UNIT FIVE:  
Chicago Becomes an Inland Seaport

INTRODUCTION FOR THE TEACHER

**Key Topics**  
National expansion, development, infrastructure, commerce

**Objectives:**  
Students will  
a. predict, trace, and analyze the historic process of development  
b. describe the strategic importance of the Portage Site and other Chicago waterways in the national economy  
c. analyze primary sources such as treaties, business directories, government documents, photographs, prints, and newspaper editorials

**Summary**  
Before O’Hare, before the web of railroads, Chicago was known as a great inland seaport. The unit introduces students to the peak of the seaport’s success and then leads them through an inquiry about how development happens. They study each phase, make the connections between social, economic, and political spheres at both the local and national level. Students examine how human actions and decisions account for Chicago’s burgeoning commercial success that helped transform Chicago from a small settlement to a major U.S. City.

**State Goals and Standards Met in Unit 5**

- State Goal 1: A, C
- State Goal 5, A, B
- State Goal 15, A
- State Goal 16, A, C, E
- State Goal 17: A, C, D
PORTAGES

Look at a map of North America. Where are the major seaports? Which of those may be found in the interior of the country rather than its perimeters. Looking at the inland seaports, trace the larger water systems to which they connect.

Find the major transfer points for CTA trains. What are the main features of these transfer points? How would the public transportation system function without them?
LESSON 1

The Inland Seaport

From the mid-nineteenth century Chicago was one of the biggest, busiest seaports in the world—which was all the more remarkable because Chicago is not on the ocean. Chicago’s access to the open sea, by way of the St. Lawrence River, the Great Lakes and the Portage-inspired I & M Canal, gave it the opportunity to become a great inland seaport.

In reporting to the Mayor and Alderman in 1909, J. Paul Goode of the Chicago Harbor Commission stated:

“One of the remarkable phenomena of the nineteenth century was the magical rise of Chicago. From a struggling village sunk in the mud of a prairie creek it rose within the memory of living men to a great metropolis, ranking fifth in the roll of the world’s great cities.

“It was inevitable that Chicago should assume this rank, for Chicago is a city of destiny. The record of the past lies open, and he who will may run the gamut of causes which have worked together in the production of the present metropolis. And if this be wisely done, we shall be in a position to evaluate the resources and forces geographic and economic which condition our future growth. And so we can plan sanely for a long future and for a greater city than has yet been.”

QUESTIONS

What words are used by Mr. Goode that imply he is not a historian? Circle them and explain your reasoning. What is his perspective on Chicago’s past…and future?

What kinds of sources might you use to corroborate Mr. Goode’s report?
Chicago Becomes an Inland Seaport

**PRIMARY SOURCE**
Use the “Looking at Photographs or Prints” worksheet (in Appendix) to analyze the “bird’s eye view” of the Chicago Harbor printed by Currier and Ives in 1892. It looks like the water version of the Dan Ryan Expressway!

LESSON 2

How Chicago Became an Inland Seaport

Chicago emerged as a commercial and industrial center during the 19th century as the boosterish Mr. J. Goode declared in 1909. One of the key elements to its success was its port which connected the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico. What was the historical process that led to Chicago achieving pre-eminence on the waterways? Decisions and actions of explorers, government and military personnel, politicians, investors and speculators all shaped the outcome—despite Mr. Goode’s declaration, it did not happen by “magic.”

Development can happen on a large scale, such as a city or region, or it can happen on a small scale, such as a neighborhood. The image below demonstrates the small scale version. Review it carefully before analyzing the development of Chicago’s seaport.
### ACTIVITY

The historical process of developing a major inland seaport can be divided into the following four phases. Predict what might need to happen in each phase.

1. **Exploration/Finding a Site:**

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2. **Obtaining the Territory:**

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3. **Developing the Physical Infrastructure:**

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4. **Developing a Business Infrastructure:**

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Phase 1: Exploration/Finding a Site

The Chicago Portage Route provided the link between the Atlantic Ocean and Great Lakes on the one hand and the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico on the other. It was known and used by the Native Americans long before Europeans arrived. As a canoe portage it suited the transportation needs of Native American cultures not engaged in large scale trading enterprises. At first, the fur trade of the Europeans was comprised of small operators who could still use canoes to transport goods, but as exploration, trade, and settlement grew so did the demands of investors.

1. Review the primary sources in Units 1-4 for evidence of exploration. See accounts by Jolliet, LaSalle, Hubbard and Franklin.

2. Discuss in class: Do explorers always intend to pave the way for colonization?
In order for colonization and development to occur the area also had to be secured. Many of the area tribes allied themselves with the French against the English in the French and Indian War in 1763. When they won the war, the English then established their “ownership” of the area, though many Native Americans did not necessarily view it this way. When the British gained control of the waterway in 1763, they sought to eliminate commercial competition from the French by establishing forts to license and regulate trade in central and southern Illinois. No forts or European settlements existed in the Chicago area where hostile tribal peoples were able to keep colonists at bay.

The Americans gained “ownership” of the Illinois Country from the English after the Revolution, and although the area was included in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, the new government still did not control the Chicago Portage. American attempts to secure the region for military and economic purposes did not begin in earnest until area tribes were defeated in the Battle of Fallen Timbers and the Treaty of Greenville was signed in 1795. Americans pursued additional treaties in the subsequent decades—some of which were contested among the tribal peoples themselves as they questioned the authority of the signers to enter in agreements with the Americans. Global politics continued to be played out, as manifested by the alliance of tribal peoples and the British during the war of 1812. However, by 1832 the U.S. government succeeded in forcing Native Americans to sign a treaty that removed them from the Chicago area, therefore opening the town to quick incorporation and settlement by migrants from the Northeast.
A treaty of peace between the United States of America, and the tribes of Indians called the Wyandots, Delawares, Shawanees, Ottawas, Chippewas, Pattawatimas, Miamis, Eel Rivers, Weas, Kickapoos, Piankeshaws, and Kaskaskias.

To put an end to a destructive war, to settle all controversies, and to restore harmony and friendly intercourse between the said United States and Indian tribes, Anthony Wayne, major general commanding the army of the United States, and sole commissioner for the good purposes above mentioned, and the said tribes of Indians, by their sachems, chiefs, and warriors, met together at Greenville, the head quarters of the said army, have agreed on the following articles, which, when ratified by the President, with the advice and consent of the Senate of the United States, shall be binding on them and the said Indian tribes.

**Article 1**
Henceforth all hostilities shall cease; peace is hereby established, and shall be perpetual; and a friendly intercourse shall take place between the said United States and Indian tribes.

**Article 3**
The general boundary line between the lands of the United States and the land of the said Indian tribes, shall begin at the mouth of the Cayahoga river, and run ... And in consideration of the peace now established; of the goods formerly received from the United States; of those now to be delivered; and of the yearly delivery of goods now stipulated to be made hereafter; and to indemnify the United States for the injuries and expenses they have sustained during the war, the said Indian tribes do hereby cede and relinquish forever, all their claims to the lands lying eastwardly and southwardly of the general boundary line now described: and these lands, or any part of them, shall never hereafter be made a cause or pretence, on the part of the said tribes, or any of them, of war or injury to the United States, or any of the people thereof.

And for the same considerations, and as an evidence of the returning friendship of the said Indian tribes, of their confidence in the United States, and desire to provide for their accommodations, and for that convenient intercourse which will be beneficial to both parties, the said Indian tribes do also cede to the United States the following pieces of land, to wit:

11. One piece of land six miles square, at or near Loromie’s store, before mentioned...

12. The post of Detroit ....

13. The post of Michilimackinac, and all the land on the island on which the post stands, and the main land adjacent, of which the Indian title has been extinguished by gifts or grants to the French or English governments ... and also, the Island De Bois Blane, being an extra and voluntary gift of the Chippewa nation.

14. One piece of land six miles square, at the mouth of the Chikago river, emptying into the southwest end of lake Michigan, where a fort formerly stood.

15. One piece twelve miles square, at or near the mouth of the Illinois river, emptying into the Mississippi.
16. One piece six miles square, at the old Piorias fort and village near the south end of the Illinois lake, on said Illinois river. And whenever the United States shall think proper to survey and mark the boundaries of the lands hereby ceded to them, they shall give timely notice thereof to the said tribes of Indians, that they may appoint some of their wise chiefs to attend and see that the lines are run according to the terms of this treaty.

And the said Indian tribes will allow to the people of the United States a free passage by land and by water, as one and the other shall be found convenient, through their country, along the chain of posts hereinbefore mentioned... And the said Indian tribes will also allow to the people of the United States, the free use of the harbors and mouths of rivers along the lakes adjoining the Indian lands, for sheltering vessels and boats, and liberty to land their cargoes where necessary for their safety.

Article 4
And the same considerations and with the same views as above mentioned, the United States now deliver to the said Indian tribes a quantity of goods to the value of twenty thousand dollars, the receipt whereof they do hereby acknowledge; and henceforward every year, forever, the United States will deliver, at some convenient place northward of the river Ohio, like useful goods, suited to the circumstances of the Indians, of the value of nine thousand five hundred dollars; reckoning that value at the first cost of the goods are to be annually delivered, and the proportions in which they are to be delivered, are the following:

Article 5
To prevent any misunderstanding about the Indian lands relinquished by the United States in the fourth article, it is now explicitly declared, that the meaning of that relinquishment is this: the Indian tribes who have a right to those lands, are quietly to enjoy them, hunting, planting, and dwelling thereon, so long as they please, without any molestation from the United States; but when those tribes, or any of them, shall be disposed to sell their lands, or any part of them, they are to be sold only to the United States; and until such sale, the United States will protect all the said Indian tribes in the quiet enjoyment of their lands against all citizens of the United States, and against all other white persons who intrude upon the same. And the said Indian tribes again acknowledge themselves to be under the protection of the said United States, and no other power whatever.

Article 6
If any citizen of the United States, or any other white person or persons, shall presume to settle upon the lands now relinquished by the United States, such citizen or other person shall be out of the protection of the United States; and the Indian tribe, on whose land the settlement shall be made, may drive off the settler, or punish him in such manner as they shall think fit; and because such settlements, made without the consent of the United States, will be injurious to them as well as to the Indians, the United States shall be at liberty to break them up, and remove and punish the settlers as they shall think proper, and so effect that protection of the Indian lands herein before stipulated.

Article 10
...Done at Greenville, in the territory of the United States northwest of the river Ohio, on the third day of August, one thousand seven hundred and ninety five.
Wyandots
Tarhe, or Crane, his x mark L.S.
J. Williams, jun. his x mark, L.S.
Teyyahtaw, his x mark L.S…

Delawares
Tetabokshke, or Grand Glaize King, his x mark, L.S….
Moses, his x mark, L.S.

Shawanees
Misquacoonacaw, or Red Pole, his x mark, L.S.
Waytheah, or Long Shanks, his x mark, L.S.
Weyapiersenwaw, or Blue Jacket, his x mark, L.S.

Ottawas
Augooshaway, his x mark, L.S.

Chippewas
Mashipinashiwish, or Bad Bird, his x mark, L.S.
Nahshogashe, (from Lake Superior), his x mark, L.S.

Ottawa
Chegonickska, an Ottawa from Sandusky, his x mark, L.S.

Pattawatimas
Thupenebu, his x mark, L.S. Nawac, fo himself and brother Etsimethe, his x mark, L.S.

Pattawatimas of Huron
Okia, his x mark, L.S.

Miamis
Nagohquangogh, or Le Gris, his x mark, L.S.
Meshekunnoghtogh, or Little Turtle, his x mark, L.S.

H. DeButts, first A.D.C. and Sec’ry to Major Gen. Wayne,
Wm. H. Harrison, Aid de Camp to Major Gen. Wayne,
T. Lewis, Aid de Camp to Major Gen. Wayne,
James O’Hara, Quartermaster Gen’l.
John Mills, Major of the Infantry, and Adj. Gen’l. Caleb Swan, P.M.T.U.S.
H. Lasselle, Wm. Wells, Js. Beau Bien, Jacques Lasselle, David Jones,
Chaplain U.S.S. M. Morins, Lewis Beaufait, Bt. Sans Crainte, R. Lachambre,
Christopher Miller, Jas. Pepen, Robert Wilson, Baties Coutien, Abraham Williams,
his x mark P. Navarre. Isaac Zane, his x mark
QUESTIONS

1. What is a “treaty”? Under what conditions is this agreement drawn up?

2. Who were the agreeing parties to this treaty?

3. What did the U.S. gain from this treaty? List three different ways that Native Americans gave up their claim of ownership. What did the U.S. give the Native Americans in return?

4. What are the conditions laid out for trade between the two peoples? What rights are retained by the Native peoples? What rights are retained by the U.S.?

5. Do you consider the treaty to be fair to both parties?

6. Treaties are signed by authorized “representatives” of the peoples concerned. How can we know if the representatives of either nation were “authorized”? What might be the result if they were not authorized?
ACTIVITIES

1. Research the Native American perspective on the geopolitical alliances and activities of the French, British and American empires.

2. Research the treaties signed between the U.S. government and Native Americans in the Midwest. Place this history within the larger history of expansionism and Indian Removal.
LESSON 2C

Phase 3: Developing the Physical Infrastructure

In 1804, the year in which the construction of Fort Dearborn was completed, Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin reported that if the new interior territory of the U.S. were to be developed, highways, canals and other means of communication and transportation must be built and that the federal government was best equipped to take on these projects. He encouraged the nation to begin developing strategic sites like the Chicago Portage.

In 1836 the state of Illinois began work on a canal, such as was called for by Gallatin and others for decades. It began at the last navigable point of the South Branch of the Chicago River, ran parallel to Mud Lake and connected to the Des Plaines and Illinois rivers where deeper water was more reliable—this would take care of the obstacles at the western end. The canal took 12 years to complete. In order for the canal to prove successful however, a reliable harbor had to be developed on Lake Michigan, the eastern end of the Portage Route.
“The general utility of artificial roads and canals, is at this time so universally admitted, as hardly to require any additional proofs…

“The early and efficient aid of the federal government is recommended by still more important considerations. The inconveniences, complaints and perhaps dangers which may result from a vast extent of territory, can not otherwise be radically removed, or prevented than by opening speedy and easy communications through all its parts. Good roads and canals will shorten distances, facilitate commercial and personal intercourse, and unite by a still more intimate community of interests the most remote quarters of the United States.

1. Great canals from North to south along the Atlantic coast.
2. Communications between the Atlantic and western waters.
3. Communications between the Atlantic waters and those of the great lakes, and river St. Lawrence.
4. Interior Canals…(at)… the Illinois River, which empties into the Mississippi above St. Louis, rises in a swamp, which when the waters are high, affords a natural canoe navigation to the sources of Chicago creek, a short stream, which falls into Lake Michigan…

“The present population of the United States, compared with the extent of the territory over which it is spread, does not, except in the vicinity of the seaports, admit that extensive commercial intercourse within short distances, which, in England and some other countries, forms the principal support of artificial roads and canals. With a few exceptions, canals particularly, cannot in America be undertaken with a view solely to the intercourse between the two extremes of, and along the intermediate ground which they occupy. It is necessary, in order to be productive, that the canal should open a communication with a natural extensive navigation which will flow through that new channel.”
When the Americans gained control of the Chicago Portage Route after the Battle of Fallen Timbers (1794) they established Fort Dearborn at the mouth of the Chicago River in 1803. The fort was burned in 1812 and rebuilt four years later. The American government then sent engineers west to assess its potential for development.

“It is not impossible that at some distant day when the banks of the Illinois shall have been covered with dense population… that Chicago may become one of the points in the direct line of communication between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi; but even the intercourse which will be carried through this communication will we think at all times be a rather limited one: the dangers attending the navigation of the lake, and the scarcity of harbors along the shore must ever prove a serious obstacle to the increase of the commercial importance of Chicago. The extent of the sand banks which are formed on the eastern and southern shore, by the prevailing north and northwesterly winds will likewise prevent any important works from being undertaken to improve the post of Chicago.

“Although at the time there was scarce enough water to permit our pirogue to pass, we could not doubt that in the spring of the year the route must be a very eligible one. Lt. Hopson, who accompanied us to the Des Plaines told us he had traveled it with ease in a boat loaded with lead and flour...When we consider the facts above stated, we are irresistibly led to the conclusion that … it is equally apparent that an expenditure trifling in comparison to the importance of the object would again render Lake Michigan a tributary of the Mexican Gulf. … Of the practicability of the work, and of the sufficiency of the supply of water no doubt can exist. The only difficulty will, we apprehend be in keeping the communication open after it is once made as the soil is swampy and probably will require particular care to oppose the return of soft mud into the excavations.”

“Account by Gurdon Hubbard, 1888


“In the spring of 1828, the Chicago River had a strong current caused by flood, and taking advantage of this the officer commanding at the fort ordered some of his men to cut a passage through the spit of land at the commencement of the bend and parallel with the North side of the fort. It was the work now of but an hour or two to dig a ditch down to the level of the river and the water being let in, the force of the current soon washed a straight channel through to the lake fifteen or more feet deep; but the ever shifting sand soon again filled in this channel and the mouth of the river worked south to about where Madison street is.
QUESTIONS

1. What is Major Long’s opinion about the potential for development of the Chicago Portage? Why do you think it is different than LaSalle’s assessment 100 years before?

2. Why might Gallatin consider the development of the Chicago Portage as a matter of national interest?

3. Should the federal government have become involved in developing Chicago’s infrastructure?
**ACTIVITY**

Review the early reports of Long, Hubbard, Jolliet (Unit 1), and LaSalle (Unit 2) and list the obstacles to the development of the Portage that existed both on the west and east ends.

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Does Chicago still seem “magically” situated or endowed with ideal geographic features? Write a letter to J. Paul Goode explaining your views. Cite evidence.
Solving the Problems of the Physical Infrastructure

In its natural state the Chicago Portage well served Native American commerce with their small cargoes and canoes. But as the fur trade and later agricultural settlements developed, larger boats were needed. As Chicago grew, large boats were needed to bring in and take out huge cargoes of lumber, grain and manufactured items. In 1836, work began on the Illinois and Michigan canal, a development which would eliminate the difficulties posed by the western end of the Portage Site. All kinds of products, wheat, lead, lumber could traverse waterway to Chicago where it would be loaded onto larger lake boats headed for the East Coast and Europe. But the lake boats had to have a harbor and developing the harbor became a focus for those that wanted Chicago to become a major city. Chicago then became a “transfer point” as goods would be unloaded from lake boats onto canal boats and wagons, or later railroads. In 1847, the federal government assumed responsibility for permanently fixing the sandbar problem. Historians think removal of the sandbar ensured the completion of the I & M Canal and Chicago’s role as a major inland seaport during the mid-nineteenth century.

1. Explain in your own words the obstacle at the mouth of the river by referring to the following drawing.

2. Write a description of the land surrounding your school or neighborhood. Make a map of the major routes to the Loop from your school by car, bus, train, or bicycle.
Chicago Becomes an Inland Seaport
In July 1847, a national Harbor Convention was held in Chicago attended by 20,000 businessmen and legislators from across the nation. This was a step forward to garner funds for the improvement of the Chicago Harbor. The following is an excerpt from that convention’s papers.

“Chicago River and its branches with the channel in between constitutes the harbor. The main portion of the river is 3/4 of a mile in length, sixty yards wide and about 20 feet deep. The north and south branches which unite with the river in opposite directions in the heart of the city and have about the same width and depth are navigable....

“The principal difficulty in the way of constructing harbors on the Western shore of Lake Michigan proceeds from the deposition of large quantities of sand at their mouths. A strong and almost constant current passes along the shore of the lake, from the north to the south carrying with it large quantities of sand which it deposits forming bars wherever an obstacle, in the shape of a river, or piers, or any object....

“These evils prior to the present year have found a partial remedy in dredging. But this year that poor consolation has been denied us; the government machine heretofore used for that purpose having been removed last season to a northern port and subsequently sunk. The consequence has been that our harbor has been exceedingly difficult to enter even in favorable weather, and in storms, when its protection is needed, almost effectively closed. Our commerce has suffered greatly and been subjected to the risk of almost total ruin.

“Such a state of things demands a prompt and effectual remedy, particularly at a time when our canal is on the eve of completion and a consequently great augmentation of our commercial interest about to take place. The completion of the canal will divert a large share of the carrying trade of the west in this direction, and a safe and commodious harbor at this place in 1848 will be a matter of the most urgent necessity....

“One fact presents itself to us with startling distinctness at this time. Should the accumulation of sand in our harbor the coming winter equal the last... the spring of 1848 will find our harbor entirely closed and Chicago cut off, even barred from the general commerce of the country.”
Phase 4: Developing the Business Infrastructure

By 1848 the waterway system that began as the Chicago Portage Route had been prepared for shipping larger volumes of goods and products. Chicago was ready to take its place as an “inland seaport”. Before the docking facilities and harbor were completed, large ships had to stand off shore in Lake Michigan, their cargoes loaded onto smaller craft and brought with difficulty into the mouth of the river. But facilities for docking, loading and unloading of ships is not all that is needed for the harbor at the mouth of the River. Business has to be ready to handle the transactions, labor must be at hand to build and repair ships, load and unload cargo, store and sell products. A banking system is needed to handle the transactions, and government, not only to keep the harbor clear of sand, but also to regulate, license and tax the commerce.

What other facilities for the handling of ships and cargo had to be developed? What kinds of trades or services would be needed?
ACTIVITY

Use the photograph analysis worksheet to help analyze this view of the inland seaport. You may also want to refer to the Currier and Ives’ “bird’s eye view” that opens this unit.

Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society.
Identify persons whom you think might be directly involved in the inland seaport business from this page of the 1844 Chicago City Directory. Some occupations may need to be looked up in the dictionary.

How might those not directly involved be affected?

What other kinds of businesses might be established to service the inland seaport trade?

In small groups brainstorm then report back to the whole class.

Brinckerhoff, John, physician, Clark Street office (see card)
Bristol and Porter, forwarding and commission merchants, Cor South Water and State strts.
Bristol, ———, sailor, res. Michigan Avenue
Brock, John, clerk at James Bishops, res James T Durands
Brock, Michael, carpenter 211 Lake Street
Brock, Mrs., straw and tuscan milliner, 211 Lake Street
Brooks, Henry E, ship carpenter, Kinzie Street between Cass and Rush
Brooks, Ths., tailor, Clark street between Lake and Water streets
Brooksohonnedt, JW , cooper, at Tucker’s
Brown, Charles E, laborer on harbor, res S Jackson’s...
Brown, Henry, city attorney, office cor, of State and Dearborn strts...
Brown, Samuel, blacksmith and boarding house 142 Lake Street
Brown, William, attorney office Bank Building, res. cor. Illinois and Pine...
Burdell, Nicholas, musician, house Washington Street b.

Franklin and Wells
Burdick, E, porter, Mansion House
Burke, Patrick, tobacconist, at Henry Chapman’s
Burton, Edward, tailor, 162 Lake Street
Burton, George, sailor
Busch, Franz, wagon maker at Burgess’s
Butterfield, Jonas, captain res Franklin str.
Butterfield, Carver, printer of the Prairie Farmer 112 Lake Str.
Carpenter, Philo residence Randolph Street, Carpenter’s Addition
Casey. John, milkman, res Market Street b. Randolph and Washington Streets
Clarke, H.B. farmer, lake shore, below Michigan Avenue
Clarke, H. W, attorney at Law, Clark Street. Opposite the city Saloon res. Mrs Posts’s
Claus, Joseph, engineer harbor machine, Illinois between Dearborn and Wolcott
Clement, Steven, captain steamboat Champion
Clifford FM, portrait painter, Clark Street
Clyburn, Archibald of C and Hovey res North Branch
QUESTIONS

1. Look carefully at the addresses. Do you notice anything strange about them? What historical question could you ask about them?

2. Why does Philo Carpenter not have an occupation? Find out who he is.

3. The oldest remaining house in Chicago is the Henrik B. Clarke house. Is that either of the Clarkes listed? Which one is it? Find out more information about the Clarke house.

4. How does a modern day directory differ from this one? What kinds of changes in society account for the differences?
ACTIVITIES

1. Return to your organizer where you set forth your problem/solution/tasks associated with the four phases of developing the inland seaport. Compare and contrast with the process explored in Lesson 2. What challenges remain? What solutions were different than you proposed? What more do you want to know?

2. Create three historical questions generated by the primary sources used in Lesson 2. Explain how you might go about finding the answers to each of your questions.
Lesson 3

Inland Seaport Achieved

Work on the harbor continued after 1848, the railroads came, competing with the shipping in products. Railroads were useful for products that needed a faster transport but other cargoes traveled well on ships and barges. Chicago shipping grew rapidly. The first ship bound for England left the harbor with Illinois goods in 1856. It was the Dean Richmond, and carried wheat. Next year, when the first ship left Liverpool bringing English goods to Chicago, Chicago’s transformation from a fur trading outpost to a great Inland Seaport was complete. July 14, 1857 was widely celebrated as the day the Madeira Pet arrived in Chicago’s Harbor. It carried a mix of crockery, china, glassware, white lead, paint, guns and hardware. It departed on August 5 with a load of 3,000 hides.

The following primary sources serve as evidence of the significance of the Madeira Pet’s arrival. Ask your own questions of these documents, then compare to the questions provided below. Which questions help pinpoint the context of the times and the impact of the event?
July 20, 1857
To the Honorable Mayor and Common Council of the City of Chicago:

The undersigned Beg leave to represent that they were appointed a committee by the board of trade of the city of Chicago, to confer with your honorable body, and take such action as might be thought advisable, properly to commemorate the arrival of the Madeira Pet in this city, the first British Vessel which ever arrived in this port with goods direct from Liverpool.

Hoping that you will take action as in your wisdom shall be deemed best, we are very respectfully,

Your Obt servants,
George Steelm John P Chapin, P Anderson, S.Y. Richmond, Wm Bross
“DIRECT TRADE OF CHICAGO WITH EUROPE. —The all-engrossing topic, in monetary and commercial circles, for the day, is the influence, prospective, on the fortunes of our city, likely to be exerted by the direct trade with foreign marts which has within the past season grown from a vague dream into a defined reality. The Madeira Pet has, by her appearance in our harbor, settled the matter, that our neighbors across the water, alive to the importance of the subject, have seized the first opportunity to reciprocate, ‘by a return of the compliment,’ the enterprise of our own merchants, in proffering to them the offer of an interchange of fraternal and commercial intercourse direct, without the aid of our seaboard cities.

“Eighteen months since, and those of our citizens who were bold enough to urge the practicability of opening with Europe a direct trade, with profit to ourselves, were looked upon by the more plodding portion of community as visionary enthusiasts—of the same class as those who recklessly claim that Chicago must, in a few years, rival in extent and importance New York city itself—they were jeered at and their project denominated an empty bubble.

“...The Madeira Pet has given the broad denial to this—those poor sanguine souls have gladdened their eyes by an inspection, at their own doors, of an English vessel—English manned and officered, with an English cargo,—cleared from England’s greatest metropolis, direct for Chicago—her merchandise consigned to our Chicago market for its sale.”
QUESTIONS

1. If the writers were celebrating “direct trade,” how did Chicago send and receive goods from Europe before the Madeira Pet?

2. What was the Board of Trade’s interest in the ship?

3. What is the perspective of the signers of the letter and publishers of the Chicago Magazine toward the arrival of the Madeira Pet? What other opinions might have existed then?

4. Was the Madeira Pet’s return cargo, 3,000 hides, the furs of wild animals (in which case we might question our ending date of 1832 for the fur trade)? Or were they the hides from slaughtered domestic animals (in which case we might wonder if this was the beginning of the stockyard industry in Chicago)? Which do you think? Why?
ACTIVITIES

1. Find a map of the Western Hemisphere and plot the Madeira Pet’s voyage from Liverpool to Chicago.

2. Research the origins and function of the Board of Trade. What kind of impact does it make in the economy and how it changed over the years?

3. One of the signers of the petition is a Mr. Bross, but his name does not appear in the city directory of 1844. Why not? Research who Bross was and the role he and his descendants played in the history of Chicago.

4. What kind of primary source evidence is used to determine the effect and importance of the voyage of the Madeira Pet? What additional sources would you like to examine?
UNIT EXTENSIONS

Location, Location, Location
Prior to the beginning of the building of the Illinois and Michigan Canal in 1832, there were those who thought the better route to the Chicago Portage through the Cal Sag channel which would meet Lake Michigan several miles from the Indiana Border. Gurdon Hubbard convinced the state government to use the Chicago River route by pointing out that the great city that would grow from the canal would be better completely in Illinois rather than sharing with Indiana. How does the development of the I&M Canal relate to the current discussions of the “third airport” for the Chicago area? What does this incident tell us about regionalism, federal aid, and interstate relations?

The Illinois and Michigan Canal
Would Chicago have become a major inland seaport without the Illinois and Michigan Canal? Investigate this historical question. For more information on the I&M Canal

• see the film “Prairie Tides,”
• contact the Canal Corridor Association for curriculum materials and resources at www.canalcor.org
• visit the website at Lewis University, “A Corridor Through Time” at http://216.125.7.15/index.htm
• order a box of the Illinois State Archives documents on the I&M Canal.

What Happened to Navy Pier?
Now that the waterway was complete and the original vision of the Chicago Portage realized, shipping boomed. But a look at the harbor today does not reveal a “forest of ship masts”. Today, there are no cargo boats in our harbor, no docks, wharves, shipyards. Navy Pier is an amusement park, North Pier is a shopping mall.

We began this chapter by taking an end point, the developed inland seaport, and worked backward to see how it was created. We saw the Chicago Portage Route, which had been sufficient for the fur trade, receive a total makeover – the creation of a canal along the Portage Route, the creation of a massive harbor at its mouth. Now take another endpoint, the end of shipping in Chicago’s downtown harbor. What might have led to that result? How did it happen? Where did the harbor move?