

A Long Haul: The Story of the New York State Barge Canal

Michele A. McFee



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The Barge Canal is as much a modernization of the Erie Canal and its branches as it is an enlargement. In 1918, when the Barge Canal was completed, travelers saw things on the new canal they had not seen on the Erie: canalized rivers, movable dams, liberal use of concrete, mechanized locks, and barges pulled by tugs or traveling under their own power. No longer were boats pulled by animals walking along a towpath. The larger vessels of the Barge Canal transported a variety of products, but grain and oil made up the bulk of the traffic on the canal in its highest traffic years in the 1950s. The stories of the many people who worked ot traveled along the canal provide a colorful legacy to what today is a quiet waterway for tourists.

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