



New York State Archives

St. Lawrence Seaway-Welland Canal subject file B1415

New York State Archives
222 Madison Avenue
Albany, NY 12230
archref@nysed.gov
URL: <http://www.archives.nysed.gov/>

Table of Contents

Overview of the Records	3
Administrative History	3
Scope and Contents	4
Related Information	5
Other Finding Aids	5
Use of Records	5
Access Terms	5

Overview of the Records

Repository:	New York State Archives
Summary:	This series contains documents in support of policy discussions to revive a project for an American canal from Lake Ontario to the Niagara River and Lake Erie. Information was needed to establish economic justification and/or engineering feasibility of constructing/improving the canal, and estimates cost. Records include maps, photographs, pamphlets, clippings, correspondence, and notes pertaining to canal construction or improvement and waterpower.
Creator:	New York (State). Department of Commerce
Title:	St. Lawrence Seaway-Welland Canal subject file
Quantity:	0.3 cubic feet
Inclusive Date:	1950-1960
Series:	B1415

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative History

The Welland Canal, part of Canada's St. Lawrence system, connects the western end of Lake Ontario with the eastern extremity of Lake Erie. It opened in 1829, was completed from lake to lake in 1833, and was enlarged in 1871 and again in 1887. Deepening of the Welland Canal in the 1950s conformed it to the St. Lawrence Seaway but left two obstacles. First, a series of five single locks dictated one-way only traffic through portions of the canal. To expand the canal by duplicating the locks would be very expensive. Second, operating capacity of the Welland Canal was lessened because of winter weather which closes it.

The St. Lawrence Seaway connects the Atlantic Ocean with the Great Lakes. Amid much controversy, it was improved by the U.S. and Canada in the late 1950s, and opened as a deep waterway in 1959. A section of the seaway between two long stretches of open navigation was impeded by shoals and rapids and a series of Canadian canals and locks (such as the Welland) which were inadequate for large tonnage. The removal of this "bottleneck" was the objective of joint Canadian-U.S. construction during the 1950s. Works designed principally to provide hydroelectric power, but which contributed to the navigation project, were built by New York State and the Province of Ontario. American construction was carried out by the St.

Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation and the Army Corps of Engineers, both of which are represented in the series.

State government policy discussions were apparently triggered by a move to relegate the project to inactive status by the Corps of Engineers. Information was needed to establish economic justification and/or engineering feasibility of constructing/improving the canal, and to bring cost estimates up to date (i.e., to 1955 dollars). There were several problems: construction of the canal along routes where the projected rights of way had been overtaken by concentrated industrial and residential building; lack of sponsors; and studies of traffic potential of a western New York canal were tied to the amount of traffic on the St. Lawrence Seaway, the full effect of which was unknown. Materials in the file provide background information and "current" opinions.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Content Note

The series consists of a file labeled "St. Lawrence-Welland Canal Prbm" which contains assorted documents in support of policy discussions to revive a project for an American canal from Lake Ontario to the Niagara River and Lake Erie. The idea of an "American canal" sprouted in the 1800s and persisted many decades into the 20th century. File material includes undated maps, photographs, and pamphlets, as well as newspaper clippings and a small amount of correspondence, notes, and memoranda all dating from the 1950s. The point of discussions was to prevent the Welland Canal (in Canada) from bogging down commercial development that would follow the St. Lawrence Seaway. The file material pertains to canal construction or improvement and the side issue of water power.

The material may have been gathered by the State Commerce Department's Bureau of Industrial Development, which would have an interest in issues of trade and manufacturing. Internal evidence suggests it is a partial file, and that related statistical information was kept elsewhere (location now unknown.) Implementation of the project was postponed many times before being rated as inactive by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The file includes: 4 undated, unattributed, black and white photos, 3.5" x 3.5"; pamphlet, "Visit Canada's Canal Zone, Thorold Ontario: Where the Steamships Climb the Mountain"; unannotated print map and profile of "St. Lawrence - Great Lakes Waterway," published by Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, n.d., 22" x 32"; unannotated print map showing three alternate canal routes, n.d. 8 1/2" x 7 3/4"; pamphlet, "Welland Ship Canal: In Picture and Story," printed and published by F.H. Leslie, Ltd, Niagara Falls, Canada, n.d.; pamphlet, "Great Lakes Water," published by the Power Authority of the State of New York, June 20, 1960; copies of correspondence, excerpts from speeches, and memoranda, ca. 1955; newspaper clippings (1956, 1959) and magazine articles (1955); and unattributed manuscript notes taken from a 1900 survey for a canal around Niagara Falls on the American side.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Related Information

Related Material

Series B0746, File on All American Canal and St. Lawrence Ship Canal and Power Project, and Series 14220, Economic Development Board Subject and Correspondence Files, contain related information that pre- and post-dates this series.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Other Finding Aids

Available at Repository

Item list.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Use of Records

Access Restrictions

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

Access Terms

- Saint Lawrence Seaway
- Maps (documents)
- New York (State)
- Shipping--New York (State)
- Pamphlets
- Advocating economic development
- Planning canals

- Photographs
- Waterways--North America
- Clippings (information artifacts)
- Economic development
- Industrial policy
- Canals--Design and construction
- Welland Canal (Canada)