



*New York State Archives*

**New York State Engineer and Surveyor Copies of Maps of  
Lands Appropriated for Enlargement of Erie Canal at Lyons  
and Palmyra B0665**

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## Overview of the Records

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<b>Repository:</b>	New York State Archives
<b>Summary:</b>	This series consists of maps showing the appropriation of lands for the enlargement of the Erie Canal through the village of Palmyra and at or near the village of Lyons. These maps contain name of property owner and acreage of land appropriated.
<b>Creator:</b>	New York (State). State Engineer and Surveyor
<b>Title:</b>	Copies of maps of lands appropriated for enlargement of Erie Canal at Lyons and Palmyra
<b>Quantity:</b>	0.2 cubic feet
<b>Quantity:</b>	2 volumes; 20 maps
<b>Inclusive Date:</b>	1849
<b>Series:</b>	B0665

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## Arrangement

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Geographical by village and therein by property owner.

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## Administrative History

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These maps were prepared during the period of the first enlargement of the Erie Canal. After a financial panic (together with the increased costs of canal improvements and an inadequate plan to finance them) caused all but the most essential canal work to stop, the Constitution of 1846 permitted work to be resumed.

The enlargement through the village of Lyons commenced before the suspension of work, and an independent canal line extending west of the village was put out under contract to shorten the canal by three quarters of a mile, and to separate an enlarged aqueduct and lock by a reach of nearly one-half mile. The line was brought into use in spring of 1849, making lockage faster and less difficult. Enlargement through the rest of Lyons continued, resulting

in a continuous enlarged canal of more than three miles in length. The one and one-half mile section through the village of Palmyra was commenced in the winter of 1849.

Around this time changes in planning may have influenced land appropriation. Under previous canal plans there was nothing in the angle of the towing path to prevent the earth above the wall from being carried into the canal by the towing rope. In 1848 the Canal Commissioners adopted a change of plan by which the towing path slope wall was carried to the top of the bank and the tow path was sloped so as to drain away from the canal. Thus, three boats could pass abreast and approach much nearer the bank, increasing canal capacity nearly one-third and making travel easier and requiring less repair. Surveys were begun in 1848 for remaining enlargements to the canal and they were continued in 1849. Chapter 233 of the Laws of 1849 authorized locks from Syracuse to Rochester to be lengthened, which would permit lengthening of boats and an increase of tonnage and travel on the canal. In addition, the nature of many claims against the state involved questions on the diversion of water (especially during the original construction of the Erie Canal), whether such diversions were permanent appropriations of the waterways, what quantity of water the state was entitled to, and the quantities of water actually diverted. The prolific and contentious claims against the state propelled certain improvements; in 1849 the Lyons aqueduct was completed.

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## Scope and Content Note

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The series consists of maps showing the appropriation of lands for the enlargement of the Erie Canal through the village of Palmyra and at and near the village of Lyons in 1849. The maps are apparently copies made for canal appraisers by western division engineers from the office of the State Engineer and Surveyor and held at the Lyons office.

Engineers were often employed as agents and assistants to the Canal Commissioners, and took care of state interests in the adjudication of land damages before the Canal Appraisers.

The maps are hand drawn in ink, some with various colors and/or washes. All contain the property owner's name and acreage of land appropriated, sometimes divided into various categories. Information also includes some or all of the following (often in the form of specific notes written on the face of the maps): general dimensions and acreage of specific land parcels; the condition of land (e.g., meadow); the location of streets, roads, junction lines, and locks; acreage of permanent appropriations for the enlarged canal; acreage of various permanent appropriations for roads, bridge embankments, spoil banks, gravel, and lands destroyed for material (sometime with the date of destruction); acreage formerly appropriated to the Old Erie Canal; acreage for unspecified additional appropriations; acreage formerly appraised (as covered by spoil banks or waste weirs) that was later permanently appropriated; and acreage occupied by stone and timber (sometimes with dates of occupation). The acreage figures are often totaled in the note.

Maps measure 31 x 19 cm on a single page, and 31 x 38 cm when one map spreads across two pages. Most of the maps in both volumes usually have directional symbols. Presence of other features varies with the volume.

Volume 1 covers Lyons and contains 11 maps. The maps are identified by property owner's name, which often serves as a title; there is one map for each piece of property appropriated and each map includes a handwritten statement "Lyons Office Sept. 1849." Scale is 1 or 2 chains to an inch, or sometimes 50 links to an inch. The maps are hand drawn in ink, with some blue and brown (faded red?) colored lines (e.g. showing the line of the canal and the old canal line) and occasionally blue wash for natural bodies of water. There are neither legends nor annotations.

Volume 2 covers Palmyra and contains 9 maps. There is a formal title page marked as "No. 2" from the "Lyons Office" stating that the copies were made for appraisers showing the appropriation of lands for the enlargement of the Erie Canal through the Village of Palmyra on work let at Lyons, October 16, 1849. This statement is signed by the Resident Engineer and the First and Second Assistant Engineers. The volume also contains an index in the fore, giving name of property owner. Notes that function as a legend state that red figures represent distances from the red line of the old canal, and black figures represent distances from the red line of the enlarged canal (a red line typically represents the inner line of the canal towpath from which measurements are taken). Yellow shading represents permanent appropriations. There are no scales given. The maps contain a significant number of pencilled annotations, both of property owners' names (sometimes reflecting new ownership) and acreage. In addition the note section on each map often gives acreage of permanent appropriations at two separate locations on the property, marked as "A" and "B".

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## Related Information

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### Related Material

### Related Publications

Annual Reports of Canal Appraisers, available at the New York State Library, include statements of claims giving name and residence of claimants, nature of claims, dates filed and appealed, and the amounts claimed and awarded.

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## Use of Records

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### Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions regarding access to or use of this material.

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## Access Terms

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- Land use--New York (State)
- Lyons (N.Y.)
- Erie Canal (N.Y.)
- Palmyra (N.Y.)
- Canals--New York (State)
- Manuscript maps
- New York (State)
- Maps (documents)
- Eminent domain--New York (State)
- Maintaining infrastructure
- Canals--Design and construction
- Constructing canals
- New York (State). Department of Transportation