



# BOTTOMING OUT

*USEFUL AND INTERESTING NOTES COLLECTED FOR THE MEMBERS OF*

**THE CANAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK STATE**

No. 75

Winter/Spring 2024



## BOTTOMING OUT

Published semi-annually by  
The Canal Society of New York  
State

[www.newyorkcanals.org](http://www.newyorkcanals.org)

The Canal Society of New York State brings together canal enthusiasts from across the state, to learn about the history, development and on-going activities associated with the numerous canal systems found throughout the state. Its activities include: the protection of historic canal sites, and features; support for the revitalization of canals, the development of canal ports, recreational facilities, canal trails and other related amenities, and; the presentation or interpretation of canal history and related topics. Founded in Buffalo on October 13, 1956, the Canal Society is a not for profit educational organization, that provides a forum for visiting canal sites around the state and an opportunity for sharing information, and ideas relevant to preserving the history and traditions of the canal as well as promoting ideas for continued revitalization and development of it. Membership is open to individuals interested in learning more about the history of canals and supporting the revitalization of canals. Benefits include two issues of *Bottoming Out* per year, access to individuals with extensive knowledge of canals and the opportunity to participate in any of the field trips to canal sites throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe that are sponsored and run by the Canal Society.

*Individual membership in the Society is \$30/ year and family membership is \$40. You can visit the Society's web site for detailed membership information or use the form in the back of this issue to mail in membership dues today!*

**Bottoming Out** is published twice a year: Spring and Fall. The deadline for the Winter/Spring issue is December 30 and the deadline for the Summer/Fall issue is June 30. Please send material by email to [bottomingouteditor@gmail.com](mailto:bottomingouteditor@gmail.com) or to:

Canal Society of New York State  
P.O. Box 303  
Port Byron, NY 13140

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### OFFICERS

**Craig Williams** *President*  
Stuyvesant, NY

**Dan Ward** *Vice President*  
Syracuse, NY

**Anita Cottrell** *Treasurer*  
Manlius, NY

**David Kinyon** *Secretary*  
Lockport, NY

### DIRECTORS

**John M. DiMura**  
Delmar, NY

**Janice Fontanella**  
Albany, NY

**Ronald Grube**  
Phelps, NY

**John Hatch**  
Henrietta, NY

**William Miles**  
Pittsford, NY

**Lisa O'Hara**  
Loudonville, NY

**Tammee Poinan Grimes**  
Pittsford, NY

**Chris Romanchok**  
Alfred Station, NY

**Darrin Rooker**  
Port Byron, NY

**Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck**  
Rush, NY

**Bill Schollenberger**  
Albany, NY

**Bruce Schwendy**  
Rochester, NY

**Andrea Seamans**  
Port Byron, NY

**William Van Dorp**  
Kew Gardens, NY

### HERITAGE PARK MANAGER

**Dan Wiles**  
Syracuse, NY

## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

**Paul Bartzcak**— *Longtime editor of Bottoming Out, Paul has been a member of the Canal Society for many years and has also served on the Board of Directors. His many contributions to the Society include his ongoing reporting on the Seneca Chief in Buffalo.*

**Tom Beardsley**— *Captain of the Lois McClure for most of her trip from Burlington to Cayuga Lake, Tom grew up on the canals of New York State. He has since pursued dual career paths: in communications and on the water, still serving as part of the team on the Seneca Lake survey project.*

**William H. Havens** - *A native of Cato, NY, Bill now lives in Syracuse and has been active with the Canal Society since the early 1970s with an interest in local history and canals going back even further. Bill is a graduate of Union College and his engineering career, now retired, enabled him to study and appreciate canals in Europe as well as the Erie.*

**David Kinyon**— *Chairman of the Lockport Locks Heritage District and Canal Society Board Member and Secretary, Dave worked in community development and economic development for over 40 years, including over 20 years with Niagara County.*

**Lisa O'Hara**— *A project manager by day, Lisa has been a member of the Canal Society of New York State since 2013 and a member of the Board since 2022. Her enthusiasm for canals began with researching a small canal in the southwest of Ireland in college.*

**Nancy Papish** - *Nancy retired in 2002 from teaching in the Schoharie Central School District after 24 years. Originally and proudly from Ithaca, she now lives in Schenectady and has been passionate about all-things canals for many years. With her late mother, Dorothy, she has tracked down canal aqueducts across Upstate and both have been regulars on our study tours for decades.*

**Bruce Schwendy**— *In addition to volunteering as a member of the Board of Directors, Bruce has served as chair of the Winter Symposium committee since 2015. Bruce retired from a career as a manufacturing engineer with General Motors and has studied NYS canal history for many years.*

**Craig Williams**— *Canal Society Board President and frequent speaker on canal-related topics, Craig retired as senior historian from the New York State Museum after 30 years of service. He also served as curator at the Erie Canal Museum.*

## ON THE COVER...

**Main image:** The canal schooner *Lois McClure* passing through Weedsport on her transit from Vermont to Cayuga Lake, October 15, 2023  
*Image provided by Lisa O'Hara*

**Background image:** 1912 Barge Canal map showing new and existing canals  
*Image from the Canal Society of NYS*

## BACK COVER...

Rendering by Steve Boerner—A flat-bottomed bateau, with two oarsmen and the pilot manning the sweep, waits to pass beneath Joel Northrup's floating bridge on its way down the Seneca River to Cross Lake.

*Copyright 2024 by Steve Boerner ([40x4x28.com](http://40x4x28.com))*

## CONTENTS

Celebrations: 2023 field trips.....	2
The Rescue Tour of the <i>Lois McClure</i> .....	13
The Floating Bridge at the Location of Quimby's Bridge.....	23
The 1840 Plotter Kill Aqueduct.....	34
Remembering Todd Weseloh.....	39
<i>Seneca Chief</i> Nears Completion.....	40
Have a Seat with Lockport's Lock Tenders.....	43
Looking ahead: Winter Symposium and Annual Meeting .....	44
Upcoming Events Calendar.....	44
Bookshelf .....	Inside Back Cover

### A NOTE TO READERS

The Editorial staff welcomes your ideas and thoughts concerning *Bottoming Out*. If you have ideas for articles that you would like to see covered, please pass them along. Or if you have corrections or additions concerning past articles, we also welcome your input. The discussion of history is greatly benefited when people are willing to put forth their thoughts and findings.

### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES FOR BOTTOMING OUT.

It is the intent of the Canal Society to provide its members and the canal community a scholarly journal, containing in-depth and well-researched articles. All authors or submitters should keep the following in mind:

- 1) All articles should contain as full a citation that is possible. The standard citation is the Chicago method, but there are times that this might not be possible. Our goal is to provide the canal community and other researchers with the best possible reference which could serve as the foundation for additional study.
- 2) You can also send in historic newspaper articles. If you run across an interesting piece from an old newspaper, you can submit it as long as you can provide the name of the paper and date of publication.
- 3) The Canal Society reserves the right to refuse any material we feel does not fit the mission of the Society.
- 4) In all cases, you must provide your name, address and email on all submitted material. This is required in case the editor of *Bottoming Out* needs more information or clarification.



# CELEBRATIONS: 2023 STUDY TOURS

By Lisa O'Hara

## SPRING 2023 STUDY TOUR: A CELEBRATION OF THE CANAL SOCIETY'S NEW SAMUEL CENTER FOR CANAL HISTORY

The spring 2023 field trip, held Sunday April 23<sup>rd</sup> and Monday April 24<sup>th</sup>, centered around a celebration of the new Samuel Center for Canal History in Port Byron, minutes away from the Old Erie Canal Heritage Park at Port Byron. For any members that may not already be aware, the Canal Society purchased the former St. John's Catholic Church in Port Byron in 2022, which gives the Society year-round event space as well as space to keep all its collections in one place.



Fig. 1: Presentation by Craig Williams in the Samuel Center  
*Image provided by the author*

Sunday morning was due to start with a bicycle ride, followed by the dedication of the new Tom Grasso Memorial at the Erie House (in the Old Erie Canal Heritage Park) at 1pm. As might be expected, the dedication of the Tom Grasso Memorial was well attended; the new memorial features a bench-size piece of "fossiliferous" Oriskany sandstone, along with a sign noting his dedication to the Society and the Park.

Following refreshments in the Erie House, the gathering moved on to the Samuel Center for Canal History for tour



Fig. 2: Owasco Creek aqueduct remains  
*Image provided by the author*

registration and an introduction to the new Center by Park Manager Dan Wiles. Craig Williams also presented an overview of the sites we would visit on the Monday tour and some of their history (Fig. 1). All were then led to the Owasco Creek, behind the Center, to look over the edge at the remains of an arch of the 1819 Owasco Creek aqueduct from the original Erie Canal that passes under the parking lot (Fig. 2). Crossing the street, we had an opportunity to explore the remains of the 1876 Feeder, with special thanks to the Rooker family for letting tour attendees explore the structures on their property.

That evening we had a delicious dinner at the headquarters hotel, the Holiday Inn in Auburn. The presenter that evening was William Kappel, scientist emeritus for the U.S. Geological Survey, with a presentation on "The Ups and Downs of Cayuga Lake" based on his background studying the hydrogeology of upstate New York. Cayuga Lake would be a tour stop the next day and learning about the interaction between the local geology and groundwater, and



Fig. 3: Tour attendees with staff at the Oakwood Quarry  
*Image provided by the author*

its effects on the lake, provided an interesting additional perspective to the tour.

Monday morning, we all boarded the bus by 8:30am to head off to Oakwood Quarry, where we learned about current operations at the quarry as well as learning about DeWitt Clinton's tour of the area in 1810. Kudos to our Onondaga Coach Tours driver, who very capably drove us down into the main operational area of the quarry so we could get a good look at the operations (Fig. 3).



Fig. 4: Touring Beacon Bay Marina  
*Image provided by the author*

After an informative and enjoyable visit where members of the Cayuga Nation welcomed us to Union Springs, we made our way to Cayuga Lake for a tour of Beacon Bay Marina (Fig. 4). The tour included an explanation of the history of development on the former Beacon Milling Company site and the opportunity to explore the facilities at the marina. The owners had also brought out a variety of photos of the site over the years for us to look at in a covered space outside (that also serves as the break room on site).

Cayuga-Seneca Barge Canal Lock 1, and the taintor gates on the far side of the lock, was our next stop and for canal structures this site has plenty. After an overview of the site as it is today and the locations of the Cayuga-Seneca enlarged locks, we crossed the gates at Lock CS-1 to go take a walk across the taintor gate dam, not something typically open to the public. It was incredible to see the power of the water rushing through as we walked across above.

Returning to the bus, we were welcomed at the United Methodist Church of Port Byron for a satisfying lunch where every detail was thought of, even down to





Fig. 5: Crossing the taintor gate dam at CS-1  
Image provided by the author

folded boats of M&Ms for a treat!

Schasel Park, our next stop on the tour, allowed us an opportunity to see part of a rewatered section of the Enlarged Erie Canal between Port Byron and the Centerport Aqueduct. Gathering first in the pavilion, Ken Avery, a design engineer from Bergmann Associates, spoke to us about the plans for the rewatering project. After a brief discussion, we were able to walk up a bit along the Empire State Trail, the bike/hike path that follows the old Enlarged Erie towpath along this section of the canal. It was a beautiful spot on a fine spring day, with trees flowering in the park.

We had enough time on our way back through Port Byron to stop at the Old Erie Canal Heritage Park before season opening for a look around the visitor center and gift shop, which was a great opportunity for members who hadn't visited recently – or perhaps at all – to see the facilities, models, and interpretation at the Visitors Center (Fig. 8).



Fig. 6: Visiting the Old Erie Canal Heritage Park at Port Byron  
Image provided by the author



Fig 7: Exploring the Richmond Aqueduct at Montezuma Heritage Park  
Image provided by the author

Our final stop at the Montezuma Heritage Park was another site with many points of interest; anyone who wished was given a ride on park-provided ATVs along the towpath trail. A short diversion off the trail to the aqueduct takes you to an original Erie Canal lock; further onward, the Richmond Aqueduct is an impressive structure to see (and walk on!) (Fig. 9). There was a light rain for the very end of our visit, but we were otherwise fortunate that the weather mostly cooperated with our plans.

*Text continues on page 7.*





Fig. 8: Craig Williams speaks at the dedication ceremony for Tom Grasso's memorial at the Old Erie Canal Heritage Park in Port Byron  
*Image provided by Ted Olsen*



Fig. 9: Tom Grasso's memorial stone at the Heritage Park  
*Image provided by Ted Olsen*



Fig. 10: The Samuel Center for Canal History  
*Image provided by the author*



Fig. 11: Approaching the 1876 Feeder structures  
*Image provided by Ted Olsen*





Fig. 12: Meeting members of the Cayuga Nation at Union Springs  
Image provided by Steven Talbot



Fig. 13: Viewing historic photographs of the site at Beacon Bay Marina  
Image provided by Steven Talbot



Fig. 14: Approaching Lock CS-1  
Image provided by the author



Fig. 15: Looking at the lock models in the Visitors Center at the Old Erie Canal Heritage Park at Port Byron  
Image provided by the author





Fig. 16: Reviewing plans at Schasel Park  
*Image provided by the author*



Fig. 17: Exploring Schasel Park  
*Image provided by Steven Talbot*



Fig. 18: Richmond Aqueduct at Montezuma Heritage Park  
*Image provided by Steven Talbot*



Fig. 19: Attendees on the Richmond Aqueduct at Montezuma Heritage Park  
*Image provided by the author*



## THE CHAMPLAIN CANAL BICENTENNIAL: A FALL STUDY TOUR

Two hundred years to the day after the arrival of the first canal boat to enter the Hudson River at Albany, the Canal Society Fall Study Tour October 6-8<sup>th</sup> celebrated the bicentennial of completion of the Champlain Canal with a full weekend of activities from Albany to Fort Edward and the Glens Falls Feeder Canal.

The weekend started on Friday, October 6<sup>th</sup>, with a visit to the Scarano Boat yard in the Port of Albany. The morning started grey and with very light rain as we gathered in the parking lot at the boatyard, which is at the south end of the port of Albany, past grain silos and recycling operations. Scarano Boat is a nationally recognized boat-building operation that has been on the Albany waterfront for decades, and we were fortunate to be given a tour of the facility that morning by John Scarano, company president and lead designer. After a brief overview of the history of the company, we were brought past the design offices and as we walked down the hallway to the main operations, we were told about the various boats featured in photos on the walls, including the *Adirondack* and *America* and New York City Harbor cruise boat *Manhattan*. Society members may recognize their work in boats like Rochester's *Riverie* and the *Charles F.*



Fig. 20: John Scarano speaks about boats his company has built  
Image provided by Steven Talbot

*Mercer* at the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historic Park. We were given a very thorough tour of the boat building facility, from their hardware/tool storage through boatbuilding areas and sailmaking space. John Scarano was very generous with his time, answering questions from attendees and sharing examples of the various stages of work in the boatyard.



Fig. 21: Walking tour of Waterford with Town Historian Russ VanDerVoort  
Image provided by Ted Olsen

After the visit to the Scarano Boat yard, attendees were free to make their own arrangements for lunch and start to make their way towards Waterford for the afternoon's activity. At 2pm Friday afternoon we gathered at Erie Barge Canal Lock 2, near the Old Champlain Canal Sidecut, for a walk with Waterford town historian Russ VanDerVoort. It was the last weekend of the 2023 regular season on the Barge Canal, so we happened to be gathering just as a group of boats departing the Erie Canal heading east were entering Lock E-2. Naturally, the walking tour was delayed by several minutes as all stopped to watch the boats lock through on what had become a beautiful warm, sunny afternoon. The walking tour highlighted sites of interest along the Old Champlain Canal, including the sidecut and a weighlock that's located across Broad Street from lock E-2, a task made even easier with use of the paved trail next to the old canal, and a number of old photographs were shared with the group. A visit to the *Day Peckinpaugh*, tied up near lock E-3, finished off the walking tour, with a group photo and some discussion of the *Peckinpaugh*'s history and its future.

That evening tour attendees gathered at the visitor center at Peebles Island State Park, located just across the Mohawk River from Waterford Harbor, for an orientation presentation by Craig Williams highlighting the history around many of the sites we would be visiting on the bus tour the next day. We also received information about the Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway for those that were interested in doing some additional exploring in the area, courtesy of Nancy Papish, and were given the chance to obtain copies of the Champlain Canal gazetteer put together by Steven Talbot.

The wet October weather didn't put a dampener on activities as attendees gathered first thing Saturday morning at the *Dutch Apple* Cruises parking lot on the Albany riverfront – although the bus being a little behind schedule did start to cause some concern. After a slight delay we were safely headed north for our first stop along the Champlain Canal: an extensive and very informative tour of the historic Mechanicville Hydroelectric Plant, built in 1897, with Albany Engineering Corporation president Jim Besha. Our planned next stop at the Old Champlain Canal section by Wilbur Road was canceled due to a combination of illness on the part of our guest speaker from the Audubon Society and in the interests of time; attendees were encouraged to explore the spot on their own, where (with reference to the maps provided in the tour guidebook) you can clearly see the path of both the original Champlain Canal and the enlargement.

We continued on to the new Champlain Canal Regional Visitors Center in the village of Schuylerville for a brief introduction from Kate Morse, Executive Director of Hudson Crossing Park, and a look around at the new



Fig. 22: Hudson Crossing Park Executive Director Kate Morse talks to tour attendees at the Visitors Center  
Image provided by the author



visitors center. The visitors center is a Dutch timber frame style building built by the Timber Framers Guild that still smelled of freshly cut wood, and the approach of the center is to provide information on the history and attractions of the area to encourage visitors to go out and participate in all that the area has to offer. Attendees also got an opportunity to speak to Revolutionary War reenactors outside the visitors center, as our tour coincided with the Saratoga Siege Weekend commemorating the Battle of Saratoga, the turning point of the American Revolution.

From there, tour stop number 3 at Champlain Barge Canal Lock C-5 allowed attendees a glimpse of the road into Hudson Crossing Park, so that they might return the next day to explore at their own pace. There was much else to see by the Barge Canal, with a stop first at the junction lock, which connected a portion of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Champlain Canal into Schuylerville with the Champlain Barge Canal; the junction lock and section of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Champlain Canal was still used locally into the 1950s. We continued into the powerhouse at Lock C-5 for a closer look at the equipment that generated the electricity on-site to power the equipment to run the lock (there not having been a National Grid hookup available in 1915).



Fig. 23: Looking around the Lock C-5 powerhouse in Schuylerville  
*Image provided by the author*

Back on the bus and crossing the Northumberland bridge, we ventured into Fort Miller past Lock C-6 for a look (from the bus) at a remaining Groton Bridge Company bridge over the canal from the early 1900s. A section of the Old Champlain Canal runs through private property by the Moses Kill, and for our next stop we had been given permission by the owner to visit the property to see the old general store, ice house, and line barn that still stand near the old canal prism. The general store is very similar to the Erie House, and sits



Fig. 24: Craig Williams addressing tour attendees at the Old Champlain Canal line barn in Fort Edward  
*Image provided by Steven Talbot*

near the section of the enlarged Champlain Canal from the late 1800s that's clearly visible running through the property. The property owner, Frank Burkhardt, also generously shared photographs that belonged to his family depicting the old Champlain Canal and construction of the Champlain Barge Canal.

After that we were on to the Fort Edward Firehouse, where we enjoyed a delicious lunch and remembered the late Fred Godfrey, long time Society member who was also active with the Fort Edward Fire Department. We were encouraged to visit a small exhibit related to the Champlain Canal in the Canal Street Marketplace, adjacent to



Fig. 25: Tour attendees speak with Pattie Simone, Executive Director of the Glens Falls Feeder Canal Alliance, at the Five Combine Locks  
*Image provided by the author*

the firehouse. Over lunch we also were able to meet Pattie Simone, Executive Director of the Glens Falls Feeder Canal Alliance, and Pamela Landi, a member of the Board of Directors of the Glens Falls Feeder Canal Alliance. That brought us to our next stop, at the Five Combine Locks on the Glens Falls Feeder Canal, where we learned more about the history of the feeder canal and the activities of the Glens Falls Feeder Canal Alliance. Our final stop at Rogers Island Visitors Center in Fort Edward gave everyone a chance to get off their feet in the audio-visual room for a few minutes and to explore the extensive collections on display.

Returning to Albany, we were able to board the *Dutch Apple* for a cruise on the Hudson River; unfortunately the weather wasn't as pleasant as one might have hoped, but everyone seemed to enjoy the lively music and dancing, as well as the opportunity to view the Albany waterfront from the river.



Fig. 26: Meeting the captain on the *Dutch Apple*  
*Image provided by the author*

The sun was shining and temperatures much milder Sunday morning for the bicentennial performance of the *Grand Canal March* at Jennings Landing on the Albany waterfront, funded in part through the generous support of the NYS Canal Corporation and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. On arriving at the site we discovered that the City of Albany had issued 2 permits for the same time, with the Albany Symphony Orchestra's brass quintet setting up next to an awards tent for the Mohawk Hudson River Marathon, organized by the Hudson Mohawk Road Runners Club. Good humor prevailed and the quintet was able to perform the *Grand Canal March* and selection of canal music only slightly behind schedule, attracting additional attention from runners and their families who lingered to listen to the musical performance.



The final scheduled activity of the weekend was a return to Washington County and a visit to Battenkill Fibers, a mill in Greenwich that processes fleece from all over the country and spins it on refurbished historic machinery to turn it into yarn. The tour was excellent – owner Mary Jeanne Packer gave attendees the history of the mill along with the background of the refurbished machinery and walked us through the complete process of turning the fleece as sheared from a sheep into yarn. After that, attendees were encouraged to visit any of a number of other attractions in the vicinity of Schuylerville, particularly Hudson Crossing Park (less than 10 minutes’ drive from the mill’s location in Greenwich).



Fig. 27: Albany Symphony Orchestra brass quintet performing the “Erie Canal March” 200 years after its first performance on the Albany Waterfront  
*Image provided by Steven Talbot*



Fig. 28: Mill owner Mary Jeanne Packer talks to tour attendees at Battenkill Fibers  
*Image provided by the author*

***For more information, please see:***

Canal Society 2023 Study Tours webpage:  
<https://newyorkcanals.org/2023-field-trips>

Montezuma Heritage Park:  
<https://townofmontezuma.org/visit-the-park/>

Scarano Boat Building:  
<https://www.scaranoboat.com/>

Hudson Crossing Park:  
<https://www.hudsoncrossingpark.org/>

Glens Falls Feeder Canal Alliance:  
<https://feedercanal.org/>

Battenkill Fibers:  
<https://www.battenkillfibers.com/>



Fig. 29: Learning about how the mill machinery works  
*Image provided by the author*



Fig. 30: Touring Scarano Boat yard  
*Image provided by Steven Talbot*



Fig. 31: Tour attendees at Scarano Boat yard  
*Image provided by Steven Talbot*



Fig. 32: Group photo in front of the Day Peckinpugh, Waterford  
*Image provided by the author*



Fig. 33: Tour of the historic Mechanicville Hydroelectric Plant  
*Image provided by the author*





Fig. 34: Touring the Mechanicville Hydroelectric Plant  
*Image provided by Ted Olsen*



Fig. 35: At the Junction Lock in Schuylerville  
*Image provided by the author*



Fig. 36: At the line barn in Fort Edward attendees had an opportunity to view the property owner's extensive collection of photographs of the Old Champlain Canal and the building of the Champlain Barge Canal  
*Image provided by Ted Olsen*





Fig. 37: Tour attendees with Pattie Simone, Executive Director of the Glens Falls Feeder Canal Alliance, at the Five Combine Locks in Hudson Falls  
*Image provided by the author*



Fig. 38: Door on the line barn in Fort Edward showing raised lettering where a painted sign advertised to passing boats on the Old Champlain Canal  
*Image provided by Steven Talbot*



Fig. 39: The brass quintet of the Albany Symphony Orchestra plays "The Grand Canal March" exactly 200 years after it was first played on the Albany waterfront to welcome the first canal boats and celebrate the completion of the Champlain Canal in 1823  
*Image provided by Gary Gold/ASO*



Fig. 40: Enjoying the performance of the Brass Quintet of the Albany Symphony Orchestra  
*Image provided by the author*



## THE RESCUE TOUR OF THE *LOIS MCCLURE*

By Tom Beardsley

If you haven't had a chance to learn about the latest acquisition of the Canal Society yet, then just understand what an amazing gift came to the arms of the organization in late fall, 2023.

The *Lois McClure*, flagship of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum for just over 20 years, toured the canals of New York State, the Hudson and St. Lawrence Rivers and of course, Lake Champlain for years, logging thousands of miles. The *Lois* was built by the museum over a multi-year period beginning in 2002, but actually the concept began much earlier.

This 88' long ship is a sailing canal schooner, lofted from similar boats built for the enlarged canals and in service in the 1860's. Two wrecks, discovered on the bottom of Lake Champlain off the Burlington seawall, became the models. Hundreds of dives by museum archaeologists, measurements, photographs, and drawings became working drawings by marine architects. Shipwrights were taught how to dive and, when escorted to the wrecks, they were able to take a look and, in the words of one, "finally got it."

The *Lois* is authentic as it can be, while still meeting the needs and requirements of the museum's goals. Those goals were to show the world, through the eyes of thousands along the navigable waterways of Vermont, New York, south-eastern Ontario and south-western Quebec, how inland navigation along the rivers, canals, and lakes shaped the area's destiny.

Many members of the Society remember the *Lois* tours, always accompanied by a 32' wooden tugboat called *C.L.*



The *Lois McClure* at Hudson Crossing Park, Schuylerville, 2014  
Image courtesy of Hudson Crossing

*Churchill*, stopping in canal towns, at river wharves and lake ports. The pair hosted hundreds of thousands through the years, interpreting the history of canals and 19<sup>th</sup> century trade. The last major tour, in 2018, was with the Corning Glass Museum's "Glass Barge" as Corning celebrated 150 years of history and its move from Brooklyn to Corning along the New York State Canal System.

In 2019, the *Lois* didn't travel much. There was a modest tour along the Champlain basin, staying home most of the time at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum. At the same time, the administration of the museum was changing and so was the interest in the boat as a flagship. With that change – and a bothersome worldwide pandemic in 2020 and 2021 – maintenance took a back seat. *Lois* stayed in the water, moving in the spring from Basin Harbor Marina around the point and to the museum dock space in their own cove. Ramps were set for boarding, but the boat seldom saw visitors. In the fall, the boat was moved back for winter storage at Basin Harbor only to repeat the process through the seasons and into the summer of 2023.

Throughout that time, there was discussion by the museum on what to do with the boat. In spite of the museum's rise in stature and growth since its launching, to some it was an albatross. Serious plans were made to simply cut the boat into pieces and maybe display just a part of it on the lawns of the museum. There were state legislative hearings, press articles, protests, letter campaigns and more. It seemed everyone was urging the museum to halt those plans. At least, the plans were put on hold.

It always seems it is the efforts of a handful who save a movement, an artifact, a structure or somehow a piece of time from which the rest of us learn. It was that case with the *Lois*. Former crew members stayed in touch, the central figure seeming to be the museum's Director-Emeritus and founder, Art Cohn.

However it all worked, Art got the ear of Canal Society president Craig Williams and a fading ember of hope sparked into a plan.

In 2023, the Buffalo Maritime Center, building a replica of DeWitt Clinton's *Seneca Chief*, found a way to acquire the *C.L. Churchill*. The tug had been on the hard for almost four years. The engine



Then-Director of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum Susan Evans McClure leads Canal Society President Craig Williams for a tour of the *Lois McClure*, August 2022  
Image by Lisa O'Hara

hadn't been run, but the BMC was determined and they were convinced they could make it work. They were actually planning on trailering the boat to Buffalo from the museum in Vermont.

But, the *Lois* was in question. If it went to the Canal Society, it would move by water to Central New York. From there, it would be easier to move it overland to a permanent home, intact but dry, in front of the Erie House at the Heritage Park in Port Byron.

(There were still, in back of a lot of minds, the possibility of the *Lois* being a part of the bicentennial celebrations in 2025. Those plans are still not totally discounted!)

Now, everything had to come together.

I was lucky enough to be integral to what I call "the Rescue Tour of the *Lois McClure*." This tour, if it worked with only two weeks or so of serious planning, had to happen in 2023. It was already getting toward the end of September and the NYS Canal System was scheduled to close to traffic on October 12. This tour would not be at all like the tours of the glory years. It was a mission to get the boat from Lake Champlain all the way to the north end of Cayuga Lake for in-water winter storage.

The irony of all this wasn't lost. Here

was a replica of an old canal boat, too heavy to move overland great distances, on its way to a new home. The only way to travel was on the very canal for which its ancestors were designed. This trip would be made not with the show, the banners, flags and interpretive signage of the presentation of history, but it would be made with a dedicated crew made of up seasoned veterans and a few newbies, meeting either for the first time in years or for the first time ever. And it would be made with the *Churchill* on the hip of the *Lois*, just as always, but with chipping paint and weathered wood.

The *Lois McClure*, an 88' long canal boat that was also a sailing schooner, was showing its age at only 20 years.

In recent years, museum staff were told not to do any maintenance at all. A few would still put in some quiet hours occasionally, checking pumps, watering the batteries, and ensuring that things were safe.

In early October, with agreements in place and almost signed, the museum allowed some former crew on board to start cleaning things up and getting systems like the head, battery chargers, batteries, and lights, up and running. The steering consisted of an enormous rudder, steered by an authentic system that allowed a ships' wheel, mounted on the tiller, to turn the entire system with a series of ropes and blocks mounted on deck. These ropes needed to be replaced. Anchors were found, food was stored on board, bunks were cleaned enough for a hastily put together crew to place air mattresses and sleeping bags. Charts were found.

The tugboat *C.L. Churchill*, had to be addressed because now it would be traveling by water, taking the *Lois* to Cayuga Lake before continuing on to Buffalo. But, the engine was reported to be seized and inoperative. Towing lines and bridles were missing as were fenders for both boats. The tug's pumps ran a lot when it was put in the water and they didn't seem to want to slow down as the boat soaked up.

This wasn't the only problem. There was the small matter of the canal's closing on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October for recreational traffic. There was no way the famous team of the canal boat and tug could get underway before the 15<sup>th</sup>. Commercial traffic may be granted permission to extend the season, although that must be requested and isn't necessarily automatic.

The mechanic who worked for years on the *Churchill*, Van Powell, got to work. Art, who also served as captain of the tug through all the adventures and tours, ordered new fenders and towing lines. It turned out the engine wasn't seized but needed new gaskets and a lot of cleaning. The boat was doing well and the systems were all reviewed while the *Churchill* soaked, swelling the dry planking.

Then the insurance company asked questions and asked for a survey. The Coast Guard expressed some concerns. The 11<sup>th</sup> hour was ticking.

With just 36 hours before the weekend, when most of the world stops working, the questions came in as fast as the solutions could be assembled. If this move was going to work, a lot of moving parts would have to come together in just a few hours. The crew and trip planners made two sets of plans for the next two weeks: It would either be life as normal or a two-week adventure away from home and family. It seemed like stacking wood in the side yard was more likely than line-handling on a late season canal trip.

Somehow, with timing that would be the envy of a moon launch, everything aligned. The insurance survey passed on Friday morning and that afternoon the insurance company wrote a policy. The Coast Guard, debating between two or three different sectors, issued its okay on a Saturday. The word went out and crews and captains shifted and started packing less than 24 hours before departure.

The enormous efforts of people like Kerry and Barb Batdorf, Paul Smith and Elisa Nelson, Tom Larsen and Samantha Williams, Art Cohn and a host of others paid off. Most of these people were on board for all of the trip, a few for part of it. I had been tapped as *Lois* captain while a former captain, Erick Tichonuk found that he would be able to join us for the first three days. Kerry and Barb who had a family emergency just days earlier found themselves able to travel with the boat. A long-time volunteer from Quebec and a great friend of the Cohn family, Jean Belisle was on board as the *Churchill* deckhand, a critical role. Erick drafted from his own operation in Long Island, a deckhand to help us out. John Hey became an outstanding member of the crew. Fuel was generously donated by Ess-Kay Yards when we got to Brewerton after crossing Oneida Lake.

The relief to have Erick, the only one with experience in captaining the *Lois*, Kerry, ships' carpenter for years, and all the others who had served so much time on board was more than palpable, it was critical to the smoothness of the entire operation over the next 11 days. It turned out, with all this talent, knowledge and calmness to be a very smooth, easy, professional and calm journey.



The *Churchill* approaches the *Lois* on Sunday morning, 10/15  
Image by Lisa O'Hara

So it was on that Sunday, October 15, at 0800 with all the cooperation of the canal system, the *Churchill* came around the point and chugged up to the *Lois*, still moored at the dock at the museum. Gear was placed in bunk areas, shore power was disconnected, lines were taken in and the final mooring retrieved.

The *Oocher*, an inflatable with a 50 hp engine and critical to the operation, was borrowed from the museum with permission and blessings. The *Churchill* made up at the hip and the trio of boats, reunited for a last trip, left the bay and headed out into Lake Champlain for the first time in just over five years. Ahead of us were 11 to 12 days of travel, a wide mix of weather, a little bit of unknown and what turned out to be an incredible outpouring of gracious, warm, optimistic and encouraging hospitality from friends, *Lois* fans, Canal Society members, marina operators, lock tenders, canal officials, local officials



Final pre-departure meeting on board. Sunday, October 15th  
Image by Lisa O'Hara



and just curious, interested public along the way. Along the way, Society membership even saw a spike!

The *Lois McClure* has now moved, not into just a new chapter, but a new volume of its life and interpretive value as a story teller of history and the importance and value of inland navigation.

### NAVIGATING AN 88' CANAL BOAT WITH NO POWER OF ITS OWN WHEN THE TUGBOAT CAN'T SEE OVER ITS TOW.

"Oocher, give me a slow push..."

"Churchill, slow ahead, right rudder.... Churchill, neutral."

Both boats respond, *Oocher* going first, "Slow push, copy." *Churchill*: "Slow Ahead, right rudder," followed by "Churchill, neutral."

With calm commands from the *Lois McClure*, first by Erick Tichonuk and then after two days and for the next ten by me, the *Lois* eases into the lock, slowly coming to a stop along the lock wall with line handlers holding the boat in place both fore and aft.

The locktender calls down to the boat a quick greeting and a light banter rises up, "Thanks for taking us after you've closed!" says the *Lois*.

"That's what we're here for and it's really good to see the boat again," says the lock chief, a 19 year veteran of the system.



*Lois* crew exchange pleasantries with the locktenders at Champlain Canal Lock C-3, 10/18  
Image by Lisa O'Hara

The *Lois McClure*, the *Oocher* and the venerable tug *C.L. Churchill* are making their way from the Vermont shores of Lake Champlain south of Burlington to the north end of Cayuga Lake for the winter and it is getting close to Halloween, 2023.



Art Cohn aboard the *Churchill* at Whitehall, 10/17  
Image by Craig Williams

Behind the wheel of the *Churchill* is Art Cohn, founder and director-emeritus of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum. In that position on the tug, he is at home, settling into the routines of pushing the *Lois* with the tug he knows so well after so many years and so many miles.

At the tiller of the *Oocher* is our 20-something John Hey, the deckhand drafted by Erick. He deftly followed the commands for pushing and pulling from the bow of the canal boat, at various speeds, all while checking the inflatable constantly for any issues.

In between locks, depending on the weather, duties change. There are things to do below, like tending the wood / coal stove, preparing or cleaning up from meals and just keeping things tidy. When the weather is raw, it is definitely a treat to be below, warm and dry.

Meals are "family style" aboard the boat, the way they have been since the boat started long tours for the museum. Someone is in charge of meal prep, but always enlists help with things like salads, side dishes, etc. Everyone takes turns in clean-ups, rank has no privilege!

The boat is just over 20 years old. It was primarily built by volunteers in and near Burlington, Vermont under the supervision of master shipwrights.

The building of the *Lois* was to tell, no – illustrate the history of the sailing canal boats of Lake Champlain and the story of the canals of New York State. Separately, the stories are interesting, but told together with the passion of the narrator and the narrative, these stories are fascinating.

It's not just that the canals provided transportation ease, like building a new road around a mountain. These canals opened avenues which had only been dreamt, opportunities which hadn't been considered, riches that hadn't been planned and impacts that were

surprisingly life-changing. The cost of transportation dropped by 90% as soon as the canal opened and it stayed that way, making an enormous difference in raw materials, design and construction of buildings along the east coast. The ease of personal transportation meant that families looking for a new life could easily find new land to the west. As the people moved, politics moved. They moved their ideals and ideologies and the influence of New England moved into western New York, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan and the rest of the upper Midwest. Some historians express wonder of how the country's progression might have changed without the canals. Would Vermont have been aligned more with Canada? Would western New York materials, like Medina sandstone, been used in construction of some of the iconic buildings of New York City? Would the politics of the upper Midwest have been so different that the civil war never have happened?

To state it briefly, the canals of New York State were simply a game-changer. Providing the only easy route through the Appalachians between mid-Georgia and northern New England, this waterway opened the west to the Great Lakes. They opened the southern tier of New York, they opened the north coasts of Lake Champlain to both Vermont and New York and fundamentally provided the impetus propelling the industrial age of the Northeast and the financial future of the mid-Atlantic coast. The Port of New York became the trading capital of the world and now, nearly 200 years later, it still holds that position.

The *Lois McClure* held the torch to tell that story for about 15 years of touring. With a last minute rescue and transfer to the venerable Canal Society of New York State, this ship has many years left with a few more chapters to tell both as a floating story-teller and a feature of a small section of the historic waterway at the Canal Society's Heritage Park in Port Byron.

# THE *LOIS MCCLURE* FROM BURLINGTON TO CAYUGA LAKE

Images compiled by Lisa O'Hara



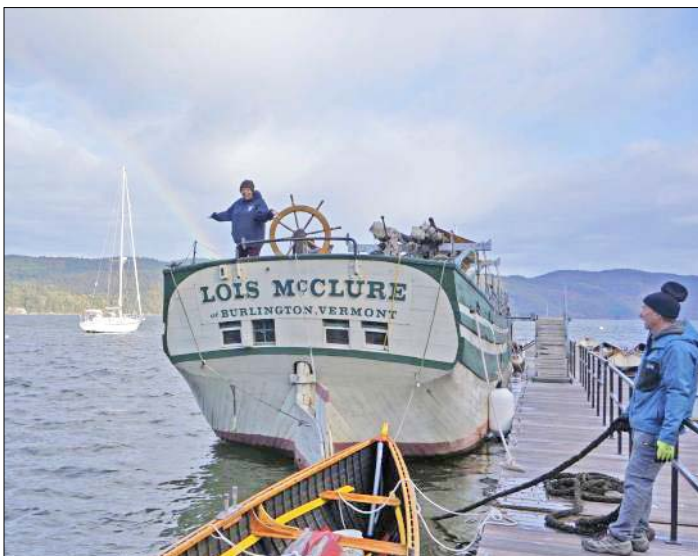
**OCTOBER 15, 2023: SETTING OFF FROM  
THE LAKE CHAMPLAIN MARITIME MUSE-  
UM**



Canal Society President Craig Williams with Lake Champlain Maritime Museum Board member Scott Hardy and Interim Director Chris Sabick sign paperwork transferring ownership of the *Lois McClure*  
*Image by Lisa O'Hara*



L-R: Elisa Nelson, Barbara Batdorf, Tom Larsen, Samantha Williams, Paul Smith, Jean Belisle, Kerry Batdorf, Erick Tichonuk, Art Cohn, John Hey, Tom Beardsley  
*Image by Lisa O'Hara*



A rainbow appears directly over the *Lois McClure* as the crew prepares for departure  
*Image by Craig Williams*



The *Lois McClure*, with tug *C.L. Churchill*, leaves the docks at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum  
*Image by Lisa O'Hara*





Off the lake—and starting through the Champlain Canal in Whitehall, morning of 10/17/23  
*Image by Craig Williams*



**TRANSITING THE CHAMPLAIN CANAL  
 OCTOBER 16-18, 2023**



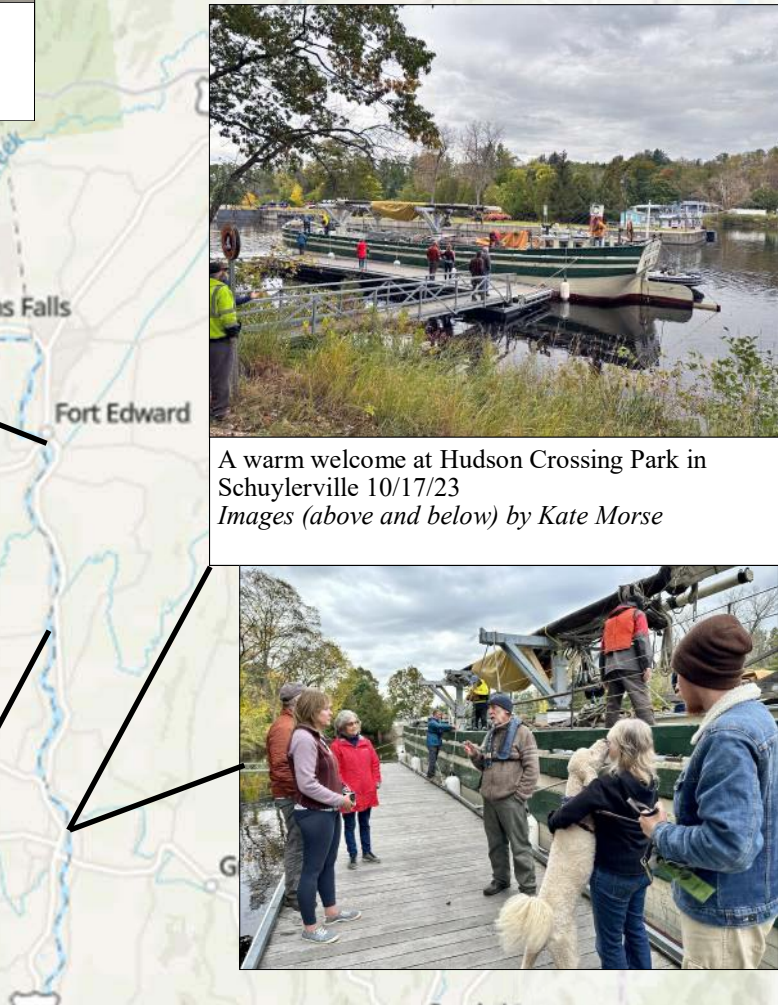
Shipwright Lianna Tennal and her family watch the *Lois McClure* lock through C-7 in Fort Edward 10/17/23  
*Image by Lisa O'Hara*



A warm welcome at Hudson Crossing Park in Schuylerville 10/17/23  
*Images (above and below) by Kate Morse*

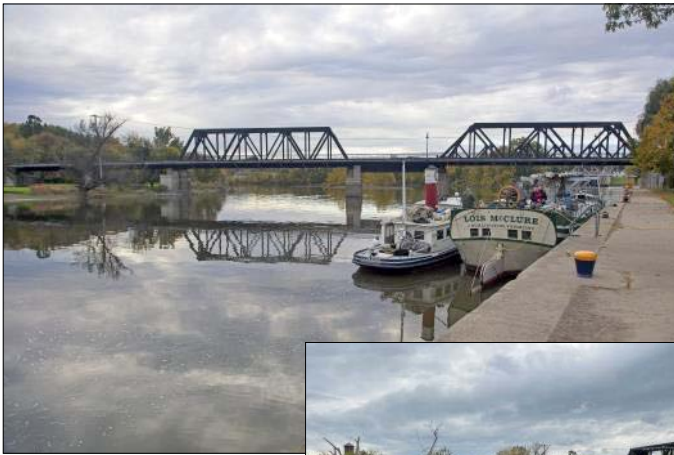


Passing under the Crocker's Reef Guard Gate 10/17/23  
*Image by Lisa O'Hara*



Locking through C-2 past the Mechanicville Hydroelectric Plant, 10/18/23  
*Image by Lisa O'Hara*





Tied up at Waterford 10/18.  
*Images Left to right by Steven Talbot,, Bill Schollenberger, Lisa O'Hara, and Craig Williams*



Traveling through the Waterford flight 10/19  
*Image by John Callaghan*

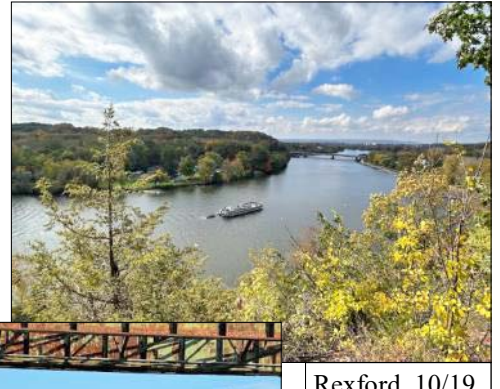


Passing the Day Peckinpaugh near lock E-3, Waterford 10/19  
*Image by Craig Williams*

**TURNING WEST: ENTERING THE ERIE CANAL AT WATERFORD  
 OCTOBER 18-19**



Watching at Lock E-11,  
Amsterdam, 10/19  
*Image by Lisa Wiles*



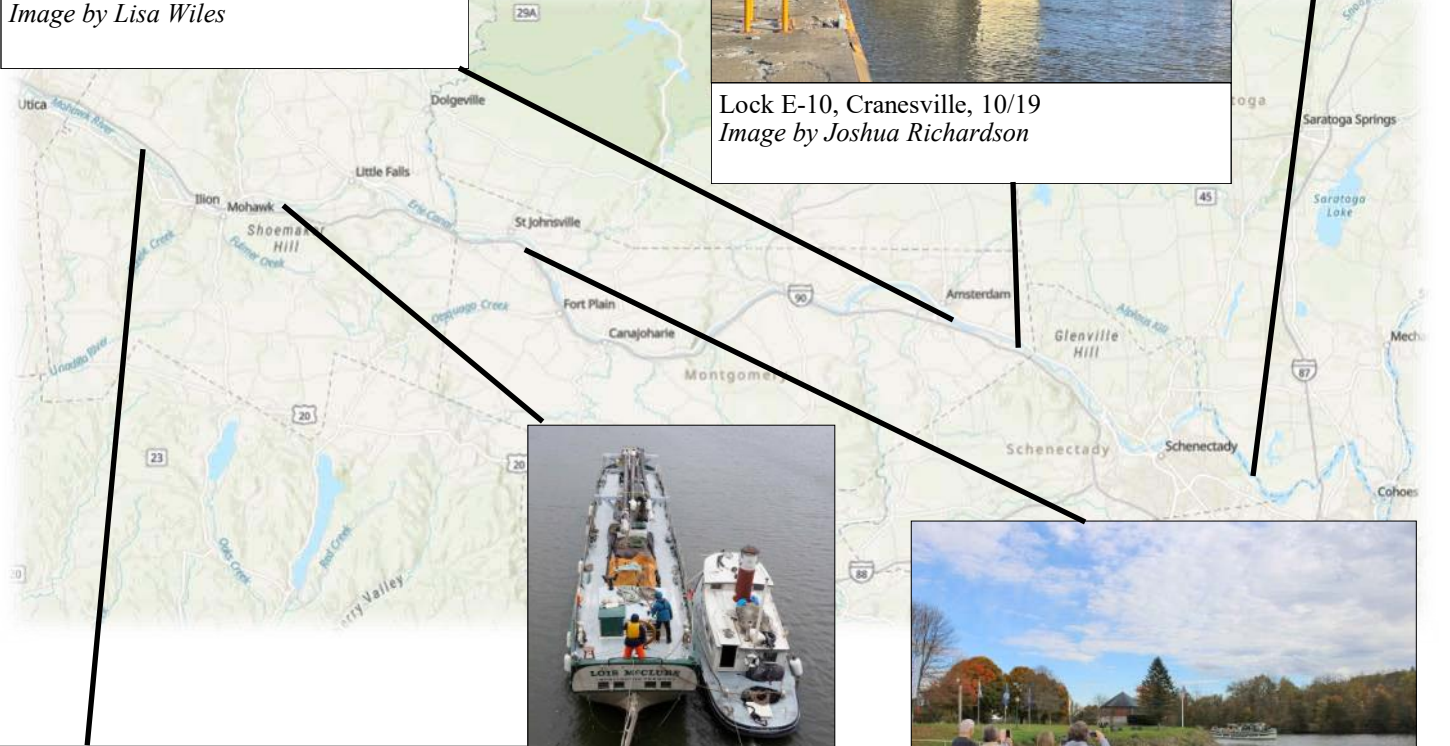
Rexford, 10/19  
*Image by John Callaghan*



Port Byron Erie Canal Heritage Park  
Manager Dan Wiles with Canal Society  
members Nancy Papish and Barbara  
Kuban at Amsterdam Lock E-11, 10/19  
*Image by Lisa Wiles*



Lock E-10, Cranesville, 10/19  
*Image by Joshua Richardson*



A chilly wet day through  
Herkimer 10/21  
*Image by Craig Williams*



A crowd had gathered at St. Johnsville, 10/20  
*Images above and below by Lisa O'Hara*



Approaching Lock E-19, Utica 10/21  
*Image by Lisa O'Hara*





Right: Riding along at E-22:  
CSNYS Board member Chris  
Romanchok with his family, 10/22  
*Image by Craig Williams*



Tied up at Sylvan Beach  
to wait out the weather,  
10/22-23  
*Image above by Don  
Wagner;  
Image right by Lisa  
Wiles*



Locking through at E-22, 10/22  
*Image by Cheri Allen*



A crowd gathered to  
greet the *Lois McClure*  
at Baldwinsville, 10/24  
*Images (left, below) by  
Craig Williams*



Passing Cold Springs  
Harbor, 10/24  
*Images (above,  
right) by Lisa Wiles*

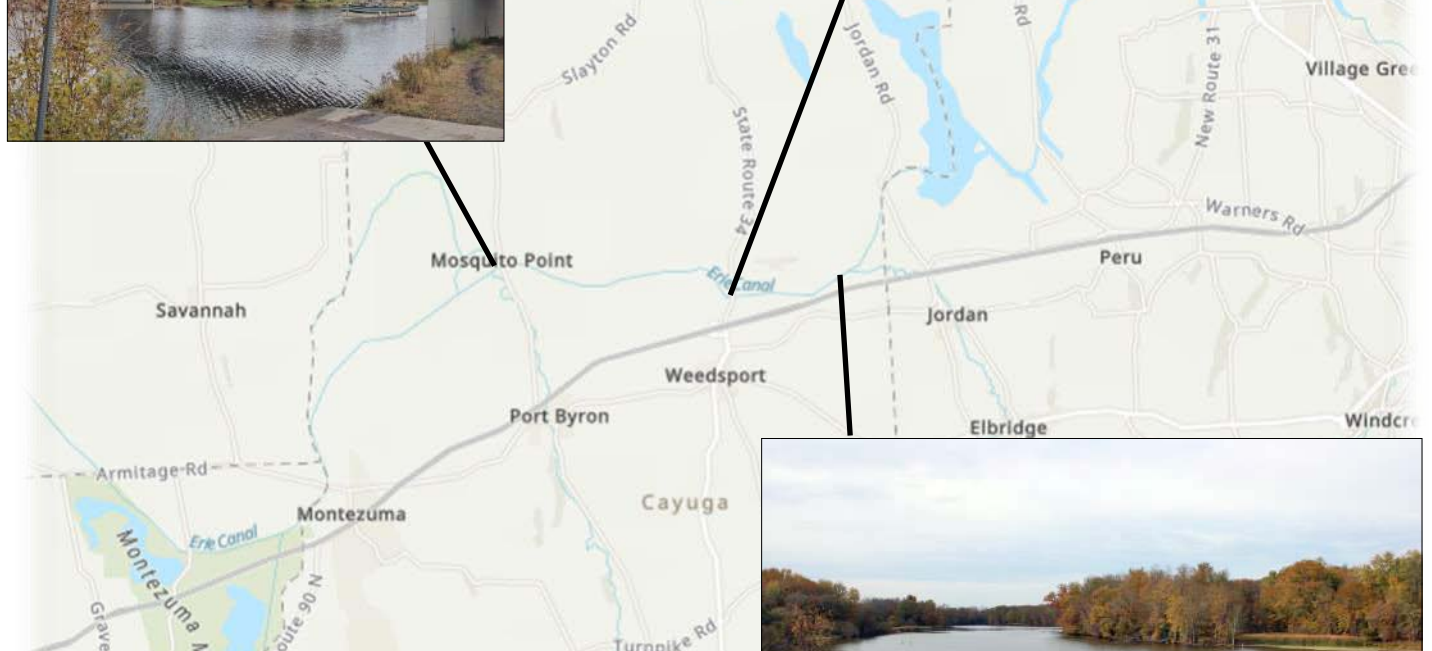




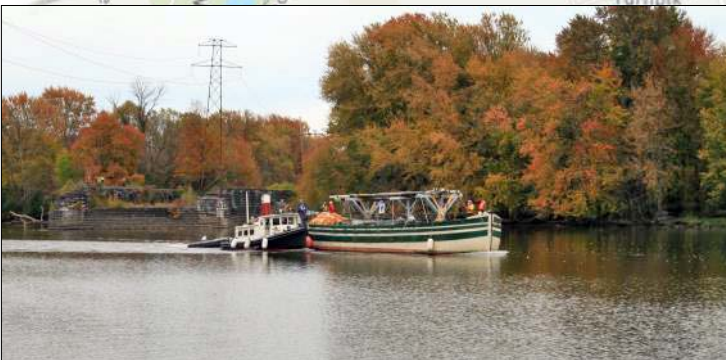
Heritage Park volunteers and friends watch the *Lois McClure* pass Seneca Riverside, Weedsport, 10/25  
 Images below and right by Lisa O'Hara



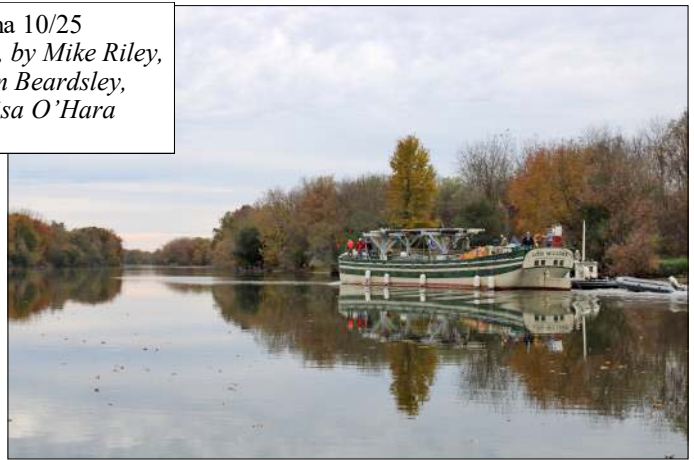
Passing under the Route 38 bridge, 10/25  
 Image below by Lisa O'Hara



Greeting American Canal Society President Mike Riley after passing under the Bonta Bridge, 10/25/23  
 Image by Lisa O'Hara



Passing Montezuma 10/25  
 Images: above left, by Mike Riley,  
 bottom left, by Tom Beardsley,  
 bottom right, by Lisa O'Hara







**ARRIVING AT WINTER QUARTERS  
ON CAYUGA LAKE  
OCTOBER 25, 2023**



Through CS-1.  
*Image above by Mike Riley,  
Image below by Tammee Poinan Grimes*



Arriving to winter  
quarters on Cayuga Lake  
*Images, clockwise from  
left: by Tammee Poinan  
Grimes, Craig Williams  
(2), and Gary Lefebvre  
(from drone footage)*





# THE FLOATING BRIDGE AT THE LOCATION OF QUIMBY'S BRIDGE

By William H. Havens (Copyright, 2024)

## INTRODUCTION

In 1989 while assisting Philip Meacham, my third cousin twice removed, dispose of the Meacham family estate, I came across a small journal kept by Parsons P. Meacham, Philip's paternal grandfather. This journal, started on 26 May 1834, contained the notes for a committee established "for the purpose of taking measures for keeping in repair the Floating Bridge across the Seneca River."<sup>1</sup> Having grown up in the Central New York vicinity, during college worked two summers on the Barge Canal maintenance boats, been a member of the Canal Society of New York State, and fascinated by local history, I had never heard mention of a "floating bridge" in this area! Here follows the fascinating story of that floating bridge.

## THE SENECA RIVER AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL NEW YORK

The Finger Lakes of Central New York were formed during the last glacial period, which ended about 10,000 years ago and left behind the long sculptured lakes we see today. As the glaciers receded, the meltwaters formed rivers draining

through what are today the Seneca, and Oneida rivers, merging at Three Rivers to form the Oswego River and ultimately emptying into Lake Ontario at Oswego. These features are shown in the accompanying map [Figure 1].<sup>2</sup>

As shown, the Seneca River runs from Cayuga Lake west to east through the southern end of Cross Lake, not only draining the Finger Lakes, but also controlling the water in the Montezuma marsh and even the harbor of Ithaca at the southern end of Cayuga Lake. The river has a grade of about one-half foot per mile which explains its tendency to flood its banks during periods of high water, especially during the spring runoff.<sup>3</sup> Notice that the path of the original Erie Canal is also shown on this map [Figure 1].

From prehistoric through colonial times the Seneca River was a critical route for communications and

commerce. Prior to the Revolutionary War, the area was primarily inhabited by the Cayuga Nation of the Iroquois Confederacy (Haudenosaunee).<sup>4</sup> Even later it was still very thinly populated and the 1810 United States Census for the town of Cato, which

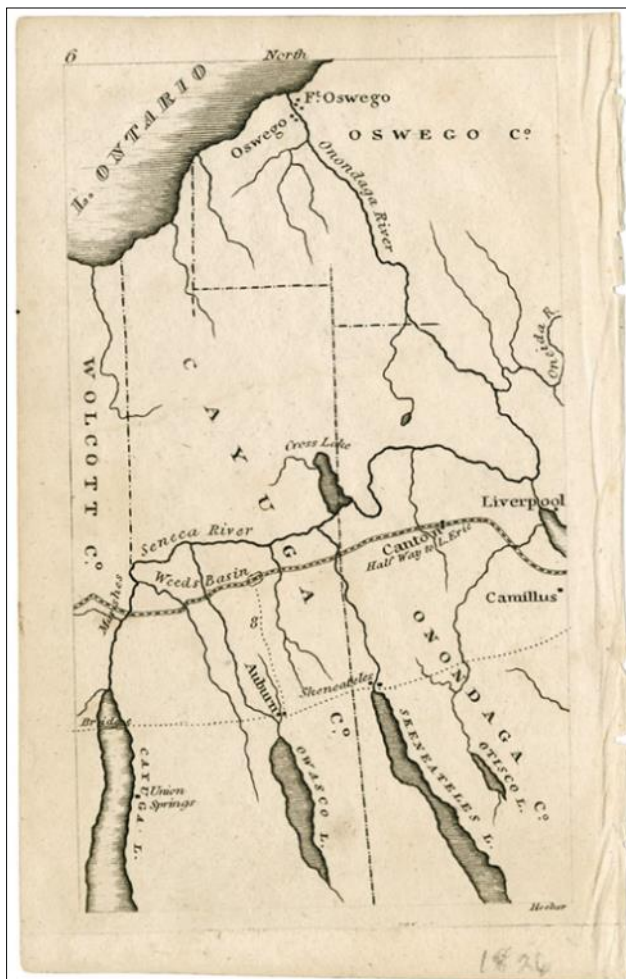


Figure 1: Path of the Seneca River across Central New York<sup>2</sup>

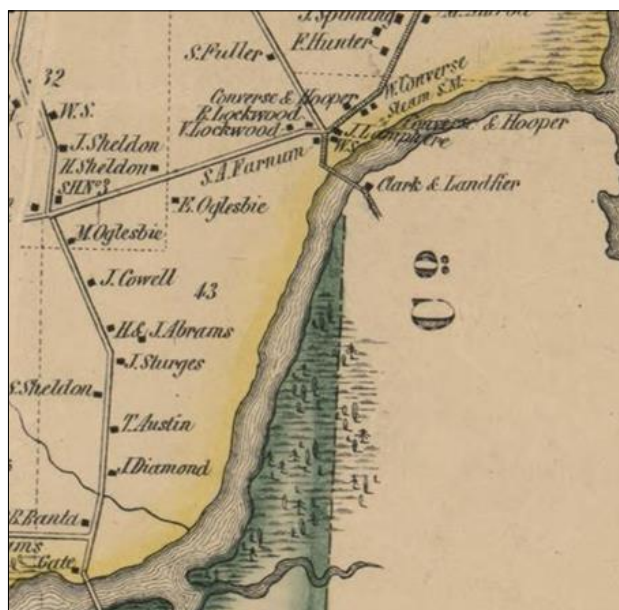


Figure 2: Eastern Town of Cato, Cayuga County, New York showing lot 43 and the Seneca River.<sup>7</sup>



Figure 3: Western Town of Elbridge, Onondaga County, New York showing lot 30, the Seneca River and the southern end of Cross Lake.<sup>8</sup>



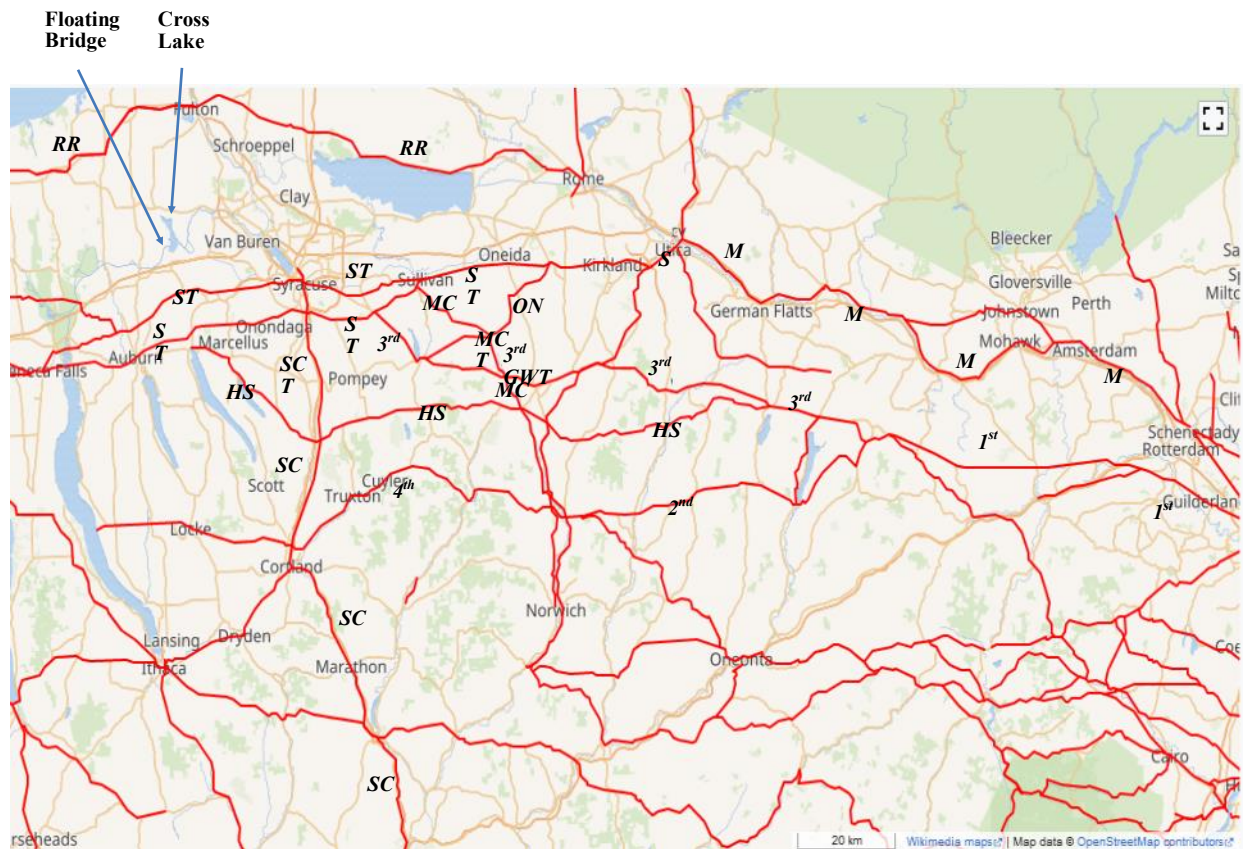


Figure 4: Upstate New York map showing approximate turnpike locations for Central New York<sup>15</sup>

at that time included the present-day towns of Ira, Conquest, Victory, Sterling and Cato, had but 1,075 inhabitants.<sup>5</sup>

The Seneca River was used by the indigenous communities and later by the colonial residents and traders as a major

route of communication and commerce. This was done using canoes, rafts and later the larger flat-bottomed shallow-draft bateaus and Durham boats,<sup>6</sup> which were able to navigate the shallows and rifts of these natural waterways. Unfortunately,

although convenient for east-west commerce, the Seneca River was also an impediment to north-south travel.

As seen in the maps of the towns of Cato [Figure 2] and Elbridge [Figure 3] from 1853 and 1852 respectively, the Sen-

eca is a broad river separating the towns of Cato and Brutus in Cayuga County<sup>7</sup> and the towns of Elbridge and Lysander in Onondaga County.<sup>8</sup>

The Seneca could be crossed at fords during periods of low water and occasionally there might be a bridge. However, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the span of most bridge designs was insufficient to cross a river as wide as the Seneca in the Central New York region. More often one used ferries to cross the river. In the early 1800s John St. John and David Follett operated a ferry just north of Weedsport where today Route 34 crosses the Seneca River. The Abrams Ferry was located near today's Bonta Bridge, and the Woodworth ferry near the southwest end of Cross Lake at what is today known as Quimby's bridge.<sup>9</sup>

As the country evolved and became more sophisticated after the Revolutionary War period, the trails evolved into turnpikes, and the commercial centers shifted towards the towns and cities, and later even as far as Oswego and New

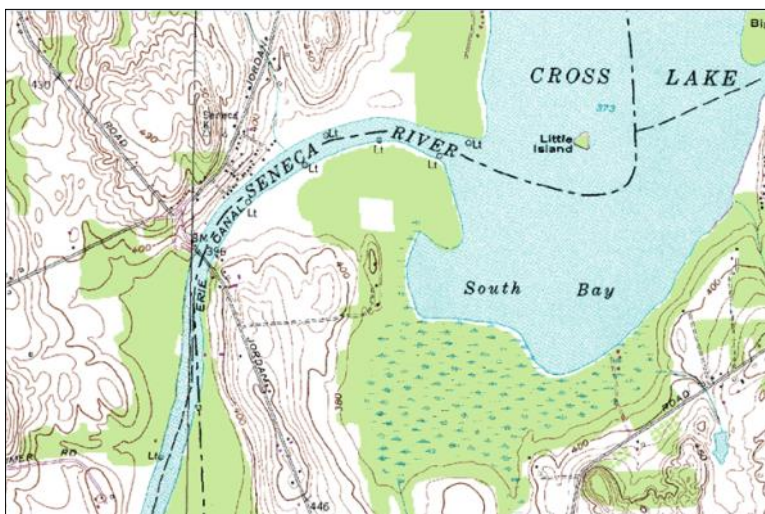


Figure 5: Topographical map of the southwest section of Cross Lake and a preferred location for crossing the Seneca River.<sup>16</sup>



York City. The early farmers of Central New York were shipping potash, wool, linen, grains, butter, cheese, salt, and other farm products to the population centers in exchange for finished products such as cloth, silks, fine leather shoes, clothing, porcelain, silver goods, furniture, etc. Most of these goods were transported along turnpikes. A perfect example of this was the Ingham store complex in Meridian which was established about 1814 and became a major business center for northern Cayuga County, purchasing the local produce for sale in distant markets and also selling imported furniture and clothing for local sale.<sup>10</sup> Drovers herded large numbers of sheep and cows to the population centers to be sold in markets and butcher shops.<sup>11</sup> Dewitt Clinton on 13 August 1810 writes in his "Private Journal" while passing through Cayuga County that "a great number of sheep are driven to the New York market."<sup>12</sup> These drovers would also have taken advantage of the many turnpikes running throughout the state. The upstate New York map shows the approximate location for many of these early turnpikes. [Figure 4]<sup>13 14 15</sup>

Study of the turnpike map reveals that from places to the north and west of Cross Lake, the shortest route to the southeast and many of the turnpikes would be around the southwest corner of Cross Lake.

A study of the topology at the southwest corner of Cross Lake shows there is a ridge of higher ground running north along the east bank of the Seneca River that is surrounded by low wetland on both sides. This higher ground continues north along the west side of Cross Lake. These two elevated regions on both sides of the Seneca River make an ideal location for a bridge to cross the river. Also, because of the banks on both sides of the river, the width of the river does not change appreciably with the river level. It is likely for this reason that Solomon Woodworth would later choose this spot as the location for his river ferry. This can also be seen in the attached topographical map [Figure 5] of this area.<sup>16</sup>

### SOLOMON WOODWORTH

One of the earlier known residents in this portion of the town of Cato was Solomon Woodworth, whose name appears in the 1810 United States Federal Census.<sup>17</sup> A study of the adjacent names in this census support that Woodworth lived along the road fronting the river from present day Meridian to pre-

sent day Quimby's bridge and continuing on toward present-day Bonta Bridge. Also Dewitt Clinton as a member of the Canal Commissioners exploring possible routes for the proposed inland canal (to become the Erie Canal) visited "Wordworth" (Woodworth) on 21 July 1810. At this time "Wordworth" had a "small log house, fourteen miles from Columbia [present day Baldwinsville], on the right side of the river [i.e. north side]."<sup>18</sup> Clinton also noted that "Wordworth" had paid four dollars an acre for his land four years ago (i.e. 1806).<sup>19</sup>

Later in February 1812 Solomon Woodworth signed a deed for the purchase of 60 acres of land on the west side of the Seneca River, that is the Meridian side, with \$300 cash and a note for \$167 dated 14 August 1811 and due on 1 April 1812.<sup>20</sup> This land had a river frontage of about 1,000 feet roughly centered on the future floating bridge location. It would have been reasonable for the land agent to have rented or leased the same lot to Woodworth for several years prior to the time he made the actual land purchase, which could explain his presence here when Dewitt Clinton passed through this area in August 1810.

Although generally accepted that the Woodworth Ferry must have been located along this portion of the Seneca River where Solomon Woodworth owned land, no clear reference to support it has been found.<sup>21</sup>

The width of the Seneca River where it discharges into Cross Lake varies significantly depending on the Seneca River water level. Obviously as the river level increases, the width of the river will also increase. Note also that the bridge location is very near Cross Lake, thus the river level at this point will be essentially the same as that for Cross Lake. One of the earliest recorded widths of the Seneca River is at "Wordworth's" when Clinton reported that the width was 24 rods<sup>22</sup> (396 feet) and "near fifty feet deep."<sup>23</sup> This measurement was taken during the summer dry season on 21 July 1810 and as Clinton had observed "river was never so low."<sup>24</sup> In the future the water level in the Seneca River (and also Cross Lake) would be reduced by about four feet in an effort to enhance the property values, reduce flooding and illnesses in the Ithaca area,<sup>25</sup> and to allow the reclamation of lands in the Montezuma Swamp and the entire Seneca River drainage basin.<sup>26</sup> However, the author has observed that with the spring snowmelt the water level at Cross Lake in that era could have been as much as

ten feet higher. There have been several efforts made to reduce the water level in the entire Seneca River drainage basin in order to prevent damage from spring snow runoff in the Montezuma Swamp area and even as far away as at the head of Cayuga Lake and the city of Ithaca. Work to reduce the obstructions at Jack's Reef were undertaken on at least two different occasions. "[In] 1829. Channel around Jack's reef completed, 4,200 feet long, forty feet wide, lowers water five feet at Cross Lake and two feet at Montezuma."<sup>27</sup> Then in August 1862 further effort dropped the water level of Cross Lake by 4.01 feet.<sup>28</sup> Even greater water control was achieved through a number of measures, including multiple works to increase the water flow at Jack's Reef by deepening the river channel. Many years later, the channel restrictions caused by Jack's Reef were eliminated by digging a new river channel, the "State Ditch," completely bypassing the Jack's Reef portion of the river.

### JOEL NORTHRUP

Joel Northrup (1770–1820) was born in Litchfield County, Connecticut, and arrived in the town of Cato, Cayuga County, area prior to 1810.<sup>29 30</sup> He married Clarissa Dudley (born 15 April 1790, probably in Glastonbury, Bennington County, Vermont), daughter of Stephen Dudley and by 1811 the Dudley family was living in the town of Cato.<sup>31</sup> Northrup must have had significant financial resources because he purchased a number of properties in the town of Cato and by the end of 1814 he had purchased at least 350 acres of land along the west side of Cross Lake.<sup>32</sup> It is also reported that he brought the first wagon into the region!<sup>33</sup>

Northrup recognized that a reliable and economical way was needed for people and freight to cross the Seneca River at the southwest corner of Cross Lake in order that those living north and west of Cross Lake might have a convenient access route to the extensive turnpike network that extended throughout New York State and to the eastern markets.

Northrup apparently was not only a visionary but also a very astute businessman. He realized that he would have a profitable concession if he could create a convenient and easy way to cross the Seneca River. The best location for this river crossing would be the ridge of





Figure 6: The five-man crew of a Durham boat push their craft beneath the north end of Joel Northrup's floating bridge. It's likely that his bridge included a raised section such as this to accommodate river traffic. This bird's-eye view of the bridge looks northeast toward Cross Lake. The scene is set prior to the construction of the Erie Canal and the area is busy with commercial activity. A cattle drover drives his herd across the bridge, right behind a farm wagon loaded with hay, while flat-bottomed watercraft ply their trade along the river. *Copyright 2024 by Steve Boerner (40x4x28.com)*

land near the Woodworth ferry where the Seneca River enters Cross Lake.

It would be realistic to assume that the Seneca River width could have been the 396 feet measured by Clinton. However, for a conventional bridge this 396 feet river width would have required a span that was wider than local bridge builders at that time could accommodate without having a bent (a stone or earthen foundation) to support the bridge center portion about halfway across the river.

### THE FLOATING BRIDGE

An alternative bridge construction option was to float the bridge on the surface of the river. A floating bridge is conceptually a series of rafts connected together in order to span a body of water. This could be a functional solution as long as the raft has sufficient buoyancy to support its own weight and the weight of any load crossing thereon, such as wagons, and livestock. This series of rafts could be connected together in order to form a longer bridge surface of almost arbitrary width and

length. It would need to be wide enough so as not to tip over and also to allow two loaded wagons to pass each other in opposite directions. Floating or pontoon bridges have been used to cross rivers and smaller lakes since antiquity.<sup>34</sup>

The major materials needed for a floating bridge would be wood, of which there was a ready supply in the surrounding forests, and limited hardware such as nails, spikes and chains, all of which could be made by local blacksmiths. The actual design details of this floating bridge are unknown, however the basic outlines of such a floating bridge can be deduced from several period documents.

The State of New York approved "Chap. 189., An Act to Incorporate The Cato and Jordan Bridge Company" on 28 April 1840 to build a toll bridge over the Seneca River.<sup>35</sup> This bridge is believed to be a direct replacement of the floating bridge initially constructed by Joel Northrup, which was by this time very much in need of extensive repair or replacement. This being the case, it is reasonable to assume that this replacement

floating bridge had similar specifications to the original Northrup design. Thus one can infer the following floating bridge specifications:

- The bridge will be at least 16 feet wide;<sup>36</sup>
- There will be a substantial railing on each side of at least 3 feet;<sup>37</sup>
- It would be important that any bridge over the Seneca River not be allowed to impede the normal flow of boat traffic on the river. This might be anything as simple as small canoes, row boats, Durham boats, bateau or lumber rafts. This was accomplished by having a portion of the bridge raised above the water surface so that boats might pass under this bridge section, that is "an opening or passage shall be left at one end of said bridge, of sufficient height and width to admit the passage of boats of the largest class now used, or that maybe hereafter be used, on the Erie Canal."<sup>38</sup> and it should also accommodate Durham boats of that period,<sup>39 40</sup>



To accommodate boats with a greater width or clearance, one end of the bridge may be disconnected from the shore and floated out of the way;<sup>41</sup>

- The elevated section of the bridge will be on the north end of the bridge;<sup>42 43</sup>
- Boats with a draft of at least 7 feet will be accommodated;
- Assume that boats would need a width clearance of at least 12 feet;<sup>44</sup>
- Assume the grade will be 10% sloping to water level over a distance of 80 feet;
- Assume the maximum load will be not more than 50 pounds per square foot.

Based on the dates mentioned in the New York legislative journals, the original floating bridge was built no later than 1815 by Joel Northrup of Meridian.<sup>45</sup> Note that this is two years before the start of construction of the original Erie Canal on 4 July 1817 and a full ten years before the opening of the Erie Canal with the Wedding of the Waters on 4 November 1825.<sup>45</sup>

Unfortunately, photography did not come into common use until the 1860's, well after the initial construction of the first floating bridge. However, a rendering showing how the floating bridge might have appeared shortly after it was constructed in 1815 was developed by Steve Boerner of Steve Boerner Design and is shown in Figures 6 and 12 and the back cover.<sup>47</sup>

### FINANCING FOR THE FLOATING BRIDGE

As far as is now known, the entire construction cost was borne by Northrup and he anticipated being reimbursed by the local or state governments, or alternately be allowed to charge tolls for passage over the bridge. On 7 February 1816 the New York State Assembly recorded:<sup>48</sup>

The Petition of Joel Northrop, and others, setting forth that he the said Joel has erected a bridge, at considerable expence [*sic*], across the Seneca river, near Woodworth's ferry, for which he has never been wholly paid, and praying to the authorised [*sic*] to raise the sum of one thousand two hundred dollars, by tolls, was read, and referred to a select committee, consisting of Mr. Beach, Mr. M'Fadden and Mr. G. Hall.

This petition became the basis for the law that was enacted on 14 April 1817 as New York Chapter 227, "An Act for the relief of Joel Northrop" which was passed "to enable the said Joel Northrop, ..., to

demand and receive from all persons passing said bridge, the following rates of toll."<sup>49</sup> [the table is paraphrased for convenience of presentation]

Wagon with two horses, mules, or oxen	12 1/2 cents
And for any additional horse, mule, or ox	3
One horse cart	9
Coach, coachee, curricule, or phaeton with two horses	25
Sulkey, chaise, chair or other pleasure carriage drawn by one horse	12
Cart drawn by two oxen	12
For every additional yoke	6
Horse and rider	6
Led horse	3
Sleigh or sled drawn by one horse, or mule	6
Sleigh or sled drawn by two horses, mules or oxen	12
For every additional horse, mule, or ox	3
Footman	3
Score (20) of horses, mules, or oxen	25
And so in proportion for a greater or lesser number	
Score [20] of sheep or hogs	20
And so in proportion for a greater or lesser number	

This law further states "that when the said Joel Northrop shall have received the said sum of twelve hundred dollars, and be fully compensated for all monies he may have expended for repairs done to and taking care of said bridge, together with interest thereon, at the rate of seven per centum per annum; thereupon, the right, interest and property of said bridge shall be vested in the people of this state, and be and remain at their disposal."

It is interesting to compare these tariffs with those that David Follett charged at the ferry located nearby on the Seneca River north of the village of Macedonia (today known as Weedsport).<sup>50 51</sup>

In 1807 the court licensed David Follett to keep a ferry across the Seneca River, opposite his dwelling house, [note the absence of any mention of wagons or carts] at the following rates of toll [paraphrased for convenience of presentation]:

One span of horses, or yoke of oxen	25 cents
Man and horses	12
One man	6
Cows, steers, bullocks two years old, each	12 1/2
Yearlings	6
Hogs or sheep	3

Comparing these charges, it was clearly less expensive to cross the Seneca River via the floating bridge than to utilize the Follett Ferry. Also one would envision that the effort and time needed to cross on the river would similarly be much more advantageous via the floating bridge.

The floating bridge was a dominant local feature. For example, a number of highway districts were established in the Town of Elbridge beginning at the "Float Bridge," the earliest of which was 13 December 1830, "No. 30 beginning at the float bridge over Seneca River then south & southwardly to the south side of the Jenkins House on lot 31 to intersect district No. 9."<sup>52</sup> Later on 12 February 1850 it was mentioned in association with the Jordan & Cato Plank Road Co.<sup>53</sup>

By May 1834 this original floating bridge was apparently in need of repair, because that month in Meridian a group of men formed an organization with the purpose of raising funds to maintain it.<sup>54</sup>

At a meeting of several of the inhabitants of the towns of Cato & Ira held at the house of P.P. Meacham on Monday the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 1834 for the purpose of taking measures for keeping in repair the Floating Bridge across the Seneca River.

Resolved that in our opinion it is advisable to circulate in Cato, Ira, Victory, Conquest & Hannibal a subscription for sums to be paid yearly for the repairs of said Bridge. Appointed George Hoskins, Wm Hedger & Josiah Converse Commissions to oversee & pay for all necessary repairs & who shall draw their or-





Figure 7: "SENECA RIVER IRON BRIDGE, S. Degraff, Builder - Length 373 feet - Geo. H. DYGERT Artist." A contemporary photograph of the Iron Bridge. Courtesy of Old Brutus Historical Association," Weedsport, New York, 24 Oct 2011.<sup>67</sup>

der on the Treasurer for the same & who shall make an annual report to the Treasurer of their proceedings. Appointed P.P. Meacham Treasurer who shall make and keep a correct account of receipts and payments which shall be open to inspection at all times and who is authorized to pay over all monies to the said commissioners.

The Legislature passed on 25 April 1840 "Chap. 189. An act to incorporate the Cato and Jordan Bridge Company."<sup>55</sup>

This act stated that "The said corporation is authorized to build a toll-bridge commencing on lot number forty-three in the town of Cato (formerly Brutus), in the county of Cayuga, across the Seneca river, to the opposite bank of said river, in the town of Elbridge, in the county of Onondaga." This bill further describes the functional requirements for such a bridge together with how the bridge will be organized, governed and financed. The functional requirements are believed to be essentially similar to those presented above for the original 1815 floating bridge. The corporation was authorized

to erect a toll gate and charge the following tolls [the following section is paraphrased for convenience of presentation]:

Wagon, cart, or other carriage, drawn by 2 horses, oxen, or mules	10 cents
For every additional horse, ox, or mule	2 1/2
Wagon cart or other carriage, drawn by one horse, ox, or mule	5
Sleigh or sled drawn by two horses, oxen, or mules	5
Sleigh or sled drawn by one horse, ox or mule	3
Horse and rider	3
Horse, mule or jack, led or driven	3
Score of cattle, horses or mules	10
Score of sheep or hogs	5
Person on foot	2

Observe that these rates of toll are significantly lower than the fees that Northrop was allowed to collect in 1817, that is, 23 years earlier.

An inherent disadvantage of the floating bridge concept is that the floating sections were prone to becoming wet as the bridge surface dipped and swayed with traffic, causing some horses to be skittish about crossing it. Unfortunately, the floating bridge was not immune to accidents, as evidenced by this incident reported in the Syracuse newspaper 2 May 1859:<sup>56</sup>

Accident at the Float Bridge – On Wednesday of last week [29 April 1859], as a family who were moving from Jordan to Ira, Cayuga County, were crossing the Float Bridge over Seneca River, the horses, from some cause, became frightened just as they reached the north end of the bridge, and backed the wagon, containing thirteen persons varying from six months to sixty years of age, off the upper side of the bridge into the river. The horses freed themselves from the wagon, and did not get into the river. Fortunately, assistance soon arrived and the unfortunate family were all rescued, although not until some of them were nearly drowned. One little girl floated down partly under the bridge where she could not be seen, and where she remained until all the others were helped out, when, it being found there was one still missing, a search was instituted

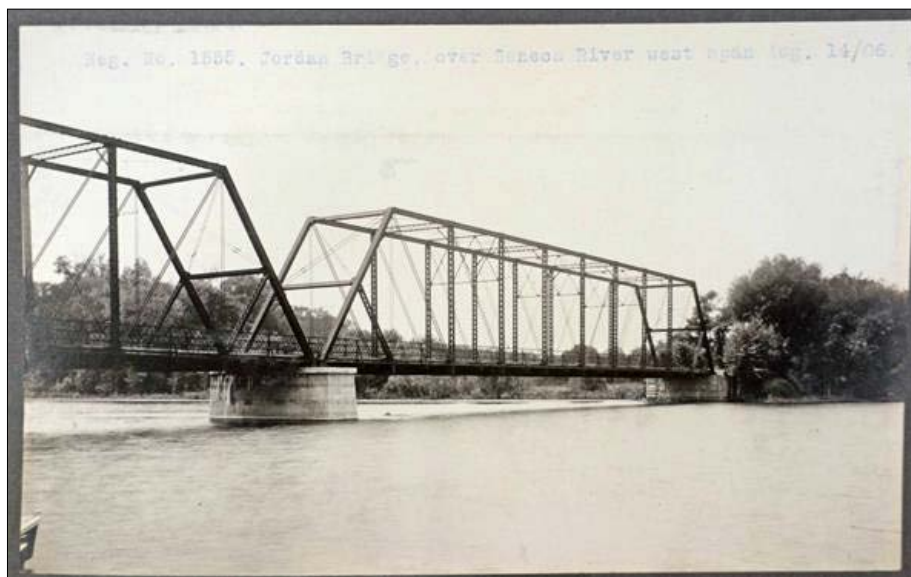


Figure 8: Jordan Steel Truss Bridge over the Seneca River at present day Quimby's Landing. Text at top of image "Neg. No. 1555. Jordan Bridge, over Seneca River west span Aug. 14/06." <sup>69</sup>





Figure 9: Photograph dated "Mar. 9, 1911" showing the raising of the steel truss bridge north of Jordan in preparation for opening of this section of the new Cayuga-Seneca Barge Canal in the summer.<sup>71</sup>

and she was found and taken out, apparently lifeless, but after long and active exertions was returned to consciousness.

This was not the only calamity to befall the floating bridge. Apparently on at least two different occasions, the bridge literally floated down the river, once on 2 May 1856 when the floating bridge had "gone down stream,"<sup>57</sup> and again on 6 March 1861 when it "went adrift ..., but was fortunately [*sic*] secured at Busby's steam saw mill [down river near the mouth of Cross Lake]. For several days passengers and teams had to be ferried across the river in a boat; but the bridge was at last brought back to its proper position and secured, and teams are again passing over it as before."<sup>58</sup>

### THE END OF THE FLOATING BRIDGE ERA

The first floating bridge had a useful life of 23 years (1817 to 1840); after a similar life time, the 2<sup>nd</sup> floating bridge was ready for replacement in 1864. Chapter 375 of the Laws of New York passed April 25, 1864 authorized the financing and the seeking of bids on this replacement bridge structure. The total cost of the new bridge was "not to exceed \$20,000." This amount was to be paid in four equal parts by the county of Cayuga, the county of Onondaga, the town of Cato in Cayuga County and the town of Elbridge in Onondaga County.<sup>59</sup>

The sealed proposals for building this "Iron Bridge" were to be opened on 10 June 1864.<sup>60</sup> The bridge contract was finally awarded to Simon Degroff/Degraff<sup>61</sup> of Syracuse for \$ 19,700 in June 1864<sup>62 63</sup> and site work was begun during the week of 7 January 1865.<sup>64</sup>

The Auburn Daily Advertiser wrote on

15 March 1865:<sup>65</sup>

"Seneca River Iron Bridge, - The new iron bridge over Seneca River is completed, and will shortly be "opened" for travel. It is the largest structure of the kind in the world; total length 365 feet, width 24 feet, height of arch 24 feet, composed of two spans each 180 feet; height of pier from bottom of river 41 feet; total weight of bridge over 125 tons. - The old float bridge, after having performed its office for over thirty years, became water logged and somewhat dangerous, and it was deemed advisable to build a new structure in its place. Upon due examination in the matter of the differ-

ent kinds of bridges now in use, it was finally resolved to build a bridge known as Whipple's, with sundry improvements by the present owner of the patent."

There is no mention of a toll in any of the laws or other publications, thus it is assumed that this was a "free bridge." A subsequent law, Chap. 572, was passed on 27 April 1865 to further address the financing of the "Iron Bridge."<sup>66</sup>

Subsequently this "Iron Bridge" was replaced by a steel truss bridge in January 1905.<sup>68</sup>

A new bridge has recently been erected over [the] Seneca River between the towns of Cato, Cayuga county, and Elbridge Onondaga county. The bridge was built by the Weedsport Construction company. It replace an old cast-iron, two-span structure. The new bridge is built of steel and is also in two spans; the north span being 200 feet long and the south span 160, making the total length of the bridge 360 feet. The trusses are twenty-eight feet high. Width of roadway is eighteen feet in the clear. The capacity of each span, under an equally distributed load, is 100 tons.

The shore ends of the bridge rest on stone abutments and the mid stream ends on a concrete pier. The construction of this pier was no small part of the work connected with placing the new bridge. The pier is 40 feet long, 15 wide and 35 feet high.



Figure 10: A tug and barge running west on the Cayuga-Seneca Barge Canal as they pass under the iron truss bridge just after leaving Cross Lake. Courtesy of the Jordan Historical Society Museum.<sup>75</sup>



Its foundation was carried down to solid rock, 22 feet below the surface of water. The bridge was erect in five weeks and travel was interrupted but two weeks by the change from the old to the new bridge.

Early in the 20th century, this portion of the Seneca River became part of the Barge Canal System. The first boat was able to traverse the new Barge Canal over its entire length 15 May 1918.<sup>70</sup> For this to happen, many of the bridges crossing the new canal would have to be raised to accommodate the larger clearance requirements of the Barge Canal System. This was often accomplished by simply jacking the bridge up and placing a new foundation under it. At Quimby's the steel truss bridge was also raised above its original position as shown in Figure 9.

A later photo of this bridge is shown in Figure 10. Note the tug and barge running west after leaving Cross Lake. This river crossing is known today as Quimby's Bridge because the Riverside House and Boat Marina that operated here for years were operated (and possibly owned) by the Quimby Family who arrived in the community between 1905<sup>72</sup> and 1910.<sup>73 74</sup>

The current single span Parker truss bridge is locally known as Quimby's Bridge. The construction bids for this bridge were accepted 30 Mar 1949 and at that time the cost was estimated to be on the order of \$529,000.<sup>76</sup> On 9 July 1950, the steel was in place and the project was estimated to be 80% complete.<sup>77</sup> Then on the 5th of November 1950 the new bridge was scheduled to be completed about the first of December 1950.<sup>78</sup>

1815	Northrup Floating Bridge
1840	Replacement Floating Bridge
1865	Iron Whipple Bridge
1905	Steel Truss Bridge
1951	Current Parker Truss Bridge   (also known as Quimby's Bridge)

Periods of use for various Seneca River  
Bridges at today's Quimby's Bridge.

## FLOATING BRIDGE LOCATION

Unfortunately there are no clearly identifiable physical remnants of either the initial floating bridge (1815) or the replacement floating bridge (1840). How-



Figure 11: Scene showing both the Steel Truss Bridge and the new Parker Truss Bridge over the Seneca River (Cayuga-Seneca Barge Canal) just west of Cross Lake at Quimby's Landing as it appeared in the SYRACUSE POST-STANDARD PICTORIAL of November 5, 1950. Courtesy of the Onondaga Historical Association.<sup>79</sup>

ever, there is excellent circumstantial evidence that these two bridges were built on the same footprint as the Iron Whipple bridge. In general with few exceptions it would seem that replacement bridges are usually located either at or in close proximity to the initial bridge being replaced. One would assume that this is often done for convenience because of the existence of clear right of way. The 1906 drawing for the new Steel Truss Bridge sheet 63, Contract No. 12, Section 6 & 7 shows that the old crib in the Seneca River was to be removed to an elevation safely below the water line so as not to be a potential obstruction in the shipping lanes. This would have been the cribbing supporting the 1865 Iron Whipple bridge. Based on descriptions, photographs and maps, it is clear that all bridges after the 1865 Iron Whipple Bridge until the 1950 Quimby Bridge are within feet of each other. The Quimby Bridge crossed the river at more of a diagonal than any of the prior bridges in order to reduce the curvature of the access roads on both sides of the river. Note that this was accomplished at the expense of a longer bridge.

The Elbridge town meeting minutes for 16 June 1832 define a road "beginning at the centre [*sic*] of the south end of the Float Bridge across the Seneca River ... to the centre of the bridge across the Skaneateles creak [*sic*]... and further to the centre of the Canal Bridge [in Jordan]." These survey data were used to find location of the "Float Bridge" on a

Google Earth<sup>TM</sup> area photograph by following the dimensions of this survey back from the canal bridge in Jordan to the floating bridge. The resulting location for the center of the floating bridge is estimated to be less than 100 feet from the center of the southeast embankment under the current steel Parker Truss Bridge. Since the original floating bridge was not replaced until after 1840, this

would have been the location of the original 1815 floating bridge as built by Northrop.

The road embankment located at the northwest end of the floating bridge is consistent with the north end of the floating bridge being elevated in order to accommodate Seneca River boat traffic. Note that this is also in agreement with the site description given in the 1859 accident summary discussing this accident at the floating bridge.

## OTHER FLOATING BRIDGES

Although we have no primary source description of this original floating bridge over the Seneca River, nor details about how it was constructed, a number of other floating bridges were known in this time period:

- Floating bridge across the Schuylkill in Philadelphia is believed to have been in use as early as 1788.<sup>80</sup>
- Floating bridge over Collins Pond in Lynn, Massachusetts was built in



“three sections on the shore of the pond and floated into place. First a course of logs hewn on the upper sides was placed. Then a course of timbers one foot square was laid at right angles upon it, the operation being repeated until there were five such layers, when a top course of plank was laid, making the whole bridge about five and one half feet deep. The timbers were fastened together with dowels, which allowed an undulating movement as loads passed along the surface, and provided flexibility between the fixed ends on the banks and the portion affected by the variations of water level in the pond.”<sup>81</sup>

- In 1820 the residents of Brookfield, Vermont, built a floating bridge across Sunset Lake. “In the winter of 1820 a bridge of logs was built on top of the ice. When the ice melted that spring, Brookfield had its first floating bridge. Every few years new logs had to be added to the bridge as the old ones became waterlogged and lost their flotation. This type of bridge remained until 1884 when Orlando Ralph devised a flotation system using kerosene barrels.”<sup>82</sup>
- There was a floating bridge across the Seneca River near Mud Lock at Cold Spring, which carried a towpath from the Oswego Canal northwesterly along this section of the Seneca towpath into Baldwinsville. It is believed this may have been built in about 1836.<sup>83 84</sup>
- There was purportedly a floating bridge at Frawley’s pond near Baldwinsville, but unfortunately the location of Frawley’s pond is unknown at this time.<sup>85 86</sup>

### THANKS

Special thanks are in order to the following people whose effort have helped with this project in many ways: Eva Taylor-Sholes, CIVIC Heritage Historical Society, assistance researching New York laws and Cayuga County Deeds; Jack Horner, deceased, Town of Elbridge, and Village of Jordan Historian, assistance; Fred Crofut, Jordan Historical Society; Deb Stapleton, former Elbridge Town Clerk; Craig Williams, Canal Society of New York State, for his encouragement and valuable reference collection; Nancy Assmann, Cayuga County Historian’s Office; Jeanne Baker and Alice Mattison, Old Brutus Historical Society, Weedsport; William Hecht, general history resource; Steve Boerner, artistic rendition of floating bridge and photo

restoration; and my wife, Karen Havens, unfailing support and editorial assistance.

### NOTES

1. This untitled bound journal measures, 4 inch x 6 1/2 inch donated as part of the Meacham Estate to CIVIC Heritage Historical Society, Cato, NY.
2. [Map, Seneca River in Cayuga and Onondaga Counties], *The Northern Traveler [sic] and Northern Tour: with the Routes to The Springs, Niagara, and Quebec, and the Coal Mines of Pennsylvania; also the Tour of New-England* (New York: J. & J. Harper, 1831) between pages 120 & 121.
3. Arthur L. Bloom, *Gorges History, Landscapes and Geology of the Finger Lakes Region* (Ithaca, New York: Paleontological Research Institution, 2018), 191.
4. “Iroquois”, Wikipedia website, viewed 21 Nov 2022.
5. Horatio Gates Spafford, *A Gazetteer of the State of New York, Carefully Written from Original and Authentic Materials, Arranged on a New Plan, In Three Parts* (Albany: H. C. Southwick, 1813), 154.
6. Engraving showing bateau and Durham boats. Viewed 7 January 2023 at website considerthesourcenyc.org.
7. Wall Map, “Map of Cayuga County New York: From Actual Surveys”, Samuel Geil (Philadelphia: Published Samuel Geil, 1853). Library of Congress, Washington.
8. Wall Map, “Map of Onondaga County, New York: From Actual Surveys”, L. Fagan, under direction of Sidney & Neff, E. H. Babcock & Co, Syracuse (RI, Providence: Geo. C. Brown, 1852) Library of Congress, Washington.
9. “About Cato and Its History”, The Cayuga County Website, viewed 7 Jan 2023.
10. Betty H. Murphy, *History of Meridian, A Bicentennial Product*, 2-nd edition (Soft cover, 8 1/2 inch x 11 inch, 74 pages, self-published): July 1976, 4-6
11. Richard F. Palmer, *The “Old Line Mail” Stagecoach Days in Upstate New York* (Lakemont, New York: North Country Books, 1977), 58-62.
12. William W. Campbell, *The Life and Writings of De Witt Clinton* (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1849), p. 171.
13. “New York Turnpikes”, Material viewed 18 Nov 2022 on the FamilySearch website <[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/New\\_York\\_Turnpikes](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/New_York_Turnpikes)>.
14. “List of turnpikes in New York”, Material viewed 18 Nov 2022 on the Wikipedia website <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_turnpikes\\_in\\_New\\_York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_turnpikes_in_New_York)>.
15. Basic map viewed at Website <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_turnpikes\\_in\\_New\\_York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_turnpikes_in_New_York)> augmented with information from William H. Havens. “New York Turnpikes.map, Wikimedia maps | Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors” This composite map is presented under the terms of use as defined by Wikimedia maps | Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors. See also copywrite page at <<https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>>, viewed on 16 Nov 2022.
16. “USGS Topographic Maps, New York State, 2000”, Cornell University Geospatial Information Repository, viewed 17 Feb 2023.
17. Solomon Woodworth, “United States Census, 1810,” viewed at FamilySearch.org on 23 Jan 2023, New York, Cayuga, Cato, ( image 7/15.); citing NARA microfilm publication M252, (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).
18. William W. Campbell, *The Life and Writings of De Witt Clinton*, 91.
19. William W. Campbell, *The Life and Writings of De Witt Clinton*, 92.
20. New York State Land Records, Cayuga County, Vol. Q 119-201; Isaac Smith seller & Solomon Woodworth buyer, [Lot Number] 43, town of Brutus, 60 acres. Viewed 24 Jan 2023 at Familysearch.
21. Elliot G. Storke, *History of Cayuga County, New York with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches, (New York, Syracuse: 1879)*, 289.
22. 1 rod = 16.5 feet.
23. William W. Campbell, *The Life and Writings of De Witt Clinton*, 91.
24. William W. Campbell, *The Life and Writings of De Witt Clinton*, 89.
25. “State Board of Health of New York, Eleventh Annual Report, Vol. II (New York, Albany: State Printer, 1891) p. 424-435. This report gives an excellent summary of work done to date in an effort to drain the Montezuma marshes.
26. “Report of the select committee, to whom was referred the report of the Commissioners for draining the Cayuga Marshes”, March 7, 1831, “Documents of the Senate of the State of New-York, fifty-Fourth Session, 1831 (From No. 1 to 73, Inclusive) (New York, Albany: E. Crosswell, Printer to the State, 1831), 527-529.
27. “Annual Report of the State Engineer and Surveyor for the Fiscal Year Ending Sept. 30, 1891.” (New York: Albany, James R. Lyon, State Printer, 1892), 92. Viewed 25 Jan 2023 at Google.books.com.
28. “State Board of Health of New York, Eleventh Annual Report, Vol. II (New York, Albany: State Printer, 1891), 501.
29. Northrup, A. Judd, *The Northrup-Northrup Genealogy* (New York: Grafton Press, 1908), 81.
30. Joel Nortrep [Northrup], “United States Census, 1810,” viewed at FamilySearch.org on 23 Jan 2023, New York, Cayuga, Cato, ( image 7/15.); citing NA-

- RA microfilm publication M252, (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).
31. Carroll Scribner Dudley Sr. and David Alan Dudley, William H. Havens Editor, *The Dudley Family History* (Syracuse, New York, privately printed: 2022), 17, 43.
32. New York State Land Records, Cayuga County, Vol P-408, Vol. P-409 and Vol O-385; in all cases Town of Cato, Lots 83, 84 and 99; Joel Northrop buyer.
33. Storke, *History of Cayuga County*, 289.
34. David J. Brown, *BRIDGES, Three Thousand Years of Defying Nature* (Minnesota, St. Paul: MBI Publishing Co. 2001), 19.
35. "Laws of the State of New-York, Passed at the Sixty-Third Session of the Legislature, Begun and held in the City of Albany", (New York, Albany: Thurlow Weed, Printer to the State, 1840), 136-138.
36. Laws of the State of New-York, Chapter 189.
37. Laws of the State of New-York, Chapter 189.
38. Laws of the State of New-York, Chapter 189.
39. The Durham style of boat was the boat style frequently used on the rivers of upstate New York. Boats had a width of 8 feet, length of 40 to 60 feet, and a draft of up to 2 feet when fully loaded. See Wikipedia, "Durham boat".
40. "The Erie Canal", "Boats on the Erie Canal (page 2): Working Boats", Viewed 23 Jan 2023 at <<http://eriecanal.org/boats-2.html>>.
41. In the Court of Appeals of the State of New York, Lehigh Valley Railroad Company, Plaintiff-Respondent, Against Canal Board, Et Al, Defendants-Appellants. Volume 1, Record of Appeal" (Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, State Printers) 1911, 128 (par 639).
42. In the Court of Appeals of the State of New York, Lehigh Valley Railroad Company, Plaintiff-Respondent, 134 (par 666) and 152 (par 759).
43. Syracuse NY *Daily Standard*, 1859 [April 29]. Found at Old Fulton Post Cards on 30 Sept 2011.
44. "The Erie Canal", "Boats on the Erie Canal (page 2): Working Boats."
45. *Journal of the Assembly of the State of New York: at Their Thirty-Ninth Session, Begun and Held at the City of Albany, the Thirtieth Day of January, 1816* (Albany: J. Buel, Printer to the State: 1816), 50.
46. Ronald E. Shaw, *Erie Water West, A History of the Erie Canal, 1792-1854* (Kentucky, Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1966), 84-85, 188-189.
47. Steve Boerner Typography & Design, 312 Gallup Road, Spencerport, NY 14559.
48. *Journal of the Assembly of the State of New-York: at Their Thirty-Ninth Session, begun and held at the City of Albany, The Thirtieth Day of January, 1816* (Albany, New York: J. Buel, Printer to the State) 1816, 50.
49. "Laws of the State of New-York, passed at the Thirty-Ninth, Fortieth and Forty-First Sessions of the Legislature, Commencing January 1816, and Ending April 1818. Vol. IV." (Albany: Printer to the State, 1818) p 267 CHAP. CCXXVII., "An Act for The Relief of Joel Northrop," Passed April 14, 1817.
50. Storke, *History of Cayuga County*, 325.
51. Storke, *History of Cayuga County*, 92.
52. Notes for the Commissioners of Highway, Town of Elbridge, Onondaga, New York, "Minute Book 1829-1853," Elbridge Town Clerk, Elbridge Town Hall, Jordan, NY, 10.
53. Notes for the Commissioners of Highway, Town of Elbridge, 119.
54. Unlabeled leather bound 4 inch by 6 1/2 inch Journal, Parsons P. Meacham, This volume is part of the Meacham Collection at the CVIC Heritage Organization, Cato, NY.
55. "Laws of the State of New-York, passed at the Sixty-Third Session of the Legislature, Begun and Held in the City of Albany, the Seventh day of January, 1840" (Albany: Thurlow Weed, Printer to the State, 1840) p. 136 Chap. 189, An Act to Incorporate the Cato and Jordan Bridge Company, Passed April 28, 1840.
56. *Syracuse Standard*, April 29, 1859, viewed at "Old Fulton New York Post Cards."
57. *Syracuse Standard*, May 2, 1856, viewed 1 March 2023 at Onondaga Historical Association, Syracuse, NY.
58. *The Daily Journal* [New York, Syracuse], *Accident to a Floating Bridge*, 15 March 1861. Viewed 1 March 2023 at Onondaga Historical Association., Syracuse, NY.
59. "Laws of the State of New York passed at the Eighty-Seventh Session of the Legislature, Begun January Fifth, and Ended April Twenty-Third, 1864, in the City of Albany" (Albany: Van Benthusen's Steam Printing House, 1864) p. 870, Chap. 375, "An Act to provide for the rebuilding of the bridge over the Seneca River, between the towns of Elbridge, in the county of Onondaga, and Cato, in the county of Cayuga, where the present float bridge is now located". Passed April 25, 1864.
60. *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, "Sealed Proposals", 27 May 1864. Viewed at Cayuga County Historian, Auburn, New York: Microfilm roll 23, Auburn Daily Advertiser, 6 Jan. 1864 to 29 Dec 1864.
61. Jim Stewart, "Simon DeGraff, Adventurous Bridge Builder," *The Rochester Engineer*, August 2007, 42-43.
62. *Daily Journal* [Syracuse], "Jordan News", 17 June 1864. Viewed at Fultonhistory.com on 15 Mar 2023.
63. *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, "Seneca River Iron Bridge" 15 March 1865. Viewed at Cayuga County Historian, Auburn, NY: Microfilm roll 24, Auburn Daily Advertiser, 4 Jan 1865 to 30 Dec 1865.
64. *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, "The work of putting up ..." 7 Jan 1865. Viewed at Cayuga County Historian, Auburn, NY: Microfilm role 24, Auburn Daily Advertiser, 4 Jan 1865 to 30 Dec 1865.
65. *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, "Seneca River Iron Bridge", 15 March 1865. Viewed at Cayuga County Historian, Auburn, NY: Microfilm role 24, Auburn Daily Advertiser, 4 Jan 1865 to 30 Dec 1865.
66. Laws of the State of New York passed at the Eighty-Eighth Session of the Legislature, Begun January Third, and Ended April Twenty-Ninth, 1865, in the City of Albany. (Albany: William Gould: 1865) p. 1162, "Chap. 572, An Act supplementary to an act entitled "An act to rebuild the bridge over the Seneca River between the towns of Elbridge, in the county of Onondaga, and Cato, in the county of Cayuga, where the present float bridge is now located," passed April twenty-fifth, eighteen hundred and sixty-four. Passed April 27, 1865.
67. George H. Dygert, (1835-1921) for many years a photographer in Jordan, New York. See Find A Grave, George H. Dygert, Death 31 Dec 1921, Burial, Maple Grove Cemetery, Jordan, Onondaga, NY. Viewed 17 Feb 2023.
68. *Elbridge Citizen*, 28 Jan 1905, "A new Bridge over Seneca River", Viewed at Onondaga Historical Association, Syracuse, NY.
69. New York State Archives 11833 collection description "Neg. No. 1555. Jordan Bridge, over Seneca River west span Aug. 14/06".
70. Michele A. McFee, *A Long Haul, The Story of the New York State Barge Canal* (Fleischmanns, New York: Purple Mountain Press, 1961) 18.
71. New York State Archives 11833 collection description "Cont. 12, 2703, view of N. approach to Jordan's Bridge, Mar. 9-11".
72. Clinton M. Quimby, New York State Census, 1905, Onondaga County, Election District No. 6, Village of Eastwood, Town of Dewitt, line 45 (view 1 of 23) viewed 20 February 2023 at Ancestry.com.
73. C. M. Quimby, United States Census, 1910, Onondaga County, Enumeration



- District No. 52 , Town of Elbridge, line 9, (view 23 of 32), viewed 20 February 2023 at Ancestry.com.
74. See notations made on photograph entitled RIVERSIDE HOUSE, SENECA RIVER, QUIMBY'S BRIDGE, RIVER ROAD (1912): "1912" with hand written notations: "1912", "Riverside House", and "Clinton M. Quimby Prop". Viewed at "Jordan Memories" on 14 April 2023.
  75. Original photographed at Jordan Museum, Jordan, NY, 14 October 2011 by William H. Havens
  76. *The [Syracuse] Post-Standard*, "Jordan Bridge Bids due March 30", 13 Mar 1949, 66, viewed on 16 Mar 2023 at newspapers.com.
  77. *The [Syracuse] Post-Standard*, "Most at One Time", 9 Jul 1950, p. 66, Viewed on 17 Mar 2023 at newspapers.com.
  78. *"Syracuse Post-Standard Pictorial"*, Nov 5, 1950. Image copied 1 Mar 2023 at Onondaga Historical Association, Syracuse, NY.
  79. *"Syracuse Post-Standard Pictorial"*, Nov 5, 1950. Image copied 1 Mar 2023 at Onondaga Historical Association, Syracuse, NY.
  80. Charles P. Dare, *Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad Guide: Containing A Description of the Scenery, Rivers, Towns, Villages, and Objects of Interest Along The Line of Road; Including Historical Sketches, Legends, &c.* (Philadelphia: Fitzgibbon & Van Ness, 1856), 118-119.
  81. Frederic J. Wood, *The Turnpikes of New England and Evolution of the same through England, Virginia, and Maryland* (Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1919), 85.
  82. *The History of Brookfield, Vermont* (Brookfield, VT: Brookfield Historical Society, 1987) is available online in PDF format. Chapter VII, "The Floating Bridge" by Kit Cage, 110.
  83. Lillian Pearl Palmer, *A Historical Review of the Town of Lysander* [New York] (Higginson Book Co., 1998), Part 169.
  84. "Supplement to the Annual Report of the State Engineer and Surveyor of the State of New York for the Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 1905." Transmitted to the Legislature March 28, 1906. (Albany: Brandon Printing Company, 1906) including "History of the Canal System of the State of New York Together with Brief Histories of the Canals of the United States and Canada," Volume 1, by Noble E. Whitford, 566.
  85. Lillian Pearl Palmer, *A Historical Review of the Town of Lysander* [New York] (Higginson Book Co., 1998), Part 169.
  86. A. I. Christopher, "Old Float Bridge at Frawley's Pond", *The Messenger*, Baldwinsville, New York, "Sketches of Yesterday," 6 July 1967.



Figure 12: Close up of the scene depicted in Figure 6. Copyright 2024 by Steve Boerner (40x4x28.com)

# THE 1840 PLOTTER KILL AQUEDUCT

By Nancy H. Papish

Originally, the city of Schenectady had four wards. What are today the Towns of Glenville and Rotterdam were once areas for farms and woodlots of Stockade residents from the 1661 Dutch trading settlement<sup>1</sup> located on the Mohawk River at the mouth of the Binne Kill. Over time, diverging interests of rural and urban developments led to Wards 3 and 4 separating from Schenectady. The Town of Rotterdam was officially established April 14, 1820<sup>2</sup>. The 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this establishment was celebrated during the coronavirus epidemic.

Work on the original Erie Canal ("Clinton's Ditch") had already begun in 1817. After traversing portions of Saratoga County north of the Mohawk River and re-crossing this river on the Rexford Aqueduct, the canal went through Schenectady, abandoning the original Binne Kill waterfront. Continuing westward, the canal cut through the properties of Mohawk riverside landowners, among them Hermanus Van Slyke<sup>3</sup>. The Plotter Kill ran through his property from south to north; some maps and documents bear his name where the canal crossed this stream. [Figures 1 and 2]

Appearing [Figures 3 and 4] as No. 3 in Noble Whitford's Table of Aqueducts for the Enlarged Erie Canal<sup>4</sup>, the 1840 aqueduct crossing the Plotter Kill replaced the one built on the original

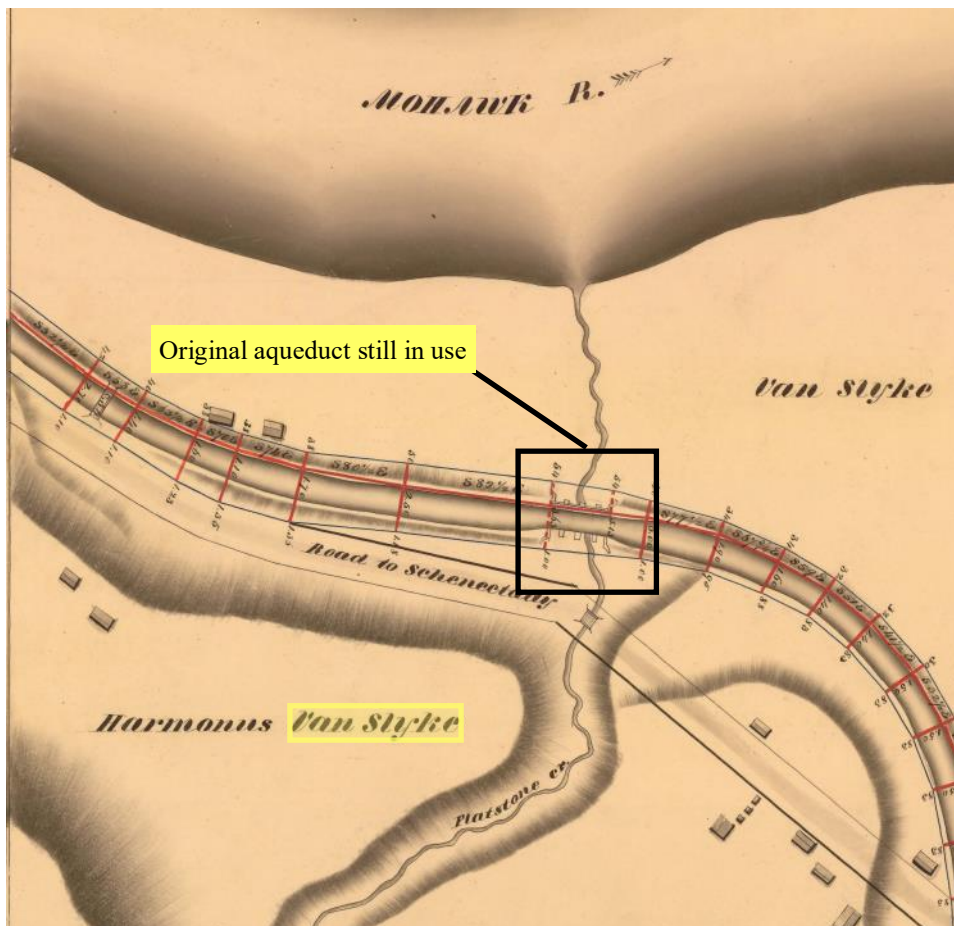


Figure 1: An enlargement of the 1834 map shown in Figure 1, giving a better image of the aqueduct carrying the original Erie Canal over the creek cutting through the property of Hermanus Van Slyke. The stream was known variously as Flatstone Creek or the Plotter Kill, and the aqueduct was referred to as the Plotter Kill Aqueduct, the Flatstone Creek Aqueduct, or Van Slyke's Aqueduct. *Image courtesy of New York State Archives.*

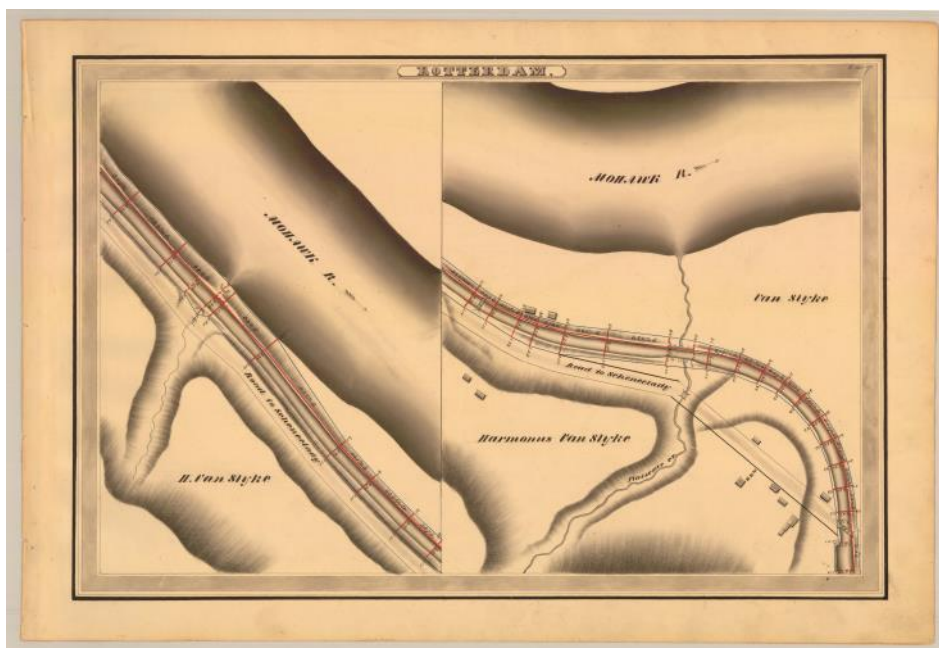


Figure 2: 1834 Holmes Hutchinson survey map of property for the completed original "Clinton's Ditch" Erie Canal of 1825. The property owner is identified as Hermanus Van Slyke, and the Plotter Kill stream (the thin meandering line going from the bottom of the image up into the Mohawk River on the right side of the image) is shown on this map by its alternate name: Flatstone Creek. The Plotter Kill Aqueduct, where the canal crosses the stream, is seen more clearly in Figure 2 above. *Image courtesy of New York State Archives*



canal of 1825<sup>5</sup>. (The original 1825 canal aqueduct had been noted in earlier publications such as traveler guides [Figure 5].) By comparison, the watershed of the Plotter Kill is far smaller in scope than Schoharie Creek which seemingly required no aqueduct in 1825 when the original canal crossed that stream in Fort Hunter. However, the geology and geography of the Plotter Kill determined that a mere culvert would not be capable of handling the volume and velocity from annual spring thaws and the occasionally torrential summer storms on this stream in Rotterdam. The Plotter Kill drops 900 feet in three miles<sup>6</sup> to where this stream enters the Mohawk River. Such rapid descent necessitated a small aqueduct for the canal to reliably accommodate this stream's variable flow.

When the Enlargement was undertaken, the original "Ditch" aqueduct was slated to be replaced by a new aqueduct just to the south, again across the Plotter Kill. [Figures 6 and 7] Completed in 1840<sup>7</sup>, this new aqueduct was not immediately watered despite the severely deteriorated condition of the original<sup>8</sup>. Canal construction on the Enlargement was

still incomplete on sections east and west of the new aqueduct at this time. Eventually, all the work of enlargement in this stretch was finished, water was let in, and this Plotter Kill Aqueduct began carrying Enlarged Erie Canal traffic.

### Disaster!

On July 21, 1891, a freak summer storm tore out the middle portion of the 1840 Plotter Kill Aqueduct<sup>9</sup>. This section of the canal was closed for days while a wooden channel was hastily constructed to allow canal traffic to resume. The missing stone work was completely replaced over several seasons<sup>10</sup>.

This aqueduct was in full service until the Enlarged Canal closed, replaced by the Barge Canal in 1918, flowing just a stone's throw to the north in the Mohawk River. Eventually this aqueduct was partially dismantled. Stone from the south side piers and some of the creek supports that cradled the trunk were reused for the abutments of the current New York State Route 5S bridge across the Plotter Kill. Kiwanis Park and its boat launches in Lower

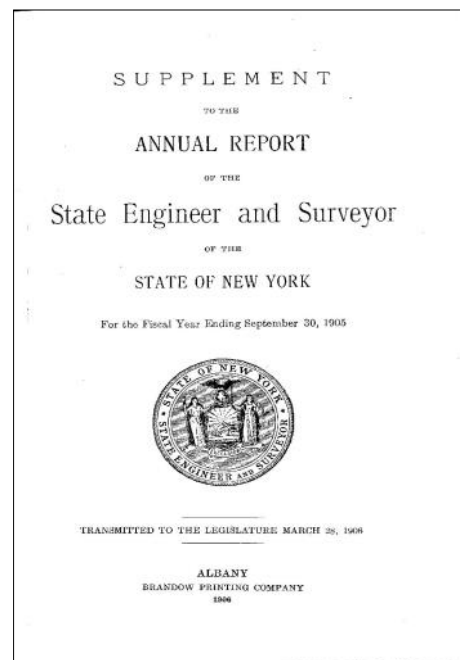


Figure 3: Noble Whitford's 1905 comprehensive two-volume inventory of the physical structures on New York State's system of canals prior to the construction of the modern New York State Barge Canal. Refer to page 1069 in Figure 4, below.

## TABLES OF EXISTING STRUCTURES ON CANALS.

### TABLES OF STRUCTURES ON THE ERIE CANAL.

#### TABLE OF AQUEDUCTS.

No.	NAME.	Location: between locks.	Continuous stations* from Hudson river Junction.	INTERIOR WIDTH.		Number of spans.	TOTAL LENGTH.		Elevation of spillway.	Number of gates.
				Feet.	Inches.		Feet.	Inches.		
Eastern Division.†										
1	Lower Mohawk.....	18 and 19	668+50	40	6	26	1,137	0	188.889	.....
2	Upper Mohawk.....	22 and 23	1,315+35	44	4	14	610	0	230.822	.....
3	Flat Stone creek, Van Slykes.....	24 and 25	1,790+50	52	0	3	57	1	247.014	.....
4	Sousaickill, Hoffman's.....	25 and 26	2,028+99	54	6	4	111	7	254.382	.....
5	Schoharie creek.....	30 and 31	2,685+80	41	6	14	624	3	297.232	.....
6	Tokkon creek.....	30 and 31	3,116+97	50	3	4	105	10	296.997	.....
7	Leonardson creek, Yatesville.....	30 and 31	3,236+70	50	7	4	105	6	297.052	.....
8	Lasher's.....	30 and 31	3,294+84	51	0	3	79	1	296.280	.....
9	Plattskill, Sprakers.....	31 and 32	3,413+27	50	0	5	128	0	302.555	.....
10	Bauman's creek, Canajoharie.....	31 and 32	3,575+90	50	0	5	128	0	302.985	.....
11	Otsuango creek, Fort Plain.....	32 and 33	3,755+63	50	0	5	126	0	311.429	.....
12	Castle creek, Indian Castle.....	35 and 36	4,322+07	50	6	5	128	0	333.167	.....
13	Fulmer's creek, Mohawk.....	43 and 44	5,053+88	65	6	3	74	0	405.100	.....
14	Steel creek, Ilion.....	43 and 44	5,137+33	51	6	2	50	0	405.200	.....
15	Moyer creek, Frankfort.....	45 and 46	5,261+53	66	0	2	50	0	426.100	.....
16	Furgeson creek.....	45 and 46	5,558+46	57	6	1	22	0	426.972	.....
Middle Division.‡										
1	Sauquoit creek.....	46 and 47	5,913+89	56	5½	3	77	0	430.244	6
2	Oriskany creek.....	46 and 47	6,108+33	54	11	4	105	0	429.159	8
3	Cowassalon creek.....	46 and 47	7,448+69	53	0	2	51	6	429.139	3
4	Chittenango creek.....	46 and 47	7,982+63	50	6	3	76	0	429.246	3
5	Limestone creek.....	46 and 47	8,405+98	49	10	3	79	10	429.346	3
6	Butternut creek.....	46 and 47	8,515+25	50	0	3	80	0	429.633	3
7	Nine Mile creek.....	50 and 51	9,210+04	49	0	4	144	0	409.692	4
8	Jordan.....	50 and 51	9,786+07	50	0	4	105	6	410.090	3
9	Centerport.....	51 and 52	10,101+25	49	1	3	75	6	404.262	3
10	Port Byron.....	51 and 52	10,239+01	50	0	4	98	0	404.944	2
11	Crane brook.....	52 and 53	10,410+87	51	2	3	72	0	394.465	6
12	Seneca river.....	52 and 53	10,516+94	50	0	31	840	0	393.012	14

\*Distances taken to centers of aqueducts. †106.35 miles from river junction to Oneida county line. ‡97.07 miles from Oneida county line to Wayne county line.

NOTE:—All elevations in these Tables of Existing Structures on Canals have mean tide at New York as zero of the datum plane, and were derived by using bench marks established by the Barge canal levels of 1901, which started from the "Grist Mill" bench mark at Greenbush (Rensselaer), N. Y., with an elevation of 14.730.

Figure 4: On this listing of aqueducts on the Erie Canal, the 1840 structure that was built for the Enlarged canal (replacing the original structure carrying the 1825 canal over the Plotter Kill) is (at No. 3) referred to as both the Flat Stone Creek Aqueduct and Van Slykes Aqueduct.

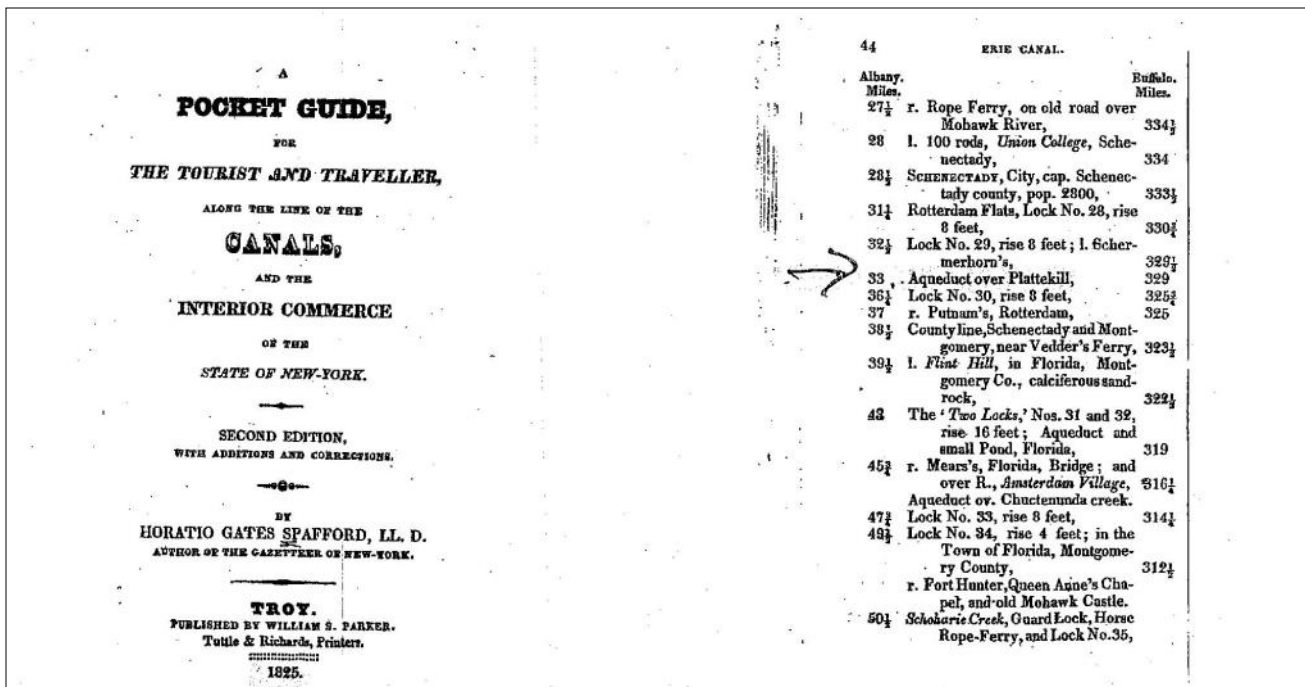


Figure 5: A representative traveler and tour guide of the day notes the existence of an aqueduct over a stream identified as the "Plattekill" [sic] (Plotter Kill). This would be the first aqueduct carrying the original 1825 canal over the stream. Image provided by Mike Riley

Rotterdam Junction are on the Barge Canal/Mohawk River along the west bank of the Plotter Kill. Today the Empire State Trail bike/hike path [Figure 10] crosses the Plotter Kill on the still-intact arches of this 1840 aqueduct that once carried the Enlarged Erie Canal towpath.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Schenectady County Historical Society, Images of America Rotterdam, "Introduction" Arcadia Publishing, Chicago, IL, 2004, Page 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Page 7.

<sup>3</sup> Holmes Hutchinson, Canal System Survey Maps 1832-1843, "Rotterdam" New York State Archives, 1834.

<sup>4</sup> Noble E. Whitford, History of the Canal System of the State of New York, Volume II, "Table of Aqueducts" Brantford Printing Company, Albany, NY, 1906, Page 1069.

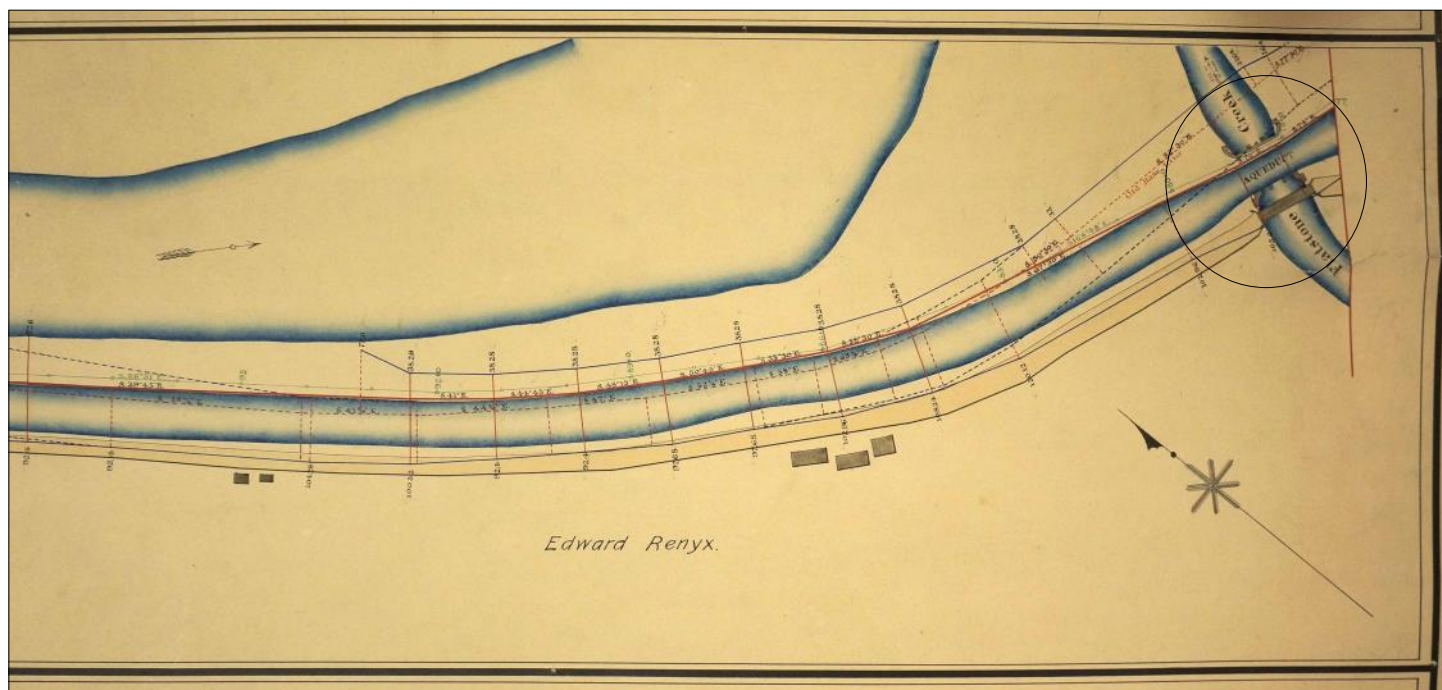


Figure 6: An 1896 Schillner map of the Enlarged Erie Canal. The aqueduct (circled) is shown crossing the stream identified as Flatstone Creek and is variously identified as the Flatstone Creek Aqueduct or the Plotter Kill Aqueduct. While primarily showing the route of the Enlarged canal, the alignment of the 1825 canal is also indicated by dotted lines Image courtesy of New York State Archives



<sup>5</sup> Horatio Gates Spafford, A Pocket Guide for the Tourist and Traveller, Along the Line of the Canals, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Tuttle & Richards, Troy, NY, 1825, Page 44.

<sup>6</sup> ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse, Along the Bike Hike Trail, A Guide to the Mohawk – Hudson Bike Way – Schenectady County Section, 3rd edition, “Lock 8 to Kiwanis Park” ECOS, Schenectady, NY, 2013, Page 45.

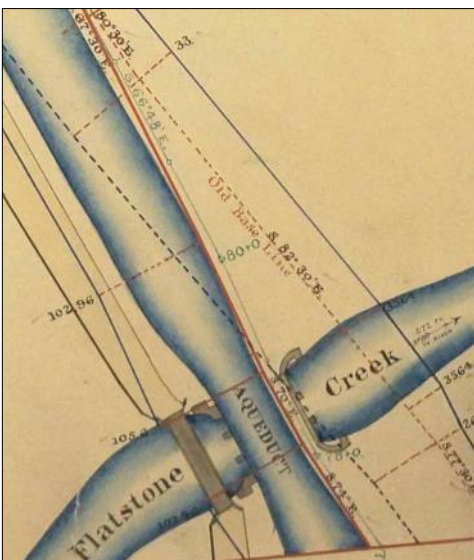


Figure 7. Magnified detail on an 1896 Schillner map, showing the aqueduct carrying the Enlarged canal over Flatstone Creek (Plotter Kill), and (shown in dotted lines) the alignment of the original 1825 canal and its crossing of the waterway just to the north of the Enlarged canal.

*Image courtesy of New York State Archives*



Figure 9: Aerial photograph, 1935.

*Image provided by Craig Williams*

<sup>7</sup> Annual Report of the Canal Commissioners of the State of New York, Thurlow Weed, Albany, NY, 1841, Page 25.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Pages 14-15.

<sup>9</sup> Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Works of the Canals of the State, for the Year Ending September 30, 1891 James B. Lyon, Albany, NY, 1892, Pages 44, 53-54, 61-62.

<sup>10</sup> George L. Schillner, Schillner Maps, “Flatstone Creek Aqueduct” Office of State Engineer and Surveyor, New York State Archives, 1896.

## ADDENDUM

### NEW HISTORICAL MARKER

The Town of Rotterdam was awarded a grant through the Pomeroy Foundation for a new highway historical marker. The proposal for this project was prepared by town resident Nancy Papish, a volunteer on the Town of Rotterdam 2020/200<sup>th</sup> Celebration Committee. The research conducted to apply for the Pomeroy Grant formed the basis for the preceding article.

The marker [Figure 9] has been installed on New York State Route 5S at Kiwanis Park (Lower Rotterdam Junction). The new sign

highlights the stone remains of the 1840 Aqueduct, one of 32 such structures on the Enlarged Erie Canal. Repaired after major storm damage in the 1890s, the stone arches supported the towpath and are still in service today carrying the bike path across the Plotter Kill on the east side of Kiwanis Park.



Figure 8: The aqueduct continues to serve the public today. Signage indicates that the bike/hike path of the Empire State Trail is carried over the aqueduct.

*Image provided by the author.*

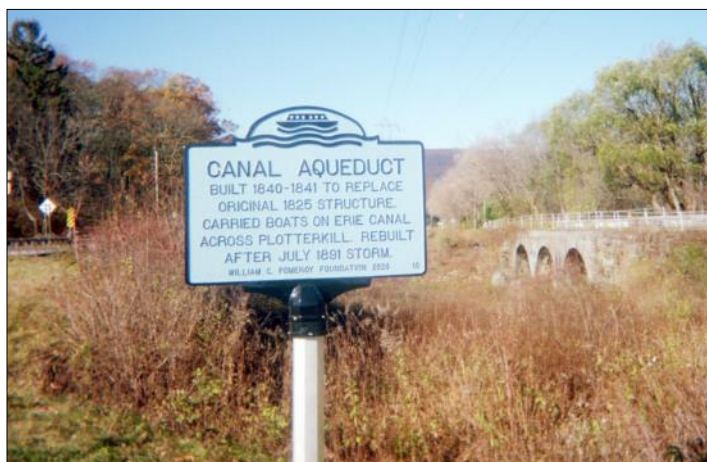


Figure 10: Historical marker provided by the Pomeroy Foundation as a result of the research done by the author. The marker is located on New York State Route 5S at Kiwanis Park in Lower Rotterdam Junction.

*Image provided by the author*





Figure 11: Plotterkill Aqueduct carrying the Empire State Trail.  
*Image by Ted Olsen.*



Figure 12: Stone remains of the original 1825 canal by the Plotterkill.  
*Image by Ted Olsen*



Figure 13: Stone remains of the original 1825 canal by the Plotterkill.  
*Image by Ted Olsen*



## REMEMBERING TODD WESELOH

By Craig Williams

A good friend, Todd called me last January 20th. Having known Todd for over forty years, I could immediately tell in the tone of his voice that all was not well. He explained that he had just gotten out of the hospital and that while things seemed ok he wanted to start as soon as possible to donate more material to the Canal Society. We had often talk over the years about his wonderful collection of canal manuscripts, photographs, and books. He came to the Samuel Center soon after we purchased it in 2022 and was looking forward to volunteering there to help move our collections from the Erie Canal Museum to the Center and to establish a new home for his collections. I visited with Todd two days later at his Syracuse home. Crowded with books and boxes, Todd and I went down cramped aisles of canal-related treasures. "This 1798 manuscript of the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company, could I take that now?" I asked Todd. "Yes, please take it." "That 19th-century canal boat model?" "Yes, please take that too!" I drove away after several hours in awe of Todd and his collections, sensing that Todd was relieved to know that a start had been made in finding a wonderful home for his wonderful material. I returned the following Sunday with Society members Anita Cottrell and Mike Riley, both also good friends of Todd. We loaded two cars for Port Byron and realized that many more trips were going to be needed. Todd died two weeks later on February 18, 2023. Over the following months, with the blessing and help of Todd's family, we finished moving his collections to Port Byron though we are far from finished cataloging them.

I first met Todd in 1976 at the Canal Museum in Syracuse. I was the curator at the Museum and Todd was coming to the Museum as an intern from Syracuse University's library graduate school. Though I left the Museum the following year, I certainly kept in touch with Todd if only with my repeated requests for help with my study of the Syracuse Weighlock Building as Todd had become the Museum's librarian and archivist. In 1982 Todd married Connie Eustis, a volunteer at the Canal Museum from its very first days and another very close friend going back years earlier. Connie sadly passed in 2012. Connie and Todd amassed likely the most comprehensive collection of canal materials

in private hands. And, their passion was not limited to just canals, from match book covers to images of cats and owls to countless postcards.

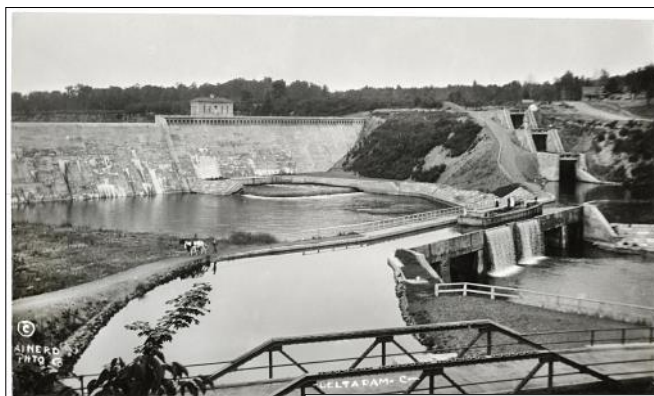
The Society is extremely grateful to Todd's family for respecting his wish

that these materials come to the Society. I am also extremely grateful to the Society volunteers who helped back and move the hundreds of boxes. More on Todd and Connie's remarkable archive will be featured in upcoming issues of Bottoming Out.

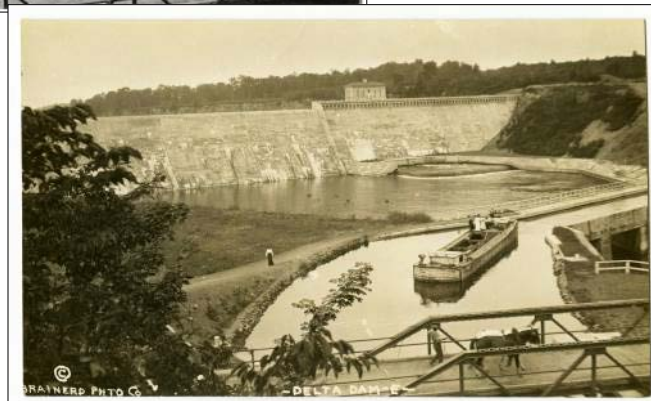


Left to right: Tom Grasso, Bob Brown, Todd Weseloh, and Rob Mangold look at a Holmes Hutchinson map of Pittsford in 2007

*Image provided by Dave Kipp*



Images of Delta Dam from the Weseloh collection, among many photographs of canal sites across the state



# REPLICA CANAL BOAT SENECA CHIEF NEARS COMPLETION

By Paul Bartczak

Previous issues of this publication have followed the progress of the Buffalo Maritime Center's project to build a replica of the *Seneca Chief*, the Erie Canal line boat that carried Governor DeWitt Clinton from Buffalo to New York City in October 1825 to celebrate the completion of the Erie Canal. Readers are specifically directed to the last issue of this publication (No. 74) where coverage of this project is recapped on page 21.

Since June 15, 2022, the last visit to the boat's construction site at the Longshed adjacent to Buffalo's Commercial Slip, this writer has made three additional visits to the facility to monitor and report the ongoing progress of construction. Representative images from these three visits are to be found below, and on the following pages.

The boat is expected to be completed early in 2024. Present plans call for the vessel to be launched during the week of May 6. This writer will faithfully record this historic event for the benefit of readers of this publication. After the launch, the boat will spend time at Canalside in Buffalo until September 24, 2025 when it is scheduled to commence a bicentennial recreation of Governor Clinton's voyage to New York City. This writer will continue to monitor this ongoing project and report significant developments to readers of this publication. Readers are also invited to visit the website of the Buffalo Maritime Center to learn more about the project:

**[buffalomaritimecenter.org](http://buffalomaritimecenter.org).**

*Note: On October 7, the Buffalo Maritime Center held its "Whiskey Plank" ceremony for the Seneca Chief. The "whiskey plank" is the final plank required to complete the outer shell of a wooden hull, and is a major milestone in the construction of a wooden boat.*



Figure 1: A good view of the bow and the partially-framed cabin taken on June 29, 2023 from the upstairs observation gallery.

*Image provided by the author.*

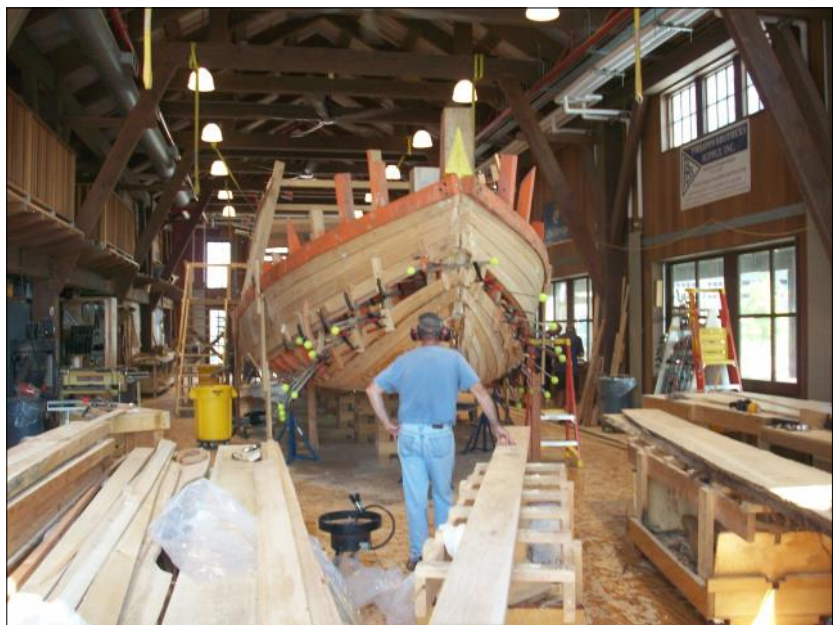


Figure 2: September 7, 2023 ground floor view of the bow, showing the nearly completed planking on both sides of the hull.

*Image provided by the author.*





Figure 3: Upstairs observation gallery view of the boat. While the hull will be completed today, there is still significant work to be done on the cabin. The long white strip of wood resting on sawhorses below the hull is the final, or “whiskey” plank which will complete the hull planking. *Image provided by the author.*

Figure 4: Attendees were invited to sign the “whiskey” plank prior to its installation in the hull. My wife signed for the both of us while I was photographing the day’s events from the upstairs viewing gallery. *Image provided by the author.*

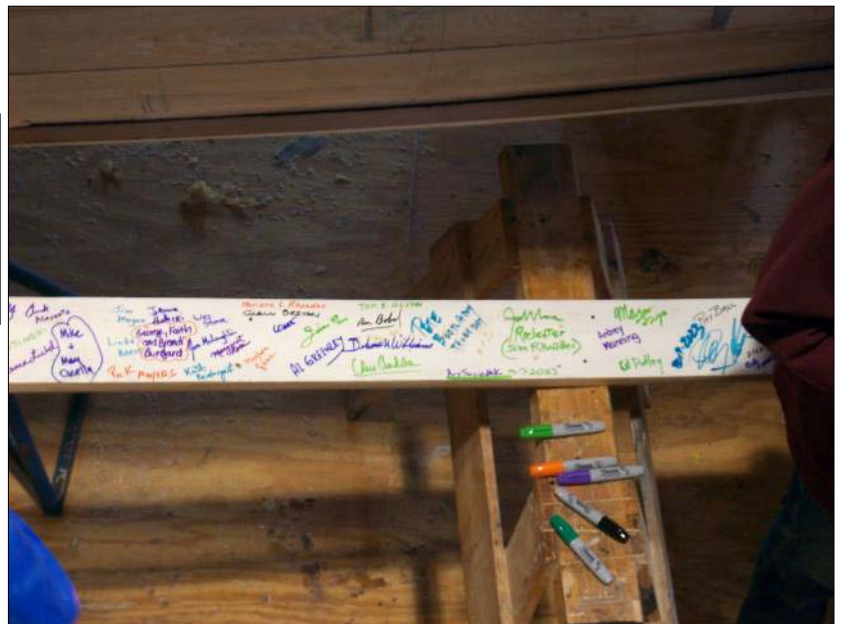


Figure 5: Brian Trzeciak, Executive Director of Buffalo Maritime Center, served as the Master of Ceremonies for the “whiskey” plank event on October 7, 2023. *Image provided by the author.*





Figure 6: Roger Allen, Master Boatbuilder, supervised the construction of the *Seneca Chief* from the beginning. Here, at the podium in the unfinished cabin, he introduces the various dignitaries who are taking turns at installing the “whiskey” plank to the hull.  
*Image provided by the author.*

Figure 7: The “whiskey” plank is being lifted from its resting place on the sawhorses and maneuvered into position in the gap in the hull planking.  
*Image provided by the author.*



Figure 8: Placing the last fastener into place, securing the “whiskey” plank, and completing the hull planking. The day’s events included musical entertainment and, of course, passing out small shots of whiskey.  
*Image provided by the author.*



# HAVE A SEAT WITH LOCKPORT'S HISTORIC LOCK TENDERS

By Dave Kinyon

Lockport has completed the installation of all 14 life-size, cast bronze sculptures in the Lock Tenders Tribute Monument. Approximately 200 attendees joined in celebrating the completion of the Erie Canal-themed statuary September 16 in the Lockport Locks.

Canal Society Board Member Dave Kinyon, Chairman of the Lockport Locks Heritage District, was joined by Society President Craig Williams for the dedication ceremony. The ceremony featured the unveiling of the final six sculptures in the statuary and the introduction of over 70 descendants of the Lock Tenders memorialized in the display on the stairway in the locks.

The three-phase project took 10 years to complete due to the need to raise the \$1.5 million needed to pay for the sculptures and site preparation in the Lockport Locks. Phase I consisted of the original three sculptures in 2020, followed by the five figures that were added in 2021. The final six sculptures included the figure of the only female, the daughter of one of the 12 Lockport Lock Tenders who were photographed on the same stairway in 1897.

Other dignitaries participating in the dedication ceremony included Director of Canals Brian Stratton, City of Lockport Mayor Michelle Roman, State Senator Robert Ortt and State Assemblymen Michael Norris and Angelo Morinello.

Attendees at the Canal Society's Spring Study Tour will have the opportunity to see first-hand the tremendous artistry of sculptor Susan Geissler, who molded each of the 14 figures. The bronze pieces were initially cast in clay and then poured in bronze at a Colorado foundry, shipped back to Lockport and installed on the Lockport Locks stairway.

The visit to the Lock Tenders Tribute Monument will be just one of the many highlights of the Spring Study Tour. Other components will include a visit to the replica *Seneca Chief* under

construction in Buffalo, presentations about the little-known canals of Niagara Falls and a tour of both Barge Canal and Erie Canal structures in Medina during the weekend of May 3-5, 2024.



Lock Tenders Tribute with Photographer  
*Photo by Lee Williams*



Lock Tenders Photo by FB Clench—the original 1897 photo of the Lockport Lock Tenders on the stairway in the Lockport Locks.  
*Image provided by the author.*



All the Clans—Over 70 descendants of the Historic Lockport Lock Tenders posed on the stairway in the Lockport Locks for the September 16 Dedication.  
*Image provided by the author.*

## WINTER SYMPOSIUM AND ANNUAL MEETING

By Bruce Schwendy

On Saturday, March 2, 2024, we will again be hosting our Winter Symposium in the spacious conference facility at Monroe Community College in Rochester New York.

Our full and varied slate of speakers will appeal to many of the canal interests which are the foundation of the goals of the Canal Society.

This year we expect to feature commercial use of our canals along with presentations about our rich canal history. The Keynote Address by Canal Corporation Director, Brian Stratton with Senior Communications Strategy Manager, Shane Mahar, will feature upcoming news for the 2024 season.

Important to our history is the effect early canals had on the lives of Native Americans and African Americans living in the canal corridor. Laurence Hauptman, author and Distinguished Professor of American History at SUNY New Paltz and Judy Wellman, writer and Professor Emeritus, SUNY Oswego will address these topics.

Our Canal Society partner, Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, will be represented by Judy McKinney-Cherry, Executive Director, Schuyler County Partnership for Economic Development. She will cover exciting canalway developments and plans for the 2025 celebration.

Dr. John Montague, President Emeritus, Buffalo Maritime Center will give us interesting details about the construction of the full size replica of the "Seneca Chief" and plans for it to participate in the 2025 celebrations.

Francis E. Griggs, Retired Chair of Engineering Departments at Merrimac and Union Colleges, will give us an inside look at his survey of the Clinton's Ditch era aqueduct located off the parking lot of the Canal Society's Samuel Center in Port Byron.

Representing local canal corridor communities efforts to use the canal to their advantage this year will be David Kinyon, Vice President of the Canal Society and Heather Peck, City of Lockport Director of Development and Planning, to talk about Lockport's evolving waterfront.

A treat this year will be a brass quintet from Roberts Wesleyan College, playing the "Grand Canal March." This piece of music, special to canal history, was composed by West Point Music Professor Willis in 1823. It was performed by the West Point Band on October 8, 1823 at the Albany Waterfront to celebrate canal boats from

the partially completed Erie and Champlain Canals passing into the Hudson River for the first time. Craig Williams will talk about this event.

Symposium Program Details and Registration materials are available on the Canal Society website..

## CHECK OUT THE NEW CANAL SOCIETY ONLINE STORE!

Our new online store went up on the website in December and offers a wide variety of Canal Society merchandise, from T-shirts, sweatshirts, and hats, to coffee mugs, journals, tote bags, and even gifts for the smallest canal enthusiasts! Check it out at [newyorkcanals.org](http://newyorkcanals.org).



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- March 2— Winter Symposium and Annual Meeting  
Monroe Community College, Rochester
- March 3— Presentation at the Samuel Center for Canal History— Legacy of the Erie Canal with Art Cohn
- May 1— Heritage Park opens
- May 3-5— Spring Study Tour in Lockport

*Monthly programs at the Samuel Center for Canal History in Port Byron and volunteer opportunities at the Heritage Park will be coming up —keep an eye on the website and Facebook for details!*



## VOLUNTEER WITH US!

As they say: many hands make light work. Volunteering has many benefits, and can be a fun and very rewarding experience while contributing to the Society and meeting like-minded individuals! If you're interested in volunteering with the Canal Society, please visit <https://newyorkcanals.org/volunteer-interest-form> to indicate what activities you'd like to participate in, and someone will reach out to follow up with you. As always: we can't do what we do without our members and volunteers! THANK YOU!





# Give the Gift of Membership!

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.

*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*

## Membership categories

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$30 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining \$100  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$40     | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor \$250  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor \$45    | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporation \$300 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$55     | <input type="checkbox"/> Additional _____  |

**Gift Recipient Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_



*Newyorkcanals.org/membership*

## The Bookshelf:

Copies of the books/publications listed below are available for sale to support the Society. Please complete this form and mail it along with payment (checks made out to the Canal Society of New York State) to:

Lisa O'Hara  
P.O. Box 11429  
Loudonville, NY 12211

Title	Cost	Quantity	Total
"Lake Champlain's Sailing Canal Boats: An Illustrated Journey from Burlington Bay to the Hudson River" by Art Cohn	\$20	_____	\$_____
Champlain Canal Gazetteer by Steven Talbot	\$20	_____	\$_____
Postage, handling, and state tax:			\$8
Total			\$_____

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City, State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP:** \_\_\_\_\_





Copyright 2024 by Steve Boerner

