

The Mohawk (Iroquois) Trail

~ Traffic ~

"The early Hudson River settlements reached Albany, where the Mohawk River Valley was a natural route to the west from Albany to Lake Erie. This route has gone from a horse path in the early 1700s, a wagon trail in the 1750s, the route of the Erie Canal by 1825, the New York Central Railroad by 1850, and the New York Thruway today."

--William Dollarhide,
Map Guide to American Migration Routes

"While the Iroquois were not primarily canoe Indians, they did make use of the natural waterway that ran through their forested domain when Dutch, and later English, traders established contact with them from Albany. Then the crude Iroquois canoes filled with heavy packets of beaver pelts began using the Seneca-Mohawk river system."

--Douglas Waitley,
Roads of Destiny.

The *Mohawk Trail* was used heavily by New York's early emigrants and was much involved with the early history of the state.

The Mohawk River Valley served "first as a route for wagons to reach Lake Ontario, where boats could be used to ferry wagons and families to other Lake Ontario ports including Upper Canada (Ontario). This was the route of many Loyalists leaving the U.S. for British protection during and after the Revolutionary War."

--William Dollarhide,
Map Guide to American Migration Routes

Various groups of settlers moved from Hartford, CT, to Dutchess County, NY, then northwest to Albany and along the Mohawk Valley to Utica and the *Great Genesee Road* to Ohio.

After the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, thousands moved west into the upper Northwest Territory. They came mainly from New England.

~ Features ~

Hiawatha formed five squabbling tribes into a strong federation. The Iroquois Nation was tied together by a trail that gave each tribe excellent communication with the others. In the west the Senecas had villages extending as far as the Genesee River. Their neighbors, the Cayugas, had a string of villages. The Onondagas were the largest of the tribes. The Oneida tribe had towns at the site of today's Oneida and also at Utica. The Mohawk tribe was the most eastern of the Iroquois.

With the capitulation of Fort Niagara by the French in 1759, the Iroquois no longer held the balance of power on the frontier. With a total population of only 20,000, the Five Nations would not be able to hold back the coming surge of British pioneers.

The Mohawk River Valley became the primary route west in New York.

The *Old Connecticut Path* from Boston, through Worcester and Springfield, joined the *Mohawk or Iroquois Trail* to Lake Erie at Albany.

The Hudson River in New York allowed a natural route for very early settlements north and northwest of New York City. Albany became the jumping off point for expeditions into the northern and western regions of New York and also into the upper areas of present-day Vermont.

Another road from Albany much used by the early pioneers went through the southern portion of New York, with one branch leading south to Pittsburgh, and another near Lake Chautauqua to Lake Erie, passing through the towns of Delhi, Ithaca, and Bath.

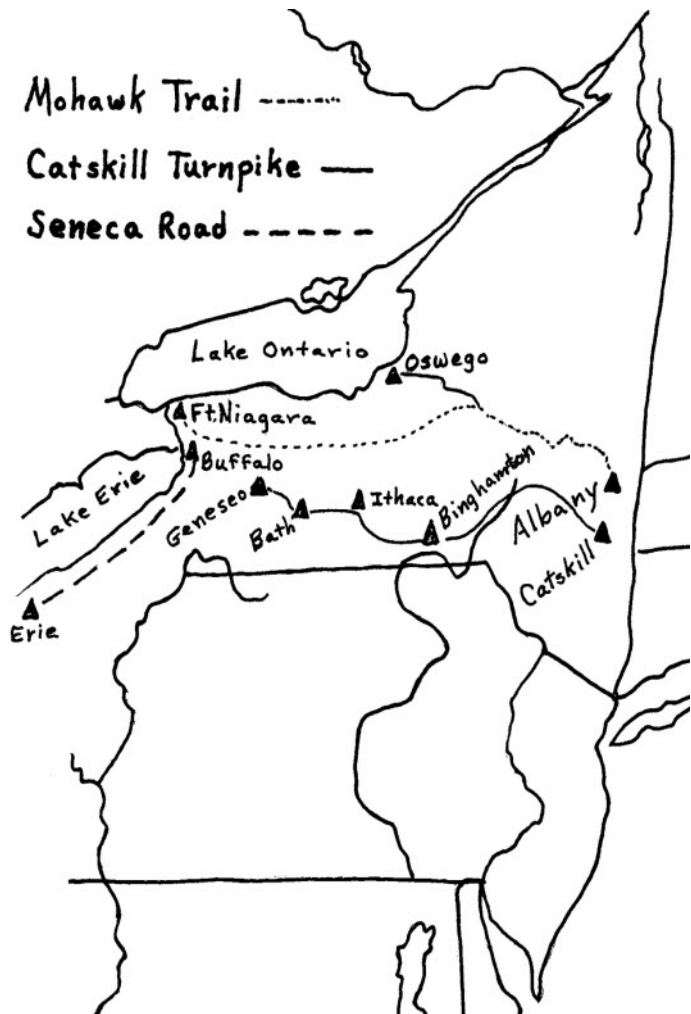
This was the most northerly route through the Appalachian Mountains, leading from New York's Hudson Valley along the Mohawk River to the Great Lakes.

The Erie Canal had 83 locks to raise a canal boat from the level of the Hudson River to Lake Erie. A stone aqueduct of 802 feet arched the Genesee River; two others crossed and re-crossed the Mohawk River. The canal passed under more than 300 bridges. The canal offered an alternative to overland travel across New York and connected to the Great Lakes steamers which could take passengers on to the *Chicago Road* and Detroit.

~ Timeline ~
The Mohawk Trail
(Iroquois)

- abt 1680 French-Iroquois Country is a major stronghold for many years.
- 1725-1750 Pioneers in New York move west through the Mohawk Valley to the Great Lakes.
- 1754-1763 The French and Indian War
- 1770 From Albany to Lake Erie (Buffalo) is a wagon trail.
- 1776-90 From Albany to Lake Erie becomes part of the route followed by Loyalists into Upper Canada, later to become Ontario.
- 1793 Fingers of settlement have extended along the rich Mohawk River leading into western New York. The *Mohawk Turnpike* is opened as far as Utica by 1793.
- 1800 The New York state government charts the Catskill Turnpike (sometimes known as the Susquehanna Turnpike) to run from Catskill to Unadilla. People use it to move west after the Revolutionary War. On their 1775 "Map of the Most settled Parts of Virginia," Peter Jefferson and Joshua Fry labeled this route "The Great Wagon Road" from the Yadkin River through Virginia to Philadelphia distant 435 miles."
 --Parke Rouse, *Planters and Pioneers*
- 1825 From Albany to Lake Erie is the route of the Erie Canal. It was completed in 1825. The Erie Canal was 350 miles long and had 35 locks. It connected Lake Erie to the Hudson River, giving an outlet to the interior and allowing New York to control trade.
- After 1825 A system of side canals connected to the main system, and almost all of New York's frontier roads became a part of this new canal system.
- 1845 From Albany to Lake Erie is the route of the New York Central Railroad.
- 1862 The canal trade had brought such large profits that it was decided to enlarge the canal for greater carrying capacity. Improvements were completed in 1862. As a result, freight costs were cut drastically.

<http://home.roadrunner.com/~gentutor>



Route of the Mohawk Trail

The *Mohawk Trail* of New York, also known as the *Iroquois Trail*, extended from Albany west to near Tonawanda at the eastern end of Lake Erie, where Buffalo is now located. Today's maps show this travel route as the *New York Thruway* (I-90) from Albany west.

- Albany, NY
- Schenectady, NY
- Utica, NY
- Oneida, NY
- Syracuse, NY
- Auburn, NY
- Batavia, NY
- Buffalo, NY (on Lake Erie)

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