



Lake Erie

Topic Guide for Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>)

Introduction

Lake Erie, named for the American Indian tribe that lived on its southern shore, is part of the Great Lakes in North America. It is bordered by Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York to the south, Michigan to the west and Canada to the north. The lake provided transportation for fur traders and settlers moving to Ohio in the 1700s and 1800s. After the building of several canals, including the Miami and Erie in 1833, it became connected to other major waterways, like the Ohio River, and farmers and merchants were able to quickly and cheaply transport their goods. This led to increased growth in Ohio and two of its major cities, Toledo and Cleveland, which sit on the lake. In addition to its commercial uses, Lake Erie served (and still does) recreational purposes such as swimming, fishing and, later, diving to examine shipwrecks. Before the invention of modern radar, lake travel was dangerous as ships could be caught in violent storms. These incidents were often reported upon by the press.

Important Dates

- 1850s: The first commercial fisheries on Lake Erie are established.
- 1857: John Steiner, a balloonist, travels across the lake from Erie, Pennsylvania to Canada.
- 1862: Confederate prisoners are kept on Johnson's Island near Sandusky.
- 1870: Cedar Point is opened as a public bathing beach, quickly becoming a tourist attraction.
- 1885: Lake winds cause water levels to drop significantly, leaving some ports temporarily inoperable.
- July 1892: The legendary Lake Erie monster is spotted by the crew of a ship traveling from Buffalo, New York, to Toledo, Ohio.
- 1917: Ohio's Flemming Act is passed, allowing for better governance over wise use of the lake.
- 1919-1933: Alcohol is transported across the lake during Prohibition.

Suggested Search Strategies

- Try searching the following terms as an "all" word search, in proximity or as phrases: Lake Erie, gale, Cleveland, Toledo, Sandusky, Ohio, sea serpent, tidal wave, fishery, ship, storm, steamship, squall, wind, balloon, aeronaut, propeller, Kelleys Island, Put in Bay, island, vineyard, Cedar Point, pirate.
- Some results may be about companies or railroads bearing the name "Lake Erie."

Sample Articles from Chronicling America

- "[A 'Sea Serpent' in Lake Erie](#)" *Perrysburg Journal* (Perrysburg, OH), November 4, 1854, Image 2, col. 1.
- "[Perilous Balloon Ascension](#)" *Daily Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), June 26, 1857, Image 1, col. 3.
- "[Execution of Beall, the Lake Erie Pirate](#)" *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), February 25, 1865, Image 1, col. 5.
- "[A Huge Tidal Wave...](#)" *National Republican* (Washington, DC), June 24, 1882, Image 1, col. 1.
- "[Sea Serpent in Lake Erie](#)" *Evening World* (New York, NY), July 16, 1892, Image 3, col. 6.
- "[The Great Lakes Fisheries...](#)" *Wallowa Chieftain* (Joseph, OR), October 23, 1902, Image 3, col. 2-3.
- "[Twenty Three Die...](#)" *Daily Capital Journal* (Salem, OR), July 25, 1916, Image 1, col. 1-2.
- "[Pounded to Pieces](#)" *Citizen* (Berea, KY), October 26, 1916, Image 1, col. 4.