

Erie Canal Vocabulary

Aqueduct: a bridge filled with water that carried the boats over natural rivers, streams, and swamps

Artifact: a manufactured item used by people in the past

Barge: a flat bottomed boat used to carry freight

Barge Canal: the 1917 third enlargement of the canal that mostly used natural waterways and is still used today

Berm: the side of the canal not used by the mules

Bow: the front part of a boat

Bumboats: small boats that were a floating grocery store and would pull up to larger boats to sell those on board food and goods

Canal: a man made waterway or artificial river

Canal Stores: various types of businesses such as a general store and blacksmith shop often started next to locks to supply the canal boat workers and passengers with needed food, products, and services

Cargo: the items or lading carried by the boat

Clinton's Ditch: the nickname for the first Erie Canal also called Clinton's Folly or the Grand Canal started in 1817 and completed in 1825.

Culvert: tunnels under the canal that let small streams run their natural course

Erie Canal: the 363 mile man made waterway built between Albany and Buffalo that connected the Atlantic Ocean with the Great Lakes

Elevation: the height of land above sea level

Enlarged Canal: the 350 mile second canal started in 1836 so larger boats with more cargo could travel faster from Albany to Buffalo

Feeder: a tributary stream used for adding water to the canal

Hayburners: the nickname for a mule that pulled the canal boats

Heel Path: the top of the berm not used for the mules, but where people could walk

Hoodledasher: when two boats were tied end to end and were pulled by one team of mules

Laker: working boat with a double hull that usually carried grain or other cargos that needed to be kept dry

Line Boat: working boats that carried both people and cargo

Lock: a man made structure designed to lift or lower boats from high and low water sections of the canal caused by the change in elevation of NY

Lock Chamber: the middle of the lock where changes in water levels raised or lowered the boats

Lock Gate: wooden doors at each end of the lock chamber that opened and closed as a boat went through a lock

Lock tender: a person in charge of opening and closing the lock gates as well as controlling the water level

Manufactured Goods: items such as stoves, furniture, plows, and barrels that people make using natural resources

Mudlarked: when a boat got stuck on the bottom of the canal due to a lack of water

Mule: a cross between a donkey and a horse whose job it was to pull the canal boats

Mule Driver: a boy or man who drove the mules or horses used to tow the canal boats

Natural Resources: materials found in nature such as apples, salt, wheat, coal, or wood that people use for themselves or use to make products

Packet Boat: a fancy boat that carried passengers or mail and was often pulled by horses

Prism: the trapezoidal shape of the canal where the top is wider than the bottom.



Steersman: the person who used the rudder to steer the boat away from the banks of the canal

Stern: the back of the boat

Toll: money charged to the boat captain for transporting cargo on the canal based on type, weight and distance traveled

Trick: the work time of the mule driver who had two six hour shifts per day

Towpath: the path along one side of the canal along which the mule driver and mules walked while towing the boats

Valve Gate: small doors at the base of the lock gate that when opened allows gravity to fill the lock chamber with water or to release water from the lock chamber so the boat can be raised or lowered to continue its journey

Waste Weir: a structure built into the canal bank that could be opened to allow extra water to leave the canal

Weighlock: a building along the canal used to weigh boats to determine how much toll the captain should pay