

Symposium Abstracts

Bill Hullfish. *The Story behind the most famous songs of the Erie Canal.*

Beginning with Thomas Allen's "Low Bridge, Everybody Down," this presentation reveals the background of the most well-known Erie Canal songs, including "The Raging Canal," "A Life on the Raging Canal," "Look Out, That Low Bridge," and "Never Take the Hind Shoe from a Mule". It explores how the occupational songs of the Erie Canal differ from those of other professions and why. And did canallers actually sing these songs?

Bob Stopper. *3 NYS Erie Canals, Wayne County and a Bit Beyond.*

We will quickly visit Macedon, Palmyra, Port Gibson, Newark, Lyons, Lock Berlin, Clyde, Lockport, and Port Byron. We will travel by airplane, by drone, by boat and on foot. You will enjoy the sights, appreciate the craftsmanship of yesteryear, and better understand why the Erie Canal is indeed a National Historic Landmark.

Jean Mackay. *The Value of the NYS Canal System.*

New York's iconic canals provide numerous economic and quality of life benefits. This presentation will explore the waterway's multidimensional assets, from recreation to tourism to agriculture and industry, so that you can effectively champion its long-term preservation.

Brian Stratton. *Canal Update Looking Forward; Reimagine the Canals.*

As the 200th anniversary of the Erie Canal approaches, the Canal Corporation is actively engaging with a wide range of local stakeholders across New York who rely on the waterway to identify their needs.

Thomas R. Feeney. *The Feeney Family – Five Generations of Canal Trades and Traditions.*

Feeney will follow the course of five generations of a New York State canal family, from the founding of the Feeney shipyard in 1904 on Rondout Creek through current operations and his own personal life story. Growing up alongside the shipyard docks, he was inspired by the marine trades of his grandfather and father, representing many decades of canal traditions. His hope as a teenager to be a graduate of the Fort Schuyler SUNY Maritime School was soon realized. He worked on the Kirby Offshore Transportation Company's 135 feet-long tug *Tina Pyne* with its integrated barge before returning to the family shipyard. He assumed his new position with Centerline Logistics just this past June.

Cabryn Gurdo. *Making History Accessible in Unprecedented Times: Reopening a Museum and Historic Site During the Coronavirus Pandemic.*

When non-essential businesses shut down in early 2020, museums, historic sites and other cultural institutions closed as well. Preparing for reopening once the restrictions were lifted presented many new challenges to staff and volunteers. By late summer, the Old Erie Canal Heritage Park at Port Byron was able to open its doors and welcome thousands of visitors to its exhibit space and Historic Lock 52 Complex. In this presentation, we will discuss the compromises and adaptations that were implemented in order to welcome our audience safely.

Nancy Uffindell. *Mt. Hope Cemetery – The Eternal Erie Canal Stop.*

Many of the hundreds of people who made a living on or near the Erie Canal are now at eternal rest in Mt. Hope Cemetery, the nation's oldest municipally owned Victorian cemetery. The Erie Canal made Rochester America's first inland boomtown. These people that Nancy will introduce you to built this city and the canal through its several enlargements and extraordinary success.

Dave Kinyon and Dr. Patrick McGreevy. *Mountain Ridge and the Flight of Five Locks.*

Dr. McGreevy will share documentation from his treatise about how the site of the staircase set of five locks that breached the Niagara Escarpment was selected. He will make use of a series of digital elevation models from the U.S. Geological Survey along with James Geddes 1817 surveys to explain the methodology of determining the exact route that canal builders selected for the Flight of Five. Kinyon will explain the design of the original "Ditch Locks" constructed between 1823-25, and will present the efforts to date to return the Enlarged Erie Canal Flight of Five Locks to working order, as well as the vision for a vibrant, engaging waterfront in Lockport's historic Locks District.

About the Speakers

Bill Hullfish, Emeritus, SUNY College at Brockport; Author of *The Erie Canal Sings: The Canaller's Songbook*; Articles in *Bottoming Out* and *American Canals*; Member of the American Canal Society and the Canal Society of New York State; recorded an album of canal songs for Smithsonian/Folkways (Grand Canal Ballads); toured the Erie and Oswego Canals under a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Bob Stopper is a retired Newark Senior High School English teacher and a retired FLCC English Adjunct. For the past ten years, Bob has been coordinator of the Lyons Erie Canalway Greeters, a volunteer senior citizen group which meets, greets, and welcomes boaters, bikers, and hikers to the Erie Canalway and the Community of Lyons. An avid fisherman and boater, Bob is an Erie Canal writer, lecturer, and photographer. A canal cruise narrator, Bob is also a contributor and Erie Canal advocate on the AGLCA (American Great Loop Cruising Association) Forum.

Jean Mackay has served as the Director of Communications and Outreach for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor since 2007. She works collaboratively with federal, state, and local agencies and organizations throughout the 500-mile-long National Heritage Corridor to preserve canal heritage, promote tourism, and foster vibrant communities along the waterway. Jean is responsible for developing and implementing communications, marketing, and special programs. Jean formerly worked as Director of Education for Audubon International. She holds a MS in Environmental Education from Leslie University.

Brian Stratton is Director of the New York State Canal Corporation, responsible for the operation and maintenance of the New York State Canal System. This 524 mile waterway for boats of all descriptions links the Hudson River with the Great Lakes, Finger Lakes and Lake Champlain for both commercial and recreational use. The System includes the Erie Canalway Trail, a multiuse trail for pedestrians, bicyclists and cross country skiers. Together, the canals and the trail create a world class recreationway that is a vibrant, scenic and unique New York Resource.

Prior to joining the Canal Corporation in 2011, Mr. Stratton was elected Mayor of Schenectady in 2003 and served two terms. In his years as Mayor, he worked with local leaders to attract more than \$300 million in new private investment, creating and retaining more than 2,000 jobs. As Mayor, Mr. Stratton also served from 2009-2011 as Co-Chair of the United States Conference of Mayors Water Council, leading mayors of more than 300 American cities in national policy formation of issues impacting how cities provide safe and affordable water and wastewater services. He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree from SUNY Oswego. His numerous awards include the National Association of Government Accountants (AGA) Distinguished Local Government Leadership Award in 2009 and the AGA New York Chapter Outstanding Achievement Award in 2008.

Tom Feeney is a Port Captain for Centerline Logistics, one of the primary marine transportation companies in the nation. He is responsible for day-to-day operations of tugs and barges in New York, Philadelphia, and the Gulf of Mexico. Tom came to that position as a fifth-generation New York State canal family. The Feeney shipyard on Rondout Creek in Kingston, NY has been building and servicing canal craft for well more than a century. The Feeneys were also founding members of the Canal Society. Many Society members will recall the fascinating tour arranged by Tom of their yard as part of the Spring 2019 study tour.

Cabryn Gurdo was appointed Executive Director of the Canal Society of New York State in May 2020. She holds a Master's degree in History from the University at Buffalo and a Master's degree in Historic Preservation from Goucher College in Baltimore, MD. She is a historian based in Utica, NY. Active in her community, Cabryn served on the Board of Trustees of the Landmarks Society of Greater Utica and wrote for *Greater Utica*, a popular monthly local history magazine. She serves on the Board of Trustees of the Rome Historical Society – Friends of Fort Stanwix National Monument and is currently Secretary of the Board. When not anthropomorphizing Erie Canal structures or historic buildings, she enjoys traveling with her Jack Russell terrier.

Nancy Uffindell is an RIT graduate and since 2001 has been a Trustee of the Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery in Rochester, New York. Beginning with a tour she prepared for the 2010 World Canals conference, she has contributed to research those interred at the cemetery who have a connection to the canal.

Dave Kinyon is a Director for the Canal Society of New York State. He had a 40-year public service career in community and economic development in Niagara County, and has been a leader in the effort to restore the Erie Canal Flight of Five Locks since 2003. He has been a driving force in the project to create the Lock Tenders Tribute Monument in Lockport.

Dr. Patrick McGreevy, a native of Lockport, resides in Greenfield, Massachusetts, having retired recently as a Professor of History and Director of the Center for American Studies and Research at the American University of Beirut.