

The E-ri-e Canal

We were for - ty miles from Al - ban - y For -
 get it I ne - ver shall. What a ter - ri - ble storm we
 had one night On the E - ri - e Ca - nal. O the
 E - ri - e was a - ris - ing And the gin was a - get - ting
 low. And I scarce - ly think We'll get a drink Till we
 get to Buff - a - lo - o - o Till we get to Buf - fa -
 lo.

1. We were forty miles from Albany
Forget it I never shall.
What a terrible storm we had one night
On the E-ri-e Canal.

Chorus:

O the E-ri-e was a-rising
 And the gin was a-getting low.
 And I scarcely think
 We'll get a drink
 Till we get to Buff-a-lo-o-o
 Till we get to Buffalo.

2. We were loaded down with barley
We were chock-full up on rye.
The captain he looked down at me
With his gol-durned wicked eye.

Chorus

3. Two days out from Syracuse
The vessel struck a shoal;
We like to all be foundered
On a chunk o' Lackawanna coal.

Chorus

4. We hollered to the captain
On the towpath, treadin' dirt
He jumped on board and stopped the leak
With his old red flannel shirt.
Chorus

5. The cook she was a grand old gal
Stood six foot in her socks.
Had a foot just like an elephant
And her breath would open locks.
Chorus

6. The wind begins to whistle
The waves begin to roll
We had to reef our royals
On that ragin' canal.
Chorus

7. The cook came to our rescue
She had a ragged dress;
We h'isted her upon the pole
As a signal of distress.
Chorus

8. When we got to Syracuse
Off-mule, he was dead;
The nigh mule got blind staggers
We cracked him on the head.
Chorus

9. The cook is in the Police Gazette
The captain went to jail;
And I'm the only son-of-a-gub
That's left to tell the tale.
Chorus

Far from being a sailing song, "The E-ri-e Canal" is a song written probably sometime during the 1800's about life on the Erie Canal. It tells the story of a problem ridden trip from Albany to Buffalo. The canal men were more teamsters than sailors, their main duty being to manage the horses or mules used to pull the barges. The trip between Albany and Buffalo was 363 miles. The canal had 36 locks and an elevation differential of about 565 feet. It opened on October 26, 1825. This system preceded the development of the railways and allowed larger cargos to be carried than wagons. It has been recorded by Burl Ives, Pete Seeger, The Hardtackers and others. This is not the same song as "The Erie Canal", also known as "Low Bridge, Everybody Down" or "Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal" which is a song composed in 1905 by Thomas S. Allen. I learned this song from **The Burl Ives Songbook**.