

The Map that Changed the NEW World: the Erie Canal (200th Anniversary) and Amos Eaton

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ABSTRACT

We draw historical analogy between Simon Winchester's story of William Smith (the first geologic map of England, 1815) with Amos Eaton (the first geologic map of NY and the New World (1818 cross section and 1822 map). Both pioneering efforts share similarities: canal digging creates fresh outcrops, need for geoscientists to evaluate local resources, canal pathways provide vital access to move fuel for the Industrial revolution and manpower to open isolated regions.

Amos Eaton was a traveling lecturer who founded the Rensselaer School for Engineering (RPI, 1824). Like William Smith in England, Eaton suffered many hardships in his personal life. Field work and applied science differentiated the American model of education from pure science education of European traditions. Early graduates founded many state geological surveys in the US which provided energy, critical resources, paving the way to an improved way of life. Many AAPG Eastern Section members will remember Gerald M. Friedman, a modern day Amos Eaton, and a keeper of the flame for practical geoscience education.