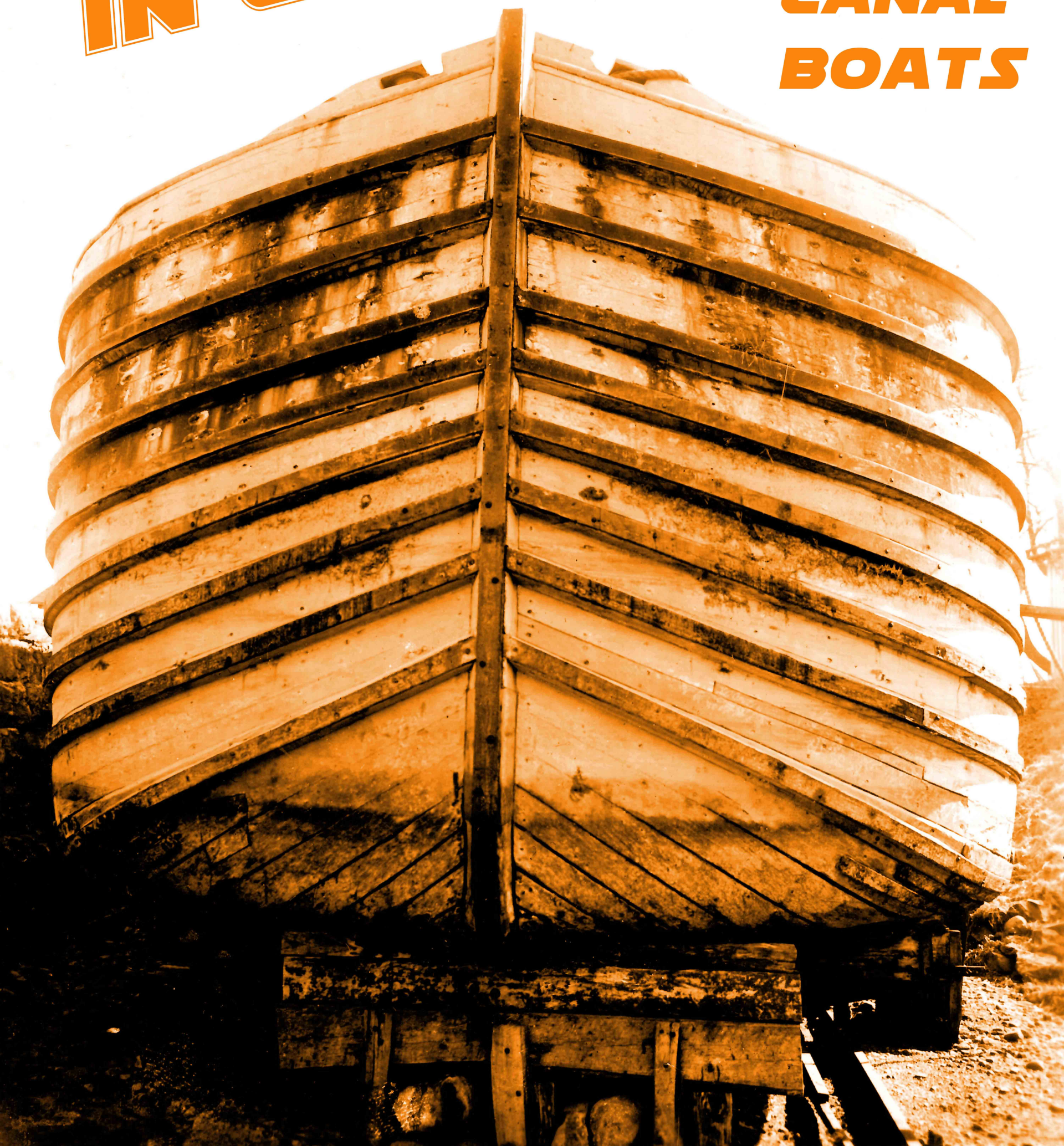


BARGE & IN CHARGE!

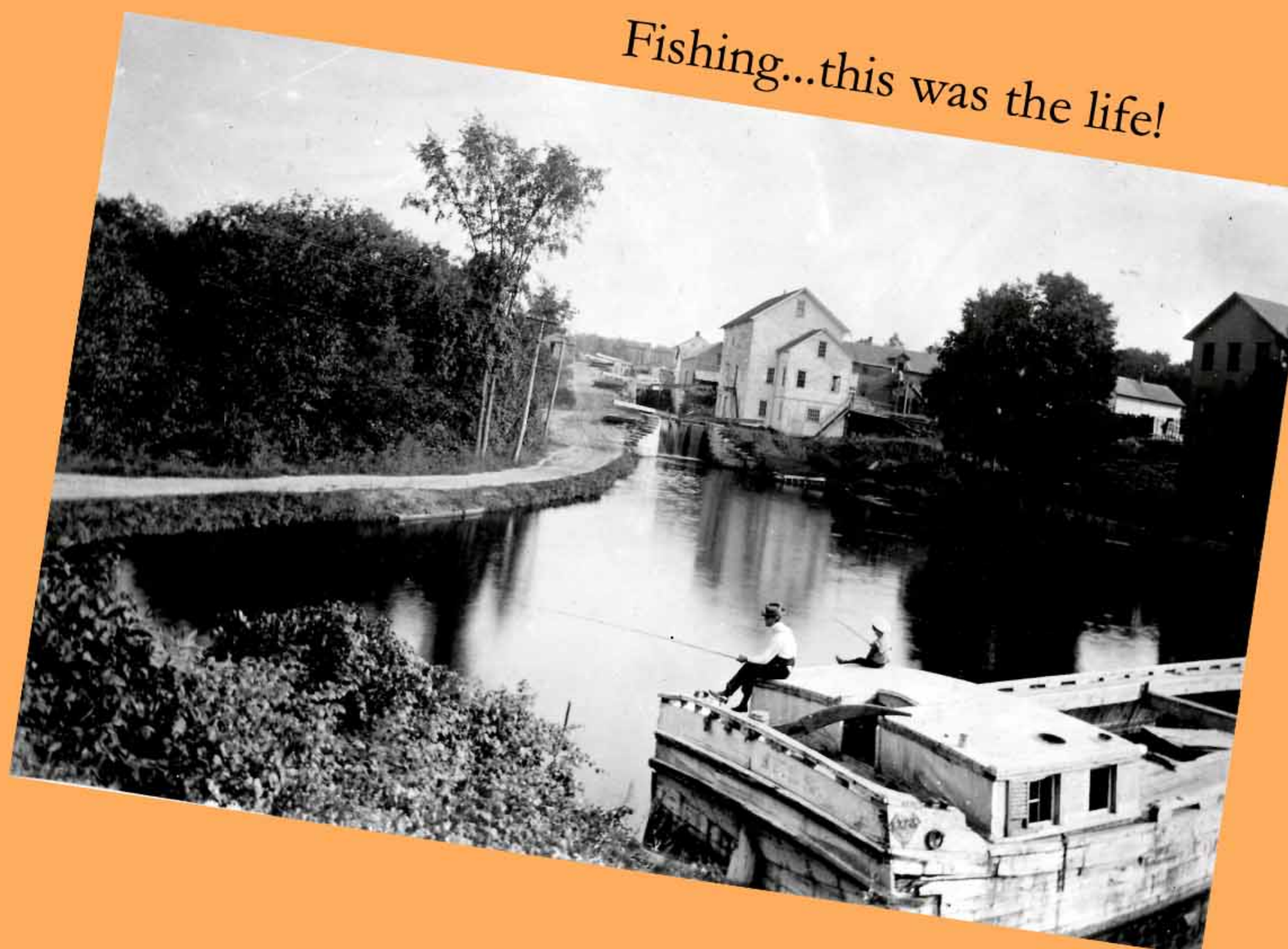
**ERIE
CANAL
BOATS**



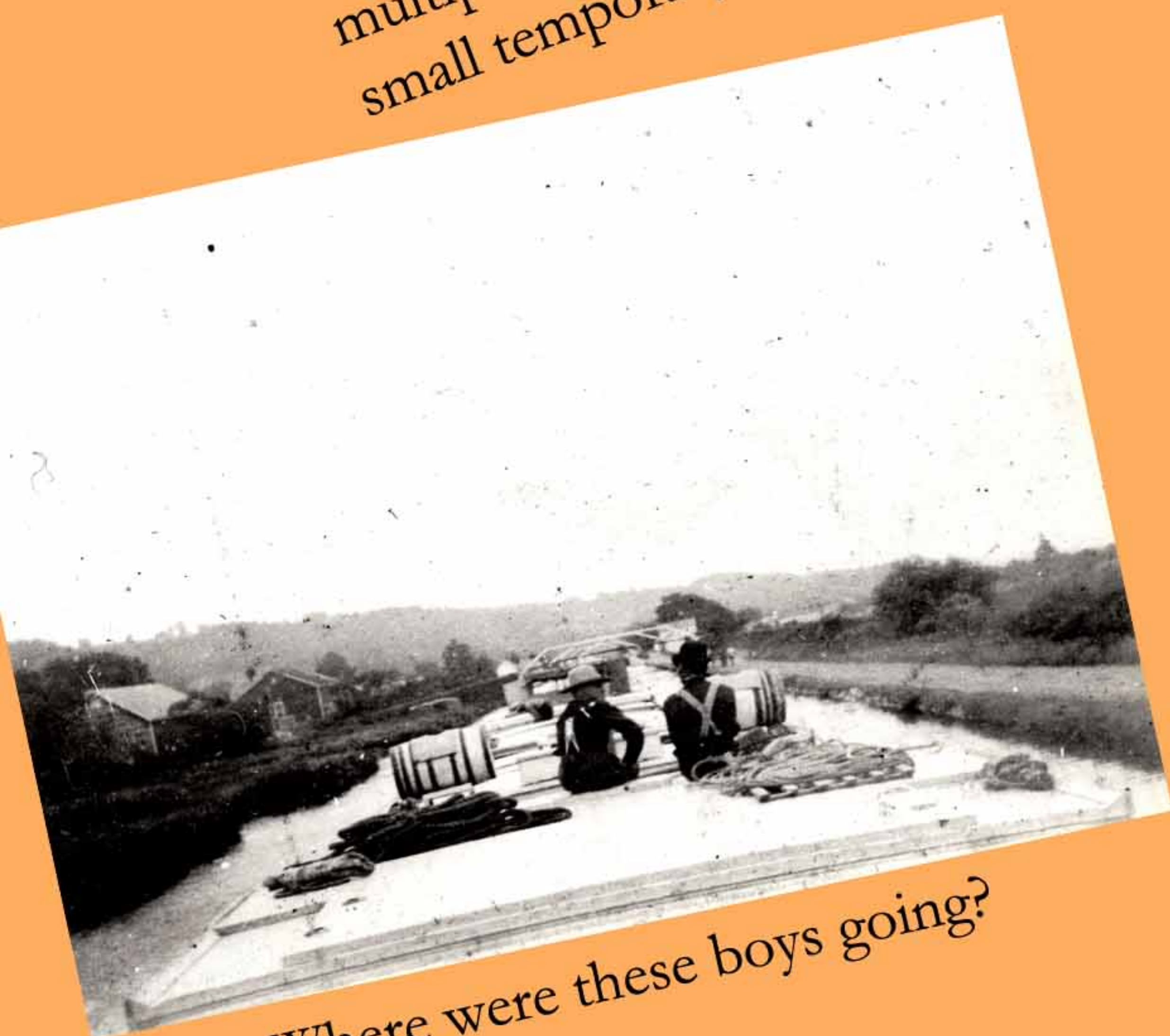
LIFE ON BOARD CANAL BOATS



Laundry day on the Erie Canal! Sometimes multiple boats would tie up together, creating a small temporary community.



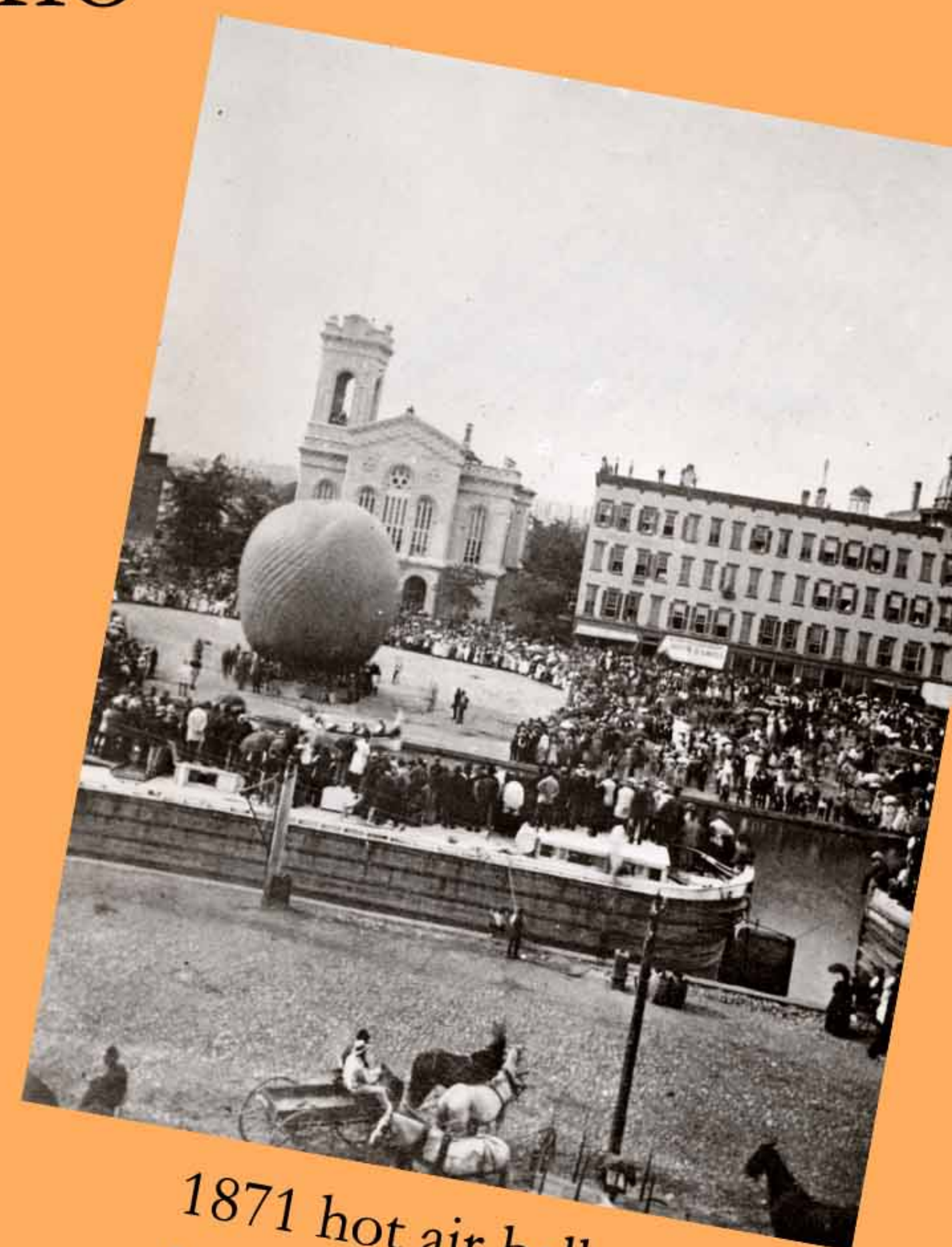
Fishing...this was the life!



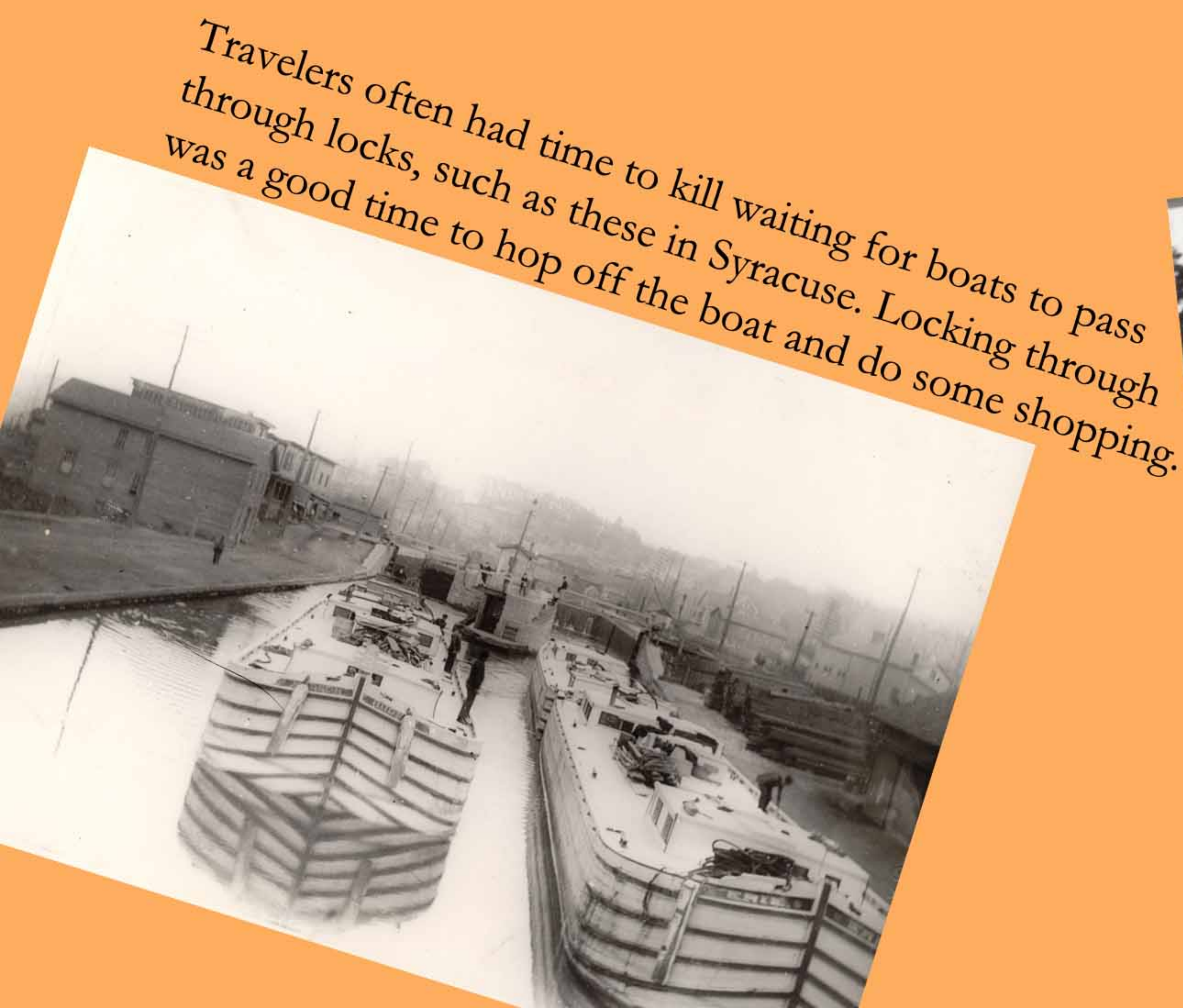
Where were these boys going?

Many people who worked on the Canal actually lived on board their boats!

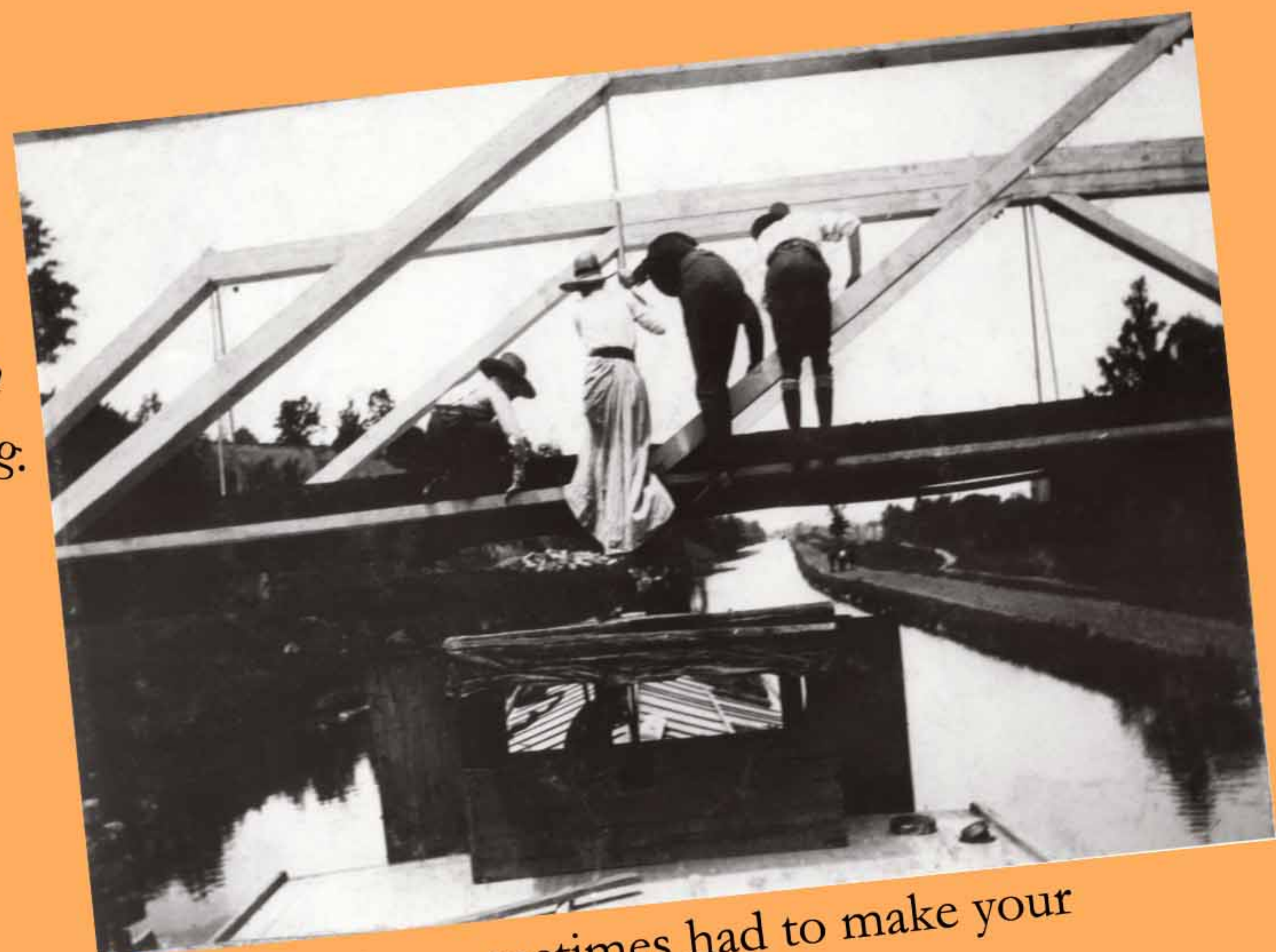
Some canal boats were owned by families, who would also live on their boat during the canal season (usually May to November). Many children grew up on their family's boat. Even occasional travelers on the Canal had to make their (temporary) home on a boat; the trip across New York State on the Canal took 6-11 days. Conditions varied on board, from cramped to luxurious, but the sights along the Canal were often interesting.



1871 hot air balloon launch in Clinton Square, Syracuse. Those on boats had the best view!



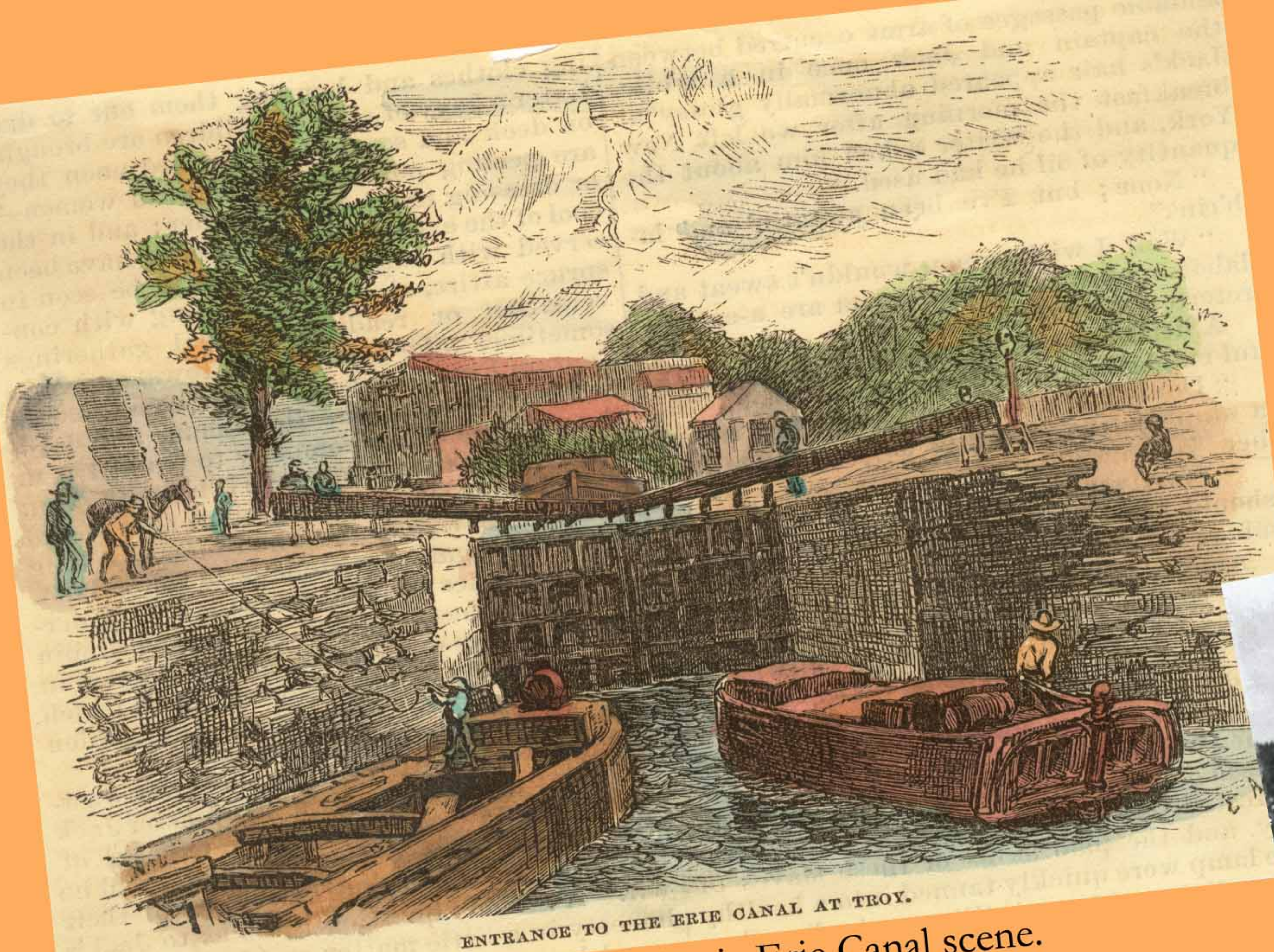
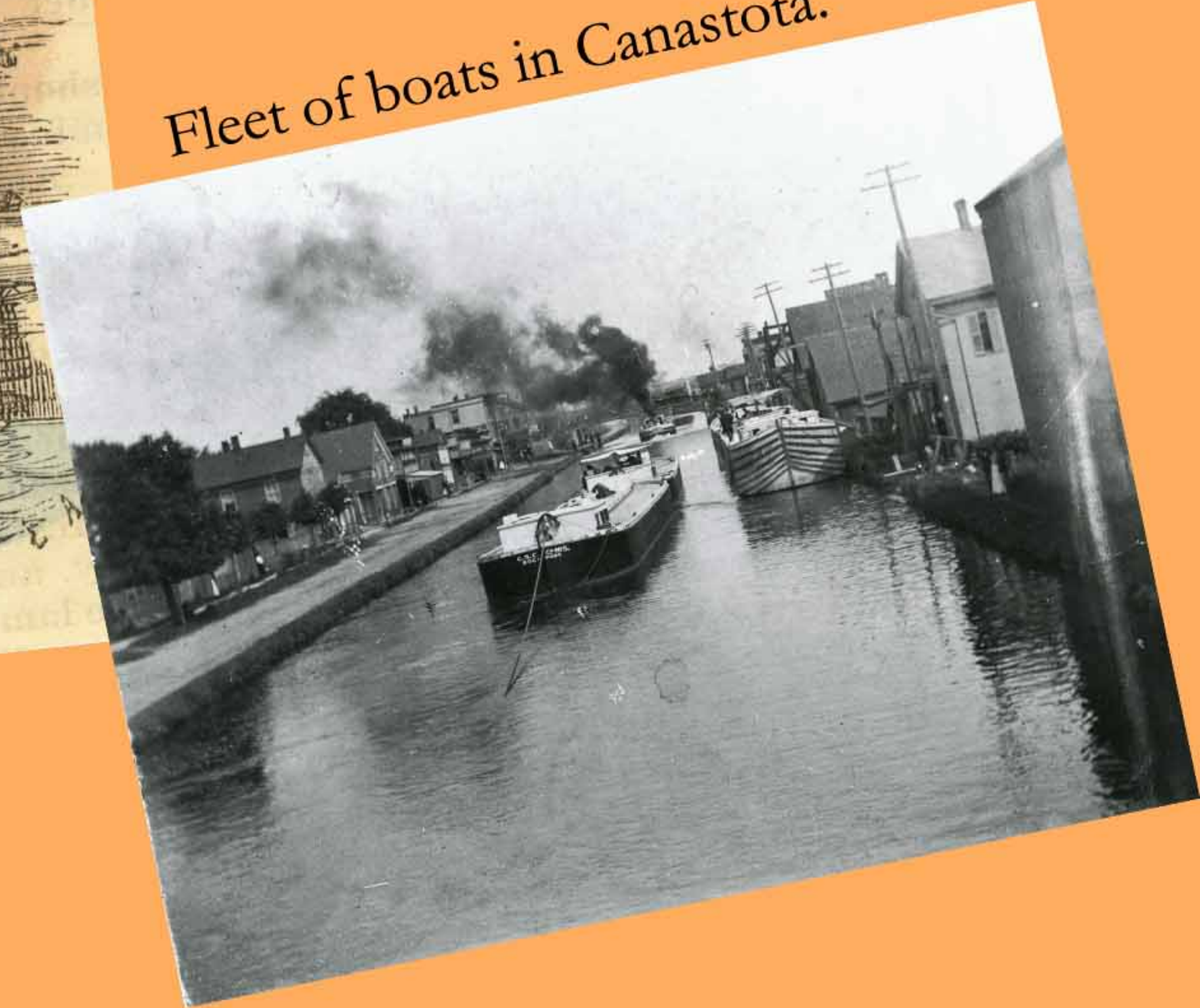
Travelers often had time to kill waiting for boats to pass through locks, such as these in Syracuse. Locking through was a good time to hop off the boat and do some shopping.



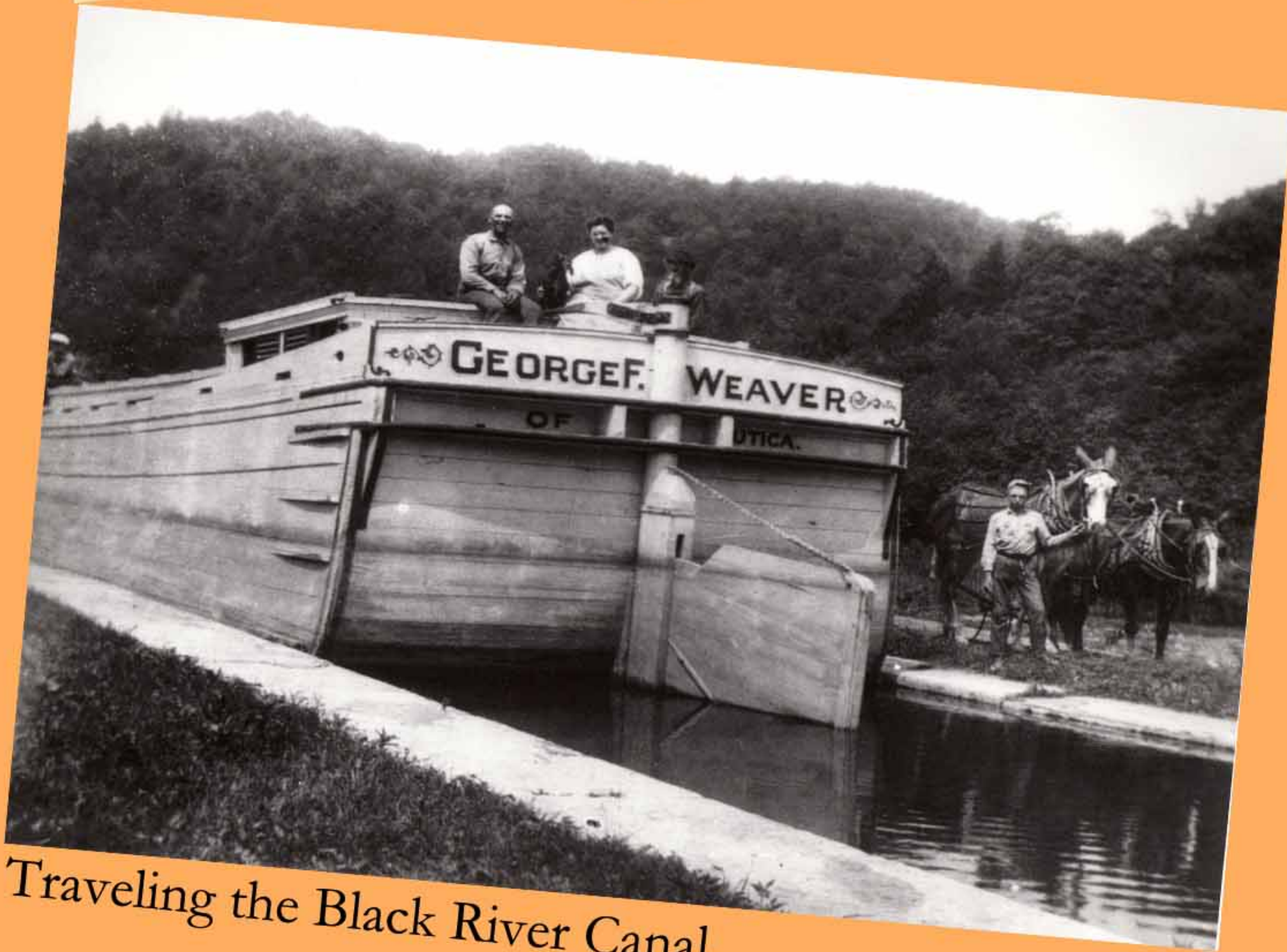
You sometimes had to make your own fun on a canal boat.

LINE BOATS

Fleet of boats in Canastota.



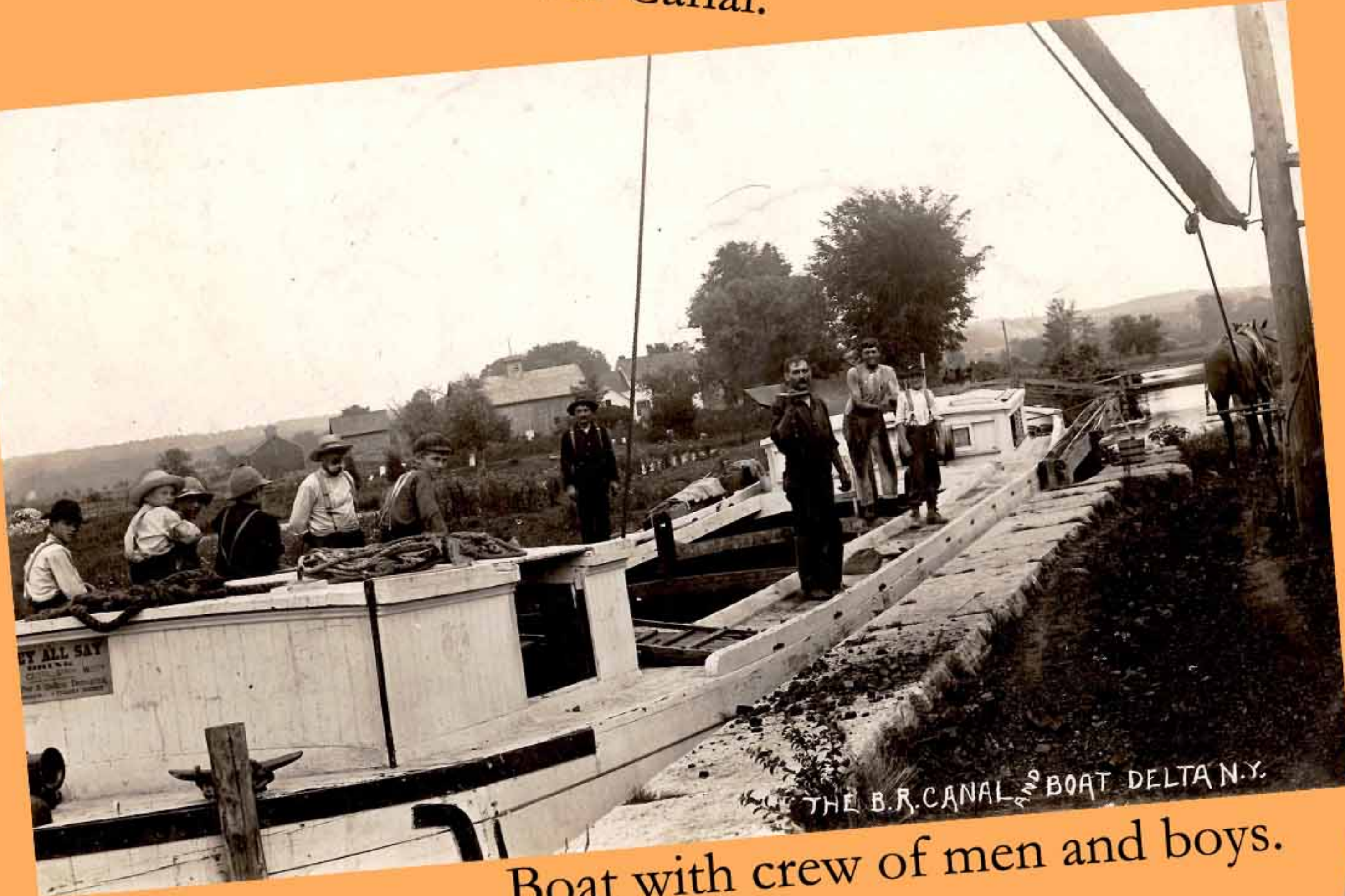
ENTRANCE TO THE ERIE CANAL AT TROY.
Print of a classic Erie Canal scene.



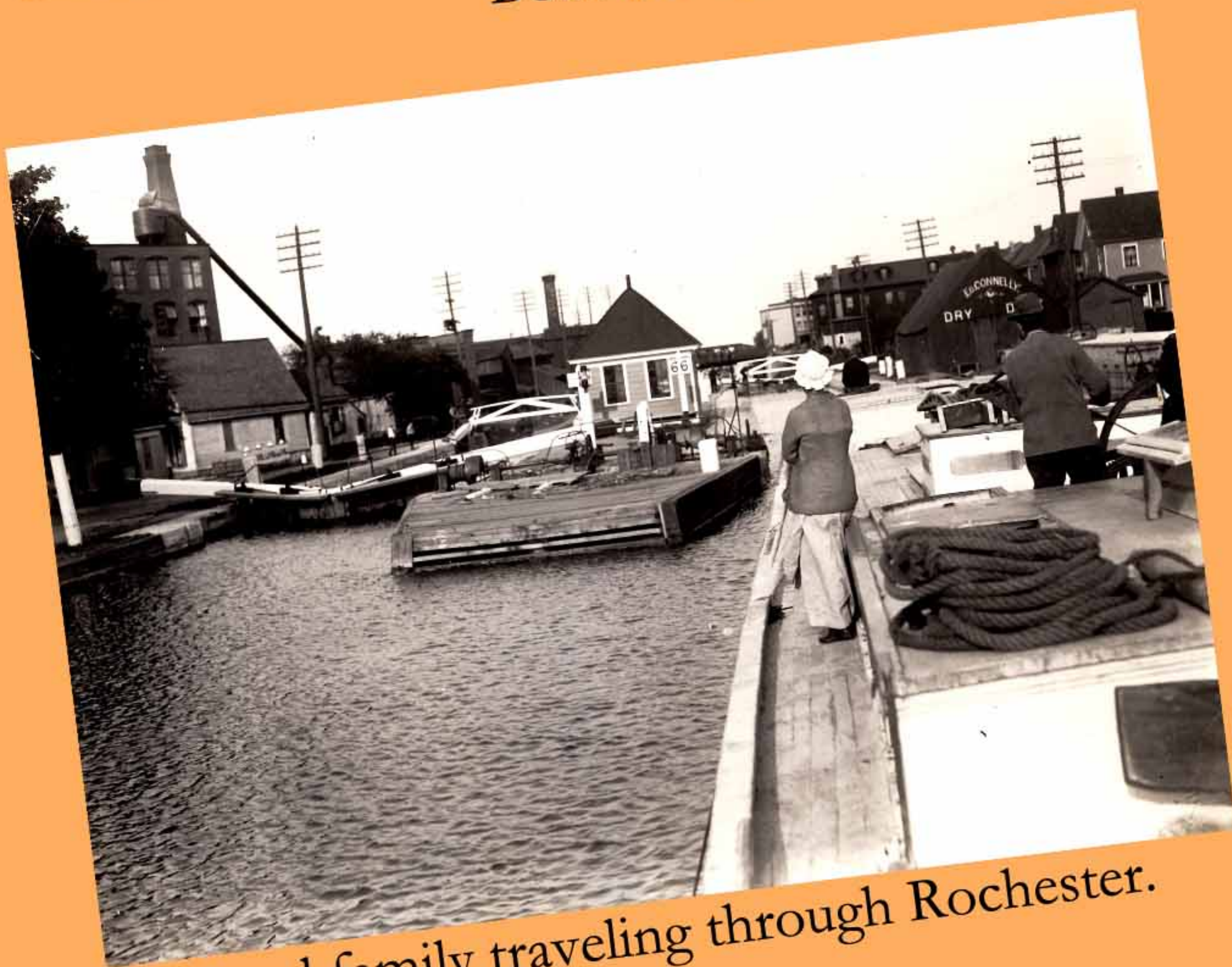
Traveling the Black River Canal.

Line boats were used to carry people, animals, and cargo. These were most often the boats that brought European immigrants from New York Harbor to the interior of the country, to start their new lives. Line boats were the bargain way to travel across New York State, and were not luxurious or comfortable, but functional.

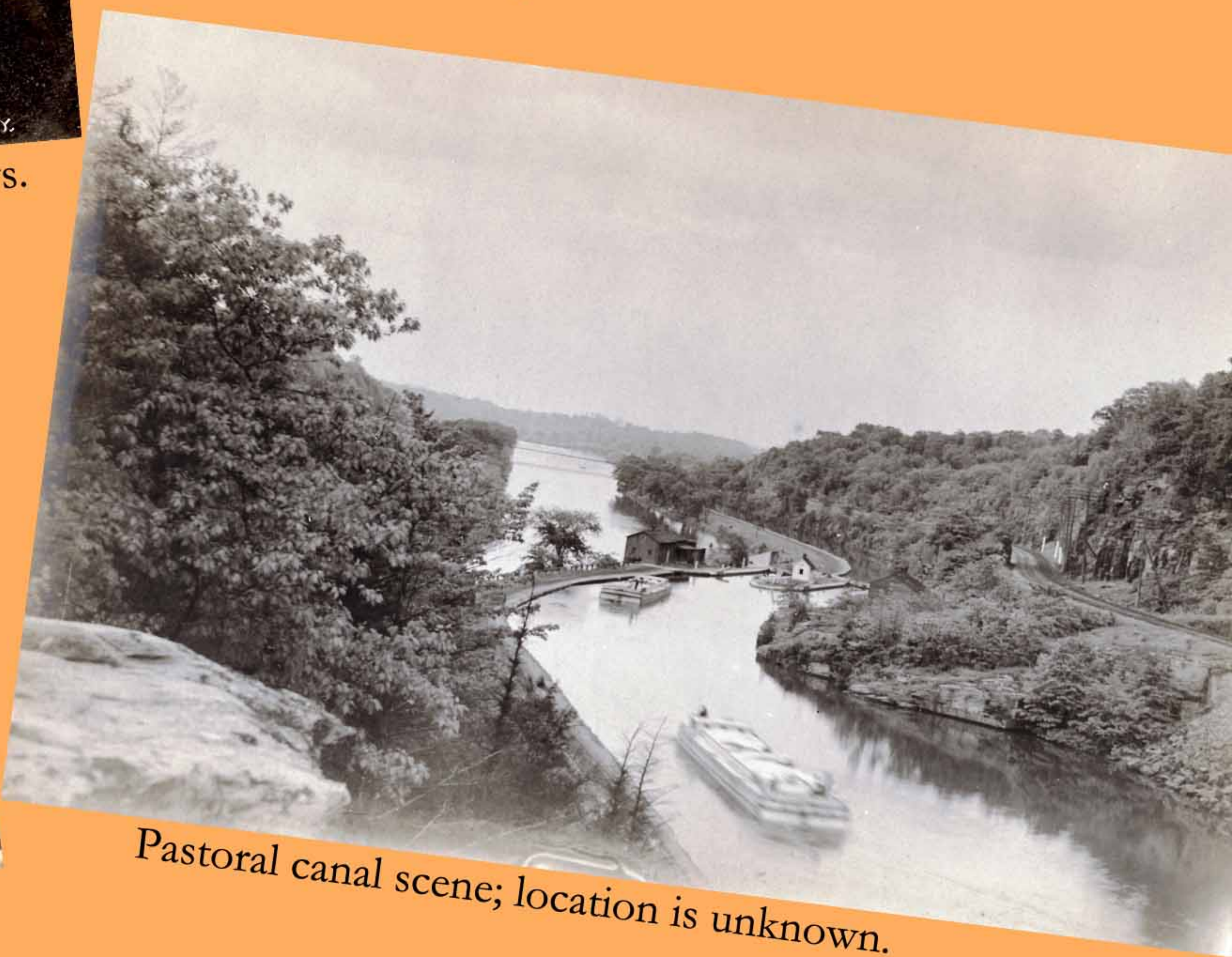
Line boats could be owned by shipping lines or by individual families, the members of which would then work on board the boat. Dad would captain the boat, with Mom serving as cook, and the children assisting with onboard duties and driving the mules that pulled the boat.



Boat with crew of men and boys.



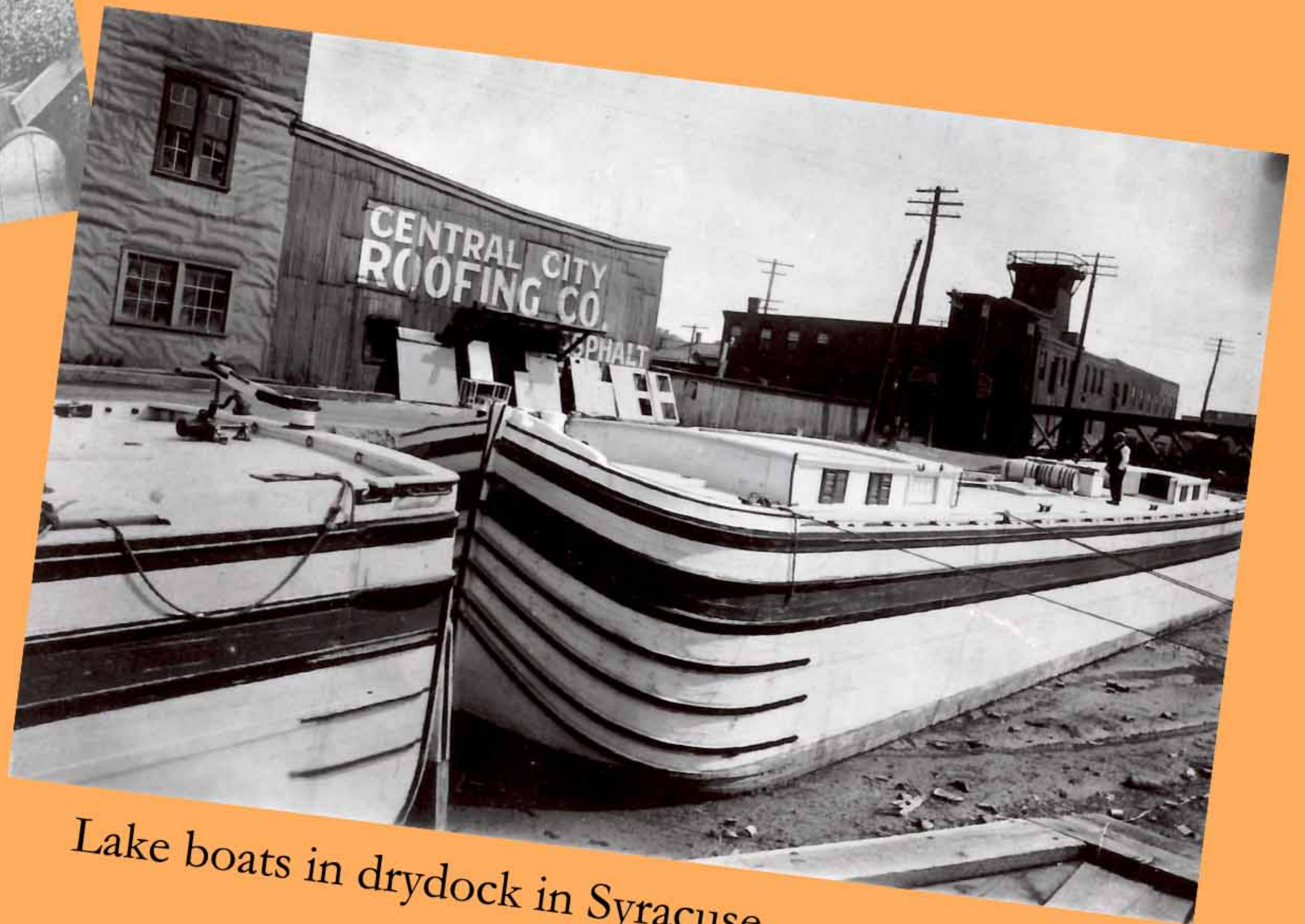
Canal family traveling through Rochester.



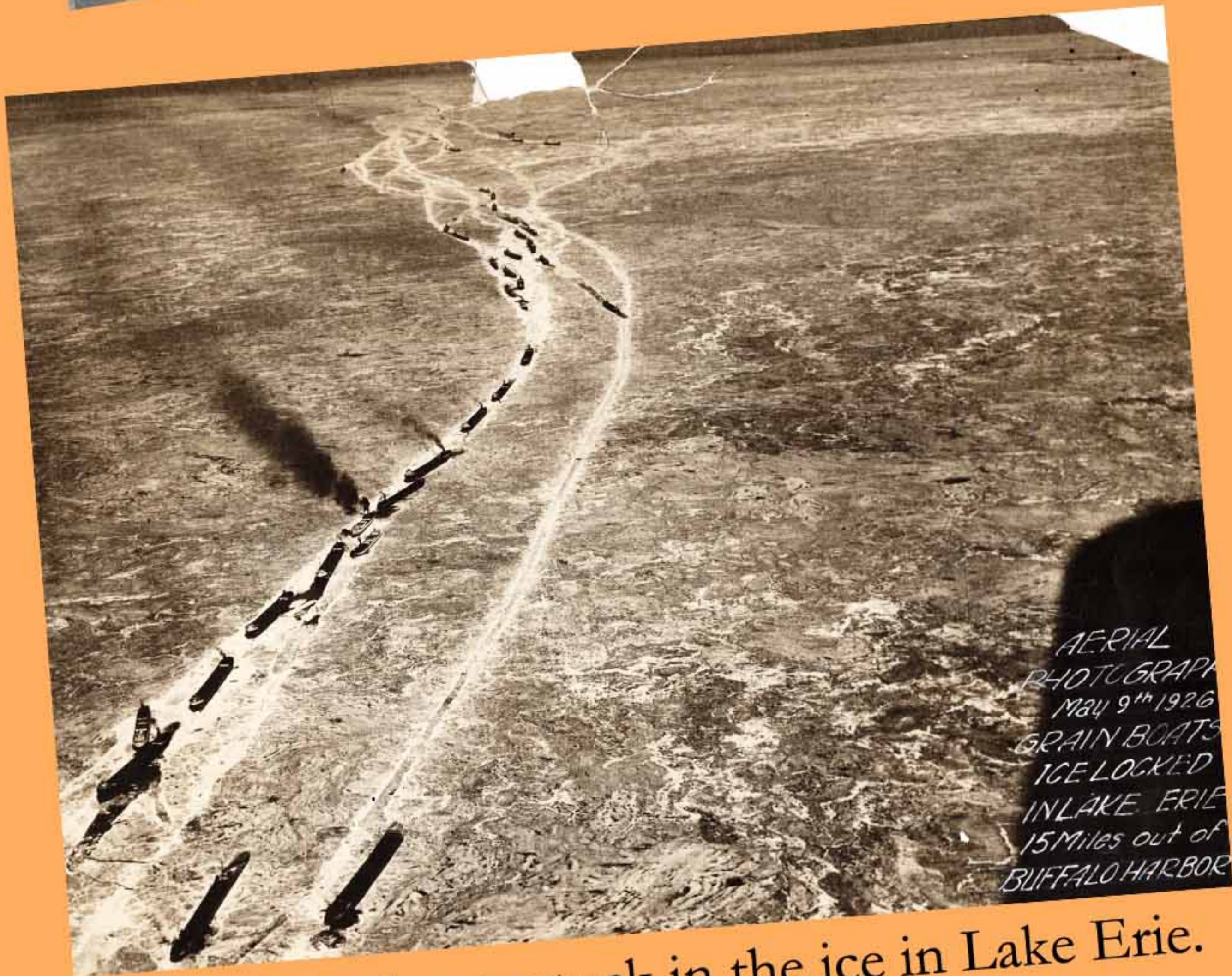
Pastoral canal scene; location is unknown.

LAKE BOATS

The canal boat
Dr. Chapin on
the Erie Canal.

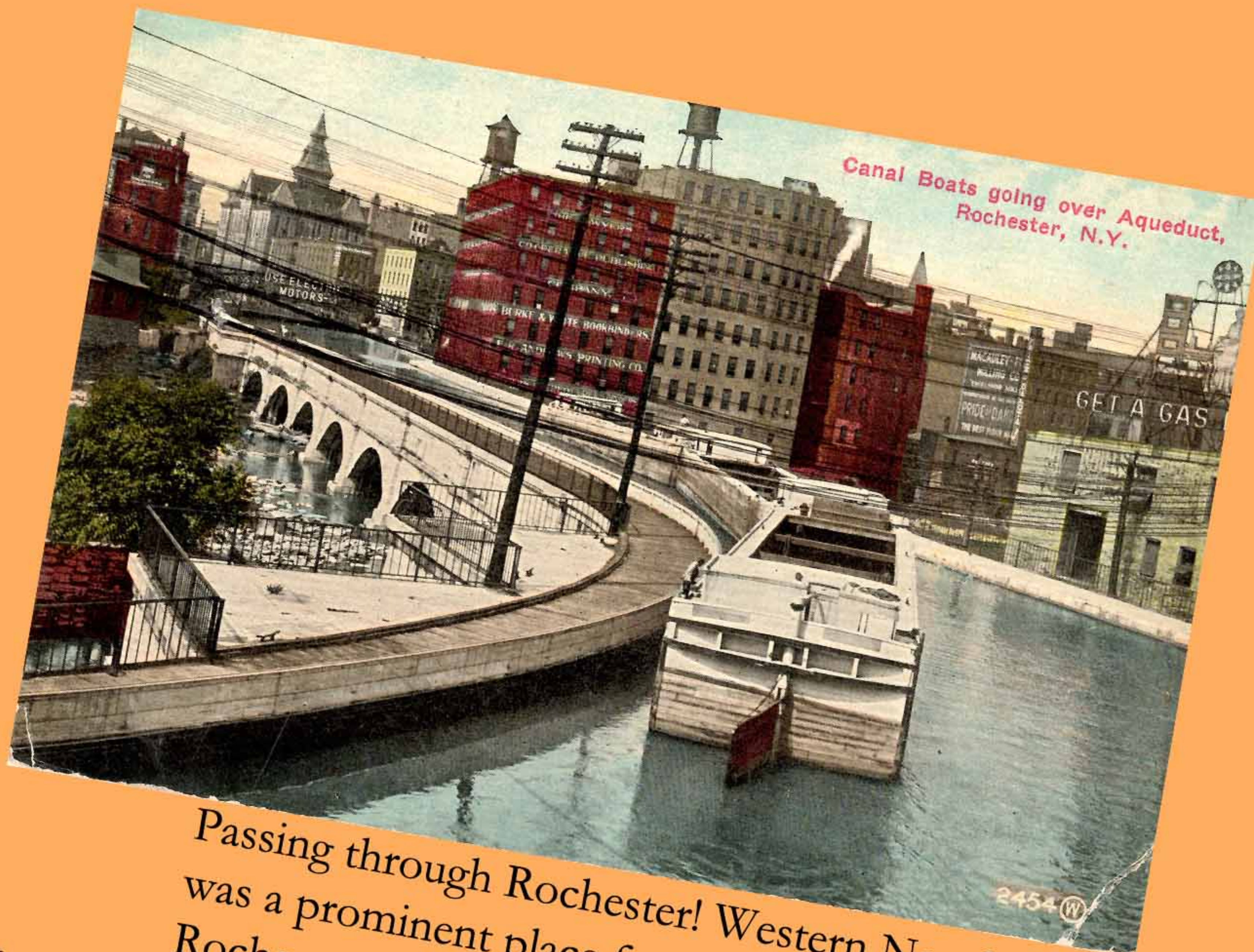


Lake boats in drydock in Syracuse.



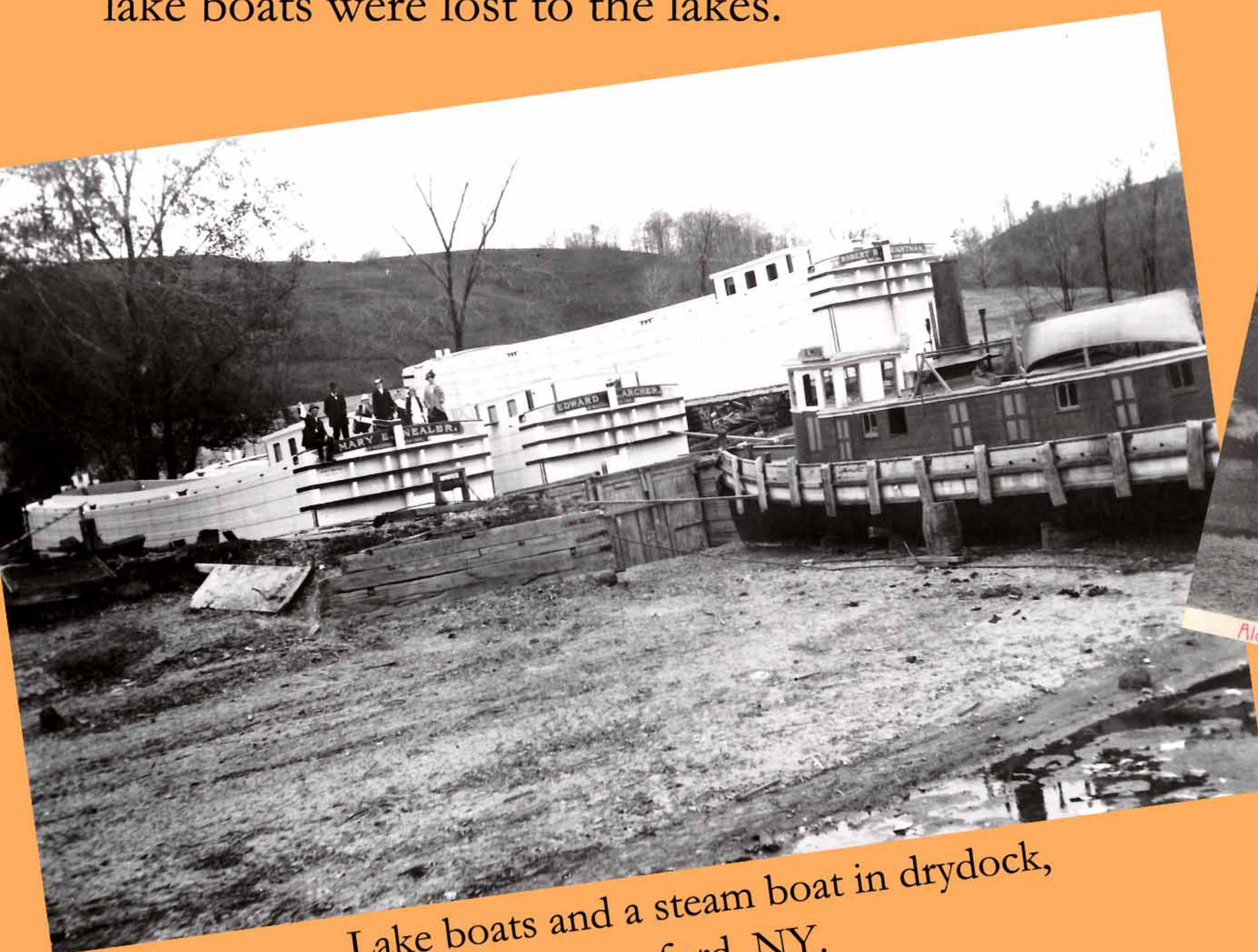
Lake boats stuck in the ice in Lake Erie.

Lake boats were used to carry non-perishable cargo on the Great Lakes. These boats had rounded bows and were double-hulled, in order to help them withstand the pounding of lake waves. For lake travel, they would be towed in a raft behind a steam boat, and if the wind kicked up, could be cut loose to save the steam boat. Under these conditions, many lake boats were lost to the lakes.

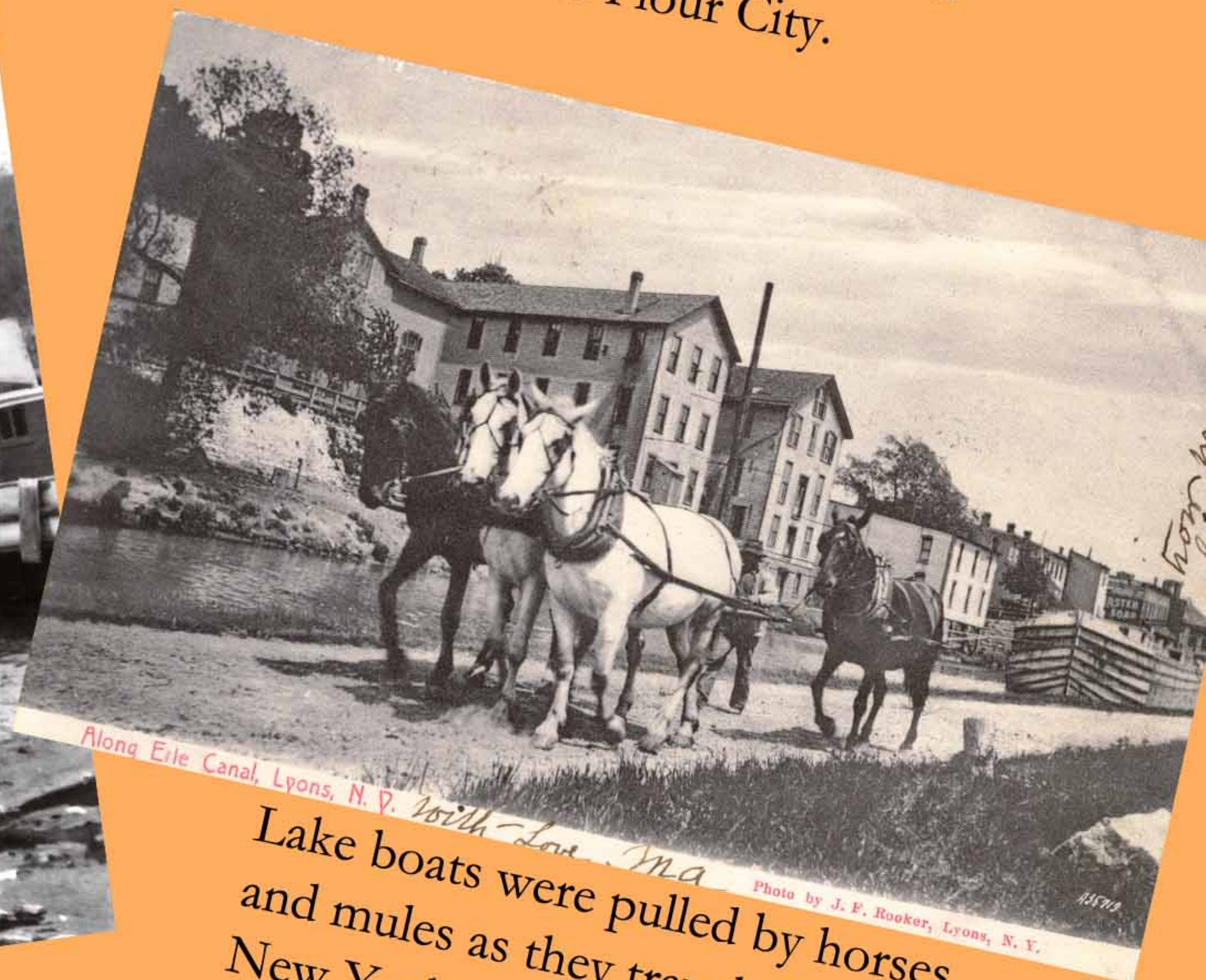


Canal Boats going over Aqueduct,
Rochester, N.Y.

Passing through Rochester! Western New York
was a prominent place for the grain trade, and
Rochester was known as The Flour City.



Lake boats and a steam boat in drydock,
possibly in Waterford, NY.

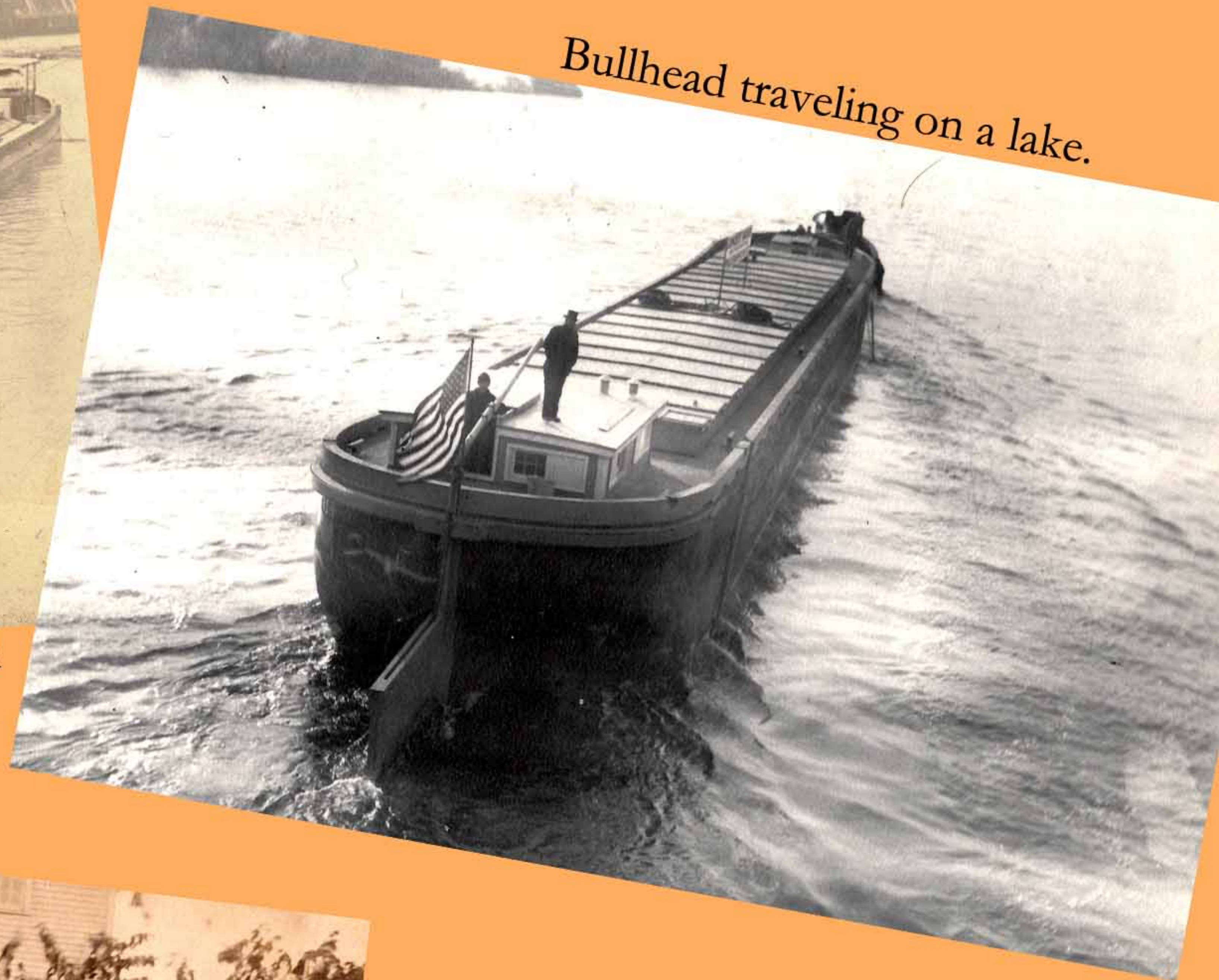


Along Erie Canal, Lyons, N. Y. with *Lat. Ma*
Lake boats were pulled by horses
and mules as they traveled across
New York on canals.

BULLHEADS



Transferring cargo from canal boat to ship on Lake Erie.

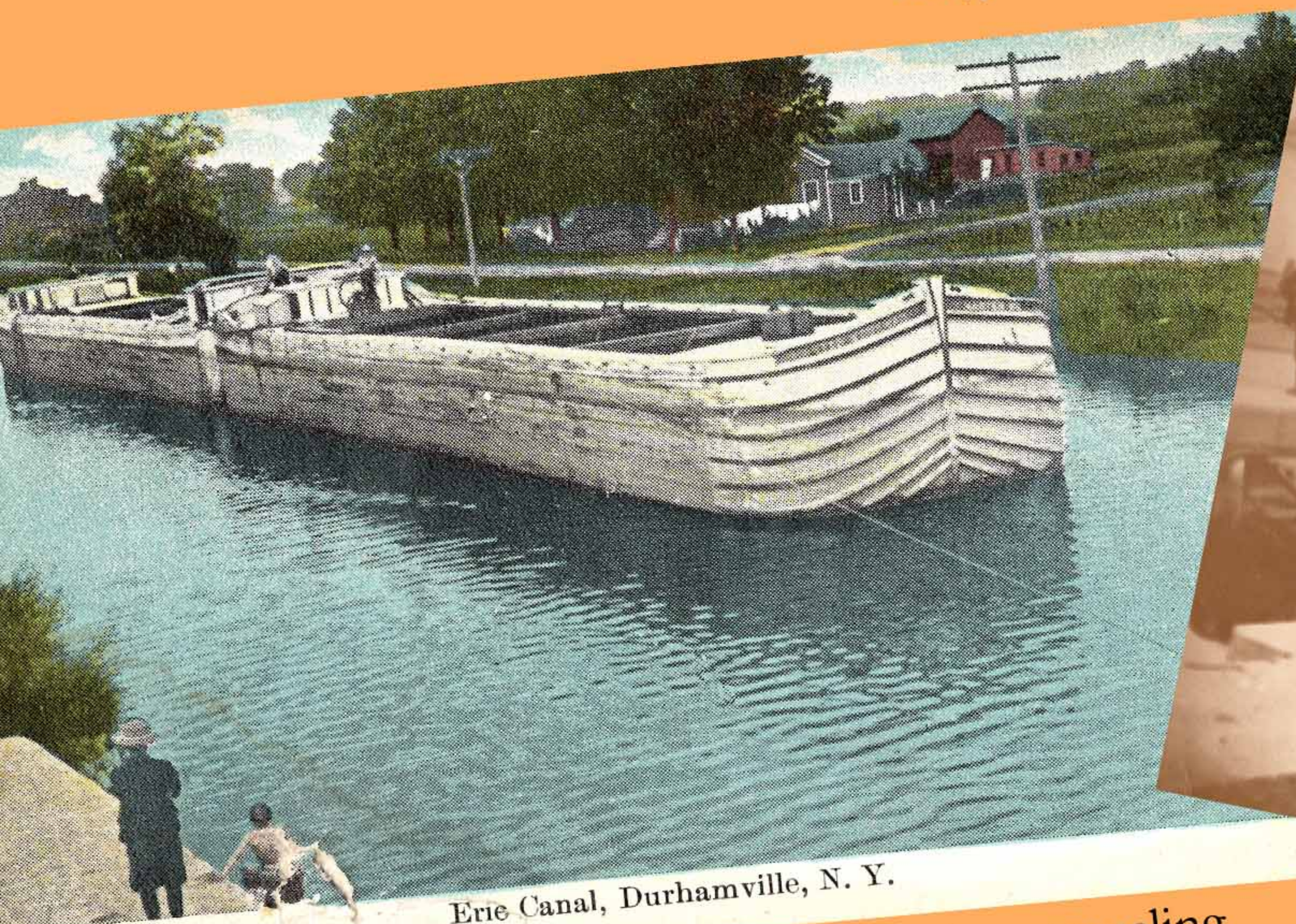


Bullhead traveling on a lake.



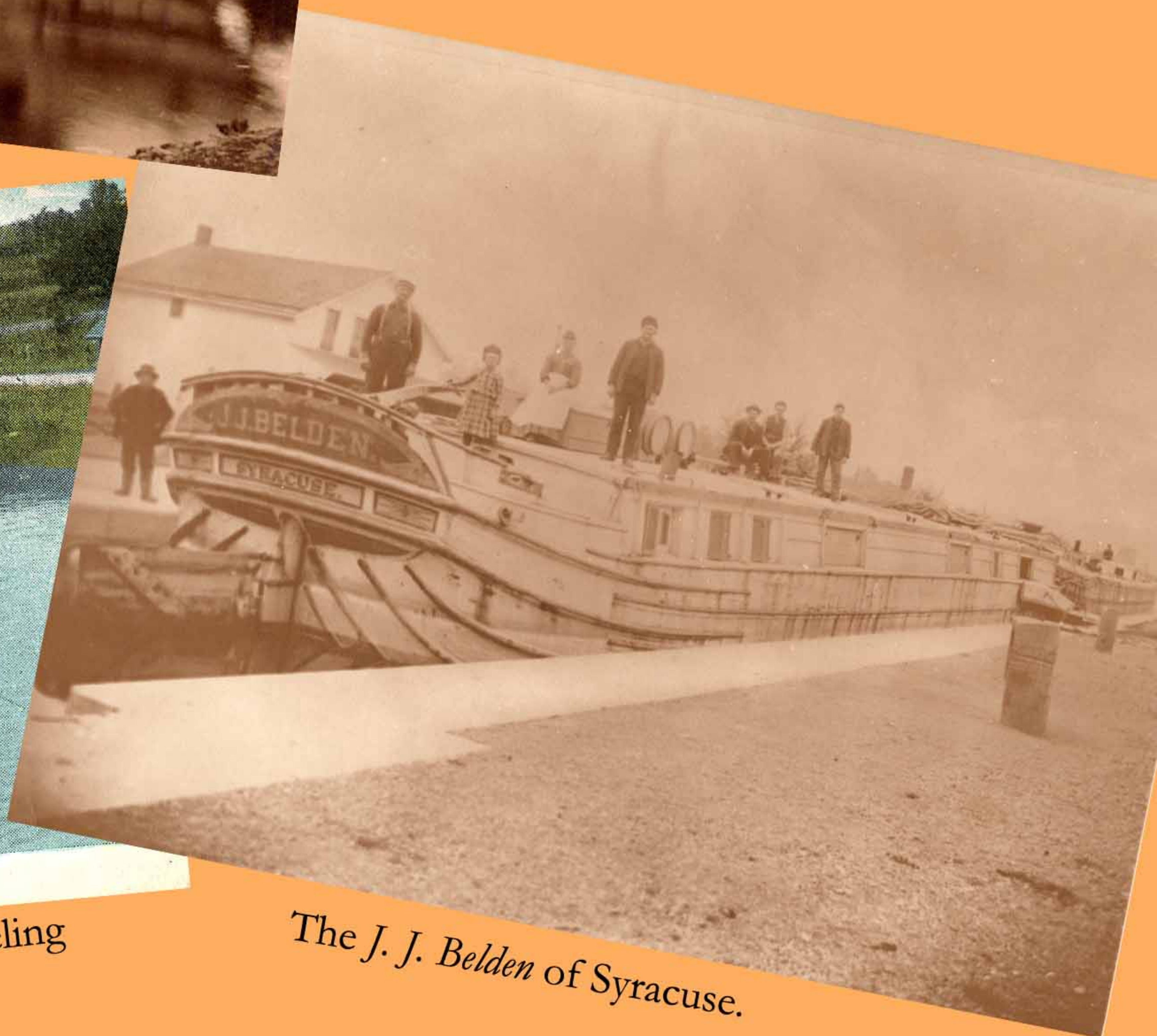
Empire State Mills boat, complete with crew.

Bullhead boats were designed to carry perishable cargo from canals to larger bodies of water, such as the Great Lakes. They had watertight cabin covers that ran the full length of the boat, thereby ensuring that the cargo on board would remain dry during transport. Bullheads were one of the most expensive boats to build.



Erie Canal, Durhamville, N. Y.

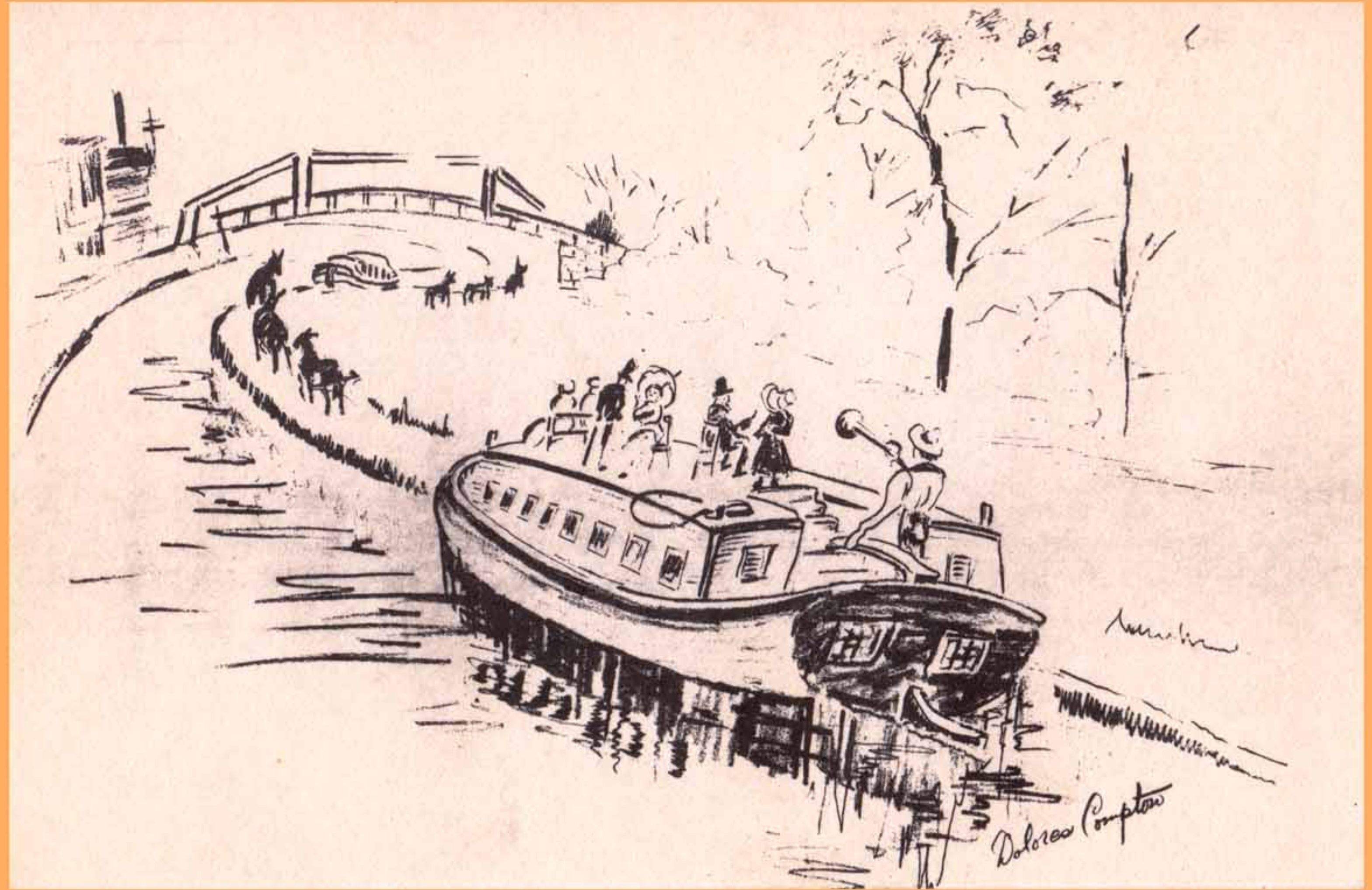
Postcard showing a bullhead boat traveling on the Canal at Durhamville.



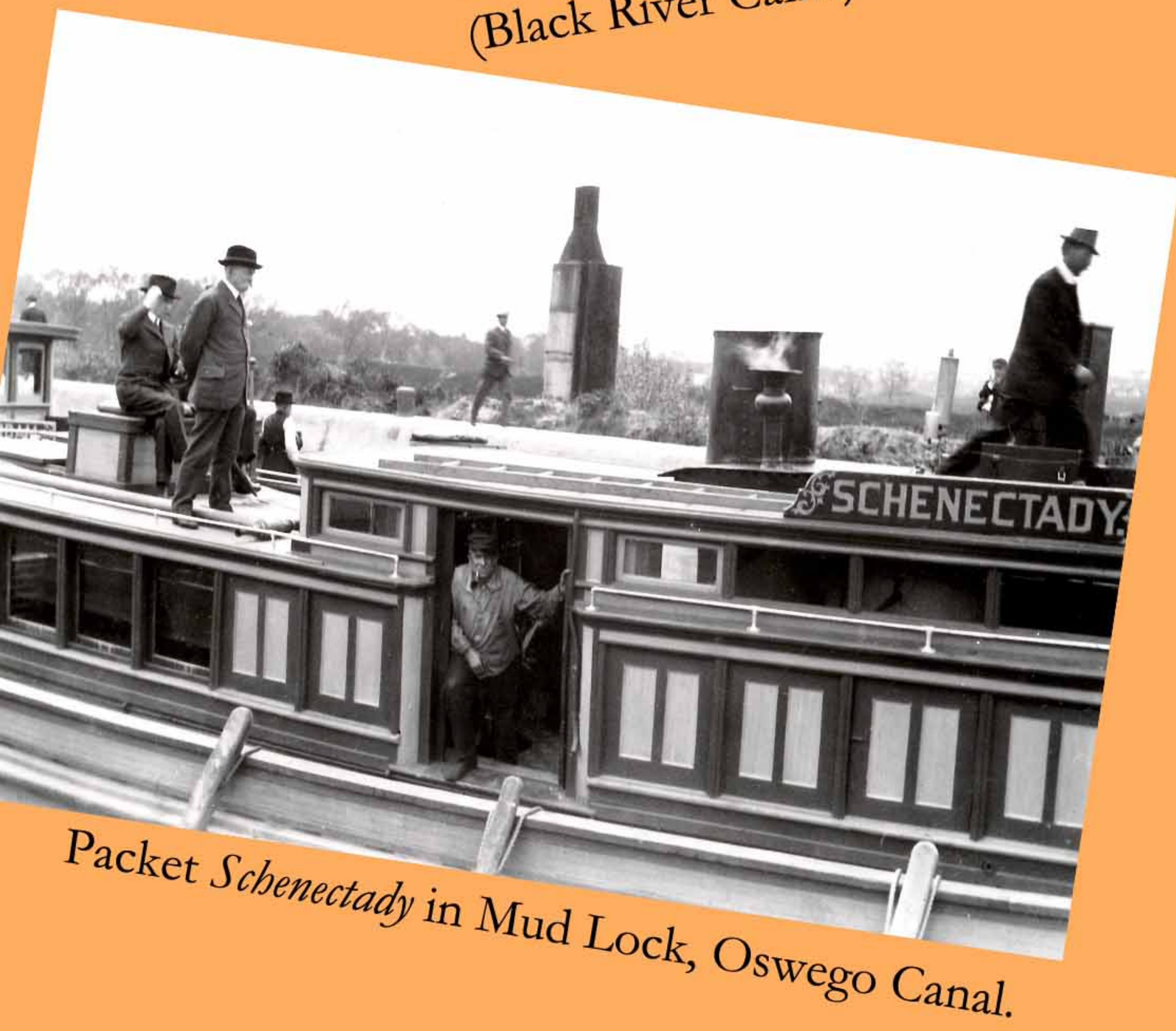
The J. J. Belden of Syracuse.

PACKETS & PLEASURE BOATS

The only way to travel!



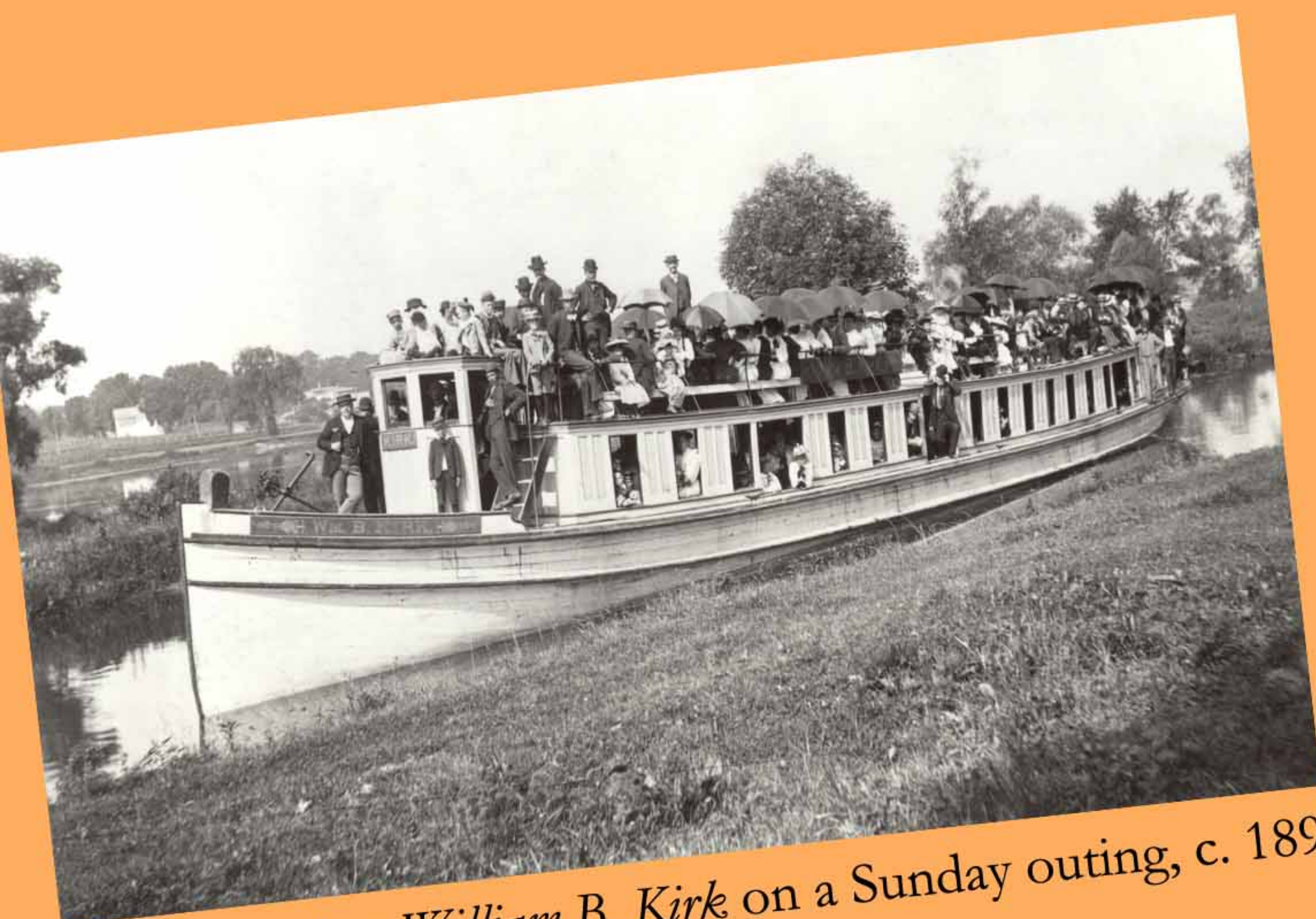
Locking through at Delta Dam
(Black River Canal).



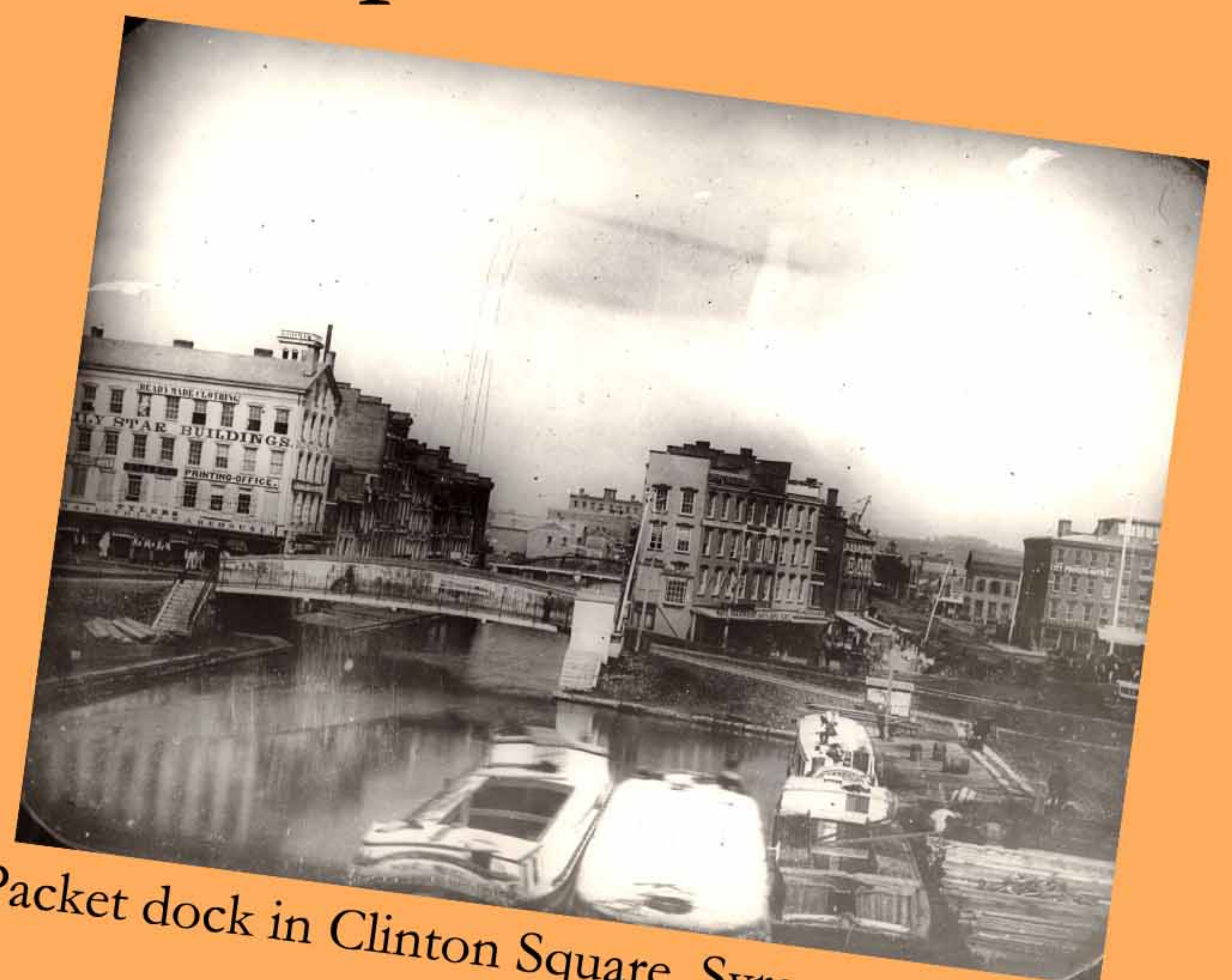
Packet *Schenectady* in Mud Lock, Oswego Canal.

During the 19th century, many people traveled across the state on packet boats and other leisure vessels. Packets were narrow boats, usually with many windows. They were often beautifully appointed, and were the luxury way to travel the canals. They were not just for longer distance travel; there were local and short term pleasure cruises operating out of many Canal cities, including Syracuse! By the second half of the 19th century, packets were all but extinct on the canals, having been replaced by the railroads.

New York's canals were not only used for business and immigration, but for pleasure too!



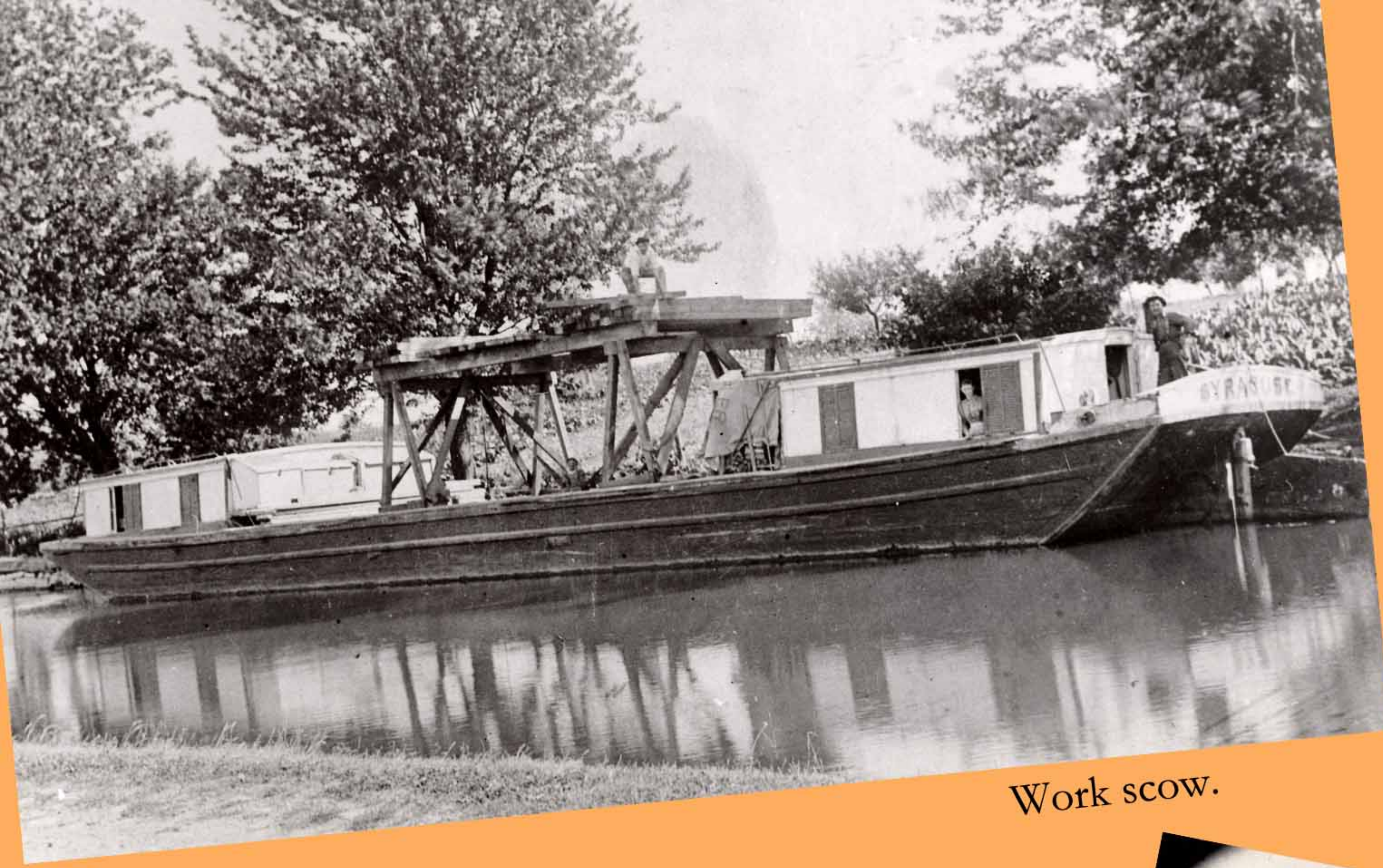
Steam packet *William B. Kirk* on a Sunday outing, c. 1890.



Packet dock in Clinton Square, Syracuse, early 1850s.

SCOWS

When there was a canal leak, every minute counted!



Work scow.

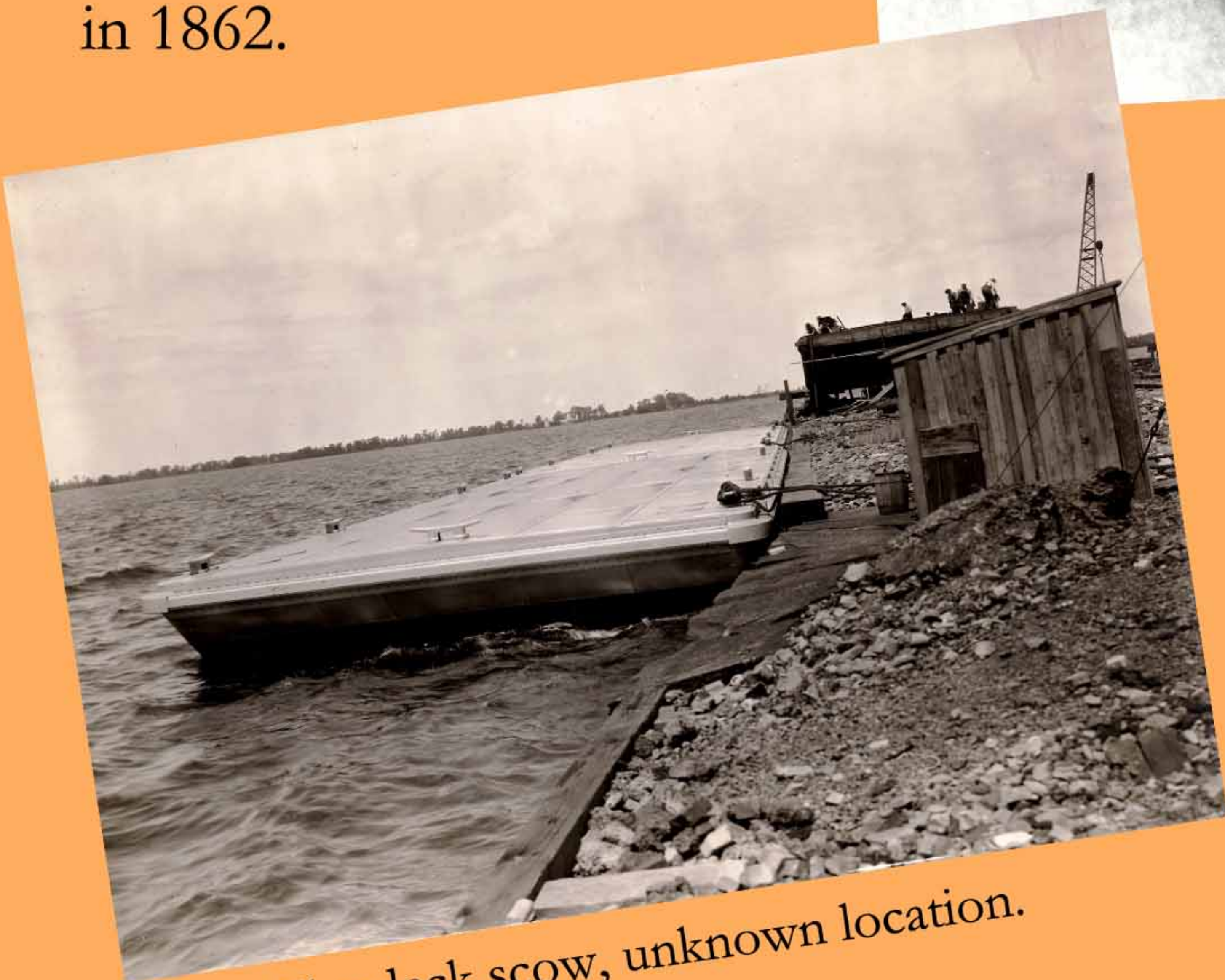
Scows were flat bottomed boats used for hauling lumber and other bulk cargo. A special type of scow, used for making Canal repairs, was owned by the State of New York. They were a fixture on the Canal and would haul work crews and materials necessary to make repairs to Canal sections. These boats were also known as “hurry up boats” because when there was a leak in the canal’s wall, every minute counted!

As a result, these boats were permitted to travel up to 11 miles per hour, faster than the legal speed of 4 miles per hour for other boats. Repair scows became the only boats allowed to have square bows after the law mandated round bows in 1862.

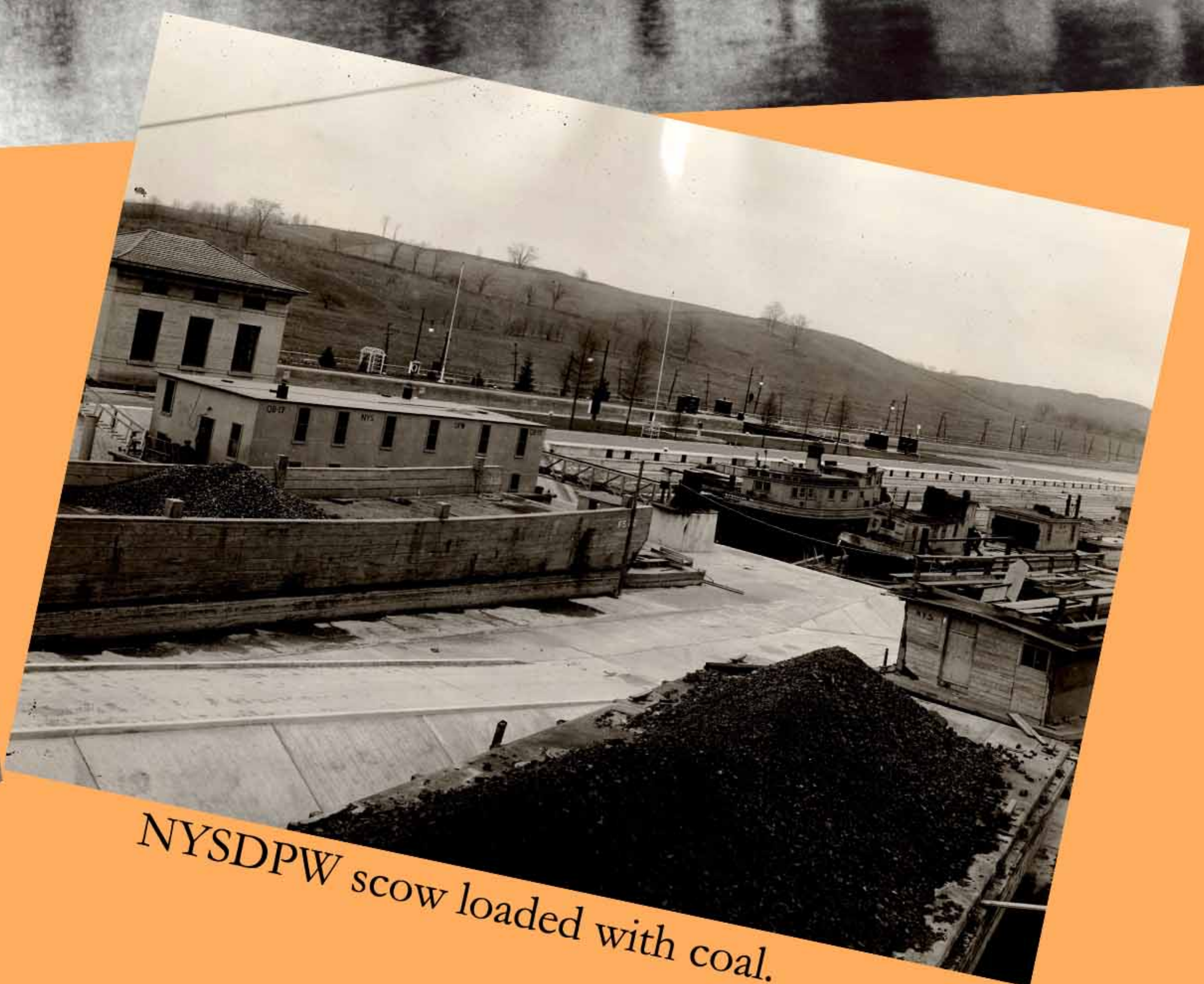


NY State Scow at Illion.

Scow near Weedsport.



Flat deck scow, unknown location.



NYSDPW scow loaded with coal.

TUGBOATS



Tug suspended in Lock #3, Oswego Canal.

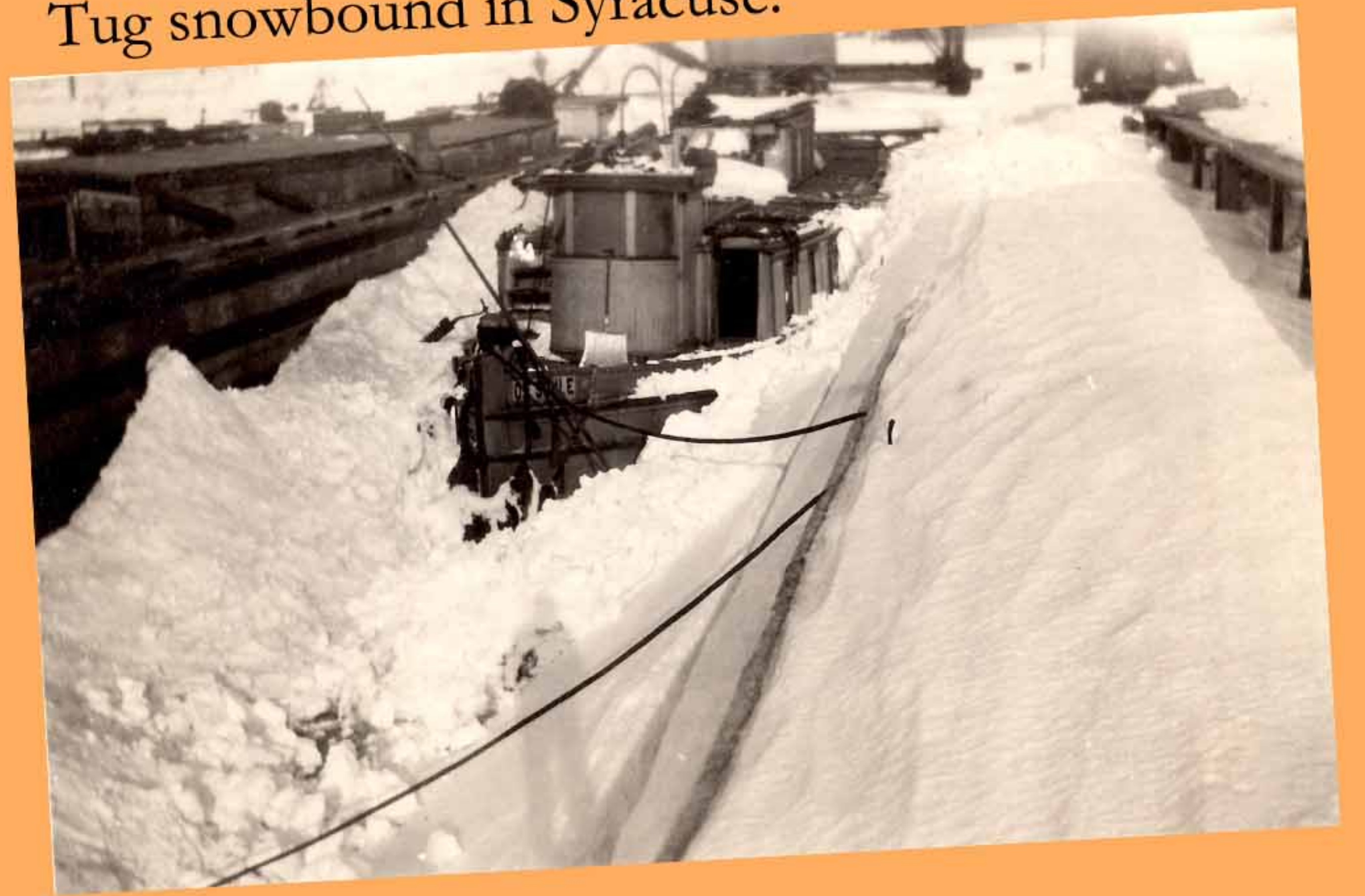
Tugboats are another way to move canal boats, and they excel at moving larger boats through tight areas and towing vessels from port to port. Tugs were invented in the 1810s, after steam was first applied to maritime vessels. They came into more frequent use on New York's canals after the opening of the current New York State Canal System (constructed 1905-1918; in use 1918 to present), which is larger than the towpath canals.

The New York State Canal System uses natural waterways across much of the state, and the manmade sections (in Western NY) are constructed to a minimum depth of 12 feet and a minimum width of 120 feet, allowing tugboats to pull cargo vessels carrying up to 1,000 tons!

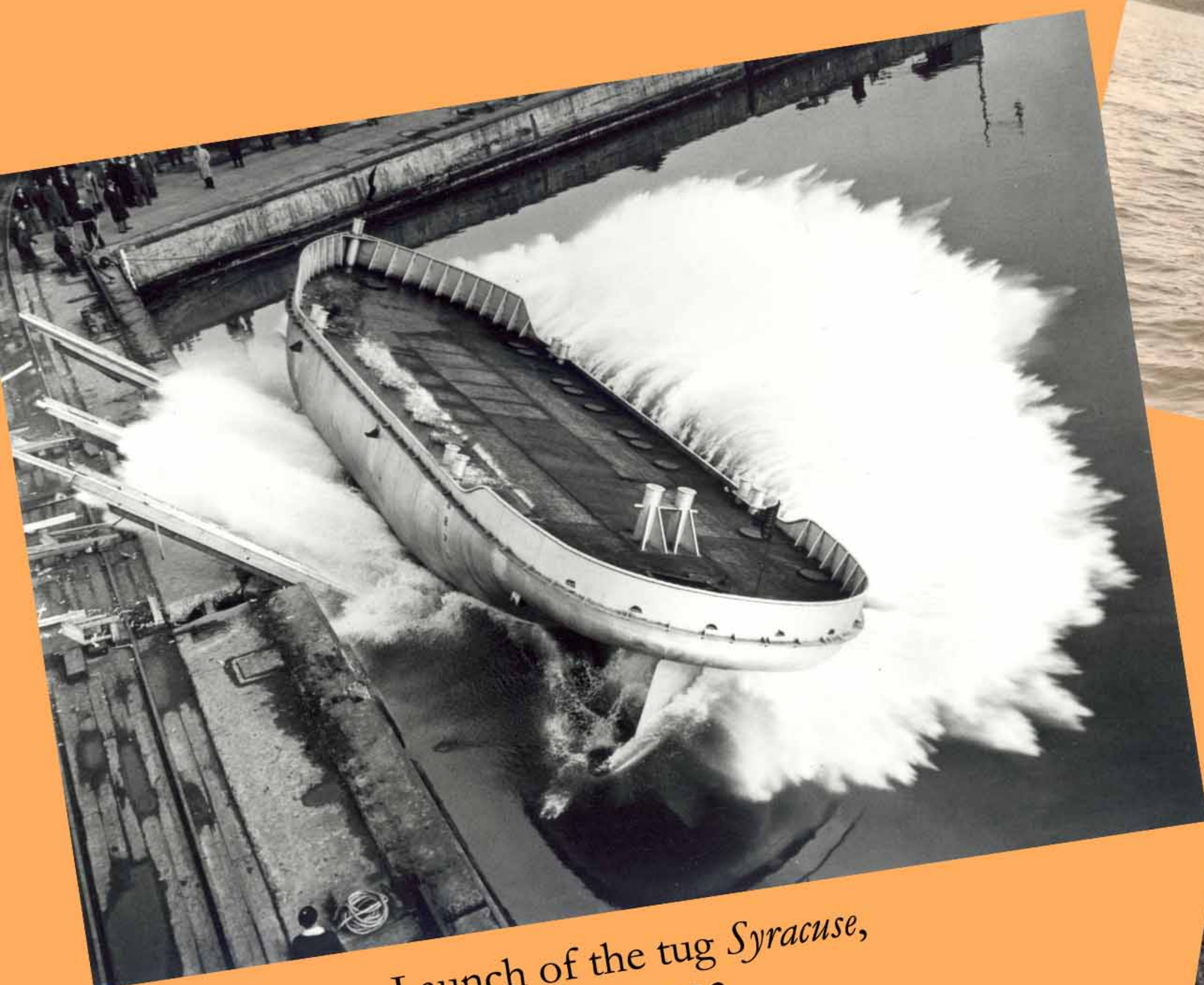


Tugs in Oswego.

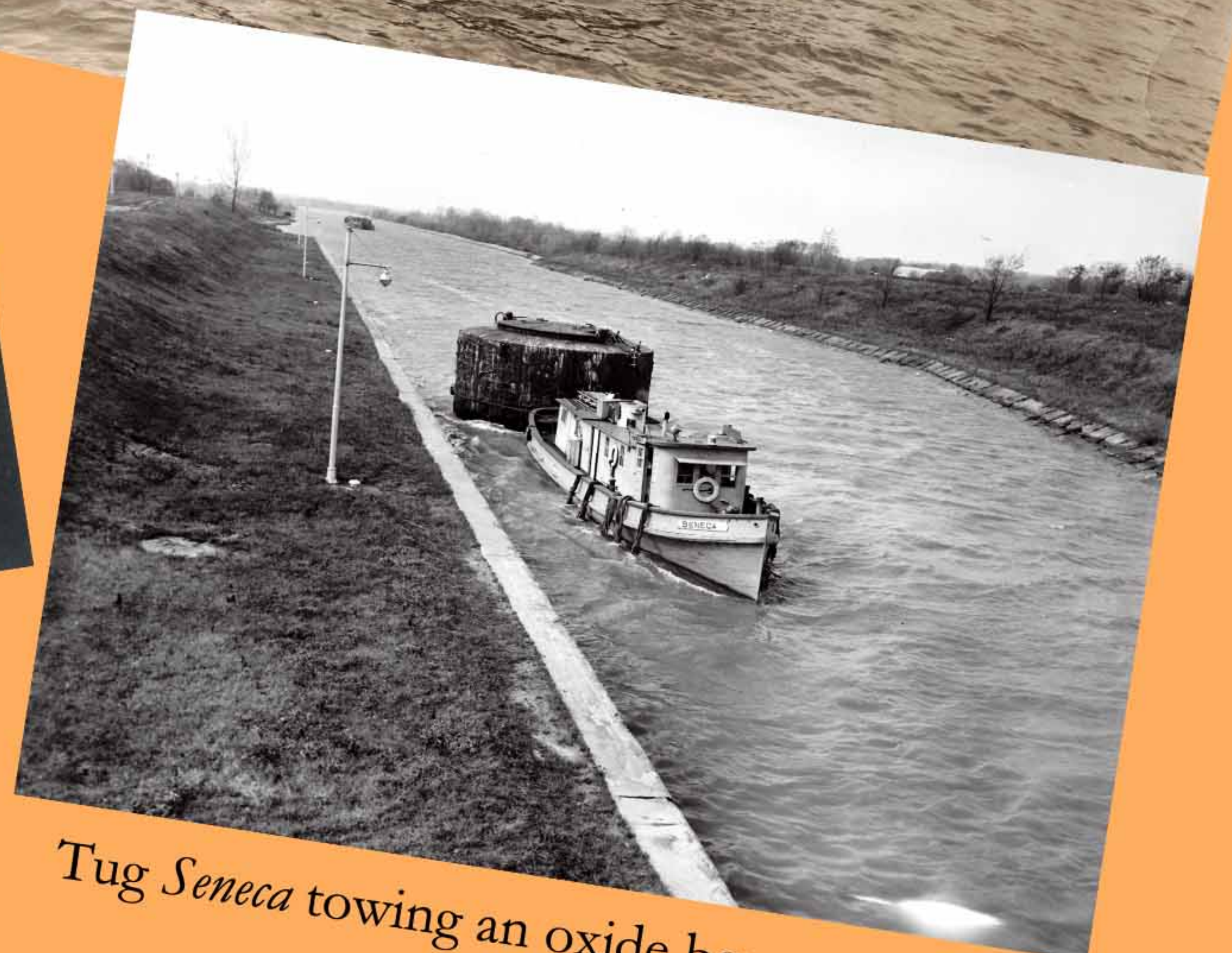
Tug snowbound in Syracuse.



Tug *Sachem* on Lake Erie.



Launch of the tug *Syracuse*, December 7, 1933.

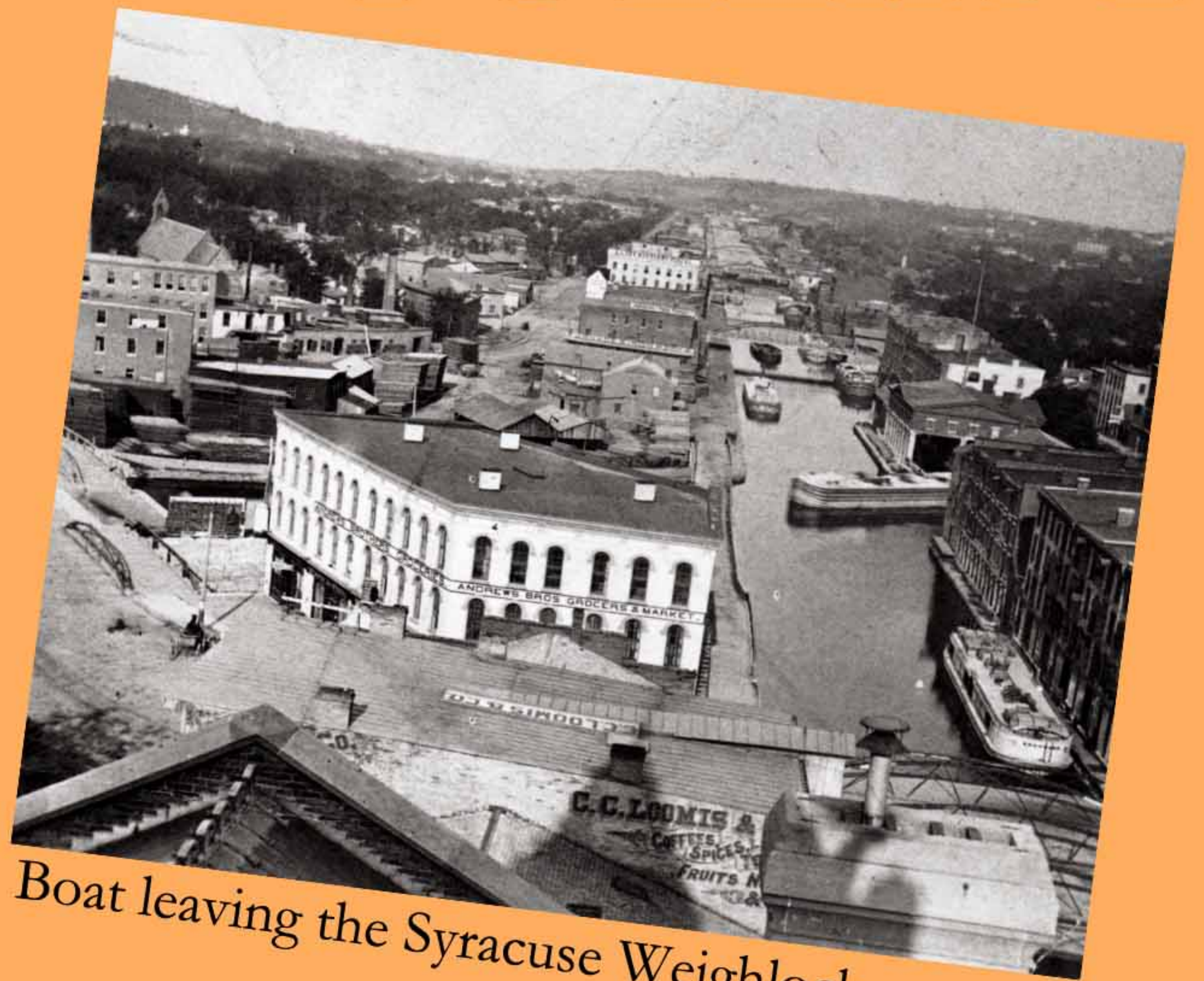


Tug *Seneca* towing an oxide box.

WEIGHING & TOLLING



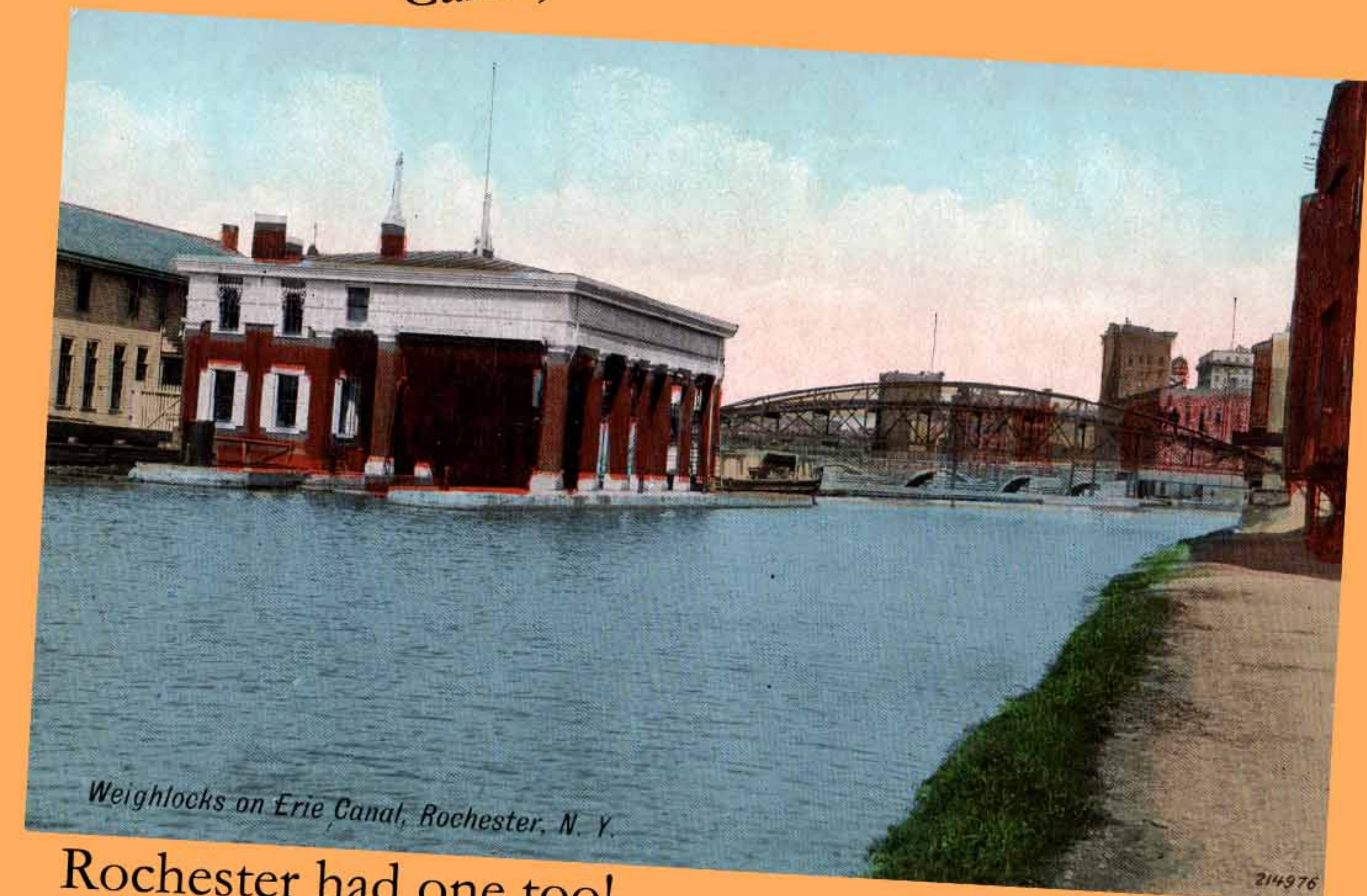
Early photo of the Syracuse Weighlock.



Boat leaving the Syracuse Weighlock.

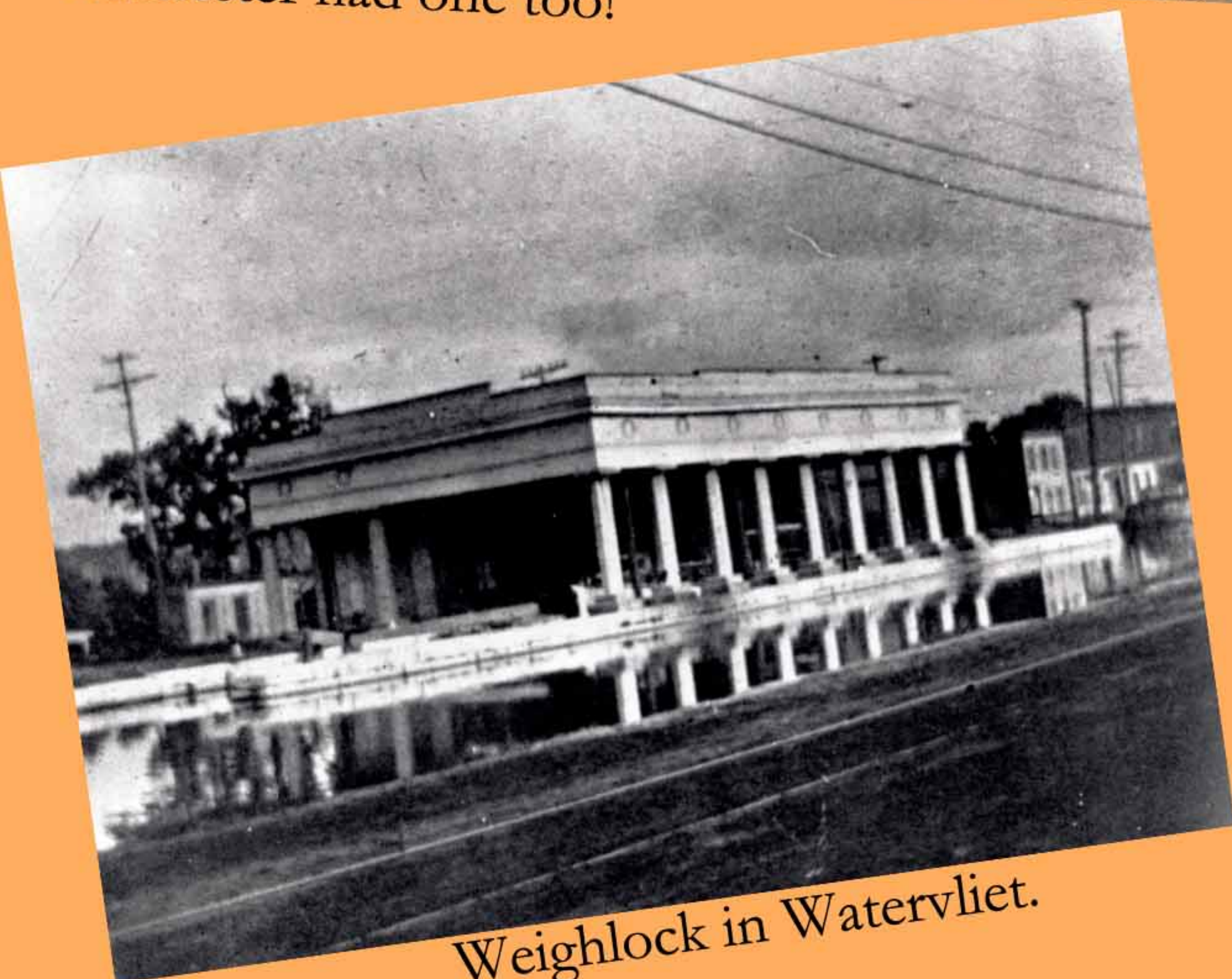


Oswego's weighlock was on the Oswego Canal, connected to Lake Ontario.



Weighlocks on Erie Canal, Rochester, N. Y.

Rochester had one too!



Weighlock in Watervliet.

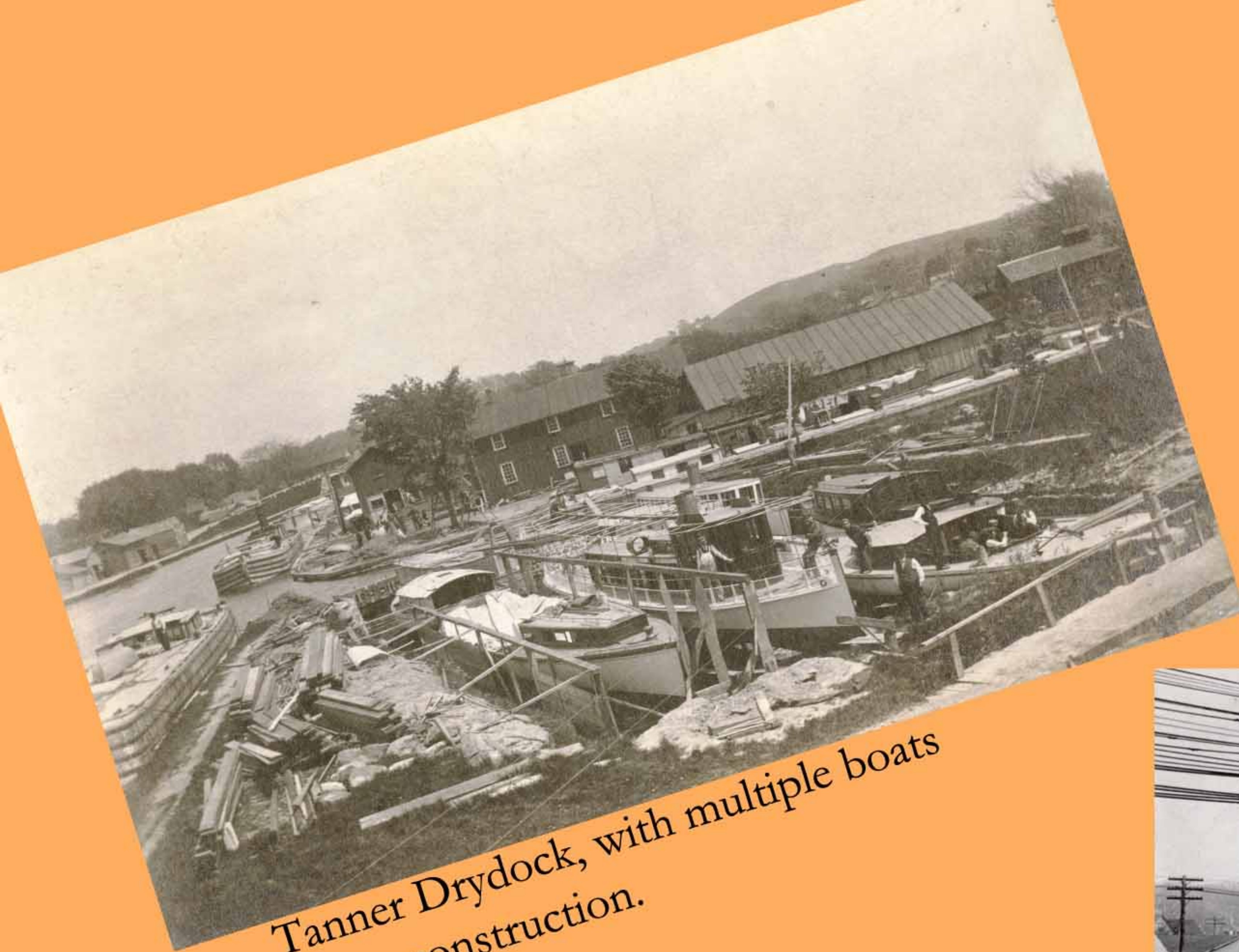


Syracuse Weighlock in winter.

From the opening of the Erie Canal until 1882, boats traveling across New York were required to pay canal usage tolls. Tolls were collected at one of seven weighlocks. These weigh stations along the canal would weigh boats, subtract the loaded weight from the dry weight of the boat (these were collected at the beginning of every canalling season), and assess a toll based on the cargo carried. The weighlocks were found in Albany, Watervliet, Waterford, Utica, Syracuse, Oswego, and Rochester.

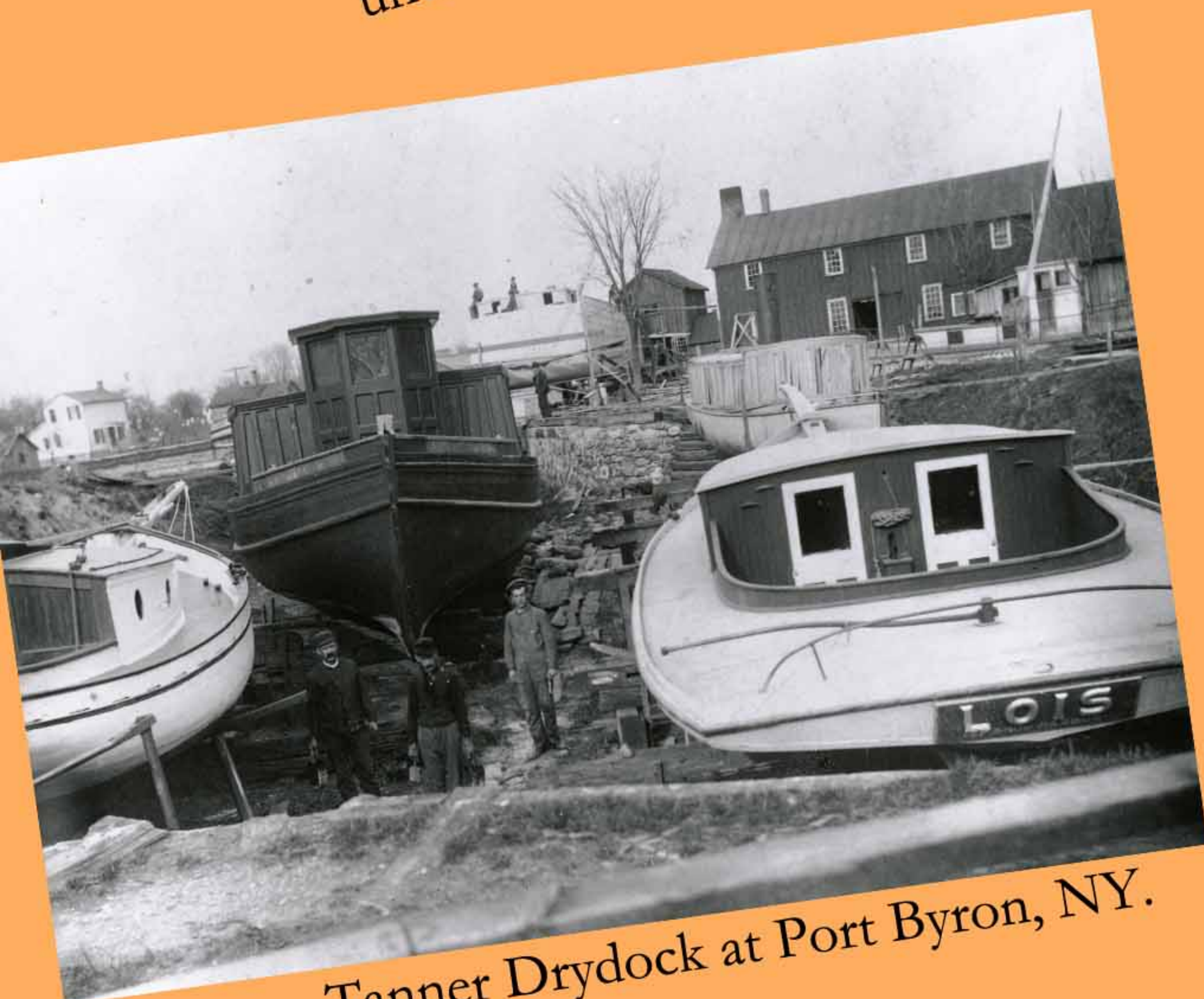
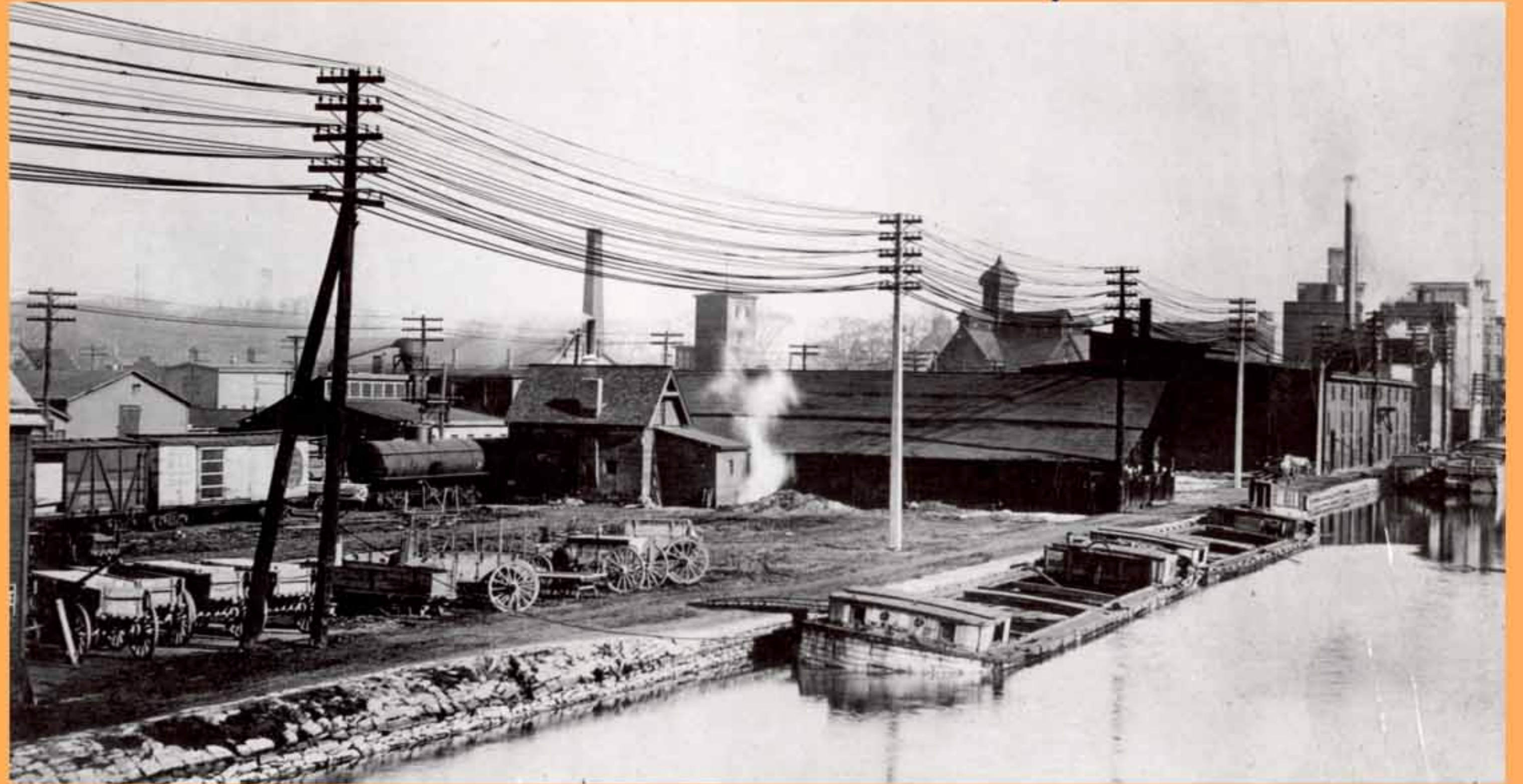
The Syracuse Weighlock is the only one remaining, and today it is home to the Erie Canal Museum.

BUILDING & REPAIRING



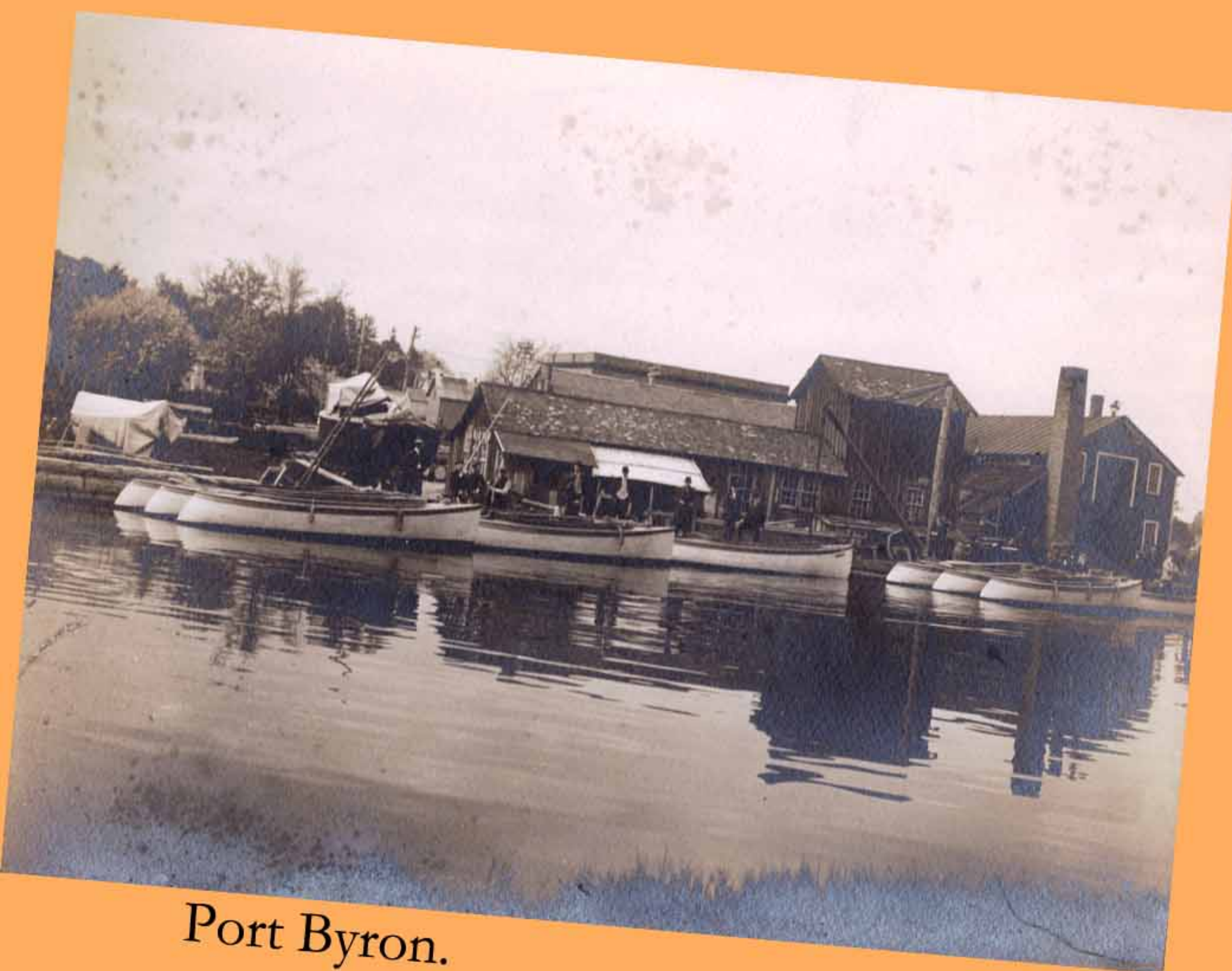
Tanner Drydock, with multiple boats under construction.

These canal boats have been abandoned and left to rot in the canal in Syracuse.



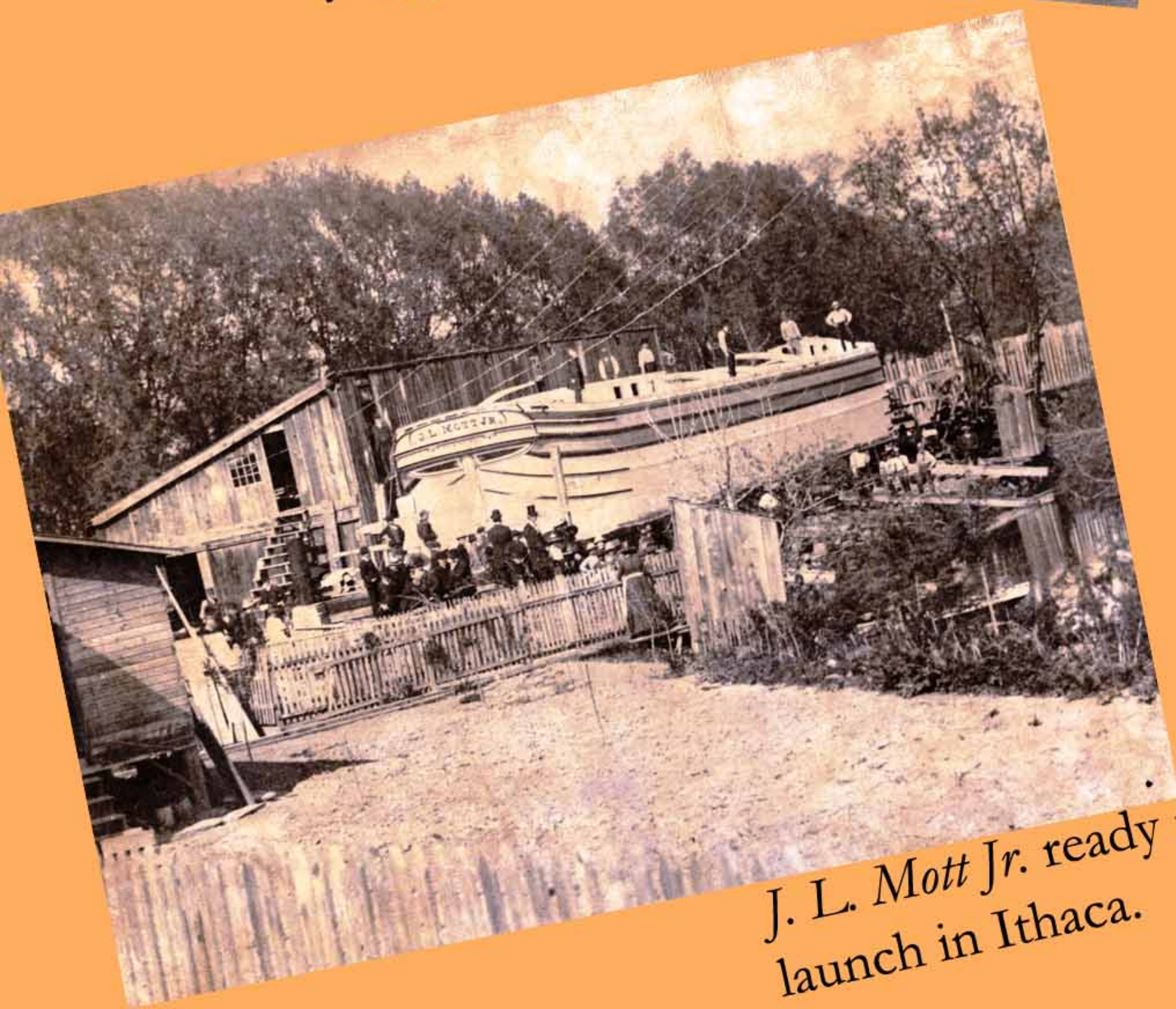
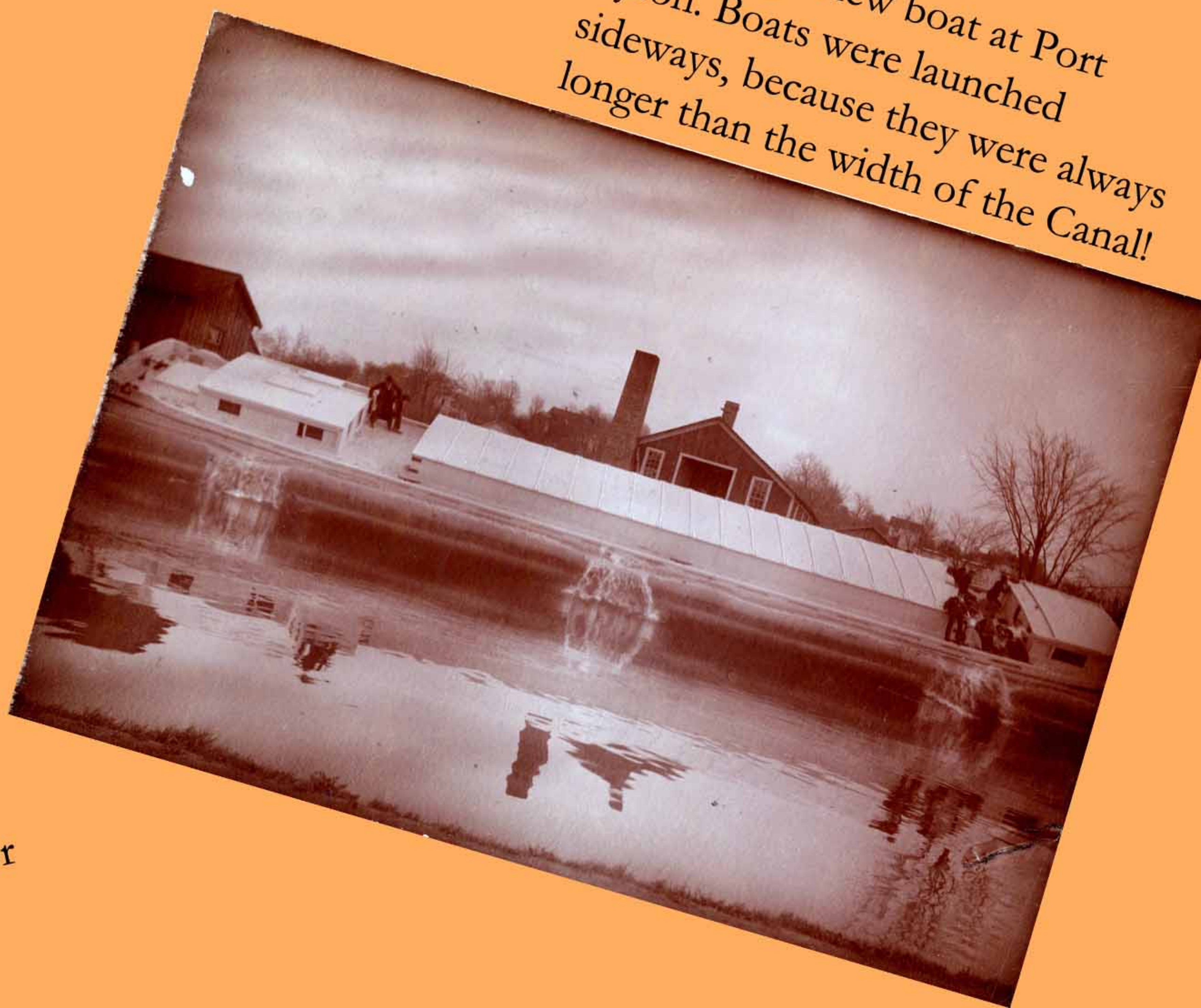
Tanner Drydock at Port Byron, NY.

Without boat builders, there would be no canal boats. Small boatyards could be found along the entire length of the Canal, and they made a few boats per year. Each would make one type of boat, without the aid of blueprints. Originally, boats were painted in bright colors, to attract attention and therefore business, but this later fell out of fashion. As the Canal was enlarged, the boats traveling it got larger as well. And in 1862, rounded bows were mandated by law, a change from the earlier square bows (if a square bow's corner suffered an impact, the entire side of the boat could be sheared off). Boats on the 19th century Canal were made of wood, but today the New York State Canal System uses steel boats.



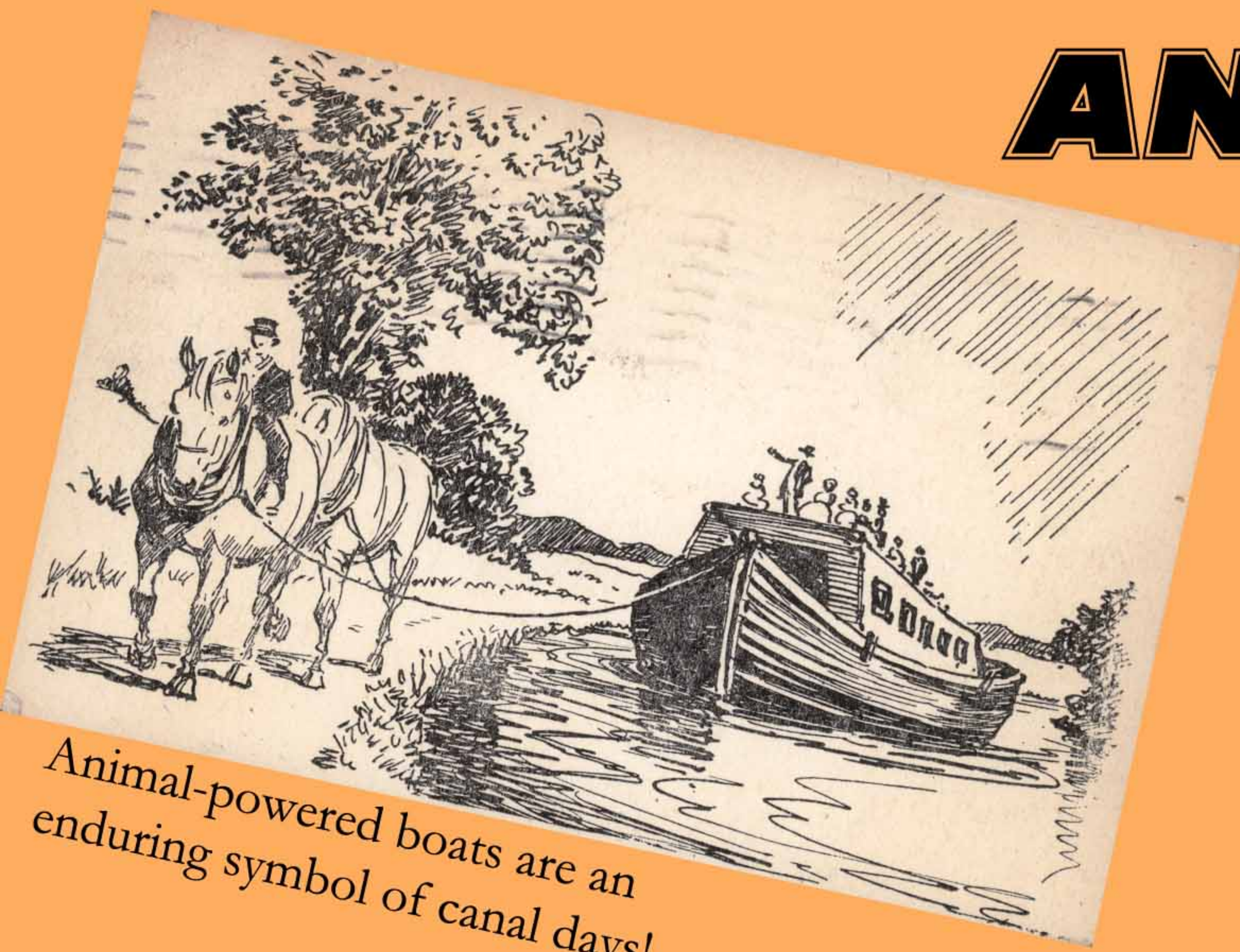
Port Byron.

Launching a new boat at Port Byron. Boats were launched sideways, because they were always longer than the width of the Canal!



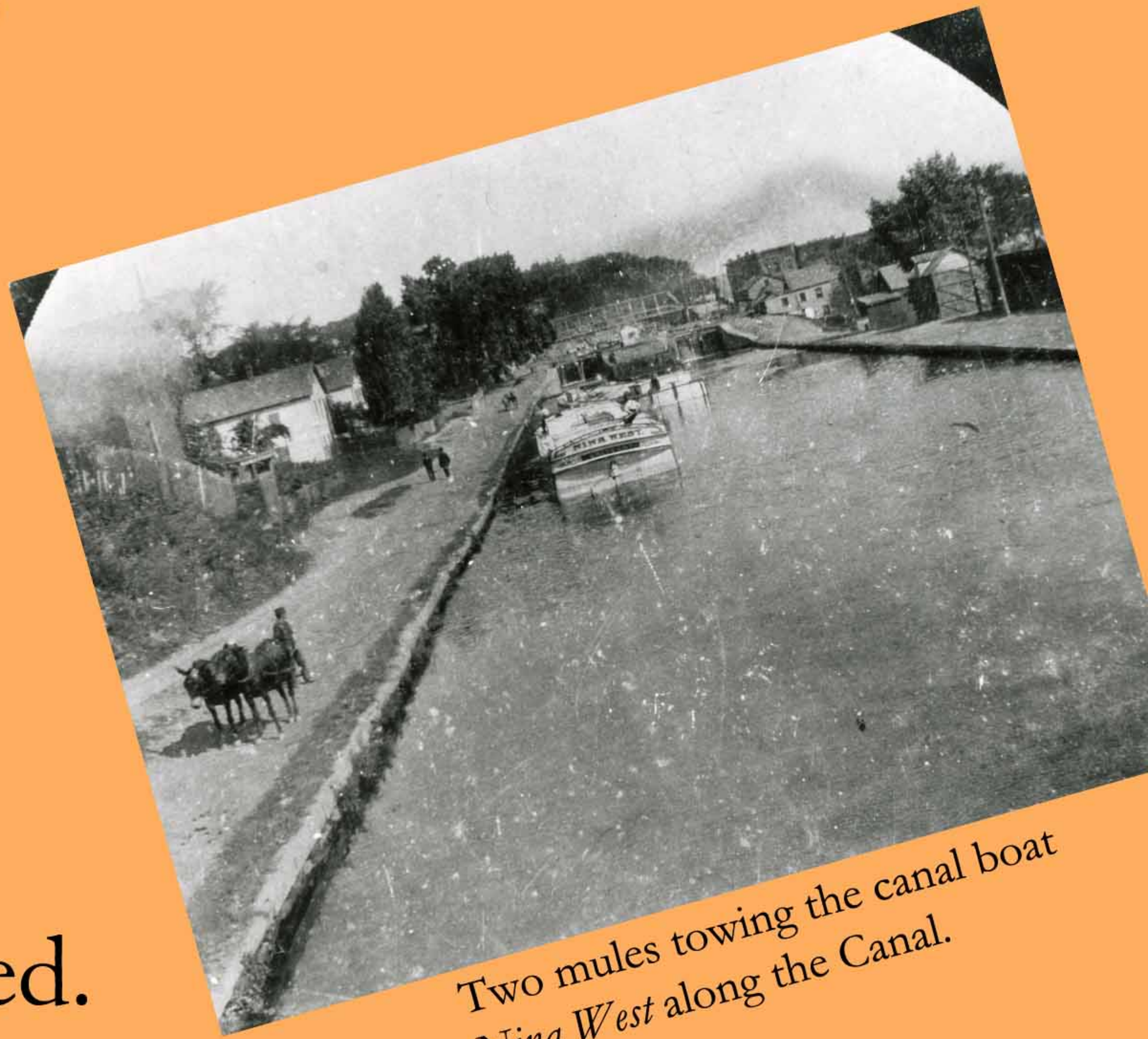
J. L. Mott Jr. ready for launch in Ithaca.

ANIMAL POWER

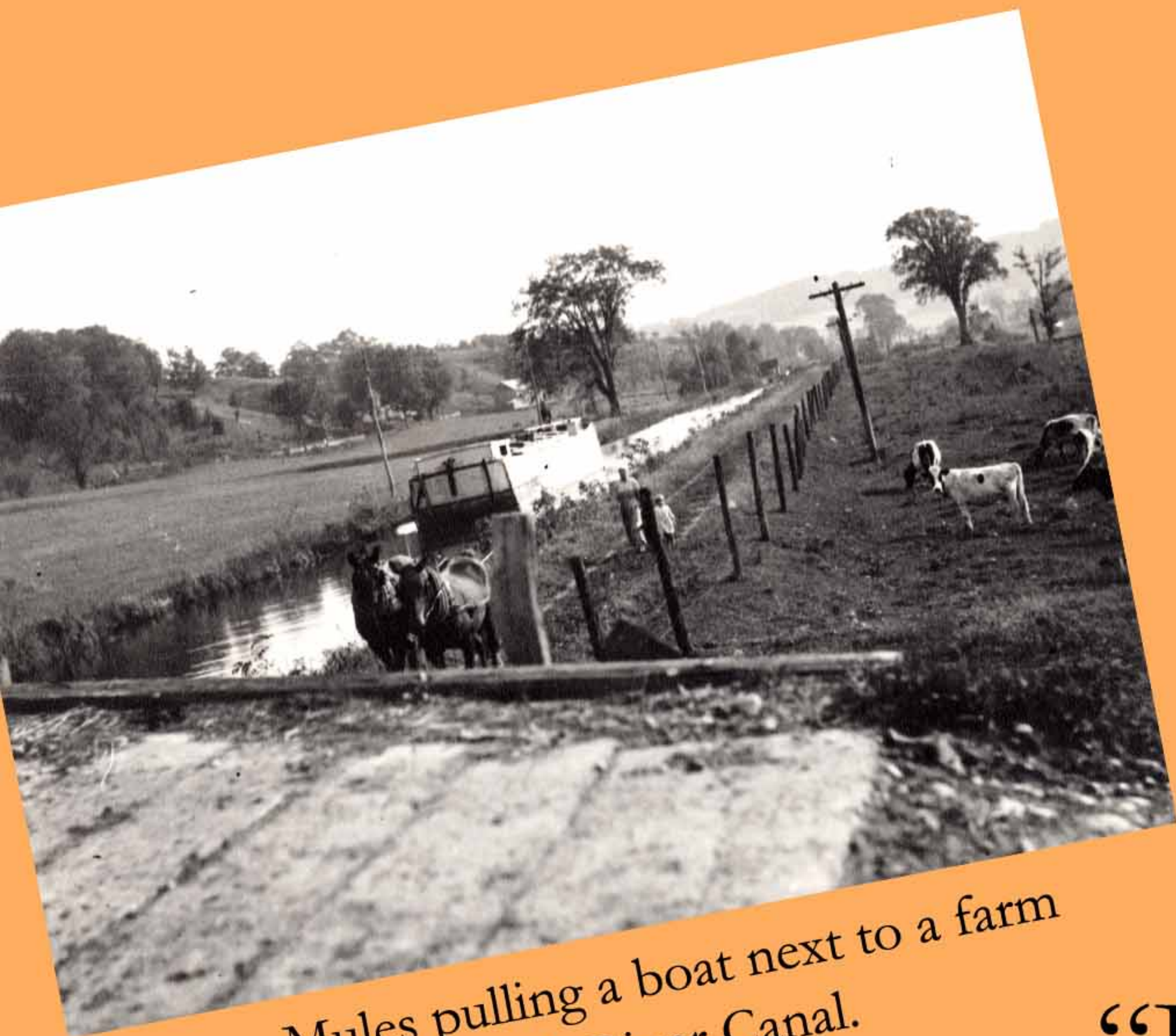


Animal-powered boats are an enduring symbol of canal days!

In the early days of the Erie Canal, boats were exclusively animal-powered.



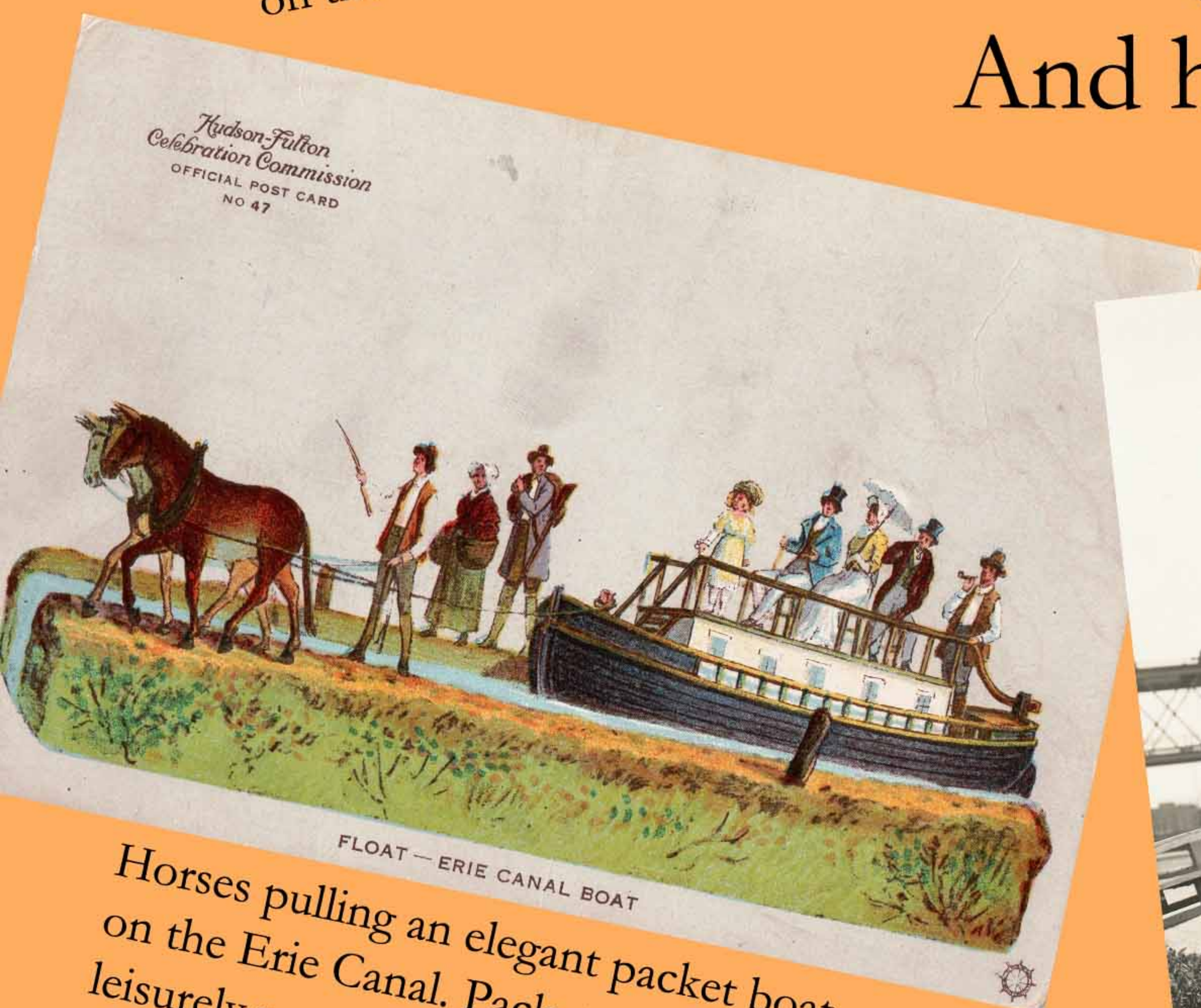
Two mules towing the canal boat *Nina West* along the Canal.



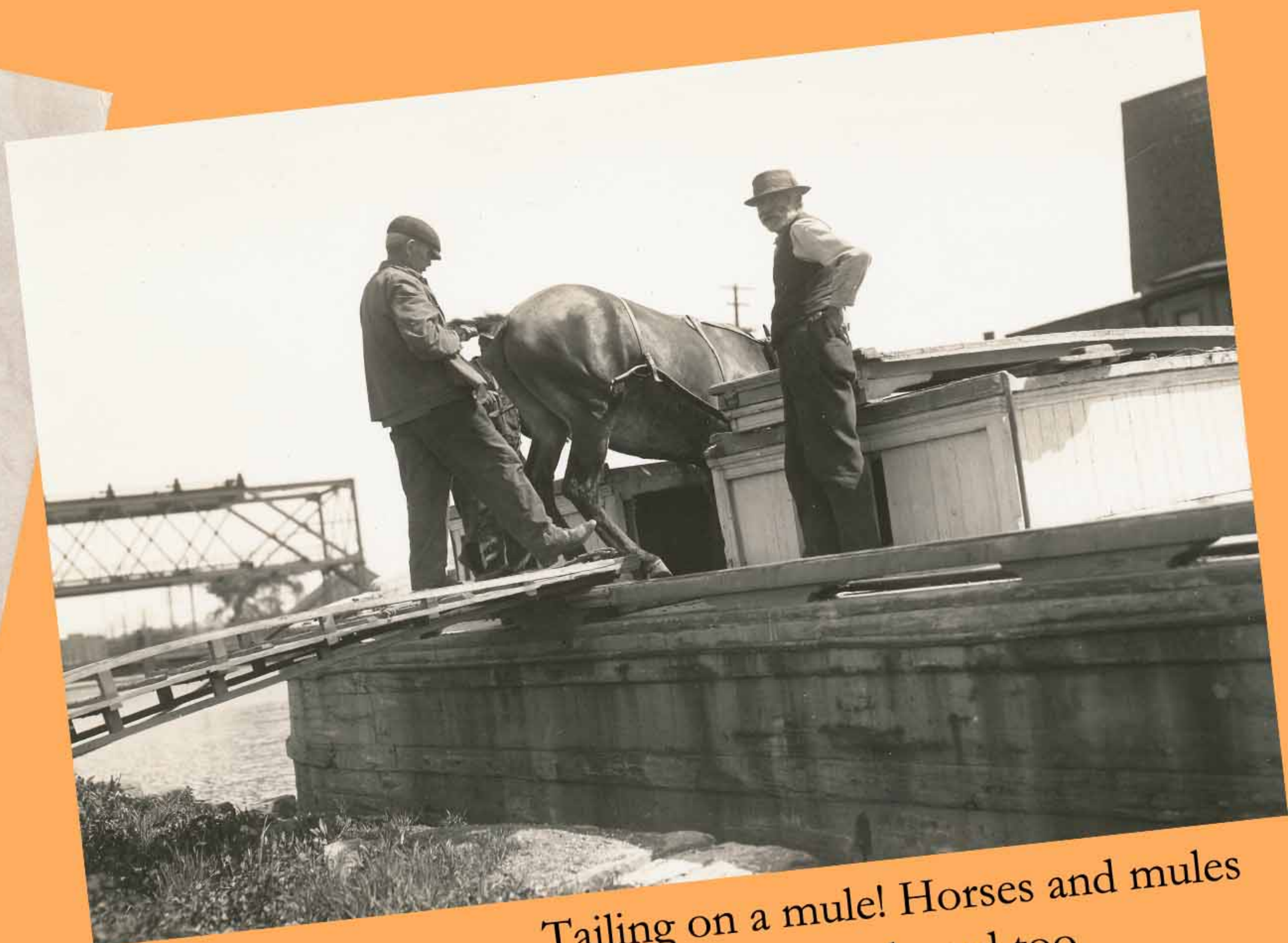
Mules pulling a boat next to a farm on the Black River Canal.

Boats were pulled by horses and mules, led by drivers (often teenage boys) walking along the Canal's towpath. Mules in particular were very well-suited to this job, due to their physical strength, surefootedness, and agility. A mule is a cross between a male donkey and a female horse, and is one of mankind's oldest examples of genetic engineering. Horses pulled boats as well, and were often used to pull packets for leisure travel, but mules were the real backbone of the Canal, and became the subject of several famous Canal songs.

“I’ve got an old mule,
And her name is Sal...”



Horses pulling an elegant packet boat on the Erie Canal. Packets were the leisurely way to travel across the state.



Tailing on a mule! Horses and mules often traveled on board too.



The *City of Fulton* provided packet services on the Oswego Canal.

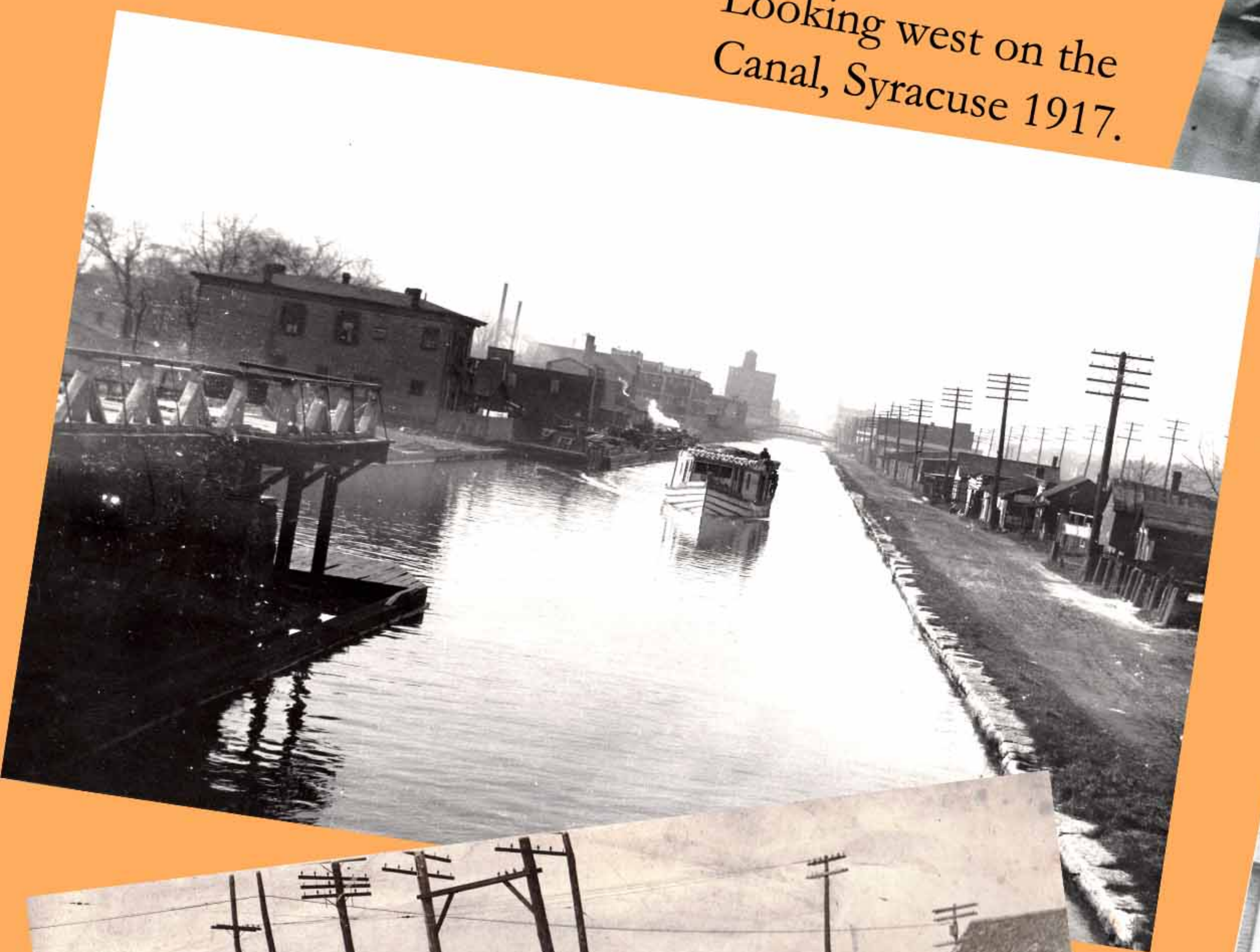
STEAM POWER

As time went on, steam engines increasingly powered canal boats, rather than animals. Steam powered boats included cargo and passenger boats, as well as tugboats, which were used to tow other boats. They could go faster than those pulled by horses and mules, but they ran the risk of tearing up the Canal's walls; many types of propellers were invented and tested, in hopes of fixing this problem, and steam boats were limited to a speed of 6 miles per hour. By the early 1860s, line boats on the Canal were the first commercial vessels to use steam power. At this point, the Canal had been enlarged to 7 feet deep and 70 feet wide, so larger boats could be used.

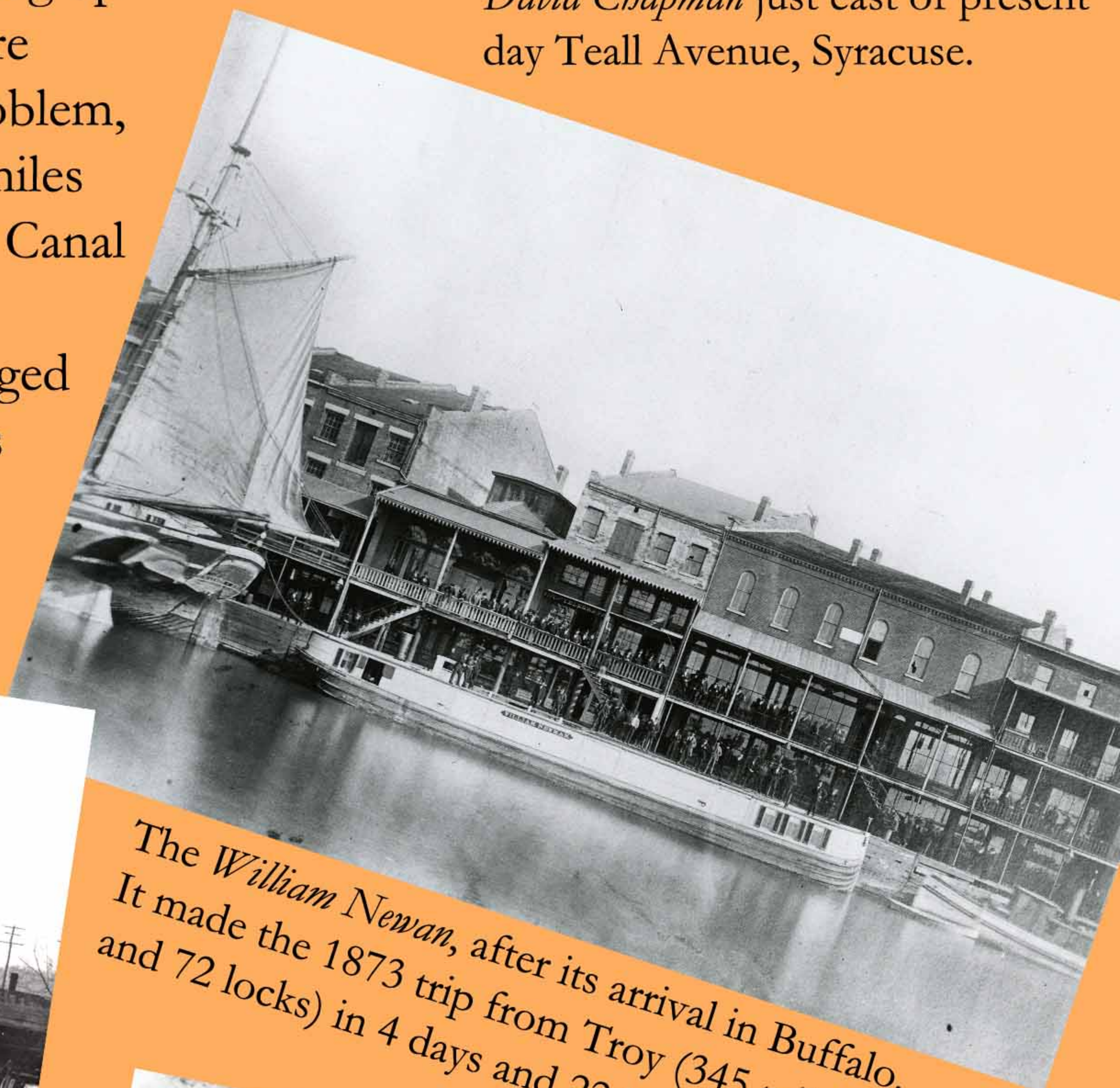


David Chapman just east of present day Teall Avenue, Syracuse.

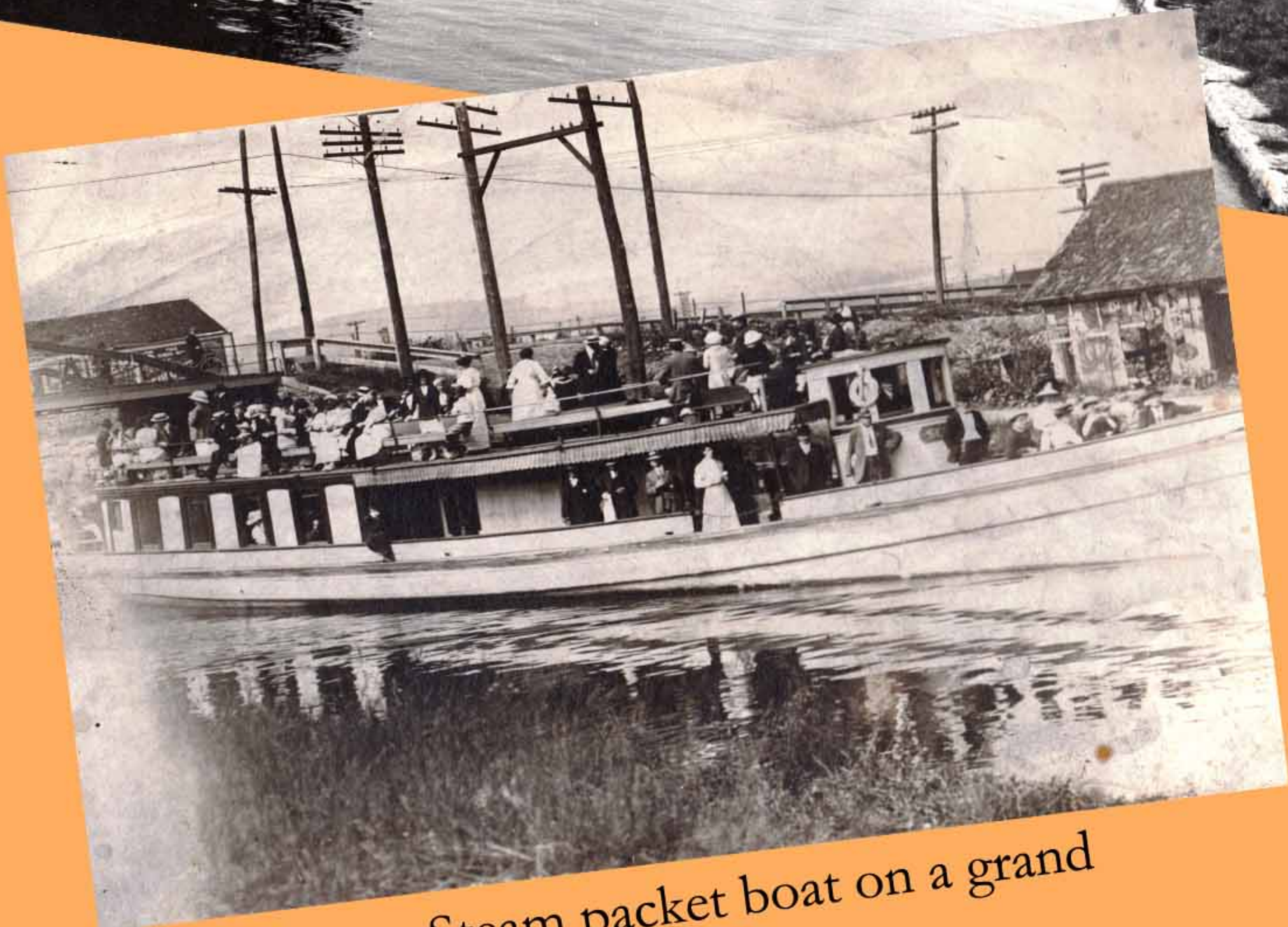
Looking west on the Canal, Syracuse 1917.



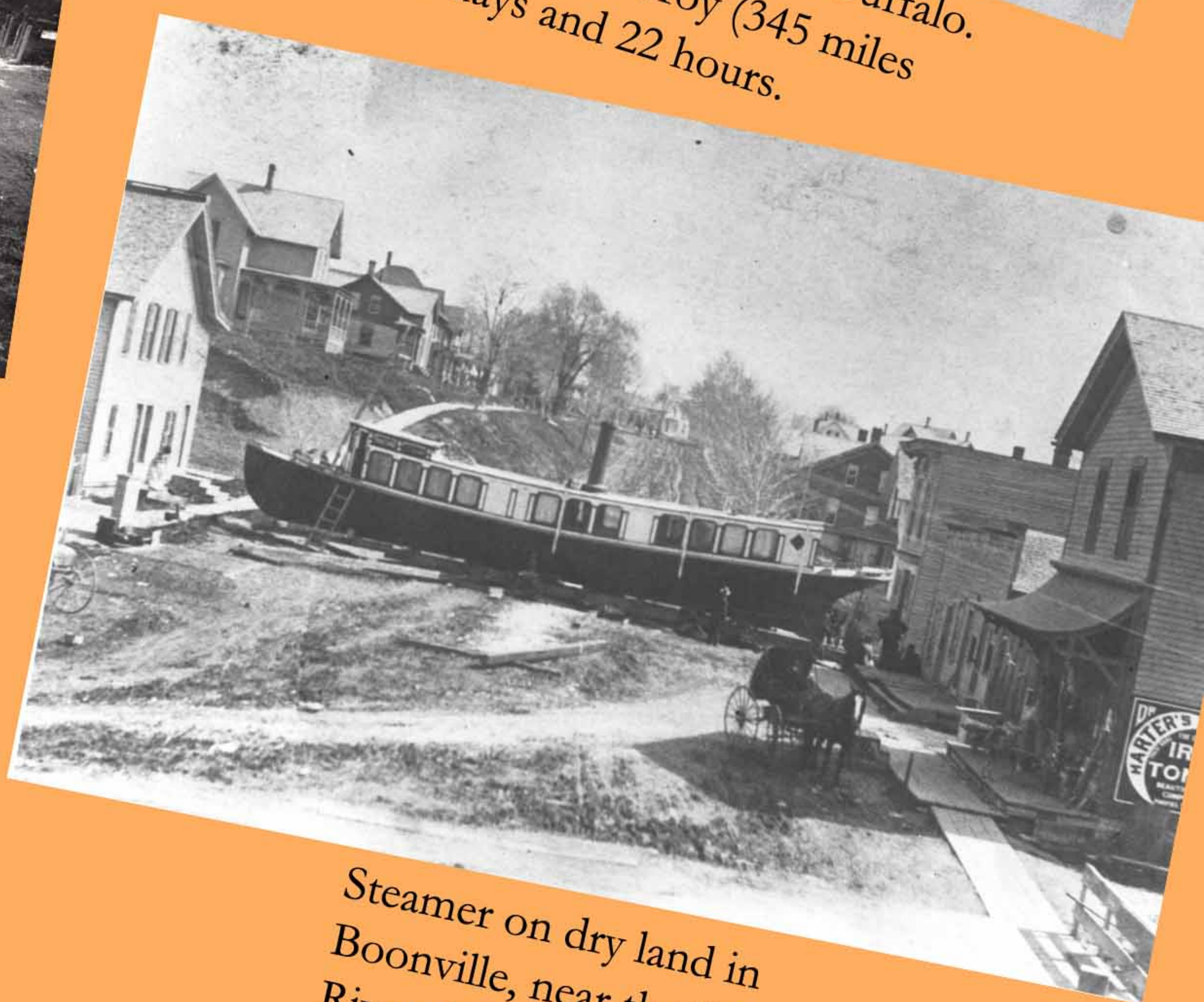
The *William Newan*, after its arrival in Buffalo. It made the 1873 trip from Troy (345 miles and 72 locks) in 4 days and 22 hours.



Steam packet boat on a grand day out in Syracuse.



Steamer on dry land in Boonville, near the Black River Canal.

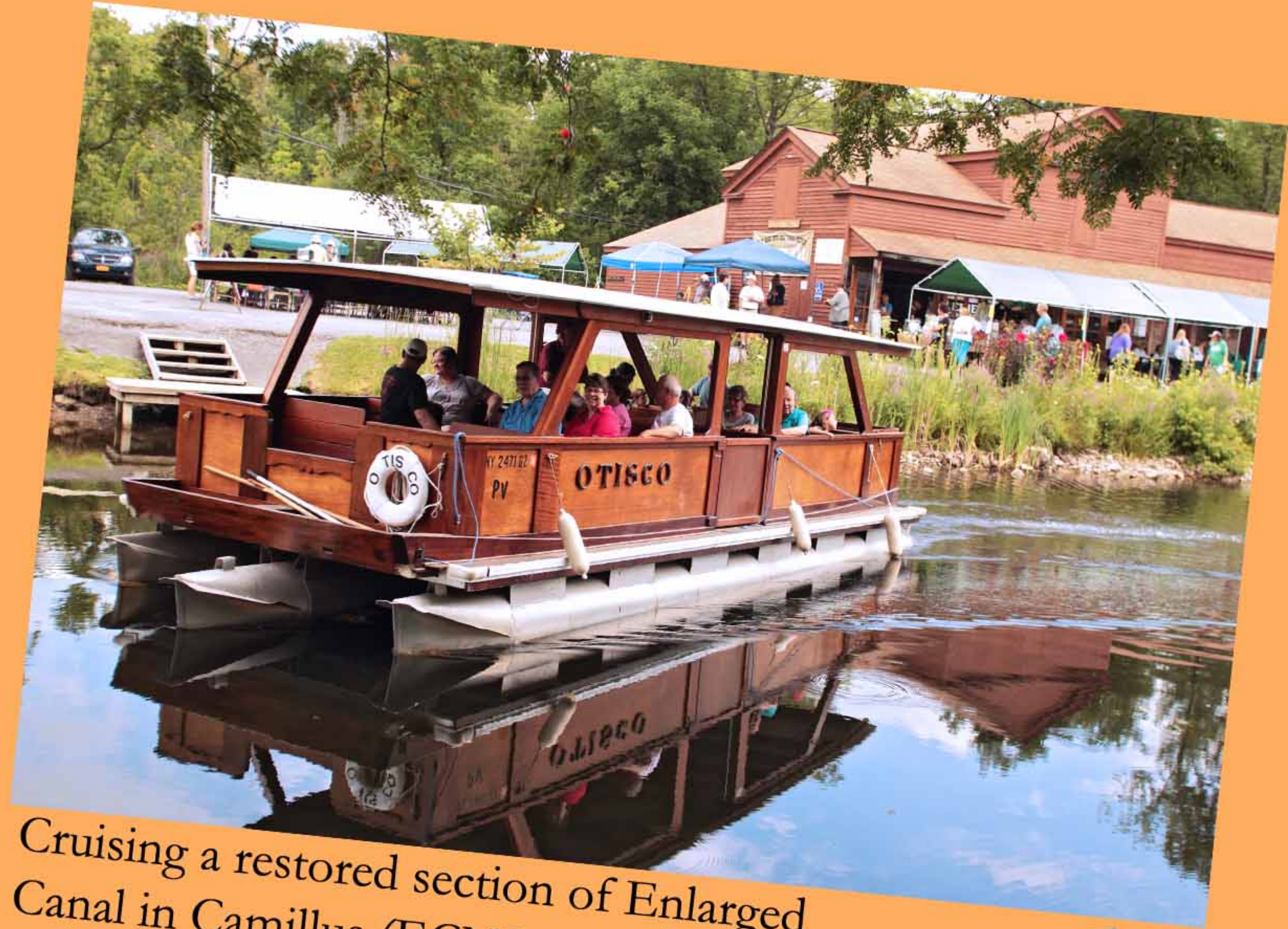


BOATING ON THE CANAL NOW

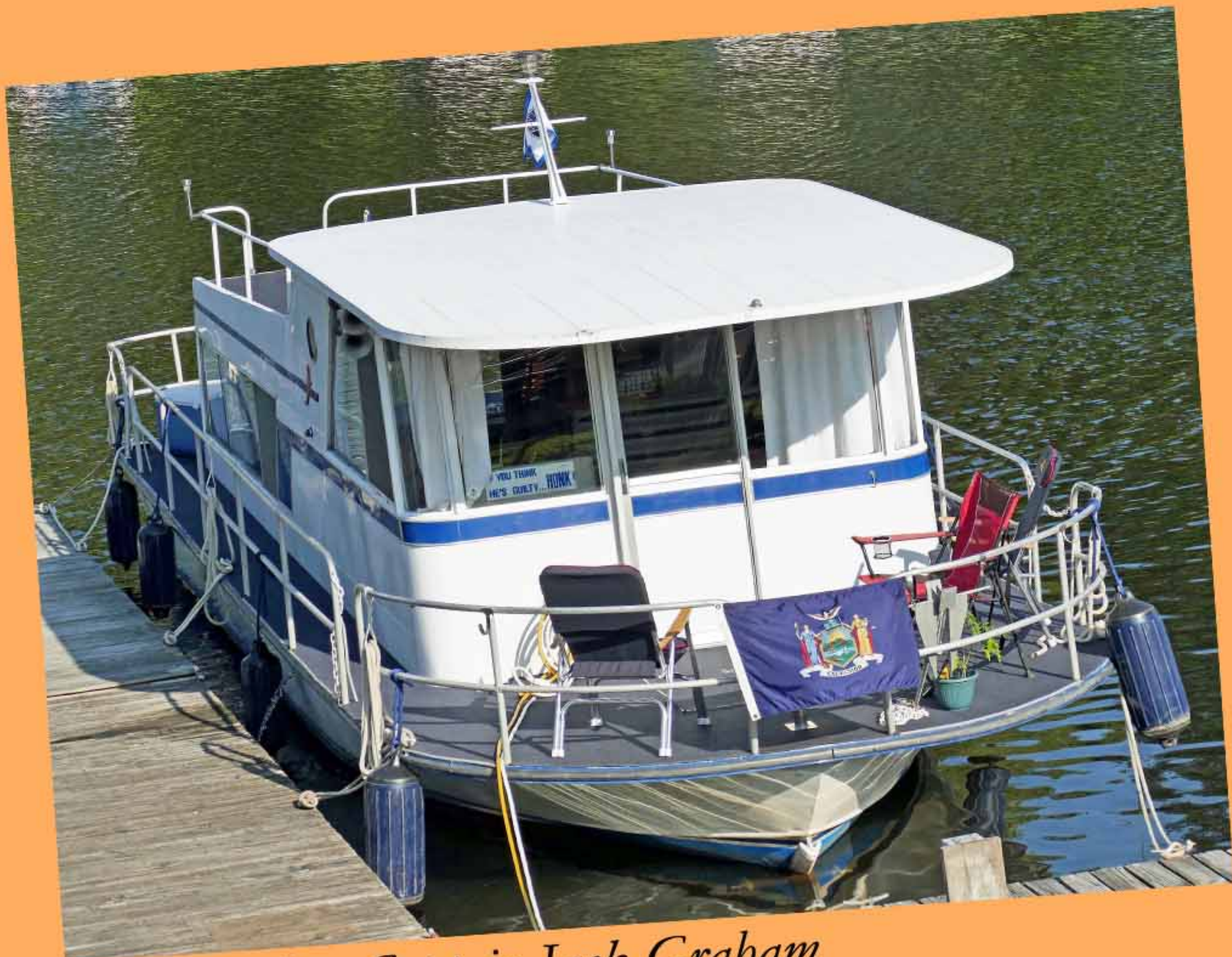


Kayakers in Waterford, 2019 (ECNHC).

While the New York State Canal System does still see some commercial use (notably in the spring of 2017, a dozen massive beer tanks were sent across New York on the canal, eventually arriving in Rochester at Genesee Brewery), in the 21st century New York's canals are primarily used for recreation. Boaters from New York as well as those from all over the United States and the world use the 524 miles of canals that make up the system. This includes 4 branches: the Erie, Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca Canals.

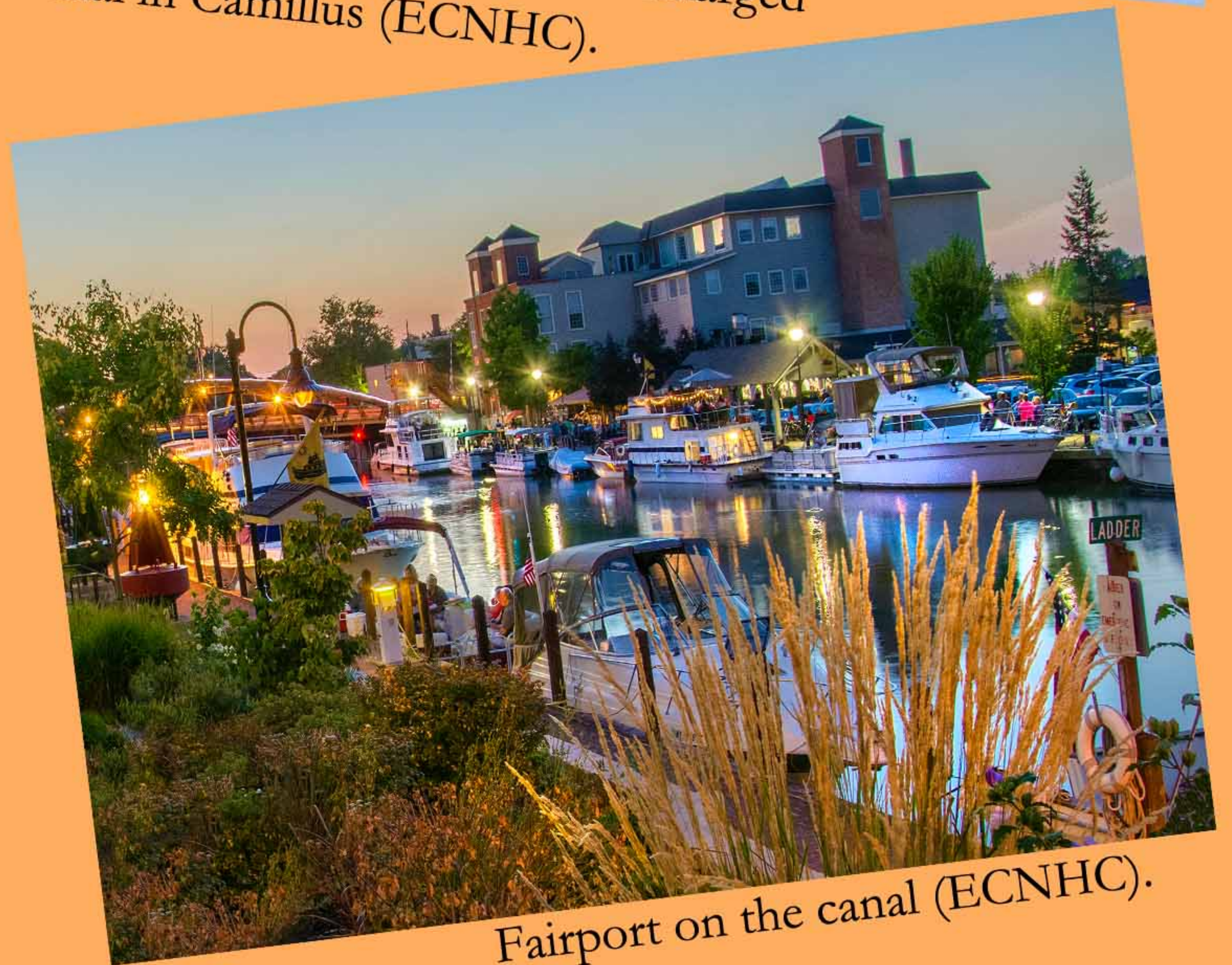


Cruising a restored section of Enlarged Canal in Camillus (ECNHC).

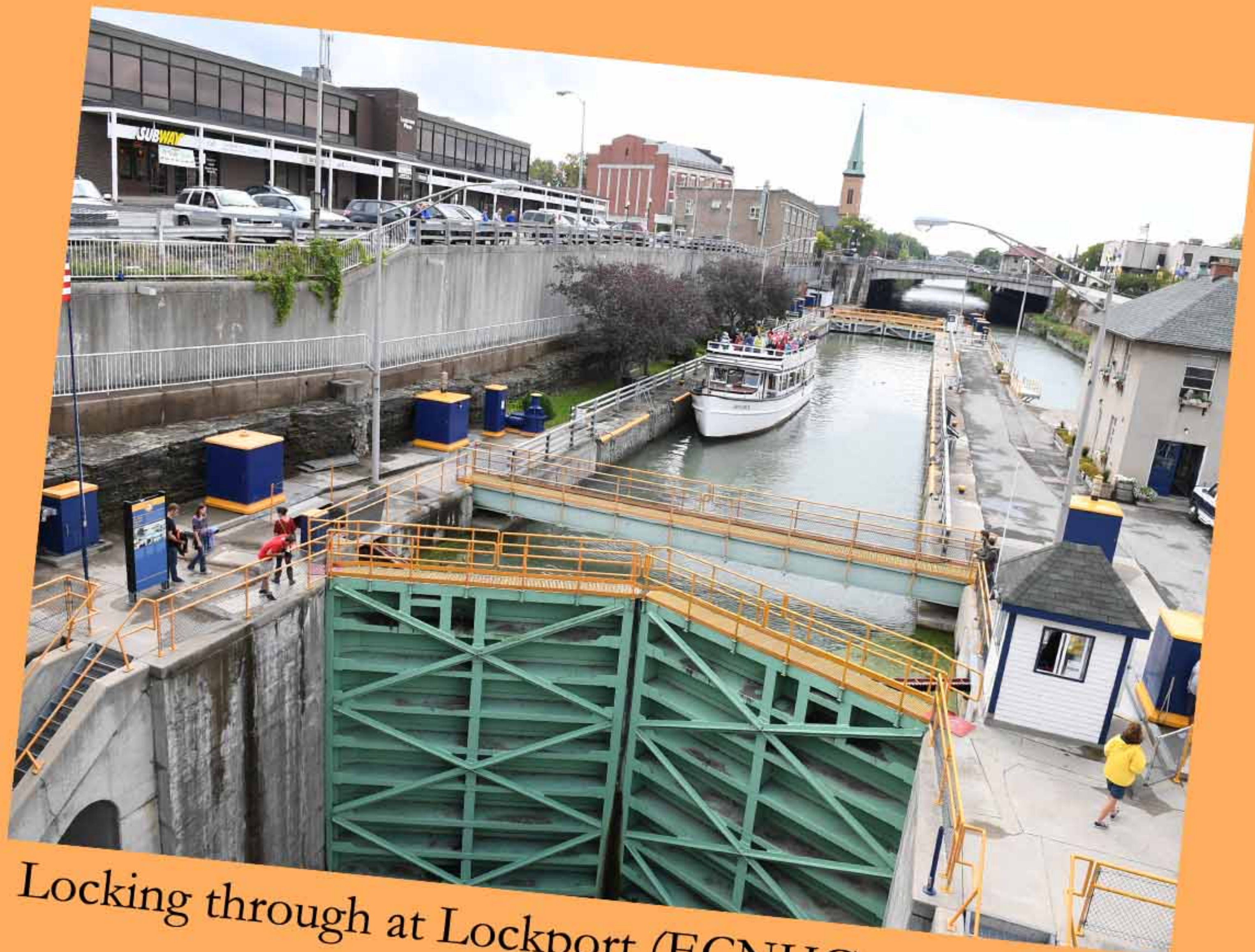


The *Captain Jack Graham*
(photo courtesy of the Grahams).

Canal boaters Bob and Leslie Graham get out on the water every summer, on board their houseboat, the *Captain Jack Graham* (it is named for Bob's grandfather, who was a commercial tugboat captain on the canal). The Grahams note that a trip on the canal is impossible without the help of friends they've made along the way!



Fairport on the canal (ECNHC).



Locking through at Lockport (ECNHC).