Canal Stories
Background Information and Credits

**Canal Stories** was produced by City Lore and the Erie Canal Museum, in collaboration with the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission and the New York State Museum, with additional funding provided by the New York Council on the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

**The Love for Water**
*Albert E. Gayer*
Jump onboard a canal boat with Albert Gayer (c1898-1976), who grew up alongside the Erie Canal in the early 1900s. Born in Budapest, Hungary, Albert moved to Schenectady from Bristol, Ct. in 1913. He and his vast collection of canal and rail memorabilia are legendary.

**Credit:** From “The Er-I-E,” a documentary produced by Robert Broekman Productions, written by Irwin Lewis, narrated by Sam Gray

**Courtesy:** New York State Museum

**Sitting on the Potty**
*Evamay Wilkins*
Bootleg on a canal boat! Evamay Wilkins shares her family’s secret for transporting whiskey on the Champlain Canal in the 1920s. In 1993, Evamay—well remembered as a hairdresser in Waterford—was interviewed by historian Craig Williams for the New York State Museum. When she passed away in 2006 at the age of 85, her photo albums were donated to the Museum.

**Courtesy:** New York State Museum. Music by Evamay Wilkins

**A Canal Family**
*Catherine Charron*
As a young girl, Catherine Charron spent hours listening to her great-grandfather Lachapelle and grandfathers Lachapelle and Charron tell stories about their canal boat family on the Champlain Canal. In 2001, Traditional Arts in Upstate New York awarded Catherine the North Country Heritage Award for her storytelling.

**Credit:** Video and editing by Paul Wagner. Produced in collaboration with City Lore and the Erie Canal Museum. Music by George Ward.

**Learning From Old Timers**
*David Gower*
After twenty-odd years on the Erie Canal, Engineer Dave Gower has a few words of advice and more than a few stories to tell. Born in Auburn, New York in 1955, Dave Gower came to work for the Tug Seneca on May 14, 1981.

**Credit:** Video by Christina Voros, editing by Paul Wagner and Lee Eaton. Produced in collaboration with City Lore and the Erie Canal Museum. Music by George Ward.
A City of Neighborhoods
Robert Coles
Lifelong Buffalo resident and architect Robert Coles recalls how ethnic tensions influenced access to the canal and shaped a city. A graduate of MIT, Robert Traynham Coles is a retired architect who advocated for the inclusion of more African Americans in architecture.

Out of the Fog
Don Meixner
Take a nostalgic journey with Don Meixner, who has lived all his life in and around the Erie Canal. Born in 1950, he grew up in the town of Jack’s Reef and now lives in the nearby town of Jordan.
Credit: Video by Benh Zeitlin, editing by Paul Wagner. Produced in collaboration with City Lore and the Erie Canal Museum.

Looking Over His Shoulder
Robert Montross
Robert Montross’ grandfather was no stranger to trouble along the Old Erie Canal…or to starting that trouble! From North Bay, New York, Robert shared with us this tale of his grandfather during the era of mule-drawn canal boats. Folklorist and musician George Ward sings “Boatin’ on a Bullhead,” a traditional canal song, as Montross tells his story.

Driving Mules
Jesse Wimett
Childhood labor may be a thing of the past, but the daily chores of a nine year old mule driver are still remembered by Jesse Wimett.
Credit: Wimett was filmed for The Ditch that Helped Build America (c. 1970); Marvin Rapp, narrator and historical consultant. Produced and written by Richard H. Thomas.

Dipper Dredge No. 3
Steve Wunder
Tugboat Captain Steve Wunder shares his passion for working on the canal through stories and poetry. Steve was born in Lyons, New York in 1957. His answering machine says simply, “Wunder here.”
For more information

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor
P.O. Box 219
Waterford, NY 12188
518-237-7000
www.eriecanalway.org
e-mail: eriecanal@nps.gov
Project Manager: Andy Kitzmann

City Lore
72 E. First Street
New York, NY 10003
212-529-1955
www.citylore.org
e-mail: citylore@citylore.org
Executive Director: Steve Zeitlin

Erie Canal Museum
318 Erie Boulevard East
Syracuse, NY 13202
www.eriecanalmuseum.org
contactus@eriecanalmuseum.org
Curator: Dan Ward

New York State Museum
Rm 3023
Cultural Education Center
Albany, New York 12230
www.nysm.nysed.gov
e-mail: cwillia4@mail.nysed.gov
Historian: Craig Williams