

THE *LOIS McCLURE*'S NEXT CHAPTER



What's a "canal schooner"?

Canal schooners developed following the completion of the Champlain Canal in 1823, connecting Lake Champlain to the Hudson River. Canal schooners were designed to be able to sail from lake ports to the canal, where masts were lowered and the centerboard raised. The sailing canal-boat could then enter the canal, where it would be towed by mules. Shipwrecks of canal schooners have been found and studied in Lake Champlain and the Finger Lakes.

The *Lois McClure*

The *Lois McClure* is a replica of the type of canal schooner that was built beginning around 1862, known as the "1862-class canal schooner". She's designed based on shipwrecks found in Lake Champlain, and was built in 2002 by a team of shipwrights and volunteers at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum in Vergennes, Vermont. The Museum is shifting its focus, and decided it was time to retire the *McClure*. The *Lois McClure* was donated to the Canal Society of New York State in October 2023.



What's next?

The Canal Society of New York State, founded in 1956, is a volunteer organization for canal advocates interested in education about and preservation of New York's 200+ years of canal history. Among other activities, the Canal Society maintains a Heritage Park in Port Byron, where the *Lois McClure* will ultimately continue its educational mission as a land-based exhibit within a section of the Enlarged Erie Canal in the Park.



The Canal Society of New York State

The Canal Society of New York State was founded in Buffalo in 1956 “to promote interest in the canal and encourage preservation of records, relics, structures, sites, and traces”. We’re a volunteer organization of canal advocates: through our membership we advocate to preserve historic places and objects; we host various gatherings to help people discover the history of the canals of New York and other places; and for over 60 years our members have been collecting and archiving materials that help tell the story of these canals. The Society’s collections are available to researchers who wish to find original source materials.



The Old Erie Canal Heritage Park at Port Byron



Opened in 2016, the Old Erie Canal Heritage Park offers visitors a unique opportunity to walk through Enlarged Erie Canal Lock 52 as well as a chance to visit the Erie House Saloon, Blacksmith Shop, and Mule Barn, directly from the New York State Thruway. Authentic canal structures include the 1853 Enlarged Erie Lock, lengthened for double-long tows in 1887, and immediately east the c. 1895 Erie House Saloon, Blacksmith Shop, and Mule Barn built by

Italian immigrants Pietro and Salvatore Van Detto. Paved trails lead through the lock chambers to the Erie House complex of buildings, so visitors can walk through lock chambers that canal boats passed through in the 19th century.

The park also offers a fully accessible visitors center with restrooms, a gift shop, and informational models and signage that allow visitors to learn about the Erie Canal from its earliest beginnings to the present day.

The Heritage Park is accessible directly off the Thruway (I-90) between Waterloo (Exit 41) and Weedsport (Exit 40) heading eastbound. Driving west, get off at Weedsport and take Route 31 to the Heritage Park in Port Byron. Our dog-friendly park is open daily 9am—6pm May-October.



Join us!

Members of the Canal Society receive the members-only publication *Bottoming Out* twice a year, as well as notifications of all the Society’s trips and events, such as the Winter Symposium, Field Trips, and Canal Conferences.

We’d love to have you volunteer with us, especially as we begin our stewardship of the *Lois McClure*—there are lots of volunteer opportunities with the Canal Society, and volunteering is a great way to meet people with similar interests and learn from one another!

Membership categories

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Please complete this form and mail with check payable to the Canal Society of NYS to:

Anita Cottrell, Treasurer

Canal Society of New York State

7308 State Route 173

Manlius NY 13104

