The Erie Canal: A Founding of a Village, Early Industry, and a Century of Change

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The Erie Canal:
A Founding of a Village, Early Industry, and a Century of Change

By
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A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of the State University of New York College at Brockport in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education
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The topic of my thesis is going to be focused on the Erie Canal as a route on the Underground Railroad. However, upon investigation it is apparent that very little scholarship is readily available for this topic as presented in this way or from this particular angle. Therefore, the review of the history of scholarship on this topic seems to necessitate the following of a course a bit more rudimentary. This work will focus on the history of scholarship of the Underground Railroad as its basis. While the history of scholarship on the Erie Canal is also important, initial investigations led to a lot of dead ends in terms of how the history of the Erie Canal contributed to the Underground Railroad. Approaching the topic by putting the Underground Railroad first and foremost and then making connections to the Erie Canal seems to have a lot more promise and therefore the most relevant information regarding the canal itself will be included but not in an exhaustive manner. It is the Underground Railroad itself that warrants the most attention be given to its background and history.

We shall begin with the Underground Railroad because the history of slavery and people assisting fugitive slaves in their quest for freedom pre-dates the United States and can be traced back to colonial times, albeit it may not have been an organized network carrying with it the name that is so familiarly attached to it today. In terms of historical scholarship, the first widely accepted and readily accessible work that can specifically be attached to the examination of what came to be termed the Underground Railroad is a book entitled *The Underground Railroad: From Slavery to Freedom* authored by Wilbur Siebert. This work was originally published in 1898 and so it is only a mere 30 plus years removed from the end of slavery in the United States. This particular piece of work of Siebert’s is the cornerstone, or the bedrock, from which countless numbers of
historians have begun their subsequent work on the history of the Underground Railroad. Almost every bibliographic reference that will be cited in this particular work makes reference at one point or another to this work of Siebert's as being an invaluable tool or starting point in their own research. Benjamin Quarles, whose many credentials include holding the position of Chairman of the History Department at Morgan State College from 1953-1974 wrote that “Siebert’s book immediately stamped him as the foremost authority in the field, a position that has gone unchallenged”.\(^1\) Siebert worked diligently to procure as many first person accounts of fugitives and conductors as possible because he knew that they are a dying breed and every year his first hand information pool was drying up. Siebert’s best efforts determine that an organized system of helping to move fugitive slaves to freedom existed in Pennsylvania before 1800 and in Ohio shortly after 1815 and in all he was able to gather the names of almost 3,200 people known to have engaged in the work of the Underground Railroad.\(^2\) What is also helpful is that Siebert reports on the work of many early abolitionists who lie in relative obscurity today because they conducted their work prior to the entering on the scene of such famous contributors as Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison.

Siebert devotes the first chapter of his book to evaluating and discussing this plethora of sources. He then discusses the growth and the origin of the Underground Railroad in detail including its modes of operation, the dangers faced by those who chose to involve themselves in the operation of the network, the fortunes or misfortunes of many of the runaways to Canada and to the northern states, and he also discusses the role that the Underground Railroad played as a contributing factor to the widening rift


between the North and the South leading up to the Civil War years. Chapter 5 is dedicated to the study of the map of the Underground Railroad system. It describes the geographical extent of the underground lines, the location and distribution of stations, the Underground Railroad lines of New York, various river routes, as well as a large number of other noteworthy categories. Unfortunately, this is where the first dead end on the quest to make a connection to the Erie Canal is found. No mention of the Erie Canal is present in this exhaustive work. However, a number of stories chronicled by Siebert in this work have fugitives landing in St. Catherines, Ontario as a final destination and based on its proximity to the city of Buffalo and Buffalo Harbor, it stands to reason that the canal may have been used by some of the fugitives and perhaps by some who’s stories were chronicled by Siebert. One generically reoccurring theme in the stories chronicled by Siebert is that a source such as a letter is recovered that says something to the effect of “I arrived safely in St. Catherines, but I can’t say much about how I got here”. One point that Siebert is not shy in making: his contention that the Underground Railroad was “one of the greatest forces which brought on the Civil War”. Also adding additional value to the book are its five appendices which provide a state-by-state roster of the names of conductors on the Underground Railroad as well as a listing of significant fugitive slave court cases.

Siebert’s next body of work connected to the Underground Railroad would come only after 39 years had passed since his original release when in 1937 Vermont’s Anti-Slavery and Underground Railroad Record was published. Obviously a much more localized work and substantially smaller than his original book, Siebert’s second effort typifies the direction that a large percentage of scholarship on the Underground Railroad

3 Siebert, The Underground Railroad, 2.
would travel. That direction being localized investigations either at a state, regional, county, or local level. The amount of information available on the Underground Railroad becomes exhaustingly enormous and impossible to grapple with as historians in communities all over the country sought to have what would develop into a romantic fascination with the Underground Railroad attached to their own localities. Soon every farmhouse that turned up a hidden crawlspace in the attic or a trap door in the basement was being exalted as a station used to hide fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad. This is an obvious exaggeration but as will be documented later in this work, there lies more than a hint of truth in these contentions as well.

However, Siebert's work, like so many others that followed (if not almost all of the others) falls victim to the historian's dilemma. As good and as thorough as he attempted to be, the fact of the matter is (and this theme is repeated time and time again with later works) that facilitating the movement of fugitive slaves in their quest for freedom was highly illegal. For the purposes of limiting the possibilities of incriminating oneself, those involved very rarely kept any sort of reliable detailed records of their work because if it were discovered they could be prosecuted under penalty of law. As a result, the amount of primary source materials and authentic records are woefully inadequate for a topic that is so important and so deserving of a complete and accurate analysis and place in American history.

In 1941 Henrietta Buckmaster's *Let My People Go: The Story of the Underground Railroad and the Abolition Movement* made a splash and is still regarded by some as being "the definitive account of the Underground Railroad, the Abolition Movement, and
the African American struggle to be free". If one struggles to try and find a specific framework for which to identify exactly when what would come to be known as the Underground Railroad began and what its impetus was, Buckmaster confidently lays to rest any doubts in her own mind by asserting that “the first mention of systematic aid to fugitive slaves came in two letters written by George Washington in 1786”. This seems a rather bold statement and seemingly rather difficult to substantiate. Another assertion by Buckmaster is that the successful slave insurrection on the island of San Domingo was very influential in helping to promote the rise of the Underground Railroad in the United States. Calling Toussaint L’Ouverture the “black man’s Napoleon, American slaveholders “beat out repressive laws” in response. “The revolutionary words liberty, fraternity, and equality fed the fires of servile insurrection which had numbed the South in those years between 1791 and 1802. From New Jersey to Louisiana the uprisings spread. Arsons, murders, and suicides grew, and the long irregular line of fugitives shaped into less dreamy form the outlines of the Underground Railroad”. This is an interesting insight because it might seem to the casual researcher that it would be very unlikely that news of a successful slave insurrection on an island in the Caribbean controlled by France would reach the majority, or even much of the minority, of the slave population in the southern United States. It would also seem that this would be information that slaveholders would go to great lengths to suppress. Considering that many southern slave plantations were almost entire towns in and of themselves and were

6 Buckmaster, Let My People Go, 21.
often quite independent of many outside sources, it would seem feasible that something like this could successfully be kept from the larger slave populations in general.

Unfortunately, it quickly becomes apparent that much of what is widely accepted as fact by the general public today may really at its essence be glorified folklore and interesting tales that, for a want of having something to cling to and to feel good about in the face of such an evil institution as slavery, have been perpetuated and grown undeservedly in proportion. That is not to say that stories of the Underground Railroad are lies. Certainly there is at least a thread of truth to most of these accounts but it is documented that in an effort to legitimize the organization of the Underground Railroad, exaggerations and mistruths have occurred. The person who would first float this idea on a wide scale would be Larry Gara in 1963 with his work *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad*. In the preface of this book, Gara takes care to credit Siebert’s first work on the topic and states that his own work largely drew upon Siebert’s, but admittedly his conclusions differ greatly from Siebert’s. Gara boldly states that “although the Underground Railroad was a reality, much of the material relating to it belongs in the realm of folklore rather than history”.\(^7\) A statement like this may come as a shock or seem appalling to people who may have come to internalize the Underground Railroad as some sort of attempt at redemption for some people in the face of the evils of slavery. Or perhaps to those as well who have romanticized the idea of a vast and organized system spearheaded by righteous and well motivated white people who risked their own legal status and respectability in their communities for the purpose of serving a greater and more just cause. Gara just shoots these ideas clear out of the water. “The

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legend is a melodrama." Gara refutes the idea of abolitionists as "idealists of fortitude and courage". He describes them as human beings with varying motives and not all of them pure and they did not all believe in the work of the Underground Railroad. To that end, often the conductors on the railroad were unscrupulous opportunists looking for economic opportunities and wouldn't hesitate to turn a fugitive in if the reward money were greater than the fee they might charge to help facilitate passage. "The significance of the Underground Railroad has been greatly magnified". This is another statement that might arouse some protests. Gara genuinely believes that the numbers of fugitives that found freedom through an organized network has been greatly exaggerated and in reality amount to a much smaller total than popular belief might dictate. Gara, like most others who position themselves as authorities on the topic, also reiterates that the secrecy and illegality of participation in the Underground Railroad makes details and evidence scarce. But he also puts forth the idea, which is almost a theme among some naysayers, "that myth and legend are punctuated as every potential hiding spot or home irregularity is claimed to be a station if located near the home of a well known abolitionist". Gara also posits the idea that popular writers are the most culpable in exaggerations but states that professional scholars are not so innocent either. Specifically here he refers to aforementioned Henrietta Buckmaster and her work Let My People Go that was highly regarded at the University of South Carolina Press as earlier referenced. He states that some of these scholars drew on traditional materials so if the inaccuracies are not entirely ignorable, they may be at least expected. He is also critical of Wilbur Siebert for "drawing on tradition" for so much of his scholarship. Gara next goes after college texts

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8 Gara, The Liberty Line, 3.
which he believes are inaccurately colored by romantic legend as well as taking jabs at the 1950’s reference encyclopedias which he calls “restrained but romanticized” in their descriptions of the Underground Railroad. In a condemnation of his peers he writes that “few writers have exercised critical discrimination in dealing with the institution and some of the scholars have accepted improvable assertions and questionable data as a basis for their statements”. These are some pretty heavy hitting statements to be making about his peers but Gara definitely has his supporters as will be illustrated shortly. Does that mean that Gara thinks the work of his contemporaries is all based on lies? No. In fact, he graciously states that there is at least “a gem of truth to most stories”.

The next misconception that Gara tries to identify is that most fugitives were likely to only find freedom through the organized Underground Railroad network and the prospects for success without the network were dismal. In fact, he states that evidence for a “nationwide conspiratorial network” of Underground Railroad lines is “completely lacking” and he asserts that most fugitive slaves were primarily dependent upon themselves and their own resources in obtaining their freedom. He admits that there were indeed localized organizations but that not all abolitionists participated or necessarily even condoned the work of the Underground Railroad. Gara gives much more credit to free blacks who he believes contributed much more to the cause of aiding escaped slaves and even so, their help usually only came after the fugitives themselves did most of the traveling without being aided at all. Gara asserts that for many abolitionists, the fugitive

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slave issue was more useful as a propaganda tool and as “political polemic” and that they were often far less interested in the well beings of the slaves or the fugitives themselves.¹³

Again, the idea that most often fugitives planned and executed their own escapes unaided by abolitionists or the Underground Railroad is put forth by Gara. In fact, he asserts that many fugitives escaped having no knowledge that any organized assistance even existed.¹⁴ And again this totally flies in the face of what the popular conception of the role of the Underground Railroad may be. Going back to an earlier reference regarding conductors on the railroad, Gara cites instances where ship captains would transport fugitives but only for cash. Perhaps they may have sympathized with those trying to escape a life of bondage, but largely they didn’t care one way or the other about the cause.¹⁵ In fact, according to Gara, fugitives asked for and received only minimal amounts of help, this according to the records of those who told their stories. The minimal amount of help that they got came from a variety of sources of which abolitionists only happened to be one. Self reliance played the biggest part in the success of fugitive slaves and the Underground Railroad only played a part. Certainly not in all cases. And when it did it was usually only after the worst of the travel was over. In fact, Gara refutes the idea that an “intricate” organization even existed. He does state that aid for fugitives passing through certainly existed but that it was not a concerted effort so much as just a degree of chance and just the lending of a helping hand here and there. And then again, help of this nature came mostly from free blacks and not white abolitionists.¹⁶

¹³ Gara, The Liberty Line, 18.
¹⁴ Gara, The Liberty Line, 33.
¹⁵ Gara, The Liberty Line, 33.
A more realistic picture of the Underground Railroad, as painted by Gara, existed in urban areas such as Cincinnati, Philadelphia, and Wilmington where large communities of freed blacks existed and offered more aid and assistance to fugitives than the popular conception of the Underground Railroad. Gara states that the work of freed blacks in this cause is greatly overlooked and that an abolitionist “deep laid scheme” simply did not exist. But rather what has come to be known as the Underground Railroad was in reality “a relatively small number of energetic individuals who organized vigilance committees and local Underground Railroad service”. Vigilance committees were formed with the intention of protecting fugitive slaves from re-enslavement. As slave catchers sought fugitives vigilance committees provided legal assistance, food, clothing, money, sometimes employment, temporary shelter and assisted fugitives in making their way toward freedom. And free negroes contributed at least as much to the cause of aiding fugitives as did white abolitionists.¹⁷ Gara does touch on some specific individuals who carry a particular degree of notoriety as Underground Railroad conductors. Specifically, he conducts a brief examination of the work of Levi Coffin. According to Gara, Coffin himself professes to have aided more than 100 fugitives a year. But Gara’s examination of Coffin’s “station” home reveals that it was not really so “underground” at all but rather it was run out in the clear day and in open defiance of a largely apathetic justice system. The underground work of Thomas Garrett, also a prolific and enthusiastic Underground Railroad conductor who assisted Harriet Tubman and utilized the help of local Quakers was still himself “not quite so highly organized as the legend suggests”.¹⁸

¹⁸ Gara, The Liberty Line, 95-96.
So what does Gara attribute all of these misconceptions, half-truths, exaggerations, and folklore to? “In addition to actual events, the legend of the Underground Railroad rests in part on the propaganda literature of the abolitionists and of their southern opponents” particularly after the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. But why spend so much time analyzing the work of one man, Larry Gara? Because his work is bold, controversial, unconventional, and it challenges all of the popularly held beliefs about this organized and effective system of helping fugitive slaves in their flight to freedom called the Underground Railroad. He’s the one person who challenged the established and accepted conceptions of what the Underground Railroad had been perceived to be for 100 or so years. His work is important in helping to direct a quest on the study of the Erie Canal as a component of the Underground Railroad because it takes attention away from the usual high profile people and places and helps to put the focus on less conventional directions such as looking away from the well established “safe houses” on the larger well known underground routes and onto the African American individuals and communities that may have existed along, or within reasonable proximity to, the canal. And success will be found here as shall be demonstrated further into this work. But before we leave Gara, it’s important to point out that he has received credibility from people such as the aforementioned Benjamin Quarles, the African American scholar who mentions this in his introduction which was added the beginning of the 1968 republication of Siebert’s *The Underground Railroad*. Gara’s work is also featured in the journal *American History Illustrated* where earlier he had laid out the ideas behind these major themes in a 1978 article entitled *The Myth of the Underground Railroad*. He

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continues to carry this message in his article *The Real Story of the Underground Railroad* which appeared in a 1964 edition of *Civil War History*.²¹

As stated earlier, scholarship on the Underground Railroad is as plentiful as the number of counties there are in the United States, and just about every one has some sort of publication or a variety of them available for study on any particular region. The work that is most exclusive to our region of Rochester, NY is a work aptly titled *Rochester Region Underground Railroad: Network to Freedom*. This work was completed by a number of contributors, too many to list here, that comprised the Rochester-Monroe County Freedom Trail Commission. This is an invaluable source because it appropriately highlights and details the role of the Underground Railroad in the Rochester Area and much of upstate New York which lies along the route of the Erie Canal. It also includes selected biographical sketches of the most prolific abolitionists such as Susan B. Anthony, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and Harriet Tubman. But information and scholarship on these particular individuals comes at a dime a dozen. Where the value of the work of this commission really displays itself is in the stories of those abolitionists who are unique to the Rochester area but that are not quite as recognizable on the national stage. People such as Isaac and Amy Post, Myron Holley, and Harriet Jacobs are examples. These individuals receive their just dues in this publication as does the Rochester area. This work identifies that “a major underground route was from Syracuse through Rochester to Buffalo and on to St. Catherines and other Ontario, Canada cities,

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Larry Gara, “The Real Story of the Underground Railroad”, *Civil War History* 10, no.3 (1964) 229-240.
particularly after the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 was passed". While no conclusive connection of the Underground Railroad to the Erie Canal exists in this work either, it certainly stands to reason that if the canal was completed in 1825, there were plenty of years that it could have been used by fugitives to move between these cities as well as Lake Ontario was. This book details underground routes coming up from the Southern Tier and into Rochester and escaped slaves either going to Canada by ship from Charlotte or by going “westward to Buffalo and subsequently to Canada” with Pultneyville being listed as another active site in the area for escaped slaves to embark on their passage to Canada. This book asserts that 150 slaves per year passed through Rochester by way of the Underground Railroad in the 1850’s. However, an excellent map contained in this book shows the major east/west underground route following a path that lies a significant distance to the south of the Erie Canal and actually skims the tips of Skaneateles, Owasco, Cayuga, Seneca, and Canandaigua Lakes before cutting northward to connect with Rochester.

According to this work, abolition activity in Rochester began in the 1820’s with an official anti-slavery society being organized in 1938 and headed by its first president Lindley Mott Moore, a Quaker teacher. It is the activity of her and other abolitionists (aside from those mentioned above) such as Thomas Warrant, Asa Anthony, William C. Bloss, John Talman and Gilbert Ramsdell as well as Rochester’s strategic location on Lake Ontario between Syracuse and Buffalo that contributed to the importance of Rochester as a hub in the Underground Railroad. Finally, one tiny lead may be gleaned

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from this work that may connect the Underground Railroad to the Erie Canal. That is a simple illustration of passengers riding atop a canal boat with a caption stating that “fugitive slaves often escaped on passenger boats accompanied by an abolitionist, or they hid in the cargo holds of canal boats”.25 A glimmer of hope but hardly concrete. All in all, this is an excellent resource whose bibliographic references may prove very useful in the work that is to follow.

However, if a late success story were to be uncovered that connects the Erie Canal to the Underground Railroad, it can be found in Tales of the Underground Railroad: On the Erie Canal. This is a 2004 video release that chronicles the scholarship of Buffalo area historians who primarily currently work, or at one time recently worked, at the University of Buffalo or Buffalo State University. While this video still does not entirely deliver what is being sought after, this late catch has exposed a lot of ideas, information, and perhaps most importantly, a lead on some good sources for future work. This work does indeed make a connection to a rich history of Underground Railroad activity taking place around and on the Erie Canal. However, this work takes a different angle on the Erie Canal/Underground Railroad connection than might have been expected. One might naturally think that it would relate the stories of fugitive slaves hiding on canal boats or walking the adjacent towpath by moonlight from Albany to Buffalo. But in fact it tells a story of immigrants, free African Americans, and indeed fugitive slaves being drawn to employment opportunities that excavation and maintenance of the Erie Canal provided these groups. The connection is then made that this network that provided employment also provided for the transportation of fugitive slaves. Interestingly, here is where the most recent scholarship can back up some of the ideas posited by Larry Gara. This video

discusses at great length the presence of an African American community of over 300 members in Buffalo at the Erie Canal terminus which provided the basis of aid and comfort to fugitive slaves that made their way to the area. And this was not the stereotypical, white abolitionist Underground Railroad network that is held in popular imagination.

The video does chronicle a couple of interesting stories. One being of an attempted triple suicide when a fugitive by the name of Harris tried to kill his wife, child, and himself on a canal boat west of Syracuse at the moment he believes they are about to be captured and returned to bondage. Another story relates the tale of Darius Comstock, a fugitive that is working on the construction of canal locks in the Town of Lockport in 1823. He was captured by slave hunters but was freed again through the aid of his co-workers. These are interesting pieces that give a little credence to the production, but the main focus of this work is directed on the canal terminus in Buffalo Harbor. Here there was believed to be a major Underground Railroad terminus in an area that was called Union Block. It also went by the name of New England Block, but also was referred to as Negro Block. Recent excavations in 1999 revealed the exact location of this site as well as additional evidence being used by historians to corroborate their stories and paint a clearer picture of Negro Block. Negro Block was located on Buffalo’s waterfront on the Erie Canal at the Buffalo River and in close proximity to railroad tracks. This location therefore was at the crossroads of a lot of commercial and transportation activity as lake steamers, barges, and railroads converged at the terminus of the Erie Canal in Buffalo. At the core of the story of Negro Block is a little establishment called Dug’s Dive. It was owned by an African American entrepreneur by the name of William
Douglas, a freed slave. It was a bar, brothel, and all around gritty kind of place that was seen as a safe haven among the African American community in Negro Block, particularly during times of riots. It is also believed to have been a safe haven for fugitive slaves. It lied below street level along the towpath of the Erie Canal. Much of the information in the video is corroborated by The Buffalonian, an on-line historical magazine.\(^26\) Dug's Dive was but one of many African American owned business in Union Block but his establishment was different from the others. “He was known as a good Samaritan for giving food and a place to sleep to African-Americans in need of help who found his door. Undoubtedly, these unfortunate souls included many fugitive slaves finding their way to Canada with nothing but the shirts on their backs”\(^27\). This definitely seems to follow more of the Gara formula of an unorganized, sort of help who comes along with what they can style of Underground Railroad activity provided for by freed blacks.

The video also emphasizes the demand for workers that the canal construction drew and how that was more of a draw for fugitive slaves who decided to stick and stayed a while rather than just use the canal as a step to freedom in Canada. The ironic part is that fugitive slaves would be working on a project that ultimately would be used in the future by other fugitives to help secure their freedom. This is both the ending point for this piece of work and the jumping off point for the work to follow. The names of the historians are listed in the video as well as the institutions where they at least one time worked and so it is reasonable to believe that contact can be made with some of these individuals and that information, references, and other relevant information can be


gleaned from them and a path to a greater work can be traversed using their work as a jumping off point.
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Clark Hine, Darlene http://sc.edu/uscpress/1993older/9865.html

Vide/DVDs


The four segments and 524 miles of man-made waterway that make up today's New York State Canal System has an incredibly rich history and linkage to the past and although today's "Erie Canal" still shares many commonalities with its original 1825 incarnation, it has undergone many changes since it first opened up as a strictly commercial waterway. From the many projects of deepening and widening the channel to accommodate larger payloads, to replacing and modernizing lock systems, to completely rerouting it's course, to adding entirely new segments, and to the even not-so-subtle (and not so appealing) name changes that have been given the water system over the course of its life, the "Erie Canal" in it's modern state is in so many ways is wildly removed from the original manifestation in everything from its flow to its function that one might hardly believe that it could have ever been created for the purpose for which it indeed originally was. Many works have been produced to educate and inform the public, the interested and the enthusiast, on the absolutely incredible affect that this engineering marvel had on the City and State of New York, on the westward expansion to the Great Lakes region and beyond, and the many interesting stories, songs, and lore that have grown from the lazy waters of this truly American iconic treasure in it's heyday as a commercial artery. This work however, concerns itself with its near death, its rebirth, and the possibilities for its future. The artificial river that we commonly refer to as the Erie Canal indeed has a past of incredible historical importance, but it has undergone, and continues to undergo changes that serve to preserve, expand and enhance its importance. While perhaps it may never have the economic impact on the state and nation that it did in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there is great promise that it will have an ever growing economic impact on the state and the towns and communities along its banks
and that it will provide a continued burgeoning source of recreation for generations to come.

Today’s Erie Canal, the famed “from Albany to Buffalo”, or the 363 miles from the Hudson River to the Niagara River, is actually the largest segment of a connected group of four man-made waterways that are collectively (and officially) called the New York State Canal System. The other three canal segments are the Cayuga-Seneca Canal, the Oswego Canal, and the Champlain Canal. They add an additional 161 miles to the system to bring the total navigable waterway of the entire system to 524 miles. The current incarnation of the New York State Canal system for all intents and purposes came to be in 1918 after the completion of its most recent renovation, a project begun in 1905 and completed in 1918, which enlarged it’s depth and width and rerouted it away from the larger cities of Rochester, Syracuse, and Utica and toward (and intertwining with) the natural waterways of Cross Lake, Oneida Lake, the Clyde River, the Oswego River, the Seneca River and the Mohawk River. Since 1918, the only work on the canal system has been regular maintenance of locks, dredging, other forms of upkeep, and waterfront development for aesthetics, recreation, historical preservation, and economic development.

The 1918 renovation was for the purpose of accommodating newer, larger 3,000 ton capacity barges that were moved via tugboat power. Hence, the unappealing (and thankfully since dropped) re-naming of the waterway to the “New York State Barge Canal”. The actual work involved in the renovation hampered shipping on the canal to a degree in the years immediately prior to, and following, the completion of the project but

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in the decades to follow the canal system peaked out in terms of tons of cargo shipped before seeing a moderate and then rapid decline to the point of near death in the 1970's and 1980's. The following table offers some very interesting and revealing information about the canal system in the 1900's.

Some relevant information or highlights from the table for our purposes include a significant decline in tonnage shipped beginning in 1912 which perhaps may be accounted for by restrictions imposed by the limitations of the existing waterway, or through obstacles of shipping as a result of the renovation project itself, or maybe a combination of both. What is vividly clear however, is that after just a couple of years of the renovation project being completed, the amount of tonnage shipped via the canal system skyrocketed in the 1920's and continued upward into the 1930's, dipped

3 McFee, p174
significantly during the World War II years, and then peaked out in the year 1951 before
beginning a slow and steady decline through the 1960’s and 1970’s. Finally the bottom
dropped out in the 1980’s. Reasons accounting for the decline in the shipping on the
canal system beginning in the 1950’s, in addition to the already present and growing
competition with railroad freight, include the construction of the interstate highway
system after World War II and the advent of trucking large volumes of freight, but also
the opening of the St. Lawrence River seaway which began practical operation in 1958. 4
Add to it the fact that the canal system was, and still is, inoperable in the winter months
and it’s clear that its demise as a competitive freight artery was inevitable. Technology
and improvements in the efficiency of hauling large amounts of cargo would leave the
canal stagnant.

For some, that may be where the story ends. But for us, it’s just the end of a
chapter and the beginning of the next one. If the 1980’s bore witness to a canal that was
sacrificed with perhaps what might be called an identity crisis or a period of transition,
this perception has neither been universally accepted nor long lived. Canal towns in
Western New York such as Fairport and Pittsford in Monroe County for example have
long kept and nurtured their canal town charm and celebrated “Canal Days” festivals.
Pittsford has for decades boasted a strip of shops with boat moorings along a road called
Schoen Place that parallels the canal and which many of us locals grew up calling “Old
Fashioned Town”. But this is a digression. The fact is that during the 1980’s it was all
too clear that the salad days of the canal system as a viable commercial waterway were
over and the transition to a recreational waterway and historical centerpiece of New York
State had to begin, albeit slowly and largely unrecognizabled to many New Yorkers and

certainly completely out of view of Americans outside western and central New York. While little pockets of creativity and nurturing may have existed in isolated locations along the canal system, there was no cohesive or comprehensive plan or initiative for determining the long range status or purpose of the canal system.

Obviously a waterway of such historical import couldn’t simply be dismantled, drained, filled in, or left for the forces of time and nature to determine its fate. In 1992 the new chapter would be given a title and authors. New York State would begin to take action that would prevent the canal system from becoming a white elephant for New Yorkers and their tax dollars. In that year several events took place that would give the future of the Canal System a course and a purpose. First, and most significantly, as part of New York State’s “Thruway 2000” legislation, operation and maintenance of the canal system was transferred from the New York State Department of Transportation to the New York State Thruway Authority. From this time to the present operation and maintenance of the canal system has been funded primarily by revenues collected from the toll booths along the thruway. Second, the Thruway Authority created the New York State Canal Corporation under its auspices and relegated the lion’s share of the decision making and the responsibility of the canal system to this new bureaucracy. With an eye on the development and marketing of the Canal System as a recreational waterway came the creation of the New York State Recreationway Commission. The Recreationway Commission was likewise created in 1992 by the New York State Legislature under article XIII-A, Section 138-a, of the Canal Law to advise the Thruway and Canal

Corporation on canal related activities. Still very active today, the Commission is comprised of 24 members. There are 14 voting members involved in canal use, development, preservation, and enhancement and who work with local governments in the counties adjacent to or intersected by the Canal System. These members are appointed by the Governor, with three appointed at the recommendation of the President Pro Tem and Majority Leader of the Senate, and three appointed at the recommendation of the Speaker of the Assembly. The remaining voting membership consists of representatives from four state agencies: the Thruway Authority/Canal Corporation, the New York State Department of Transportation, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. There are ten non-voting members of the Commission, comprised of two state agencies (Department of State and Empire State Development) and eight regional planning boards whose regions are intersected by the Canal System: Lake George-Lake Champlain Regional Planning Board, Capital District Regional Planning Commission, Herkimer-Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program, Central New York Regional Planning Board, Southern Tier East Regional Planning Board, Southern Tier Central Regional Planning Board, Genesee-Finger Lakes Regional Planning Board, and Erie & Niagara Counties Regional Planning Board. Upon the formation of the Commission, it was instructed to develop a conceptual framework for fostering the development of the Canal System into a recreationway system. Why so much emphasis here on the makeup and dynamics of this commission? First, it’s the body that spearheads and promotes the recreational development of the entire New York

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6 Thruway 200 Legislation.
State Canal System which is so vital to the future of the Canal System. Second, any and all projects requiring or requesting state tax dollars have to go through the commission such as the 2006 Erie Canal Greenway Grant Program which will be discussed further in this work. But the first significant accomplishment of the commission was the completion of the “Canal Recreationway Plan” was prepared and was adopted by the Commission in August, 1995. The following month the Canal Corporation Board adopted the Recreationway Plan with significant oversight in that it was stipulated that a detailed schedule of costs, funding and phasing be prepared for the Plan’s proposals prior to implementation. A year later, in September 1996, the Commission unveiled its “New York State Canal Revitalization Program”. The five year undertaking with a $32.3 million price tag presented a comprehensive approach to Canal System development which to date had been unrivaled. It placed its focus on four major elements: Canal Harbors, Canal Service Port and Lock Projects, the Canalway Trail, and a Canal System Marketing Plan. We will return later to discuss the Canalway Trail as it is worthy of its own segment in this work. Both the Revitalization Program and the Canal Recreationway Plan targeted the construction of seven harbors at gateways and key destinations along the Canal System. Six of the harbors have been constructed in Whitehall, Waterford, Seneca Falls, Oswego, Rochester and the Tonawandas. Construction on the seventh harbor, in Little Falls, began in 2002 and one might assume that this project has been completed but no information to validate this is ascertainable at the time of this investigation. However, collectively these harbor facilities include a variety of boater services and amenities which serve to promote boating as viable canal

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9 New York State Canal Recreationway Plan / prepared for New York State Canal Corporation (Clough, Harbour & Associates, 1995), 4.22-4.25
recreational activity and stimulate economic activity as well. Additionally, Thruway 2000 legislation also authorized the Thruway Authority to undertake and finance transportation projects including the Syracuse Inner Harbor. Public improvements that have been completed in the Syracuse Harbor include construction of an amphitheater and pavilion area, 1,000 feet of waterfront promenade, docking space and ample parking. This expenditure is seen as an investment and with these improvements the Inner Harbor has been made ready for private enterprise to step in and validate the value of the state investment. Improvement capital has not been confined to Syracuse and the other aforementioned six harbors however. Projects improving canal frontage and mooring at lock sites and municipalities along the Canal System were extended to ninety-six Service Port and Lock projects of various sizes and functions in the Recreationway Plan. Nearly half of the sites highlighted in the plan have started improvement efforts and some have already been completed such as those in Mechanicville, Holley, Palmyra and Canajoharie. Now back to the Canalway Trail. The "New York State Canalway Trail System" as it is officially called, consists of a network of over 260 miles of multi-use recreational trails whose major segments are either adjacent to the Canal System or follow remnants of the original canal beds of the 1800's. The four major segments include the 8 mile "Glens Falls Feeder Canal Trail" in the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains near Lake George, the 36 mile "Old Erie Canal State Park Trail" in Central New York, the 60 mile "Mohawk-Hudson Bikeway" in the eastern Capital Region, and finally the 100 mile "Erie Canal Heritage Trail" in Western New York. This is one of the most extensive trail networks in the country and when it is completed under the Recreationway Plan, it will be a continuous 500 mile trail and claim the fame of being the

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10 City of Syracuse website, Inner Harbor page Http://www.syracuse.ny.us/innerHarbor.asp
longest in the country, making it a significant eco-tourism destination. The many current uses include, biking, hiking, jogging, and in some smaller, smoothly paved sections in at least the Pittsford and Brighton sections, roller blading and roller-skiing (the equivalent of warm weather cross-country skiing). While the current Canalway Trail system sees most of it use as “close to home” recreational opportunities, it is practical to envision more long distance uses, particularly bike tours, as facilities are further developed. Currently, an event called “Cycling the Erie Canal Bike Tour” holds the mantle of being the largest, organized bike tour along the Canal System. This annual event is an eight day, 400 mile bicycle tour from Albany to Buffalo which combines the Canalway Trail with portions of public roadways to breach the gaps in the Canalway Trail not yet connected. The 2006 and 2007 events boasted numbers close to 400 cyclists participating in the event. The New York State Canalway Commission’s work is ongoing. The commission is charged with the responsibility of making recommendations concerning the future of the Canal System as with three fundamental goals embodied in their vision:

- Preserving the best of the past
- Enhancing recreational opportunities
- Fostering appropriate and sustainable economic development

Bringing us into the 21st century, the most recent events to have shaped the present and will continue to shape the future of the Canal System was its designation by Congress in 2001 as the nation’s 23rd “National Heritage Corridor” joining ranks with some of America’s most treasured historical resources. This designation is very significant and very much more than just a fancy title. It is a partnership with the

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12 National Park Services website http://www.nps.gov/cenic/
National Park Service that brings in federal backing with park service expertise and
guidance, but with a very desirable amount of local control. In this National Park Service
staff join with local community activists in planning and implementing heritage area
activities. A sort of compact is entered into which serves as a “statement of assent to
mutually shared goals, and also serves as the legal vehicle through which federal funds
can be passed to non-governmental management entities”. NPS does not make or carry
out management decisions but rather it serves in an advisory role.13 Another plus is that
it gives the nationally recognized National Park Service color and arrowhead insignia to
the Canal System as is evidenced by the most recent erection of the NPS “Now entering
the Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor” billboard style tourist sign at exit 42 when
traveling East on Interstate 90 of the New York State Thruway. This obviously is a sign
of cooperation not just among state agencies but also of federal and state governments
and agencies.

In May of 2005, then New York Governor George Pataki made public his desire
to see an “Erie Canal Greenway” come to fruition. This was an initiative to bring a
regional approach to tourism, recreational trail development, land-use planning, and other
collaborative projects along the Canal System. Even more boldly, he laid out his vision
for an “Empire State Greenway” in which the Erie Canal Greenway would serve as a
middle conduit to connect the already existing Niagara River Greenway and the Hudson
River Greenway. At that time, Pataki recommended that Carmella Montello be appointed
Director of the Canal Corporation. She was, and has been the face of Canal System
goings-on ever since. Pataki also called on the Canal Corporation to form an
“Interagency Task Force” to review existing Canal Corporation duties and functions but

13 National Park Services website/National Heritage Area
more importantly, to further develop his Greenway plans. Clearly, the potential of the Canal System was not lost on the former governor. Six months later, in December of 2005, Mantello presented to the public *A Report on the Future of New York State Canals*, a 137 page report detailing the Task Force's findings and the recommendations for the future of the New York State Canal System. The degree to which current Governor George Patterson shares Pataki's vision is unclear and certainly worthy of inclusion in the investigation that will follow this work. But Pataki has left his mark. The 2006 Erie Canal Greenway Grant Program was unveiled on November 16th of 2006, the money has been awarded and allocated, and projects are in the works. Under the Grant Program, as part of Pataki's overall canalway vision, 54 proposals from municipalities and non-profits were selected for $8,365,000 in grant funding. Funding for the 54 proposals fell into four categories: Erie Canal Greenway Development and Tourism Promotion, Erie Canal Greenway Water Trail, Canalway Land Trail, and Canal Community Infrastructure Projects. Eligible projects were required to demonstrate consistency with the 2005 *Report on the Future of New York State Canals* and the 1995 Canal Recreationway plan. This being the first mention of the "Greenway Water Trail", it is worth noting that this is largely a plan to encourage non-motorized boating such as canoeing and kayaking for which the placid waters of the Canal System are already ideally suited. "Man-powered boating" is largely underutilized on the Canal System and it's believed that this is another area that can be exploited.

What is interesting to note is that the report also places emphasis on recreating the Canal System as a viable commercial waterway again as well. Arguments in the report

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15 *New York State Department of Environmental Conservation website* http://www.dec.ny.gov/environmentdec/18877.html
that highlight the practicality of such an endeavor include fuel efficiency, less wear and tear on infrastructure, the possible lessening of congestion on roadways, and difficulty moving oversize cargo. It also states that the Canal could be a viable shipping alternative for New York manufacturers and could help reduce the cost of doing business in New York State. The report argues that the canal can still be a vital link between the Hudson River and the lakes to the North and West. It also points to Europe’s inland canal system and states there’s been an explosion in commercial activity on it and a nice relationship between commercial enterprise and recreational activity that has served Europe well. In fact, the Canal System has maintained commercial shipping fees on the canal straight through to today. Seasonal fees are $750 per vessel. However, a key component to a surge in pleasure boating has been the dropping of the seasonal pleasure boating fees. Implemented in 1993, the fees ranged from $25 a season for 16 foot boats and climbed to $100 dollars for boats greater than 39 feet. Pleasure boating declined significantly after the imposition of the fees and it was decided that the revenue generated by the fees was counter productive when stacked up against the economic activity that was spurred prior to the use of boater fees. The fees were lifted in 2005 as part of the Greenway Plan and consequently the 2007 navigation season was described by Martello as a “banner year”.

The canal system saw an increase in traffic numbers during 2007 with a nearly 30 percent increase in lockings from May to September, compared to the same period in 2006. It should be noted however that severe flooding forced closures along portions of the system, particularly in the Mohawk River Valley region, during the height of the 2006 navigation season so comparisons are problematic. The official traffic numbers for the

16 A Report on the Future of New York State Canals, pg. 96
2007 season won't be available until mid to late December however. But when compared to the same time period in 2005, one of the better seasons along the canal, the 2007 season was up roughly two percent according to Canal Corporation estimates.¹⁷

As far as managing or streamlining the various commissions, committees, corporations, plans, and reports, the future of the Canal System may look something like this, if recommendations from the report are carried out. The Canal Corporation will sever its ties with the Thruway Authority and become it's own independent agency and phase out funding from the Thruway by 2012. The Canal Recreation Committee will be dissolved and replaced with an Erie Canal Greenway Council which will advise the Canal Corporation and with broader membership than the current CRC. With many of their goals being achieved the Commission and the Recreationway Plan will make way for the new configuration which, ideally, will better transition the Canal System into a viable economic engine and tourist destination.¹⁸

Turning our attention to the Rochester, NY area, local canal enthusiasts have embraced the release of the Grasso-Zimmer Canal Revitalization Plan with great enthusiasm. The plan, unveiled in July of 2005, was developed by canal expert Thomas Grasso and architect Rory Zimmer with major research and conceptualization contributed by the Rochester Institute of Technology. The plan proposes to renovate and re-water the still existing canal bed which runs along downtown’s Broad Street roughly from the site of the Paetec Park soccer stadium up to South Avenue at Rundel Library. Major components of the plan include completely removing a one mile stretch of Broad Street

exposing the old Erie Canal alignment, restoring the 1842 old Erie Canal Aqueduct, and connecting the old restored canal to the existing Erie Canal through the construction of a “round lock” on the east side of the Genesee River. A terminal basin would be included also and downtown Rochester would have an “inner harbor” as part of a restored old Erie Canal. The plan concludes that this “brand name” waterway would unite the PaeTec Park and Frontier Field sports stadiums, High Falls entertainment district, historic canal side buildings and warehouses, the downtown Convention Center, the War Memorial, Corn Hill Landing and a proposed Brooks Avenue/University of Rochester landing. The projected cost of the project is estimated to come in “well below $100 million”.\textsuperscript{19} In June of 2006, a locally based organization called AdRoc or “Advocates for the Development of Rochester’s Canal” was created with Grasso as its executive director to support the Grasso-Zimmer Plan with the goal of realizing its completion by 2012.\textsuperscript{20} The plan received another advocate in November of 2006 when Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (D-Fairport) secured $8,000,000 in federal funding for a feasibility study of the plan as part of House Resolution 1495 titled the “Water Resources Development Act of 2007”.\textsuperscript{21} However, the plan was vetoed by President Bush citing fiscal irresponsibility so it remains to be seen whether or not funding for the plan can be secured in another bill or from other sources.\textsuperscript{22} Inquiries as to the next steps or follow ups for the plan or for funding emailed to Tom Grasso have been received with hopeful optimism but with no concrete plans to move forward with any groundbreaking at this time.

\textsuperscript{19} Grasso-Zimmer Canal Revitalization Plan, http://www.canalsnys.org/
\textsuperscript{20} AdRoc http://www.rochestercanal.com/
So there we have it. The present and the future of the New York State Canal System is incredibly bright. Many projects have been completed, many are in the works, and some are fighting for approval and funding. What is gratifying to see in all of this is that there are several agencies and interest groups working together to foster the marriage between the recreation, historic preservation, environment protection, commercial interests, and economic potentials of the New York State Canal System.
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White House, press release
Hometown History: Teaching with Historic Markers

Industry, Agriculture, and Transportation in Brockport, NY

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(May 2009)
I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The McCormick reaper was the first mechanized farm machinery to be manufactured and sold on a scale. A handful of companies were given license to manufacture and distribute Cyrus McCormick's invention. Among those was Seymour, Morgan & Company, located on the Erie Canal in Brockport, New York. They employed over 200 people and produced over 100 of McCormick's reapers before designing and manufacturing their own reaper, a more modern improvement over the original McCormick reaper. This company and these farm implements allowed the Village of Brockport to share in a post-Civil War economic boon that was enjoyed by many regions of the country at the time and led to a growth and prosperity in the Village of Brockport.

Essential to the distribution of these machines was the proximity of the company's manufacturing facility to the Erie Canal. When the Erie Canal
was completed in 1825, it instantly became the fastest and cheapest way to ship goods between the eastern seaboard and the ever expanding western territories of the United States. In fact, the inception of Brockport owes its existence to the construction of the Erie Canal. The idea of creating a village on the site of modern-day Brockport was itself an extension of the plans to build a canal. Were there no plans to build the Erie Canal, plans to develop Brockport likely would not have come to fruition.

Crucial to the success of Brockport as an emerging community was village founder Hiel Brockway. Original canal plans called for construction of the waterway as far west as Rochester, which was to be the temporary western terminus of the canal until the necessary lock system at Lockport could be completed. Brockway lobbied hard to extend construction the extra distance to Brockport, thus making Brockport itself the western terminus for a full two years from 1823 until 1825 when the canal was fully completed. For those 2 years, anyone shipping via the Erie Canal could send their goods by water only as far west as Brockport. Simultaneously, products coming from the west were brought to Brockport to be loaded on to packet boats for shipment east. But for the vision and efforts of Hiel Brockway and the construction of the Erie Canal, the land that Brockport occupies today would likely have remained divided between the neighboring towns of Clarkson and Sweden.

II. ABOUT THIS LESSON

This lesson is based on the format used by the National Park Service’s “Teaching With Historic Places” and Dr. Mary Corey’s “Hometown Heroes: Teaching With Historic Markers” online lesson and using sources related to this topic including Early Brockport and Images of America: Around Brockport by William G. Andrews, The Story of Brockport for 100 Years by Charlotte Elizabeth Martin, The Village of Brockport 1829-1879 by David George Hale, and From the American System to Mass Production by David A. Hounshell.

III. CONNECTING TO THE NYS CURRICULUM STANDARDS

The teaching materials in this lesson are aligned with the New York State Curriculum and Learning Standards for the Social Studies and the thematic strands of the National Council for the Social Studies. The lesson can be

It also meets the National Council for the Social Studies Thematic Standards for Social Studies. Thematic standards include Standard 2, Time, Continuity and Change; Standard 3, People, Places and Environments and Standard 8, Science, Technology, and Society

IV. OBJECTIVES FOR STUDENTS (Students will be able to:)

- Describe the role that the Erie Canal played in the founding of the Village of Brockport
- Recount the history of Brockport’s founders as the village was born
- Compare and contrast the economic viability of the canal in the 19th Century with that of its recreational viability today
- Explain the era of national and regional growth as related to the emergence of canals and railroads.
- Discover the role played by Brockport and Western New York in advancements in transportation, westward expansion, and industrialization.
- Evaluate the impact of the canal on Brockport and the region over time.

V. VISITING THE SITE

A marker commemorates the site where the Seymour and Morgan Company constructed McCormick reapers in 1846. It stands near the Erie Canal front at the corners of Park Avenue and Market Street in the Harvester Park Brockport/Canal Front Welcome Center area.
Supplementary Readings: To learn more about Cyrus McCormick, the McCormick reaper, the Seymour and Morgan Company, and Brockport and its relationship with the Erie Canal teachers and students can refer to The Story of Brockport for 100 Years by Charlotte Martin, The Village of Brockport Sesquicentennial 1829-1979 by David Hale, Images of America: Around Brockport and Early Brockport both by William G. Andrews and the Village of Brockport website.

VI. SETTING THE STAGE

This lesson can be used to help students understand the relationships between modes of transportation and regional growth, agriculture and technology, and means of production and the entrepreneurial spirit. The birth and continued growth of Brockport were the direct result of the vision of Hiel Brockway and his vision of creating a community along this new, modern trade route. Cyrus McCormick's invention of his mechanical reaper vastly improved agricultural output in America. His subsequent contracting to Brockport village's Seymour, Morgan & Company to produce these reapers locally and the company's location on the Erie Canal exemplifies the
cooperation between agriculture, industry, modes of transportation, and the American entrepreneurial spirit.

The Erie Canal and Brockport, being the western terminus of the canal for a full two years, were at the heart of westward expansion to the Great Lakes region and to the incredibly fertile and productive farmland of the Midwest.

VII. FOR STUDENT (Documents, Readings, and Activities)
Part I. The Vision of Hiel Brockway and the Founding of Brockport

The importance that the construction of the original Barge Canal had on the development of Brockport cannot be understated. Upon learning of the canal's impending route based on the geology of the region, Hiel Brockway moved from Geneva, NY to Clarkson, NY in 1816 and in 1817 began buying up land that would later comprise much of what would become the Village of Brockport. In the spring of 1820, Brockway and business partner James Seymour successfully lobbied the canal commission to extend the western terminus of the canal from its originally planned stopping point in Rochester to Brockport instead. As a result, for a full two years Brockport would serve as the dropping off point for Northeastern manufactured goods heading to markets in the Midwest and also the loading point for agricultural goods produced in the Midwest heading to eastern markets. Even after full completion of the Barge Canal from Albany to Buffalo, Brockport's place as an important economic hub along the canal had been secured for decades to come.

Hiel Brockway
The canal reached the area in 1822 and was filled with water on October 10. Docks and toll and freight houses were built on its south side near Main Street, and Seymour, Baldwin, and Holley dug a basin for to the east where Seymour built a warehouse. The fact that for two years Brockport was the western terminus of the canal gave the new Village a tremendous boost.

Between 1823 and 1825 when the canal was finished to Buffalo, Hiel Brockway built two sections of the canal and a bridge. He established a “boat and brick yards” at the end of Utica Street and began building packet boats. He launched a fleet of them in 1828 and, in connection with his future son-in-law, Elias B. Holmes, commenced daily service to Buffalo. He established a terminal at the junction of the canal and the Niagara River.

The boat-building and packet line venture proved immensely profitable, and Brockway’s influence on the western reaches of the canal is said to have been substantial, setting high standards for both packet boats and service.

By common consent, for the citizen who unquestionably overshadowed all others in means, property, enterprise and public spirit, the new village was named first “Brockway,” then “Brockwayport,” and finally “Brockport.” The Village of Brockport was incorporated April 6, 1829.

A Rochester newspaper took editorial notice on September 1 of that year:

“Considerable improvement has been made this summer in this neat and flourishing village, in the way of sidewalks, &c. The general health of the place, too, is stated, in the paper printed there, to be better, in proportion to the number of inhabitants, than ever before known…”

1. List specific things did Brockport founder Hiel Brockway did to take economic advantage of the Barge Canal’s location.

2. Which enterprise does the excerpt describe as being “immensely profitable” for Hiel Brockway?

3. Does the reading passage above paint a favorable or unfavorable impression of Hiel Brockway? Cite specific information to support your answer.
Cyrus McCormick patented the first successful horse-drawn grain reaper. Once harvest time arrived, the mechanical reaper allowed one man to do the work of five hired hands. The reaper was packed in parts and shipped to the farmer along with a handbook of directions for assembling and operating. Combined with the newly invented steel plow, farmers could now shift from subsistence farming to growing such cash crops as wheat and corn. This also encouraged northerners and southerners to seek out farmland in the west. In 1847 McCormick began to mass produce his reaper but a mass market for his reaper didn't fully develop until the late 1800's with the migration of farmers on to the plains.
1. In what way did McCormick's mechanical reaper help to create a shift in the type of farming that was performed in America?

2. Make connections: How did the McCormick reaper, combined with other advances in farming technology, contribute to the expansion of farming in the western states and territories?

View the video that can be accessed at the link or address below and use the information to answer the following questions
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-KB7TjdSgk
3. Was Cyrus McCormick satisfied after his first invention that he'd created a finished product that would need no improvements? Explain

4. Explain the transition that McCormick made from inventor to businessman

5. In what ways did McCormick's business savvy help him to sell more reapers?

Part III. Seymour, Morgan & Company and its Place in History

The Seymour, Morgan & Company began as a foundry for the manufacture of stoves and other castings in 1843. It must certainly have been unknown to business partners William Seymour, Dayton Morgan, and Thomas Roby that their company would evolve to play a part on the national stage and one that would have international implications. Shortly after the foundry began, Seymour set his sights on the possibility of manufacturing mechanical reapers. As fate would have it, the son-in-law of Hiel Brockway, Congressman Elias B. Holmes, invited Cyrus McCormick to Brockport in 1845. McCormick had produced and sold but a small number of his newly patented mechanical reapers and was looking for a company to manufacture his invention on a larger scale. He was informed that the Backus, Fitch & Company of Brockport might be a likely candidate to meet this need. McCormick visited Brockport and brought his reaper with him. However, the partnership between Mr. Backus and Mr. McCormick was short lived as Backus, Fitch & Company were only able to produce a few of McCormick's reapers. McCormick had to look no further than across the village to the Seymour, Morgan & Company to find a company that was able to meet his needs and a deal was struck for the company to produce 100 mechanical reapers in time for the harvest season of 1846. The following year, 200 machines were made but the business marriage between the Seymour, Morgan & Company and the McCormick mechanical reaper would prove to be brief. Differing business interests and disagreements caused the two entities to part ways but not before planting a seed that would make local history. McCormick would go on to move production operations to Chicago but history ought not forget that it was the Seymour, Morgan & Company and the little Village of Brockport, NY that served as McCormick's launch pad for the large scale manufacture of his invention, an invention that would propel him to international fame and
fortune. Simultaneously, Seymour, Morgan, & Company would go on to design their own mechanical reaper, the "New Yorker", and in the process of manufacturing 500 reapers of their own design, the company became the first regular manufacturer of reapers in the country while placing its stamp of historical notoriety on the Village of Brockport.

1. At the time that this catalog for D.S. Morgan & Co. farm implements was produced, for how many years had this company been in business?

2. In what location, outside of Brockport, did D.S. Morgan and Co. also have facilities?

3. What evidence from the document illustrates that D.S. Morgan and Co. engaged in good business practices?

4. Why might it have made sense for McCormick to move his manufacturing to the specific location of Chicago?
Part IV. The Barge Canal Gives Way to the Railroads

At the turn of the 19th century, there was still no cheaper or more efficient way of transporting goods or people than by water. The original New York State Barge Canal, completed in 1825 and spanning 363 miles, created a water route between New York City and Buffalo allowing farm products from the Great Lakes region to flow east, and people and manufactured goods from the East to flow west. The canal was the single largest factor in allowing for: a) New York City to become the nation's largest city, b) the rapid opening of the Great Lakes region for settlement and farming, and c) the birth and growth of the Village of Brockport itself. However, the invention of the steam locomotive in 1803, the birth of the railroad industry, and rapid improvements within that industry would lead to a decline in the construction and economic viability of canals including the New York State Barge Canal.
1. Based on the graph and the reading passage above it, approximately how many miles of canals in New York State were NOT a part of the Barge Canal in 1830?

2. Based on the answer to number 1, what percent of miles of canal in New York were a part of the Barge Canal?

3. If the trend that can be seen in the growth of railroads in the graph above were to continue for another decade, what would the total miles of railroads in New York State be in the year 1860?

4. Critical Thinking: In terms of construction and operation, what advantages might railroads have over canals?

**Part V: The Canal Today: A Transformation**

Beginning around 1980, the amount of cargo being transported on the canal dipped down below 1 million tons and by 1994 had dipped down to below 100,000 tons. Today, the amount of cargo being shipped via the Erie Canal system is "negligible". However, the Erie Canal continues to be a unique fixture in most all of the communities it passes through. It has undergone a transformation from an economic waterway to a recreational waterway. Its resurgence can be seen in cities, towns, and villages along the canal from Albany to Buffalo and few examples can be found that highlight the contemporary use of the canal as well as the Village of Brockport. The
village's charm is centered around the canal and its old style lift bridges and lift master at the helm, ready to raise the bridge for passing boats.

In fact, many communities like Brockport have made the canal a central feature of tourism and recreation. Boating of all varieties, fishing, biking, and hiking make up some of the activities enjoyed in the waters and on the banks of the canal. Harvester Park, once the site of the Seymour, Morgan & Company foundry, is today home to a welcome center for transient boaters. On any given summer day, a line of visiting boaters can be seen tied to the moorings and enjoying the many free amenities offered by the Welcome Center at the park as seen in the photo below.
Part VI: Parting Thought
The vision of a village founder, a marriage of industry and ingenuity, and the trials and tribulations of an ever expanding and changing nation bring us to this very moment in time. The past explains our present and this is but a few brief chapters in the storied history of this beautiful and beloved western New York village.
Harvester Park transient boater welcome center with downtown Brockport in background
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