



## The Great Lakes Highway

Imagine that it is 200 years ago and you want to open a store in Detroit, Michigan, to sell dry goods to people in the vast **Northwest Territory**. All of your finished goods are made in the East and must come overland by wagons pulled by horses or oxen. It is a long, slow journey and might take weeks or months for the wagons to arrive. Roads are few and often in poor condition. There are some maps, but a traveler would need a compass to keep from getting lost.

Can you think of another way goods could be sent from the cities of the **East Coast** to the trading posts of the Northwest Territory?

**Oliver Williams** had just such an idea! He had opened a store in Detroit and had to make two long trips a year, overland, to get **dry goods** to sell. He knew that ships could travel faster and more easily from Buffalo, New York, to Detroit using Lake Erie as its highway. So Oliver Williams decided to have a ship built.

Williams could receive his goods faster and in greater **quantity** with lake travel. While a vessel would cost a lot of money, she would sail for years and could earn money by carrying passengers and by shipping goods for other stores, too. Travel on the Great Lakes was increasing and more people were moving into the Northwest Territory, creating a demand for more goods.

Oliver Williams had his ship built on the **banks** of the **Detroit River** where other ships had been built. It was ready in 1811 and he **christened** her *Friends Good Will*. Now his biggest problem was to hire the right person to navigate and sail the some times **treacherous** waters of the Great Lakes, where sudden and heavy thunderstorms were a common **occurrence**.

What difficulties do you think you would encounter shipping goods overland during this time? What difficulties might you encounter shipping goods by water? How would you decide whether to use wagons or ships?

### Places and People

#### Northwest Territory

An area of land that was eventually divided into the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

#### East Coast

The most populated and developed part of the United States where most goods were made. The East Coast included the states of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

#### Oliver Williams

Oliver Williams was born in a village near Boston, Massachusetts, in 1774. He decided to have a career in the vast Northwest Territory that included Michigan. He opened a dry goods store in Detroit in 1808.

#### Detroit River

A central point of trade in the Northwest Territory because of its location on the Great Lakes between Lake Erie and Lake Huron.

# The Great Lakes Highway Lesson

Throughout history, the Great Lakes of Michigan were an important trade route for Americans, Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Native Americans. *Friends Good Will* carried items such as furs, flour, dried pork, boxes, barrels, chests, bales, tobacco, whiskey, and wine. Trade, as well as the westward expansion, led to tensions that eventually broke out into the War of 1812. The American victory in that war ended British claims to any lands in the Northwest Territory.

## Quest:

Michigan Core Curriculum Standards and Benchmarks alignment:

English Language Arts: ELA.I.2.LE.1, ELA.V.7.LE.1

Social Studies: SS.I.2.LE.3, SS.I.3.LE.1,3

**Dispatch:** students read and comprehend expository text

Provide a copy of The Great Lakes Highway to students. Assist students to read and understand the story. As a group, use the questions in the text to discuss trade and travel on the Great Lakes. Try using the PMI strategy to develop understanding of transporting goods over water versus over land.

Help students generate all the ideas they can related to the topic by sequentially focusing their attention for an equal amount of time on each of the following:

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| PLUSES(P)       | all the positive aspects and/or ramification of the topic  |
| MINUSES (M)     | all of the negative aspects and/or ramifications of the topic  |
| INTERESTING (I) | all of the aspects and/or ramifications of the topic that simply might be of interest, rather than begin either negative or positive |

## Vocabulary Boggle

Help students learn new vocabulary using this game.

1. Read and spell a vocabulary word.
2. Ask students to write down the word, spelling it correctly.
3. Give students 60 seconds to create as many words with the letters of the vocabulary as they can. For example: Banks can be made into: a, an, as, sank, etc.
4. After 60 seconds, find out who has come up with the most number of new words.
5. Repeat with each vocabulary word.

**Vocabulary Challenge:** students learn to use new vocabulary words

**Dry goods** Textiles and other non-perishable items

**Quantity** Number of items; how many of something

**Banks** The edge of a body of water; where the water meets the shore

**Christened** When a boat is given a name

**Treacherous** Dangerous

**Occurrence** Event

**Rigging** Materials such as ropes, etc. supporting a ship's masts and sails

**Maneuverability** The ability to move quickly and easily

**Geography Journey:** students use map reading skills

1. Display the Great Lakes During the War of 1812 Map.
2. Help students identify the forts and settlements listed on the map. Why would there be forts and settlements in these locations? Could you make a case for any other locations? Why? Why not?
3. As a class, brainstorm a list of the dry goods that would be necessary for survival at these forts and settlements. Which of these items could be made, obtained by trade with Native Americans, or purchased from a merchant?
4. Help students identify routes that merchants might have taken to transport their goods to the forts and settlements (waterways and overland).
5. Ask each student to choose a fort or settlement. Using the map, have each student write directions for a merchant to follow when transporting goods from Buffalo, NY, to his or her fort or settlement.

**What You'll Need:**

- Great Lakes War of 1812 Map

**Commission:** students use research, problems solving, and writing skills

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the best means of travel was by water. There were many types of vessels for a variety of purposes. New vessels were being developed during this period to meet the needs of the military, merchants, and even pirates. These ships varied in size, speed, and maneuverability.

**What You'll Need:**

- Types of Sailing Vessels worksheet

1. Divide students into three groups: military, merchants, and pirates.
2. Ask students to work together in their groups to research and determine the primary uses of their vessel. What would be most important – size, speed, or maneuverability? Why?
3. Distribute a Types of Sailing Vessels worksheet to each group. Ask them to read the descriptions of the different sailing vessels and determine which one would be best for their group.
4. Ask groups to explain to the class which vessel they chose and why.
5. Tell the groups that they are retiring from being the military, merchants, or pirates and they want to sell their ship. Have each group create an advertisement (poster, video, written ad, etc) explaining the desirable attributes of their ship.

**Student self-assessment:**

- ✓ Did you research what the primary uses of your vessel should be?
- ✓ Were you able to explain why you chose the vessel you did?
- ✓ Did you use persuasive language and new vocabulary to sell your ship?



**Exploration:** activities to extend learning



### History:

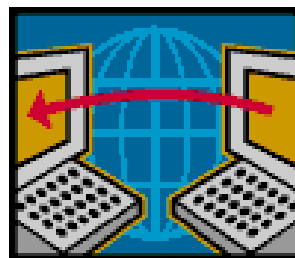
Simulate trade in the 1800s. Provide each student with a different list of random goods they will need, such as furs, blankets, cooking ware, guns, ammunition, tobacco, food, drink, spices, etc. Next provide each student with 10 note cards labeled with one item. For example, one student may be a fur trader and each of her cards has fur written on it. Give students ten minutes to trade with one another to get what they need on their list.

Ask students to think about the game they just played. How difficult was it to get everything on their list? Did they have to travel around the classroom to get the items they needed? What could they do differently to make it easier to trade their items for the goods they need? Play the game again incorporating student ideas of how to make trade easier.

### World Wide Web:

Use the Internet to learn about Michigan made products that are traded today and how they are transported. Try a website such as [www.worldalmanacforkids.com/explore/states/michigan](http://www.worldalmanacforkids.com/explore/states/michigan) to answer the following questions:

- What are the principal products of Michigan?
- What industry has dominated the Michigan economy during the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Why wasn't that true in 1812?
- What are the ways that goods are transported in Michigan?
- What city in Michigan has the most active shipping port, railway hub, and airport? Why do you think that is true?



**Set Sail:** reflection after visiting *Friends Good Will*

Imagine you are a newspaper reporter interviewing Oliver Williams, the owner of *Friends Good Will*. He is a merchant and is planning to use his new vessel to increase his trade on the Great Lakes. Write a news article about why he chose to build *Friends Good Will* and what he plans to do with her. Include quotes that Oliver Williams gives to you as you interview him and draw an image that reflects your new article.



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