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Dams for Towns; The Stagnation of Farming Culture around the Pepacton Reservoir

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Dams for Towns

The Stagnation of Farming Culture around the Pepacton Reservoir
1950 to 2000

New York City’s water supply system is the largest gravity-fed aqueduct system in the world with 19 reservoirs, the largest of which reach up into the depths of the Catskill Mountains. The Pepacton Reservoir, which lies 105 miles from the New York City, is the largest reservoir in the system and supplies 25% of the city’s drinking water.

The reservoir was built in 1955, impounding the East Branch of the Delaware River for 15 miles (24 km) and tearing down four towns: Arena, Pepacton, Shavertown, and Union Grove. A total of 943 people were forced to move from these four rural, agriculturally-based towns.

Across the United States, the communities and social structures of small agriculture died as these rural farms were replaced by large industrial farms. Changes like this are especially obvious in the Northeast because farms were not generally converted to industrial farms.

The mountainous land of the Northeast doesn’t support large agriculture and so rather than a change of technology, the 20th century in the Northeast represented a change in life style.

Two Methods

For Assessing Land Use Change and Economic Shifts in Delaware County

Using ArcGIS, software which allows cartographers to compile and analyze geographic data, we can see the changes that occurred over the latter half of the nineteenth century spatially.

Change in the Number of Farms in Each County in New York State from 1940 to 1990

Change in Land Use around the Pepacton Reservoir Using Satellite Imagery

References and Sources

Land for Imagery from:
The USGS EROS Data System, through the National Land Archive Production System.
Historical census information from:
The National Historical Geographic Information System.
Imagery and background information from:
Delaware County Historical Society, Delaware County Office of Real Property, New York State Geographic Information System.