Rivers at the Core: How Geography Shaped

the History and Future of Broome County



Broome County's entire development—economic, environmental, and cultural—has been shaped by its geography. The confluence of the Susquehanna and Chenango Rivers not only influenced where people settled, but also how they farmed, traded, industrialized, and now adapt to modern climate risks. These rivers have driven prosperity and disaster, creating both opportunity and vulnerability.

METHODS

- 1. Historical analysis using primary and secondary sources
- 2. Review of Broome County and NY State planning documents
- **3.** Case studies of infrastructure, flooding, and revitalization
- 4. GIS and archival maps for geographic insights

RESULTS

1837: Chenango Canal opens; economic boom

1848: Erie RR arrives; factory cities rise

1972–2011: 4 major floods → \$500M+ in damage

Modern plans focus on parks, levees, green infrastructure



Broome County was built by its rivers—but those same rivers threaten it.

The Susquehanna and Chenango shaped where people settled, how industry grew, and why flooding continues to define the region's future. Understanding the geography is key to resilient planning.

EARLY SETTLEMENT

Native American settlements along rivers

CANAL ERA

Chenango Canal connects Binghamton to Erie Canal

RAILROAD EXPANSION

Erie Railroad enables growth of factory cities

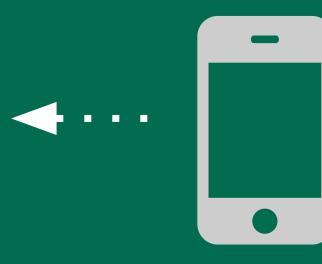
INDUSTRIAL PEAK

Greenway major industries, including IBM

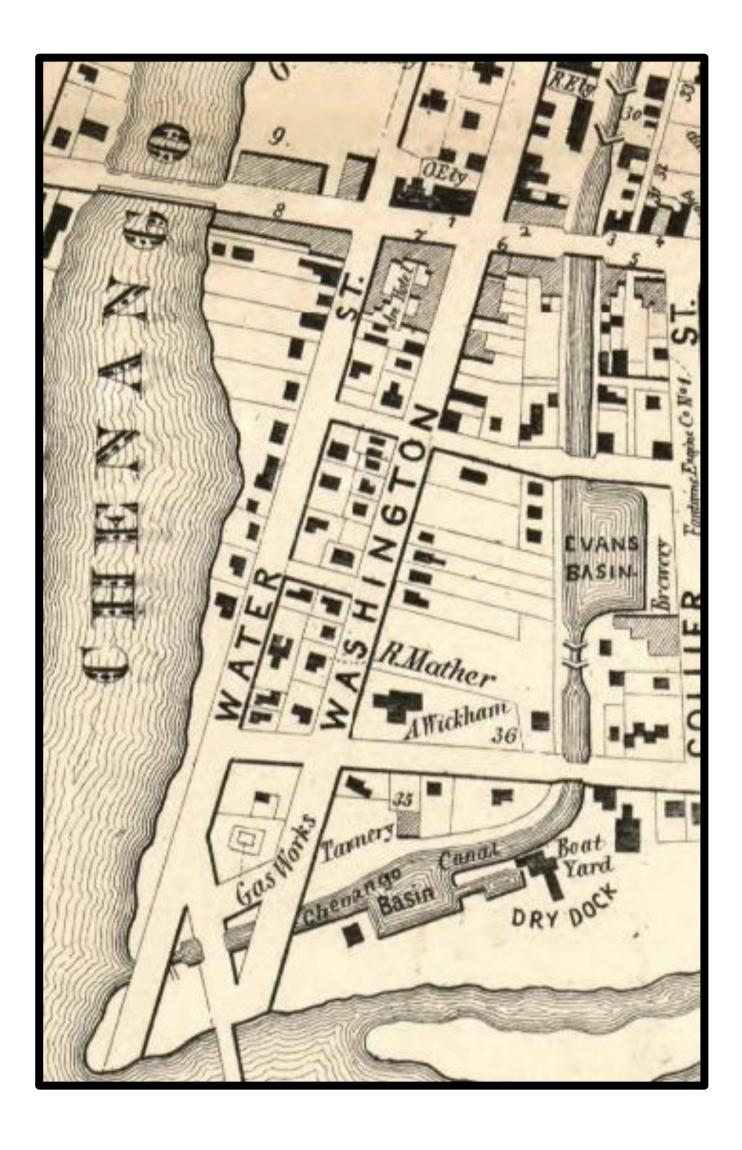
FLOOD EVENTS

Severe flooding causes significant damage





Take a picture to download the full paper



Repeated major floods in 1865, 1935–36, 1972, 2006, 2011

2011 flood: \$500M+ in damages

7,300+ structures affected, major public closures

"The HMP is our roadmap to resilience."

"Hazard mitigation reduces loss of life and property."

2014: Community Risk & Resiliency Act (CRRA)

2023: Mandatory flood disclosure law

2025: New cap on flood insurance requirements

REFERENCES

