

Torn-Down Tuesday: When the Erie Canal wandered through the West Side

Many Buffalonians know that the Erie Canal started in Buffalo — at the old Aud site at Canalside. Where it went from there is a little less well-known, but even easier to picture — the canal bed as it ran through the Lower West Side is essentially paved over for a very familiar roadway. Between Erie Street (next to the old Aud site) and Porter Street (next to the Peace Bridge), the Erie Canal ran on the path of what is now I-190.

The Canal was part of life on the Lower West Side, but not in the “low bridge” and “mule named Sal” sense. It was, for intents, a garbage dump. An illegal dump, but a dump nonetheless.

In the 25 years following the snapping of the photo above, the Lower West Side would go through a series of scorched earth “Urban Renewal” type projects that left the area entirely unrecognizable to someone who would have been familiar with the canal.

When the Lakeview Housing Project was announced, residents were told the canal bed would be transformed into a playground for children. If this ever happened, it only lasted for about a decade with the 1950s building of the “Ontario Thruway.”

Gone would be tightly packed “slum areas” like the one below.

This image, probably taken in front of 370 Trenton Ave. near Hudson Street, was provided to newspapers in 1938 as the typical sort of “slums” which would be condemned to build the new Lakeview project. By 1939, Trenton

Avenue looked like the photo below, with 696 units of housing planned, costing renters on average about \$4 per month.

Today, the corner of Trenton and Hudson has gone through another transformation, with a new generation of subsidized housing built there over the last several decades.

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