

# THE ERIE CANAL IN WESTERN NEW YORK



MUSEUM COMPLEX  
ERIE CANAL DISCOVERY CENTER  
COL. WM. BOND - JESSE HAWLEY HOUSE

**4.6 WESTWARD MOVEMENT AND INDUSTRIALIZATION:** New York State played an important role in the growth of the United States. During the 1800s, people traveled west looking for opportunities. Economic activities in New York State are varied and have changed over time, with improvements in transportation and technology. (Standards: 1, 3, 4; Themes: MOV, TCC, GEO, ECO, TECH)

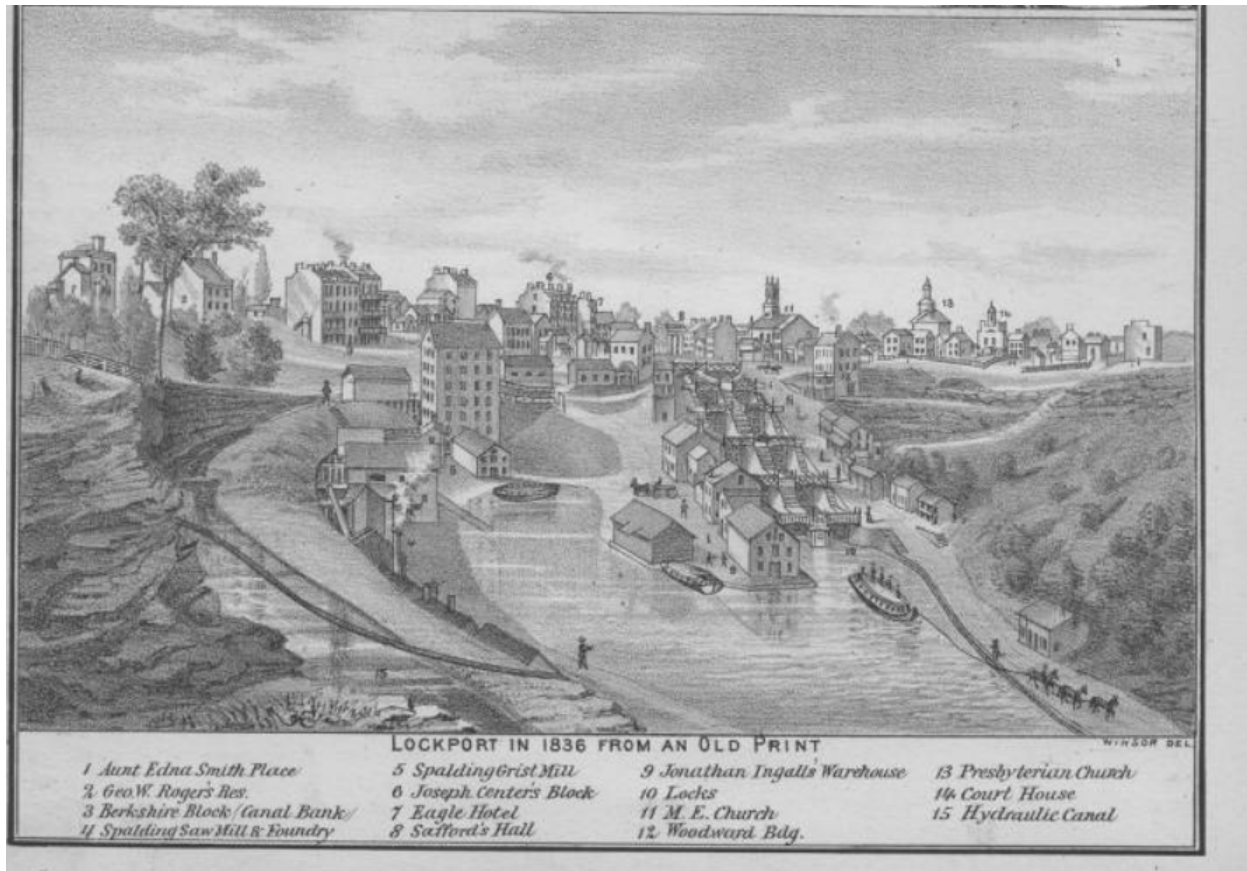
## Lessons Developed by the Niagara County Historical Society

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# Primary Source Set 4.6a: Why Did New York State and the American Nation Need the Erie Canal?



Lockport from an old print, 1836, in History of Niagara County, N.Y., with illustrations descriptive of its scenery, private residences, public buildings, fine blocks and important manufactories and portraits of old pioneers and prominent residents, 1878 in New York Heritage:

<https://cdm16694.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/VVN001/id/840>

United States Census

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**History**

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**Fast Facts**

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- 2010 Fast Facts
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## POP Culture: 1790

ICONS: George Washington, 1790 Census, USS Constitution

- President George Washington delivers the first "State of the Union Address" on January 8, 1790.
- Benjamin Franklin dies on April 17, 1790 in Philadelphia, Pa.
- Washington, DC, is established as the capital of the United States, in 1790.
- The U.S. Post Office Department is established on February 20, 1790.
- In October 1794, federal troops put an end to the "Whiskey Rebellion," after distillers in the Appalachian region of the United States resisted paying a tax on distilled spirits.
- Eli Whitney is granted a patent for the cotton gin, which cleans seed from cotton, on March 14, 1794.
- The USS Constitution ("Old Ironsides") launches as part of the U.S. Navy in 1797 and sails to the Mediterranean Sea to protect American merchant vessels from Barbary pirates.
- Construction begins on Fort Mifflin in 1790. Sixteen years later, Francis Scott Key pens "The Star Spangled Banner" during its bombardment by British forces.
- George Washington, first President of the United States, dies at Mount Vernon, Va, on December 14, 1799.

The 1790 Census		18 Largest Cities	
U.S. Population	3,929,214	Rank	Population
Population per square mile of land area	31	1	180,100 (NY)
Percent increase of population	6.4	2	80,000 (PA)
Official Enumeration Date	August 2	3	60,000 (VA)
Number of States	13	4	40,000 (MD)
State	MD, PA	5	30,000 (VA)
Cost per Census entry	\$ 1		

[https://www.census.gov/history/www/through the decades/fast facts/1790 fast facts.html](https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/fast_facts/1790_fast_facts.html)

Town/Date Established	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850
Cambria (1808)	1459	1134	1712	2099	2366
Hartland (1812)		1448	1584	2350	3028
Porter (1812)		850	1490	2177	2455
Niagara (1816)		484	1401	1277	1951
Royalton (1817)		1849	3138	3549	4024
Lewiston (1818)		689	1528	2533	2924
Wilson (1818)		688	913	1753	2955
Somerset (1823)			871	1742	2154
Lockport (1824)			3823	9125	12323
Newfane (1824)			1448	2372	3271
Pendleton (1827)			577	1098	2166
Wheatfield (1836)				1057	2659
Total Population	1459	7142	18485	31132	44126

Data compiled from U.S. Census reports 1810 to 1850 in the collection of the Niagara County Genealogical Society, Lockport NY

<https://niagarahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/4.6a.docx.pdf>



(1783 Treaty of Paris map)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3701sm.gct00483/?st=gallery>



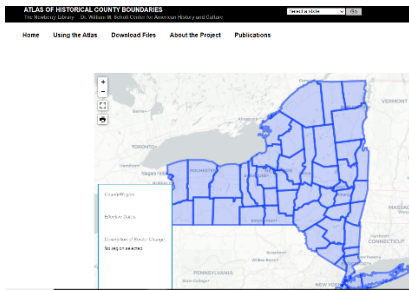
(1787 Northwest Ordinance map)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3701sm.gct00482/?sp=20>



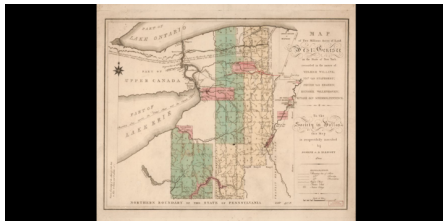
(1803 Louisiana Purchase map)

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3300.ct001126>



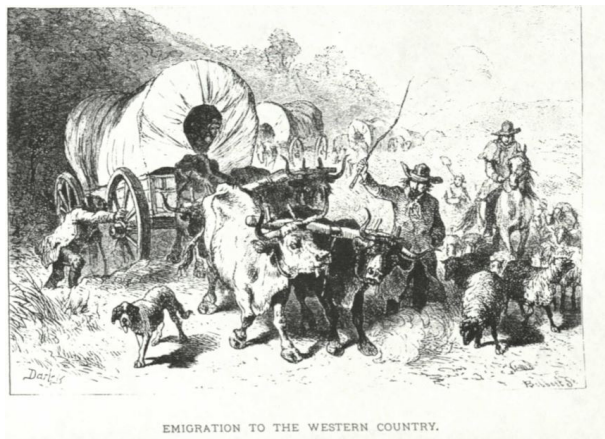
Newberry Atlas Map (NYS):

<https://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/map/map.html#NY>



Western NY land claims:

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3802n.ct005648>



Emigration to the Western Country

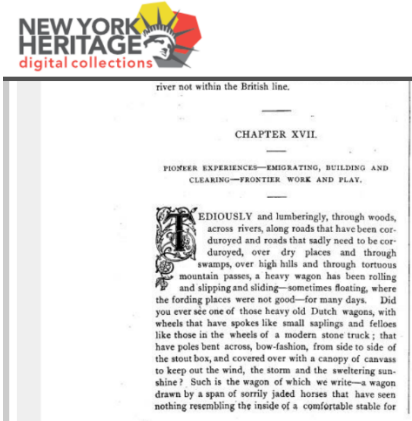
*The Pictorial Field-book of the War of 1812; or, Illustrations, by Pen and Pencil, of the History, Biography, Scenery, Relics, and Traditions of the Last War for American Independence.* Benson J. Lossing, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1869) - Vol.2, page 1180

New York State Library

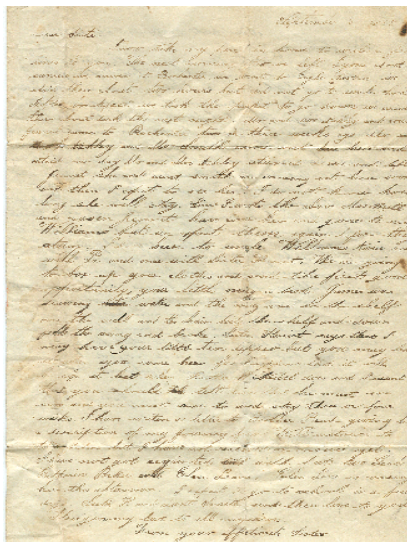
NYSL link: [http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/mssc/eriecanal/lossingimages/lossing\\_our-country-v2-opp%20p1180\\_emigration-western-country\\_oxen-pulling-wagons.pdf](http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/mssc/eriecanal/lossingimages/lossing_our-country-v2-opp%20p1180_emigration-western-country_oxen-pulling-wagons.pdf)



Images of overland travel by horse and oxcart:  
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8b28218/>



Descriptions of overland and water travel through New York State from History of Niagara County monograph (page 92):  
<https://cdm16694.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/VVN001/id/768>



Letter from 11-year-old Jane Taft to her sister Frances Taft Root in 1838  
Niagara County Historical Society, Atwater Collection  
<https://niagarahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/JaneTaft-letter14A.jpg>



“A Pioneer’s Clearing” oil painting by E.A. Philleo of the Town of Somerset, Niagara County, done from memory in 1885. The scene is nine miles from Lockport but in which direction is not specified.

Niagara County Historical Society, Art Collection

<https://niagarahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Pioneer-Clearing2-1-scaled.jpg>



Pioneer cabin recreation

Niagara County Historical Society, Lockport NY

<https://niagarahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Pioneer-cabin.jpg>

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History of Niagara County, N.Y., with illustrations descriptive of its scenery, private residences, public buildings, fine blocks and important manufactories and portraits of old pioneers and prominent residents

History of Niagara County, N.Y., with illustrations descriptive of its scenery, private residences, public buildings, fine blocks a...

ORIGIN OF LOCKPORT—FIRST OWNERS OF ITS SITE.

CITY, TOWN AND VILLAGE HISTORIES.  
THE CITY OF LOCKPORT.

It may be claimed that the city of Lockport originated from a fortuitous circumstance. Considering the natural features in the primitive condition of its site this may be true, but this fact would render it more apparent that its growth and prosperity are the result of industry and enterprise.

In all ages it has been the pride of a city or community to preserve a record of the events associated with its

The land upon which the city is built was purchased from the Holland Company by Ezek Brown, Zeno Comstock, Nathan Comstock, Webster Thorne, Daniel Smith, David Fisk, Abner H. Millard, Reuben Haines, Joseph Ows, John Comstock, Asahel Smith, Nathan B. Rogers, Daniel Washburn and James Conkey. In 1820 there were but two or three unfinished log houses upon the whole tract now enclosed within the city limits, and not a hundred acres of the land under cultivation.

It was not until 1821 when the commissioners decided

Description of occupations of first settlers in Lockport, NY:

<https://cdm16694.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/VVN001/id/841>

**T**EDIOUSLY and lumberingly, through woods, across rivers, along roads that have been corduroyed and roads that sadly need to be corduroyed, over dry places and through swamps, over high hills and through tortuous mountain passes, a heavy wagon has been rolling and slipping and sliding—sometimes floating, where the fording places were not good—for many days. Did you ever see one of those heavy old Dutch wagons, with wheels that have spokes like small saplings and fellows like those in the wheels of a modern stone truck; that have poles bent across, bow-fashion, from side to side of the stout box, and covered over with a canopy of canvass to keep out the wind, the storm and the sweltering sunshine? Such is the wagon of which we write—a wagon drawn by a span of sorrily jaded horses that have seen nothing resembling the inside of a comfortable stable for

Description of roads, terrain and travel conditions encountered on a journey to the “Genesee Country” found in the History of Niagara County, NY, Sanford and Co., New York, NY 1878, p. 92:

<https://cdm16694.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/VVN001/id/768>

“The Ridge road was just being cut through & often they [her parents] had to stop & wait or take hold & help before they could proceed...Thus they progressed slowly toward their destination in the wilderness where they built a shanty, moved their household goods & commenced living... At that time the Lake Road was not laid out east of Father’s [cabin] in its present place but they began to alter it as people began to settle & Father began to think of building on the Road & he could get sawing done as he had previously had to hew out his flooring & make his own shingles...In the fall of 1823 Mother went east to visit her parents & took my youngest sister & myself with her. I thought that the first great event of my life. I was 10 years old then & had never been out of the county. We went with a horse & wagon. I think we were four or five days on the road as Mother made visits on the road among relatives & acquaintances...”

Excerpt from the “Autobiography of Delilah Wisner Merritt (1813-1899), A Town of Newfane Pioneer,” Newfane Historical Society Publication, Star Printing Incorporated, Newfane, NY, 1975

<https://niarahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Delilah-Wisner-Merritt4A.jpg>



An enlarged and complete map of the village of Lockport, drawn from the latest maps on file and other authentic surveys, 1845 by Jesse P. Haines

Niagara County Historical Society

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3804l.wd000572>







Stone boat on skids for removing rocks and stones from land to facilitate plowing and planting; example of early plow inside Yates Barn, Niagara County Historical Society, Lockport NY

<https://niagarahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Stone-boat-w-plow4A.jpg>



c. 1810 Grain bin made from c. 200 year old Buttonwood (Sycamore) tree  
Yates Barn, Niagara County Historical Society, Lockport NY

<https://niagarahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Grain-bin4A.jpg>



Recreated Blacksmith Shop

Yates Barn, Niagara County Historical Society, Lockport NY

<https://niagarahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Blacksmith-shop4A-rotated.jpg>

## CREDITS AND RESOURCES

### SPECIAL THANKS TO:

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NIAGARA COUNTY HISTORICAL CENTER  
WESTERN NEW YORK LIBRARY RESOURCES COUNCIL  
BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS & NFCSS PRESIDENT

### LESSON RESOURCES:

NIAGARA COUNTY HISTORICAL CENTER

<https://niagarahistory.org>

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

<https://www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/about-this-program/>

NEW YORK STATE LIBRARY

<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov>

NEW YORK STATE ARCHIVES

<http://www.archives.nysed.gov/education>

NEW YORK HERITAGE

<https://nyheritage.org>

ERIE CANAL WEBSITE

<http://eriecanal.org>

BUFFALO ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORY

<https://buffaloah.com>



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