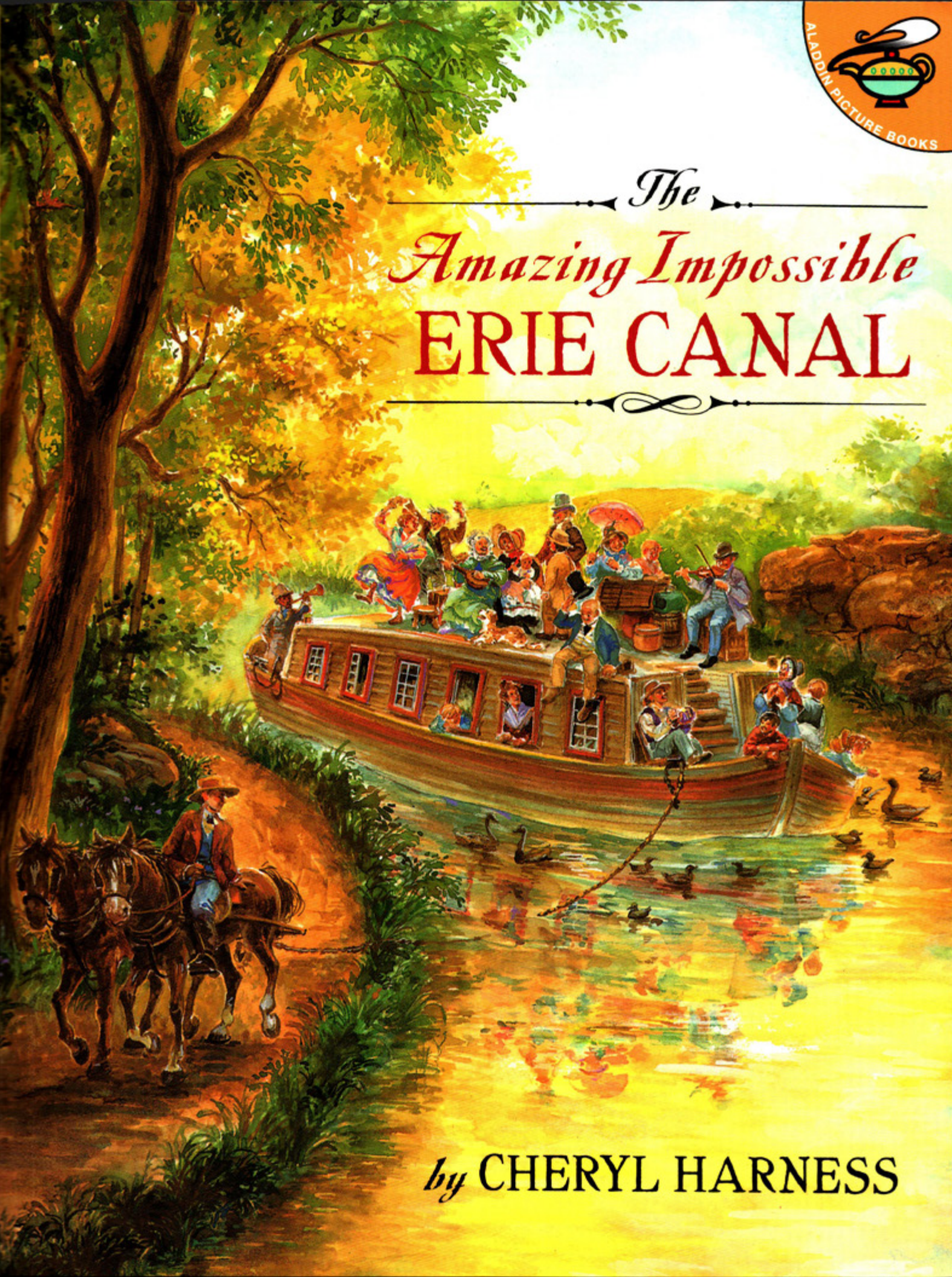


The
Amazing Impossible
ERIE CANAL



by **CHERYL HARNESS**

I wish to acknowledge the assistance of Professor Frederick J. Blue,
Youngstown State University, who helped keep the facts straight;
the inspiring work of the staff at Erie Canal Village at Rome, New York;
Sheryl Woods of New York's Division of Tourism;
and, as always,
I wish to thank Barbara Lalicki,
who edited this book.

First Aladdin Paperbacks edition June 1999

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Aladdin Paperbacks
An imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

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Also available in a Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers hardcover edition.

The text of this book is set in 14-point Janson.
The illustrations were done in watercolor, gouache, and colored pencil.
The music copyist is Christina Davidson.

Manufactured in China
32 34 36 38 40 39 37 35 33 31

The Library of Congress has cataloged the hardcover edition as follows:
Harness, Cheryl.

The amazing impossible Erie Canal / by Cheryl Harness.—1st ed.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 978-0-02-742641-0 (hc.)

1. Erie Canal (N.Y.)—History—Juvenile literature. [1. Erie Canal (N.Y.)—History.] I. Title.
F127.E5H37 1995
977.1'2—dc20 94-11114
ISBN-13: 978-0-689-82584-2 (Aladdin pbk.)
ISBN-10: 0-689-82584-6 (Aladdin pbk.)

Summary: The conception and building of the Erie Canal, the ten-day parade down the canal
led by the *Seneca Chief*, and the effects of the canal on the developing nation.

0620 SCP



This book is for Raymond, my dad;
Kim, my friend;
and Mary Beth, my hero.

CANADA

NORTH AMERICA



WASHINGTON

13 ORIGINAL STATES

GREAT BRITAIN lost most of this land to the U.S. in the **TREATY of PARIS 1783** ending the **REVOLUTIONARY WAR**.

Thomas Jefferson bought this land from **FRANCE** in **1803** for \$15 million.

MEXICAN TERRITORY until **1845 - 1848**

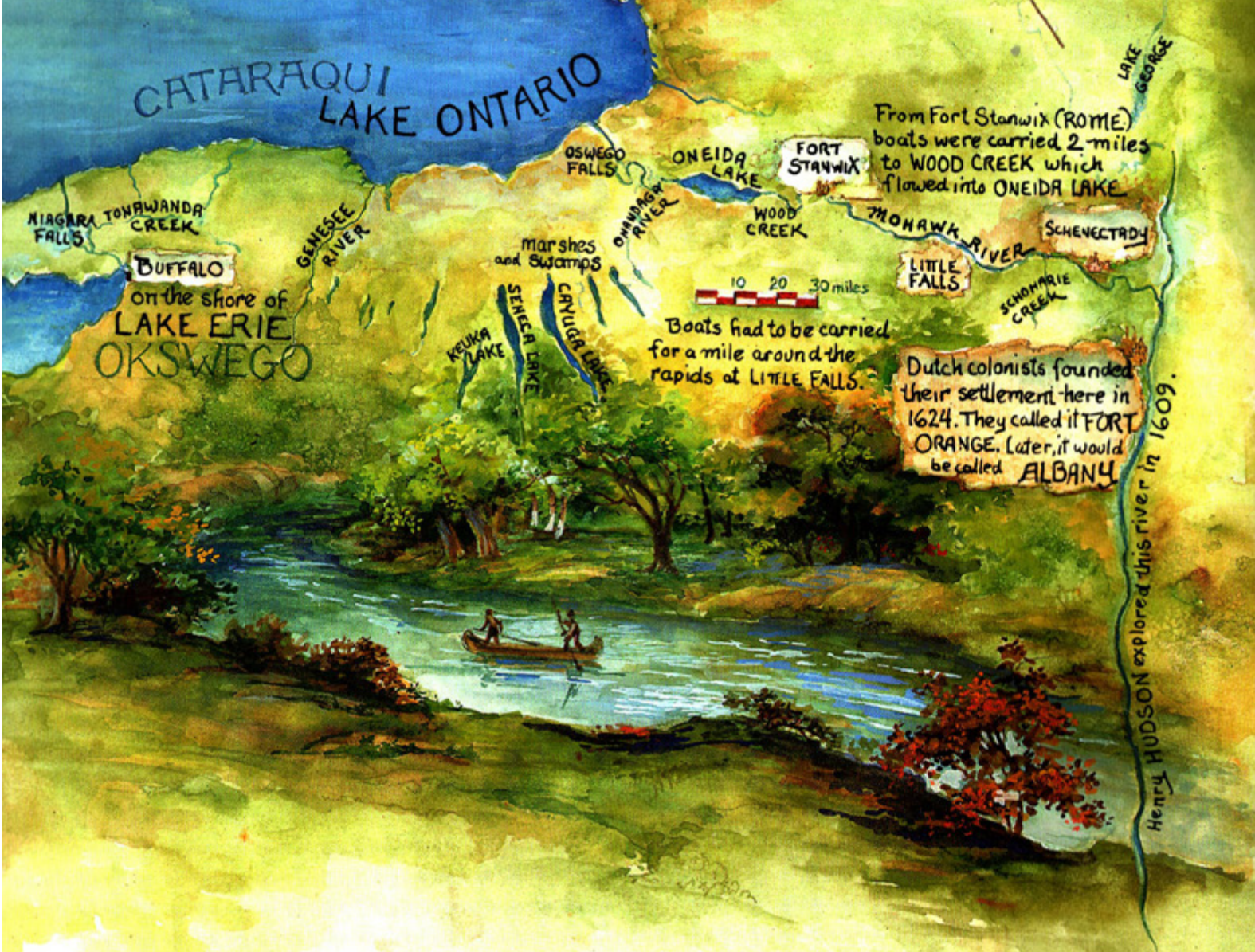
This land was occupied by the **U.S.** and **GREAT BRITAIN 1818 - 1846**



After a second war against Great Britain, the War of 1812, the people of the United States were feeling confident about the future of their expanding nation. Thousands of pioneers struggled over a rough barrier: the thickly wooded Appalachian Mountains that extended down the continent. On the other side was the tantalizing West, stretching clear to the Mississippi River and beyond.

Settlers' wagons jolted miserably down roads that once had been Indian trails. When farmers and fur trappers got to the lonely frontier, they found that it cost too much and took too long to ship apples, flour, wood, and pelts to the eastern markets. Eastern merchants had no easy way to sell axes, plows, and buttons to customers in the West.





It took nearly a month or more to get a barrel of flour from the shores of Lake Erie along the Mohawk Trail to the Hudson River. However difficult, this passage followed a natural gap in the Appalachian range. Since ancient times, native peoples such as the Senecas and Onondagas had floated their light canoes along the Mohawk River, Wood Creek, and Oneida Lake on the way to Lakes Ontario and Erie. They carried the canoes around the rapids, over land, and through valleys where boats couldn't go.

European colonists moved their heavy, flat-bottomed boats on the same waterways. They, too, had to work around the obstructions. Why not connect these rivers and lakes with man-made streams, as in the Old Country? they wondered. Smoothly floating boats could be pulled along by horses walking on the bank. After the War of Independence was over in 1783, George Washington himself championed the idea of such canals: Travel and trade made easy and cheap would hold a young country together. If such a waterway was constructed between the Great Lakes and the Hudson, a person could float from Ohio clear to London! It seemed an impossible dream.

If only the millions of dollars could be raised . . . if only all the engineering problems could be solved . . . a ditch 40 feet wide carrying 4 feet of water could be made to go up and down 363 miles across the countryside. . . . *Impossible!*



IMPOSSIBLE!

When DeWitt Clinton, a young politician, first dreams of building a canal to connect the Hudson River with the Great Lakes, folks don't believe such a thing can be done. But eight long years after the first shovelful of earth is dug, Clinton realizes his vision at last. The longest uninterrupted canal in history has been built, and it is now possible to travel by water from the American prairie all the way to Europe!

Join Cheryl Harness on a fascinating and fun-filled trip as she depicts the amazing construction and workings of the Erie Canal. From the groundbreaking ceremony on the Fourth of July in 1817 to a triumphant journey down America's first superhighway, it's a trip you definitely don't want to miss.



"Harness has done a wonderful job of making the history and construction of the Erie Canal come alive."—*School Library Journal*

"A lively and inviting look at a slice of American history."
—*The Horn Book*

"The book of choice for . . . readers embarking on the topic."
—*Kirkus Reviews*



CHERYL HARNESS has created many wonderful picture books about historical subjects, including *Three Young Pilgrims*, *Ghosts of the White House*, and *Mark Twain and the Queens of the Mississippi*. She lives in Independence, Missouri.

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0699

US \$7.99 / \$9.99 CAN

ISBN-13: 978-0-689-82584-2

ISBN-10: 0-689-82584-6

EAN



50799



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