



New York State Archives

**New York State Engineer and Surveyor Middle and Western
Division Survey Maps for the Proposed 1895 Erie Canal
Enlargement B1210**

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Overview of the Records

Repository:	New York State Archives
Summary:	These survey maps for proposed canal improvements of Erie, Champlain, and Oswego canals are particularly valuable for their representation of state-owned land. Maps show measurements of canal length; town, city, and county lines; name of some land owners, or parcel numbers, of property adjacent to the canal; buildings along the canal rout; and parapets, aqueducts, and other related structures.
Creator:	New York (State). State Engineer and Surveyor
Title:	Middle and Western Division survey maps for the proposed 1895 Erie Canal enlargement
Quantity:	32 cubic feet
Quantity:	39 maps
Inclusive Date:	1895-1900
Series:	B1210

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Arrangement

Arranged by name of canal and therein geographically.

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Scope and Content Note

The series contains survey maps of the Middle and Western divisions of the Erie Canal (including the Oswego Canal and the Cayuga and Seneca Canal) for the proposed "Nine Million Dollar" canal improvement of 1895. Chapter 79 of the Laws of the 1895 proposed the enlargement and improvement of the Erie, Champlain, and Oswego canals; its provisions were ratified by voters in the general election of November 1895.

Work on the canals entailed deepening them (by raising the banks whenever practicable), lengthening or improving locks, and providing machinery for drawing boats into the improved

locks and for building vertical stone walls where necessary. All work was to be done in accordance with plans, specifications, and estimates prepared by the State Engineer and Surveyor. In January 1896 work on the surveys for the canal improvements was begun, and these maps are apparently the results of those surveys.

Survey maps formed the basis for many subsequent maps. In particular these maps were made in order to give the most accurate representation of state owned land. This was important in light of the land appropriation needs and the damage that would naturally be expected during canal improvement and repair. Consequently the maps would be updated over time, as is apparent in this series, and the best available measurements were needed.

The maps are hand drawn and the colored lines that are used conform to standard canal surveying practice. The red line designates the inner line of the towpath, upon which all the measurements in the direction of the length of the canal were made. On some maps separate small drawings show ties to red line offsets at specific points. These are configured or triangulated to nails placed in telephone poles or elm trees. The space enclosed by blue lines represents the portion of land belonging to the state. Dotted blue lines represent the historic alignment of the old canal; solid black lines represent the new canal alignment. Measurements are especially detailed at points of land curvature, and therefore they are more closely clustered on the curves of the canal than on the straightaways.

Information ancillary to the measurements is minimal, but generally includes: town, county, and city lines; name of some owners of property adjacent to the canal, or sometimes parcel numbers; outlines of some buildings along the route, shaded in various colors and sometimes accompanied by the name of a specific company or owner; natural bodies of water or canal feeders that cross the canal; locks, parapets, aqueducts and other related structures; sometimes annotations designating land appropriations that occurred after the maps were produced, including the name of land owner, appropriation number, and date (usually ca. 1900); and sometimes field book numbers, apparently referring to other surveys.

Maps cover the Middle (28 rolls) and Western (11 rolls) divisions of the Erie Canal, with the Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca canals considered a part of the Middle Division. Most maps are identified on the back edge of the roll, usually as "blue line" maps of a particular canal and/or section. The area covered by the maps is also usually given here, as is the scale, which varies. The most common scales are one inch equal to 40 feet, or one inch equal to 100 feet. Unfortunately, dirt and age have considerably obscured this handwritten information and none, except for directional symbols, appears on the face of the maps. Some of the information was apparently added at a later date, probably to aid identification. Most maps are drawn in ink, although a few are sketched in pencil and appear to be preliminary in nature. Annotations present evidence that these maps were updated beyond the time of their immediate creation, up to 1900.

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Related Information

Related Material

14068 Series 14068, Erie and Champlain Topographical Maps, includes Eastern Division surveys not found in this series.

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Other Finding Aids

Available at Repository

Container list is available at the repository.

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Use of Records

Access Restrictions

Restricted due to fragile condition: use only with assistance of State Archives staff.

Access Terms

- Cayuga and Seneca Canal (N.Y.)
- Topographic surveys
- Erie Canal (N.Y.)
- Canals--New York (State)
- Manuscript maps
- New York (State)
- Maps (documents)
- Maintaining infrastructure
- Canals--Design and construction
- Constructing canals
- Oswego Canal (N.Y.)

- New York (State). Department of Transportation