Rochester's Historic Water Systems

Learn about the rivers, lakes, falls, and canals as you explore these exhibits about the great water systems that make up Rochester's geography and have affected New York State history.

Think About It

• How do you think water has affected Rochester's history and economy?

• How would our region be different if one of these bodies of water or geographic features wasn't here (like the Erie Canal, or High Falls).

Path

LAUNCH PAD
- What can we learn about our local history by exploring **Lake Ontario**?

STREAM TABLE
- Experiment with the moving water to discover how different land formations can be created and changed.
- How do you think the shape of the land influences where people live?

DISCOVER R WEATHER
- Take a look at the different weather maps at the studio. Where do you think your house would be on the maps?
- How do you think the weather affected people who lived in this area 100 years ago? 10,000 years ago?

CLIMBING WALL
- The **Lower Falls** are in the **Gorge**. What are some of the different ways this waterfall affected Rochester's economy?

CANAL LOCK
- How do you think the **Erie Canal** impacted life in Rochester?
- How do you think the canal was built?
- The Erie Canal connects to many different lakes and rivers. Try mapping out routes to different cities using the canal. Could you get to New York City? What about New Orleans?

What's Going On?

Water has played a prominent role in shaping Rochester's geography, history and **economy**. For thousands of years moving and eventually melting glaciers created the Genesee Valley and formed the many hills and valleys around it. The melting glaciers also left behind all of the **Great Lakes**, including **Lake Ontario, the Genesee River** (with its dramatic **gorge** and **waterfalls**) and all the nearby **Finger Lakes**. Our many lakes, rivers, and streams have been used as sources of power, transportation and drinkable water in historic as well as prehistoric times. Completion of the **Erie Canal** through Rochester in 1825, stimulated the city's **economy** and enhanced its status as a market center, creating the first "boom town" in US history.

Where to find more...

Exhibits
• At The Western Door
• Native Peoples
• Time Capsule
• Old Rochesterville

(check for booking availability)

Read More About It!

R. Rosenberg-Naparstek and E. P. Curtis, Jr.
Runnin' Crazy: A Portrait of the Genesee River
Donning Co., 1996

*J.H. Czech, J.V. DeGraff, N.J. Forsht, and R.J. Kilday, III
Waterfalls in Upstate New York
Rochester Museum & Science Center, 1972

R. Freeman and S. Freeman
Take a Hike! Family Walks in the Rochester Area
Footprint Press, 2000

C. Harness
An Amazing Impossible Canal
Aladdin Picture Books, 1999

National Geographic MapMachine
plasma.nationalgeographic.com/mapmachine

Rochester History Online
www.rochester.lib.ny.us/~rochhist

New York History Net
www.nyhistory.com

History of the Erie Canal
http://www.history.rochester.edu/canal

New York State Canals
http://www.canals.state.ny.us/index.html

*Availiable at RMSC Library

 Vocabulary

Economy - A system of producing, distributing, and consuming wealth.

Erie Canal - A waterway completed in 1825 to connect the Hudson River to Lake Erie. It increased the movement of people and goods across New York State, boosting trade and industry in cities along the canal, including New York City, Albany, and Rochester.

Finger Lakes - Long, narrow lakes in upstate New York that look like the fingers of a hand. Even though they are very narrow, two of these lakes, Cayuga and Seneca, are deeper than Lake Ontario, each more than 600 feet deep.

Genesee River - Flows northward from Genesee, PA, through western New York, and empties into Lake Ontario north of Rochester.

Gorge - A deep, narrow passage with steep, rocky walls and usually having a river or stream flowing through it

Great Lakes - The lakes in east-central North America that make up the largest area of fresh water in the world. They include Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, Lake Erie, and Lake Ontario.

High, Middle, and Lower Falls - Three of the water falls along the Genesee River that impact shipping and provide power for local industry in Rochester.

Lake Ontario - The smallest of the Great Lakes, between southeast Ontario, Canada, and northwest New York. It is 193 miles long by 53 miles wide and averages 283 feet deep.

NYS Learning Standards

CDOS1:	Career Development

SS1:	History of the United States and New York (3)
SS3:	Geography (1,2)
SS4:	Economics (1)

ELA1:	Language for Information and Understanding

MST1:	Analysis, Inquiry, and Design (1,2)
MST4:	The Physical Environment (2,3,4,5)
MST4:	The Living Environment (1,3,7)
MST5:	Technology (2,3,4,6)