

OHIO CANALS



Teacher Overview

The Ohio region was a vast wilderness when settlers first arrived following the passage of the Northwest Ordinance in 1787. Just seventeen years after statehood, the population in Ohio had grown to over half a million residents. Agriculture quickly became the main industry in Ohio, but the young state was still in need of reliable transportation routes to get goods to market. Roads at the time were prone to flooding, and were often rocky, craggy, and dangerous to travel. The National Road was still being constructed, and did not reach the northern regions of the state. Farmers and merchants needed cheap, easy methods of transporting their goods. Canals had the potential to provide this transportation and open up new markets in other regions, specifically the northeast, for Ohio goods and products.

In 1817, New York State began building a canal connecting the Hudson River to Lake Erie. When the Erie Canal in New York was completed, it connected the Atlantic Ocean, the Hudson River, and Lake Erie. Thousands used the new transportation system to migrate to Ohio where cities along Lake Erie, namely Cleveland and Toledo, experienced a boom in both population and commerce.

With the success of the Erie Canal, Ohio leaders were convinced that though an enormous endeavor, the investment would pay off. An Ohio canal route to Lake Erie would allow goods to be shipped to the northernmost regions of the state, and provide a route for Ohio goods to eastern markets via the Hudson River and New York canal system. Shortly after, in 1822, the Ohio legislature approved and created an Ohio Canal Commission. Construction on Ohio's canal system began on July 4, 1825, with the construction of the Ohio and Erie Canal. Just weeks later, work began on the Miami and Erie Canal.

Canal construction was difficult and labor intensive — workers had to dig hundreds of miles of trenches and then line them with sandstone. Canal locks, made of sandstone and wood, also had to be built. Canal construction employed thousands of workers and provided livelihoods to many recent immigrants such as the Irish. Workers labored from sunrise to sunset and were paid 30 cents an hour — a decent wage to a laborer of the 1820s.

Once construction was completed, Ohio's canal system included nearly one thousand miles of canal and feeder lines. The Ohio and Erie Canal was completed in 1833, and connected Portsmouth and Cleveland. The Miami and Erie Canal was completed later in 1845, and connected Cincinnati and Toledo, Ohio.

A number of towns sprang up around the canal depots, becoming busy hubs of commerce during the canal era. Most canals remained in operation until the end of the nineteenth century, allowing Ohio commerce to prosper. However, use of the canals began to decline in the 1850s with the increasing popularity of the railroads — many of the canal towns declined as well. Railroads could deliver both goods and people to their destinations much more quickly than canal boats, which were pulled by mule and averaged only four miles per hour. Though more expensive than the canal transport system, railroads soon became the favored mode of transportation.

Video Synopsis

In this *Our Ohio* heritage segment, the hosts visit *Roscoe Village* to learn how canals changed Ohio. The hosts take a ride on the *Monticello III* to see what the canals were like, and talk to experts on what life was like during the canal era.

Learning Objectives

Students will examine maps and primary sources to determine canal routes and how the use of the canals affected the lives of early Ohioans. Students will also complete a visual organizer comparing transportation in the early 1800s to today.



OHIO CANALS



Ohio Canals Map A

Erie Canal to the Hudson River in Eastern New York ▶



Key

- Canal Line
- City
- Capital



A Passenger Boat on the Ohio Canal - 1830

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WORKSHEET A Ohio Canal Lines

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Instructions: Look closely at the map of Ohio's canals to answer the questions below.

1. Look at the map and find the two canals lines. What are their names?

2. Which cities does each of the canals connect?

3. Find the capital of Ohio and circle it on the map; Does the capital have a canal stop?

4. Find the city you live in and circle it on the map, if your city is not listed, find the city closest to your own. Does your city have access to a canal route?

5. List three reasons why Ohioans needed canals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

6. List two advantages of using the canals to travel or to ship goods:

1. _____
2. _____

7. Name two things that were not advantages when using canals to travel or ship goods:

1. _____
2. _____

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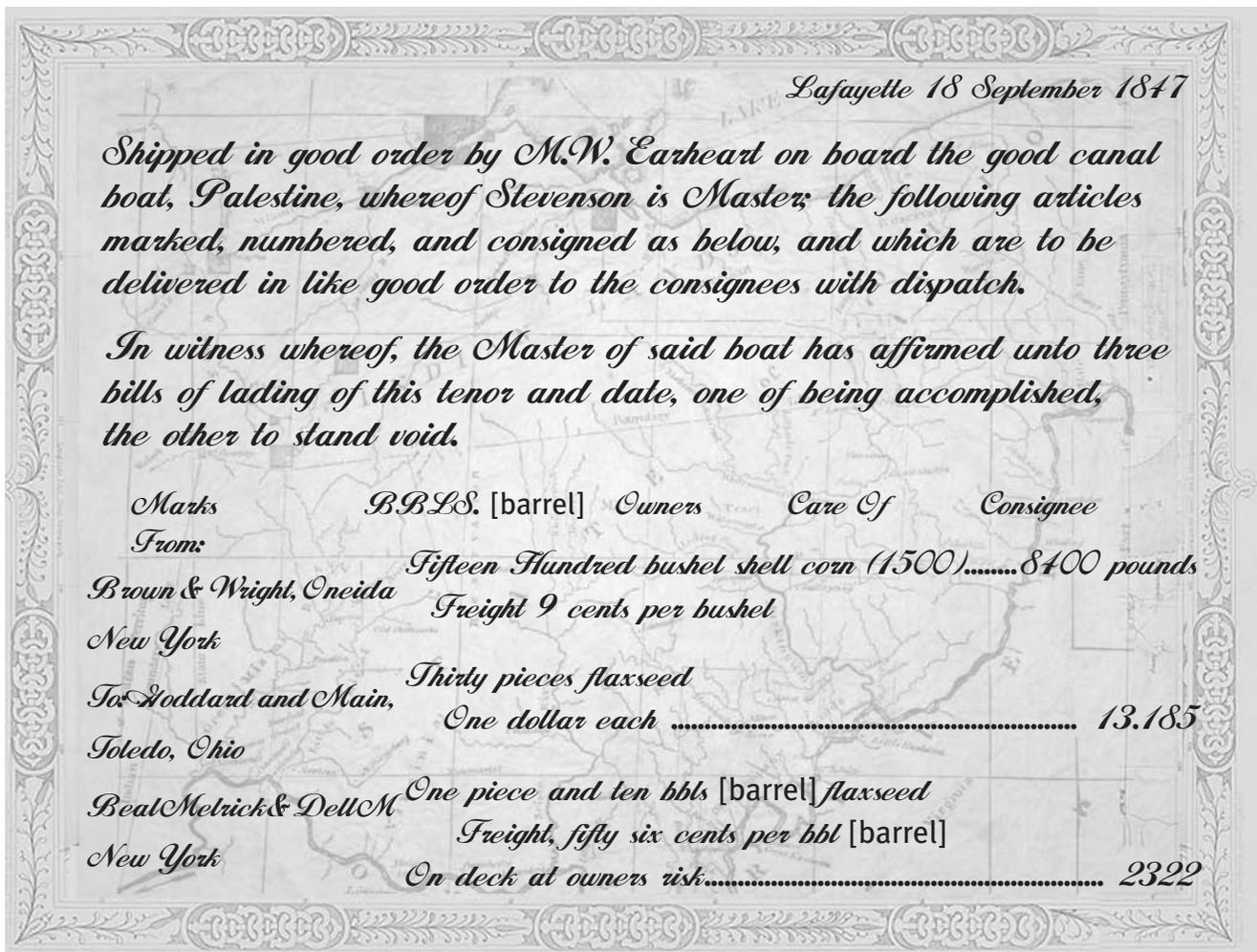


WORKSHEET B Canal Bill of Lading

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Instructions: Below is an example of a bill of lading for shipping merchandise. Canal operators issued bills of lading to customers sending goods by canal boat. Read the bill of lading carefully, and then answer the following questions on **page 9**.



(Center for Archival Collections, Bowling Green University)

Find the original document at: <http://worldmc.ohiolink.edu>

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WORKSHEET B Canal Bill of Lading

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Is this a primary or secondary source?

2. When was this bill issued?

3. What type of company issued this the bill?

4. What things were being shipped, and where were they being sent?

5. What can the types of things being shipped tell you about how the person who produced them made a living?

6. Find Toledo, Ohio on the map of the Ohio canal system (**Map A**).
On which of the two canal lines would the goods listed on the bill of lading have been sent?

7. Imagine you are a wheat farmer in Zanesville, Ohio.
Which canal line would you have used to ship your crop to Cleveland, Ohio?

8. In order to ship his wheat, the Zanesville farmer would first have to send his wheat up which river, that feeds into the canal?





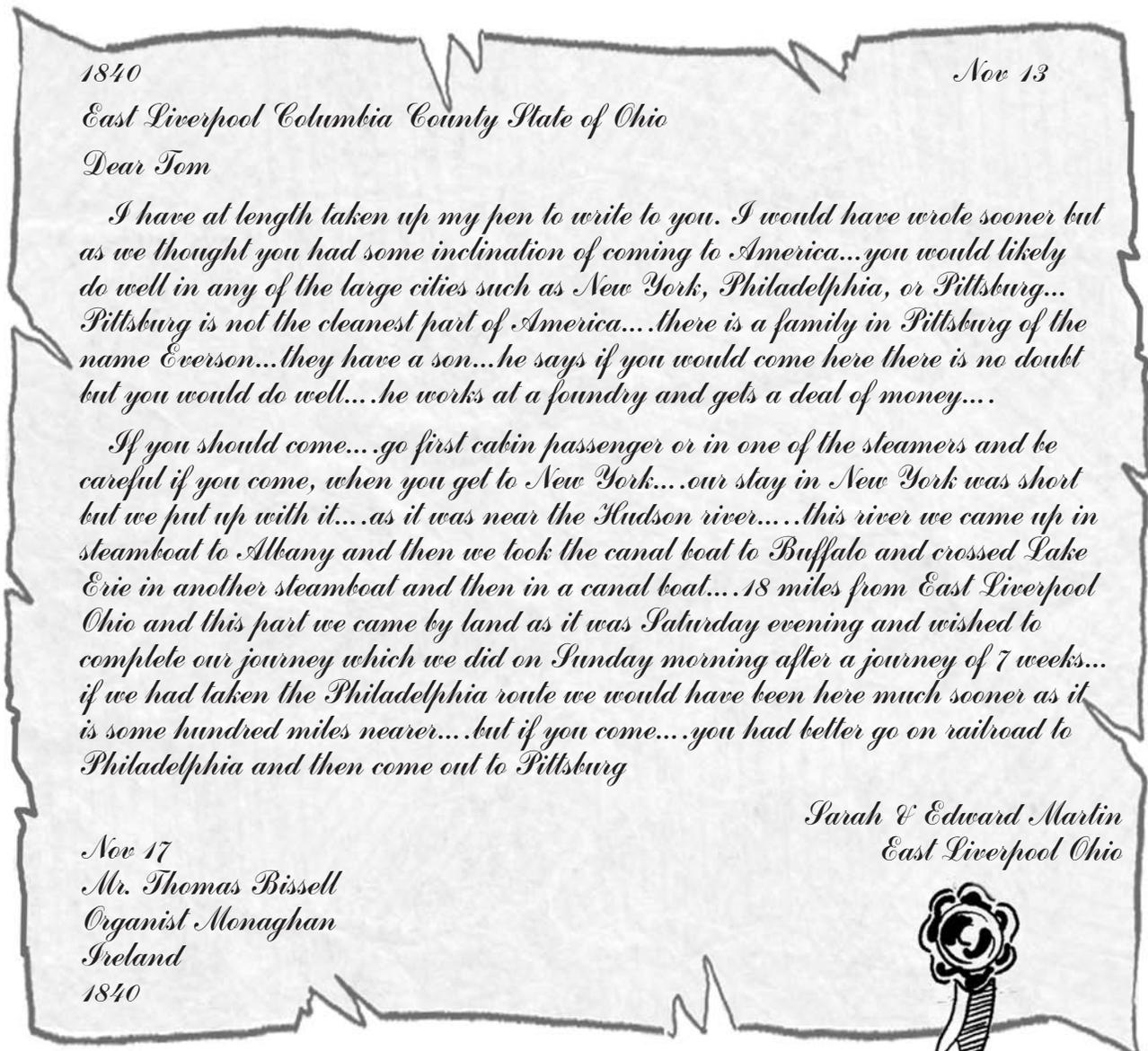
WORKSHEET C

Coming to America, Getting to Ohio

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Below is a portion of a letter written by an Ohio resident to a relative.
Read the letter, to help answer the questions on **page 11**.



1840

Nov 13

East Liverpool Columbia County State of Ohio

Dear Tom

I have at length taken up my pen to write to you. I would have wrote sooner but as we thought you had some inclination of coming to America...you would likely do well in any of the large cities such as New York, Philadelphia, or Pittsburg... Pittsburg is not the cleanest part of America...there is a family in Pittsburg of the name Everson...they have a son...he says if you would come here there is no doubt but you would do well...he works at a foundry and gets a deal of money....

If you should come...go first cabin passenger or in one of the steamers and be careful if you come, when you get to New York....our stay in New York was short but we put up with it...as it was near the Hudson river....this river we came up in steamboat to Albany and then we took the canal boat to Buffalo and crossed Lake Erie in another steamboat and then in a canal boat...18 miles from East Liverpool Ohio and this part we came by land as it was Saturday evening and wished to complete our journey which we did on Sunday morning after a journey of 7 weeks... if we had taken the Philadelphia route we would have been here much sooner as it is some hundred miles nearer...but if you come...you had better go on railroad to Philadelphia and then come out to Pittsburg

Sarah & Edward Martin
East Liverpool Ohio

Nov 17

Mr. Thomas Bissell
Organist Monaghan
Ireland

1840



Find the original document at:
<http://worlddmc.ohiolink.edu>

(Ohio Historical Society)

OHIO CANALS



WORKSHEET C

Coming to America, Getting to Ohio

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

1. Is this letter a primary or secondary source?

2. After the Erie Canal connecting the Hudson River in New York to Lake Erie was completed, the number of people living in Ohio increased. Why might this be?

3. When was this letter written?

4. Why is Edward writing to Tom, and where does Tom live?

5. What reason might Tom have for moving to America?

6. Edward describes his travel from New York to Ohio in his letter to Tom. Edward mainly traveled by water. What types of boats did Edward's family travel on?

7. How many weeks did Edward's journey last?

8. If Tom were to travel from Ireland to East Liverpool, Ohio, what ocean would he have to sail across?

9. Tom would be able to walk to East Liverpool once he arrives in Ohio on the canal boat, but first, Tom must get to the Ohio & Erie Canal. Tom will arrive in New York after his ocean voyage. Look at **Map A** to determine what river and what lake Tom must first travel in order to get to the Ohio & Erie Canal.
River: _____
Lake: _____
10. East Liverpool, Ohio is very close to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Edward tells Tom about a faster way to get to East Liverpool if he goes to Philadelphia first. What does Edward tell Tom he should take, a canal or railroad?

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WORKSHEET D

Transportation Then and Now

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Think about transportation in the mid 1800s and transportation now. The first railroads connecting places in Ohio were not completed until the 1850s. Think about how people and goods were transported long distances, and then think about how we transported them then, without the help of railroads, and how we transport them today and write your answers in the boxes. Finally, compare transportation then and now, think about how they might be different and how they are similar, and write your answer in the box.

What's Going Where:	Transportation Then (1840)	Transportation Now (Today)	Compare
Person traveling from Cincinnati to Toledo in winter			
Farmer shipping corn from Cincinnati to Toledo			
Family migrating from New York to Ohio			
Person traveling from Columbus to Cincinnati			
Cargo being sent to Europe from New York			
Boy going one mile to school			