

2. CONDUCTING THE SURVEY

2.1 Elements of the Survey

The *Genesee-Finger Lakes Historic Transportation Gateway Inventory and Assessment* is a comprehensive, thematic survey with an architectural component. The inventoried sites reflect the region's transportation history between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth century—from trolley passenger stations to automobile service stations to agricultural warehouses located along railroad beds. With a regional outlook, the documented sites were recorded based on criteria designed to guide evaluation of potential entries for the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is the official federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. The criteria is best described as, “the quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture that's present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects and possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.” There are four criteria to also consider: Criterion A is association to events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; Criterion B is association with the lives of persons significant in our past; Criterion C is the embodiment of distinct characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that presents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that presents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; and Criterion D is the ability to yield, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.¹ Therefore, the inventoried sites are a diverse sampling of transportation-related buildings representative of the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region that have not been adequately documented using this criteria.

For each historic transportation-related building surveyed, a New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (NYS OPRHP) Historic Resource Inventory Form was completed. The information recorded on each property identified provides an adequate data base for making accurate decisions about its significance and is organized and recorded in a manner that is compatible with National Register Bulletin No.16 (Part A), *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*. However, as this survey was reconnaissance-level, the kinds of information collected is not in sufficient detail to permit each property's evaluation and registration in the National Register. For example, the statement of significance does not classify or fully evaluate applicable National Register criteria. Statement of significance will be explained later in this section.

Instead, the information provided on the NYS OPRHP Historic Resource Inventory Form will serve as sufficient overview in the development of both regional and local transportation and land-use plans, in the early planning of projects, and in making decisions on where to direct future intensive survey efforts with the potential of nomination to the National Register.

The first item requested in the Identification section of the NYS OPRHP Historic Resource Inventory Form is the property name. The historic name is most often used, as it will remain constant regardless of how the property changes in function or ownership. For the *Genesee-Finger Lakes Historic Transportation Gateway Inventory and Assessment*, the names selected generally refer to the original

¹ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “National Register Bulletin No. 16 (Part A): How to Complete the National Register Registration Form,” 37.

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owner or builder or to significant persons or events associated with the property. Other items in the Identification section of the form include address or street location of the property, county that the property is located in addition to the town/city and/or village/hamlet, property owner and address of property owner, original and current use of the property, architect/builder (if known), and date of construction (if known).

The Description section of the form has two components: 1. a narrative that provides the physical appearance of the property and its condition and 2. a narrative that discusses the area of significance and the historic context, based on the criteria of the National Register program. The narrative description of the property usually includes architectural information, such as: number of stories, structural system, construction materials and wall finish, roof shape, specific features including location, number, and appearance of porches, windows, doors, chimneys, and dormers, important decorative elements, and important features in the immediate environment such as landscaping and roadways. Alterations are noted, if observed.

The narrative statement of significance is the information about historic trends and properties grouped by an important theme in the prehistory or history of a community, state, or the nation during a particular period of time. Facts, such as early owners and functions or activities, not only verify the property's history but also place the property in a particular time or course of events. *Section 2.4 Historic Context* will discuss in more detail this framework for determining significance.

Lastly, a “sketch” map and one or two digital photographs accompany each NYS OPRHP Historic Resource Inventory Form. All maps have been created utilizing GIS data for consistency and ability for future surveyors to relocate the identified property. The photographs are in digital format due to ease in transferring the data to survey forms for use in this report. In order for the identified sites to be eligible for registration in the National Register, a United States Geological Survey map will need to be used in addition to a detailed map such as a plat book, insurance map, or district highway map. Unmounted black and white prints labeled with pencil will also need to accompany a National Register nomination. Guidelines for sketch maps, geographical maps, and photographic coverage are provided in National Register Bulletin No.16 (Part A), *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*.

2.2 Study Area Delineation

The boundaries of the *Genesee-Finger Lakes Historic Transportation Gateway Inventory and Assessment* are geographically defined by the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region, which includes: Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates Counties. The Genesee-Finger Lakes Region is located in west-central New York State and is bordered by Lake Ontario to the north, the Southern Tier Region and foothills of the Appalachian Mountains to the south, Syracuse and the Central New York Region to the east, and the Buffalo-Niagara metropolitan area to the west. The area of the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region is approximately 4,700 square miles.

When delineating the boundaries of this survey, it was also imperative to sketch out the major transportation routes (see Figures 2-1 and 2-2, next page). Over the past century, numerous rights-of-way in the region have come and gone. Where various transportation systems once crisscrossed the region, there are now homes, businesses, farms, roads, trails, and vacant land. The number of active rail-related networks remaining in the region has been greatly diminished. Approximately 200 miles of active

2.3 Survey Methodology

The *Genesee-Finger Lakes Historic Transportation Gateway Inventory and Assessment* is an inventory of historic transportation-related properties suitable for specific transportation improvements in the region, such as rehabilitation for welcome centers and other types of “gateways.” Criteria were defined when planning for the kinds of historic resources the survey would identify. First, the resource had to be a building. Second, an effort was made to not identify buildings already listed on the New York State and/or National Register of Historic Places. Finally, the resource had to be related to surface transportation, such as highway, transit/train, waterborne, bicycle and/or pedestrian. As discussed in the *Section 2.2: Study Area Delineation*, the geographic boundaries of the survey are defined by the counties in the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region. Lastly, the period of significance was determined from about the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century in order for a broad representation of historic transportation contexts to be identified and documented throughout region—from the development of waterways to railroads and mass transit to highways.

The National Park Service defines historic resource into five broad categories: buildings, districts, objects, sites, and structures. A building creates shelter for any form of human activity, such as a house, barn, church, or hotel. A structure is distinguished from a building in that it serves a functional purpose other than shelter. Districts are a collection of buildings and/or structures and sites are usually associated with the location of a significant event or where buildings and/or structures were once situated. Objects are relatively small in scale and simply constructed, such as a fountain or sculpture. Since one of the goals of the *Genesee-Finger Lakes Historic Transportation Gateway Inventory and Assessment* was to identify potential adaptive reuse projects for welcome centers, buildings were decided to be the most appropriate resource to identify.

In order to avoid replication, buildings listed on the New York State and/or National Register of Historic Places were not included in this survey. For example, buildings associated with the Erie and Cayuga-Seneca Canal—although considered surface transportation—were not included. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor (ECNHC), along with representatives from the New York State Canal Corporation, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, and the New York State Museum, are listing the Barge Canal System on the National Register of Historic Places. According to the ECNHC, designation of the Barge Canal as a Historic District will be pursued first. Consideration of preparing a Multiple Property Listing for the historic canal eras will then follow. The scope of the listing will include the 524 miles of navigational channels and canal system structures of the four active branches of the New York State Canal System.³ However, some waterway buildings—especially those with an industrial or commercial significance associated with a transportation network—were documented for this project.

Lastly, the *Genesee-Finger Lakes Historic Transportation Gateway Inventory and Assessment* sought buildings that were related to surface transportation. The rationale for this requirement is discussed at length in *Chapter 4: Use of Survey Data*. Nevertheless, the project was designed to be in keeping with the U.S. Department of Transportation’s transportation enhancements programs that have historically been a funding source for the preservation of historic transportation-related resources.

³ Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, “Historic Preservation;” available http://www.eriecanalway.org/get-involved_hist-pres.htm; Internet; accessed 22 July 2009.

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The first phase of information gathering for the project involved the study and organization of transportation history and historic resources within the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region. This work included contacting all known public historians in the region, preparing a bibliography of archives, books, and internet sources of information, and determining which transportation-related buildings were listed on the New York State and/or National Register of Historic Places.

A letter of introduction about the project was mailed first to the county historians. Meetings and research opportunities were then scheduled with seven of the nine county historians. Additionally, informational letters were mailed to approximately 140 municipal historians requesting help in identifying transportation-related buildings located in their communities. Ten municipal historians responded to our request for assistance.

The second phase was to compile a list of potential transportation-related buildings with their exact or approximate location. Invaluable sources included county and municipal historical societies, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, and two websites: “Western New York Railroad Archive” and “Existing Railroad Stations in New York State.” Interviews were also conducted with various nonprofit organizations and knowledgeable private citizens. Major transportation corridors in the region were also identified using various local and regional reports.

The third phase of the project was to verify the existence of each transportation-related building. Priority was given to buildings that are currently vacant, have the ability for adaptive reuse, and/or situated in a place that would make them suitable to serve as a welcome center or a “gateway.” Therefore, many transportation-related buildings that house museums, businesses, and other civic or municipal purposes were not recorded simply because they’ve already been rehabbed or are being used. Identification was accomplished by driving the major roads within the region and making notes on the buildings and landscape characteristics and on the general character of the areas driven through. The information was recorded photographically and data gathered and reported in tabular format. Additional buildings, especially automobile-related, were added when discovered during the windshield surveys. The rationale for inclusion of an automobile service station was based on its proximity to a community.

The fourth and final phase of the project was to identify buildings worthy of documentation using a NYS OPRHP Historic Resource Inventory Form. Criteria used to identify and evaluate the historic significance of the property are based on those used by the National Register. The National Register criteria for evaluation is provided in Appendix B.

Overall, sixty-six buildings were identified by the *Genesee-Finger Lakes Historic Transportation Gateway Inventory and Assessment*. Table 2-1 on the following page provides the number of buildings documented by county and by transportation category:

Table 2-1: Historic Transportation-Related Building Survey Data

County	Documented Historic Buildings	Air-related	Rail-related	Road-related (vehicular)	Water-related
Genesee	6	0	3	3	0
Livingston	7	1	5	1	0
Monroe	9	0	6	2	1
Ontario	9	0	7	2	0
Orleans	5	0	3	1	1
Seneca	5	0	4	1	0
Wayne	9	0	7	2	0
Wyoming	8	1	5	2	0
Yates	8	0	5	0	3
Total	66	2	45	14	5

2.4 Historic Context

Historic context is defined by the National Park Service as, “a broad pattern of historical development in a community or its region that may be represented by historic resources.”⁴ Developing a survey’s historic context guides the development of the actual survey design by targeting survey work and effectively working with personnel and volunteers. When the process is organized, survey methods are more cost-effective and deviation from the goals of the survey are better controlled. The following historic themes have been described in broad, general terms to allow sufficient flexibility should intensive surveys follow.

Airports

Aviation in the United States has progressed slowly from experimental and demonstration activities of the early twentieth century to civil, commercial, and military operations within the last few decades. In the early twentieth century, any level field or pasture was looked upon as a potential landing strip. It was generally believed that merely installing a gas pump made such “airports” ready for operation. More elaborate airports of the period had wooden loading ramps and cleared runways for aircraft takeoffs and landings. Although the physical facilities of airports have changed considerably during the past fifty years, their basic function remains the same—to furnish aircraft with an adequate surface for takeoff and landing.⁵

The two air-related buildings documented in this survey are representative of the 1920s through 1940s Moderne Style. The style’s smooth-surfaced, flat-roofed elements expressed the acceleration of industrial technology in addition to the public’s romance with aerodynamics and simplicity. The use of concrete

⁴ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “National Register Bulletin No. 24: Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning,” 14.

⁵ American Public Works Association, *History of Public Works in the United States: 1776-1976* (Chicago, IL: The Association, 1976), 188.

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and steel as structural elements made the load-bearing walls of the nineteenth century obsolete and encouraged the use of large expanses of glass to fill the interiors with light.⁶

Automobile Service Stations

Gasoline stations are roadside facilities designed particularly to sell gasoline and other closely related products, such as lubricants, tires, and batteries for the automobile. Many gasoline stations also offer minor repair services, such as motor tuning and tire alignment. The focus of this historic resources survey has been the “traditional” gasoline station (circa 1910 to 1950), now numbering fewer than 100,000 in the United States—down from 236,000 as late as 1969.⁷

Gas stations appeared in the first decade of the twentieth century as makeshift solutions to the problem of gasoline distribution. With large-scale car manufacturing beginning in 1901 in Detroit, Michigan and Henry Ford’s introduction of the low-priced Model T in 1908, increasing numbers of drivers became aware of rural road improvement. Most existing roads connected farms with towns and railroad stations. The Good Roads Movement, started in the nineteenth century, led to many new organizations that promoted the development of roads as a federal and state concern rather than just a local problem. As the relationship of vehicles to population combined with the increasing amount of gasoline consumed, the gasoline station evolved as a physical form on American roadsides and became the primary device for corporate identities.⁸

Various kinds of “stations” appeared on the American scene between 1907 and 1913. By 1920, there were approximately 15,000 service stations in the United States. Standard Oil Trust, created by John D. Rockefeller and his associates in 1863, had been divided into separate companies in 1911. With the trust owning some 90 percent of the nation’s refinery capacity and some 85 percent of the total petroleum market, the Standard Oil companies found it difficult to expand rapidly enough to serve the new gasoline market. Other independent oil producers made substantial gains by orienting initial refinery and marketing facility toward fueling America’s new motorcars. The gasoline station became the prime advertising device by which companies sought to develop sales territories.⁹

Based on the National Register’s standards for evaluating the significance of properties and the structural types identified by *National Petroleum News* (1909 through today), the historic context applied to the gasoline station by way of this survey ranges between “curbside” stations (circa 1910) and the “oblong box” (circa 1950). The curbside station came about in 1915, normally installed in front of grocery, hardware, and other stores that expanded from carrying household petroleum products. The curbside pumps featured underground storage tanks, which greatly reduced the threat from fire that occurred with

⁶ Rachel Carley, *The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), 222-226.

⁷ John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle, *The Gas Station in America* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 131.

⁸ Mead & Hunt, “Contextual Study of New York State’s Pre-1961 Bridges: Prepared for New York State Department of Transportation,” 101 and 102.

⁹ John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle, 131.

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horse-drawn tank wagons. Later on, when the automobile became enclosed, small sheds were built to house lubricating oils, grease, and equipment and to protect the station operator and its customers.¹⁰ By 1920, oil companies sought to build stations that blended into residential neighborhoods with the “house” form (with or without the canopy). Stations eventually became equipped with grease pits and car-washing floors, so the house form added covered bays. Before 1935, building additions usually adopted the architecture of the original structure.¹¹

The “oblong box” form dominated from 1940 to 1950. As opposed to the 1920s, where oil companies wanted to soften the intrusion of the gasoline station in the American landscape, by the 1930s they desired maximum visibility. The glistening porcelain and glass façades contrasted with their surroundings and facilitated selling through point of purchase display.¹²

A national highway system for defense was initiated in 1956 by the Federal Aid Highway Act, known commonly as the interstate highway program. The Highway Revenue Act provided the funding for the program. With initial funding authorized for 12 years (1957 to 1969), the acts required that the interstate system be designed for traffic projected for 1975. The federal government would pay 90 percent of the cost from an increased gasoline tax and other highway user tax changes and states would pay 10 percent.¹³

A local example of the modern era of the expressway is the New York State Thruway, constructed in the region in the 1950s. The first 115-mile section of the New York State Thruway opened between Lowell (Onondaga County) and Rochester in June of 1954. By August 1954, the Thruway reached Buffalo; in December 1955 it was to Yonkers; and in August 1956 it reached New York City. These and other extensions throughout the 1950s increased the Thruway’s total mileage to 559 by the end of 1960, when the original Thruway was completed.¹⁴

As the old roads could not deliver the efficiency, high-speed, and safety of the New York State Thruway, early gas stations along those routes were torn down or significantly remodeled. For instance, the oblong boxes were converted into the Ranch Style, updated through resurfacing with used red brick, “top-hatting” with a front-gable roof, and by extending the eave of one end of the building to form a porch. Many new stations were little more than canopies with a small booth located on the side of a pump island during the 1970s. The convenience store is the latest fashion in retailing along with automated, unattended pumps covered by the canopy.¹⁵

Railroad Facilities

The Genesee-Finger Lakes Region was served by many railroads. In 1900, seven major railroads operated within the nine-county region, including: Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburgh Railway (a line of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad); Delaware, Lackawanna & Western; Erie Railroad; Lehigh Valley; New

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 135-137.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 137-142.

¹² *Ibid.*, 144-150.

¹³ Mead & Hunt, 105 and 106.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁵ John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle, 152-154.

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York Central Railroad; Pennsylvania Railroad; and the Western New York & Pennsylvania Railway (and all their predecessors).¹⁶

Railroads and steam-powered locomotives developed about the same time as canals in the 1830s. For topographic reasons, many railroads closely paralleled canal routes and created direct competition. A local example is the Rochester and Syracuse Railroad and the New York Central Railroad that followed alongside the Erie Canal. The New York Central Railroad actually constructed tracks in the Crooked Lake Canal bed in Yates County when it was abandoned. Within 6 months of the completion of the Erie Canal, the Mohawk and Hudson Railroad was chartered and became the first railroad company in New York State. The success of this railroad sparked a rail boom and money soon flowed into lines that linked other Erie Canal towns.

As a result of the Mississippi River being closed to commercial traffic during the Civil War, passenger and freight service increased on established east-west railroads, such as the Erie Railroad and New York Central Railroad. The New York Central Railroad was formed in 1853 from a number of smaller companies. The Erie Railroad became the first through line to the Midwest and Great Lakes in 1861, with financial control of lines to Buffalo and Chicago.

Railroads continued to become the dominant form of transportation in the country by the late nineteenth century, taking traffic off roads and leading to roadway neglect. Railroads minimized travel time and shipping costs in addition to providing access to regional markets and major ports. On a smaller scale, railroads provided a link between urban centers and small surrounding towns.

With exports doubling during World War I, a tremendous strain was put on both New York's railroads and the nation's railroads traveling to the Port of New York. With confidence in railroads shaken, truckers began to undercut railway rates. Thus, trucking became a viable economic alternative. Railroads sustained a role in the region's transportation system, but emphasis was shifted to highways after World War I.¹⁷

There are two types of railroad stations: freight and passenger. Usually, railroad stations were designed buildings that relied on simple, direct geometry for effective recognition. Specific rail companies commissioned firms to design buildings that could be replicated throughout their system. Some companies had architectural divisions that produced any kind of structures—although buildings tended to be long and low, running parallel to the track rather than tall and compact. These designs used manufactured elements common to the industrial vernacular system such as some lintel or sill work in masonry structures. Stations were often designed and built in bays to hold goods or people, with one bay serving as an office. They could also be adjusted to fit a community of any size. Most were domestic in scale, with limited trim, bracketing, and common cladding. Stylistically, they were modest stations intended to convey an image of confidence and service. Stations could, however, use local materials and absorb historic styles.¹⁸

¹⁶ Western New York Railroad Archive, "Railroads of Western New York;" available <http://wnyrails.org/railroads.htm>; Internet; accessed 22 July 2009.

¹⁷ Mead & Hunt, 117 and 118.

¹⁸ Herbert Gottfried and Jan Jennings, *American Vernacular Design: 1870 – 1940, An Illustrated Glossary* (New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company In., 1985), 12 and 13.

Industrial Warehouses, Factories, and Mills

Industrial buildings have played an important role in the development of cities, towns, and villages linked by railroads and waterways. Within the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region, most of the industrial buildings are associated with railroads; in particular, the Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburgh Railway, Erie Railroad, and New York Central Railroad (and all their predecessors). Some industrial buildings have also served the Erie Canal and the Crooked Lake Canal (now the Keuka Lake Outlet Trail).

In the vernacular tradition, warehouses are modest buildings used to store wares, goods, and merchandise. They have been associated with wholesaling and with the assemblage of component parts. Warehouse design throughout the country is quite uniform: typically brick, plain walls, orderly placement of windows, and simple ornamentation. The most architectural element of the warehouse is the cornice line. Normally, shipping and receiving areas have large openings for the easy movement of goods while many loading docks rotate between transportation and storage. In warehouses that display goods on the ground floor, a well-marked entrance with some ornamentation would emphasize an office space.

Factories differ from warehouses in that their use was for the manufacturing or assembly of products or component parts. Also, as factories required more light than in warehouse design, the proportion of window to wall increased dramatically in factory construction. The organization of tasks to be performed in the factory, whether the need for assembly lines or accommodation for machinery, determined the size and shape of the building. Usually small to medium in size with masonry construction, factories also featured strong piers on the walls due to the fenestration pattern.

Mills are the third type of industrial building—either masonry and frame construction—that relies on mechanical systems to alter the state of raw materials, such as grains into flour or oil. Large amounts of energy, such as water power, ran the machinery. As manufacturing processes evolved, the mill structure adapted with various additions and extensions. Similar to factories, mills also required a lot of light. Therefore, window arrangements expanded and skylights, monitor roofs, or roofs that trap light are common.

Overall, warehouses, factories and mills share uniform shapes and use of building materials and clearly denote industrial districts that have evolved in chorus with this region's transportation corridors.¹⁹

Trolley Facilities

The trolley²⁰ launched downtowns and central business districts of the American city as a nodal point for customers and workers throughout the urban area to gather in a relatively short time and with lower costs. The street railway network allowed the concentration of a variety of labor skills in one location while larger amounts of workers did not have to live within walking distance of their jobs. Residential development began along the streets served by the streetcars while the junction points of some major lines outside the downtown developed into commercial blocks.²¹

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10 and 11.

²⁰ Also referred to as electric streetcars and interurbans.

²¹ American Public Works Association, 170 and 171.

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The three major trolley lines that intersected Rochester and served the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region were the Rochester and Eastern Rapid Railway, Buffalo, Lockport and Rochester Railway, and the Rochester Syracuse and Eastern Railroad. The concentration of trolley lines in upstate New York ran from the Pennsylvania state line roughly parallel to the main line of the New York Central Railroad, amounting to 1,129 miles. The effect of the Great Depression was severe to trolley operations and most of the railways were put out of use by 1933.²²

The Rochester and Eastern Rapid Railway opened a line from Rochester to Canandaigua in 1903 and from Canandaigua to Geneva in 1904. In its early years, much of the heavy traffic occurred during the summer with passengers filtering to and from the Finger Lakes. The Rochester and Eastern Rapid Railway was consolidated with several other electric railways in Rochester to form New York State Railways in 1912, which was controlled by the New York Central Railroad. The New York State Railways filed for abandonment of its Rochester and Eastern line and a permit to end service was granted in 1930.²³

Buffalo, Lockport and Rochester Railway was completed in 1908 and put into regular service a year later. The line paralleled the New York Central Railroad for 59 miles from Rochester to Lockport, where it connected with the International Railway Company. In 1911, Clifford D. Beebe of Syracuse, proprietor of one of the two main networks of interurbans in New York, acquired the company. The railway operated throughout the 1920s but was abandoned by 1931.²⁴

Rochester Syracuse and Eastern Railroad paralleled the New York Central Railroad and the Erie Canal. Although a number of miles had been in service since 1906, the line was completed under the name Rochester Syracuse and Eastern Railroad in 1909. In 1913, the line was merged with two other interurban properties—all possessed by Clifford D. Beebe—into the Empire United Railways. However, the Empire United failed in 1915 and the Rochester Syracuse and Eastern Railroad was reorganized in 1917 as the Rochester and Syracuse Railroad. It existed throughout the 1920s but went into receivership in 1930 and was eventually abandoned in 1931.²⁵

Waterway Facilities

Until the mid-nineteenth century, ferries were the primary mode of transportation across large streams, rivers, and lakes. Many ferries were private and operated for a fee. The right to operate a ferry was obtained from the colonial legislature or county by a grant or contract.

When New York State was first being settled, transportation between the Hudson River and western New York was difficult. Rivers provided the easiest method of travel, but still did not provide efficient access to the Great Lakes or western territories. Interest in building a navigable waterway between the Hudson River and Lake Erie began in the late 1700s.

²² George W. Hilton and John F. Due, *The Electric Interurban Railways in America* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1960), 309.

²³ *Ibid.*, 312.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 312-313.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 314.

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In 1817, Governor DeWitt Clinton convinced the legislature to authorize seven million for the construction of the Erie Canal. The entire canal was opened in 1825. Although the canal only ran through the northern and western portions of the state, it influenced development statewide and beyond through its connection to the Hudson River.

As a result of the increase in trade and traffic, cities developed in New York west of Albany, including Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo. Other canals were also built in New York State, some to connect to the Erie Canal and others for competition. Between 1823 and 1828, construction began on several lateral canals, including the Cayuga-Seneca.

Improvements to the Erie and Cayuga-Seneca Canals occurred during the later half of the nineteenth century. However, interest in canals waned as the railroads grew. As the canals lost business, their revenues decreased and the state began abandoning some canals. As a result, the New York State Barge Canal—improved as a result of the Barge Canal Law of 1903—was designed to accommodate 1,000-ton barges. To accomplish this, much of the original Erie Canal was abandoned and the rivers avoided during the canal's original construction were canalized. The improved system was opened in 1918 and ran nearly parallel to the original canal route.

Traffic on the canal system slumped during World War II, but recovered to an all-time high in 1951. However, the canal's importance as a means of transportation greatly decreased over the course of the twentieth century due to the growing competition from railroads and highways and the opening of the Saint Lawrence Seaway in 1959.²⁶

²⁶ Mead & Hunt, 115-117.