Why a Canal?

Around 1900, most settlers in this area lived in Seattle, west of two land-locked lakes (now Lake Washington and Lake Union). Most of the region's resources came from forests and coal mines in the foothills east of Lake Washington, resulting in a transportation nightmare. Coal had to be transferred 11 times on its way from mines, around the north end of Lake Washington, to bunkers at the foot of Seattle's Pike Street. Huge, heavy logs had to be loaded onto wagons, which were then pulled laboriously over rough, muddy roads to the mills. But the lure of a canal inspired more than just water transportation of coal and timber. There were other advantages:

- Wharves and ships moored in freshwater escaped wood-boring shipworms.
- Boats could be loaded directly from the docks at anytime, not just at high tide.
- Lake Washington would be available for a naval base. (The idea was later rejected.)
- Developing the extensive shorelines of Lake Washington and Lake Union would fuel Seattle's economy for decades.

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