal south of Mount Morris in 1861:

Rochester is interested largely in the repair of this canal as it is intended to prosecute the business of boat building this winter with vigor if lumber can be had...Intelligence that no more wood can be brought in by the Valley Canal...has caused quite a flurry among [limber] dealers here who have orders to fill and who have not a supply...⁶⁰

During the following season, delays wrought by sand and sediment incited lumber dealers of Rochester to action. They even offered to "remove the earth from the bottom of the canal at the shallowest points [between the Shaker's Settlement—now Sonyea—and Mount Morris] if the State [would] permit them, and do it free of cost."⁶¹ Even with intermittent disruptions in the navigability along the Genesee Valley Canal, compared to previous forms of transportation, Rochester saved an estimated \$150,000 every year on lumber during the canal's life.⁶²

As the century progressed, the distant promise of railroad in the early 1800s had become a full-fledged reality. From the time that work began on the canal south of Mount Morris, advocates suggested that a railroad connection from Olean might be more cost-effective. The proposal, however, was seen as nothing more than a way of profiting the economy of Mount Morris and was summarily dismissed.⁶³ Years later a Rochester newspaper commented on the opportunity that had been missed.⁶⁴ By the 1850s, the Erie Railroad had begun to compete directly with the Genesee

Valley Canal, transporting lumber, dairy, and wheat at an equal or lesser cost (with dependable year-round service as well). The promise of cheap coal from Pennsylvania was never realized: "As the railroad running from the coal fields of Pennsylvania," an observer noted in 1876:

was completed the year previous, it was expected...that cheap coal [would go to Rochester] and a market, but none was shipped on the canal. The original project of the Genesee Valley Canal extension contemplated full as much from coal transportation as lumber...When shall we see this realized?⁶⁵

As for the water access to the Allegheny, improvements to the river, promised at various times by Pennsylvania and the Federal government, were put off, and in the end never attempted.⁶⁶ In February 1878, a writer asked "Should we or shouldn't we keep the Genesee Valley Canal open?"⁶⁷ The state answered by abandoning the canal in September of 1878. It was somewhat ironic that several years later the abandoned towpath would become the foundation for the Genesee Valley Canal Railroad (not to be confused with the Genesee Valley Railroad), the canal bed remaining a source of health concerns into the 1890s.⁶⁸

The Genesee Valley Canal, like many of the later laterals of the Erie, was born in the shadow of a formidable sibling. What seemed justifiable by the standards of 1820s canal mania appeared less so in the sober realities of financial panics, national expansion, railroads, and geography. But we should not judge the Genesee Valley Canal as an historically inevitable failure. Thomas Grasso suggests that laterals, such as the Genesee Valley Canal, were "very useful," and in some cases "highly successful" undertakings if judged outside of a conception of laterals as "little Erie Canals." As Grasso observed, "laterals joined isolated small communities with the main stream of commerce borne by the Erie Canal...and [as growing communities] acted as nuclei that later attracted the railroad companies" who found it profitable to construct mainlines through such "existing communities."⁶⁹

There was no "new" Rochester or Buffalo along the path of the Genesee Valley Canal. The boom town phenomenon had long since moved west to towns and cities whose optimistic citizens petitioned not for canal locks of stone, but railroad tracks of steel instead.

The author would like to thank Laurie Thurston, Dr. O. S. Ireland, Dr. Mary Young, Thomas X. Grasso, Mrs. Florence Fields, and Mr. Karl Kabelac for their help and guidance.

Jim Warlick lives in Chili and is working at Four Corners Abstract. He is completing his Master's degree at the University of Rochester.

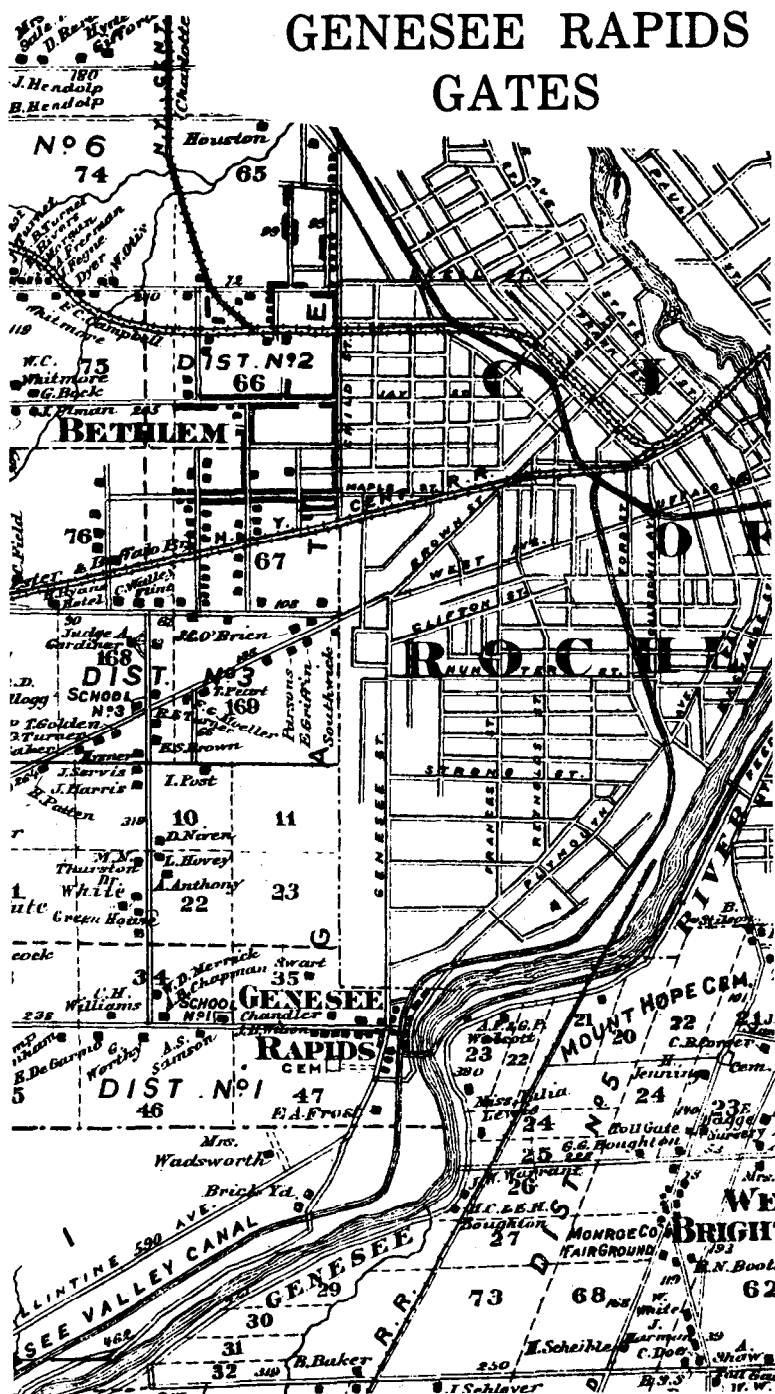
Endnotes

1. *Rochester Republican*, June 7, 1836.
2. Blake McKelvey, *Rochester: The Water-Power City, 1812-1854* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1945) p. 71-135, 205-241; *Rochester: The Flower City, 1845-1890* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Press, 1949), 1-25, 98-127; Neil Adams McNall, *An Agricultural History of the Genesee Valley, 1790-1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1952), p. 124.
3. Noble Whitford, "Data Concerning Canals in the United States and Canada" in *History of the Canal System of the State of New York* [Vol. 2] (Albany: Brandow Printing, 1906), p. 1467.
4. *Ibid*; Gladys Reid Holton, *The Genesee Valley Canal* (Brockport, N.Y.: Stylus Graphics, 1970), p. 4, 15.
5. Blake McKelvey noted that in 1845, 2,968 craft left Rochester south down the Genesee Valley Canal, with "a total of 5,345 [passing] the first lock south of the city" [*Rochester: The Flower City*, p. 6].
6. *Rochester Advertiser*, November 17, 1825; January 17, 1826; January 31, 1826; March 21, 1826; July 18, 1826, January 15, 1828; *Rochester Telegraph*, March 1, 1825; April 5, 1825; *Monroe Republican*, March 28, 1826. McKelvey, *Rochester: The Water Power City*, p. 206; McCall, p. 125; Wheeler Chapin Chase, "The Genesee Valley Canal" *Rochester Historical Society Publication Series*, XXI (1943), p. 195-196. A plan was even put forth seeking to carry the proposed canal past the Upper Falls making a direct route to Lake Ontario [*Rochester Advertiser*, February 21, 1826].
7. Noble E. Whitford, *History of the Canal System of the State of New York, Vol. 1* (Albany: Brandow Printing Company, 1906), p. 710, 709. Among the alternative routes proposed were LeRoy to Scottsville, and from the Erie Canal in Buffalo down the Conewango creek valley to the Allegheny.
8. *Rochester Telegraph*, January 15, 1828.
9. *Rochester Republican*, December 29, 1929.
10. McNall, p. 125; McKelvey, *Rochester: The Water-Power City*, p. 93, 169.
11. Whitford, p. 708.

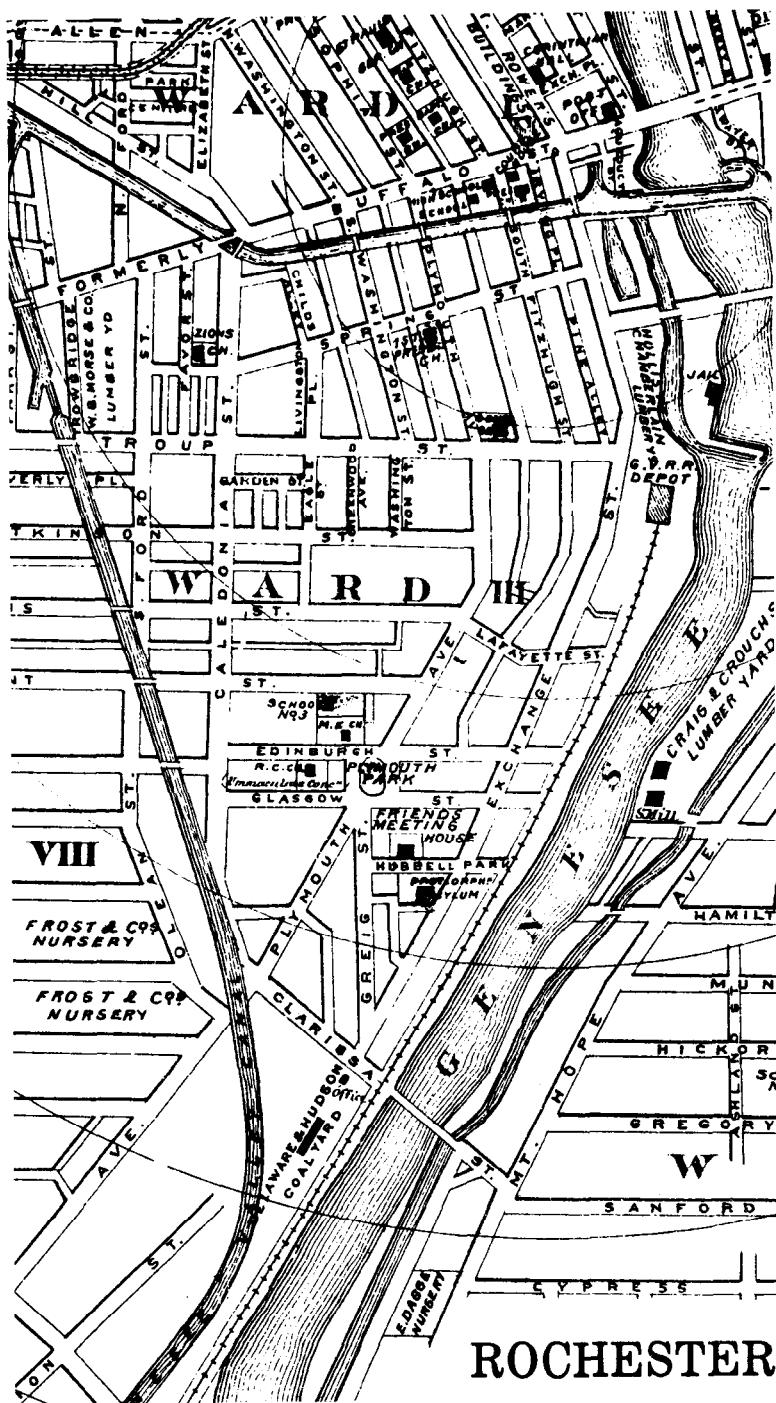
12. See Nathan Miller, *Enterprise of a Free People: Aspects of Economic Development in New York State During the Canal Period, 1792–1838* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1962).
13. *Rochester Republic*, January 19, 1830.
14. *Rochester Republican*, June 1, 1830; Sept 7, 1830; *Rochester Daily Advertiser*, April 17, 1830; May 31, 1830; February 31, 1831. See also Whitford, p. 710.
15. Whitford, p. 710; *Rochester Daily Advertiser*, October 21, 1933; *Rochester Republican*, June 7, 1836.
16. *Rochester Daily Democrat*, February 11, 1836; Whitford, p. 711.
17. Whitford, p. 711–712.
18. *Rochester Daily Democrat*, June 3, 1835; February 11, 1836.
19. McNall, p. 188; McKelvey, *Rochester: The Water-Power City*, p. 206.
20. *Rochester Daily Democrat*, March 7, 1836. The committee was headed by Dr. Matthew Brown, Jacob Gould and Obadiah Bush, and included such Rochesterians as Jonathan Child, Joseph Strong, and Isaac Z. Hills.
21. Whitford, p. 712; *Rochester Daily Democrat*, May 9, 1836; May 19, 1836; *Rochester Republican*, May 10, 1836.
22. *Rochester Republican*, June 7, 1836.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Rochester Daily Democrat*, January 4, 1837.
25. *Rochester Republican*, January 27, 1837. For accounts of the Panic of 1837 and its impact upon the Genesee Valley Canal, as well as the Erie enlargement, see Nathan Miller, *Enterprise of a Free People: Aspects of Economic Development in New York State During the Canal Period, 1792–1838* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 197–215, 221, 223; Ronald Shaw, *Erie Water West: A History of the Erie Canal, 1792–1854* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1966), p. 257, 318, 397; McKelvey, *Rochester: The Water Power City*, p. 213–220.
26. See Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck, "Settlement at the Rapids," *Rochester History* (1992), p. 15; Holton, p. 7–10; *Rochester Daily Democrat*, June 24, 1837; June 28, 1837; July 1, 1837; *Rochester Republican*, July 4, 1837.
27. *Rochester Republican*, January 27, 1837.
28. Slocum, p. 78. In 1829, a group of Scottsville businessmen secured a charter for the construction of what would later become the Scottsville–Genesee River Canal. Construction and

actual financing, however, did not begin until 1836, when a stock company was formed and investments were secured by village residents. The actual canal was a very short one, being less than one half mile in length, but being connected to Allen's (Oatka) Creek allowed the water route to extend as far as the creek was navigable, especially giving access to Garbuttsville and the mills just west of the village of Scottsville. It also provided a good access point to the river from other southern tier villages who could have transhipped by road to Scottsville, and then on to the Erie. Although Allen's Creek did terminate in the Genesee just east of Scottsville, it was, like other natural waterways of its size, not a dependable point of entry, most probably because of unsure navigability, as well as its damming up by the state for local milling. The canal's guard locks were right before the dam (a new dam was constructed on the old State dam to facilitate the canal and the mill waters), from where it traveled northeast approximately one third mile at which point it turned sharply to the east and the river. According to village historian George Slocum, the lock at the Genesee, "having a quicksand foundation, proved very expensive," inflating construction costs for the locally funded project.

29. Slocum, *History of Wheatland, Monroe County* (Scottsville, N.Y.: Isaac Van Hoosek, 1908), p. 29, 78.
30. *Rochester Daily Democrat*, July 29, 1842; Whitford, p. 714; Ronald E. Shaw, *Canals for a Nation: The Canal Era in the United States, 1790–1860* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1990), p. 208; Shaw, *Erie Water West*, p. 333–334; McKelvey, *Rochester: The Water-Power City*, p. 219.
31. Whitford, p. 717.
32. *Rochester Daily Democrat*, April 22, 1847.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Rochester Daily Democrat*, July 9, 1852.
35. Whitford, p. 717.
36. *Rochester Daily Democrat*, June 24, 1850.
37. Whitford, p. 713, 722; Case, p. 198.
38. *Rochester Daily Advertiser*, November 22, 1833.
39. Whitford, p. 721.
40. New York State Legislature, Canal Appraisers. *Awards and Testimony in the Claims of Rochester Mill Owners for the Diversion of the Waters of the Genesee River for the Supply of the Erie and Genesee Valley Canals, Heard by the Canal Appraisers* (Albany: C. Van Bethuyen, 1856), p. 34.



From The Genesee Valley Canal by Mildred L. H. Anderson, 1978.

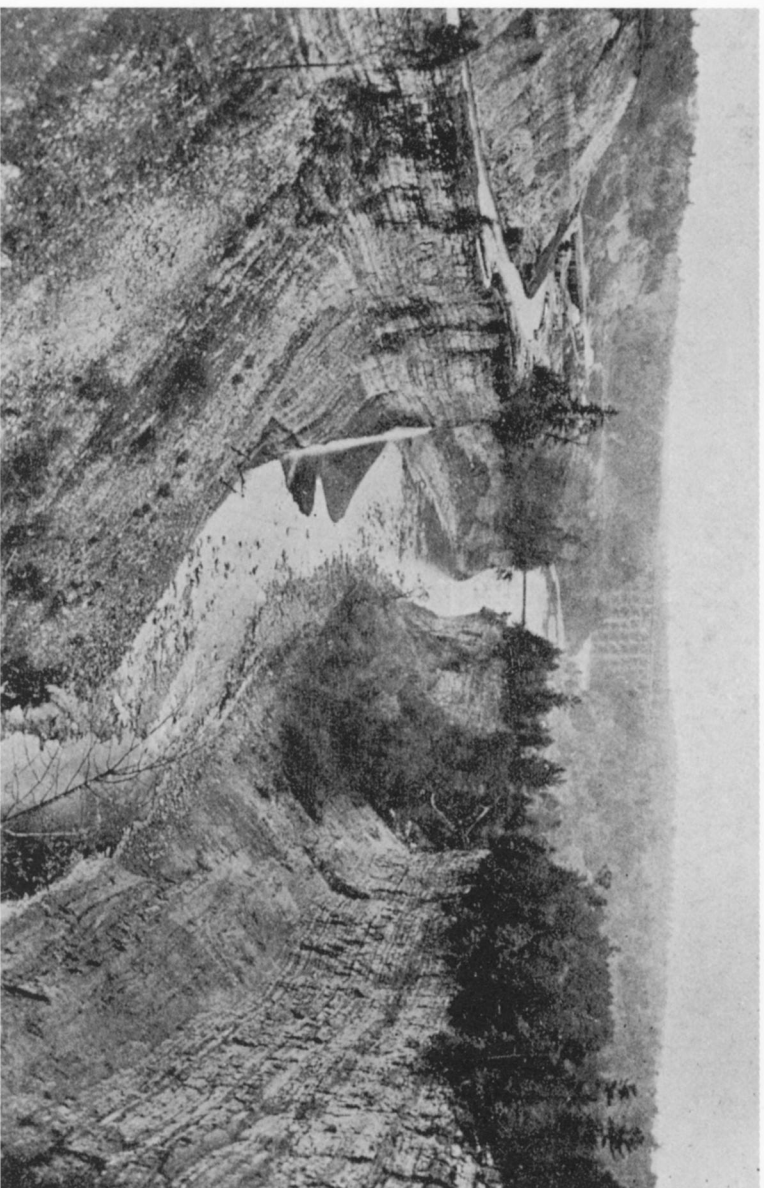


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41. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
43. Carl Schmidt, *History of the Town of Wheatland* (Rochester, N.Y.: Carl Schmidt, 1953), p. 75.
44. Schmidt, p. 213.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 214–215.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 213–215.
47. Schmidt, p. 214–215, 88; Slocum, p. 48.
48. Schmidt, 222.
49. Schmidt, p. 218–219. Water-lime cement is most similar to dry-wall.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 215.
51. Shipping Bills (Miscellaneous)—Genesee Valley Canal, Wheatland Town Historian's Office, Mumford, New York.
52. *Rochester City Directory*, 1845–1846; 1855–1856; 1863–1864.
53. Whitford, p. 783. For a sampling of reports of breaks, see *Rochester Daily Advertiser*, August 8, 1853; October 17, 1853; *Rochester Daily Union*, October 17, 1853; *Union and Advertiser*, July 28, 1858; June 21, 1861; July 13, 1861; July 29, 1861; May 26, 1862; July 1, 1862; May 15, 1836; July 13, 1863; July 21, 1863; July 22, 1863.
54. Holton, *The Genesee Valley Canal*, p. 3.
55. *Rochester City Directory*—1854–55, 1863–64.
56. *Rochester Daily Democrat*, April 17, 1847.
57. McNall, p. 184.
58. *Ibid.*
59. Holton, p. 23; "Shipping Bills—Genesee Valley Canal," Wheatland Town Historian's Office, Mumford, N.Y.; Chase, "The Genesee Valley Canal," *Rochester Historical Society Publication Series*, XXI (1945), p. 202–203.
60. *Union and Advertiser*, October 5, 1861. Regarding the paralyzed boat industry and impending prospects for the winter, the paper added that "there are now seven boats in the stocks at the yards in all stages of construction [60 having been completed that season]...that when completed will carry 210 tons each making an aggregate of 12,600 tons each trip. They cost [an average of] \$3,200 making the total value \$192,000." *The Union and Advertiser* urged that the state help by repairing the canal so that these boats

might be completed and benefit the greatest number of people. For more on boat builders in the Ohio Basin, see Thomas X. Grasso, "Rochester's Canal Boat Industry," *Rochester History* (1987), p. 13, 14, 19.

61. *Union and Advertiser*, May 21, 1862. The report refers to the individual contracted to dredge the canal by the state as "the Contractor Lord. Also see *Union and Advertiser*, January 13, 1869.
62. McNall, p. 189.
63. McNall, p. 187; see also *Rochester Daily Democrat*, August 11, 1852.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Union and Advertiser*, July 27, 1876.
66. Whitford, p. 720; McKelvey, *Rochester: The Flower City*, p. 6.
67. *Union and Advertiser*, February 8, 1878. For a complete discussion of the background of the abandonment of the Genesee Valley Canal and other laterals of its type, see Whitford, p. 763–785.
68. *Union and Advertiser*, June 19, 1879; January 15, 1880; February 3, 1881; Whitford, p. 726–727; Case, p. 206–207; *Union and Advertiser*, July 17, 1879; December 6, 1879; January 13, 1893.
69. Grasso, *The Canals and a Brief History of Rochester and Eastern Monroe County* (Rochester: Canal Society of New York, 1978), p. 13.



The Genesee Valley Canal on the upper left carried boats high above the Genesee River near the Middle Falls at Portage. In the distance (center) is the wooden Erie Railroad bridge over the Upper Falls. Donated by Lena B. Flynn, Nunda to the Rochester Public Library.