

Child's Basin: Center of Commerce and Intellect

Passengers brought inventions, entrepreneurship, political and social ideas to Child's Basin

“Within the city, Child's Basin was the busiest point on the canal.”

“Passengers boarded and those going farther west sometimes disembarked to take the stage coach, for it was a shorter trip before the canal was straightened and the stage could travel faster....”

“The 'runner' is picking up passengers... the ice man goes from boat to boat offering his 'cold comfort,'...”

“then comes the bread and cracker peddler, the radish or vegetable merchant...the posy girls.”

“The measure is only filled up by the din of horns, the profanity of boatmen and drivers, and the orders of the 'captains,' whose voices loom, up amid the general confusion.”

-EDWIN SCRANTOM, PIONEER

Jonathan Child (1795-1860), Owned Child's Basin and Child's Slip. Married Sophia Rochester, daughter of city's founder Nathaniel Rochester. First mayor of the city of Rochester in 1834, resigned after refusing to sign liquor licenses. His residence on Washington Street in Corn Hill overlooks the old Erie Canal and is a registered historic landmark.

The Underground Railroad
Its proximity to Canada made Rochester one of the most active sites on the Underground Railroad and a center of the abolitionist movement.

Frederick Douglass, former slave, anti-slavery orator and publisher of *The North Star*, and Susan B. Anthony, suffragist, abolitionist and temperance advocate, made their homes in Rochester.

Many activists, speakers, conference attendants and fugitives from slavery passed through Child's Basin. Nearby Main Street was an abolitionist hotbed.



Left: Portrait of Jonathan Child circa 1835

Rochester Images: From the Collection of the Rochester City Hall Photo Lab



ERIE CANAL AQUEDUCT, ROCHESTER, N. Y.

Above: View, looking south, of the new Erie Canal aqueduct (1842). On the left you can see the remains of the first aqueduct (1823) which were washed away in the flood of 1865.



Above: DeWitt Clinton, by John Wesley Jarvis ca.1816

Collection of The New-York Historical Society

DeWitt Clinton (1769-1828)
As governor of New York he implemented Jesse Hawley's idea of a canal crossing the state. In a grand opening celebration known as the 'Wedding of the Waters,' Clinton carried Lake Erie water aboard the 'Seneca Chief' canal boat from Buffalo to Albany and poured the water into the Hudson River, symbolizing the joining of the Great Lakes with the Atlantic Ocean and opening the interior of America to settlement and commerce. The 'Seneca Chief' canal boat was met by Rochester's canal boat, 'Young Lion of the West' on October 26, 1825 at Child's Basin as the Governor made a ceremonial request to cross the original Erie Canal aqueduct.



Above: View of Kimball Tobacco Factory, Erie canal aqueduct crossing the Genesee River and Child's Basin. Rochester Images: From the Collection of the Rochester Public Library Local History Division



The Erie Canal cut the cost of shipping one ton of goods from Buffalo to New York City from \$100 to \$10.

Right: Erie Canal survey map circa 1898
Courtesy of Canal Society of New York State

