

# Erie Canal Facts



Office of the NEW YORK STATE COMPTROLLER  
New York State Comptroller • THOMAS P. DiNAPOLI

## Canal System Commercial Traffic:

- Peak year – 1951: 5.2 million tons of cargo transported.
- 2007 to 2015 average: 25,456 tons.
- 2015: 5,572 tons.



The New York State Canal System includes the Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca canals. Much of the current commercial traffic is on the Champlain and Oswego canals.

Most recreational use occurs between locks, with boats entering from any of the 85 boat launches along the Canal. Most Erie Canal locks have parks open to the public.

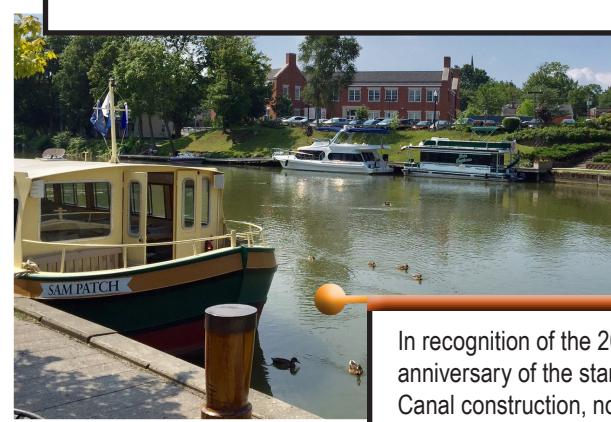


The **Canalway Trail** comprises about 300 miles of multiple-use trails, much of it following the current and former routes of the Erie Canal. Almost 1.6 million people visit the Canal each year. The Trail is still being expanded and will eventually be completed across the State.



## Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor:

- Federally designated to preserve and ensure access to historical features.
- 34 National Historic Landmarks.
- 800 listings on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Four National Parks, one National Forest, two National Wildlife Refuges, one National Scenic Trail and four National Natural Landmarks.
- 11 State Wildlife Management Areas, nine New York State Historic Sites and 24 State Parks.



In recognition of the 200th anniversary of the start of Erie Canal construction, no tolls or fees will be charged for recreational vessels traveling the New York State Canal System in 2017.



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For sources and more information on the Erie Canal see: [www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/pubs/erie-canal-reference.pdf](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/pubs/erie-canal-reference.pdf)

# The Erie Canal: Celebrating 200 Years of a National Landmark

## The Erie Canal and the Development of New York State

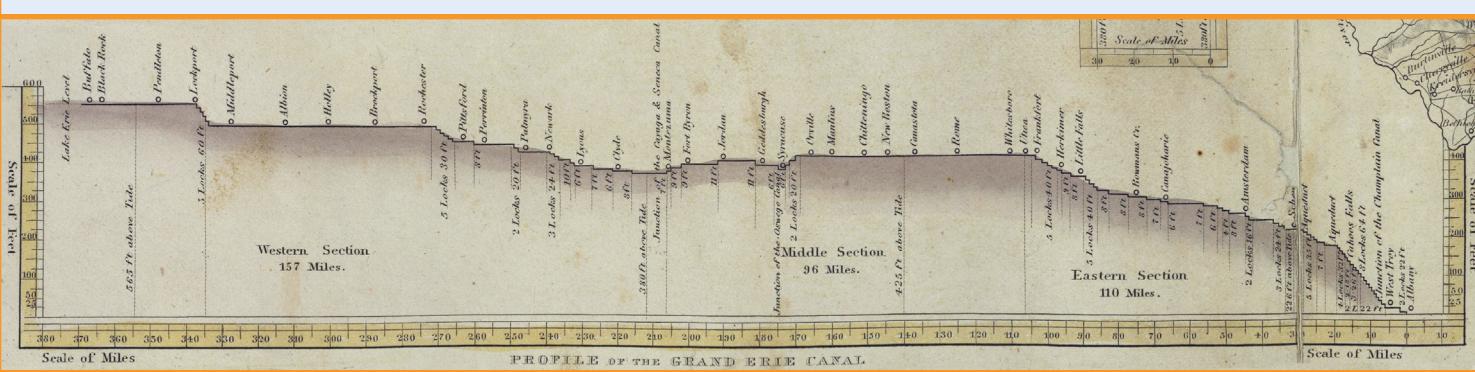
Begun in 1817, the Erie Canal was one of the largest public works projects of the early nineteenth-century and helped transform both New York State and the Country as a whole. State Comptrollers — starting with Archibald McIntyre — were ex-officio commissioners of the Canal Fund and members of the Canal Board up until 1926.

The original Canal was 363 miles long, 40 feet wide, four feet deep and connected the Hudson River (Albany) at its eastern end to Lake Erie (Buffalo) at its western terminus, lifting boats by almost 600 feet through many locks (currently 35) along the way. From 1834 through 1862, the Canal was widened and deepened and it became the main route of commerce from the Atlantic coast to the Great Lakes, the developing Midwestern states and Canada, as well as opening connections to the southern states through other canals and navigable rivers.



Thanks to trade brought by the Canal, numerous cities and villages grew and prospered. Most of the major metropolitan centers of upstate New York are arrayed along the route of the Erie Canal, which also later became the route of railroads and highways. These municipalities developed industries that used the Canal to send products and materials to the nation and the world. New York City became a leading port and hub of commerce due, in large part, to its connection with the American interior through the Erie Canal.

In the early twentieth century, the Canal was renovated to become part of the "Barge Canal," allowing it to be used by larger vessels. It continued to be a major route for shipping until the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959. Since then, the Erie Canal has increasingly become a recreational center for boating and tourism. In recent years, there has been some resurgence in the commercial use of the Canal, which can handle cargoes that are too large or heavy for efficient air, road or rail transportation.



# 15 Places on the Erie Canal

## Lockport

- Named for the twin flights of locks located here, Lockport became a town in 1824 and incorporated as a city in 1865.
- Land speculators bought the previously unsettled area after the canal route was determined. It had a population of 2,500 in 1825 and 10,900 by 1860.
- Lockport is the home to the widest bridge in North America and the Lockport Erie Canal Museum.

## Medina

- "Medina sandstone" was discovered about the same time the Canal was being dug.
- More than 100 local quarries supplied building material for such structures as the Brooklyn Bridge, New York State Capitol and Buckingham Palace.

## Brockport

- The Canal brought a blossoming of commerce. In 1830, there were an estimated 100 businesses in the village and only 133 families.
- Cyrus McCormick manufactured his revolutionary mechanical reapers (grain harvesters) in Brockport.
- Other manufactured items included carriages, rotary pumps, mowers, foundry products, vinegar, and cooling boards for undertakers.
- 45 Victorian-era buildings are recognized as historic places.

## Baldwinsville

- Key industries included flour milling and tobacco cultivation.
- Also produced axes, woolen cloth, tissue paper, pumps and farm tools.
- Recently hosted the first annual Baldwinsville Canal Arts Festival.

## Syracuse

- Population grew from 1,000 in 1825 to 22,300 in 1850.
- Major producer of salt, fine china and typewriters.
- First dental chair produced in Syracuse.
- Canal route was formerly through the City.
- The Erie Canal Museum is in the only surviving weigh station from the original canal.

## Rome

- Erie Canal construction began here in 1817.
- Known as the "Copper City," Rome once produced 10 percent of all copper in the United States.
- Home to the Erie Canal Village, a living history museum, currently under restoration.

## Amsterdam

- Boomed after completion of the Canal.
- Became a hub for carpet and textile manufacturing.
- The nearby Schoharie Aqueduct is one of the only surviving pieces of the original Erie Canal.

## Waterford

- "Gateway to New York's Canals."
- Five locks lift boats 169 feet from the level of the Hudson, about twice the total lift of the Panama Canal (85 feet).
- Home of the Tugboat Roundup.
- Current eastern terminus of the Canal.



## Buffalo

- The original western terminus of the Canal, its population dramatically expanded from 2,400 in 1825 to 8,700 by 1830.
- Buffalo became the largest inland port in the nation and the "grain capital" of North America. Buffalo's Canal District included grain elevators, warehouses, businesses, saloons, shops, residences and hotels.
- Now, Buffalo's "Canalside" is a mixed-use urban entertainment destination.

## Rochester

- Rochester's population increased from 9,200 in 1830 to 48,200 by 1860.
- Known as the "Flour City" due to its large flour mills, Rochester also developed major tobacco, woodworking, precision instrument and flower seed industries.
- It was also a key location on the Underground Railroad and home to abolitionist Frederick Douglass.

## Palmyra

- The "Queen of Canal Towns."
- Home to five museums – including the Erie Canal Depot – which offer historical collections, artifacts and experiences from the 19th century.

## Cayuga

- Location of the first lock on the Cayuga-Seneca Canal, connecting the Erie Canal to the Finger Lakes.
- The Beacon Milling Company was one of the largest feed producers in the nation.

## Utica

- The first completed section of the Canal connected Utica and Rome in 1819.
- Became a worldwide hub of the textile industry.
- Also produced furniture, machinery and lumber.

## Little Falls

- An early German settlement, it became the midpoint on the Canal between Albany and Syracuse.
- The lock with highest lift on the Canal – 40.5 feet – is in Little Falls.
- A center for cheese production.
- Holds an annual Canal Day Celebration.

## Albany

- The original eastern terminus of the Canal.
- Center of trade: exporting beer, lumber and ironworks.
- One of the ten most populous cities in the nation from 1810 to 1860.