

Genealogical Guide to Monroe County, New York

Transportation Routes

Most of the main roads through Monroe County began as Indian trails. These trails were slowly widened as the settlers came into the area after it was opened up in 1789. Widened further, those trails exist as today's modern highways.

The coming of the Erie Canal to Rochester in 1825 greatly increased the population of the County and especially the population of Rochester, which was centered on the junction of the canal and the Genesee River.

Population of Rochester

| | | | |
|------|--------------|------|-------|
| 1820 | approx. 1500 | 1840 | 20191 |
| 1825 | 4274 | 1845 | 26965 |
| 1830 | 9207 | 1850 | 36403 |
| 1835 | 14414 | 1855 | 43877 |



Erie Canal in 1840

The Erie Canal greatly decreased both the price of freight and passenger fares, making it easy for people to move away from the Atlantic coast toward the center of the continent. Don't be surprised if an ancestor lived in Monroe County for only a short time, as the canal made it easy and cheap for people to continue moving west, especially to Ohio and Michigan.

An often asked question is whether passenger lists exist for the Erie Canal. Boats were taxed on the weight of cargo that they hauled. There was no reason to keep lists of passengers. Still, there are a few lists for the years 1827 to 1829 included in a collection of Erie Canal documents at the New York State Archives in Albany. There is no index to any of these records.

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Starting about 1850 railroads would start building lines that would follow the route of the canal. Many passengers still used the Erie Canal for many years after railroads came through the area because of the low canal fares. The path of the Erie Canal was moved south out of Rochester in the 1920s. The old canal bed was used for a trolley/subway system that went underground only in downtown Rochester. In the 1950s the trolley/subway system was abandoned and the old Erie Canal bed was changed over to a four-lane highway which is now Interstate 490.

The Genesee Valley Canal opened from Rochester southward to Dansville in 1840. It only lasted about twenty years because of the coming of the railroads in the 1850s.

The railroads that followed the path of both the Genesee Valley and Erie Canals slowly cut into the canal's freight and passenger service. Passenger service peaked during World War II when gasoline and tires for autos were rationed. Railroads are still used for transporting goods. There is still some rail passenger service but it is limited.

There used to be passenger boats that sailed on Lake Ontario. The Port of Rochester is in the neighborhood (and former Village) of Charlotte. Because there are three waterfalls on the Genesee River between Charlotte and downtown Rochester, you would had to take a wagon between the two places. An early railroad line between the two places made it easier to get to the port. In the early days ships would sail around to ports on the coast of Lake Ontario. Charlotte was a port of entry to the US and was required to keep lists of passenger arrivals. Most of those passenger lists have been lost. Only one passenger register survives from [July to September 1866](#) and the original is the National Archives. There was a ferry from 1907 to 1952 that carried both passengers and cargo between Charlotte and Cobourg, Ontario. It closed down because the cargo, mostly coal, stopped. A modern ferry ran between Charlotte and Toronto in 2004 and 2005. It never made any money and was plagued with service problems and bad management.

Collector's Office, *Monroe Co. N.Y. 16183*

Master of the Boat *J. R. Hatcher* of *Hackensack*

Do Certify that the following is a full and true statement of the present cargo of the said boat, and that I have paid toll thereon as follows:

To *J. Hatcher* for original cargo on Clearance No. *3742 1472*

To *J. Hatcher* for additional cargo, *8.00*

| ARTICLES. | WHERE FROM. | WHERE BOUND. | WEIGHT—lbs. | Miles. | Rate. | TOLLS. |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| <i>25 Bbls Salt (Mch)</i> | <i>Puffan</i> | <i>Puffan</i> | <i>7500</i> | <i>35</i> | <i>25</i> | <i>60.</i> |
| <i>25 Bbls Salt (Mch)</i> | <i>Albion</i> | <i>Albion</i> | <i>3578</i> | <i>13</i> | <i>14</i> | <i>11</i> |
| <i>-</i> | <i>E. Harbour</i> | <i>E. Harbour</i> | <i>210</i> | <i>35</i> | <i>-</i> | <i>11</i> |
| <i>-</i> | <i>Holley</i> | <i>Holley</i> | <i>689</i> | <i>25</i> | <i>-</i> | <i>34</i> |
| <i>J. R. Hatcher</i> | | | | | | <i>8.00</i> |



Ferry "Ontario" that sailed to Cobourg

There was a ferry from 1907 to 1952 that carried both passengers and cargo between Charlotte and Cobourg, Ontario. It closed down because the cargo, mostly coal, stopped. A modern ferry ran between Charlotte and Toronto in 2004 and 2005. It never made any money and was plagued with service problems and bad management.

