

### The Erie Canal.

As a considerable portion of Manitoba's wheat crop reaches the seaboard by way of the Erie canal, it will be interesting to many western people to learn something about this great highway of commerce. Greater Buffalo, a monthly publication published in the city whose name has been incorporated in its title, recently issued a special number devoted mainly to the Erie canal. The information given herewith is taken from this publication, as well as the accompanying illustrations.

The Erie canal extends from Buffalo, on Lake Erie, to the Hudson river, thus forming a waterway to the seaboard at New York. The canal is one of the old institutions of the great Empire state, dating back to the early period of the present century.

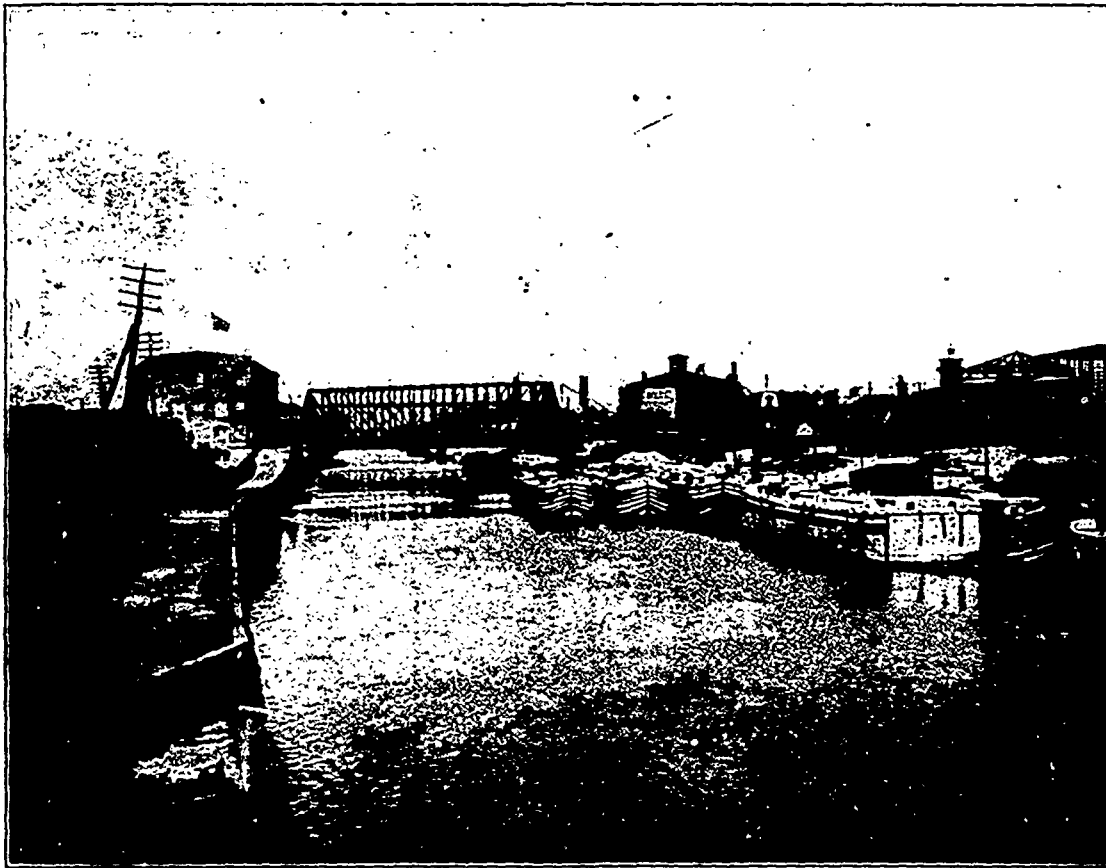
rates to compete with the railways. The inability of the canal to compete with the railways is alleged to be because it is antiquated. The railroads have been improving their tracks and equipments and reducing the cost of handling traffic. Wheat freight rates on the canal from Buffalo to New York have declined from 4.88 cents per bushel in 1882 to 3.30 cents in 1897. With the proposed improvements to the canal it is claimed that wheat could be carried at a profit at 2 cents per bushel. The railways have reduced their rates during the same period from 7.5 to 4.5 cents per bushel, or about double the reduction in canal rates. The railways, on account of quicker service, can always get a slightly higher rate than the canal.

In 1896 it was decided to improve

transportation.

The construction of the old Erie Canal was begun in 1817, and it was completed in October, 1836. The actual cost was \$7,123,000, or about two and a quarter millions in excess of the estimated cost. The length was 363 miles. It had 83 locks. The first enlargement was begun in 1836 and completed in 1862, at a cost of \$14,465,000, or \$11,000,000 in excess of estimates. The enlarged canal has 72 locks, and is 350 1-2 miles long, the original length having been shortened by new cuts. The second enlargement now going on, is expected to cost about \$23,000,000, the estimated cost of \$9,000,000 having already been exceeded.

Though the Erie canal has of late been somewhat under a cloud, apparently owing largely to mismanage-



IMPROVED PORTION OF THE ERIE CANAL AT BUFFALO

Up to 1870 the canal had little to bother it in the way of railway competition, but since that date there has been a fight between the canal and the railways for supremacy. In 1882 canal tolls were abolished and business picked up again, but of late years the canal appears to have had a hard struggle against the railways. Since 1894 the lake trade has steadily increased while the canal business has noticeably fallen off. This apparently peculiar state of affairs is due to the new control of the lake business by the railroads which, within the last few years, have come to be the principal and, in many cases the only receivers and shippers at Buffalo. With the roads controlling lake business and offering low through rates, it is said there must be a reduction in canal

the canal to the extent of \$9,000,000. This provided for the deepening of the canal to a depth of nine feet, or eight feet over sills. It has been found as the work proceeded, that more money will be required. The nine millions have been exhausted and it is now estimated that \$15,000,000 more will be required to complete the work. Against this, however, it is said that the revenue from canal tolls, before it was made free, have paid for all expenditure on the canal to date and there yet remains a surplus of \$20,000,000 to the good. From this it would appear that the canal has been a very profitable enterprise in its day. With the canal modernized to meet the requirements of the present day it will no doubt again prove a great boon to shippers and an unrivalled means of cheap

ment, it has been a great source of wealth to New York state. Many important industries have been established at points along its course and towns have grown up which would not now be in existence if there never had been a canal.

"Head of the Lakes" is the name of a new trade paper coming from Duluth, Minnesota, volume and number one of which has been received.

Bradstreet's says: "Prices of leading staples in December reflected exceptional activity in many lines of trade and industry in a further uplifting of the general level of values, the close of the year finding Bradstreet's prices index numbers not only at the highest point reached in 1898, but at a higher level than at any previous date since October, 1893."