

## Sample Lesson #2

### The Coming of the Canals

In the 1800s, Ohio's main products were agricultural. Farmers grew beans, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, squash, and other vegetables in Ohio's rich soil. American Indians had grown these crops for many years. Like them, settlers used what they grew to feed their families.

Settlers also raised tobacco, wheat, corn, and other grain crops to sell for a profit. Most farmers sold their crops nearby. They did not have an easy way to ship goods over the Appalachian Mountains.

Trails that had been used by the Delaware, Seneca, and other tribes became the first roads. Some were made of logs or planks. However, many were dirt roads, full of ruts, mud, holes, and tree stumps.

In 1811, construction of the National Road began. It stretched from Cumberland, Maryland to the Ohio River. The National Road was the first gravel road to cross the Appalachian Mountains. Twenty-one years later, it reached across Ohio and provided a better way for carriages and wagons to travel between Ohio and the East Coast. Even so, it was a long and difficult journey.

Some cargo shipments went by steamboat down the Ohio River and the Mississippi River to New Orleans. But Ohio was not able to fully take part in trade among eastern states or between America and Europe.

New York paved the way for Ohio by digging the Erie Canal. This important canal connected the Hudson River with the Niagara River. The Niagara flowed into Lake Erie. Two Ohio canals quickly followed. They were the Ohio & Erie and the Miami & Erie.

The two Ohio canals followed paths created by streams and small rivers. These waterways provided a ready supply of water for the canals. Stream beds were usually flat and had soft soil that was easy to dig. German and Irish immigrants did most of the work on these canals. They were completed during the 1820s and 1830s.

Locks on the canals raised and lowered water levels. This allowed barges to pass through. Locks lifted or lowered boats through uneven terrain. Short "feeder canals" made it easier to get to the main canals. Ohio's products could now move north to Lake Erie. From there, the cargo completed its journey east by way of New York's Erie Canal.



One of the early hotels on National Road  
Cambridge, Ohio

Photo Credit: Library of Congress

1. Why was the National Road so important to Ohio and the United States?
  - A) It helped Ohio farmers to grow their crops.
  - B) It improved travel between Ohio and the East Coast.
  - C) It helped bring an end to the American Civil War.
  - D) all of these
  
2. Study the map of Ohio Canals in the *Help Pages*. What was the best route for a farmer near Columbus who wanted to send products to a dock on Lake Erie?
  - A) Ohio & Erie Canal going north
  - B) Ohio & Erie Canal going south
  - C) Miami & Erie Canal going north
  - D) Ohio River going north
  
3. How did building the three canals help Ohioans?
  - A) The canals provided jobs for laborers.
  - B) The canals made shipping easier.
  - C) Ohioans could move cargo to shipping docks on the east coast.
  - D) all of these
  
4. Who did most of the work of digging the canals during the 1820s and 1830s?
  - immigrants
  - slaves
  - union workers
  - farmers
  
5. In the 1800s, Ohio's main products were \_\_\_\_\_.
  - industrial
  - imported
  - roadways
  - agricultural
  
6. Why was Ohio able to help the United States grow during the 1800s?
  - A) Ohio was one of the first thirteen colonies.
  - B) Ohio had plenty of waterways that allowed products to be shipped.
  - C) During the 1800s, most Americans lived in Ohio.
  - D) Ohio was the only state that had a National Road.
  
7. During the 1800s, a major source of conflict between the North and South was \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A) the practice of impressments
  - B) the Enabling Act of 1802
  - C) the issue of slavery
  - D) American independence
  
8. Name an Ohio abolitionist. \_\_\_\_\_
  
9. List two bodies of water that form the borders of Ohio.  
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