

Canal Vocabulary

The following lists of words, terms, and concepts have been compiled to provide a working level of comprehension and communication before visiting the National Canal Museum or riding the canal boat ride.

Aqueduct: a bridge filled with water allowing canal boats to cross rivers or other difficult terrains.

Bridge: a structure carrying a roadway over a depression or obstacle.

Canal: an artificial waterway for navigation, for drainage, or for irrigating land.

Canal Boat: a steerable vessel used on canals for transportation.

Cargo: the different materials and objects carried by canal boats.

Coal: a black stony form of fossil carbon that can be burned like wood.

Conch shell: a sea shell used by canal boatmen to signal the locktender that a boat was approaching the lock.

Dam: a barrier built across a watercourse to create a pool of water or to divert water into a race or canal.

Factory: a building where goods are built, assembled, or manufactured, by hand or machine.

Hoggee: pronounced ho-ge. The hoggee was usually a child 6-16 years old. It was the hoggee's job to take care of the mules and walk alongside them all day.

Incline plane: a device developed to haul canal boats over hills. The boat was strapped to a rail car and pulled over the hill on tracks.

Iron: a heavy silver-white metallic element, the most useful of metals. The most common forms are called cast iron, wrought iron and steel.

Lock: an enclosure, or chamber in a canal, with watertight gates at each end. Used for raising or lowering boats from one elevation to another by filling or draining the water in the chamber.

Locktender: a person paid to operate the lock for the canal boat. The locktender's family lived in a house alongside the lock to enable the locktender to work the long days.

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Locomotive: a self-propelled engine, running on rails, used to move cars for passengers and freight.

Manufacture: to make goods by hand or, especially, by machinery, often on a large scale.

Mule: an animal that is part horse and part donkey. Bigger and stronger than a donkey, hardier than a horse, a mule is an ideal draft animal.

Navigate: to steer or travel by ship or boat.

Packet: a special boat designed to carry passengers instead of cargo. Packets traveled faster than cargo boats.

Railroad: a permanent road having a line of rails fixed to ties and laid on a roadbed, providing a track for rolling stock drawn by locomotives or other motive power.

Raw Materials: natural or unprocessed minerals or plants from which useful products are derived or manufactured.

Rudder: a flat movable piece which can be moved from side to side in the water at the back of a boat to steer it.

Steam: the transparent gas created when water is heated to the boiling point.

Steam Engine: an engine driven or worked by steam.

Tiller: a lever for turning the rudder of a boat.

Toll: a tax or fee paid to use a canal, bridge, turnpike or other transportation link.

Ton: a unit of weight, usually 2,000 pounds.

Towpath: a trail on the side of the canal where the mules walked pulling or towing the boat.

Transportation: a means of conveyance or travel from one place to another.

Water Wheel: a large wheel, turned by the movement of water upon it to power machinery.