



P.O. Box 219, Waterford, NY 12188 ■ 518-237-7000 ■ www.eriecanalway.org

Erie Canalway News Release

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Contact: Jean Mackay, Director of Communications and Outreach

518-925-6721, jean_mackay@partner.nps.gov

Andy Kitzmann, Assistant Director and video project manager, 315-558-1679,

andy_kitzmann@partner.nps.gov

Documentary Explores Erie Canal's Role in Shaping America

WATERFORD, NY- The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, in partnership with the National Park Foundation and WCNY-TV, are pleased to announce the premier showing of ***Floating Ideas: How the Erie Canal Helped Shape America*** on WCNY-TV on June 29 at 9 pm ET. The half-hour documentary airs again on WCNY-TV on July 4 at 1 pm ET and premieres on YouTube on July 6.

Floating Ideas: How the Erie Canal Helped Shape America examines the spread of ideas along the Erie Canal, with an emphasis on women's rights, suffrage, and the quest for social justice.

"The struggle began two centuries ago, but is just as relevant today," said **Bob Radliff, Executive Director of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor**. "Although the Preamble of the Constitution begins with 'We the People of the United States,' expanding who 'we' means to include women, Native Americans, and people of color has been a long and enduring fight. ***Floating Ideas*** explores the Erie Canal's role in shaping the narrative and expanding our national identity."

The film threads together movements to end slavery and secure women's right to vote. Themes include: the influence of the Haudenosaunee on suffragists like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Matilda Joslyn Gage; the women left out of the suffrage narrative who faced voting barriers despite the passage of the 19th Amendment; and expanding opportunities for women today.

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor received a [National Park Foundation Women in Parks grant](#) to support to the creation of the film.

"This film details how the Erie Canal was an information highway, moving people and their changemaking ideas throughout the country," said **LaTresse Snead, Chief Program Officer at the National Park Foundation**. "The National Park Foundation and our donors are committed to elevating more perspectives about the multifaceted history of the United States through national parks, including women who broke the norms traveling alone along the Erie Canal to gather and organize around their vision of equality, dramatically impacting the world as we experience it today."

"The National Park Service tells the stories of diverse women at parks, historic sites, and heritage areas across the nation. This exciting documentary project shares that dynamic history of the Erie Canal with

an even wider public,” said **Ella Wagner, 250th Commemorative Fellow, National Park Service, Cultural Resources Office of Interpretation and Education.**

“The Erie Canal is something New Yorkers and beyond so often take for granted,” said **New York State Canal Corporation Director Brian U. Stratton.** “A revolutionary feat of engineering built by many New Yorkers before us, the Canal and its banks hold stories of our nation’s journey to self-discovery and its struggle for equality. Just as goods and travelers passed through its waters, so too did the fight of women’s rights, suffrage, and the quest for social justice. ***Floating Ideas*** provides New Yorkers with an inside look at that journey and how this historic waterway helped shape our nation’s identity for decades to come.”

“WCNY welcomed the opportunity to work with the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor to produce and broadcast this story about the Erie Canal’s role as an information highway transporting ideas that transformed a young America,” said **Mitch Gelman, President and CEO of WCNY,** Syracuse, New York. “WCNY looks forward to sharing the program with our viewers and PBS viewers across the state and beyond.”

The documentary was produced by [WCNY Public Media](#) for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor with funding support from the National Park Foundation, the [National Park Service](#), and the [New York State Canal Corporation](#).

ABOUT THE ERIE CANALWAY

Nearly 200 years after its construction, the Erie Canal remains an iconic symbol of American ingenuity and determination. The **Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor** preserves our extraordinary canal heritage, promotes the Corridor as a world-class tourism destination, and fosters vibrant communities connected by more than 500 miles of waterway. It achieves its mission in partnership with the National Park Service, New York State agencies, non-profit organizations, local residents, and more than 200 communities across the full expanse of upstate New York. www.eriecanalway.org

ABOUT THE NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION

The National Park Foundation works to protect wildlife and park lands, preserve history and culture, educate and engage youth, and connect people everywhere to the wonder of parks. We do it in collaboration with the National Park Service, the park partner community, and with the generous support of donors, without whom our work would not be possible. Learn more at nationalparks.org.

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Attached Image / Caption: The new documentary ***Floating Ideas: How the Erie Canal Helped Shape America*** examines the spread of ideas along the Erie Canal, with an emphasis on women’s rights, suffrage, and the quest for social justice. (Image courtesy 1st Amendment-1st Vote <https://1sta1stv.org>)

YouTube premier link: <https://youtu.be/Y2hh0XXHUGo>