New York State Canal System

ACTIVITY BOOK
Sal, the mule made famous by the Erie Canal Song in 1913 has been a steadfast representative of the NYS Canal System. In this edition, Sal shows off the canal system, shares the song that made him famous and hopes to entice his fans with coloring pages, connect-the-dots, word jumbles and a little bit of history.

The construction of the Erie Canal came about for political as well as economic reasons. DeWitt Clinton, who in 1815 pushed the idea of a waterway to link the Hudson River and Lake Erie, wanted to revive his political career. It worked, too, because Clinton's role in building the canal led to his serving several terms as governor of New York. The canal, which was completed in 1825, also worked economically. By linking Buffalo to New York City, the waterway decreased freight costs. Towns along the canal - Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse - boomed. The canal boats were slow but could carry thousands of passengers each year and were pulled along the towpaths by mules! The success of the Erie Canal set off a burst of canal building throughout the country.

Visit the New York State Canal Corporation website:
www.canals.state.ny.us

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The "Erie Canal Song," also known as "Low Bridge," was first published in 1913. It was composed in order to protest the coming of the mechanized barge which would replace the mule that had been used previously. It quickly became a song that workers sang to make tedious tasks easier. The "Erie Canal" song made the long trip on the canal seem to pass by more quickly.

The chorus "low bridge..." refers to the bridges that crossed the canal. Passengers often rode on the flat roof of the canal boat to get fresh air. They would have to duck when approaching a bridge to avoid getting hit or knocked off the boat.
FUN FACTS:

It took the muscle power of men and horses eight years to build the Erie Canal. Although it is considered the engineering marvel of its time, not a single professional engineer was involved.

The Waterford Flight is a series of five locks where boats are lifted and lowered the greatest height in the shortest distance of any canal in the world.
Sal Strolls Along The Scenic Canal Trail
Glossary

AQUEDUCT - A water-carrying bridge built to help the canal cross over a river or a low valley.

BARGE - A flat-bottomed vessel used on canals or rivers to transport cargo.

BRIDGE - A structure carrying a roadway over the canal. Since they were built low to save money, a crew member sat up front in the boat and yelled to passengers - “low bridge everybody down” or they would be knocked off the boat.

BOW - The front part of a boat.

CANAL - An artificial or man-made waterway. A big ditch filled with water.

CRADLE - Part of a scale in a weighlock used to weigh canal boats.

ERIE - The original 363-mile canal that ran from Albany to Buffalo, connecting the Atlantic Ocean and the Great Lakes.

FLOTILLA - A fleet of small boats.

HATCH - A small door on the gate of a lock which opens to empty the water inside.

HOGGEE - A young boy in his early teens (or sometimes a man) who drove the animals used to tow the canal boats.

LOCKTENDER - The person who opens/closes the lock/s. (Also referred to as Lockmaster.)

MULE - Canal boats had no engines or sails. They were pulled by a pair of sturdy mules or horses on a towpath alongside the canal.
A Mule is a Cross Between a Donkey and a Horse
There are 524 miles of canal waterways to explore!
A Bridge for Boats was Called an Aqueduct
Canal Word Find

(words are hidden in all directions - left, right, up, down and diagonal)

AQUEDUCT
CANAL
CARGO
COAL
CONCH SHELL
DAM
DASHER
HOGGEE
INCLINE PATH
LANTERN
LOCK
LOCKTENDER
MULES
NIGHTHAWKER
PACKET BOAT
TOWPATH
The Tugboat “Urger” is the flagship of the fleet of vessels operated by the New York State Canal Corporation on the 524-mile Canal System and was built in 1901.
UNJUGGLE LETTERS TO FIND CANAL WORDS FROM GLOSSARY

CDUEQATU
ACALN
DEARCL
EEIR
LEUM
OBW
CTAHH
GDIRBE
COKLS
DNTEERCKOL
RBEAG
GOHEGE
LTLLOAF